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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

HERMENEUTICS AND EXEGESIS:

THE ROLE OF PRE-UNDERSTANDING IN THE INTERPRETATION OF
THE NEW TESTAMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE WORK
OF T.W.MANSON AND R.H.LIGHTFOOT

by

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University of St Andrews

1974

The central problem of the thesis is to determine why exegetes interpret texts in radically different ways when they have the same historical and philological information available. I try to show that the determinative factor is pre-understanding. The process of understanding is circular; we approach the text with presuppositions which are related conceptually and experientially to the way we see the world. When we interpret a text our pre-understanding of the content of that text effects and affects the way in which we interpret it. But then our understanding of the text reflects in a circular manner on our pre-understanding and either confirms it or criticizes it as being deficient in some respect.

In New Testament interpretation our pre-understanding, it is suggested, is made up of a series of concepts which include 'revelation', 'history', 'resurrection', 'eschatology' and 'miracle' among the more important. We also approach the text with a prior practical interest

which is derived from our social and political (i.e. practical) life. The way in which we understand these concepts and the nature of our practical interest determines in part how we understand the New Testament. Our pre-understanding of these concepts, however, can be modified in the light of our interpretation of the text, i.e. if our interpretation does not ring true. Practical interest opens a perspective and provides motivation for understanding the text, but the perspective is necessarily a limited and limiting one.

Various ways are summarized in the thesis in which these concepts have been understood during the course of this century by several systematic or dogmatic theologians. This shows what variations of pre-understanding are possible. A number of practical interests are also described which have been used by non-theologians to interpret texts from the Old Testament. In the second part of the thesis I have tried to reconstruct the pre-understanding brought to the New Testament by two exegetes, T.W.Manson and R.H.Lightfoot, and I have tried to show by the use of selected examples how in each case their pre-understanding has determined the character of their interpretation.

I suggest, finally, that a critical use of the idea of pre-understanding will help in some cases to remove, or at least make more transparent, differences of interpretation in New Testament exegesis.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
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1974

I hereby certify that I myself composed this thesis, that the work of which it is a record has been done by myself, and that it has not been accepted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Geoffrey Turner.

I hereby certify that the candidate, Geoffrey Turner, has fulfilled the conditions of the Ordinances and Regulations.

Ernest Best,
Professor of Divinity and
Biblical Criticism,
University of Glasgow.

PART TWO

<u>Chapter Four</u>	<u>T.W.Manson: Pre-understanding</u>	
	<u>Analysed</u>	150
Pre-understanding	151
Interest	159
History	167
Revelation	184
Resurrection and Miracles	192
Eschatology	198
<u>Chapter Five</u>	<u>T.W.Manson: Pre-understanding</u>	
	<u>At Work</u>	207
The Son of Man	208
The Kingdom of God	219
Peter's Confession: Mk 8.27-30	231
The Messianic Secret	238
The Cursing of the Fig Tree: Mk 11.12-14, 20-25	245
The Last Supper	252
The Resurrection Appearances	258
The Lord's Prayer	262
<u>Chapter Six</u>	<u>R.H.Lightfoot: Pre-understanding</u>	
	<u>Analysed</u>	276
Methodology and Pre-understanding	277
Cognitive Interest	284
History	295
Ecclesiology	310
Revelation	316
Resurrection and Eschatology	321

<u>Chapter Seven</u>	<u>R.H.Lightfoot: Pre-understanding</u>	
	<u>At Work</u>	331
The Messianic Secret	333
The Cursing of the Fig Tree	341
Eschatological Texts a) Son of Man	347
	b) The Kingdom of God	353
	c) Parousia	359
	d) The Last Day	363
The Last Supper	365
The Lamb of God	372
The Trial of Jesus	376
The Resurrection Appearances: Jn 20.1-29	..	380
The Ending of Mark	385
<u>Summary and Conclusions</u>	393
Summary	394
Conclusions	401
<u>Bibliography</u>	406
T.W.Manson	407
R.H.Lightfoot	413
General Bibliography	414

Preface

I should like to thank Professor Matthew Black, the Principal of St Mary's College, St Andrews University, who was appointed literary executor for the late Professor T.W.Manson, for allowing me access to Manson's unpublished papers; to the Rev. Philip N. Haynes, Vicar of St Mark's, Purley, the literary executor for the late Professor R.H.Lightfoot, for giving me permission to examine Lightfoot's unpublished papers which are kept in the Bodleian Library, Oxford; and to the Rev. Dr. Dennis E. Nineham, Warden of Keble College, Oxford, who gave me considerable insight into Lightfoot's personal character and theology. I must also express my thanks to Professor Ernest Best for his sympathy and help in supervising this thesis. None of the above mentioned, however, bear any responsibility for the views expressed in the body of the thesis, which are entirely my own.

I should also like to express my gratitude to my wife, Barbara, without whose support, moral and material, this thesis would never have been started, let alone completed.

Abbreviations

T.W.Manson

- T The Teaching of Jesus (1931)
- S 'The Sayings of Jesus' in The Mission and Message of Jesus, H.D.A.Major, T.W.Manson and C.J.Wright (1937)
- Dug 'The Failure of Liberalism to Interpret the Bible as the Word of God' in The Interpretation of the Bible, ed. by C.W.Dugmore (1944)
- CMin The Church's Ministry (1948)
- SerM The Servant Messiah (1953)
- REMS 'Realized Eschatology and the Messianic Secret' in Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R.H.Lightfoot, ed. by D.E.Nineham (1955)
- LifeJ 'The Life of Jesus: Some Tendencies in Present Day Research' in The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology (Essays in Honour of C.H.Dodd), ed. by W.D.Davies and D.Daube (1956)
- M&P Ministry and Priesthood (1958)
- E&G Ethics and the Gospel (1960)
- SGE Studies in the Gospels and Epistles, ed. by M.Black (1962)
- P&J On Paul and John, ed. by M.Black (1963)

R.H.Lightfoot

- H&I History and Interpretation in the Gospels (1935)
- L&D Locality and Doctrine in the Gospels (1938)
- GMM The Gospel Message of St Mark (1950)
- J St John's Gospel: A Commentary (1956)

General

BJRL	<u>The Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</u>
CQ	<u>The Congregational Quarterly</u>
ExpT	<u>The Expository Times</u>
JBL	<u>Journal of Biblical Literature</u>
JEH	<u>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</u>
JR	<u>Journal of Religion</u>
JTS	<u>Journal of Theological Studies</u>
NovT	<u>Novum Testamentum</u>
NTS	<u>New Testament Studies</u>
RE	<u>Religion in Education</u>
RGG	<u>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</u>
SBT	<u>Studies in Biblical Theology</u>
SJT	<u>Scottish Journal of Theology</u>
ZNW	<u>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</u>
ZThK	<u>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</u>

I N T R O D U C T I O N

I N T R O D U C T I O N

In this thesis I am concerned basically to understand why an exegete interprets a particular text as he does rather than in some other possible way. Or to express the problem another way, why do two or more exegetes interpret the same text in fundamentally opposed ways, when they adopt the same methodology and have more or less the same historical and philological evidence available. To some extent these differences result from the evidence having been assessed rather differently, but this is only a part of the answer because the fact remains that exegetes often adopt totally opposed outlooks in their interpretation of New Testament texts which results in different types of exegesis. In this thesis I shall examine, in part at least, the basis of these fundamentally opposed outlooks. The difficulty presented by this situation is that, as the task of the exegete is to clarify the meaning of the text, each exegete evidently thinks that the text means something different from the meaning expounded by some other exegetes. It may be that some interpretations are mutually exclusive as would be the case, for example, with an existential interpretation of the resurrection appearances and a more traditional historicizing interpretation. Or it may be that a particular text contains multiple layers of meaning which are not mutually exclusive. But in either case we must ask, why has the exegete produced just this interpretation? Moreover, this question is preliminary to our determining whether this particular interpretation represents a correct

(if partial) understanding of the text.

All this necessarily calls into question the objectivity of understanding. This problem, furthermore, is only a partial representation of the wider problem of determining why we understand reality as we do. This general problem of understanding leads to the task of philosophical hermeneutics, which is to analyse critically the general structural dynamics of understanding. Theological hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics have an analogous but more restricted scope. All understanding takes place in language, whether this be language in the ordinary sense or in the metaphorical sense of the language of music or the language of ritual. Either way meaning is communicated by means of an objective code of socially accepted signs. The reader receives the message encoded by the author and understands. But how objective is this code? How closed is the process of understanding?¹ Certainly the elements of the code do not refer to 'things' in any simple sense as in the tradition of Locke.² The more convincing view is that language reveals a world, a world which we inhabit, and this is the view of the later Wittgenstein and the later Heidegger.³ Language is not a set of tools we use as a

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1. See P.Wollen, Signs and Meaning in the Cinema, pp.158-64
 2. J.Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Book 3. For a destructive criticism of this model of language see the early part of L.Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations.
 3. F.Kerr, 'Language as Hermeneutic in the Later Wittgenstein' in Tijdschrift voor Filosofie, 27, 1965, pp.491-520.

convenient means of communicating meaning to others, but it structures and reveals the world in which we live. We do not control our world objectively, we enter into it in language. Understanding a text presupposes that we understand the words (or signs) and these have to be learnt in a social context. Understanding, then, presupposes the social and personal world we bring with us to the text. And each time we read a text we have to relearn the signs which constitute it; understanding is a process which is never complete. Richard Hoggart suggests the restlessness of understanding when he says:

We can and should push more and more towards objectivity, but we can never reach it.... I am pointing to an inescapable fact of our lives. I say 'ours' since it is, phrased rather differently, a fact of the writer's life also. We none of us 'know' anything in the blue, we know things in the conceptual and imaginative frames available to us.⁴

Roland Barthes, the French literary critic and structuralist, expresses the same judgment about texts. "How can anyone believe", he asks, "that a given work is an object independent of the psyche and personal history of the critic studying it, with regard to which he enjoys a sort of extraterritorial status?"⁵

When we read a text we bring to bear on the text a

4. R.Hoggart, Speaking to Each Other, Vol.2: About Literature p.247.

5. R.Barthes, 'Criticism as Language' in Critics Abroad, a special issue of the Times Literary Supplement, 27 Sept, 1963, p.739.

personal and social world which is made up, in part, of our conceptual understanding of that world. Furthermore, when we read a text we integrate that text, if we are able, into our understanding of the world. Our understanding of the text is structured by our prior understanding of the world. John Berger has explained how this is true when we look at a work of art:

No other kind of relic or text from the past can offer such a direct testimony about the world which surrounded other people at other times. In this respect images are more precise and richer than literature. To say this is not to deny the expressive or imaginative quality of art, treating it as mere documentary evidence; the more imaginative the work, the more profoundly it allows us to share the artist's experience of the visible.

Yet when an image is presented as a work of art, the way people look at it is affected by a whole series of learnt assumptions about art. Assumptions concerning:

Beauty
 Truth
 Genius
 Civilization
 Form
 Status
 Taste, etc.

Many of these assumptions no longer accord with the world as it is. (The world-as-it-is is more than pure objective fact, it includes consciousness.) Out of true with the present, these assumptions obscure the past. They mystify rather than clarify. The past is never there waiting to be discovered, to be recognized for exactly what it is.⁶

The first chapter of this thesis discusses one of the major gains of philosophical hermeneutics: the hermeneutical

6. J. Berger, Ways of Seeing, p.10f.

circle, the analysis of the process of all understanding as circular. The hermeneutical circle supposes that the act of understanding does not take place in a vacuum; meaning is not an object which can be read off in a purely objective fashion. Each act of understanding is preceded by a prior understanding which the reader brings to the text, and this pre-understanding both affects and effects subsequent understanding. But, provided that the pre-understanding is an explicit pre-understanding, the subsequent understanding can reflect back upon that pre-understanding which gave it birth and can modify that pre-understanding in a circular manner. The character of the hermeneutical circle, however, has appeared in a number of guises and the more important ones are described and discussed in the first chapter. As we shall see, Paul Ricoeur's version of the hermeneutical circle, after it has been modified somewhat, seems to offer the most help in understanding what takes place in the interpretation of a biblical text.

This attempt to oppose the naiveté of 'objective' interpretation does not necessarily relativize the truth of understanding, but it does presuppose that understanding is a very complex, hidden process in which we must develop fresh criteria for ascertaining the correctness of understanding. The next task, in the context of this thesis, is to determine precisely which concepts - parallel to those concepts listed by John Berger - make up the pre-understanding which is presupposed in New Testament exegesis. For we must be clear that Berger has not advocated that our learnt assumptions about art should be excluded.

We cannot help but have some assumptions. The problem is to criticise our assumptions so that we may be satisfied that they are justified assumptions. Because of this, chapter two will analyse the concepts which make up the pre-understanding of New Testament exegesis as they have been discussed by six major German dogmatic theologians of this century. This will give us some idea of the range of possible understandings which are available for these concepts. The difficulty is that while a limited number of concepts make up pre-understanding, these concepts can be understood in a theoretically unlimited number of ways.

While the first and second chapters will attempt to lay bare the conceptual content of pre-understanding, the third chapter will attempt to uncover a second level of pre-understanding, that of 'interest'. We shall look at the epistemological work of Jürgen Habermas who has related knowledge to practical cognitive-interests. This operates in a general sense whereby scientific knowledge results from technical interests, interests in the control and exploitability of nature, and whereby humanistic knowledge results from an interest in cultural communication and maintaining a viable social life. It operates at a more detailed level in each science or field of knowledge, and, as we shall see, we may expect an individual practical interest in each man's life-work.

In the second part of the thesis we shall examine the work, the total output, of two New Testament exegetes: T.W.Manson and R.H.Lightfoot. There will be two chapters

devoted to each. In the first we shall offer a general account of each exegete's pre-understanding; his particular, individual understanding of these concepts which make up that form of pre-understanding which operates in New Testament exegesis, together with a brief account of each exegete's practical interest in interpreting the New Testament. This first chapter will be drawn largely from the general remarks and general publications of each man. In the second chapter we shall expound and analyse a number of selected examples of each man's exegesis in an attempt to show the interconnection between exegesis and pre-understanding. These last four chapters will have two purposes: firstly to examine in a rather new way the exegesis of Manson and Lightfoot, and secondly to justify in a practical way the theoretical ideas expounded in the first part of the thesis.

Two works have already been written which have touched on the fundamental problem of why New Testament exegetes interpret the texts as they do. They are History and Christian Apologetics by T.A. Roberts, published in 1960, in which the author examines the historical methodology of Streeter, Dodd, and Farrer; and Christology and History, an unpublished thesis at Cambridge University by P.A. Lynn who has related the assessment by Streeter and Bultmann of the Gospels as historical records to their respective christologies. These are two valuable works, but this thesis attempts to go beyond them in a number of respects. First, neither Roberts nor Lynn tackled the problem of pre-understanding as a whole; Roberts restricted himself

to historical methodology and Lynn to christology. Second, neither examined the role of practical knowledge-constitutive interests. Third, neither paid much attention to exegesis, the interpretation of texts. Fourth, each selected his examples from theologians of different generations, almost from different theological epochs - certainly that is true of Dr Lynn who contrasted Streeter with Bultmann. I have attempted the trickier task of analysing critically two contemporaries: Manson and Lightfoot knew each other, they were friends, they taught in the same country at the same time (though not in the same University even though Manson was encouraged to move to Oxford) and they died within five years of each other. This makes all the more poignant the problem of why their New Testament work is so different.

I must add finally that while I insist that the analysis of pre-understanding is of crucial importance in New Testament interpretation, and while I have attempted to take a step forward in the critical work in this area, I cannot pretend that I have given a full account of pre-understanding. I am sure there is much more at stake than I have so far perceived. But to extend further the critical analysis of pre-understanding must be the work of another thesis by another author.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

C H A P T E R O N E

THE HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE

I Formal Hermeneutics

Schleiermacher and Dilthey

Aristotle understood that the first requirement of any hermeneutic is the formal analysis of a literary work, which allows the clarification of meaning on the basis of the style and structure of the work.¹ This led to a system of hermeneutical rules aimed at the exposure of meaning in the same way as the syntax of language is laid bare. With this came the realization of the development of language and the awareness that all literary documents are conditioned historically. The hermeneutical task became one of placing the document in its historical context and understanding the document within the framework of its cultural background. The hermeneutical circle was present even in this relatively primitive hermeneutic, even though the circular structure of understanding was not made explicit until the nineteenth century. Bultmann points out that a text can be understood only on the basis of its age and environment, and yet that environment can only be understood on the basis of the witnesses of that

1. See R.K.Bultmann, 'The Problem of Hermeneutics' in Essays Philosophical and Theological, p.235f. Bultmann is himself referring to Dilthey's article 'Der Entstehung der Hermeneutik' in Gesammelte Schriften 5. 317-338.

age of which the text itself is one.²

Schleiermacher, the first to present a general hermeneutic,³ saw that these traditional hermeneutical rules could only be formulated if a more fundamental stage of understanding was reached. Schleiermacher's task was to expose this fundamental process of understanding, and to do this he separated hermeneutics proper from linguistic and historical study on the one hand and from modern interpretation and application of the traditional meaning on the other hand.⁴ By separating the fundamental understanding of the text from historical study Schleiermacher was able to express the hermeneutical circle in a form which is confined to the text itself and the understanding of it which is possible when it alone is read. Schleiermacher said that in order to understand a part of the text we must first have a provisional understanding of the whole, and yet the whole is an amalgam of parts and to understand the whole we must first understand the parts. There is a constant interaction between the part and the whole of a text in an attempt to extend our understanding of the text. Hans-Georg Gadamer has pictured this as a movement in concentric circles where the test of understanding is the unanimity of meaning between parts and whole:

So läuft die Bewegung des Verstehens stets vom Ganzen

2. Ibid. p.247f.

3. F.D.E.Schleiermacher, Hermeneutik (1838)

4. H.Kimmerle, 'Hermeneutische Theorie oder ontologische Hermeneutik', ZThK, LIX, 1962, p.115

zum Teil und zurück zum Ganzen. Die Aufgabe ist, in konzentrischen Kreisen die Einheit des verstandenen Sinnes zu erweitern. Einstimmung aller Einzelheiten zum Ganzen ist das jeweilige Kriterium für die Richtigkeit des Verstehens. Das Ausbleiben solcher Einstimmung bedeutet Scheitern des Verstehens.⁵

Furthermore Schleiermacher differentiated between the objective and subjective in this circle. Objectively, the single word is heard out of the collectivity of sentences in the text, the individual text is part of the totality of an author's work, and this in turn is part of all literary works both of the period in which the text itself was written, and of the whole of literary history. On the other hand, subjectively, the text is a "Manifestation eines schöpferischen Augenblicks in das Ganze des Seelenlebens seines Autors."⁶ Whereas the objective aspect of the hermeneutical circle was explained by Schleiermacher in terms of the interaction of the part and whole of a text (and where 'whole' could ultimately be taken to refer to the totality of literature), the subjective aspect was seen as a circular interaction between the psyche of the reader and the psyche of the author. The external form of the work both paves the way towards our grasping and sharing the psychical life of the author, and at the same time can only be fully understood when we re-experience, so to say, the life-moment of the author when the text came to expression. For Schleiermacher, such shared spiritual experience is possible because both reader and author share human nature in a general way, because both are historical

5. H-G.Gadamer, Wahrheit und Methode, p.275

6. Ibid

creatures with a social, linguistic existence.

Dilthey's work was guided by his desire to place the knowledge acquired in the humanities on as firm a basis as the knowledge of the natural sciences, and to do this he tended to distinguish between erklärung by which natural facts are explained, and verstehen where past history is understood and not merely known (wissen). He saw historical understanding as a personal art: "its most consummate execution is conditioned by the mental make-up of the exegete; and so it rests on affinity, intensified by a thoroughgoing communion with the author - by constant study."⁷ For Dilthey, understanding is a matter of the communion of souls. It is something like this which influenced Collingwood's view of historiology as the re-enactment of past experience in the mind of the historian,⁸ and, as we shall see, it has had a considerable effect on Bultmann's view of understanding being dependent on a common self-understanding shared by both exegete and author. It may seem more appropriate to call the approach of Schleiermacher and Dilthey in particular a 'psychological hermeneutic', but the fact is that even for Dilthey hermeneutics is concerned with 'monuments' - texts, inscriptions, works of art, archaeological discoveries - so that for the most part the exegete's attention is fixed on the content of a specific text, and so is better called a 'formal hermeneutics'.

7. W.Dilthey, op. cit. p.329, quoted in Bultmann op.cit. p.238

8. R.G.Collingwood, The Idea of History, pp.282-302

Such a psychologically dominated hermeneutic, however, tends to lose sight of the subject matter of the text, and deeper than that, it fails to take account of the objective dimension of meaning which had in fact been observed by Schleiermacher in the first place. Gadamer points out that the wonder of understanding is that it is not a mysterious communion of souls, but that the author and exegete are sharers of a common meaning.⁹ In order to achieve understanding we submit ourselves to an argument which is understandable in itself, and we do not shift ourselves into the subjectivity of the author. Gadamer introduces the Vorgriff der Vollkommenheit as an explicit dimension of the pre-understanding which we bring to the text.¹⁰ The 'anticipation' or 'preconception of perfection' not only contains the assumption that a text will express its purpose perfectly, but also that what it says will be the full (perfect) truth, i.e. there will be no gap between what the author wanted to say and what the text which we read in fact says. We meet the author in the objectivity of shared meaning in the text. The object of every act of understanding is the unity of understanding which we can share with another in the text itself. Gadamer says that 'the preconception of perfection' presupposes the immanent unity of meaning and guides the transcendent expectation of meaning for the reader. So the reader of a text first

9. H-G.Gadamer, Wahrheit und Methode, p.276:

Es ist die Aufgabe der Hermeneutik, dies Wunder des Verstehens aufzuklären, das nicht eine geheimnisvolle Kommunion der Seele, sondern eine Teilhabe am gemeinsamen Sinn ist.

10. Ibid., p.277f.

understands its content and then sees with the eyes of the writer; he does not need to understand the writer's intention in order to understand the content of the text.

In Schleiermacher, as one becomes increasingly familiar with the text, the circular structure of understanding is gradually dissolved in full understanding; the distance of the author and all strangeness within the text are disposed of. For Heidegger, however, understanding of the text remains conditioned by the previously grasped movement of pre-understanding, so that achieved understanding is always dependent upon pre-understanding and, in some measure, we are always distanced from the text and its author. The circle of part and whole, of self and author, is not dissolved in full understanding because understanding is always conditioned by pre-understanding. Full understanding is not possible. For Gadamer, the hermeneutical circle is not formal in nature and it is neither subjective nor objective as Schleiermacher characterised it. It is the Ineinanderspiel of the movement of tradition of which the text is a part, and the movement of the interpreter, in which subjective creativity and objective meaning coincide. The circle is not a methodological circle but describes "ein ontologisches Strukturmoment des Verstehens".¹¹ In any moment of understanding, what is to be understood is both familiar and strange, it is both partially understood and yet not fully understood. Our understanding of the tradition of which the text is a part stands "between"

11. Ibid., p.277

familiarity and strangeness and, writes Gadamer, "In diesem Zwischen ist der wahre Ort der Hermeneutik".¹²

It is at this locus that Heidegger situates his hermeneutic within a broader existential context.

II Existential Hermeneutics

Heidegger

Towards the end of his life Husserl contested Dilthey's attempt to provide for the humane sciences a method as objective as that of the natural sciences, and he drew attention to a stratum of experience, the Lebenswelt, which was prior to the conscious relationship between a subject and an object. Heidegger had already gone furthest in this direction when he extended this to cover "the primordial relationship between life and meaning".¹³ For Heidegger, the methods of historical criticism do not determine our relation to history - which was Dilthey's position - but presuppose such a relation. This relation is ontological and must be explored by ontology. Being and Time (1927) was Heidegger's unfinished attempt to allow man to rediscover his primordial relationship with Being. Before man takes part in any particular objective activity he already finds himself in the world, a world of personal experience which is bounded by that man's vision and aims. Heidegger wants to make it possible for Being to show itself once more and the point at which the quest for

12. Ibid., p.279

13. P.Mann, 'Signposts through the Hermeneutical Labyrinth' in New Blackfriars, Feb 1972, p.86

Being must begin is at the particular locus where Being can be located; that locus is the 'there' point of Being, Da-Sein, which is the human person himself.¹⁴ By analysing the ontological character of what it is to be human (Daseins-analyse) Heidegger hopes that Being will show itself in the primordial relationship which Dasein has with Das Sein. In Heidegger this interpretation of Dasein's Being, this exposure of the existentiality of what it is to be human, is the primary context for his meaning of 'hermeneutic', and, so far as this hermeneutic works out Dasein's historicity ontologically as the ontical condition for the possibility of historiology, it contains the roots of what can be called 'hermeneutic' only in a derivative sense: the methodology of those humane sciences which are historical in character.¹⁵

So hermeneutics is now the analysis of the existentiality of human existence from which the various procedures of the humane sciences can be derived. Hermeneutics is the process of articulating the relationship with Being within which Dasein finds himself prior to any objective moment of thought.

It is at this point that Heidegger introduces the notion of the circularity of understanding. The circularity exists in the relation between Dasein and Sein - that is, we understand ourselves only in terms of the relation we have with Being, but we understand Being only in so far as we understand how Being discloses itself in our own human

14. M. Heidegger, Being and Time, p.26f.

15. Ibid., p.62

person. Heidegger suggests that to understand ourselves we have to presuppose an understanding of Being which can only be adequately expressed in the light of the way in which we understand ourselves.

Is there not, however, a manifest circularity in such an undertaking [the explication of Dasein's relation to Being]? If we must first define an entity in its Being, and if we want to formulate the question of Being only on this basis, what is this but going in a circle? In working out our question, have we not 'presupposed' something which only the answer can bring?¹⁶

Man is a Being-in-the-world with a relation to Being from the very first moment of thought, and the kind of world that man inhabits will form an horizon for all subsequent thought. Of course, this circle cannot preclude understanding: understanding does take place and so the problem becomes one of how man enters into this circle of understanding in the first place. For Heidegger, what we presuppose is a self-evident concept of Being which is grasped, consciously or not, by everyone, "and which in the end belongs to the essential constitution of Dasein itself."¹⁷ That there is such a self-evident understanding of Being is a conclusion we may well want to question, but Heidegger later makes it clear that it is not only our primordial relationship with Being that constitutes the hermeneutical circle but that all forms of subsequent understanding have this circular structure.

Heidegger marks out three aspects of pre-understanding

16. Ibid., p.27

17. Ibid., p.28

which precede any act of understanding, though the first of these can be called a form of 'understanding' only in a derived sense. The object which is to be understood can only be understood when we have grasped provisionally the totality of involvements which that object has already formed with other persons and objects in the world. This totality of involvements forms a background to the understanding of the object itself, and our provisional grasp of this totality is called by Heidegger a fore-having (Vorhabe). We focus on the object from a particular direction, we approach it in a way which is predetermined, and this is called fore-sight:

When something is understood but still veiled, it becomes unveiled by an act of appropriation, and this is always done under the guidance of a point of view, which fixes that with regard to which what is understood is to be interpreted. In every case interpretation is grounded in something we see in advance - in a fore-sight (Vorsicht).¹⁸

Finally and most importantly, Heidegger thinks that how we conceive of an object is decided in advance by a fore-conception (Vorgriff) of that object. This fore-conception can be modified by subsequent criticism, but at the outset we have a preconception of what the object is like before we can be said to understand it explicitly. Whether this fore-conception will need to be modified will depend on whether the conception can in fact be drawn from the object or whether it is opposed to the object's manner of being. Heidegger goes on:

Whenever something is interpreted as something, the

18. Ibid., p.191

interpretation will be founded essentially upon fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception. An interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us. If, when one is engaged in a particular concrete kind of interpretation, in the sense of exact textual interpretation, one likes to appeal to what 'stands there', then one finds that what 'stands there' in the first instance is nothing other than the obvious undiscussed assumption (Vormeinung) of the person who does the interpreting. In an interpretative approach there lies such an assumption, as that which has been 'taken for granted' ("gesetzt") with the interpretation as such - that is to say, as that which has been presented in our fore-having, our fore-sight and our fore-conception.¹⁹

Heidegger maintains that all understanding and interpretation operate within this fore-structure. Any interpretation which is to mediate understanding must have already understood, in a provisional way at least, what is to be interpreted, and the fact that our provisional pre-understanding can be deepened to constitute a more perfect understanding does not remove the circularity. Heidegger admits that this has always been recognised in derivative ways of understanding and interpretation, such as philology, and we can illustrate this with a quotation from A.E.Housman on the process of discovering the grammatical rules of an ancient language:

The manuscripts are the material upon which we base our rule (of grammar), and then, when we have got our rule, we turn round upon the manuscripts and say that

19. Ibid., p.191f.

the rule, based upon them, convicts them of error. We are thus working in a circle, that is a fact which there is no denying; but, as Lachmann says, the task of the critic is just this, to tread that circle deftly and warily.²⁰

(N.H.Palmer, from whom I derived the above quotation,²¹ thinks that this circle is in fact a spiral, which seems to be a reversion to Schleiermacher's view that the circular structure of understanding disappears in the moment of full understanding, whereas Heidegger insists that the fore-structure of understanding always conditions our interpretations.) Yet if all the historiological sciences achieve their knowledge within the hermeneutical circle, is not their claim to provide objective knowledge vitiated? Scientific proof cannot presuppose what it is our task to provide grounds for. But if interpretation must operate in that which is already understood, how can an historiological science produce scientific results, especially if this pre-understanding concerns our common information about man and the world. We seem to be trapped within a logical circle. If this is so, "historiology must then be resigned to less rigorous possibilities of knowing",

20. A.E.Housman, 'The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism' from Proceedings of the Classical Association, XVIII, 1922, in A.E.Housman: Selected Prose, ed. by J.Carter, p.145.

21. N.H.Palmer, The Logic of Criticism: An Analysis of the Methods of Textual and Documentary Critics, with Special Reference to Epistemological Problems in Biblical Historiography. An unpublished thesis at University of Wales, Cardiff, 1966. This was later published as The Logic of Gospel Criticism, but the quotation from Housman has disappeared.

and historiology can only be "permitted to compensate for this defect to some extent through the 'spiritual significance' of its 'objects'".²²

This scientific challenge to historiological knowledge is based on the view that the presuppositions within the hermeneutical circle take the form of axioms from which various propositions are derived deductively, in the manner of the systems of symbolic logic. Heidegger denies that this is the correct model, and says that if we see the circle as a logical circle "then the act of understanding has been misunderstood from the ground up".²³ The basis of this 'scientific' challenge is a false ideal of knowledge, or at any rate an ideal which is inappropriate for the way in which we exist in the world. It is a mistake to suppose that objects are essentially unknown and must become known in a way which does not presuppose what is to be known. Understanding does take place, and the task of hermeneutics is to recognise the conditions under which interpretation can be carried out:

What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way. This circle of understanding is not an orbit in which any random kind of knowledge may move: it is the expression of the existential fore-structure of Dasein itself. It is not to be reduced to the level of a vicious circle, or even a circle which is merely tolerated.... The 'circle' in understanding belongs to the structure of meaning, and the latter phenomenon is rooted in the existential

22. M.Heidegger, Being and Time, p.194

23. Ibid.

constitution of Dasein - that is, in the understanding which interprets.²⁴

That is to say, to be human is to be a linguistic animal and linguistic meaning is rooted and develops in the world as we experience it - meaningfulness does not stand outside the way we exist in the world. We need not be alarmed that understanding is circular, but we must enter into this circle in the right sort of way, with the right sort of pre-understanding. Heidegger says that we must "leap (springen) into the 'circle', primordially and wholly, so that even at the start of the analysis of Dasein we make sure that we have a full view of Dasein's circular Being."²⁵ Hermeneutics will never want to deny its presuppositions nor simply be content with just admitting that they are there. Hermeneutics must grasp these presuppositions and, together with the analysis for which they are presupposed, bring these presuppositions to a more penetrating elucidation.²⁶ Finally Heidegger says that each specific form of interpretation and the existential analysis of Dasein in particular, if it is to provide an authentic interpretation, must elucidate, clarify and secure in advance the totality of those presuppositions which make up pre-understanding.²⁷

This is how Heidegger talks about the hermeneutical circle in the existential analysis of Being and Time, but Heidegger's philosophy has changed over the years so that

24. Ibid., p.195

25. Ibid., p.363

26. Ibid., p.358

27. Ibid., p.275

his ideas fall into two phases with a transitional period between them. In the 1930's Heidegger became less happy with the immediate intuition and everyday understanding of Being as it shows itself in the human person's world of everyday objects. He began to look for the rarer insights which come with the great historical philosophers and poets, notably Hölderlin and Rilke. Yet he was unable to provide any philosophical criteria for judging the reliability of the 'call of Being' which is heard in these works. Heidegger had to invest these writers' works with an authority akin to that of biblical authority without being able to provide any rationale for such an investiture of authority. So he moved into his last phase where he has become a quasi-prophetic figure through whom suprahuman messages of Being are passed. He claims to hear calls of Being in language itself which has led to some interesting but entirely unreliable etymologies often confined to the peculiarities of the German language.²⁸ And yet the hermeneutical circle is to be found in this later philosophy also as the following quotation, which was written in 1952, shows:

Allein die Frage "Was heißt Denken?" ist nicht voraussetzungslos. Sie ist es so wenig, daß sie gerade auf das, was man hier Voraussetzung nennen möchte, zugeht und darauf sich einläßt.²⁹

Even though the word 'hermeneutic' is no longer used, the

28. This final phase of hearing the calls of Being has been a particular inspiration for the theology of Heinrich Ott. See The Later Heidegger and Theology: New Frontiers Volume 1, ed. by J.M. Robinson and J. Cobb.

29. M. Heidegger, Was Heisst Denken?, p.162

hermeneutical circle forms a connecting link throughout Heidegger's work,³⁰ and it can be claimed that this use of the circularity of understanding will be the abiding value of his work. However, whether the hermeneutical circle as it appears in the later Heidegger allows a genuine disclosure of Being or whether it is the product of the fancifulness of Heidegger's imagination is matter for further criticism. But we can at this point introduce Ricoeur's basic criticisms of Heidegger, criticisms which will be only too willingly supported by those who are involved with biblical exegesis. Quite simply, Ricoeur says that Heidegger's analysis of human existence does not solve the problem of interpreting texts, gives no methodological basis for the historiological sciences, and cannot decide between rival interpretations of texts. There remains a gap between Heidegger's original ontological understanding and historiological interpretation as practised in the humanities.³¹

Bultmann

Bultmann's interest in hermeneutics is not primarily philosophical, but comes from his work as a New Testament exegete, that is an interpreter of historical documents which claim to speak to us in the present about God. His attempt to cope with the problem of hermeneutics is directed by his

30. P.Ricoeur, 'Heidegger et la Question du Sujet' in Le Conflit des Interprétations, p.230

31. 'Existence et Herméneutique' in Le Conflit des Interprétations, p.14

aim of preserving speech about God, and the success of this attempt will depend on the extent to which and the manner in which he is able to speak of God. This means that Bultmann is not ultimately interested in what the text says of itself; he is rather concerned with the nature of reality to which the language of the text is a witness. Paradoxically, as we shall see, the reality behind the text is not what we would normally call 'divine reality' so much as 'human reality'.

Collingwood understood that historical documents only yield information to the extent that the enquirer questions them, and they only yield valid information to the extent that the enquirer asks them the right questions, questions which the document was originally intended to answer.³² Bultmann uses the same insight which he may well have derived from Collingwood:

A comprehension - an interpretation - is...consistently orientated to a particular formulation of a question, a particular 'objective'.³³

If questions are not asked of a text, the text remains dumb. But when texts are approached with some particular objective in mind, some particular point of view, the questioning of the text is:

governed always by a prior understanding of the subject

32. R.G.Collingwood, The Idea of History, pp.269-74, 278-82; Autobiography, chapters 5 and 11.

33. R.K.Bultmann, 'The Problem of Hermeneutics' in Essays Philosophical and Theological, p.239. I have removed a number of italics in quotations from Bultmann's collected articles.

in accordance with which it investigates the text. The formulation of a question, and an interpretation, is possible at all only on the basis of such a prior understanding.³⁴

Of course, a text is capable of offering a variety of interpretations depending on the predetermined purpose of interpretation. The problem is to question the text in a manner which is appropriate to the answers which can be legitimately obtained from the text without doing violence to it. Given the fact that we must not ask questions of a text which it cannot legitimately answer, we still have to demand what is the presupposition which determines the sort of questions we do in fact ask.

Bultmann says that the formulation of a question is based on an interest in the life of the enquirer, and the presupposition of all interpretation is that this interest is also to be found in the text. It is the relationship between the author and interpreter which conditions any understanding of a text. This need not result in a psychological examination of the author and interpreter, but simply in the acceptance that "the presupposition for understanding is the interpreter's relationship in his life to the subject which is directly or indirectly expressed in the text".³⁵ It is precisely this prior relation to the subject under investigation which the enquirer takes with him to the text as a pre-understanding, and this relation to the subject under investigation is a matter of

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., p.241

lived experience for the enquirer. Interpretation always presupposes a living relationship with the subject under review, and the text only speaks to the enquirer in so far as there is such a relation. The example that Bultmann offers at this point is that many passages of Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus are incomprehensible to those readers who do not have an interest in music. This is coupled with Bultmann's assertion that we do not read historical documents primarily as testimonies for what they record but for what they tell us about their time and how reality was understood by the author at that time. So that what is of primary interest is not what is recorded but the recorder, and that in so far as texts are read for the purpose of historiography the primary interest of the text is left out of consideration.³⁶ Bultmann presupposes that the intention of a text ultimately is to communicate an understanding of the human condition, and that our primary interest in reading it should be to elucidate our own understanding of human existence, i.e. we read a text with an existential interest. One commentator on Bultmann has written:

Our putting of a question to the text therefore presupposes a certain interest in the matter of the text, which obviously cannot occur without a certain understanding thereof, which is thus a 'prior-understanding'. This understanding is interested understanding and so is part of the complex of choices and decisions that is our movement through life; it is existentiell.³⁷

Bultmann supposes that the reader can have a relationship with the text because both he and the author share a life

36. Ibid., p.245

37. R.W.Jenson, The Knowledge of Things Hoped For, p.162f.

of comparable choices and decisions. For Bultmann interpretation is existential interpretation. And it is in this existentiality that the hermeneutical circle appears. We question a text so that the text may speak to us, but for that question to be an appropriate one we must already understand that we share with the author of the text an interest in the subject of the text - in order to come to understand the text, we must already understand. The circle of understanding is deepened by Bultmann's use of the idea of 'self-understanding'. We are able to understand a text to the extent that we share a common self-understanding with the author; the text will speak to us to the extent that it provides answers to the questions which are raised by the problems of our self-understanding. But to ask these questions of the text is to presuppose that the text will answer them and that the author does share our self-understanding. M.F.Schröder uses the image of a strait-jacket to picture our relationship with the text, in which we are the strait-jacket where the relationship we have with the text is one of our own choosing.³⁸

It may legitimately be argued that Bultmann does

38. M.F.Schröder, Rudolf Bultmanns Hermeneutik und ihr Apologetisches Interesse, a dissertation presented at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg in 1963: "Es soll mit dem Vorverständnis also nicht darumgehen, daß das Verstehen und das zu Verstehende in ein Korsett gezwängt werden, das man sich nach dem eigenen Belieben wählt, sondern es geht darum, deutlich zu machen, daß und auf welche Weise wir selbst das 'Korsett' sind."(p.8)

violence to history in his insistence that historical documents are to be interpreted in their relevance to the present. And Bultmann does have a special concept of 'history' which has a crucial role to play in his interpretation of the New Testament, an examination of which must be delayed until the next chapter. Yet Bultmann thinks that existential interpretation is the only genuine historical use of history as it alone circumscribes the essence of man's historical nature. Man's historical existence is present existence and his movement into the future calls for decisions based on his present self-understanding. The purpose of existential interpretation is to clarify self-understanding for the sake of these decisions for the future. But of what value, it may be asked, are decisions which are formed on the basis of an understanding which is, in the first instance, presupposed by the one who makes the decision? Bultmann insists that we do not approach a text with a dogmatic or practical purpose in mind,³⁹ nor can we presuppose the results of our enquiry.⁴⁰ The presupposition which we take to the text is our self-understanding, but it always takes the form of a question, a question which we take to the text. What is brought to the text is the self-questioning character of human existence. Bultmann brings an a priori existential analysis to bear on the text by supposing that the text is primarily concerned with human self-questioning, and when he comes to the New Testament he seeks to carry out "the inquiry into the understanding of human existence

39. R.K.Bultmann, 'The Problem of Hermeneutics' in Essays Philosophical and Theological, p.239 n.2

40. Ibid., p.255

which finds expression in the Scriptures."⁴¹ When man questions a text about God he must presuppose what is meant by 'God' - but only in the form of a question:

Is he acquainted with God because he has a concept of God? Not in the least. In it he has only reached the stage of an inquiry about God; and the knowledge contained in this inquiry is fundamentally none other than man's knowledge of himself; a knowledge about what he has not and is not, and yet of what he would like to have and to be....⁴²

In such an existential hermeneutic, to ask about God is an indirect way of asking about oneself, about the inadequacies of one's own existence. The enquiry about God is initiated by general questions which arise from the (partial) absence of meaning in our life, which may take "the form of the inquiry about 'happiness', 'salvation', the meaning of the world and history; and the inquiry into the real nature of each person's particular 'being'."⁴³

This latter remark suggests that Bultmann thinks that any sufficiently broad existential-philosophical enquiry is an oblique raising of the God-question, and this may lead us to wonder whether Bultmann is prepared to give a traditional meaning to 'God'. Especially as Bultmann's hermeneutic further suggests that the New Testament speaks about God to the extent that it answers our questions about 'happiness', 'salvation', and generally how to achieve authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) of being. We may

41. Ibid., p.258

42. 'The Question of Natural Revelation' in Essays Philosophical and Theological, p.94

43. 'The Problem of Hermeneutics', ibid., p.257

wonder whether Heidegger's Being and Time would provide for Bultmann a sufficient account of what constitutes 'authenticity'. It may be, however, that Bultmann wants to insist that only the New Testament can adequately lead one to authenticity, but Bultmann could only do this by presupposing that scripture is the authoritative Word of God. Bultmann does just this, but the legitimacy of this claim to authority itself requires justification and Bultmann has consistently refused to provide this. The point to be remembered here in our examination of the hermeneutical circle, is that in Bultmann all enquiry is initiated by a self-understanding, and the circularity of understanding is constituted by the self-understanding of the author and of the interpreter.

I originally suggested that the success of Bultmann's hermeneutic would depend on the extent to which and the manner in which Bultmann was able to speak of God. Both Heinrich Ott⁴⁴ and Schubert Ogden have pointed out that the result of Bultmann's existential analysis is that he "cannot speak of God directly, but only indirectly by speaking of man and his possibilities of existential self-understanding."⁴⁵ This criticism seems to be perfectly

44. H.Ott, 'Objectification and Existentialism' in Kerygma and Myth, ed. by H.W.Bartsch, vol.2, p.320ff.; and Geschichte und Heilsgeschichte in der Theologie Rudolf Bultmanns, pp.194-203.

45. S.Ogden, 'The Understanding of Theology in Ott and Bultmann' in The Later Heidegger and Theology, ed. by J.M.Robinson and J.Cobb, p.158.

justified. But Bultmann has been challenged on other grounds. Wolfhart Pannenberg has pointed out that in ignoring the direct content and intention of scripture (intentio recta) which speaks about God and the world, in favour of the indirect intention (intentio obliqua) of scripture, that is scripture as an expression of the author's self-understanding, Bultmann is interpreting scripture anthropocentrically and existentially in a way which would have been quite foreign to any of the New Testament authors.⁴⁶ Is such an interpretation an accurate reflection of the author's self-understanding? Could the author have understood himself without reference to God and the world?

Ricoeur has offered criticism on a similar level. He has alleged that:

D'abord son travail comme exégète du Nouveau Testament ne trouve pas dans sa philosophie une base adéquate.⁴⁷

Ricoeur agrees that a text can only be understood in a comprehensive relationship with an interpreter, but when Bultmann suggests that we move straight to the self-understanding of the author to provide an answer for our own need to take decisions in the present and for the future, Ricoeur accuses Bultmann of having omitted a linguistic and semantic reflection on the text which will allow one to grasp the actual sense of the text:

Une théorie de l'interprétation qui court d'emblée au

46. W.Pannenberg, 'Hermeneutic and Universal History' in Basic Questions in Theology, Vol.1, p.110.

47. P.Ricoeur, 'Préface à Bultmann' in Le Conflit des Interprétations, p.388

moment de la décision va trop vite; elle saute le moment du sens, qui est l'étape objective, dans l'acceptation non mondaine du mot. Pas d'exégèse sans une 'teneur du sens' qui tient au texte, non à l'auteur du texte.⁴⁸

It is this too rapid movement in Bultmann which Ricoeur tries to overcome in his reflective hermeneutic. But it is Gadamer who finally knocks away all support from Bultmann. The problem for Gadamer is whether the primary self-understanding in Bultmann is, as it were, of a neutral value which could be accepted by anyone. Gadamer denies that this is so; he says that Bultmann's pre-understanding is a peculiarly Christian pre-understanding which would not be shared by, for example, a Jew who would refuse to identify himself with the pre-understanding of the New Testament authors. At one further remove the Marxist,

wird doch gewiß die Voraussetzung nicht akzeptieren, daß das menschliche Dasein als solche von der Gottesfrage bewegt ist. Eine solche Voraussetzung gilt offenbar nur für den, der darin die Alternative von Glauben oder Unglauben gegenüber dem wahren Gott schon anerkennt. So scheint mir der hermeneutische Sinn des theologischen Vorverständnisses selber ein theologischer zu sein.... Die moderne Hermeneutik als protestantische Disziplin ist offenkundig als Kunst der Schriftauslegung auf die dogmatische Tradition der katholischen Kirche und ihre Lehre von der Werkgerichtigkeit polemisch bezogen. Sie hat selber einen dogmatisch-konfessionellen Sinn.⁴⁹

Gadamer's last remark, interesting as it is, cannot be accepted because not all theological hermeneutic need be identified with Bultmann's existential hermeneutic, but it

48. Ibid., p.389

49. H-G.Gadamer, Wahrheit und Methode, p.315

does show that Bultmann has failed to use the hermeneutical circle to provide an adequate basis for the interpretation of the New Testament. Bultmann's hermeneutic, as Ricoeur has said, moves too quickly and assumes too much.

III Reflective Hermeneutics

Ricoeur

The task Ricoeur has set himself is to graft - more successfully than Heidegger - the problem of hermeneutics onto phenomenology. That is to say, Ricoeur wants to produce a general hermeneutic of comprehension, a hermeneutic which will form a matrix for all varieties of interpretation, but to do this he has taken into account the multiplicity of methods used in particular projects of interpretation. He says that we must remember that the hermeneutical problem was posed in the first place as an expression of the limits and difficulties of exegesis. Exegesis is a discipline for understanding a text, its intention, what it wants to say, and so is directed to the objective meaning of the text. Within the multifold activities of exegesis Ricoeur is aware of a plurality of methodologies, so that, for example, Rabbinic commentaries on the Torah are carried out on a different basis from Christian exegesis of the Old and New Testaments, which is in turn quite different from, say, Stoic use of ancient Greek myths.⁵⁰ In addition there is a plurality of possible interpretations of any

50. P.Ricoeur, 'Existence et Herméneutique' in Le Conflit des Interprétations, p.7

single text or of a passage within a text - witness the various views expressed in New Testament commentaries. Ricoeur wants to draw hermeneutics back to this actuality of exegesis, to the actual understanding which takes place in the various humane sciences. This is also what Gadamer has tried to do in what he calls "ontological hermeneutics", where he wants to avoid deciding in advance what authentic understanding can take place, but rather to observe what understanding actually does take place. Only within that context is he prepared to develop criteria for the verification and falsification of interpretations.

Ricoeur believes that there are two possible methods of grafting hermeneutics onto phenomenology. There is, first, Heidegger's method which he calls "la voie courte".⁵¹ Heidegger's "ontologie de la compréhension" is not concerned with methods, but wants to carry out an ontology of what it is to be human by looking at the act of understanding, not as understanding, but as a way of 'being'. It is not a method which moves gradually, by degrees, by deepening the contingent methods of exegesis; it moves straightway to the question: What kind of being has the being which consists in understanding? And so the Daseinsanalyse takes no account of what is actually understood. Ricoeur does not repudiate Heidegger's aim of providing an ontology of comprehension, but he thinks that the content of such an ontology can only be supplied by a semantic analysis of texts and by reflection on the significance which the

51. Ibid., p.10

objective meaning of the text has for personal self-understanding. Only such a detour can allow a satisfactory self-understanding within the plurality of all possible forms of human understanding. Ricoeur proposes a second method, "la voie longue", which is "un chemin plus détourné et plus laborieux, amercé par des considérations linguistiques et sémantiques."⁵²

Ricoeur realises that interpretation always takes place in language which is why he takes account of the semantics of understanding in a philosophy of language, a task which tries to satisfy Ricoeur's criticisms of Heidegger which have already been remarked upon (see p.25). There is indeed a philosophy of language in the later Heidegger, but this does not answer Ricoeur's critique, as the function of language in that philosophy is always "global, undifferentiated and 'mystical'",⁵³ Each text and each symbol (for Ricoeur is frequently interested in symbols: dreams, works of art, sacred symbols, etc.) has various layers of meaning; there is an outer layer, as it were, which allows immediate understanding and which in turn veils deeper hidden layers of meaning. Ricoeur locates his analysis of language in the semantic of the revealed-hidden duality, in the semantic of multiple meaning, and it is this which he thinks will provide an axis of reference for the whole of the hermeneutical field. All symbols have hidden meanings and the task of interpretation

52. Ibid.

53. P.Mann, Op. cit., p.87

is to reveal systematically this hidden meaning, in a process of understanding and interpretation which is always linguistic in character.

Ricoeur proposes that hermeneutics should first give an enumeration of types of symbol and then a criteriology for dealing with the truth value of each type. We cannot, however, here follow Ricoeur in his sketch for a general hermeneutic, important and interesting as that may be, for we must not lose sight of the particular type of interpretation which deals with scripture. On Ricoeur's basis, then, a semantic of biblical language will lead us to the objective meaning of the language of scripture. The significance of the text will, however, only be appropriated in the further process of reflection. Ricoeur's problem at this point is how to connect the understanding of signs with an introspective understanding of the self. Yet the self only understands itself when it understands something outside itself, namely "documents de la vie", and reflection is the link between the two. Reflection is a process of critical meditation and contemplation in which our understanding of texts illuminates our understanding of ourselves, and vice versa. So we are still in the hermeneutical circle. Self-understanding is not immediate as it is in Heidegger and Bultmann but comes indirectly in a double fashion:

Ainsi, la réflexion doit être doublement indirecte, d'abord parce que l'existence ne s'atteste que dans les documents de la vie, mais aussi parce que la conscience est d'abord conscience fautive et qu'il faut toujours s'élever par une critique corrective de la mécompréhension

à la compréhension.⁵⁴

Each particular hermeneutic focuses itself on a particular aspect of existence which forms the basis for its method, and yet the interest in this aspect of existence is always that of a, provisionally at least, interpreted being. The being which develops a hermeneutic of the Bible is a being which interprets itself as being dependent on, shall we say, the 'religious'. The use of the methodology of biblical hermeneutics does not allow us to be without presuppositions as there must always be a point of departure which is "interpreted being". Ricoeur says that:

The illusion [of understanding] is not in looking for a point of departure, but in looking for it without presuppositions. There is no philosophy without presuppositions.⁵⁵

The "living and stimulating circle" in which all understanding takes place is stated as follows: "We must understand in order to believe, but we must believe in order to understand".⁵⁶ Hermeneutics proceeds from a prior understanding of what is to be understood in interpretation:

But thanks to that circle in hermeneutics, I can still today communicate with the sacred by making explicit the prior understanding that gives life to the interpretation.⁵⁷

What is required in the first instance is that we believe

54. P.Ricoeur, 'Existence et Herméneutique' in Le Conflit des Interprétations, p.22

55. The Symbolism of Evil, p.348

56. Ibid., p.351

57. Ibid., p.352

what the text has to say, for only then do we have sufficient affinity with the text for understanding to take place. Ricoeur says that the procedure is Anselmian in character, one of faith seeking understanding, so that a dialectic of belief and reflection leads to understanding.⁵⁸ But the problem of the validity of the initial act of faith remains, the problem of how to enter the circle. Ricoeur speaks in terms reminiscent of Pascal and Kierkegaard of a wager: I gamble that my initial movement of understanding will lead to intelligibility;

I wager that I shall have a better understanding of man and of the bond between the being of man and the being of all beings if I follow the indication of symbolic thought. That wager then becomes the task of verifying my wager and saturating it, so to speak, with intelligibility. In return, the task transforms my wager: in betting on the significance of the symbolic world, I bet at the same time that my wager will be restored to me in power of reflection, in the element of coherent discourse.⁵⁹

Ricoeur presents the hermeneutical circle as a simple reciprocal interaction between faith and understanding. This seems to require modification, however, because there must be a difference between the initial act of faith and the ultimate act of faith which is informed by understanding, just as there is a difference between our initial, superficial and provisional understanding and our final deepened understanding. Ricoeur himself seems to have some residual awareness of this difference when he writes in his work on

58. Freud and Philosophy, p.525

59. The Symbolism of Evil, p.355

Freud: "to believe is to listen to the call, but to hear the call we must interpret the message."⁶⁰ To listen to a call is not the same thing as to commit oneself to the veracity of the message one hears. So in biblical exegesis we need not presuppose the truth of the message we hear in the text; we must listen sympathetically, prepared to believe that it may be true, so that our criticism of the objective meaning of the text, and the text's criticism of our provisional self-understanding, in the prolonged process of reflection, may lead us to a personal commitment to what we hear in the text, i.e. we may be brought to religious faith. It would seem then that the hermeneutical circle does not involve a simple round-and-round movement, but contains a shift of movement within the circle. This does not bring the dissolution of the fundamentally circular structure of understanding, but it does widen the circumference of the circle, so to say, as the area of understanding is increased. The circle begins with an act of submission which is a sympathetic and trusting hearing of the message. This submission leads to a provisional understanding, which may lead in turn to some personal commitment to the message if the message is true and merits commitment. This commitment of faith should lead by further reflection to a more penetrating understanding, and this in turn to a more transparent and firm faith. This again may lead to something approaching full understanding. Clearly this circle has many gradations and, as Ricoeur has pointed out, it is a long and arduous

60. Freud and Philosophy, p.525

business requiring many readings and much reflection. Another point of crucial importance is that the circle does not spiral out of existence. Our understanding is always limited in some respect; there will always be an element of strangeness between the self and the text.

In order to prevent Ricoeur's faith degenerating into fideism (and in view of Ricoeur's admiration for Bultmann it is by no means clear that this would not happen) it must be possible to withdraw one's belief in the text's veracity should the truth of its content at any stage be seen to be unjustifiable. One's original faith in the text must be provisional, and only later after a provisional understanding has been achieved does this faith become justifiable faith or, alternatively, only then does it cease to be faith at all. We must differentiate in the first place between faith as existential commitment and faith as empathy with, and receptivity and submission to, the critical potentiality of the text. On the whole Ricoeur would seem to imply the second of these.

Even after our modification of Ricoeur's model of the hermeneutical circle two difficulties remain. First, his insistence on the objectivity of the semantics of biblical language. We can agree that language is objective to the extent that words have specific determinable meanings in so far as they are used in particular linguistic contexts. That is to say, the meaning of a word is not arbitrary. But neither can the range of a word's meaning be narrowed artificially. The meaning of a word is like a field with

imprecise boundaries.⁶¹ So we must oppose the view of the total objectivity of language in so far as a word's meaning has been abstracted from social use. Ricoeur, however, would presumably not accept this narrow sense of 'objective' in view of his use of the idea of 'reflection'. The second difficulty is that the faith of Ricoeur's circle is in reality the faith of a believing subject. It is the faith of an individual with a personal and social history and with a predetermined understanding of the world. So while the polarities of faith and understanding in Ricoeur's circle may form one valid model for the hermeneutical circle, we still require a second model. We require a circle with the polarities pre-understanding - understanding, for the task of understanding is to integrate the meaning of the text into an individual's predetermined understanding of reality. To the extent that there is not immediate agreement between these, the one criticizes and questions the other.

Having outlined the structural dynamics of the understanding of texts, we must now specify the content of pre-understanding in so far as it concerns the interpretation of the New Testament. Pre-understanding here refers to a whole conceptual world which the exegete brings, of necessity, to the text. This conceptual world is a personal world, determined by the exegete's own experience and the culture to which he belongs. He reads the text as a member of the second half of the twentieth century, and as a Scottish Presbyterian or a German Catholic or whatever. But to say

61. L. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, I.71, 76, 77.

this does not take us very far. Gadamer and Pannenberg mean something like this when they speak of the necessity of the 'horizon' of the understanding of the reader merging with the 'horizon' of the text.⁶² This is true enough; there must indeed be common ground for understanding to take place. But if hermeneutical discussion of the problem of pre-understanding is to have practical relevance for New Testament exegesis, if it is to cease being a non-historical abstraction, we must analyse and specify precisely what it is that constitutes pre-understanding and the role it plays in the interpretation of the New Testament. In order to fill this exegetical vacuum I want to suggest (and in the second part of the thesis, to justify) that pre-understanding consists of a series of concepts; the meaning of each of these concepts is ambivalent, i.e. they can be understood in a variety of ways; the text cannot be understood without reference to these concepts; and how the reader understands these concepts will affect the way he understands the text. The concepts which make up pre-understanding in New Testament work include, amongst the more important, 'history', 'revelation', 'resurrection', 'eschatology' and 'miracle'. These concepts together form an intricate conceptual matrix and it is quite impossible to understand the New Testament as a whole without first having some understanding of these concepts. But it is the specific understanding of these concepts

62. H-G.Gadamer, Wahrheit und Methode, pp.286-90; and W.Pannenberg, 'Hermeneutic and Universal History' in Basic Questions in Theology, vol 1, pp.117-20.

adopted by the exegete which needs to be brought into question.

There is a second set of concepts in addition to those mentioned above, which forms a further layer of pre-understanding. The distinction between these two sets of concepts is rather artificial, but while the concepts of the first set give rise to considerable dispute among Christian theologians, the concepts of the second set are more general (and in one sense more fundamental) and are more likely to be a matter of dispute between Christian and non-Christian exegetes. Even so, they are disputed often enough by Christian theologians. This second series of concepts would include 'knowledge' (a presupposed epistemology), 'man' (a presupposed anthropology), 'God', 'world', 'spirit',⁶³ and possibly some others. It can reasonably be claimed that other hermeneutically based sciences which are concerned with the problem of interpreting texts, such as historical criticism, literary criticism or jurisprudence, will be controlled by their own form of pre-understanding. This would be similar to the pre-understanding which operates in New Testament exegesis, but would be made up of a different range of concepts - students of jurisprudence, for example, are unlikely to be interested in 'revelation' and 'eschatology'.

Pre-understanding is like a permutation of filters

63. Observe, for example, the way in which nineteenth century German theologians used Geist to interpret

πνεῦμα.

through which the light of the text of the New Testament must pass to reach us. The point is, however, that each individual filter and the permutation of multiple filters is of our own choosing. The concepts of pre-understanding can be analysed, criticised and changed if necessary. For this reason we should have some idea of the range of possible understandings of these concepts. This we shall try to fulfil to some extent in the following chapter.

EXCURSUS APRESUPPOSITIONS IN HISTORIOGRAPHY

The hermeneutical circle is not only to be found in the historiological sciences. E.H.Carr quotes the following passage from a standard book on scientific method to show that the natural sciences too are "essentially circular":

We obtain evidence for principles by appealing to empirical material, to what is alleged to be 'fact'; and we select, analyse and interpret empirical material on the basis of principles.⁶⁴

Carr quotes this sentence to show that historians, like scientists, do not deal with raw data when they write history and, because historiography occupies a central place among the historiological sciences, it may be useful to note some of the culturally determined presuppositions which have been at work in the writing of history.

It has by no means always been accepted, nor is it still always accepted, that history cannot be performed without any prior decisions about the nature of history, about man as an historical being, about society and the role of the individual within it, about politics, and so

64. M.R.Cohen and E.Nagel, Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method, p.596, quoted in E.H.Carr, What is History?, p.59.

forth. As a reaction against the moralizing histories which had been written in the eighteenth century, Ranke established the objective approach to history known subsequently as 'historicism', in which historians were to preclude any axiology and where they were only to collate the facts of past history. History dealt with the past 'wie es eigentlich gewesen'. Acton held a similar view at the beginning of this century:

Ultimate history we cannot have in this generation; but we can dispose of conventional history, and show the point we have reached on the road from one to the other, now that all information is within reach, and every problem has become capable of solution.⁶⁵

Mr Gradgrind in Hard Times said that, "Facts alone are wanted in life", and Acton wanted to serve them up plain in history books. But while nineteenth century historians in general, and Ranke in particular, wanted to document history as it really happened there is in fact no single major historian who did not approach history without a number of crucial presuppositions which structured the whole of his historiography. Ranke himself had the grossest and, for the present-day mind, the most unpalatable presuppositions. He thought that politics alone constituted true history because politics alone were dramatic. And within politics there seemed to be a mysterious balance which held the aggression of opposing forces in check. Pieter Geyl goes so far as to say that

65. The Cambridge Modern History: Its Origin, Authorship and Production (1907), p.10, quoted in E.H.Carr, op. cit., p.7.

Ranke was quite naive to believe, as he did, in the salutary nature of the struggle between opposing imperialist powers, in the good intentions of the Prussian government, and that the Prussian citizen could best preserve this equilibrium of power by submitting himself in obedience to his government.⁶⁶ Ranke also saw history as a scenario for God and his actions, and his decision to withhold value judgments allowed despicable acts to go uncondemned; he had, for example, no strictures to pass over Philip of Hesse's bigamy.

For most of the nineteenth century the charting of facts was a record of 'progress'. "The history of England", wrote one such historian, "is emphatically the history of progress." The same author on the same subject goes on:

The greatest and most highly civilized people that ever the world saw...which have spread their dominion over every quarter of the globe...which have carried the science of healing, the means of locomotion and correspondence, every mechanical art, every manufacture, everything that promotes the convenience of life, to a perfection which our ancestors would have thought magical; have produced a literature which may boast of works not inferior to the works which Greece has bequeathed to us; have discovered the laws which regulate the motions of the heavenly bodies, have speculated with exquisite subtlety on the operations of the human mind, have been the acknowledged leaders of the human race in the career of political improvement.

That was Macaulay.⁶⁷ And yet he was quite unaware that he was

66. P.Geyl, Debates with Historians, p.14f.

67. Quoted in P.Geyl, ibid., p.37.

not viewing history as it actually happened. Geyl says that his is a view of history which makes one shudder as the enormities of nineteenth century imperialism are glossed over in the name of liberty and progress.

In the twentieth century Toynbee has charted the movement of civilizations in a cyclical manner because of a present historical trend which he considers to be the decline of western civilization. It is only recently that E.H.Carr has been able to point out that historiography is a matter of the "selection and arrangement of appropriate facts." The selection and arrangement is based on a preconception of what constitutes history and the historian's task. He continues:

The historian is necessarily selective. The belief in a hard core of historical facts existing objectively and independently of the historian is a preposterous fallacy, but one which it is very hard to eradicate.⁶⁸

We may well wonder, if the historian must interpret his facts, and if historians have produced results like those of Ranke, Macaulay and the rest, whether the interpretative faculty should not be reduced in influence as much as possible. Certainly the presuppositions which Macaulay brought to history were of the crudest sort and can only be called prejudices. And yet the task of hermeneutics, as I have pointed out, is to expose these interpretative presuppositions and subject them to criticism. Carr says that "the historian is engaged on a continuous process of moulding his facts to his interpretation and his

68. E.H.Carr, What is History?, p.12

interpretation to his facts,"⁶⁹ The one does not have primacy over the other.

It is obvious enough that if the historian can only do his job on the basis of presuppositions about history and society, then the theologian and exegete will find that his own work is based on similar preconceptions in his own field. But there is one further corollary of what Carr has said. Carr has made it clear that the material the historian deals with and the books he eventually writes are always an amalgam of fact and interpretation. It follows that New Testament documents are likely to be the same. Because the primary purpose of the evangelists was to write kerygma and not historiography, we must not therefore assume that the Gospels have no historical value. They contain both fact and interpretation, both history and kerygma, though the Gospels are likely to include more interpretation and less factual information than more conventional historical documents.

69. Ibid., p.29

E X C U R S U S B

PRE-UNDERSTANDING AND THE THEOLOGIANS:

TILLICH, BULTMANN AND CULLMANN

The hermeneutical circle has not been taken up and used to any large extent in dogmatic theology, and the idea of 'pre-understanding' has been discussed, it would seem, by only three theologians of the front rank: Tillich, Bultmann and Cullmann.

Paul Tillich

Tillich has not actually used the word 'pre-understanding' but he has spoken of a "mystical a priori" in "the theological circle", which would seem to come to the same thing.⁷⁰ His starting point is that all attempts at an empirical-inductive or a metaphysical-deductive 'scientific' theology have failed.

In every assumedly scientific theology there is a point where individual experience, traditional valuation and personal commitment must decide the issue.⁷¹

No matter where a theology begins, "an a priori of experience and valuation is implied". Such an a priori is an expression of ultimate concern and this is a metaphysical and religious ultimate. He says that such an a priori

70. P.Tillich, Systematic Theology, vol.1, pp.11-14

71. Ibid., p.11

is "a type of mystical experience", and includes 'being-itself', 'universal substance', 'absolute spirit', and so on. Tillich goes on:

And if in the course of a 'scientific' procedure this a priori is discovered, its discovery is possible only because it was present from the very beginning. This is the circle which no philosopher can escape. And it is by no means a vicious one. Every understanding of spiritual things (Geisteswissenschaft) is circular.⁷²

Tillich then says that the circle for the theologian is narrower because he adds to the mystical a priori the criterion of the Christian message: "He enters the theological circle with a concrete commitment." One enters this circle, then, with an existential decision for faith. Tillich's circle resembles Ricoeur's where the foci are faith and understanding: theological understanding comes only as the result of faith. It follows, then, that theological understanding is simply not possible outside a hermeneutical circle which does not include faith. We can always insist that the unbeliever does not understand, because of the structure of the theological circle. For our purposes we may also notice that the circle is not brought to bear on the interpretation of texts, and does not solve the problem of why Christian, i.e. believing, exegetes differ amongst themselves in their understanding of texts.

Rudolf Bultmann

Bultmann has focussed the idea of pre-understanding onto the interpretation of texts, but the background

72. Ibid., p.12

for his exposition is always, as with Tillich, existential. His basic problem is to clarify the existential nature of faith, so in fact Bultmann is not concerned with why theologians differ in their interpretation of scripture. For example, Bultmann says that in order to understand a text one must have a prior understanding of the subjects discussed, so that if the text speaks of life and death⁷³ or of sin and forgiveness⁷⁴ the reader must first understand the meaning of life and death, sin and forgiveness. But the use of 'meaning' here is not the ordinary use, for it means something like 'existential significance for my own life'. The pre-understanding which we bring to the text is a living experience of the subject matter of the text; we have a prior interest in the text which arises from our life-experience and from our pre-knowledge of the content of the text.⁷⁵ Bultmann makes it clear that pre-understanding does not presuppose the results of an interpretation, though the appropriate methodology - the historical-critical method - is presupposed.⁷⁶ Our life-relation to the text instigates an investigation which manifests itself in a series of questions which are put to the text.⁷⁷

73. R.K.Bultmann, 'The Significance of Dialectical Theology' in Faith and Understanding, p.156

74. 'Church and Teaching in the New Testament' in ibid., p.192

75. 'The Problem of Hermeneutics' in Essays Philosophical and Theological, p.240ff.

76. 'Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible?' in Existence and Faith, p.342ff.

77. 'The Problem of Hermeneutics' in Essays Philosophical and Theological, pp.241-2 & 252.

Pre-understanding, then, for Bultmann, is a series of indeterminate questions related to our self-understanding which are put to the text in the hope of finding a satisfactory answer there. And Bultmann further presupposes that the New Testament is the only document that can provide satisfactory answers for questions of self-understanding. The presupposition for these questions being answered by the text is that the interpreter should share across the centuries a common self-understanding with the author, and it is here that Bultmann comes close to Dilthey's description of understanding as a "communion of souls". Again we find that while this may or may not be suitable as an existential analysis of faith it is not directly related to the problem of interpreting texts and solving disputes of understanding. This is because Bultmann has failed to give pre-understanding any specific content which can be related to texts.

Oscar Cullmann

Cullmann has given a thoroughly negative account of pre-understanding.⁷⁸ He has criticized Bultmann's supposition that one can only understand the text of the New Testament after one has committed oneself in faith. Cullmann wants to distinguish two phases: "a simple listening to the content of the proclamation, and then the encounter of faith, that is, the existential decision."⁷⁹ But the consequence of this is that Cullmann

78. O.Cullmann, Salvation in History, pp.64-74

79. Ibid., p.66

proposes "a simple listening" to the content of the text in which we must strive for pure objectivity. That we do bring presuppositions to the text may be unavoidable but it is nonetheless regrettable. We must aim to reduce them to a minimum:

The fact that complete absence of presuppositions is impossible must not excuse us from striving for objectivity altogether, going so far as to regard such striving primarily as an outmoded standpoint, and making a necessary fact into a virtue.⁸⁰

Cullmann suggests that the instrument by which objectivity will be attained and subjective eisegesis avoided is the philological, historical-critical method.⁸¹ The suggestion is that a rigorous use of this methodology and a careful 'listening' to the text will preclude major exegetical disagreements. But such a hope is illusory. To all intents and purposes all modern exegetes do adopt the philological, historical-critical method and yet there is no unanimity of understanding. Cullmann has avoided the basic problem with a pious hope.

80. Ibid., p.67

81. Ibid., p.73

CHAPTER TWO

CHAPTER TWOHERMENEUTIC CONCEPTS AND DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the various possible ways in which the philosophical and theological concepts can be understood which run through dogmatic theology and which form a framework for and control exegesis. I do not propose to follow the tedious path of plotting the many logically possible ways in which these concepts can be understood, but will adopt the more relevant and interesting method of looking at the actual ways in which they have been understood by a number of particularly important dogmatic - or systematic - theologians of this century. Obviously it will not be possible to look in great detail at how these concepts have been understood, nor, for my purposes, would it be particularly important to do so. Ultimately my purpose will be to reveal the preconceptions which T.W.Manson and R.H.Lightfoot brought to their exegesis by examining the relationship between their understanding of these concepts and the various alternatives proposed by these dogmatic theologians. So a relatively brief discussion of each of these dogmatic theologians will suffice. An examination of the variety of ways in which these apparently straightforward concepts can be understood will further help to entrench the argument put forward at the close of the first chapter that an exegete must consciously choose, or at least unconsciously accept, a particular understanding of these concepts,

and so, by implication, reject a number of other possibilities. Seeing these hermeneutical fore-concepts in action among dogmatic theologians may help the reader to see that an exegete must have such a prior understanding, for this is a form of demonstration which is not open to rigorous proof - it is something which must be seen by intuition.¹

Harnack

That concept which outweighs all others, that concept which forms the basis of any pre-understanding in theology, the correct understanding of which is a sine qua non for authentic exegesis, is the concept of 'history'. The importance of history comes to the fore with the first of our dogmatic theologians, Adolf von Harnack, because he was the last major exponent of a nineteenth century Protestant theology which identified theology with history, where 'history' is synonymous with the historical-critical method as a strictly scientific procedure. The complexity of our understanding of the concept 'history' is indicated to some extent by the fact that the German language has two words for 'history'. This distinction was first established

1. Without, it would seem, having the specific intention of demonstrating it, Ludwig Wittgenstein at several points in his Philosophical Investigations shows that understanding comes often at a moment of intuition, at a point where we can say, "Now I see it." See for example PI I.151. Indeed the whole of that posthumously published work puts this into practice by offering no proofs and by inviting the reader to think out problems with the author.

by Martin Kähler in 1892 when he published Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche, biblische Christus where Historie is taken to refer to the objective pastness of history which is open to the scrutiny of historians through texts (and by derivation it can also refer to critical historical research), and where Geschichte refers to history in its existential significance, in the way the past affects our existence in the present and as it creates our future. History can be understood in either manner, or as an integrated concept of the two, or by placing some special stress on either dimension of history. In Being and Time, Heidegger offers four quite distinct meanings for 'history', and clearly any number of subtle variations is possible.²

Harnack came at the end of a long tradition stretching back to Semler in the eighteenth century, a tradition which saw history as a scientific procedure for establishing what happened in the past in its objective reality, in so far as the past can still be reached. This is the tradition of historicism, the tradition which included Ranke with his slogan "wie es eigentlich gewesen", and Ritschl the teacher of Harnack. In this tradition history was robbed of any existential significance, and was reduced to historiography (Historie). After the onslaught of the Enlightenment which discredited any 'knowledge' which had not been established after the manner of the natural sciences, history had to pose as a strict science in order to maintain

2. M.Heidegger, Being and Time, p.429ff.

any academic respectability. This is best shown by two quotations from Ernst Troeltsch:

The sole task of history in its specifically theoretical aspect is to explain every movement, process, state and nexus of things by reference to the web of its causal relations. That is, in a word, the whole function of purely scientific investigation.³

Historical knowledge selects its materials as it may require...and seeks, by means of the individual causality proper to history, to make it as intelligible as if it were part of our own experience.⁴

From this view of history as a strictly scientific procedure for establishing the reality of the past, there emerges a presupposition of enormous proportions for New Testament exegesis which is common to all forms of liberal Christianity; it is a presupposition which, as we shall see, emerges even in Bultmann's theology. It follows for someone of Harnack's persuasion that if history has a scientific methodology then any event which cannot be understood in terms of natural science, any event which cannot be incorporated into a law of nature, any event for which there is no analogy in experience,⁵ cannot by definition be an event which has happened in history and so cannot be verified by the methods of critical history. Harnack drew the logical conclusion from this by excluding the concepts of 'revelation',

3. E.Troeltsch, 'Historiography' in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. by James Hastings, Vol 6, p.718b.

4. Ibid., p.720a.

5. That Troeltsch held this view is clear from 'Historische und Dogmatische Methode' in Gesammelte Schriften, II, p.732.

'miracle' and 'resurrection' from history, and so from theology, because they were all unscientific concepts.

Of revelation, Harnack said:

Revelation is not a scientific concept; science can neither draw together under one generic concept nor explain in terms of 'revelation' the God-consciousness of the paradoxical preaching of founders of religion and prophets (and religious experience in general).⁶

It is small wonder that Harnack thought that Barth's concept of revelation "stays under the cover of a heavy fog".⁷

Harnack thought that history gives "not the least cause for the assumption that Jesus did not continue in the grave",⁸ but in fact he had disposed of the possibility of the resurrection in advance because such a concept is 'unscientific' and outside the laws of nature. In the same way Harnack could make no sense of eschatology, neither in the New Testament nor in dogmatic theology. In fact Torrance goes so far as to say that Harnack detested anything in religion which was corporeal.⁹

Such a one-sided view of history is not only open to

6. Harnack's final letter to Karl Barth from their correspondence of 1923 originally published in Die Christliche Welt, and now available in a translation by H.M.Rumscheidt, Revelation and Theology: An Analysis of the Barth-Harnack Correspondence of 1923, p.53.
7. Ibid., p.36
8. A. von Harnack, History of Dogma, I p.86
9. T.F.Torrance, Karl Barth: An Introduction to his Early Theology 1910-1931, p.73

philosophical and dogmatic criticism, but also fails to do justice to the New Testament as a whole. Harnack, as may be imagined, had a distinct preference for the straightforward biographical accounts (for so he thought they were) of the synoptic Gospels, and especially for the historicizing approach of Luke. He believed that the Gospels present the reader with a relatively uncomplicated account of the life of Jesus.¹⁰ There is a small amount of myth in the Gospels but this is confined to the birth narratives¹¹ (though a little reflection would have made him include the resurrection narratives, the miracles and all eschatological passages, but the point is that Harnack was conscious of the Gospels only as uncomplicated historical documents). And yet, it seems that Harnack emptied the New Testament of its most significant events; it is difficult to see how he could base faith on history as he must if he is to maintain that theology and history share an identical scientific methodology.¹² The relation between faith and history is a strange one in Harnack because on the one hand he limits scientific theology to the historical-critical method, and on the other hand he is dominated by Lessing's verdict that the contingent facts of history offer no basis for absolute judgments:

Accidental truths can never become the proof for the necessary truths of reason.¹³

10. A. von Harnack, What is Christianity?, p.20

11. Ibid., p.23f.

12. H.M.Rumscheidt, op. cit., p.36

13. G.E.Lessing, 'On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power' in Theological Writings, ed. by Henry Chadwick, p.55

Harnack overcame the gap between historicism and faith by means of a psychological bridge between ourselves and the Jesus we meet in the Bible. In the first place the historical-critical method is used to clarify the precise nature of the 'accidental truth' of the past. Historiography reveals the real Jesus of Nazareth rather than some figment of the imagination.¹⁴ What emerges next is the psychological impact that Jesus had on his disciples, and this second stage reveals a general religious a priori. In other words in the historical encounter with great figures from the past like Christ there unfolds the psycho-moral experience of 'the religious'. Rumscheidt comments:

What Overbeck denied was what Harnack had spent a lifetime in demonstrating: that historical events as such contain in themselves a reference to a final and all-embracing reality, the divine.¹⁵

The mediation of the religious always comes through persons and the truth of religion is contained in our experience of such persons:

There has never been progress in history without the marvellous intervention of a person. It was not what he [Jesus] said which was new...it was rather how he said it, how his words became in him the power and strength of new life and how he made it grow in his disciples.... About the content of his life it is rightly said that even if one were able to refute all objections to the Bible, religion would nevertheless remain unshaken and intact in the hearts of those Christians who have obtained an inner feeling of the essential truths of that religion.¹⁶

14. H.M.Rumscheidt, op. cit., p.31 q.14

15. Ibid., p.67

16. A. von Harnack, Das Christentum und die Geschichte, p.9 and p.18. quoted in Rumscheidt, op. cit., p.108

Harnack buttressed this psychologism with his idea of the two gospels of the New Testament. He supposed that any reference to dogma in the New Testament had been introduced by the Apostolic Church, so that any reference to incarnation, resurrection and eschatology could be discounted as a secondary gospel. Behind this lay the simple gospel devoid of dogma. A gospel which tells us of the Kingdom of God (in a purely non-eschatological sense), God the Father and the infinite value of the human soul, the higher morality and the commandment to love.¹⁷ Harnack reduced the content of the Gospels to Jesus's teaching, Jesus's psychology in terms of his vocation, and the effect he had on his disciples.¹⁸ He then reduced the content of Jesus's teaching to the three simple truths mentioned above. For after all: "The personal, higher life and morality are the sole areas in which we may be able to encounter God".¹⁹

Far from uncovering some hidden pre-dogmatic gospel, Harnack took to the text a dogmatic preconception of what the gospel is, and he interpreted the text accordingly. And we can see that it is by no means an easy matter to reconcile Harnack's simple gospel with the text of the New Testament. It may be noted that as a New Testament

17. What is Christianity?, p.51

18. Ibid., p.31

19. Das doppelte Evangelium in Neuen Testaments, p.223f., quoted in Rumscheidt, op. cit., p.83.

critic Harnack had already been left behind by the demonstration of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer that Jesus could not be isolated from eschatology. We are now in a position to sum up the nature of the preconceptions which Harnack adopted in interpreting scripture, and we can now sketch the principal characteristics of his exegesis. For Harnack, 'history' has almost exclusively the character of Historie, it is positivist and historicist. Past historical events have no inherent effect in creating the present and can only have effect in the present when some past personality encounters the psyche of the present historian, so to speak. Few would now accept this understanding of history in New Testament work, but it remains one possibility which is open for the exegete and the general course of Harnack's theology shows where such an understanding of 'history' can lead. 'Resurrection', for example, is emptied of all possible objective significance and is said to be no more than an interpretative category for the death of Jesus.²⁰ The concept of 'miracle' is also emptied of significance and in What is Christianity? Harnack disposed of the miraculous element in the Gospels by suggesting that the primitive pre-scientific imagination regarded certain ordinary natural events as 'miracles' (a judgment which is quite independent of the content of the miracles in

20. For a similar view see W. Marxsen, 'The Resurrection of Jesus as a Historical and Theological Problem' in The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ, ed. by C.F.D. Moule, pp.15-50.

the New Testament).²¹ Harnack similarly disposed of 'revelation', and if this concept can be said to have any content in Harnack it must refer to the eternal truths of the simple gospel of which one may become aware through the psychological impact which Jesus may have on one.

We may now suggest what type of exegesis would result from such a positivistic approach where many of the conceptions which must be used in New Testament theology are emptied of content, and where the remaining concepts are given a scientific slant. Such exegesis would emphasize, we would expect, the biographical aspects of the Gospels with especial emphasis on the psychological content, and yet the authenticity of no particular biographical event would be insisted on. Eschatological concepts such as 'Son of Man' and 'Kingdom of God' would be devoid of any future reference and would be idealized in the present. There would be emphasis on the teaching of Jesus with an ethical interpretation of the parables. The significance of the Lord's Prayer would be for the present, it would be moral and psychological and not eschatological. We would expect Harnack to approve of the synoptic evangelists and especially Luke, he would approve of the moral and spiritual emphases of John, and he would have little or no time for the evangelism of Paul.

21. A. von Harnack, What is Christianity?, p.26: "...we are firmly convinced that what happens in space and time is subject to the general laws of motion, and that in this sense, as an interruption of the laws of Nature, there can be no such things as 'miracles'."

Barth

It can truly be said that twentieth century theology proper began when Karl Barth reacted with the utmost vigour against everything that Harnack stood for. Yet Barth was even less aware than Harnack of the gulf between ourselves and the world of the New Testament. For Barth, the text was contemporaneous with the reader. In the preface to the first edition of his commentary on Romans he wrote:

If we rightly understand ourselves, our problems are the problems of Paul; and if we be enlightened by the brightness of his answers, those answers must be ours.²²

And in the preface to the second edition, he wrote of Calvin's exegesis,

how energetically Calvin, having first established what stands in the text, sets himself to rethink the whole material and to wrestle with it, till the walls which separate the sixteenth century from the first become transparent! Paul speaks, and the man of the sixteenth century hears. The conversation between the original record and the reader moves round the subject matter, until a distinction between yesterday and today becomes impossible.²³

And yet while Barth experiences no strangeness in the text, rather as Harnack saw nothing alien in the evangelists' picture of Jesus, Barth feels confronted by Paul's scandalous and terrible message that God has acted in Jesus Christ and that he will justify those who respond

22. K.Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, p.1, written in 1918

23. Ibid., p.7, written in 1921. Evidently he had shifted from this position somewhat by 1924 when he wrote in The Resurrection of the Dead, p.118: "We are probably (and not only historically) too far away from Paul to be able to approach him here, even approximately."

to this act with faith. Barth sees scripture as a testimony to an act of God, to a revelation, which lies behind scripture. This act of God is very closely identified with Jesus Christ and is called the Word of God. But the Word of God can be viewed in three different ways. In the first place it is scripture; in the second place it refers to Jesus himself; and finally it is the timeless act of God on the individual when he is justified by hearing the testimony of scripture. But only rarely does Barth call scripture the Word of God because he insists that the revelatory Word of God lies behind the text of the New Testament: "The Scriptures then witness to revelation".²⁴ This "act of God" which Harnack found so unscientific and unhistorical, does indeed transcend history in its supra-temporal significance; it belongs to 'primal history' (Urgeschichte), a term borrowed from Overbeck, of whom Barth had been a pupil. Yet Barth is not prepared to dismiss the Word of God simply because it does not fit within the canons of the historical-critical method. It is the Jesus of faith who is this act of God; Jesus is perceived by faith to be the Word of God and as such cannot be discovered by critical history (Historie). The Jesus of faith is not historical, just because he cannot be understood by the scientific historian as such.

In the early part of his career, while he was in conversation with Harnack, Barth could find no constructive role in his theology for 'history'. It is true that both

24. H.M.Rumscheidt, op. cit., p.44

in Romans and in his letters to Harnack he declared that historical methods were an indispensable part of exegesis, but these methods have only a negative role:

The reliability and communality of the knowledge of Jesus Christ as the centre of the gospel can be none other than that of the God-awakened faith. Critical-historical study signifies the deserved and necessary end of those 'foundations' of this knowledge which are no foundations at all since they have not been laid by God himself. Whoever does not yet know...that we no longer know Christ according to the flesh, should let the critical study of the Bible tell them so. The more radically he is frightened the better it is for him and for the matter involved. This might turn out to be the service which 'historical knowledge' can render to the actual task of theology.²⁵

Critical-historical method throws us back on faith as the only foundation because it is God's foundation. Barth's depreciation of Historie led him to reject any quest for the historical Jesus and this is an opinion to which he has stuck throughout his career despite the many shifts within his theology. In 1923 he said that the Jesus discovered by history was "a banality",²⁶ and in 1960 he wrote:

To me it is significant that present-day Old Testament scholars, especially in regard to the old, yet always new, theme of 'faith and history', are on the whole on much better ground than the authoritative New Testament men, who to my amazement have armed themselves with swords and staves and once again undertaken the search for the 'historical Jesus' - a search in which I now as before prefer not to participate.²⁷

25. Ibid., p.35 answer no.14

26. Ibid., p.46

27. K.Barth, The Christian Century, 20 Jan 1960, p.74f., quoted in T.F.Torrance, op. cit., p.208.

The chief characteristic of the theology of Barth and all those who have followed his Theology of the Word of God is that, under the judgment of Lessing, faith has been cut away from history as its foundation and has been forced to stand alone. In the Barthian tradition faith is self-authenticating, because nothing else can authenticate it. How then can we know the Word of God if not by means of historiography? Barth does not allow that this is a legitimate problem; we just know that it is the Word of God which we encounter when we read the testimonies of scripture:

I see the theological function of historical criticism especially in making clear to us a posteriori that there is no road this way.... The acceptance of this unbelievable testimony of the Scriptures I call faith... the ground for knowing both justifying faith and revelation would be God's action on us through his Word.²⁸

Barth is clear that our knowledge of the Word of God is not a matter of psychological experience, it is just - knowledge.²⁹ Because scripture witnesses to the Word of God and offers a sort of primary knowledge, Barth is neither prepared to mark off this knowledge from any other, nor is he prepared to subject scripture to a general secular hermeneutic. It is secular knowledge which must rather be subjected to a hermeneutic derived from the Bible.³⁰

28. H.M.Rumscheidt, op. cit., pp.46 and 48

29. K.Barth, Romans, p.277

30. Church Dogmatics, 1.2 p.465f.; and 'Rudolf Bultmann: An Attempt to Understand Him' in Kerygma and Myth, II p.125.

When Barth wanted to sever all connection between faith and history he took the whole content of revelation out of history. Barth has located, for example, the awareness Abraham had of God outside the course of history. When he comments on Romans 4,16: "Abraham is the father of us all", he quotes Nietzsche:

The non-historical resembles an all-embracing atmosphere in which human life is conceived and apart from which it shrivels up. For the actions which men propose take shape first in this dim and non-historical vapour. If it were possible for a man to penetrate with his understanding the non-historical in which every great episode of history had its origin, he might by raising himself beyond the sphere of history, attain to that knowledge which would absolve him from the necessity of taking serious account of the actual facts of history.³¹

Barth goes on to say that we must not relapse into mythology or mysticism in order to express the non-historical, for we see at the critical moment "the light of the Logos of all history...and this is the non-historical, or rather the Primal History (Urgeschichte), which conditions all history."³² The non-historical is that which transcends time and can give significance to the transience of history:

History reveals its importance, when, through such communing, the present becomes aware of the unity of meaning that is in all history. If, however, the unhistorical is removed, the past remains dumb and the present deaf.³³

The locus of the penetration of revelation into history

31. Romans, p.140

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., p.145

comes with the incarnation, but it is not the man Jesus who is the Jesus of faith. Jesus, as the Word of God, can only be believed and obeyed. The resurrection is the non-historical moment when Jesus returns to his urgeschichtlich origins:

The Resurrection is the non-historical relating of the whole historical life of Jesus to its origin in God.³⁴

In the early Barth, the resurrection has nothing to do with the empty tomb but is the symbol for the revelation of Jesus as the Lord. Barth calls the resurrection an 'event' but only by giving that concept a strange meaning. An 'event' is something which happens, it can be known and understood, but it need not be a part of history and so is not open to verification or, of more importance from Barth's point of view, falsification:

The resurrection of Christ, or his second coming, which is the same thing, is not an historical event; the historians may reassure themselves - unless, of course, they prefer to let it destroy their assurance - that our concern here is with an event, though it is the only real happening in, is not a real happening of history.³⁵

Only until about 1930 did Barth use the concept of Urgeschichte to isolate revelation from ordinary history. It appears in his first attempt at a dogmatics, Die Christliche Dogmatik in Entwurf (1927), but after receiving heavy criticism he had dropped it by the time the first volume of the Church Dogmatics was published (1932).

34. Ibid., p.195

35. The Word of God and the Word of Man, p.90

Even in The Resurrection of the Dead, which first appeared in 1924, he had been able to speak of the bodily resurrection of Jesus as an historical event, or at any rate as the frontier of history in history.³⁶ He took this to be an anticipation of our own resurrection, but in no sense could he regard it as a proof for faith. As he became more distant from his controversy with Harnack and nineteenth century liberalism (which he more than anyone else had destroyed), and as he became more involved with the issues raised by Bultmann, Barth came to give a much more positive account of 'history'. Barth's early theology was an attack on history as Historie as much as anything, but when he saw the Bultmannian implications of history as Geschichte he attempted to reintegrate the two dimensions of history into a single homogeneous concept.

The clearest account of Barth's more mature conception of 'history' comes in the Church Dogmatics 3.2 which was completed in 1948. Here, as in his earlier works, Barth sees the relevance of history, not in its objective pastness, but in its significance for the present. However, whereas Bultmann cut significance away from the past, Barth felt the need to reintegrate the past event with present meaningfulness. He wanted to ground Geschichte in Historie. This is clearly of great importance for textual exegesis. It controls the results of interpretation; either we interpret historical narrative as a mythic expression of existential significance, or we see such narrative as an

36. The Resurrection of the Dead, p.141

account of past events which create our present existence. And the precise nature of this existential significance could vary in each case.

In the Church Dogmatics Jesus Christ is described as the Lord of time, but Barth now insists that we would lose him as Lord of time if we ignored him as a man of his own time.³⁷ Whereas in Romans he could speak of Christ's "non-historical radiance"³⁸ this radiance has now become trans-historical, geschichtlich. But this radiance is geschichtlich only because it is also historisch:

The eternal content of his life must not cause us to miss or to forget or to depreciate this form, separating the content from it and discarding the form, as though we could see and have the content without it. For while the content is eternal, it is his human life, the action or series of actions of his human subject, which could not take place unless he had his own particular time.

The eternal salvation of all men is absolutely dependent on our being able to recount this history: "Once upon a time there was..." Note the "once". "Once" means: "In his time". The New Testament ἄπασι or ἐφ' ἅπασιν certainly means "once for all". But the event thus designated - the death of Jesus as the climax of his life - could not have happened once for all if it had not happened once, in its own time. It is in this history, and therefore in time, that the fulness of time is reached, and only so.³⁹

Barth still sees history as being bounded by death, but for

37. Church Dogmatics, 3.2, p.440f.

38. Romans, p.145

39. Church Dogmatics, 3.2, pp.440-1

Jesus a second history began on the third day after his first history had ended. This second history happened in time and was witnessed by the disciples. Like Bultmann, Barth wants to exclude the mythic from Christian faith, but Barth sees myth as the expression of timeless truths and an escape from myth necessitates involvement in time, in history. Even the resurrection is historical in this sense:

No, it happened "once upon a time" that he was among them as the Resurrected.... It was by this specific memory, and not by a timeless and non-historical truth, that the apostles and the Churches they founded lived in all the relations between Jesus and them and them and Jesus.⁴⁰

Barth sees the totality of faith resting on the historicity of the resurrection just as, in his earlier commentary on 1 Corinthians 15, he saw the whole of Paul's gospel bound up with his assertion of the resurrection of Jesus and of all Christians.⁴¹ He even goes so far as to speak, not only of the "bodily", but of the "physical" resurrection.⁴²

And yet having said all this, Barth can still maintain that the narratives of the post-resurrection appearances, are not meant to be taken as 'history' in our sense of the word.... For they are describing an event beyond the reach of historical research or depiction. Hence we have no right to analyse or harmonise them.⁴³

40. Ibid., p.442

41. The Resurrection of the Dead, p.125f., and Church Dogmatics, 3.2, p.443

42. Church Dogmatics, 3.2, p.451

43. Ibid., p.452

He declares the narratives to be "fragmentary and contradictory" and that it is "impossible to extract from the various accounts a nucleus of genuine history". Clearly, while he was opposed to Bultmann's reduction of history to no more than existential significance, Barth got cold feet at the prospect of allowing secular historians to decide for themselves what, if anything, had happened after the crucifixion. Of course, Barth wanted to preserve the insights of faith, but it is also clear that he failed to work with a truly integrated and viable concept of 'history'. At the last there remains an element of contradiction. He had to argue against Bultmann that faith could know of historical events for which there is no empirical evidence - the resurrection happened but there is no evidence for it, there is only the claim of the Word of God that Jesus has been raised.⁴⁴

The pre-understanding of 'history' which Barth brought to the text of the New Testament, that is the extent to which matters of faith can be exposed to historical criticism, did not go through any fundamental change during the development of his theology. In his later work Barth used what he hoped was a homogeneous concept of history but when it was pushed hard enough it did not prove to be substantially different from the concept he had used in Romans. Barth's Lord of time was the historical Jesus, but historical research cannot see this. The resurrection too was the sort of event which could happen in history, it was a physical act at a particular place and time, and yet it is

44. Ibid., p.446

screened off from the historian, it is not historisch. The resurrection of Jesus has indeed happened, but the historian cannot know this. The miracles of Jesus have happened, but the historian cannot allow this. Revelation happened in history in the life of Jesus, but Barth sought to protect revelation from any possibility of falsification by denying that any revelatory significance can be perceived within the course of history. To this extent 'revelation' is non-historical; it calls us to belief and obedience from outside history. Scripture testifies to revelation, to the Word of God which lies behind scripture, yet scripture is the sole channel of the Word and it is small wonder that Barth made the closest identification between the words of the New Testament and the Word of God: the whole of scripture is to be identified with the Spirit of Christ.⁴⁵ Although Barth says that he has no objection to the use of historical-critical method, in fact it has little or no place in his exegesis. There is no serious Sachkritik in Barth, his concept of 'revelation' would not allow it.⁴⁶ Barth's exegesis is for the most part an uncritical acceptance of what the text says and, as we would expect, he is more at home with the gospel of Paul than with the historical complexities of the synoptic narratives. But while his understanding of 'revelation' does not allow him to question the text, he does allow the text to speak out as it is with all its difficulties in a way which Harnack could not do. Now we must see what it was in Bultmann that Barth reacted against so strongly in the 1940's.

45. Romans, p.16

46. Barth did deny that the Serpent in Gen.2 actually spoke, and he ran into strong opposition for saying even this.

Bultmann

Despite the many important differences between Barth and Bultmann, Bultmann too is a member of the Theology of the Word of God tradition of which Barth was a founder member. This is because he too stands under the influence of Lessing. Revelation has to be self-authenticating because it can have no basis in contingent fact. But whereas Barth made faith part of a history which is not open to historiography, Bultmann has abandoned all serious interest in factual history. He has accepted modern scientific positivism by excluding from his theology the central events of the New Testament as past historical events. Miracles are, by definition, non-historical:

The historical method includes the presupposition that history is a unity in the sense of a closed continuum of effects in which individual events are connected by the succession of cause and effect.... This closedness means that the continuum of historical happenings cannot be rent by the interference of the supernatural, transcendent powers and that therefore there is no 'miracle' in this sense of the word. Such a miracle would be an event whose cause did not lie within history.⁴⁷

47. R.K.Bultmann, 'Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible in Existence and Faith, p.345. The sort of miracle Bultmann does allow is described in 'The Question of Wonder' (Zur Frage des Wunders) in Faith and Understanding, pp.247-61 in which Bultmann accepts the Wunder of what God has done for us hidden in faith, while rejecting Mirakel as mythic and unscientific:

The idea of wonder as miracle has become almost impossible for us today because we understand the processes of nature as governed by law. Wonder, as miracle, is therefore a violation of the conformity to law which governs all nature, and for us today this idea is no longer tenable.(p.247)

"Almost" in the first line of this quotation is not in the original German.

For modern man, resurrection is meaningless and impossible:

An historical fact which involves the resurrection from the dead is utterly inconceivable!⁴⁸

However, Bultmann is prepared to let historical science threaten faith because this threat will simply expose faith as being radically different from anything that can be known empirically.⁴⁹ Faith is one of the existentialia of man and is immune from such attack. Bultmann throws the whole weight of revelation and history onto the present existence of man and so cuts faith loose from the objective past and the objective future.

The central concept around which all else circles in Bultmann's theology is that of 'self-understanding'. Bultmann believes that the presupposition of all hermeneutics, and especially New Testament hermeneutics, is that the reader approaches the text with the self-questioning character (*Fraglichkeit*) of his own human existence. He brings an a priori existential analysis to bear on the text by supposing that the primary interest of the text is that of self-understanding. Bultmann undertakes "the inquiry into the understanding of human existence which finds expression in the scriptures."⁵⁰ The text must be interpreted existentially, in terms of human self-understanding.

48. 'New Testament and Mythology' in Kerygma and Myth, I p.39

49. 'The Crisis in Belief' in Essays Philosophical and Theological, p.19

50. 'The Problem of Hermeneutics' in ibid., p.258

Anything which does not deal explicitly with the understanding of human existence is labelled 'myth' and is to be cast off or, better, interpreted in terms of self-understanding (though by definition it will resist such an interpretation). It can be seen then that Bultmann's demythologizing programme is merely the negative aspect of his prime concern which is the existential interpretation of the New Testament.⁵¹ His scheme for demythologizing is grounded in his view of language as the objectification of understanding, an objectification which hides the understanding which seeks expression through language. So he describes the purpose of myth in this way:

The real purpose of myth is not to present an objective picture of the world as it is, but to express man's understanding of himself in the world in which he lives. Myth should be interpreted not cosmologically, but anthropologically, or better still, existentially.⁵²

Yet Bultmann believes that not only myth but language as a whole is inadequate for expressing man's understanding of God. No one can speak of the subject matter of revelation in a pure form because the Word of God attempts to "utter the unutterable".⁵³ Theological language, for Bultmann, has an ambiguous and relative relation to the essence of revelation. Understanding has to break through language

51. H.Ott, 'Objectification and Existentialism' in Kerygma and Myth, II p.312

52. R.K.Bultmann, 'New Testament and Mythology' in ibid I p.10

53. From Die Christliche Welt, 34, 1922, p.372f., quoted by J.M.Robinson in 'Hermeneutic since Barth' in The New Hermeneutic, p.31.

because:

from the fact that theological statements are by nature the explication of believing comprehension it also follows that these statements may only be relatively appropriate, some more so, others less so.⁵⁴

Because Bultmann's quest is for the understanding which lies behind language he can radically criticize not only the language but also the content of the New Testament. The language of the New Testament hides an understanding of human existence which is trying to break through it. The way is open for thoroughgoing Sachkritik.

'Revelation' in Bultmann's theology refers to the moment when the one who questions from his self-understanding responds in faith to the answers provided by the understanding of human existence which is contained in the New Testament. Faith is not a response to reports of historical events but to the proclamation of God's answer to the questions of self-understanding. That this answer comes from the historical past is a stumbling block because,

every phenomenon of history is ambiguous, and none reveals God's will in itself.

We cannot demonstrate to anyone that God's revelation is there in Jesus Christ. The New Testament and the Word of preaching proclaim God's forgiving grace in Christ, and man is asked whether he is willing to understand himself in the light of the Word - whether he will believe. The natural man has the stumbling block to overcome of a chance historical incident coming forward with the claim that it is the revelation of God.⁵⁵

54. Theology of the New Testament, II p.238

55. 'The Question of Natural Revelation' (originally 'Offenbarung und Heilsgeschehen') in Essays Philosophical and Theological, p.105 and p.113.

But in the same article Bultmann says:

Christian belief cannot simply speak of the revelation of God in history.⁵⁶

This is because revelation is not to be identified as the saving event which took place in Jesus in the past, but the saving event which is the moment of our present existence. God's revelation is not to be sought in the past.

Revelation is geschichtlich, but in no sense is it historisch. The saving event of God is present in the preached word: "Die Predigt ist das Heilsgeschehen."⁵⁷

The historical Jesus acts as an existential authentication for the kerygma and ensures that it is gospel, but the historical Jesus does not provide a proof for the gospel character of proclamation:

It is the historical person of Jesus that makes Paul's proclamation the Gospel. For Paul proclaims neither a new idea of God nor a new concept of the Messiah; he proclaims an act of God in history, the coming of the Messiah who is identical with the person of Jesus.⁵⁸

While Bultmann maintains a minimal reference to the objective past of Jesus, it is no longer possible for the historical Jesus to have any relevance for us:

Christ meets us in the preaching as one crucified and risen. He meets us in the word of preaching and nowhere

56. Ibid., p.103

57. 'Die Bedeutung des geschichtlichen Jesus für die Theologie des Paulus' in Glauben und Verstehen, I p.209, translated as 'The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul' in Faith and Understanding, p.242: "The preaching is the saving event because it is not merely a communication of history."

58. Ibid., p.235

else. The faith of Easter is just this - faith in the word of preaching.⁵⁹

Barth's belief in and obedience to the Word of God, a Word which was substantially identified by Barth with the text of scripture, has been transformed by Bultmann into faith in the preached word, which is in the first place the apostolic kerygma:

Preaching is itself revelation and does not merely speak about it.⁶⁰

Proclamation, for Bultmann, must in effect be self-authenticating, though he presents faith as a special existential noetic structure in which the proclamation is authenticated:

Outside of faith revelation is not visible; there is nothing revealed on the basis of which one believes. It is only in faith that the object of faith is disclosed; therefore faith itself belongs to revelation.⁶¹

As Bultmann orients his whole theology towards self-understanding he has, as with his concept of 'revelation', to use a concept of 'history' which refers exclusively to the present moment in which understanding takes place. History is seen exclusively as Geschichte. It does not matter if one cannot see any meaning in past history because this can paradoxically have the positive advantage of freeing one from the past so that historical meaning may

59. 'New Testament and Mythology' in Kerygma and Myth, I p.41

60. 'The Concept of Revelation in the New Testament' in Existence and Faith, p.91

61. Ibid., p.93

be seen in the present moment of existence.⁶² Past history has only one existential value:

The real relation of our life to history is made in the fact that the history from which we come gives us in advance the possibility for our action in the present, with regard to the tasks which the future has in store for us. That is, we receive from our history an inheritance which is binding on us in the present.⁶³

Bultmann has not dissolved Historie entirely. He maintains a minimal reference to the fact of the death of Jesus and his having preached; this is the scandal of Christianity, that revelation originates in an historical fact. Our knowledge of Jesus's past, however, is negligible.

Bultmann has remained faithful to his early opinion that we can know almost nothing about the life and personality of Jesus.⁶⁴ Bultmann does not reject past history simply because we do not happen to have sufficient evidence to uncover the past. Bultmann rejects the past because it has no relevance for the present, and because the text of the New Testament, which might look superficially like a collection of historical data, is in fact a proclamation that Jesus is Lord, a fact which remains outside the scope of history. It is for this reason that Bultmann can say:

It is therefore illegitimate to go behind the kerygma, using it as a 'source', in order to reconstruct a 'historical Jesus' with his 'messianic consciousness', his 'inner life' or his 'heroism'. That would be merely

62. History and Eschatology, p.154f.

63. 'The Question of Natural Revelation' in Essays Philosophical and Theological, p.104

64. Jesus and the Word, p.14

'Christ after the flesh' who is no longer. It is not the historical Jesus, but Jesus Christ, the Christ, preached, who is the Lord.⁶⁵

If the past is not open for significant examination and cannot be revelatory then the whole of history must be concentrated in the present:

But the 'Christ after the flesh' is no concern of ours. How things looked in the heart of Jesus I do not know and do not want to know.⁶⁶

One critic of Bultmann, commenting on his article 'The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus', has written:

Thus the facts that research can discover about Jesus of Nazareth, the what and the how of his life, are not essential to proclamatory speech about him.⁶⁷

The way in which Bultmann cleaves Geschichte from Historie is best seen in the way in which he speaks of the cross of Christ. Bultmann has not said that we can discover nothing about the historical Jesus; he has said that we can discover very little and what we can discover is of no interest to him. Bultmann insists that the 'cross' of Jesus happened, but by this he does not mean the crucifixion:

In its redemptive aspect the cross of Christ is no mere mythical event, but a historic (geschichtlich) fact originating in the historical (historisch) event which is the crucifixion of Jesus.⁶⁸

65. 'The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul' in Faith and Understanding, p.241

66. 'On the Question of Christology' in ibid., p.132

67. R.Jenson, The Knowledge of Things Hoped For, p.172

68. R.K.Bultmann, 'New Testament and Mythology' in Kerygma and Myth, I p.37

The 'fact' of the cross is the trans-historical significance of the crucifixion derived from the grace of God which has been made available in the "event" of the crucifixion. Bultmann's dualistic language leads him to treat "fact" and "event" as two quite separate matters. The crucifixion is, in principle, datable and locatable in the past, but the cross is geschichtlich and points to the significance of the crucifixion for me in the present. The cross (Bultmann often speaks of the "meaning of the cross") furthermore, is the same thing as the resurrection. The proclamation that Jesus is risen is the announcement of the permanent significance of the cross of Christ. It is the announcement (and it is a mythic announcement in so far as it needs to be interpreted existentially) that we can achieve authentic self-understanding through the grace offered in Christ. The crucifixion and the resurrection are a single event, the latter being the trans-historical significance of the former:

In this way the resurrection is not a mythological event adduced in order to prove the saving efficacy of the cross, but an article of faith just as much as the meaning of the cross itself. Indeed faith in the resurrection is really the same thing as faith in the saving efficacy of the cross, faith in the cross as the cross of Christ.⁶⁹

This is why Bultmann can say that Jesus "rose into the proclamation."⁷⁰ The proclamation is the continual re-presentation of the Geschichtlichkeit of Jesus after the

69. Ibid., p.41

70. 'The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus' in The Historical Jesus and The Kerygmatic Christ, ed. by C.Braaten and R.Harrisville, p.42.

crucifixion. But Bultmann refuses to objectify this Geschichtlichkeit, for,

side by side with the historical (historisch) event of the crucifixion is set the definitely non-historical event of the resurrection.⁷¹

The concept of 'resurrection' is not, for Bultmann, one which is open to philosophical modification or analytical description. It is unscientific and has no place outside faith:

But to see the resurrection at all requires faith, for the resurrection is in no sense visible to the unbeliever.⁷²

Yet if resurrection has no meaning outside faith how can belief give it meaning? Only because Bultmann sees resurrection as a symbol of Christ's victory over death, and this victory can only be seen in faith. He says that belief in the resurrection of Christ is identical with the belief that God speaks to us in the preached word. And yet what does all this amount to? Not that any objective change has occurred in our relations with God, but only that we now understand ourselves in terms of authentic human existence. Not only is Christ's resurrection de-objectified and brought forward into the present, but our own resurrection is de-objectified and dragged back from the future into the present:

Christ is not the cosmic ground of a future condition of existence, but the historical foundation of our present life. In a certain sense, i.e. in so far as we belong to Christ, we are the resurrected, are the

71. 'New Testament and Mythology' in Kerygma and Myth, I p.34

72. 'The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul' in Faith and Understanding, p.240f.

'first fruits' (ἀπαρχή), are a 'new creation' (καινή κτίσις), cf II Cor. 5.14-17.

But this resurrection life is never something objective. It is between time and eternity.⁷³

'Eschatology' no longer points to the distant future, the end of time. In Bultmann it points to the next instant; and yet it does not even do that. It refers to the present moment in so far as it looks towards the next instant and decides for that instant. There is to be no 'last day', no future judgment, no general resurrection:

I maintain that the 'last day' is a mythological concept, which must be replaced by the language of death....⁷⁴

Ultimately history is absorbed by eschatology, eschatology as the ever-present moment of decision introduced by God in Christ. This is best summed up in 'History and Eschatology in the New Testament':

The true solution to the problem [of the non-appearance of Christ at the Parousia] lies in the thought of Paul and John, namely in the idea that Christ is the ever present or the ever becoming present eschatological event. That is to say, that the Now gets eschatological character by the encounter with Christ or with the word which proclaims him, because in the encounter with him the world and its history comes to its end and the believer becomes free from the world by becoming a new creature.

Christ is the eschatological event not as a figure from the past...but as the Christus Praesens.

73. 'Karl Barth, The Resurrection of the Dead' in ibid., p.93f.

74. 'A Reply to the Theses of J.Schniewind' in Kerygma and Myth, I p.114

In Paul history is swallowed up in eschatology. Thereby eschatology has wholly lost its sense as goal of history and is in fact understood as the goal of the individual human being.... While the history of the nations and the world loses its interest, another phenomenon is detected, the true historical life (Geschichtlichkeit) of the human being. The decisive history is not the history of the world, of the people Israel and the other peoples, but the history which everyone experiences for himself. For this history the encounter with Christ is the decisive event, in reality the event by which the individual begins really to exist historically because he begins to exist eschatologically.

The paradox of history and eschatology is that the eschatological event has happened within history and happens everywhere in preaching. That means: eschatology in a true Christian understanding of it is not the future end of history, but history is swallowed up by eschatology.⁷⁵

Now that we have seen something of the individuality of the interpretation which Bultmann gives to those concepts which make up pre-understanding, we must offer a general indication of the character of Bultmann's exegesis as controlled by that pre-understanding. Because Bultmann reduces the significance of history to the present he is not prepared to devote very much time to the history of Jesus in the synoptic Gospels. In his Theology of the New Testament he allows 30 pages to the message of Jesus, 151 pages to the primitive church, 165 pages to Paul, and 90 pages to John. His clear preference for Paul and John is governed by his understanding of 'history' and by the

75. 'History and Eschatology in the New Testament', NTS, 1, 1954, pp.15, 13 & 16.

way in which he aligns other concepts with this understanding. All references to the objective past and the objective future are interpreted existentially for the present. Jesus did not perform miracles, he was not raised from the dead; all we can say is that he preached and was crucified (though one even wonders whether Bultmann might be able to speak of the 'cross' without any reference to the crucifixion). It is interesting that in his review of Barth's The Resurrection of the Dead, Bultmann agreed with Barth's objective account of Paul's 'mythological' description of the resurrection, but then he dismissed this on the grounds that Paul did not fully understand the subject matter of the gospel. Bultmann evidently claims to understand the gospel better than the authors of the New Testament, even though he hears that gospel only as it is refracted through the New Testament authors. Barth has pointed out that Bultmann has a hard time of interpreting the Old Testament because it is all too historical for him.⁷⁶ And one could say the same of Romans 9-11 where Paul has a genuine difficulty about understanding the history of Israel (compare this with Bultmann's statement on the previous page, n.75)⁷⁷ Yet when it comes to preaching, Bultmann has said that the preacher must forget everything that he knows about historical criticism and he must take the Bible as it stands, as though it were a book fallen from heaven.⁷⁸ And

76. K.Barth, 'Rudolf Bultmann: An Attempt to Understand Him' in Kerygma and Myth, II p.111

77. See Ernest Best, 'Recent Pauline Studies', ExpT, LXXX, 1968-9, p.164

78. R.K.Bultmann, 'On the Question of Christology' in Faith and Understanding, p.131

Heinz Zahrnt says that his published sermons are both spiritualistic and pietistic.⁷⁹ If this is the case one begins to wonder what is the purpose of critical theology.

Fuchs and Ebeling

Bultmann had originally referred to biblical history as Heilsgeschichte but he came to reject this term at least by 1948 when he reviewed Oscar Cullmann's Christ and Time.⁸⁰ He seems to have rejected this expression because it tended to separate biblical history from secular history, and by this time he had come to realize that those events which are 'subjective saving facts' for the Christian are only the reverse side of what are 'objective worldly facts' for the unbeliever. So he later came to use the expression 'saving event': Heilsgeschehen, or sometimes Heilsereignis. The modifications which Fuchs and Ebeling have brought to Bultmann's position are largely connected with the way they have remoulded the concept of 'history'. Both see history as the history of language. Ernst Fuchs, under the influence of the later Heidegger, has come to see the whole of human existence in terms of language. It is only in speech that history comes to expression and acquires meaning; so he sees "the historicity of existence

79. H.Zahrnt, The Question of God, p.244f.

80. R.K.Bultmann, 'Heilsgeschichte und Geschichte' in Theologische Literaturzeitung, LXXIII, 1948, pp.659-666, reprinted as 'History of Salvation and History' in Existence and Faith, pp.268-284.

as the language-character of existence".⁸¹ The Word of God encounters man as the spoken word which calls him to authentic existence. What Bultmann called Heilsgeschehen or Heilsereignis is now called Sprachereignis by Fuchs, 'language-event', because God always comes to man in language. Gerhard Ebeling uses the expression Wortgeschehen but this only reflects his attraction to the alternative terminology of Bultmann. Both Ebeling and Fuchs have used Sprachereignis and Wortgeschehen interchangeably which suggests that they have the same meaning.

The remoulding by Fuchs and Ebeling of Bultmann's understanding of 'history' is best illustrated by their joint attitude to the quest for the historical Jesus. After about 1950 the baneful influence of Rudolf Bultmann had made it almost impossible for German theologians to write anything about the historical Jesus. Ebeling thought that this was an illegitimate restriction on both historical and theological method. He felt the need to lay bare the facticity of Jesus's life for a number of reasons:

Now there are in fact two very closely connected theological reasons (which Bultmann seems to overlook) which do indeed provide strong arguments for the theological necessity for the quest for the historical Jesus. In the first place the mere fact that the kerygma speaks of Jesus, imposes a strong obligation on the theologian to take this speech about a historical person seriously by making an enquiry about his personal history.

The other consideration...concerns the interpretation

81. E.Fuchs, 'What is a Language-event?' in Studies of the Historical Jesus, p.211

of the primitive christian kerygma.... In the first place it is the primitive christian kerygma which we have to interpret, for this is in an historical sense primary. Yet the way in which the kerygma concentrates attention on the name of Jesus, that is to say on his person, poses the question to what extent the kerygmatic statements about Jesus, or rather the faith in him which they express, are grounded in him.... If we could ascertain nothing historically authentic concerning the person to whom the kerygma refers, then the relation of Jesus to the kerygma would consist in nothing more than a series of assertions for the understanding of which Jesus himself would have no more importance than that of a random and meaningless cipher. In this sense the kerygma, if such it could be called, would be no more than a mere myth. Nor would the matter be basically any different if all we could discover about Jesus... was the mere fact of the existence at a certain time and place of an otherwise completely unknown person by the name of Jesus.⁸²

It is clear that Ebeling's intention at this point is to put the broken pieces of history back together again. He wants to ground Geschichte (and the kerygma) in Historie, and not only in the minimal sense of Bultmann. So Ebeling says of the origin of Christianity:

Christianity stands or falls with the tie that binds it to its true historical (historisch) origin. That means first of all: Christianity is a historic (geschichtlich) phenomenon. It derives from a definite historical (historisch) past and therefore stands in historical (historisch) relation to that past...the historical (historisch) origin of Christianity is assigned the character of revelation.⁸³

82. G.Ebeling, Theology and Proclamation, p.62ff.

83. 'The Significance of the Critical Historical Method for Church and Theology in Protestantism' in Word and Faith, p.28f.

Ebeling's purpose is to let Jesus count as the sole basis for faith as it finds expression in the kerygma. This is why he can say:

The search for the historical (historisch) Jesus is a search for the hermeneutic key to Christology.⁸⁴

Ebeling in no sense confuses theology with historiography. But when he says that if it could be shown that Jesus never existed or that christological language had fundamentally misunderstood him then the ground would be taken from under Christianity, it seems that unlike Bultmann and Barth he is prepared to put faith at risk.⁸⁵ Theology must stand or fall on whether it does justice to the facticity of Jesus. And yet Historie, in the sense of historiography, has an unusual sense. There are certain 'events' which critical history cannot examine even though they may have taken place in the objective world. Historians cannot examine, those statements in the tradition which seem indeed to have the character of historical reports, yet cannot by any means be considered as historical statements about Jesus, such as above all those on the resurrection, the risen appearances and the ascension.⁸⁶

Ebeling adds most pertinently in a footnote:

Death is the boundary of historical statements. For the rest, the modern view of history cannot make an exception even in the case of the historical Jesus.⁸⁷

This arbitrary concept of historiography means that Ebeling

84. Theology and Proclamation, p.55

85. The Nature of Faith, p.46

86. 'The Question of the Historical Jesus and the Problem of Christology' in Word and Faith, p.292

87. Ibid.

need not really put Jesus's resurrected life (and by implication the Jesus of faith) at the risk of falsification by historical method, and the reason for this is that Ebeling is still working within a dichotomy in the concept of history which he has inherited from Bultmann. Ebeling may hope that he has improved on Bultmann's understanding of history, but in fact he seems to have failed to have worked with a truly integrated concept of history, and this may be because he has failed to produce a viable conceptual analysis of 'history'. The connection he has made between Historie and Geschichte is purely nominal; it stays at the level of assertion.

Ebeling admits explicitly that in pursuing a new search for the historical Jesus he is not seeking to uncover an irrefutable historical picture of Jesus. What is needed is a new concept of 'history'. This concept in the first place is not his attempt to reintegrate Historie and Geschichte, but comes with his view of history in terms of language, the handing on of linguistic tradition.⁸⁸ We must discover the historical Jesus not in objective factuality but as 'word of address', because human significance is said to lie in language and not in bare facts which have been divorced from language. So Fuchs speaks of hermeneutics as "faith's doctrine of language."⁸⁹ Human reality is

88. 'Word of God and Hermeneutic' in The New Hermeneutic, ed. by J.M. Robinson, p.115

89. E.Fuchs, Hermeneutik, p.101f.: "Einleitung in das Neue Testament nicht unerwünscht sein mag und den Charakter der ganzen Hermeneutik als eine Sprachlehre des Glaubens ein wenig bestätigen kann."

identified with linguisticity and the historical Jesus is now able to be examined as that which came to expression in the kerygma. For Fuchs, what came to expression in the kerygma was, primarily, Jesus's language of love, which when appropriated by the believer overcomes the contingency of human existence. It is faith which Ebeling sees as the primary expression of kerygma, the faith which derives from Jesus. This is clearly not the liberal nineteenth century search for the historical Jesus. Ebeling has accepted Barth's doctrine of the Word of God which demands obedience, and the new quest is carried out not "by seeking to get behind the Word of proclamation, but on the contrary, by penetrating further into the Word."⁹⁰ In this context historical criticism is seen as no more than a necessary method for fixing the exact text of the New Testament and as a means for excluding any patently false interpretations of the purpose of the Bible.⁹¹ Historical method has a tendency towards irrefutable fact but eventually the exegete must decide whether this particular text makes a claim on his understanding which transcends historical method. Fuchs would maintain that the New Testament's language of love makes such a claim, and Ebeling would make the same claim for the kerygma's language of faith. At this point we cease to be master of the text; it becomes our master with a claim on our self-understanding.⁹²

90. G.Ebeling, Theology and Proclamation, p.76

91. 'Discussion Theses for a Course of Introductory Lectures on the Study of Theology' in Word and Faith, p.428

92. E.Fuchs, 'Das Hermeneutische Problem' in Zeit und Geschichte: Dankesgabe am Rudolf Bultmann zum 80 Geburtstag, ed. by E.Dinkler, p.365f.

Fuchs' and Ebeling's concept of 'resurrection' is vague, and this may well be deliberate. They do not exclude the possibility of factual resurrection a priori as an unscientific concept, as Bultmann did, though they admit the difficulty of believing it. Fuchs allows that it was a firm fact for Paul,⁹³ and Ebeling admits that the apostles really did experience the appearances of the risen Jesus and not as mere insubstantial visions.⁹⁴ Yet neither seems to be quite sure what might have happened if it had been an historical event. We have already seen (p.95) that Ebeling makes historiography close with death, so that what lies beyond death cannot be historical. Christianity can never get back to the fact on which it rests.⁹⁵ Fuchs identifies the resurrected Jesus with the historical Jesus,⁹⁶ but the purpose here seems to be to show that the Jesus who is proclaimed as having been raised is the Jesus who was on earth. The key word here is 'proclaimed' because it is this which gives Jesus a continued existence. Fuchs says that the stumbling block of the resurrection is the stumbling block of accepting the crucifixion as the Cross of Christ. And the abiding significance of the Cross (for it is this which appears to constitute the resurrection, as it did for Bultmann) is a linguistic event, namely, the continual use of Jesus's language of love:

93. 'The Quest of the Historical Jesus' in Studies of the Historical Jesus, p.27

94. G.Ebeling, The Nature of Faith, p.65ff.

95. Theology and Proclamation, p.56

96. E.Fuchs, 'Jesus and Faith' in Studies of the Historical Jesus, p.49

Does our entire time therefore depend on this event of love? Certainly. Love alone makes our time the present. And death? It is abolished, where love is an event. Have we, then, to proclaim the resurrection of the dead? And before that, the resurrection of Jesus? Of course.⁹⁷

In the end their concept of 'resurrection' does not seem to be so very different from Bultmann's. Jesus is risen in so far as he is proclaimed as such, and we have been raised in so far as we experience love as the forgiveness of sins. The raised Jesus is not the object of faith but the witness to faith in God's forgiveness; to believe in Jesus and to believe in the Risen One are one and the same thing.

The Jesus discovered by historical research is in no sense independent of the proclaimed word. The search for the historical Jesus will help,

not by seeking to get behind the Word of proclamation, but on the contrary by penetrating further into the Word. Such an enquiry is made, not to avoid the challenge of the Word of God, but so that one can truly hear the challenge and understand the kerygma as the Word of God.⁹⁸

Ebeling does not quite identify the Word of God with scripture, nor does he quite agree that it lies behind scripture. He says that the Word of God lies in the movement from the text to the proclamation which we hear. The aim of the Word and the text is to be heard, and so the Word is a spoken 'word' in a real and not only in a metaphorical sense. It is a word which makes a unique claim on our

97. 'Jesus' Understanding of Time' in Studies of the Historical Jesus, p.165

98. G.Ebeling, Theology and Proclamation, p.76

understanding.

Ebeling and Fuchs have both left room for historical research, but on the whole one would expect their exegesis to be rather conservative as they both see scripture as providing the basis from which the Word moves out to make its claim on the hearer. Ebeling's understanding of the text, in his few remarks on the meaning of the text of the New Testament, is fairly straightforward. He thinks that the evangelists' chronological and geographical framework is their own, but he also thinks that generally speaking Jesus's conversations and sayings have been accurately reported. He accepts that Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist and that he expected a catastrophic end to history.⁹⁹ Fuchs's exegesis, like his literary style, is really rather extravagant. Fuchs believes that translation and interpretation should try to create the same space that the text sought to create when the Spirit originally spoke in it.¹⁰⁰ An example of this is the way Fuchs has dealt with Jn. 1.1. After a complex process which has been summed up by James Robinson,¹⁰¹ Fuchs finishes with: "In the beginning was the Yes, and the Yes was love, and love was the Yes." This kind of exegesis is so extreme that Käsemann has objected

99. The Nature of Faith, p.52f.

100. E.Fuchs, 'Translation and Proclamation' in Studies of the Historical Jesus, p.194

101. J.M.Robinson, 'Hermeneutic since Barth' in The New Hermeneutic, p.60f., referring to E.Fuchs, Hermeneutik, Ergänzungsheft to the 3rd edition, pp.9-13.

to it as a rape of the text.¹⁰² Yet this rape does not seem to be a necessary consequence of the pre-understanding which Fuchs shares with Ebeling. There seems to be a radical inconsistency, for what reason I do not know, between Fuchs's pre-understanding and his exegesis. Such a pre-understanding ought to lead to a moderate interpretation of the text, as is the case with Gerhard Ebeling. The principal failing of this pre-understanding is that it fails to plot the relation between language and history because history has simply been absorbed into linguisticity.

Ott

Heinrich Ott has seen the need to overcome the duality of history which is to be found in Bultmann, but whereas Ebeling tried to bring Historie and Geschichte closer together Ott has tried to exclude Historie entirely. Ott certainly recognizes the importance of understanding the reality of history correctly because of the influence this will have on the theologian's exegesis of biblical texts, particularly those which deal with the person of Jesus. He points to the inadequacy of Bultmann's concept where part of history consists of "certain facts of past history [which] can be objectively established" and where part consists of "the genuine knowledge of history" which can be gained only through "participation", "dialogue" and "encounter".¹⁰³

102. E.Käsemann, 'Zum Thema der urchristlichen Apokalyptik', ZThK, LIX, 1962, p.259 n.2

103. H.Ott, 'The Historical Jesus and the Ontology of History' in The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ, ed. by C.E.Braaten and R.A.Harrisville, p.145

Within this dichotomy Ott seeks to discover what is the reality of history, for he finds it absurd that it is possible to explore the facts of past history and yet miss the real importance of history if the past is not engaged in dialogue. How can past events be historical and yet lack intrinsic importance for the historian? "How does it happen that one part of historical reality eludes objective observation and the other not?"¹⁰⁴ Of the two dimensions of history, Ott says that objectively verifiable phenomena do not concern him. If they did concern him they would make some demand on him, he would no longer view them as a neutral observer but as an active participant, and so they would no longer be objective.

Ott proposes to reduce this dichotomy,

by proving first that the objective mode of knowledge is entirely inappropriate to historical reality because there are no such things as objectively verifiable facts and, secondly, that all true knowledge of history is finally knowledge by encounter and confrontation.¹⁰⁵

He attacks the positivist view of history - the view that history is made up of facts and that these facts are in principle determinable - because of its view of time. Scientific history sees its subject as the "self-enclosed, dynamic continuum of events which can be fixed as points of time."¹⁰⁶ Positivist history presupposes that there are facts, that a fact is an event which can be pinpointed in time, and that the historian can state that "a certain event A

104. Ibid., p.146

105. Ibid., p.148

106. Ibid., p.154

occurred at point B in time." This necessitates an "intellectual transcending of time in the direction of timelessness". In other words, the historian has to move vertically above time so that he can look down on the continuous line of history and fix points of time along that line. In fixing any event at a point in time the historian is neglecting the trans-historical significance of that event. Ott argues, and rightly, that any historical event contains a background of significance and meaning, a background of intentions, motivations and connections with other events. But Ott seems to have moved to the other extreme by supposing that history deals only with significance and never with 'facts', because there are no facts (see note 105 above).

The antipositivistic concept of history which Ott proposes insists that when we approach the past we do so through evidence from the past. Ott is not saying that there never was a past, that would be absurd. But he does say that we can only meet the past by means of evidence which is itself an interpretation of the past. He agrees with Martin Kähler that we can never get behind these interpretations to bare facts because all we have are interpretations. Whenever we meet a person or observe an event our meeting or observation is always an interpretation. We see the person or event in one way and not in some other possible way. We have a 'picture' of that person or event. In this way the apostolic church had a picture of Christ. Even the disciples themselves had a picture of Christ (the Pharisees, of course, had a different sort of picture). We cannot get behind the Gospels to the real historical Christ

because there is no such 'real' Christ, there are only pictures, interpretations, of him:

there are no such things as historical facts at all; rather, the very nature of historical reality is to be an appearance, to be a picture.¹⁰⁷

Ott claims that it is not possible to have knowledge of facts on the basis of historical sources, and he quotes Nietzsche approvingly:

To positivism which simply looks at phenomena and says, 'Only facts exist', my reply is: 'No, not facts at all, but only interpretations exist.'¹⁰⁸

Ott adds that "historical reality, perhaps all reality, is disclosed as an endless field, an endlessly surging and rolling sea of interpretations."¹⁰⁹ The consequence of this is that it is significance, it is interpretation, that constitutes historical reality.

Ott finally asks how we are to know which are the correct interpretations of reality if reality always shows itself in pictures? How, for example, do we choose between the disciples' and the Pharisees' picture of Jesus? If we no longer have access to specifiable facts to act as a legitimation of a particular interpretation then we are left with a blind choice between alternative pictures. All historiography is relative. Ott admits all this, but adds that reality is not relative because it is the way God sees it, from the end of time as it were, sub specie

107. Ibid., p.150

108. Ibid., p.152

109. Ibid., p.166

aeternitatis.¹¹⁰ How then do we know that the Christian picture of reality is God's picture? We do so by faith. Faith assures us that we share in some partial sense God's picture, the authentic picture, of reality. But faith here must mean blind trust, because no criteria have been introduced by Ott for verifying or falsifying pictures of historical reality.

What would be the consequences for exegesis of such a concept of 'history'? The facticity of the historical Jesus would be of no consequence because such facticity must remain unknown. We can only accept the various interpretations of him which we find in the New Testament. Because there are no criteria for judging the reliability of those interpretations (other than self-consistency) we can only accept them as they stand. Ott's pre-understanding would seem to lead to a biblical positivism. Ott has in fact attempted the very unhistorical practice of trying to weld the four Gospels into a single picture of Jesus. But such a picture could only be a picture for existential encounter without any reference to past events. It should also be said that this theology is in the Barthian tradition that speaks of the primacy of the Word of God which calls for faith, where there is no basis for verifying the authenticity of the call for faith.

We must now ask whether this account does justice to Ott. The reason for examining Ott is that he represents

110. Ibid., p.167

one possible though extreme understanding of history which can be used for New Testament exegesis. My reason for suggesting that this may not be a fair interpretation (despite all the quotations) is because Ott introduces a number of qualifications on the last two pages of his article which, if taken seriously, contradict much of what has gone before. For example, he pleads that in order not to be misunderstood the reader should not think that the historical quest for what really happened should be wholly excluded. What really happened must include "the deeds actually done and the words actually spoken" as well as "hidden backgrounds, motives and spiritual forces". Ott goes on:

When we say "there are no such things as facts" we only mean that "there are no naked facts" not that it can never be established what has and what has not occurred, or that it can never be decided which accounts are to be trusted and which are not.¹¹¹

But these remarks run counter to what he has been saying in the earlier part of the article, as well as what he has written in a later work.¹¹² Despite the difficulty of understanding Ott, it would not be unfair to presume that he has completely collapsed the pastness of history into the present.¹¹³

111. Ibid., p.170

112. See Theology and Preaching, pp.37-9

113. There is not sufficient space to expose in full Ott's confused language but two examples can be mentioned. On p.170 the expression 'what really happened' is given two meanings: a) what happened objectively in the past, and b) the objective event with its full background of significance. It can be observed that Ott begins on that page with meaning a), then he

Pannenberg¹¹⁴

Wolfhart Pannenberg is the only theologian who has attempted to work out a conceptual framework for dealing with the hermeneutical problem, and who at the same time has tried to produce a radical alternative to Bultmann. Pannenberg has not reacted only against a duality within the meaning of 'history', but against the whole Theology of the Word of God as it has been inherited from Karl Barth.¹¹⁵ Whether the 'Word of God' is identified with the Bible as in nineteenth century theology, or with the kerygma as in Bultmann, or with Jesus Christ as the originator of the kerygma and the Bible as in Barth, each represents a claim to authority which is supposed to be self-authenticating. Each represents a call to obedience. It is precisely this call to obedience which Pannenberg is not prepared to accept, and he thinks that before the text of the New Testament can be demythologized it must first be depositivized so that it may be made approachable for present day man with

shifts to meaning b), and finally returns to meaning a) without indicating that he has shifted his meaning. In my second example I should like to compare two quotations: p.150 "...there are no such things as historical facts at all..."; p.161 "...facts are a secondary abstraction."

114. For a more complete account of Pannenberg's theology see my article 'Wolfhart Pannenberg and the Hermeneutical Problem' in the Irish Theological Quarterly, April 1972, pp.107-129.
115. W.Pannenberg, 'Response to the Discussion' in Theology as History, New Frontiers in Theology Vol III, ed. by J.M.Robinson and J.B.Cobb, p.227.

his post-Enlightenment sensibility:

The question concerning the revelation of God, as it has been reformulated on the basis of the Enlightenment, is not seeking for some authoritarian court of appeal which suppresses critical questioning and individual judgment, but for a manifestation of divine reality which meets the test of man's mature understanding as such.¹¹⁶

He writes elsewhere: "What is needed are the reasons for the decision of faith."¹¹⁷ It is these reasons which Pannenberg has tried to provide in dealing with hermeneutics and, as we might expect, 'Word of God' is a concept he prefers to avoid.

Pannenberg has been much influenced by Gadamer's philosophical analysis of hermeneutics and has listed three ways in which Gadamer has made an advance on Bultmann:

(1) While Gadamer accepts that a reader approaches a text with a prior interest in what the text says, he denies that the reader shares a common self-understanding with the text. Interpretation must first accept the historical strangeness of the text and must even emphasize the distance between the horizon of understanding present in the text and the horizon of understanding which the reader brings to the text.

(2) Understanding is characterized as a merging of what are at first alien horizons into a comprehensive horizon of understanding.

(3) The use of 'horizon' has overcome the difficulty of

116. Ibid., p.229

117. Ibid., p.270

bringing one's self-understanding to the text as a preconception because it recognizes the partial nature of understanding and demands that it is broadened in the creative act of meeting the horizon of the text.¹¹⁸

Gadamer has used the image of conversation to show how the two horizons encounter each other. The text and interpreter question each other until agreement is reached; the text is an answer to a question which remains hidden, but the text acts as a question which is designed to bring out the interpreter's presuppositions. Pannenberg, however, sees this only as a stylistic device for showing that we must respond to the text. The model of 'conversation' is rejected as a bad metaphor because the text does not in fact pose questions but only stands as a statement, in the light of which the reader can question himself. The interpretation of the text only becomes a language-event (Sprachgeschehen) when the interpreter finds a form of language which unites him with the text. The content of the text must be formulated as an assertion (Aussage) in language which unites the content of the past text with the present reader. What is said in the text has an infinite background of unspoken connections of meaning, and the purpose of hermeneutics is to restore this unspoken context of meaning - but in assertions, for understanding is always explicit linguistic understanding. An understanding which cannot be made explicit is no understanding:

Precisely by means of interpretation, to the extent that

118. 'Hermeneutic and Universal History' in Basic Questions in Theology, vol 1, p.118f.

interpretation really intends to understand the author, everything must be turned into assertion; everything that was involved in the formulation of the text - nuances, or frames of reference, of which the author himself was partly unaware - must be made explicit.¹¹⁹

Consideration of these horizons of understanding necessarily leads to the understanding of history: "the hermeneutically schooled consciousness will...include historical consciousness."¹²⁰ Consideration of the pastness of the text makes one aware of one's own historicity. A text can only be understood against the background of how that text has been understood from the time of its composition to the present day, and against the background of the history which led up to its composition. The infinite unspoken background of meaning which surrounds the text can only be the totality of history, and this must include the futurity of meaning which the text has not yet appropriated. The full meaning of the text will be available only if a projection of future history can be made, not in the sense of restricting the novel possibilities of history, but of making the end of history known provisionally in anticipation of its occurrence. Pannenberg believes that Christianity can make, and does make, such an historical projection.

Pannenberg has criticized the critical-historical

119. Ibid., p.126f.

120. H-G.Gadamer, op.cit., p.282, quoted in W.Pannenberg, 'Hermeneutic and Universal History', Basic Questions in Theology, vol 1, p.116

method on two counts. The first is for using the idea of 'analogy' for determining whether a reported event is authentic or whether it is the product of an imaginative, primitive consciousness. Pannenberg wants history to be able to throw up completely original events which lie outside the limitations of our present experience.¹²¹ He has further criticized critical-historical method for supposing that it can arrive at bare objective facts independently of the linguistic traditions in which they have been passed on. Yet he has also maintained that to preserve a history of meanings (Geschichte) which is independent of past events is simply to accept the threat of critical history to discount all knowledge of the historical Jesus, while attempting to preserve Jesus's significance for the present. Pannenberg passes beyond Ebeling's acceptance of both Historie and Geschichte by denying that any such distinction can be made:

Against this we must reinstate today the original unity of facts and their meaning. Every event, if not artificially taken out of context (out of its historical environment, stretching into the past and the future), brings its own meaning for each particular inquirer, brings it with its context, which of course is always a context of tradition. Admittedly not every event has equal clarity of meaning. This differs from case to case. But, in principle, every event has its original meaning within the context of occurrence and tradition

121. W.Pannenberg, 'Redemptive Event and History' in ibid., pp.43-7. Pannenberg attacks Troeltsch for postulating "a fundamental homogeneity of all reality within the current range of experience and research." (p.45)

in which it took place and through which it is connected with the present and its historical interest.¹²²

Pannenberg uses Universalgeschichte for 'history', a word he has coined as a specific alternative to Historie and Geschichte. He has also used it in contrast to Barth's Urgeschichte (though Barth himself now disapproves of his earlier use of this word). He has used Universalgeschichte as an alternative to Cullmann's distinction between, and separation of, Heilsgeschichte and Weltgeschichte.¹²³ The concept also includes future as well as past history. Pannenberg's main concern is to present history as a unity which, when taken with its full historical context of meaning, will have a clarity which is available for all who care to look. In other words there are no facts or meanings which are hidden from the historian and open only to the eyes of faith. Pannenberg writes (very provocatively):

When these [events] are taken seriously for what they are, and in the historical context to which they belong, then they speak their own language, the language of facts.¹²⁴

We meet historical occurrences in so far as reports and interpretations of them are transmitted to us through history. History is the hermeneutical bridge between the past and the present, but only to the extent that history

122. 'Focal Essay: The Revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth' in Theology as History, ed. by J.M. Robinson and J.B. Cobb, p.127

123. 'Response to the Discussion' in ibid., p.247f. See also 'Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschichte' in Probleme Biblische Theologie, Gerhard von Rad zum 70 Geburtstag, ed. by H.W. Wolff, pp.349-366.

124. Revelation as History, p.137

provides a continuity of consciousness between past and present. History as the unity of event and meaning is 'the history of the transmission of traditions' (Überlieferungsgeschichte). To investigate the life of Jesus we must investigate the traditions which mediate Jesus to us through history, which traditions are in scripture and lie behind scripture. The history of dogmatic theology is the history of the interpretation of these traditions. There is a continuity of understanding which lies between the life of Jesus and ourselves:

The relationship just noted between historical experience and language makes it comprehensible that history takes place as history of the transmission of traditions. In the individual event something of general import is experienced, something relevant for other individuals. Therefore it is passed on in tradition and is received by others. But because these others experience the general differently in new events, tradition is continually modified, even when, as is usually the case in archaic cultures, these alternations are repressed from consciousness. It is a consequence of the language character of historical experience that human history always accomplishes itself as history of the transmission of traditions, in dialogue with the heritage of a past which is adopted as one's own or else rejected, and in anticipation of a future which is more than the future of the individual concerned.¹²⁵

This view of history is certainly 'traditional' in the sense that it always looks to the past and the traditions which mediate the past, but it does not follow that every form of understanding in these traditions must be accepted

125. 'Response to the Discussion' in Theology as History, ed. by J.M.Robinson and J.B.Cobb, p.256

uncritically. Present interpretation must always criticize previous forms of understanding so that our understanding of those traditions will become clearer, deeper and more precise. It may be that some earlier forms of understanding are so inadequate or mistaken that they must simply be rejected. The aim of the history of the transmission of traditions is to uncover the relation between the original tradition and the individuals who held them and formed them and, further, to discover why these traditions have been understood and developed as they have. Why has Christianity, for example, held to some traditions and rejected other possible traditions?

Pannenberg originally abandoned the Theology of the Word of God because his faith required reasons. He says that these reasons can be found in the resurrection of Jesus as a past reality, the significance of which is contained in the traditions which mediate that event to present inquiry. Pannenberg, unlike all those theologians we have examined so far in this chapter, with the exception of Ebeling, thinks it reasonable to ask whether the resurrection of Jesus actually happened, and what it was that happened, if anything. He wants to authenticate (or, if it is necessary, reject) early Christian traditions about Jesus by relating them to the events of Jesus's life, so far as this is possible. Pannenberg denies that 'resurrection' is something which could not happen, or which, if it did happen, could not be examined by the secular historian:

Whether or not Jesus was raised from the dead is a historical question in so far as it is an inquiry into what did or did not happen at a certain time. Such

questions could only be answered by historical arguments unless we had present experiences of the resurrected Jesus from which we could conclude that he did not remain dead. But obviously we have no such experiences.¹²⁶

As a matter of fact Pannenberg thinks that a serious consideration of the separate and independent traditions of the empty tomb and the post-resurrection appearances make it very probable that Jesus was raised from the dead.¹²⁷ Pannenberg is eager to point out that 'resurrection' is a metaphor for an event which cannot be known directly by observation. He points to Paul's metaphorical use of the language of waking from sleep to characterize resurrection:

We can speak of what is totally different and extraordinary by drawing something apparently similar, even though perhaps only remotely similar, out of the sphere of what is known to us, so that we can at least characterize metaphorically what is otherwise unknown and remains mysterious.¹²⁸

The objection that faith cannot be grounded on the probability of historical knowledge is dealt with by pointing out on the one hand that the resurrection of Jesus is very probable and not just a weak possibility, and on the other hand Pannenberg accepts that if a future generation is no longer able to accept that the resurrection of Jesus has happened then history would no longer be the ground of faith - and the implication is that faith would no longer have a

126. 'The Revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth' in Theology as History, ed. by J.M.Robinson and J.B.Cobb, p.128

127. Jesus, God and Man, pp.88-106

128. 'Response to the Discussion' in Theology as History, p.264

ground. Yet despite this the resurrection of Jesus demands a total response because his resurrection represents proleptically the final general resurrection.

This special eschatological character of the history of Jesus demands and undergirds unrestricted trust: because in Jesus it is a question of the whole, here total trust is required, despite the relative uncertainty of our historical knowledge of Jesus.¹²⁹

Faith, then, is the only appropriate response to the knowledge that Jesus has been raised from the dead - there is no disjunction between faith and knowledge.

Pannenberg has claimed that his concept of universal history as the history of the transmission of traditions guides one through the basic difficulties presented by the hermeneutical problem, and the same could be said for the problem of the nature of revelation. Revelation is universal history, the history of the transmission of traditions; this is where God reveals himself. Certainly Pannenberg has removed any positivistic claim to authority in his concept of 'revelation'. The perception that we come to a knowledge of God from our experience of the course of history comes from von Rad:

in principle Israel's faith is grounded in a theology of history. It regards itself as based upon historical acts, and as shaped and re-shaped by factors in which it saw the hand of Jahweh at work.¹³⁰

Von Rad's interest has been to relate Israel's interpretation, and subsequent re-interpretation, of her history to the

129. Ibid., p.273

130. G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, vol 1, p.106

actual course of history as disclosed by critical historical method. Von Rad has always refused to separate these two dimensions of history, and it is this which gives a unity to Israel's history and the historical consciousness which emerges from it in the Old Testament. Pannenberg maintains that God has not shown himself in his full reality, but that his presence is mediated through history:

The self-revelation of God in the biblical witnesses is not of a direct type in the sense of a theophany, but is indirect and is brought about by means of the historical acts of God.¹³¹

In addition this revelation is not private, it has a universal character, it is open to anyone who cares to investigate it.¹³² And yet it is because Pannenberg realizes that the ancient Israelite traditions can no longer communicate directly with us as revelatory mediations that he concentrates on the history, and particularly the resurrection, of Jesus for confirmation that God is at work in history.

Pannenberg insists that Jesus's resurrection must be understood in the first instance within its original historical context, which was the eschatological expectations of first century Jews and the eschatological message of Jesus. That Jesus should have been raised from the dead at that time is a ratification of the life and preaching of Jesus of Nazareth, and a confirmation, though an unexpected one, of contemporary eschatological expectations.

131. W.Pannenberg, Revelation as History, p.125

132. Ibid., p.135

It is also an anticipation of the final resurrection of the dead and, as such, it is a confirmation that there will be a final resurrection. Pannenberg writes:

It is true that the unsurpassability of the history of Jesus as the revelation of God was not yet decided by his earthly ministry, but by the event his disciples proclaimed as the resurrection. The earthly ministry of Jesus was burdened with an ambiguity which was dispelled for the first time by his death and resurrection.¹³³

The raising up of Jesus implies a confirmation by God himself of his pre-Easter appearance and that the pre-Easter Jesus remained dependent on his confirmation, so that no position in regard to the pre-Easter Jesus and his message can be justified without regard to the cross and resurrection.¹³⁴

The primitive Church, and possibly Jesus himself, took this raising up to be the inauguration of the general resurrection, but when this general resurrection did not happen eschatological consciousness fell increasingly into the background. But Jesus's resurrection can only be properly understood if it is seen as the prolepsis of the general resurrection, qualitatively undifferentiated from the final resurrection. It is the anticipation of the end of history when God will reveal himself as he really is:

The universal revelation of the Deity of God is not yet realized in the history of Israel, but first in the fate of Jesus of Nazareth, in so far as the end of all events is anticipated in his fate.¹³⁵

133. 'On Historical and Theological Hermeneutic' in Basic Questions in Theology, vol 1, p.179

134. Revelation as History, p.193

135. Ibid., p.139

It is because the end of history has happened proleptically that Pannenberg can speak of 'universal history' in a way which does not restrict the scope of the future content of world history. And because he has obviated any authoritative claim from the Word of God or scripture, he can speak of the essential nature of scripture as "foretelling, forthtelling and report" which means that one can speak of scripture as 'revelation' only in a derivative sense.¹³⁶

By seeing how Pannenberg puts these various concepts to work we can see the kind of understanding he has of them. One way of testing their suitability is to imagine what kind of exegesis would result from them, and whether such exegesis would have the deficiencies that I think we find in the different types of exegesis we have looked at earlier in this chapter. I cannot see any major aspect of New Testament theology which could not be reconciled with Pannenberg's pre-understanding. Whether Pannenberg's pre-understanding is really adequate for the task of exegesis only the future course of theology will show. At any rate there are serious reasons for supposing that he has provided an advance on other extant forms of pre-understanding. Anyone who cannot accept this pre-understanding must be able to criticize Pannenberg's understanding of these concepts on philosophical and theological grounds, and he must be able to criticize Pannenberg's (fragmentary) exegesis on exegetical grounds. It is not my purpose, however, to discuss Pannenberg's theology here in great detail. I want only to provide a

136. Ibid., p.152

matrix, a ground plan, for the possibilities in modern dogmatic theology of understanding the concepts which make up pre-understanding for New Testament interpretation.

Whether we shall find any close agreement between any of these German theologians and T.W.Manson and R.H.Lightfoot remains to be seen in the second part of this work.

At least as we disclose the pre-understanding which is at work in Manson and Lightfoot we shall be able to situate them in a broader context and that in itself will take us part way in assessing the legitimacy of their pre-understanding.

CHAPTER THREE

CHAPTER THREE

KNOWLEDGE AND INTEREST

Cognitive Interests

There is one further dimension of pre-understanding of which we must take account, and this - as we shall see in the following chapter - has a very close bearing on the work of T.W.Manson. We must now discuss the relationship between knowledge and interest. Jürgen Habermas, Professor of Philosophy and Sociology at the University of Frankfurt-am-Main, and a member of the Frankfurt circle of Marxist critics, has plotted in his book Knowledge and Human Interests the disintegration of classical epistemology under the attack of nineteenth century Positivism.

Habermas's basic argument is that classical epistemology reached its zenith with Kant and held the knowing human person at the centre of its analysis. It did not seek to manipulate the process of knowledge, but allowed the human subject to know whatever there was to be known. It analysed the conditions under which knowledge was acquired, and reflected on the relationship between the knowing subject and known objects. Positivism, by contrast, originating with Auguste Comte, saw the knowledge gained by the natural sciences as the only legitimate form of knowledge, and epistemology became reduced to the philosophy of science. Habermas sees the reign of positivism as the abandonment of reflection,¹ which in effect is also the

1. This is precisely the word used by Paul Ricoeur, see p.38 above.

abandonment of philosophy. Habermas hopes to encourage the phoenix of classical epistemology to rise from the ashes of positivism (though not necessarily in its Kantian form) by reflecting on the processes in which knowledge is acquired. Habermas's chief contention is that there is no such thing as pure, objective, 'scientific' knowledge; knowledge is gained only where there is some prior practical interest.² Let us now examine Habermas's critique in a little more detail.

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2. See also M. Polanyi, Personal Knowledge, pp.134-9 where, in a different context from that of Habermas, Polanyi discusses how scientific knowledge is controlled by "intellectual passion". The acquisition of scientific knowledge is guided by a "vision" and this vision leads a scientist to use data in a highly individual and sometimes arbitrary manner:

Scientific knowledge reveals new knowledge, but the new vision which accompanies it is not knowledge. It is less than knowledge, for it is a guess, but it is more than knowledge, for it is a foreknowledge of things yet unknown and at present perhaps inconceivable. Our vision of the general nature of things is our guide for the interpretation of all future experience. Such guidance is indispensable. Theories of the scientific method which try to explain the establishment of scientific truth by any purely objective formal procedure are doomed to failure. Any process of enquiry unguided by intellectual passions would inevitably spread out into a desert of trivialities. (p.135)

See also Polanyi's article 'Knowing and Being' in Knowing and Being, pp.123-137.

How is reliable knowledge possible? This, writes Habermas, is the single decisive question for philosophical discussion in the modern period.³ At the beginning of the nineteenth century the critique of knowledge was still associated with practical judgment and reflective reason, and it had not at that stage been reduced to a set of methodological principles. But since Kant, Habermas suggests, "science has no longer been seriously comprehended by philosophy".⁴ During the last century and a half the natural sciences have been supposed to be the exclusive possessors of reliable knowledge. The critique of knowledge has resigned itself to the function of the philosophy of science, which in turn has restricted itself to "the pseudo-normative regulation of established research."⁵ Science is no longer seen as one form of possible knowledge, but is simply equated with knowledge as such. The philosophy of science renounces any inquiry into the knowing subject and reduces epistemology to the methodological procedure under which we can have knowledge of objects. The general aim is to produce pure objective knowledge and as such it ignores, in Kantian terms, "the synthetic achievements of the knowing subject."⁶ On Kant's critique of the subject's role in the process of acquiring knowledge, Habermas writes:

Positivism loses sight of this dimension, because it

3. J.Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, p.3

4. Ibid., p.4

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., p.68

conceives of the fact of modern science not so much as eliminating the question of the meaning of knowledge in general but as prejudging its answer. Positivism certainly still expresses a philosophical position with regard to science for the scientist self-understanding of the sciences⁷ that it articulates does not co-incide with science itself. But by making a dogma of the sciences' belief in themselves, positivism assumes the prohibitive function of protecting scientific inquiry from epistemological self-reflection.⁸

The beginnings of self-reflection within the sciences, however, which could transcend the restrictions of positivism, are to be seen in Charles Sanders Pierce and Wilhelm Dilthey. Yet neither finally freed himself from the objectivism imposed by positivism. Dilthey is the more interesting from our point of view because his attempt at self-reflection took place within the historiological sciences, whereas Pierce was mainly concerned with the natural sciences. Dilthey was aware of the psychic basis behind any written text and he sought to understand the psyche of the author, an understanding which he regarded as a personal art that required skill and intuition. He was also aware of the social nature of understanding: "The experience of community is the presupposition of understanding."⁹ Yet embedded in this experience of community is a whole range of practical

7. This odd language is the translator's own. I do not have the original German available, but I assume that "scientific self-understanding of the sciences" would have been better.

8. J.Habermas, op. cit., p.67

9. W.Dilthey, Gesammelte Schriften, 7.141, quoted in Habermas op. cit., p.159

interests, difficulties and problems. It is in the context of these communal interests that understanding is pursued:

Understanding first arises in the interests of practical life. Here people are dependent on intercourse with one another. They must make themselves understandable to one another. One must know what the other wants.¹⁰

The cognitive interest which lies behind the hermeneutic sciences as a whole is that of preserving communication within society and thereby preserving the structure of that society from violent disintegration.¹¹

Life and the experience of life are the continually fresh-flowing sources of the understanding of the social-historical world...; only in their reaction in life and society do the cultural society attain their highest significance, and this significance is in constant increase.¹²

And yet while Dilthey recognized that whoever practises one of the cultural sciences, whether he be an historian, a philosopher, a theologian, or whatever, he will want to affect society in some way, Dilthey finally wanted to free hermeneutic understanding from such cognitive interests. Dilthey wanted to shift hermeneutic knowledge into the contemplative dimension where it would adopt a role of pure description. At the last Dilthey adopted the scientific model of objective knowledge as the model for the historical sciences. Habermas comments:

Like Pierce, Dilthey remains in the last analysis so

10. Ibid., 7.207, quoted in Habermas, op. cit., p.177

11. J.Habermas, op. cit., p.176

12. W.Dilthey, op. cit., 7.178, quoted in Habermas, op. cit., p.177

much subject to the force of positivism that he leaves off the self-reflection of the cultural sciences just at the point where the practical cognitive interest is comprehended as the foundation of possible hermeneutic knowledge and not as its corruption.¹³

Habermas himself uses 'interest' as a quasi-technical expression and he defines it in terms of life experience in society, an experience which provokes a search for that knowledge which would satisfy the interest.

I term interests the basic orientations rooted in specific fundamental conditions of the possible reproduction and self-constitution of the human species, namely work and interaction.

Knowledge-constitutive interests can be defined exclusively as a function of the objectively constituted problems of the preservation of life that have been solved by the cultural form of existence as such.¹⁴

Interest in general is the pleasure that we connect with the idea of the existence of an object or of an action.... Either the interest presupposes a need or it produces one.¹⁵

Habermas's task is to uncover the cognitive interests which lie behind the methodologies of the various sciences and he thinks that there are three categories of processes of inquiry where it is possible to demonstrate the relationship between "logical-methodological rules and knowledge-constitutive interests."¹⁶ These three categories are

13. J.Habermas, op. cit., p.179

14. Ibid., p.196

15. Ibid., p.198

16. Ibid., p.308

the 'empirical-analytic sciences' (Naturwissenschaften), the 'historical-hermeneutic sciences' (Geisteswissenschaften), and the 'sciences of social action' (social sciences).

Habermas says that the empirical-analytic sciences restrict in two ways and in a prior fashion the knowledge which they present. These sciences prejudge the meaning of possible scientific statements by establishing rules for the construction of scientific theories and rules for their critical testing. Scientific theories are made up of "hypothetico-deductive connections between propositions, which permit the deduction of lawlike hypotheses with empirical content."¹⁷ These theories make predictions possible, but the meaning of these predictions is established only by the rules according to which we apply these theories to reality. And the purpose of these predictions is the technical exploitability of reality. Theories are tested in controlled experimentation, but statements derived from such experiments do not represent facts as such but express the success or failure of these experiments. We may like to think that we apprehend facts descriptively, but in fact "the empirical sciences are first constituted through an a priori organization of our experience in the behavioral system of instrumental action."¹⁸ The cognitive interest which Habermas recognizes behind this personalized appropriation of knowledge is that of the technical control and exploitability of reality.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., p.309

The historical-hermeneutic sciences operate in a different methodological framework. Whereas the empirical-analytic sciences work within a framework of lawlike hypotheses confirmed by observation, these other sciences use the interpretation of texts to provide the understanding of meaning. The rules of hermeneutics determine the possible meaning of the validity of statements of the cultural sciences. Just as the natural sciences acquire knowledge only as it is mediated by the scientist's own control of feed-back monitoring, so the interpreter's pre-understanding controls hermeneutic knowledge. Pre-understanding, then, in the hermeneutic sciences should not be seen as a corruption of knowledge but as a necessary precondition for knowledge. Habermas sees hermeneutic pre-understanding grounded in the interpreter's social situation. Traditional meaning only reveals itself to the extent that the interpreter has his own personal and social world clarified. The interpreter establishes communication between the traditional meaning embodied in the text and his own social world.

If, however, methodological rules unite interpretation and application in this way, then this suggests that hermeneutic inquiry discloses reality subject to a constitutive interest in the preservation and expansion of the intersubjectivity of possible action-orienting mutual understanding. The understanding of meaning is directed in its very structure toward the attainment of possible consensus among actors in the framework of a self-understanding derived from tradition. This we shall call the practical cognitive interest, in contrast to the technical.¹⁹

19. Ibid., p.310

Finally Habermas considers the systematic sciences of social action (among which he includes philosophy and psychology). He sees here an emancipatory cognitive interest at work which, through a process of self-reflection, seeks to free the subject from "dependence on hypostatized powers".²⁰

My purpose in introducing this very generalized discussion of cognitive interest is to bring out the fact that knowledge derives from interest and that a particular type of interest will lead to a corresponding form of knowledge. The clarification of this is preparatory to an analysis of the role of interest in T.W.Manson and R.H.Lightfoot, for I perceive a single dominating practical interest which has acted as a controlling factor in the shaping of Manson's pre-understanding and large parts of his exegesis. In a slightly different way this is true of R.H.Lightfoot too. In order to bridge the gap between Habermas's generalized analysis of interest and my analysis of Manson's very particular interest I want to introduce a brief description of three examples of Old Testament exegesis by three non-theologians. Here we will see that the introduction of unusual and unexpected interests leads to some very unexpected, but perfectly legitimate and revealing, exegesis. The three non-theological interests are respectively those of literary criticism, Marxist philosophy and structural anthropology.

20. Ibid.

Auerbach on Abraham

Erich Auerbach was Professor of Romance Languages at Yale University until his death in 1957. In the first chapter of his great work on the history of western literature he contrasted two forms of epic poetry which lie at the foundation of western literature, the Hellenic and the Jewish.²¹ He compared the nineteenth book of the *Odyssey*²² with the biblical account of Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac.²³ The nineteenth book of the *Odyssey* tells how Odysseus at last returns to Penelope but disguised as a stranger. The old housekeeper is commanded to wash the stranger's feet. In great detail we are told how the water was fetched, hot and cold water were mixed, while the housekeeper, Euryclea, lamented her master's long absence. Suddenly, while washing the stranger's feet, Euryclea recognizes Odysseus's scar and she drops his foot into the basin in excitement. Odysseus grabs her by the throat and warns her not to reveal his identity to Penelope. In the middle of this very detailed and tense narrative, at the point where Euryclea first notices the scar, Homer introduces seventy lines recounting the origin of the scar, which have the effect of relaxing the tension - what Schiller called the "retarding element".²⁴ This "retarding"

21. E.Auerbach, 'Odysseus' Scar' in Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, pp.3-23

22. Homer, The Odyssey, Loeb Edition, London, 1919, Vol 2, pp. 228-273.

23. Genesis 22.1-14

24. E.Auerbach, op. cit., p.5

passage tells how Odysseus received the scar in a hunting accident while on a visit to his grandfather Autolycus. We are told who Autolycus was, we are told about his house, his kinship, his character and his behaviour after the birth of his grandson. We then hear of Odysseus's arrival, the greetings, the banquet, sleep and waking, the early start for the hunt, the tracking of the animal, the struggle, Odysseus's being wounded by the bear's tusk, his recovery and his return to Ithaca. All is narrated in great detail. Auerbach sees this narrative as being typical of the Homeric style, the chief characteristic of which is externalization. Every detail lies on the surface; nothing is obscure, nothing is hidden. Every private thought and psychological motive is explained. Everything is in the foreground, there is no background in Homer.

By contrast, the story of Abraham and Isaac externalizes very little. Details of location, chronology, motivation and personal character are almost all hidden. A very great amount of possible narratable material lies behind the surface, obscure, puzzling and mysterious. The narrative begins: "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said to him, Abraham! and he said, Behold, here I am."(Gen. 22.1).²⁵ Auerbach continues:

Even this opening startles us when we come to it from Homer. Where are the two speakers? We are not told. The reader, however, knows that they are not normally to be found together in one place on earth, that one of them, God, in order to speak to Abraham, must come from somewhere, must enter the earthly realm from some

25. Auerbach uses the King James translation.

unknown heights or depths. Whence does he come, whence does he call to Abraham? We are not told. He does not come, like Zeus or Poseidon, from the Aethiopians, where he has been enjoying a sacrificial feast. Nor are we told any of his reasons for tempting Abraham so terribly.²⁶

Nor, Auerbach points out, are we told anything very much about Abraham. Was he at Beersheba or elsewhere? indoors or out of doors? We do not know what Abraham was doing when God called him, nor what form the call took. Then the story continues. They begin a three day journey, but the landscape is not described, nor are the servants and retinue. In total obscurity God has commanded that a sacrifice take place at a particular location though we do not know where - we are told that Abraham went to Jeruel in the land of Moriah, but where was that?²⁷ Isaac is described in the barest of terms: he is Abraham's son and Abraham loves him. Yet this does not account for Isaac's character, but only for the relationship he has with his father. When everything remains in such obscurity we see how terrible Abraham's temptation was, and nothing has been introduced into the narrative to distract our attention from the present crisis. When characters speak in the Bible it is not to externalize thoughts as in Homer, but only to hint at thoughts which remain unexpressed. The chief characteristics of the two styles are described as follows:

It would be difficult, then, to imagine styles more

26. E.Auerbach, op. cit., p.8

27. We later discover (2 Chron. 3.1) that it is the site of the Temple at Jerusalem.

contrasted than those of these two equally ancient and equally epic texts. On the one hand, externalized, uniformly illuminated phenomena, at a definite time and in a definite place, connected together without lacunae in a perpetual foreground; thoughts and feeling completely expressed; events taking place in leisurely fashion and with very little of suspense. On the other hand, the externalization of only so much of the phenomena as is necessary for the purpose of the narrative, all else is left in obscurity; the decisive points of the narrative alone are emphasized, what lies between is nonexistent; time and place are undefined and call for interpretation; thoughts and feelings remain unexpressed, are only suggested by the silence and the fragmentary speeches; the whole, permeated with the most unrelieved suspense and directed toward a single goal (and to that extent far more of a unity), remains mysterious and "fraught with background".²⁸

That so much remains in the background in the Elohist narrative adds depth, a third dimension, both to the story and to the characters in it: "But even the human beings in the Biblical stories have greater depths of time, fate and consciousness than do the human beings in Homer."²⁹ Human relations in the Bible are "entangled and stratified", and the individuals develop whereas Homer's characters are static. The consequence of Homer's work being linguistically highly developed but psychologically simple is that: "Homer can be analyzed, as we have essayed to do here, but he cannot be interpreted."³⁰ By contrast the Bible demands

28. E.Auerbach, op. cit., p.11f.

29. Ibid., p.12

30. Ibid., p.13

interpretation:

Let no one object that this goes too far [Auerbach's assertion that the Bible declares 'truth' and demands obedience], that not the stories, but the religious doctrine, raises the claim to absolute authority; because the stories are not, like Homer's, simply narrated "reality". Doctrine and promise are incarnate in them and inseparable from them; for that very reason they are fraught with "background" and mysterious, containing a second, concealed meaning. In the story of Isaac, it is not only God's intervention at the beginning and end, but even the factual and psychological elements which come between, that are mysterious, merely touched upon, fraught with background; and therefore they require subtle investigation and interpretation, they demand them. Since so much in the story is dark and incomplete, and since the reader knows that God is a hidden God, his effort to interpret it constantly finds something new to feed upon.³¹

While Homer seeks merely to make us forget our reality for a few hours, the Bible seeks to overcome reality, and it is in this purpose that its claim to authority lies. It is because of the Bible's relation to reality that it is so much more closely bound up with history than Homer, and it has a claim to historical value even where the content is obviously legendary. This is why Auerbach believes that characters like Abraham, Jacob and Moses produce "a more concrete, direct and historical impression than the figures of the Homeric world."³²

Auerbach does not interpret the Abraham story in any

31. Ibid., p.15

32. Ibid., p.20

ordinary sense of the word, but by means of a judicious comparison with Homeric poetry he succeeds in bringing out a number of the characteristics and subtleties of the biblical narrative which are often taken for granted, or simply not noticed.

Gardavsky on Jacob

A very striking interpretation of the story of Jacob has been suggested by Viteslav Gardavsky who is a Marxist and an atheist and was formerly Professor of Philosophy at the Brno Military Academy.³³ Gardavsky points out that book of Genesis does not contain a cosmogonic theory and that the causal element plays only a secondary role in the Old Testament. Like Auerbach, he too compares the Old Testament with classical Greek literature and

33. V.Gardavsky, 'Jacob' in God is Not Yet Dead, pp.21-33. The Czech edition Buh neni zcela mrtev first appeared in 1967 a year before Professor Gardavsky, as the biographical note in the English edition so tactfully puts it, "retired from his post as Professor of Philosophy at the Brno Military Academy." In reality Gardavsky was one of the first academics to lose his job when the Dubcek regime in Czechoslovakia fell in the autumn of 1968. The last I heard was that Professor Gardavsky, who is not an old man, was employed emptying dustbins in Prague.

emphasizes that the Jews did not write an Orestes, a Medea or an Electra, and that they could not have done so. Greek mythology was not interested in history, it is full only of cosmic energy:

In the field of man, of personal identity, 'fate' or moira is the ruling element: man's achievements are subject to fate, and he can only act in the same sort of way as Odysseus, wandering between Scylla and Charybdis, unable to avoid them as they appear before him with all the static immobility of natural forces.³⁴

In contrast to this classical Greek anthropology, Jewish anthropology places man in a time system rather than a cosmic system, and the Jewish God is a God of history rather than the God of natural theology. The Greek is sure of himself in what he undertakes because experience has taught him that techne, ability, skill, is what solves life's problems. But the Jew knows that his position is insecure and that his existence is uncertain. This is why the Jew takes refuge in God, a God whom he recognizes as a model of what he might become. The Jew knows that he must take control of his destiny and wrest it from the movement of history. Gardavsky sees the dominating theme of the Old Testament as that of choice and personal decision. Gardavsky writes:

If we look at the Old Testament in this light, we soon realize that the central figure is not Adam, Abraham or Moses; nor Solomon or King David. Adam is far too blind and too passive. The others have already been initiated into the secrets of human existence and are better or worse according to how magnanimous they were. But the figure who stands at the focal point, at the

34. Ibid., p.27

point where the crucial choice is made, is Israel himself or - as he is known on less solemn occasions - Jacob.³⁵

Gardavsky summarizes the story of how Jacob obtained Esau's birthright by means of deception. In attempting to trick the now very old Isaac, Jacob was running an enormous risk:

If he wins, he wins everything, but then if he loses, he also loses everything....

As Jacob hesitates, his mother intervenes. It is at her insistence that he goes to his father, trembling with fear, to force his option - in the face of all the possibilities open to him.³⁶

Jacob has taken advantage of Isaac's blindness but he has not won. In what follows Jacob is cheated and deceived just as he has cheated and deceived. Blinded by darkness and passion he takes a wife whom he does not love but who has been slyly substituted for the woman he does love. Yet Jacob does not give up, he persists and eventually he wins Rachel. He serves Laban for a second period of seven years in order to win her, he becomes rich, and finally he decides to return home to where his roots are. And yet he is afraid that he will be killed by Esau and that his destiny will be lost. Everything is at stake once more. He guides his family and his possessions over the river and leaves them in Esau's territory while he remains overnight in safety on the other bank to make his urgent decision whether he should return. "He must choose between hanging on to his peaceful existence lived out in

35. Ibid., p.29

36. Ibid.

happy anonymity - and a name which might win some time from death."³⁷ Gardavsky then quotes Genesis 32,22-29 where Jacob's night of decision is pictured as a wrestling bout at the end of which his opponent blesses Jacob. Gardavsky concludes:

I feel that this scene provides the key to an understanding of the Old Testament; it tells how man becomes a subject, a person. Adam, whom God created from a lump of clay, was not an individual person. Adam is not even a proper human name, but a label denoting a whole species, mankind in general. And Eve merely denotes the division into two different sexes. From the point of view of personal identity 'Adam and Eve' are merely neuter: they are a specific entity, it is true, but they are not real people yet.

Jacob is utterly different. He sets little store by promises, and does not believe in gifts. He knows that anything offered as a gift is the result of chance. He disregards his natural destiny and is determined to override it by means of his own actions. By making a choice beyond the possibilities open to him, he emerges from the general run of his race and wins himself an individual name and a series of individual features. His action is the first action to have any sort of historical status, it is the first authentic human action. Israel becomes the Lord of Time....

But this idea which is so fundamental to the Old Testament - the idea of choice and personal identity - and which is exemplified by Israel and its twelve tribes in all its manifold variety is basically quite different from the classical idea of a predestined system and a cosmic harmony. God's 'chosen people' are given nothing at the outset, and are granted no special exemptions. First of all, the system must be created, the Promised Land must be wrested from their enemies. The outcome

37. Ibid., p.30

of any decision is always in doubt. And when the Old Testament commanders take counsel with the Lord before the decisive battle, they are simply making a realistic appraisal of their own prospects which will form part of the basis of their decision, as in Jacob's struggle. The children of Israel are never quite sure whether their decisions will even prove to be lasting. They are always being made aware of how precarious and dramatic their beginnings are, and in spite of this, or perhaps because of it, they allow all their decisions to be guided by their consciousness of the infinite possibilities which lie within them and represent their secret hopes.³⁸

Leach on Solomon

Edmund Leach is a pupil of Lévi-Strauss the founder of structural anthropology, and was Reader in Anthropology at Cambridge until he became Provost of King's College, Cambridge in 1966. Leach has analysed a number of parts of the Bible structurally but the one we shall be concerned with is his very complex analysis of the stories which deal with the legitimacy of Solomon's succession to the throne.³⁹ Leach acknowledges that his subject matter is that of theology, but whereas the theologian will be concerned with some hermeneutic message for the whole of mankind, he will be dealing with the patterning of arguments

38. Ibid., pp.31 and 32

39. E. Leach, 'The Legitimacy of Solomon' in Genesis as Myth and Other Essays, pp.25-83. This paper first appeared in the European Journal of Sociology, vol 7, 1966, pp.58-101. There is an interesting structural analysis of the Holiness Code of Leviticus in Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger, pp.54-72.

about endogamy, exogamy, legitimacy and illegitimacy as reflected in the work of the final editors at a comparatively late date. The idea central to structuralism is that the structure as such (i.e. the juxtaposition of elements of content) mediates meaning. At the end of his paper Leach presents a number of conclusions, but these are in fact presuppositions for any structural analysis of the Bible. First, the chronological sequence has, in part at least, structural significance. Second, geographical and genealogical information has very great importance; they are 'remembered' only because they act as a justification for the assertion of certain political rights. Third, the whole text forms a unity so far as the final editors are concerned irrespective of the complex origins of the integral parts, and the structure of this unity has its own characteristic importance.⁴⁰

Leach describes the object of his analysis in the following manner:

My purpose is to demonstrate that the Biblical story of the succession of Solomon to the throne of Israel is a myth which 'mediates' a major contradiction. The Old Testament as a whole asserts that the Jewish political title to the land of Palestine is a direct gift from God to the descendants of Israel (Jacob). This provides the fundamental basis for Jewish endogamy - the Jews should be a people of pure blood and pure religion, living in isolation in their Promised Land. But interwoven with this theological dogma there is a less idealized form of tradition which represents the population of ancient Palestine as a mixture of many peoples over whom the Jews have asserted political dominance by right of conquest. The Jews and their 'foreign' neighbours

40. Ibid., p.79f.

intermarry freely. The synthesis achieved by the story of Solomon is such that by a kind of dramatic trick the reader is persuaded that the second of these descriptions, which is morally bad, exemplifies the first description, which is morally good.⁴¹

Leach shows how this contradiction between endogamy and exogamy runs through the Old Testament. On the one hand Ezra and Nehemiah insist that Israelites reject all foreign wives and offspring, and yet the tradition of the half-Moabite origin of David emphasizes the debt they owe to their foreign neighbours. Ezra is opposed by the authors of Jonah and Ruth and there are tendencies here which are incompatible. Various editors have attempted to overcome this contradiction and Leach tries to show "how the editorial amendments of various hands have become woven into an involuted network which can convey a 'message' which was not necessarily consciously intended by any particular editor."⁴²

The contradiction between the practice of sectarian endogamy to preserve religious purity on the one hand and the political expediency of exogamous marriages on the other hand emerges in a number of Old Testament stories. The story of Dinah (Gen.34) unambiguously affirms the sinfulness of allowing an Israelite girl to cohabit with a foreigner (a Shechemite-Canaanite) because of ensuing political difficulties, even when the foreigner is prepared to adopt the Israelite faith. Abimelech (Judges 9) is a

41. Ibid., p.31

42. Ibid., p.45

half-blood Israelite-Shechemite by a Shechemite mother who, on the death of his father, joins his mother's people, kills all his pure blooded half-brothers except one and is himself killed. Jephthah (Judges 11) is a half-blood Israelite by a foreign mother who, after his father's death, is chased away by his father's people but is eventually called back to be their leader. His pure blooded relatives are saved, but his only daughter is sacrificed and he dies without descendants. Samson (Judges 13-16) is a pure blooded Israelite who has a series of liaisons with foreign, Philistine women, who are treacherous and eventually bring about his downfall. Of course, some of these stories are opposites, but the point is that a fundamental contradiction is displayed throughout. The ensuing problem is what it is that constitutes foreignness, 'How foreign is a foreigner?'⁴³ Traditional genealogies are introduced into the text in order to establish 'degrees of foreignness'.⁴⁴ Biblical texts also, notably Judges 14-22, specify very precisely which territorial areas in Palestine are to be the hereditary land of each tribe, and the fundamental division between

43. Ibid., p.40

44. Ibid., p.46: "Thus from the viewpoint of members of the tribe of Judah, the hierarchy of social distance should be: (1) Fellow members of the tribe (lineage) of Judah; (2) Other tribes descended from Leah; (3) Tribes descended from Zilpah; (4) The tribe of Benjamin; (5) Tribes descended from Joseph; (6) Tribes descended from Bilhah; (7) Edomites; (8) Ishmaelites; (9) Moabites and Ammonites; (10) Canaanites; (11) Other Gentiles; (12) Kenites."

the two kingdoms in the north and south with a portion reserved by Benjamin in the middle is treated as a "segmentary opposition" between the descendants of Leah and the descendants of Rachel. In reality the division between the tribes must have been exceedingly difficult, but the point is that Saul and Jonathan received the kingdom as descendants of Rachel, while David and Solomon received the throne as descendants of Leah. Leach remarks: "any attempt to synthesize into a unitary whole a set of stories which purport to provide historical justification for rival political positions must end up as a text full of paradoxical contradictions."⁴⁵ The final text will then say something which was not necessarily in the mind of the editors but which was embedded in Jewish culture as a whole. Religious doctrines will have to be fitted into a tradition of dual monarchy in a land where the population is very mixed and where the Israelites, narrowly defined, are not in full political control.

The final editors [who had to reconcile these contradictions] of the Biblical texts were members of an established Jewish church whose members thought of themselves as the direct successors to the House of Judah (as manifested in David) and of the Kingdom of Judah (as governed by Rehoboam and his successors). In polar opposition to the Jewish church stands the world of the Gentiles. In polar opposition to David and Rehoboam stand Foreigners (as exemplified by e.g. Philistines). But just as in the real world there were intermediate categories such as Samaritans who were neither Jew nor Gentile, so also traditional 'history' provided intermediate categories, 'the descendants of Rachel', 'the House of Joseph',

45. Ibid., p.53

'the tribe of Benjamin', 'the Kingdom of Jeroboam', 'the Calebites', 'the Edomites'. It is in the ambiguities of the relations between the Men of Judah and these other historical-legendary-mythical peoples that we see the 'resolution' of the endogamy/exogamy incompatibility described above.⁴⁶

In order to work out this thesis concretely Leach proposes to tackle the following problem: What was the legal basis of Solomon's kingship over the whole land of Israel? Solomon's title does not derive from military conquest because in the Bible this alone is not sufficient. Land is an inalienable possession (i.e. if it is taken from you it is still yours by right) and must in the first place be given by God as it was to Abraham in Gen. 17.8. The possession of a grave site or the purchase of the land is similarly inadequate (Lev.25.23-4). The only fully legitimate form of acquiring title to land is by inheritance (Ex.32.13). Land was normally in the possession of men and was inherited by the nearest male patrilineal kin but, in the absence of sons, a man's daughters inherited before his brothers (see Num.27.7-11). The rule of endogamy then had the purpose of preventing the loss of land to non-Jews in the case of women who were land owners. Conversely it had the disadvantage that Jewish males could not acquire foreign land through marriage. But if legitimacy of title depends exclusively on inheritance, Solomon's genealogy will be of crucial importance for legitimating his title. The Old Testament genealogy of

46. Ibid., p.55

the House of David is only given piecemeal but it agrees with the continuous list given in Matthew's Gospel (because, of course, Matthew derived it from the Old Testament) listing fourteen generations between Abraham and Solomon. The only difference is that Matthew includes the names of four of their wives. Leach assumes that these four names must have had some special importance for Hellenized Jews in the first century A.D. These four women are Tamar, Rachab, Ruth and Bath-Sheba. The stories about these four women move round a single question of whether it is possible for a pure blooded Israelite to have legitimate children from a woman who is not an Israelite, or conversely whether it is possible for an Israelite woman to have an Israelite child after cohabitation with a man who is not a pure Israelite.⁴⁷ Strictly speaking in both cases it is not possible, but by means of the legal fictions of levirate rule and the principle that 'the child of a harlot has no father' the issue becomes obscure. The reason why these strange women have been mixed up with the genealogy of Solomon must be that in later Palestinean politics a doctrine of narrow endogamy made no sense. In addition, these stories, when taken together, show that Solomon is directly descended from Jacob, and also from Esau the Edomite and even from Heth the Canaanite which shows that he is the legitimate heir of all forms of land title.

Leach finally shows that the structural order of the chronological sequence of events from 1 Sam.4 to 2 Kings 2,

47. The detail of Leach's argument about these four women may be found in ibid., pp.58-63

which covers the reigns of Saul, David and the succession of Solomon, betrays a pattern of sexual and political relations. This forms the pattern of a three act play where, in each scene, an anti-King (usurper) supported by champions struggles for supremacy against a legitimate King who is also supported by champions.⁴⁸ This opposition is related to various sexual relations which illustrate a pattern of endogamy/exogamy: Israelite/Foreigner, for

48. Ibid., p.75:

Act I

Prologue: David-Abigail-Nabal (Adultery) [1 Samuel 15 (inserted)].

Scene I : David and Saul (Judah v. Benjamin [1 Samuel 4-31]).

Scene II: David and Ishbosbeth (Judah v. Benjamin + adultery with former King's concubine) [2 Samuel 1-10].

Act II

Prologue: (a) David-Bath-Sheba Uriah (Adultery) [2 Samuel 11-12].
(b) Amnon-Tamar-Abselem (Half-sibling Incest) [2 Samuel 13].

Scene I : Absalom and David (Son v. Father, + adultery with Father's concubine) [2 Samuel 14-19].

Scene II: Sheba and David (Benjamin v. Judah) [2 Samuel 20-24].

Act III

Prologue: David-Abishag (Impotence) [1 Kings 1.1-4].

Scene : Adonijah and Solomon (Half-brother v. Half-brother, + attempted adultery with former Father-King's concubine) [1 Kings 1.5-11.46].

each anti-King is tainted with foreignness which is illustrated by exogamous sexual relations. When the rightful King (Solomon) is finally established his first acts are to resolve this 'play' by killing the surviving usurper (Adonijah), the surviving champion of the House of David (Joab), and the surviving champion of the House of Saul (Shimei).

At the end Leach pleads that anyone who remains sceptical about this form of analysis should compare it with the exposition of a standard introduction to the Old Testament, that of Robert Pfeiffer,⁴⁹ who sees in these chapters nothing more exciting than a prosaic account of a sequence of actual historical events.⁵⁰

We can see from these various examples, then, how specific interests both yield knowledge for the interpreter and limit the range of knowledge. Knowledge-constitutive interests open up knowledge but also act like a pair of blinkers locating knowledge in a fixed direction. Cognitive interests are both revelatory and restrictive. In analysing New Testament exegesis it will be important to specify any such interests, and this we shall do in examining the work of Manson and Lightfoot.

49. Leach describes Pfeiffer as "a modern orthodox Biblical historian of the first rank" which is a judgment that not every Old Testament scholar would agree with.

50. E. Leach, op. cit., p.83

Summary

At the close of the first part of the thesis, the following ground has been covered:

1) We have seen that all understanding presupposes a pre-understanding.

2) The pre-understanding operative in New Testament exegesis is made up of a range of concepts which can be understood in a variety of ways in modern dogmatic theology.

3) Pre-understanding also includes practical social interests which form a perspective for the acquisition of knowledge.

PART TWO

CHAPTER FOUR

C H A P T E R F O U R

T.W.MANSON: PRE-UNDERSTANDING ANALYSED

Pre-understanding

Pre-understanding is the necessary presupposition of all understanding; knowledge is possible only because of the synthetic knowledge-constituting ability of the knowing subject. This has been the point of focus in the first part of the thesis. But to what extent was T.W.Manson aware of this?¹ In 1958 he wrote:

We have, of course, to reckon with the fact that every serious student of the Gospel will reach his own conclusions on matters of literary and historical criticism, and the views put forward will inevitably be coloured by these conclusions. There is an inescapable element of subjective choice and interpretation; but that is something which applies to any investigation of matters of history and we must just put up with it.²

1. My choice of Professor Manson (and later, Professor Lightfoot) for this analysis is arbitrary. It is not likely that he responds either better or worse than any other scholar. But he remains a suitable choice because he represents traditional British New Testament scholarship at its best, and because there are no obvious illegitimate subjective prejudices to mar his work. If Manson responds to such an analysis it is likely that other scholars could be analysed in a similar way, so that their pre-understanding may be brought to light.

2. M&P, p.14

It may seem surprising that Manson should have shown such sophistication on this matter of pre-understanding because, although he took an M.A. in philosophy at Glasgow University during the First World War, it is not likely that he would have been familiar with philosophical hermeneutics which has so far been confined to continental philosophy, and the importance of pre-understanding is still not a matter which is generally accepted by British New Testament scholars. The above quotation, however, is an isolated reference in Manson's work. For the most part, Manson spoke of the meaning of a text in terms such as, "the plain meaning". In his Presidential Address to the Oxford Society of Historical Theology in 1941 he commended Friedrich Baur for letting the documents of the New Testament (the Acts of the Apostles, in this particular case) speak for themselves and for accepting the plain meaning of their words.³ In a lecture on John's theology he wrote:

It is therefore first of all necessary to let John speak for himself and try to discover from his Epistle what he thought about the Christian revelation.⁴

3. 'Tübingen Revisited' (Presidential Address to the Oxford Society of Historical Theology) in Abstract of Proceedings for the Academic Year 1941-1942. "The plain meaning" occurs near the beginning of the lecture, but I cannot give a page reference because the paper is difficult to get hold of and I have only seen the original manuscript which is in the care of Principal Matthew Black at St Mary's College, St Andrews University.

4. P&J, p.88

Yet it should now be clear that texts do not speak quite so plainly as that. Manson seems to have shared, though he was almost certainly not conscious of the fact, the psychological hermeneutic of Schleiermacher and Dilthey.⁵ By that I mean that he does not seem to have been aware of the, in certain respects, unbridgeable gulf between himself on the one hand and the evangelist and Jesus on the other. He thought that - in principle at least - simple communication was possible between the author and the reader. In undated lecture notes for a talk which he gave to the British and Foreign Bible Society he wrote:

to find the Jesus that the disciples knew, the Jesus who walked among men and showed them the light of the glory of God in his own face - for that the only thing you need is a Bible....⁶

In an article written in 1935 (before most of Bultmann's work on the problem of the kerygma as the mediation of knowledge about Jesus) Manson wrote:

And if we can get an answer from the words and deeds of Jesus himself [about Jesus's identity]...alongside the answers of the first Christians and see how far they agree, how far the Christology of Paul and John is directly confirmed by our Lord, or how far they have merely made explicit what was already implicit in His own self-consciousness....⁷

Scholars would now agree that we can have no such answer from Jesus about his own identity, but the point here is

5. See above pp.12-16

6. These notes are in the possession of Principal Black

7. 'The Christology of the New Testament', CQ, 13, 1935, p.153

that Manson seemed to think that there was a way through to Jesus's self-consciousness.

Professor Manson was certainly aware that we can make our own ideas intrude in our interpretation of the New Testament when he says that,

perhaps the chief [difficulty] among them is the inveterate tendency in us to read our own pet ideas into the Gospels, to make Jesus in our own idealized image, to claim His authority for those beliefs and practices that we ourselves hold so dear.⁸

Manson's best criticism of such intrusions occurs in a lecture/sermon which he gave on the Bible as the Word of God, and which is in effect an attack on nineteenth century liberalism.⁹ Manson's complaint was that liberalism had "succeeded in watering down the plain meaning until all the characteristic flavouring of the Biblical teaching had disappeared."¹⁰ Manson discerned a fundamental Kantian presupposition in liberalism, which remained unstated, that the essentials of religion can be subsumed under the three categories of the nature and existence of God, the moral freedom and responsibility of man, and the immortality of the soul.¹¹ He mentioned other liberal presuppositions

8. 'The Foundation of Christianity', CQ, 11, 1933, p.14f.

9. 'The Failure of Liberalism to interpret the Bible as the Word of God' in Dug, pp.92-107

10. Ibid., p.106. My italics.

11. Ibid., p.92. See also Kant, Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone, p.145:

Natural religion, as morality (in its relation to the freedom of the agent) united with the concept of that which can make actual its final end (with

drawn from the confident scientific thought of the nineteenth century, "in particular, the doctrines of the universal reign of natural law and of biological evolution."¹²

The effect of this was to discredit all miracle stories, the resurrection, cosmic eschatology and private prayer, because all these tamper with "the endless chain of cause and effect".¹³ The effect of this, Manson says,

is to establish a thick plate-glass window between God and the world. The eye of faith can see through the window and observe that there is a God and that he appears to be benevolently disposed towards men; but nothing more substantial than signals of paternal affection and filial trust and obedience can get through.¹⁴

Manson condemns liberalism because of the effect which these presuppositions had on exegesis: "By their lives of

the concept of God as moral Creator of the world), and referred to a continuance of man which is suited to this end in its completeness (to immortality), is a pure practical idea of reason which, despite its inexhaustible fruitfulness, presupposes so very little capacity for theoretical reason that one can convince every man of it sufficiently for practical purposes and can at least require of all men as a duty that which is its effect.

12. Ibid., p.93

13. Ibid. Manson quotes the following paragraph from A. von Harnack, What is Christianity?, 2nd edition, 1901, p.28f:

We are firmly convinced that what happens in space and time is subject to the general laws of motion, and that in this sense, as an interruption of the order of Nature, there can be no such thing as 'miracles'.

It is in precisely these 'scientific' presuppositions that Bultmann has inherited part of the legacy of liberalism, see, for example, 'Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?' in Existence and Faith, p.345.

14. Ibid., p.93f.

Jesus ye shall know them."¹⁵ In Bousset's book Jesus only one third of the book was devoted to the life of Jesus; the rest described the teaching of Jesus and Christology. And that teaching was in turn reduced to, in Harnack's own words, "the kingdom of God, God as Father, and the infinite value of the human soul, and the higher righteousness showing itself in love."¹⁶ Christianity is presented not as the final revelation of God (we may remember that Harnack could make nothing of the idea of 'revelation'¹⁷), but as the highest religious achievement to date of the progressive nations of Western Europe. Bousset's progressive heroes were Jesus, Goethe and Bismark! Manson's final judgment is:

In a word, the attempt of Liberalism to deal with the history of Biblical religion was vitiated by its dogmatic presuppositions. Having taken up its axioms, which were at variance with the fundamental ideas of the Bible, there was no way of carrying the business through which did not involve picking and choosing among the Biblical material on a scale and with an arbitrariness quite impossible to justify, and then imposing interpretations on what was accepted which were very far indeed from the original intention of the words.¹⁸

The fault of liberalism, of course, was not that it had presuppositions, but that it had the wrong ones, and Manson, by contrast, it may be argued, had better ones. He seems

15. Ibid., p.92

16. A. von Harnack, What is Christianity?, p.51f., quoted by Manson in Dug., p.96

17. See above p.62

18. Dug., p.102

to be aware of this when he says that the dogmatic presuppositions of Christianity cut across the dogmatic presuppositions of natural science (and by implication those of liberalism).¹⁹ Yet Manson trusts that ultimately the two sets of presuppositions will be reconcilable.

Nor is this the only place where Manson expressed suspicions about the presuppositions of others. In Bultmann's book on Jesus²⁰ the repeated use of the words Entscheidung and Gehorsam, Manson remarked, reflected a form of neo-Calvinism which was running through Germany at that time, and which still exerts enormous influence.²¹ What Manson objected to was Bultmann's use of the ideas of 'decision' and 'obedience' as substitutes for the historicity of God's acting in history in Jesus Christ, as will become clear in our discussion of Manson's concept of 'history'. Again it is a case of "By their lives of Jesus ye shall know them."

We can see, then, that Manson had some understanding, a pre-critical understanding, of the place of pre-understanding in the process of understanding, the need for presuppositions,

19. Ibid., p.103

20. Jesus (1926), translated as Jesus and The Word (1934)

21. T.W.Manson, 'The Foundation of Christianity', CQ, 11, 1933, p.15. Manson repeated his remark on the frequency of Bultmann's use of Entscheidung in his review of Theologie des Neuen Testaments Vol 1 in JTS, L, 1949, pp.202-6.

but the need for legitimate presuppositions. It should also be pointed out that he had some rudimentary idea of the circular, dialectical structure of understanding. Manson said that in order to know what the early Church did to traditions about Jesus we must first understand the mind of the Church, but in order to understand the mind of the Church we must know what they did to the traditions about Jesus.²² At first sight this may look like a vicious logical circle. But in fact the procedure is first to propose a thesis of what the mind of the early Church might have been like (i.e. the self-consciousness which would have shown itself in certain practical redactional activities), and then we take this thesis to the texts to see whether we can find evidence to support or destroy this thesis. There results a constant interaction between hypothesis and text, which - if it is fruitful - will produce a progressive refinement of the hypothesis and a heightened understanding of the text. This is to some extent an interpretation of Manson and clarifies what is implicit in his thought. We can, however, see this process at work in the following passage in his review of Jeremias's book on the parables of Jesus:

Every authentic parable once had its own unique Sitz im Leben Jesu; but not every parable has succeeded in keeping it. Many have been given a new Sitz im Leben der alten Kirche; and this transplantation has involved sundry other modifications. This way of looking at the matter - and naturally it is one which must justify itself by results, that is by giving a reasonable and self-consistent explanation of the data - is more helpful than most. It relies on assumptions that are

22. E&G., pp.93-4

credible in themselves. It assumes, for example, that the men of the early Church did not usually invent sayings of Jesus to express their own convictions or answer their ethical problems, but rather that they selected from the mass of available material what they deemed relevant. It allows that the chosen words of Jesus may have been misunderstood and made to speak to new conditions in ways that were not intended by Jesus. But that is to say that the early Church remembered better than it understood. And the better we understand the mind of the early Church, the more likely it is that we shall be able to reverse the process that went on in the first decades, to strip off mistaken interpretations and applications, and see the utterances in their original intention. We may not be able to reconstruct the actual situation in which any one was uttered; but we may readily conceive the kind of situation in which it would be very much to the point.²³

Interest

There is a single dominating interest which forms a continuous thread throughout the work of T.W.Manson. That cognitive-interest is 'ministry'; in the first place this means the ministry of the Church with which Manson was so closely involved, and in the second place it means the ministry of Jesus which Manson saw as the archetype of the Church's ministry. That Manson should have been dominated by this interest need not be surprizing; he was ordained into the ministry of the Presbyterian Church of England in 1925 at the age of 32, he spent seven years

23. Review of the second edition of J.Jeremias, Die Gleichnisse Jesu, in NTS, 1, 1954-5, p.58. This review first appeared in the Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen, 207, 1953, pp.141-7.

working in parishes in Bethnal Green and Falstone, Northumberland, and in 1953 he acted as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of England. Despite the fact that he spent most of his life as a student or as a teacher in various academic institutions, he never lost contact with the practical business of the Church's ministry, and there is no doubt that he saw his own academic career as part of that ministry. (Of course, this ministerial experience was not the cause of his cognitive-interest - if it were, similar experience would 'cause' a similar interest in all other minister-theologians - but it does illustrate an inner connection between Manson's life and theology.) This interest in the Church's ministry was in fact Manson's motive for devoting his life to the study of the life of Jesus:

The ministry of Jesus is the standard and pattern of the Church's task; but, more than that, the Church's task is the continuation of the ministry of Jesus. All our ecclesiastical designs are to be tested against the master plan depicted in the Gospel. All our endeavours are to be understood as ways in which the Risen Lord continues his work in the world. If we want to have right conceptions of the Church, what it is, and what it has to do here and now, there is one way and one way only by which we can get them, and that is by considering Jesus of Nazareth as he is portrayed for us in the gospels, what he is and what he does there and then.²⁴

The key for understanding the ministry of Jesus, thought Manson, was that of 'servant'. The Messianic Ministry is "to help the helpless, to release the captives, to seek

24. M&P., p.14

and to save the lost." Jesus's ministry was an "unwearied giving of divine service to men in body, mind and spirit", which culminated in Jesus giving up his life.²⁵ The mark of Jesus, of his disciples and of the Church today is that of 'service':

But if the Messianic career has to be worked out in terms of service and sacrifice, the followers of the Messiah must find their destiny along the same lines. Every function of the members of Christ's Body is a diakonia, and Christ Himself is the primary holder of every diakonia.²⁶

It was in this context that Manson discussed the problem of when the Church began; was it with the calling of the disciples at the beginning of Jesus's ministry, or was it at Pentecost?²⁷ Manson says that the answer we give to this question will decide what conception we will have of the ministry - whether we see the ministry as a life of service, or as a community of the redeemed - and so will decide what conception we will have of the Church. But in practice the matter is the other way round. The view Manson had of the Church's ministry at least predisposed him to accept a particular view of Jesus's ministry, which in turn predisposed him to accept that the Church began its life during the ministry of Jesus and not at Pentecost.²⁸

25. CMin., p.18

26. Ibid., p.24

27. For a full discussion of this see 'The New Testament Basis for the Doctrine of the Church', JEH, 1, 1950, pp.1-11.

28. See, for example, CMin., p.49:

The death and resurrection of Christ have made a

Manson's views on the beginning of the Church's history and the importance this has for the nature of the Church's ministry comes out most clearly in a review by Professor Manson of a book by C.K.Barrett, The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition.²⁹ Barrett's book falls into two parts; the first deals with the place of the Spirit in the synoptic record of the life and teaching of Jesus, and the second part is an inquiry into indications of the activity of the Holy Spirit among the followers of Jesus during the ministry of Jesus which might imply the gift of the Spirit to the disciples during that ministry. Barrett thought that there was no indication that anyone other than Jesus had the Spirit during his ministry, and that there was no Church before the death of Jesus. Manson agrees that we must concur with Barrett that

vital difference to the men who are sent out and to the content of the message. This difference can be summed up by saying that new power has been released. Pentecost is the proper sequel to the Cross and Resurrection; and the immediate result of Pentecost is new fervour, new courage, new confidence manifested in the conduct of the Twelve. At the same time a new and better understanding of the meaning and the purpose of the Ministry became possible.... But the character of the Ministry itself had not changed. Its pattern had been laid down once and for all by Jesus. The Apostles had been the witnesses of the Ministry. They were now in addition the witnesses of the Resurrection.

Also, 'The New Testament Basis for the Doctrine of the Church', JEH, 1, 1950, p.3:

We begin with the fact that Jesus did gather a community round himself during the course of his ministry; and we may well ask what it was, if it was not the Church.

29. JTS, XLIX, 1948, pp.198-201

"the existence of the Church presupposes the death of Christ"³⁰ if we see the Church as "the redeemed society". But Manson proposes an alternative view of the Church as the Body of Christ, where to be a member of the Body of Christ (and so of the Church) one must participate in Jesus's Messianic Ministry.³¹ Manson wants to "posit a larger measure of continuity between the story of Jesus and the story of the Church" than Barrett will allow. Which opinion we hold depends on which ecclesial tradition we follow - though Manson's argument suggests the reverse sort of dependency:

On the one view we think of the Church as the result of the Atonement, on the other as the continuation of the Incarnation. We also tend to think that we must choose between the two views, or at least make one definitely subordinate to the other; and I suspect that the way we choose makes us Catholics or Protestants.³²

Manson claims to see a similar distinction in Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus where Schweitzer distinguishes between justification by faith and justification by incorporation into the Body of Christ. This paradox can be traced back into Jesus's ministry and Manson suggests that we cannot get rid of it. Both parts of the paradox must be held in tension. But in the first place the Church is the Body of Christ which originated when Jesus invited the first disciple to follow him. Only later did the Church become the community of the redeemed after the death of Christ:

30. C.K.Barret, op. cit., p.137, cited in Manson's review p.199

31. JTS, XLIX, 1948, p.200

32. Ibid.

"Pentecost is not the birthday of the Church: it is the Church's coming of age."³³ To this discussion about the origin of the Church can be appended Manson's argument for the meaning of 'apostle' in the context of his disagreement with Kenneth Kirk, Bishop of Oxford, about the meaning and importance of 'apostolic succession'.³⁴ Manson outlined two senses of apostolicity. The first is the Catholic sense which implies direct continuity with the Apostles; this leads to the episcopacy, apostolicity restricted to an elitist group, and Apostolic Succession. The second sense is the Evangelical one of having been sent by God, which leads to a ministry which is the duty of all Christians, and the Apostolate. Manson rejected the former view as an illegitimate restriction and supported the second theory; that is to say, as a Free Churchman, he did not reject outright the idea of apostolicity but on the contrary thought it a necessary mark of the Church. Manson thought that the clue to the meaning of apostolos was the meaning of the word which lies behind apostolos in the Septuagint, i.e. shaliach. Manson discussed the evidence for the meaning of shaliach³⁵ and concluded that it means: i) someone who performs on behalf of someone else, ii) the activities of the shaliach, and sometimes the duration of the activities is prescribed, iii) the commission is not transferable - when the shaliach dies

33. Ibid.

34. CMin., Ch.2, pp.31-52

35. Ibid., pp.35-43, derived from K.H.Rengstorf in Kittel's Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, I 397-448

the commission returns to the principal, iv) shaliach is a term of function not of status, v) the commission is exercised in missionary work.³⁶ This picture, of course, is in perfect continuity with Manson's concept of the Church and its ministry, but it can be argued that while he has provided some valuable insights into the Church's ministry Manson has not necessarily proved his case. It may well be that apostolos in the New Testament may mean something rather different from shaliach in Jewish usage, and that 'apostle' in later theology may mean something further again. Indeed Manson himself accepted that we should not necessarily accept something just because it is in the New Testament.³⁷ While Manson's interest in 'ministry' has allowed him to see things in the text of the New Testament which others had not previously seen, it is also a limiting factor: interest can blinker one to what lies outside the perspective of one's interest.

The homogeneity which Manson sees in the Church and in Jesus's ministry is taken yet further to include the teaching of Jesus:

The life and teaching of Jesus illuminate one another, and the outline of the course of the Ministry...tends to confirm the interpretation of the teaching which I have already suggested.³⁸

Christian ethics, in the same way, is grounded in and illuminated by Jesus's ministry:

36. Ibid., p.43f.

37. Ibid., p.85f.

38. SerM., p.65

'Love as I have loved you' calls for a love which has forgotten the meaning of self-regard, of what we call 'looking after number one'. It is totally unselfish. It is love of the quality that marks the Ministry of Jesus all through and reaches its crowning manifestation on the Cross.³⁹

It was Manson's interest, then, in the contemporary ministry of the Church to the world that controlled his work on the New Testament. The concepts which make up pre-understanding for a New Testament exegete were, in Manson's case, all oriented towards 'ministry'. We shall see this in some detail in the following sections of this chapter, but let us note here the connections which Manson made between 'ministry' and those other concepts. Manson's chief interest in eschatology was in realized eschatology and he maintained that the Kingdom of God in the Gospels means the exercise of the ministry here and now.⁴⁰ The principle significance of Jesus's resurrection was that it implied that Jesus was still present and active in the Church's ministry.⁴¹ Revelation took place in history and particularly in the life and ministry of Jesus.⁴²

39. E&G., p.63

40. See, for example, 'The Christology of the New Testament', CQ, 13, 1935, p.158:

His ministry is no mere prelude to the coming of the Kingdom, nor even a preparation for it: it is the Kingdom at work in the world.

41. 'The Bible and Immortality', CQ, 32, 1954, p.15:

Along with this perpetual presence of Christ living on in the Church there goes the picture of the exalted Christ seated at the right hand of God in the heavenly places. The risen life of the Lord is lived on two planes.

42. P&J., p.60:

In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus there is given a new revelation of God's nature.

Manson himself told the story of how F.C.Burkitt came to Westminster College, Cambridge while Manson was a student there. During the discussion which followed Burkitt's lecture, Burkitt was asked about Schweitzer's views on thorough-going eschatology and it was suggested that if Christ's life is conceived on the lines of thorough-going eschatology then it can only be described as a gigantic mistake. Burkitt replied: "Mistake or no mistake it has sent Schweitzer himself to Africa as a medical missionary." Manson's conclusion was that what matters concerning the story of Jesus is not the eschatological theory but the ministerial practice.⁴³ The same could be said of T.W.Manson: it is not his theological ideas that matter so much as his ministerial practice, except that the two coincide to the extent that they are mutually supportive.

History

The question we must now ask is, What concept of 'history' did T.W.Manson bring to the text of the New Testament? It is this question more than anything which has differentiated recent New Testament theologies. In practice we have to reconstruct Manson's pre-understanding of 'history' from what he said about the problem of the historical value of the Gospels and the facticity of the life of Jesus.

43. SGE., p.9

We have already remarked (p.155f.) that Manson declared that the test of liberalism - or any other theological 'ism' - is what it makes of the life of Jesus, what sort of a history it could write about Jesus. Just as liberalism "was predisposed against a God who intervenes in the world, or in history", so Manson was predisposed towards such a view.⁴⁴ Nor was his predisposition a blind one for he saw liberalism not as a perversion, but as the destruction of Christianity:

That God...is constantly watching over the course of history; that he actively governs its development; that in Christ he has made the decisive intervention - these convictions are so fundamental to the Christian religion that to give them up is not to reform Christianity but to abandon it.⁴⁵

We may outline Manson's general outlook on the problem of history and the New Testament by observing some remarks in The Servant Messiah. Manson saw himself in the first place as a historian, and wanted to understand Jesus in his historico-socio-political context, a context which was bordered by the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey in 63 B.C. and by the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 A.D.⁴⁶ The reliability of "the facts presented in the Gospels" is supported by what we know of Israel's history from other sources,⁴⁷ but Manson also wants to take account

44. Dug., p.95

45. Ibid., p.103

46. SerM., p.1

47. Ibid., p.10

of the Israelite conviction that "God was 'making history'".⁴⁸
 This does not, of course, commit Manson to accept
 the historical accuracy of everything contained in the
 Gospels, but it does commit him to the importance and
 indispensability of a core of historically reliable material
 in the New Testament. Manson said in a talk for BBC Radio:

Christianity is rooted in history, and the tap-root is
 in what we call the Passion of Christ. It is therefore
 of the highest moment that we should have as true a
 picture as possible of those epoch making events
 which altered so drastically the whole course of human
 affairs.⁴⁹

Manson did not analyse his own understanding of 'history',
 but the individual character of his understanding emerges
 in his discussion with and criticism of the positions
 taken up by other New Testament scholars. None of these
 scholars, however, with the exception of Rudolf Bultmann,
 is still alive, for the Post-Bultmannians, whose ideas
 are so influential at the moment, became widely known in
 this country only after Manson's death.

Professor Manson discussed the views of Albert
 Schweitzer and William Wrede, together with form criticism
 in general, in his article on *Leben-Jesu-Forschung* which
 was published in the *Festschrift* presented to C.H.Dodd
 in 1956, only two years before Manson died.⁵⁰ It could

48. *Ibid.*, p.38

49. 'Steadfastly Towards Jerusalem', 1st talk of a series
 for Holy Week given on 19th March, 1951.

50. *LifeJ.*, pp.211-221.

be said that Manson had spent more than a decade in trying to write this article; the first draft appeared in the Expository Times in 1942,⁵¹ and a revised and much altered version was given as a lecture at Westminster College, Cambridge in 1949⁵² before the final polished version was published in 1956. The chapter headed 'Thoroughgoing Scepticism and Thoroughgoing Eschatology' in Schweitzer's Quest of the Historical Jesus presented the following disjunction:

The inconsistency between the public life of Jesus and his Messianic claim lies either in the nature of the Jewish Messianic conception, or in the representation of the Evangelist. There is, on the one hand, the eschatological solution, which at one stroke raises the Marcan account as it stands, with all its disconnectedness and inconsistencies, into genuine history; and there is, on the other hand, the literary solution, which regards the incongruous dogmatic element as interpolated by the earliest Evangelist into the tradition and therefore strikes out the Messianic claim altogether from the historical life of Jesus. Tertium non datur.⁵³

Manson is understandably reluctant to accept this disjunction, because on the one hand one must doubt that Jesus knew what he was up to, and on the other hand one must doubt the reliability of the first of the synoptic evangelists.

51. 'Is it possible to write a Life of Jesus', ExpT, LIII, May 1942, pp.248-251, reprinted as 'The Life of Jesus: A Study of the Available Materials', SGE, pp.13-27.

52. 'The Quest of the Historical Jesus - Continued', SGE, pp.3-12.

53. A.Schweitzer, Quest of the Historical Jesus, p.335

Manson maintains that the disjunction will not stand because it does not exhaust all the possibilities: tertium datur. Manson is more concerned, however, to discuss the developments which arose out of the solutions proposed by Schweitzer and Wrede, which are, respectively, Realized Eschatology and Form Criticism.⁵⁴ Form Criticism, Manson asserted, has done about all it can, and more than it should have done. If it had satisfied itself with no more than cataloguing units of form in the Gospels it would have provided a good deal of interesting but unremarkable information. "A paragraph of Mark", he remarks, "is not a penny the better or worse as historical evidence for being labelled 'apophthegm' or 'pronouncement story' or 'paradigm'."⁵⁵ But Form Criticism got mixed up with two other things; one was K.L.Schmidt's attack on the Marcan framework,⁵⁶ and the other was the use Sitz im Leben. Manson refuses to accept Schmidt's contention that, with the exception of the Passion narrative, Mark had contrived the chronological order of the events reported in his Gospel. Manson disputes this because he finds it difficult to believe as literary history. By the time the first Gospel was written - between 58 and 65 A.D., suggests Manson - there were people who wanted something more than "disconnected anecdotes", they wanted "the story of the Ministry as a whole."⁵⁷ Even within twenty or thirty years

54. T.W.Manson, LifeJ., p.212

55. Ibid.

56. K.L.Schmidt, Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu (1919)

57. T.W.Manson, LifeJ., p.213

of the end of the ministry, Christians were interested in the course of the ministry for its own sake. This, of course, is unprovable one way or the other; the only proof for the early Church's interest in the chronological order of Jesus's ministry is the order to be found in the Gospels and this is precisely what is being questioned. However, Manson finds it extremely improbable that the first generation of Christians should have been uninterested in the ministry to the extent of totally forgetting everything about its sequence, while the second generation of Christians were sufficiently interested to expect the presentation of an orderly account of the ministry.⁵⁸

From his own personal experience Manson was conscious of remembering his own life as a series of vivid, important experiences, and that he also remembered the order in which they occurred. It may be objected that although we remember our own life in this way, we do not remember the life of another so vividly, but Manson thought that Peter's own reminiscences formed the basis of Mark's Gospel.⁵⁹

Manson concludes that: "Prolonged study of Mark goes to confirm this a priori probability",⁶⁰ an assertion which has been challenged on logical grounds by Norman Perrin, as we shall see in a moment.

58. Manson writes in SGE., p.27:

Nevertheless, before the end of the first century we have gospels which offer a narrative of the Ministry. We have what Luke calls in his Preface a diegesis of the things that happened, a detailed narrative that links the Ministry with the Passion. How was the transition from kerygma to diegesis made? There lies one of the most fascinating as it is one of the most vital of Gospel problems.

59. SGE., pp.33-45

60. LifeJ., p.213

The idea of Sitz im Leben demands that individual pericopes are to be understood within the context of the interests, problems and practical needs of the people who first used them. While some parts of the Gospels would have been remembered and preserved because of the relevance they had in the primitive Christian community - and Manson, as we have seen in his review of Jeremias's book on the parables (p.158f. above), found it perfectly understandable that the Church should have put remembered material to new and sometimes inappropriate uses - Manson also suggests that some material about Jesus would have been remembered for its own sake, because of the interest of the Christian community in Jesus as a person. However, advocates of Sitz im Leben suggest, and this Manson will not in general allow, that this Gospel material originated in the interests of the early Church. It was for this reason that Manson wrote,

we should be prepared to look first for a Sitz im Leben Jesu or a Sitz im Leben des jüdischen Volkes, and not resort automatically to a Sitz im Leben der alten Kirche.⁶¹

61. Ibid., p.214. Manson went on to say that this is, a procedure which may easily involve us in circular arguments; since the alleged modifications or inventions in the Gospels are used to define the positions of the early Church, and these positions are then used to account for the phenomena presented by the Gospels.

Yet this is precisely the procedure Manson himself adopted in his review of Jeremias's book on the parables of Jesus (p.158f. above), a procedure which we found was perfectly justifiable provided that it was not abused. It does mean, however, that Manson was not justified in using this argument against the advocates of Sitz im Leben, and that he was being self-contradictory in doing so.

There are a great many utterances in the writings of Paul which could have been ascribed to Jesus, and yet not one of them is. The early Church certainly altered material, but did it create original material? Manson thought it much more likely that Jesus had an effect on those who lived with him and that this was carried through to the kerygma, so that the Church remembered what it wanted to remember from a broader mass of material. In fact we know so little about the early Church that to prove something about the life of Jesus on the basis of what we know about the literary activities of the Church is to prove what is better known from that which is less well known.⁶² On this attempt to describe what the Church got up to in the first two or three decades of its existence, Manson said that,

there is a good deal to be said for abandoning the study of the branch of fiction known as Überlieferungsgeschichte in favour of an unbiased examination of the evidence supplied by the Gospels.⁶³

We must now interrupt our discussion of Form Criticism as such to examine what Manson said about Überlieferungsgeschichte. In the first place he did not mean the same as Pannenberg (see p.113 above). Pannenberg's concept refers to a transmission of traditions which links us with the first century and also with earlier Jewish history; it is a characterization of history as a whole. Manson restricts

62. SGE., p.7. See also F.G.Downing, The Church and Jesus.

63. Ibid., p.8 Note the use of the word "unbiased".

the idea to what happened in the first few decades of the Church. Manson's bland dismissal of the attempt to describe the activities of the early Church as "a branch of fiction" is particularly unfortunate not only because the charge cannot be justified in its entirety, not only because it fails to do justice to the proponents of Form Criticism, but also because it contradicts passages that Manson himself wrote elsewhere. He did not attempt a thoroughgoing analysis of what the early Church got up to,⁶⁴ indeed he was very conscious of the limitations of our ability to do this, but Manson was aware of some of the activities of the Church. In his review of Die Gleichnisse Jesu by Joachim Jeremias already referred to, Manson tried to guess what the "mind of the Church" might have been like and how it might have dealt with the original Gospel material. Manson commended Jeremias for his attempt to justify such a hypothesis by an examination of the evidence. He was conscious of the editorial activity of the evangelists and of the changes undergone by some of the oral and written matter with which they were dealing. Manson was aware that the Sermon on the Mount was a "composition", though he

64. The most comprehensive attempt at this so far has been Birger Gerhardsson's Memory and Manuscript, Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity. Gerhardsson, however, has been criticized for his use of Rabbinic sources by Morton Smith, 'A Comparison of Early Christian and Early Rabbinic Tradition', JBL, 82, 1963, pp.169-176. Gerhardsson has replied to Morton Smith in Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity (Lund, 1965). See also the criticism of W.D.Davies, The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount, Appendix XV, pp.464-480.

insisted that it was not a "fabrication".⁶⁵ Yet it is also true to say that Manson did not pay enough attention to possible faults of memory in early tradition.⁶⁶ None the less he did have some understanding of the tradition which lies behind the Gospels as we now have them. In what was originally a schools broadcast for the BBC Manson said:

The gap between the events and the earliest of our four gospels, Mark, is not more than thirty to thirty five years; and, as we saw, we have good reason to think that the gap is bridged by the spoken words of those who could tell what they had seen and heard, and by written records that were quite probably made before the Gospels as we know them were composed.... The speeches in Acts take us back within months of the events. Of course, we wish we had far more reports than we have from the very earliest days; but what we have is very good and takes us back a very long way.⁶⁷

When Manson said that Überlieferungsgeschichte is a branch of fiction he presumably meant that we cannot know with certainty whether the Church invented parts of the Gospels for its own purposes. But this is to suppose that we may assume the reliability of the content of the Gospels unless the contrary can be clearly demonstrated. It is precisely this assumption which has been challenged by Norman Perrin (who was at one time one of Manson's students).

65. E&G., p.50

66. Ibid., pp.50 and 101

67. 'Events in the Gospels - II' in Jesus Christ: History, Interpretation and Faith, p.25. Manson's belief in the general reliability of the Gospels is supported by Gerhardsson (see n.64).

At the mid-point in the article in the Dodd Festschrift, Manson wrote: "The farther we travel along the Wredestrasse, the clearer it becomes that it is the road to nowhere."⁶⁸ In an article called 'The Wredestrasse becomes the Hauptstrasse', Perrin has noted the irony that Manson's defence of "the business of treating the Gospels - as wholes and in detail - as historical documents"⁶⁹ was placed immediately before Bornkamm's 'Enderwartung und Kirche im Matthäusevangelium' in the Dodd Festschrift, which was an attempt to show that this could not be done, and which began the movement known as Redaktionsgeschichte.⁷⁰ The methodological procedure of Redaktionsgeschichte is not to begin with the life of Jesus and to assume the historical reliability of the Gospels, but to begin with the final redaction and to move backwards in time to find a cause, if possible, in the circumstances of the primitive Church which would account for the origination of any particular part of the Gospels. Only that which necessarily goes back to the life of Jesus can be accepted as being historically reliable, and this approach, writes Perrin, is not one that promises very much in the way of knowledge of the historical Jesus and his ministry, and it must be stressed that it is indeed the case that the knowledge of the historical Jesus which is at issue in the current discussion of the "question of the historical Jesus" is very limited knowledge.⁷¹

68. LifeJ., p.216

69. Ibid., p.219

70. Ibid., pp.222-260

71. N.Perrin, 'The Wredestrasse becomes the Hauptstrasse: Reflections on the Reprinting of the Dodd Festschrift', JR, LXVI, 1966, p.299.

When all that could have been included by editors has been removed, there remains only the parables, the Kingdom proclamation, the Lord's prayer, involvement with tax collectors and sinners, some aspects of discipleship, some idiosyncrasies of speech, and the crucifixion. This list conforms to what Perrin elsewhere has called the 'criterion of dissimilarity', i.e. authentic material must be dissimilar to what we know of first century Judaism and apostolic Christianity.⁷² J.M.Robinson has also criticized Manson on the same grounds because redaction criticism "automatically shifts the burden of proof...the detection of such a sufficient 'cause' in the life of the Church would place the burden of proof upon the person who wished to affirm the existence of another 'cause' of the item under consideration lying still further back, i.e. back in the life of Jesus."⁷³ Yet the criterion of dissimilarity illegitimately excludes any material which Jesus may have repeated or adapted from Judaism, just as it excludes authentic material which still had relevance for the problems of the Church even after Jesus's death.⁷⁴

72. N.Perrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus, p.39ff. See also the trenchant criticism of Perrin by R.S.Barbour, Traditio-Historical Criticism of the Gospels, pp.5-13.

73. J.M.Robinson, A New Quest of the Historical Jesus, p.38 n.1

74. Manson had in fact answered Perrin and Robinson proleptically when he wrote:

The question of the Sitz im Leben, the concrete historical situation to which a Gospel story or saying really belongs, is of the highest importance. As it is usually posed the question requires us to decide between a Sitz im Leben Jesu and a Sitz im Leben der alten Kirche. In most cases it would be

Similarly there is not an automatic shift in the burden of proof of authenticity. In other words, the fact that the Church may have created some material does not entail that it must have done so. There may also have been a continuity of adaptation, as Manson suggested (though it is true that Manson could not tolerate the view that the Church fabricated any part of the Gospels).⁷⁵ Whether we assume the authenticity of historical material in the Gospels until it is proved to be inauthentic, or whether we assume its inauthenticity until it is shown to be necessarily authentic as Perrin and Robinson insist, is a matter which cannot be decided on purely logical grounds. We must make our choice on the basis of what we consider to be the balance of probabilities. To that extent Manson was on as safe ground as is possible when he thought it likely that the Church would not have been the original creator of the Gospels, but would have selected from a larger mass of material. Although it may well be argued that he should have been generally more sceptical than he was.

relevant to add a third possibility, a Sitz im Leben des jüdischen Volkes. The question is not one that can be answered a priori, but only after very careful examination of each case. In particular it is necessary to be on guard against the tacit assumption, all too easily made, that the possible historical contexts of a story or saying are mutually exclusive, that if it can be shown that a saying is the mot juste for some Church situation in the fifties of the first century, it cannot also be the actual spoken word of Jesus in some situation in the Ministry. The truth is that the history of the Church and the story of the Ministry overlap. (SGE., p.23f.)

75. See Manson's review of Jeremias in NTS, 1, 1954-5, p.59:

It is significant for the general question of the reliability of the Gospels as historical documents that it is absorption and adaptation of existing material with which we are presented, and not the creation of new material ex nihilo.

Professor Manson was certainly unhappy with the possibility that the Christian faith might depend on the literary creativity of the evangelists and he shared the conviction of the author of 2 Peter that "we have not followed cunningly devised myths" (2 Pt.1.16). Indeed it was precisely this problem that brought Manson's attention to the question of the historical reliability of the Gospels. In a review of a book by Alan Richardson, Manson wrote:

If we once admit the distinction between meaning that is inherent in the event and meanings foisted upon it - with the further possibility of events created to be the bearers of the meaning it is desired to convey - it becomes the more urgent to discover what did happen in any given case.⁷⁶

If we now return to Manson's article in the Dodd Festschrift we must note that he does not really discuss at all Schweitzer's opinion that Mark reported Jesus's eschatological views correctly and that Jesus was in consequence "a deluded fanatic".⁷⁷ But Manson proposes that we can account for Jesus's eschatological sayings in a way which does not involve Mark's unreliability or Jesus's fanaticism. This is the way of 'realized eschatology', which we shall discuss in the later section on 'eschatology'. What emerges from our examination of Manson vis-à-vis Wrede, Schmidt, Perrin and J.M. Robinson is that Manson was unable to relinquish the fundamental historicity of the

76. Review of A. Richardson, The Miracle Stories of the Gospels, in JTS., XLIII, 1942, p.93

77. LifeJ., p.216

Gospel narratives. At the centre of Christianity is a man who said certain things, did certain things, and had certain things done to him. This is what Manson holds fast, and this is why he assumes the essential authenticity of the Gospels as historical evidence. He does not want to protect this evidence from rigorous historical criticism, but neither does he want to see it dismissed as evidence.⁷⁸

Manson's concept of 'history' comes out best in his review of the first volume of Bultmann's Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Manson wrote in his notice that it was a very important book, though he hesitated to put it into the hands of theological students. He found much to appreciate there, but he also found its structure lopsided because of the way Bultmann had dealt with the history of Jesus in only 30 pages, and Manson found much to object to in Bultmann's concept of 'history'. The almost total reduction of Historie in Jesus's life had led to an equally exclusive concentration on what Jesus had said or, better, what the evangelists said he had said:

78. Ibid., p.219f.:

All this means that we are driven back to the business of treating the Gospels - as wholes and in detail - as historical documents, using all the resources of exact scholarship and strict historical method for the task. We need not ask that the documents should be exempt from any of the tests that are applied to other ancient historical texts; but we must ask that they should be treated seriously as evidence for the events they purport to describe, and in the first instant as evidence for those events rather than for the states of mind of first century Christians.

This divorce of history and faith means that history becomes pointless and faith arbitrary. The original disciples decided to follow Jesus for reasons which remain obscure. The primitive community decided to believe in the crucified Jesus as the risen Christ for reasons which are equally obscure. As we are told on p.76 "the community had to overcome the scandal of the Cross and did so in the Easter faith". Whether the Easter faith has any basis in fact or whether it is a compensatory fantasy which the Church created as a counterpoise to the hard fact of the Crucifixion we are not told, and we are given to understand that the question, "wie sich diese Entscheidungstat im einzelnen vollzog, wie der Osterglaube bei den einzelnen 'Jüngern' entstand...ist sachlich von keiner Bedeutung." This need not surprise us, for we are moving in a world where all the really important historical events have been consigned to the realm of the legendary: Peter's confession, the Transfiguration, the Baptism and the Temptations, the Triumphal Entry, and to a large extent the Passion (p.27). When faith has become arbitrary decision independent of history, historical criticism can afford to become arbitrary too.⁷⁹

It is clear that Manson would not tolerate a distinction between Historie and Geschichte. It often appears that by 'history' Manson slipped back into the historicist meaning of Historie, wie es eigentlich gewesen. Certainly Manson has no sophisticated idea of history as linguistic tradition or anything of that sort, but there are a number of passages in his work where he explicitly binds Historie with Geschichte (without ever actually referring to this German distinction) and he does this for the sake of faith, for the sake of the ministry, as the following passage makes clear:

79. JTS., L, 1949, p.204

It may be granted that the materials available are nothing like sufficient for a biography of Jesus. Even so, scholars come back to those materials, determined that if they will not furnish a biography, they shall at least provide a portrait. It is recognized that the essential problem of Christianity has to do not with ecclesiastical questions of orders or belief or ritual, but with the historical question of a person and a life. The supreme task of N.T. scholarship is to make Jesus Christ Crucified a living reality in the thought of our own time, to bring out all that there is of fact and meaning in those three words; and the supreme task of Christian preaching is but little different to make Jesus Christ Crucified a living reality in the lives of men and women in these days, to renew in them the awe and wonder, the faith and courage, which He inspired in men and women who knew Him in the days of His flesh.⁸⁰

There is certainly a hint here of Harnack's view that Christ communicates with us by the force of his personality,⁸¹ but it is equally clear that there is here no Bultmannian distinction between history and kerygma. In Chambers Encyclopaedia he wrote, "the gospel is a combination of historic fact and religious interpretation, these two features being present from the outset and quite inseparable one from another."⁸²

If we cast our minds back for a moment to the various concepts of history proposed by German theologians in

80. 'The Foundation of Christianity', CQ., 11, 1933, p.12

81. See 'Jesus Christ' in Chambers Encyclopaedia, vol 8, p.84b, where Manson thinks that we can reconstruct the personality of Jesus from the Gospels.

82. Ibid., p.83b

Chapter Two, we will notice that Manson clearly and explicitly differs from Harnack and Bultmann, as he would have done from Heinrich Ott. Nor would he have been too happy with the hesitant approach to the historical Jesus made by Fuchs and Ebeling. He seems to have been closest to Barth and Pannenberg in his sense of the importance of history, but we shall now see that Manson differed markedly from Barth in his understanding of 'revelation'.

Revelation

Harnack's concept of 'revelation', as we have seen, was a very simple one - there was no such thing:

Revelation is not a scientific concept; science can neither draw together under one generic concept nor explain in terms of 'revelation' the God-consciousness of the paradoxical preaching of founders of religion and prophets (and religious experience in general).⁸³

Harnack had placed, as Manson puts it, "a thick plate-glass window between God and the world" so there could be no movement of revealed knowledge from God to man.⁸⁴ The only knowledge man could have of God would be some 'natural' truth, as Kant suggested. Bousset and other members of the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule were unable to make any special claim for a Christian revelation:

When all history has thus been brought to a level it is impossible to believe in a Divine revelation, in the old acceptance of the term, which restricted

83. Harnack's last letter to Barth quoted in H.M.Rumscheidt, Revelation and Theology, p.53

84. T.W.Manson, Dug., p.93

revelation to one special province.... Only a bold step forward will save us. If the science of history demands that the seals be broken and the special revelation be surrendered, then we must seriously consider the idea of a universal revelation.⁸⁵

The significance of Jesus, according to Harnack, was that he gave "perfectly simple expression to profound and all-important truths."⁸⁶ But Manson was afraid that if revelation was precluded by science then it may prove to be the case that science might also decide that religious belief was a matter of the constitution of one's glands. Manson was quite clear that unless revelation could be given a more concrete, a more objective base, then Christianity would become untenable. He set himself against the liberals in the following way:

This means that we no longer think of Jesus as the religious genius who clearly perceived and forcefully proclaimed a few simple but profound truths about God, man and the world; we are led rather to say something like, 'God was in Christ teaching the world the knowledge of himself'.⁸⁷

Manson differed from Barth in two respects. The first was on the matter of our response to revelation, and the second was on the relationship between revelation and history. On the first issue, Barth proposed that

85. W.Bousset, What is Religion?, p.289f., quoted in Manson, Dug., p.94f.

86. A. von Harnack, What is Christianity?, p.74, quoted in Manson, Dug., p.99

87. A review by Manson of W.A.Curtis, Jesus the Teacher in JTS., XLV, 1944, p.218

scripture speaks the Word from God which demands absolute obedience. Manson agreed that scripture is the "linguistic vehicle" for the Word of God,⁸⁸ but his writings are less than unanimous about our proper response to it. Commenting on Bultmann's Jesus, Manson said:

Seeing that he is one of the more advanced form-critics it is at first sight surprising that he managed to write a couple of hundred pages on his subject. Now the teaching of Jesus, as Bultmann interprets it, turns out to be essentially that neo-Calvinism that is working with such force in Germany at the present time. Words like Entscheidung and Gehorsam appear with almost monotonous regularity on page after page, and the Gospel becomes a demand for decision, for complete submission and absolute obedience to the will of God. I pass no judgment on the Barthian movement and its ideas. I merely note the fact that when a N.T. scholar living in the context of those ideas sits down to write a book about Jesus, they come out as surely as if he had sat down to write a book about Karl Barth.⁸⁹

Manson never wrote an extended review of anything by Barth and it is impossible to discover whether Manson had any very detailed understanding of Barth's theology, but it is certain that he was suspicious of Barth's demand for obedience to the Word of God, and this may account for his reluctance to call scripture the 'Word of God', an expression which he used only rarely. A more accurate statement by

88. 'Translating the New Testament', a review of Ronald Knox's translation in the Manchester Guardian, 26.3.46

89. 'The Foundation of Christianity', CQ., 11, 1933, p.15.

Manson of our relation to scripture can be found in a lecture on Paul:

Again the hearing of this good news has its proper response from man in pistis (πίστις), which is not correct opinion, but trust, i.e. the kind of submission to God that is based on the assurance of his love, not like Islam a mere self-abasement before his power.⁹⁰

If one toned down the language a little, it would be possible to substitute 'Barth' for 'Islam'. Manson was also repelled by any tendency to make revelation remote and objectified; revelation is objective, but it is also human and personal. In notes for an unpublished lecture on 'The Greek Conception of Salvation with Special Reference to Athanasius's De Incarnatione Verbi', Manson says that λόγος has a double meaning. It means i) the pre-existent world creator, and ii) the human crucified Jesus. The trouble began when the two separate meanings were identified and i) took over ii). "At one time", Manson wrote, "the λόγος is the actual historical person with whom Christians enter into a personal relation." When meaning i) takes over meaning ii) salvation becomes cosmological and not personal. This is why Manson made the historical Jesus the focus of revelation, and why he found the kerygmatic, de-personalized salvation of Bultmann so unsatisfactory. Revelation is of a person⁹¹ and between persons.⁹²

90. P&J., p.31

91. 'The Nature and Authority of the Canonical Scriptures' in A Companion to the Bible, 1st edition edited by T.W.Manson, p.9

92. 'Some Reflections on Biblical Religion' in Memoirs and Proceedings of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society (Manchester Memoirs), XCVI, 1954-5, p.10

For revelation to be a revelation for man it must take place in history, and nowhere did T.W.Manson claim that any event, or anything which purported to be an event, in the life of Jesus should be excluded from historical and critical examination. But what is revelatory for Manson is not so much the resurrection, as it is for Barth and, in a different sense, for Pannenberg, as the ministry of Jesus. This is where God is revealed, and in a subsidiary sense Manson would be bound to say that the ministry of the Church today is also revelatory in so far as it copies faithfully Jesus's own ministry. Again we see Manson's interest in 'ministry' regulating his pre-understanding. Manson sums up his position as follows:

The Good News is the announcement of a historical event, as that 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son'; or that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself'; or that 'If I by the finger of God cast out demons, why then the Kingdom of God has come upon you'. What is claimed by Jesus, and by his followers on his behalf, is that in his Ministry God has revealed himself in saving action. This revelation does not stand by itself. It is unique in quality but it is not solitary. It is the crowning example of something which, the Bible declares, is always liable to occur in history. But if God does reveal himself in history, it is there if anywhere that we must find him. If God did in fact speak through the prophets we cannot absolve ourselves from the task of finding out as exactly as we can what was said and what it meant. If God did in fact speak to us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus it is vitally important to know as fully and as accurately as possible what sort of life, death and resurrection became the medium of the divine revelation. There is no escape from the historical inquiry. And there is no need to

be despondent about its prospects. We may venture to hope that as it progresses, we shall find that the Ministry of Jesus is a piece of real history in the sense that it is fully relevant to the historical situation of its own time, to the hopes and fears, the passionate convictions and the gnawing needs of our Lord's own contemporaries. And just because it was so relevant to their time, we shall find it relevant to our own.⁹³

Bultmann's concept of 'revelation' came in for a good deal of criticism when Manson reviewed the second volume of Theologie des Neuen Testaments which deals principally with Johannine theology.⁹⁴ Manson's complaint is that Bultmann's concept has no content. Bultmann says that Jesus "als der Offenbarer Gottes nichts offenbart, als dass er der Offenbarer ist" (p.413). Bultmann isolates the fact that Jesus is the Revealer of God from what is revealed in his words and actions. It can be noted here that Manson did not see the sayings of Jesus as ends in themselves but as illustrations or elucidations of the ministry.⁹⁵ The only clue to the content of

93. LifeJ., p.220f. The last sentence is a very considerable assumption and indicates Manson's 'hermeneutische Kontinuum' (hermeneutical axis), i.e. that which links the reader with the text, that which makes the text relevant. But this particular axis is unhistorical because it fails to take account of the historical gulf between Jesus's contemporaries and ourselves.

94. JTS., 3, 1952, pp.246-9

95. Review of W.A.Curtis, Jesus the Teacher, JTS., XLV, 1944, p.218f.

revelation in Bultmann is the faith that it evokes. Yet faith does not have very much content either: it is "Entscheidung gegen die Welt für Gott" (p.423). Manson, however, insists that John makes the creative love of God the content of revelation: "The commandment 'Love one another as I have loved you' has its basis in the statement 'As the Father has loved me so I have loved you' (Jn 15.9 & 12)", and Manson wishes that Bultmann had made as much of the fatherly love of God in his account of revelation as he had of the brotherly love of believers in his account of their faith.⁹⁶ Manson developed this theme of 'love' elsewhere:

That is to say the whole life and death of Jesus is to be regarded as a revelation of God's love. There above all we are to see the love of God in action; there we are to find the demonstration in concreto that God really does love us. In this connection it is significant, as Büchsel notes, that John does not use the verb φανερώω ('manifest' = 'reveal') of the Apostolic preaching. The revelation is once and for all in and through Jesus.⁹⁷

And even more specifically here:

And what is this revelation? It is the manifestation of the truth concerning God: and the truth is that God is love. And how is it manifested? Not in the mere statement of the proposition 'God is love', but in the fact that the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel is in the first instance perfectly and completely the object of God's love; and then in His own life the perfect manifestation of that love to men, in the laying down

96. JTS., 3, 1952, p.248

97. P&J., p.93

of His life for them.⁹⁸

While Manson never approached an identification of revelation and history as Pannenberg has done (see p.116f.), he did make it clear that God reveals himself in history and to that extent he is closer to Pannenberg than to any other dogmatic theologian. The following quotation on Jesus's use of the Old Testament shows how close he comes to Pannenberg in general intent:

The matter can be put in this way that the whole corpus of the Hebrew scriptures...is regarded as the revelation of the divine purpose. Rightly understood, it illuminates history; and history rightly understood, refers back to it. Since the revelation is from God, who knows the end from the beginning, and in whom there is no variableness, we may expect that on all vital points a genuine continuity and consistency will be discernible throughout the process of revelation and the course of history, that what is fulfilled in the life of Christ is foreordained by God from the foundation of the world.⁹⁹

Manson had nothing to say about the total revelation of God's nature which will ultimately take place at the end of time, with which Pannenberg is so concerned, and the reason for this is that 'ministry' is Manson's focus of attention and it is in the ministry of Jesus that Manson looks for and finds the revelation of God.

98. 'The Christology of the New Testament', CQ., 13, 1935, p.162

99. 'The Old Testament in the Teaching of Jesus', BJRL., 34, 1952, p.312f.

Resurrection and Miracles

Before an exegete can opt for one interpretation or another of the miracle stories in the Gospels (and a fortiori the story of the resurrection) he must decide whether miracles are inherently incredible or whether they are, in principle, possible events in the world. Whether we think Jesus actually performed miracles is another matter again. But for Harnack and Bultmann there is no problem here because miracles, by definition if you accept their 'scientific' view of the world, are impossible. T.W.Manson, however, was not prepared to preclude the possibility of miracles in this way. He believed that if you, provisionally at least, accept the view that God created the world and man, that he governs the course of history and that he made the decisive intervention in Christ, then "we at once reopen the question about 'miracles' and 'special revelations'".¹⁰⁰ Of course, for some Christians, this argument is circular, because one of the reasons for accepting that Christ is God's "decisive intervention" is that he performed miracles and was raised from the dead. But Manson was correct in supposing that no plausible reason can be introduced for precluding the possibility of any event in the natural world. Whether some possible but improbable event has actually occurred depends on the sort of evidence produced for it.

100. Dug., p.103

Bultmann made the distinction between Wunder and Mirakel, and while he would not entertain the possibility of the latter he accepted the Wunder of what God has done for us in faith.¹⁰¹ Manson also seems to make this distinction, for in one place he refers to revelation as a miracle, in fact as the miracle.¹⁰² Elsewhere he calls this a κριμὴ κρίσις and identifies it largely with the creation of the ministry - both Jesus's and the Church's.¹⁰³ However, Manson does not use this distinction in order to deny the possibility of Mirakel. In his review of Alan Richardson's The Miracle Stories of the Gospels, Manson said that the miracle stories are an integral part of the kerygma, they are signs of the Kingdom of God and Christ's place in it.¹⁰⁴ In the one article he wrote on miracles he sees them as representing what the ministry stands for - satisfying the needs of others.¹⁰⁵ Manson does not treat them as symbols without an historical basis: "They are not trimmings or decorations attached to the ministry; they are part and parcel of the ministry itself."¹⁰⁶ Manson's interest in the ministry

101. See p.79 above, especially n.47

102. 'The Nature and Authority of the Canonical Scriptures' in A Companion to the Bible, p.10

103. 'The Christology of the New Testament', CQ., 13, 1935, p.160

104. JTS., XLIII, 1942, pp.92-4

105. 'The Gospel Miracles', RE., 19, 1952, p.45f. This was originally a schools broadcast given on 19.11.1951

106. Ibid., p.46

acts as a discriminating factor because 'miracles' which do not have a personal or social purpose, i.e. a ministerial purpose, are consigned to the shadows of doubt. This is why Manson sees no reason for rejecting the healing miracles in general and, while he maintains a certain scepticism, he thinks that restorations to life by Jesus are possible. But he thinks that the nature miracles are much less likely and certainly are of much less importance.¹⁰⁷ In order to be consistent with this, Manson thought that the resurrection of Jesus was a possible event. Yet Manson was critical of the content of the Bible; there is indeed Sachkritik in Manson. We have just noted that he was quite ready to dispense with nature miracles. Manson seems also not to have believed in the existence of 'demons':

Our instinctive dislike of these vestiges of primitive Semitic superstition should not blind us to the fact that Jesus saw clearly...that the evil-doer may be, and often is, the victim of forces that seem to lie outside his own control altogether.¹⁰⁸

Similarly, Manson found it difficult to believe in a personalized 'devil', while still believing in the objectivity of the forces which Jesus had to overcome.¹⁰⁹

When discussing 'resurrection' Manson's chief task is to distinguish the Jewish and Christian concept of 'resurrection' from the Greek idea of 'immortality':

107. Ibid., p.48f.

108. SerM., p.68

109. P&J., p.22

It is the resurrection of Jesus that is asserted and believed, not the immortality of souls, including the soul of Jesus.

It is therefore important that we should be clear about what the word 'Resurrection' meant in New Testament times. It had nothing whatever to do with the survival of disembodied spirits in some heavenly sphere. On the contrary, it was essentially a restoration to life in this world, a bringing back of the dead person from the cold and shadowy underworld to resume his place among his kinsfolk and friends and to recover the health and vigour that were his before he died. Even if the conditions of life were supposed to have been drastically changed before the resurrection takes place, it is recognisably the same person who returns to join people, who will recognise him. And however much the conditions may have changed, it is assumed that there will be a real continuity of purpose and activity between the new life and the old, just as there is real continuity of personality between the man who died and the man who returns to life.¹¹⁰

The closest comparable experience with which we are familiar is that of falling asleep and waking up, and it is no coincidence that the first unmistakable reference in the Old Testament uses this image.¹¹¹ St Paul uses the same sort of language (1 Cor 15.18,20,51). Unlike Barth, Manson sees the resurrection of Jesus as an historical event in this world; he does not move it into the quasi-historical world of 'primal history'. The point at stake here is whether there can be any evidence for the resurrection. Manson is clear that there can be and is, though he never

110. SerM., p.89f.

111. Daniel 12.2, see Manson, ibid., p.90

explicitly drew the implication that there can also in principle be a lack of evidence which would make it impossible to believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead. We may, however, assume that Manson was aware of this implication and that he found it theologically acceptable - like Pannenberg, but unlike Barth. Manson is very close to Pannenberg in his discussion of the evidence for the resurrection (it is after all a very traditional position):

It is usual, and correct, to say that the New Testament evidences for the resurrection fall into two classes: those which report the finding of the empty tomb, and those which report appearances of the Lord to various people.¹¹²

Manson seems to have seen the resurrection of Jesus as a ratification of the ministry which had preceded it (an idea developed by Pannenberg whose principal interest is in verifying Christian belief in contemporary society), and also as a ratification of the Church's ministry which followed it (an idea which, so far as I know, is unique to Manson):

Consequently the Cross became for him an essential part of his task; whereas his friends and his enemies alike could only see it as a defeat for him. The events that followed the crucifixion served to confirm that he was right and they were wrong. Whatever else the experiences of men and women after the crucifixion may mean, they meant at least two things: first, that the way that Jesus had chosen was God's way; that what appeared to be the death of Jesus was, in fact, the

112. Ibid., p.91. Cf. W.Pannenberg, Jesus, God and Man, pp.88-106

triumph of the Kingdom of God. And second, that the Ministry of Jesus, so far from being ended by the crucifixion, continued through it and beyond it with increasing power.¹¹³

This latter point leads us to what is peculiar to Manson's concept of 'resurrection'. Again the crucial factor is Professor Manson's interest in 'ministry'. Just as a man who has woken up continues the work of the previous day, so it is with Jesus; that Jesus has been raised means that he can continue his ministry with his disciples. But now Jesus is freed from the limitations of his earlier existence; he is no longer confined to one locality and one time. Manson goes on:

But these features of the story, interesting and important though they are, should not be allowed to divert our attention from the central fact that the work taken up again by the Risen Lord is the work of the earthly Ministry, strengthened, intensified, enlarged, no doubt, but still in all essentials the same tasks, informed by the same spirit and directed to the same ends. The Risen Christ still 'has compassion on the multitudes', is still 'the friend of publicans and sinners', still 'comes to give service rather than receive it', still 'seeks and saves the lost'.¹¹⁴

The staying-power of the Church over more than nineteen centuries is attributed to the fact that it is the risen Christ who is continuing his ministry here and now. We are not Jesus's successors but his companions:

113. The Beginning of the Gospel, p.24

114. SerM., p.96

The Resurrection means above all just this, that Christians do not inherit their task from Christ, they share it with him.¹¹⁵

Eschatology

Professor Manson's concept of 'eschatology' is dominated, even distorted, by his interest in 'ministry'. It is at this point that Manson's pre-understanding (and consequently his exegesis) is weakest. It is at this point that traditional ideas of eschatology run counter to Manson's interest in the ministry and he has to manipulate his concept of 'eschatology' in order to avoid a stark confrontation. Only if he had been prepared to loosen his interest in ministry would Manson have been able to avoid any sort of clash here. It is true that Manson attacked liberalism for not being able to make anything of eschatology, but even there he made no specific statement about the importance of future eschatology.¹¹⁶ As we shall see, Manson did affirm in a number of places that a future παρουσία still awaits us, and in principle this would allow him to deal adequately with Jesus's eschatological sayings which obviously imply a future Kingdom of God. But Manson does not in fact seem to have been able to make theological sense of these futuristic sayings; he could not integrate them very convincingly into his theology. These affirmations of

115. Ibid., p.98

116. Dug., p.100

future eschatology stand in isolation from the sweep of Manson's theology. Of course, it may be argued that he was correct in working out his ideas in terms only of an eschatology realised in the present because there will in fact be no future παρουσία and because Jesus did not imply such a future. But we shall have to see whether such a view can be justified by the texts, for our concern here is with the exegesis of texts, i.e. with what Jesus said or what the evangelists said he said, rather than with what will in fact be the case in the future. I shall, however, postpone this task until the next chapter; my concern here is to uncover Manson's understanding of 'eschatology'.

The thorough-going eschatology of Albert Schweitzer had been most impressively answered, thought Manson, by F.C.Burkitt in the following passage:

There is a sense, on the eschatological view, in which it is true to say that Jesus had radically changed the messianic ideal. He had changed it, not by 'spiritualizing' it, but by adding to it. The ideal of King Messiah, coming in glory on the clouds of heaven to judge the world and vindicate the elect of God, he left untouched, but he prefixed to it a Prologue. He prefixed to it not a doctrine about Messiah, but the actual course of his own career. We call it his Ministry - why? Because his view of the office of the Man who was predestined to be Messiah was that he should 'minister' to the needs of God's people. According to Mark, Jesus went up to Jerusalem to die, to be killed, believing that thereby the Kingdom of God would come. And this great resolve

has to be judged in the light of its amazing success.¹¹⁷ Manson used this passage to depreciate all future eschatology; it is difficult to imagine how any affirmation of future eschatology could be integrated with what Manson says after that quotation from Burkitt:

But when we come to consider these points seriously it emerges that what really matters is not the eschatological theory but the ministerial practice. The Prologue, of which Burkitt speaks, in fact makes nonsense of the expected sequel; so much so that it is no calamity but a positive relief that there is no Parousia of the conventional Jewish pattern....¹¹⁸ In a word, the most significant thing about the Jesus of the eschatological theory, the permanently effective thing right down to the life of Schweitzer himself, is the non-eschatological, even the anti-eschatological element. The interim ethic is the abiding moral force: the Prologue has become the whole drama.¹¹⁹

Manson's suggestion is that, given the fact that even in Schweitzer's thorough-going eschatology it is the ministry which really counts, it is time thorough-going eschatology was dropped in favour of a theology which gives a better account of the ministry. He finds such a theology in the 'realized eschatology' of C.H.Dodd as presented in The Parables of the Kingdom. In his more restrained mood

117. F.C.Burkitt, The Earliest Sources for the Life of Jesus, p.130f., quoted by Manson in LifeJ., p.216f.

118. Manson wrote in 'Jesus, Paul and the Law' in Judaism and Christianity, Vol III - Law and Religion, ed. by E.I.J.Rosenthal, p.128: "It is not, perhaps, going too far to say that at the beginning of the Christian era there was scarcely a devout soul in Israel that was not looking for the coming of the kingdom...."

119. LifeJ., p.217

Manson wrote that:

The kingdom is not something to be added to the Ministry: it is already present in the Ministry.¹²⁰

But more often he made a total identification between the Kingdom of God and the ministry, in the first place as the ministry of Jesus and in the second place as the ministry of the Church. However 'ministry', 'church' and 'kingdom of God' may have been differentiated in the history of theology, all are identified by Manson, as the following quotations show:

His [Jesus's] ministry is no mere prelude to the coming of the Kingdom, nor even a preparation for it: it is the Kingdom at work in the world.¹²¹

The task of the [Christian] society is not to bring the Kingdom of God but to be the Kingdom of God by reproducing in itself the life and ministry of Jesus.

But this carries us still further. For the life and ministry of Jesus are the Kingdom of God in action in the world and in history. Jesus Himself claims that the Kingdom comes in the doing of the things He did in the course of His ministry, and in the doing of the tasks He set His disciples to do. That is, the nature of God's rule is only to be discovered by considering the nature of the ministry of Jesus.¹²²

It is of the essence of the matter that, while the Kingdom of God is not created by human effort, it is manifested in and through human lives. The manifestation is supreme and perfect in the Person and Life of Jesus, insomuch that we can say, as Origen did, that He is the Kingdom. In the disciples of Jesus the manifestation is derivative and less than perfect, but still real and

120. SerM., p.77

121. 'The Christology of the New Testament', CQ., 13, 1935, p.158

122. 'Christ and Society', Toe H Journal, 15, 1937, p.8

true. For our understanding of the nature of the Church it is necessary to know the ways in which the manifestations of the Kingdom takes place in the Ministry of our Lord.¹²³

And finally:

The society of those, who have been thus touched by God's love so that it has become the ruling motive in their own lives, is the Kingdom of God on earth, the Church, the body of Christ, whose task it is to continue the work of Christ in the power of his spirit.¹²⁴

Manson seems to have absorbed vestiges of the liberal theory that the Kingdom was created by Christians here and now in their individual and social behaviour. It is true that Manson says explicitly in the last but one passage above that the Kingdom of God is not created by human effort, but he did propound the view that the Kingdom of God exists wherever the will of God is performed, and this is a human activity: "The Kingdom of God comes when and where God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven."¹²⁵ No doubt Manson could have coped with such an apparent contradiction between the Kingdom of God as the creation of God and as an act of man in a theology of grace. But he never did so, and statements like the last one that "the Kingdom comes when and where God's will is done" inevitably sound like a form of neo-liberalism.

123. CMin., p.16

124. 'Religion and Morality in the New Testament' in The Bible and Modern Religious Thought, 6, 1935, p.19

125. 'The Foundation of Christianity', CQ., 11, 1933, p.19

In an early work, The Teaching of Jesus, Manson again understands the Kingdom in terms of doing God's will and the Kingdom of God becomes an expression of a nexus of individual relationships between God and men. It is because of this that the time element is transcended and the question whether the Kingdom of God is a present, past or future reality is rendered superfluous:

Once these distinctions are made...it becomes clear that the old dispute whether Jesus conceived the Kingdom as present or future, whether he pictured it as brought about by a gradual moral and social evolution or by a catastrophic supernatural act of God, has arisen out of the confusion of matters in the Gospel which are really distinct. The Kingdom of God in its essence is the Reign of God, a personal relation between God and the individual; and there is no point in asking whether it is present or future, just as there is no point in asking whether the Fatherhood of God is present or future. It is something independent of temporal or spatial relations. It is a standing claim made by God on the loyalty and obedience of man. From time to time individuals admit this claim and accept the sovereignty of God. This is what is meant by the phrase 'receive the Kingdom of God'....¹²⁶

Bishop Gösta Lundström in his study of the interpretation of the Kingdom of God has criticised T.W.Manson for making the Kingdom transcend time in a way which in effect makes it impossible for him to speak of future eschatology.¹²⁷

126. T., p.135

127. G.Lundström, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus, pp.107-113. P.107 contains an extraordinary footnote in which Lundström claims that T.W.Manson

In general this is a fair criticism, but it is not entirely accurate because Manson did occasionally speak of future eschatology. Clearly Manson wanted to hold on to this, but he did not seem able to make very much of it. The important point is that Manson never quite abandoned a future παρουσία as we can see, for example, in this quotation:

It is not possible to make a complete distinction between a heavenly kingdom and life on earth. What we may observe is a certain shifting of emphasis, and I think that Dibelius is right in pointing out that the main emphasis has shifted from the future consummation to the present realization. But I should hold that both elements are part of the authentic teaching of Jesus.¹²⁸

In sermon notes headed "A Cup of Cold Water", Manson wrote that the whole point of the inter-relation between the present ministry and the future judgment is that those who are on God's side now are those who will be on God's

wrote Christ's View of the Kingdom of God: A Study of Jewish Apocalyptic in the Mind of Jesus Christ, London 1918; it was actually written by William Manson. Lundström also claims that Manson wrote the section on Mark in The Mission and Message of Jesus; Manson wrote Part Two on 'Q', The Sayings of Jesus. Evidently Bishop Lundström failed to check his secondary sources. These faults do not affect Lundström's exposition of Manson which he has derived from The Teaching of Jesus, 1931, but the exposition is limited because he used only this one early source.

128. E&G., p.48

side then. Manson wanted both something to await us in the future and he wanted that something to be in continuity with Jesus's and the Church's ministry. He could not bear the thought that God would negate the ministry; he could not bear, understandably, the prospect of his own ministerial interest being made futile. It is for this reason that he wrote:

It seems to me to become increasingly clear that the essence of 'realized Eschatology' or 'sich realisierende Eschatologie' is the fact that Messianic Ministry of Jesus the Son of man is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, in a word, that the Parousia must be homocousios with the Ministry.¹²⁹

Ministry and Parousia are of a part, though they form different sections of the time scale (in contradistinction to his earlier view in The Teaching of Jesus). There will indeed be a Parousia, and there will be a future resurrection of Christians.¹³⁰ Manson came closest to abandoning his his early liberal views in his article on Jesus Christ for Chambers Encyclopaedia published in 1950, but even here he could not finally resist the view that the Kingdom is to be identified with the doing of God's will:

The message [of Jesus] proclaimed first that 'the new age has dawned'. The old aeon has reached its final days and the new aeon has begun. For a time, until the consummation, the two ages will exist concurrently. In the dawning of the new age 'the kingdom of God has drawn near'. Some interpret this to mean that the

129. Review of J. Jeremias's Die Gleichnisse Jesu, NTS., 1, 1954-5, p.61

130. See, for example, 'Baptism in the Church', SJT., 2, 1949, p.398: "Full sharing of the resurrection life lies still in the future."

kingdom is now realized, in the work of Jesus; some that the kingdom while not present is imminent; and others that it is far in the future. The correct view must neglect neither present nor future aspects. The kingdom has already begun to break in, is present in the work and ministry of Jesus. But the kingdom is also of the future, for it will not be consummated until the parousia. The present is an interim between beginning and completion of the kingdom.

The kingdom is an act of God, rather than the result of human activity. It breaks in suddenly, unexpectedly, rather than develops as the continuation of the present earthly age. Its essence is to be found in the new relationship between God and man, a relationship of immediate communion. No longer is there an intermediary, rather God is present with men and dwells among them, for in Jesus the barrier is broken down and man is reconciled to God. This implies that the true nature of the kingdom is most clearly seen in the life and ministry of Jesus, for the kingdom of God must be understood as the exercise of the kingly rule of God, a state of affairs in which the will of God is truly known and fully obeyed; in Jesus's teaching the will of God is declared, in his acts it is obeyed.¹³¹

Such, then, in general outline, is T.W.Manson's pre-understanding.

131. 'Jesus Christ' in Chambers Encyclopaedia, vol 8, p.85a

CHAPTER FIVE

CHAPTER FIVE

T.W.MANSON: PRE-UNDERSTANDING AT WORK

The task of this chapter is to see how Professor Manson's exegetical work is related to his pre-understanding, which we have outlined in the previous chapter. In order to do this I shall take a limited number of examples which are typical of Manson's exegesis as a whole. It would, of course, be hardly possible - and no doubt there would be diminishing returns even if it were possible - to cover the whole of Manson's exegesis of the New Testament, but there are several outstanding examples which are especially characteristic of Manson. My point of focus is the relation between pre-understanding and interpretation and I shall not be particularly concerned with the detail of the argumentation which supports Manson's conclusions, for pre-understanding guides only the general trend of interpretation and not every final detail.

The Son of Man

Manson says that ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου could either be a slavish translation of the Aramaic bar nāshā which would mean no more than 'man', or it could act as a symbol as it does in Daniel, The Similitudes of Enoch and IV Esdras.¹ If Jesus used it as a symbol Manson supposes

1. T.W.Manson, T., p.212

that its meaning will depend on the source from which it was derived. Manson thinks that 'the Son of Man' is the last of a series of symbols which occur in the course of the Old Testament; these are: the Remnant, the Servant of Jehovah, the 'I' in the Psalms and the Son of Man in Daniel. He argues that it is the idea of the 'Servant' understood as the Remnant of Israel which is the key to this concept as used by Jesus.

In other words, the Son of Man is, like the Servant of Jehovah, an ideal figure and stands for the manifestation of the Kingdom of God on earth in a people wholly devoted to their heavenly king.²

If the Son of Man is the embodiment of the Remnant of Israel how is it, Manson wonders, that the concept has become identified with Jesus? The answer lies in the course of Jesus's ministry.

His mission is to create the Son of Man, the Kingdom of the saints of the Most High, to realise in Israel the ideal contained in the term. This task is attempted in two ways: first by public appeal to the people through the medium of parable and sermon and by the mission of the disciples: then, when this appeal produced no adequate response, by the consolidation of his own band of followers. Finally, when it becomes apparent that not even his own disciples are ready to rise to the demands of the ideal, he stands alone, embodying in his own person the perfect human response to the regal claims of God.³

Manson rejects the view that the Son of Man has been derived from Enoch where it stands for an individual, the Messiah, for two reasons. The first is that it is

2. Ibid., p.227

3. Ibid., p.227f.

by no means clear that 'the Son of Man' - as well as 'the Righteous one', 'the Elect one' and 'the Anointed one' - stands for an individual rather than a group even in Enoch. Secondly, there is no evidence that Jesus was familiar with Enoch (nor even that it had been written by the time of Jesus⁴), and when Jesus does quote he quotes, as we would expect, from the Old Testament, from Daniel and not from Enoch (Mk 13.26). Jesus was evidently familiar with the Danielic Son of Man and there the symbol represents "the people of the saints of the Most High" (Dn 7.13).⁵

It might well be objected at this point that the derivation does not prove the meaning and that it is quite possible that if the individualistic meaning of 'Son of Man' found its way into the Similitudes of Enoch in the first century A.D. it may also have been well known in contemporary Pharisaism and that Jesus may have known about it too. On the other hand Dr C.Fitzhugh Spragins states that the Qumran scrolls support Manson's communal interpretation.⁶

4. See J.C.Hindley, 'Towards a Date for the Similitudes of Enoch: An Historical Approach', NTS., 14, 1967-8, pp.551-565, esp. p.553f. 1 Enoch 37-71 contains all the references to the Son of Man and is absent from the Dead Sea Scrolls, and so was probably not written until after 70 A.D.

5. T.W.Manson, T., p.228f.

6. C.F.Spragins, T.W.Manson: Neutestamentler, p.29:

It now appears that Manson's theory can claim some support from the evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls. This is found particularly in 1QS viii. 1ff. where within a very few verses the Qumran sect appears

Manson also noted that, with two exceptions in Mark, two in Q and one in M, Jesus only began to speak of the Son of Man after Peter's confession (Mk 8.27-30) which Manson took to be an actual historical occurrence.⁷ Manson claimed that in both Marcan exceptions the original reporter had mistranslated bar nāshā as the son of man, so that both passages in fact refer to 'man' and not 'Son of Man'.⁸ Manson removed the other exceptions on the grounds that they were either mistranslations or interpolations. His final conclusion is that the Son of Man refers to all those who seek to carry out the messianic function of service and suffering:

But the striking correspondence between the predicted fate of the Son of Man and the actual fate of Jesus may easily blind us to another correspondence, equally striking, between the 'Son of Man' predictions and the demands made by Jesus on his disciples. Again and again it is impressed upon them that discipleship is synonymous with sacrifice and suffering and the cross itself. This at once suggests that what was in the mind of Jesus was that he and his followers together should share that destiny which he describes as the

to have brought together certain aspects of the Isaianic Servant of the Lord and the Danielic Son of Man, and has applied them both to its own eschatological function as a community. This is an important consideration which weighs heavily in favour of a 'corporate' interpretation of the Son of Man title contemporary with Jesus.

See also N.Perrin, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus, p.99; and M.Black, 'Servant of the Lord and Son of Man', SJT., 6, 1953-4, pp.1-11.

7. The exceptions are: Mk 2.10 & 28; Lk 6.22/Mt 5.11; Lk 7.34/Mt 11.19; and Mt 10.23.
8. T.W.Manson, T., p.214. Manson later revised his view on Mk 2.28 in Coniectanea Neotestamentica XI (in honorem Antonii Friedrichsen), pp.138-46.

Passion of the Son of Man: that he and they together should be the Son of Man, the Remnant that saves by service and self-sacrifice, the organ of God's redemptive purpose in the world.⁹

'The Son of Man', then, was meant to refer to the whole of Israel, but by force of circumstance it was narrowed down to the disciples and finally to Jesus himself. But now it refers to all Christians who share in Jesus's task. It is obvious enough how Manson's interpretation was derived from his interest in the ministry. Manson came to modify his views slightly, but this did not affect the general character of his exegesis. In a later paper on the Son of Man he saw the term as an example of what Wheeler Robinson called 'corporate personality' where there is a "constant oscillation between the conception of the social unit as an association of individuals in the plural or as a corporate personality in the singular."¹⁰ But one of the marks of 'corporate personality' is that sometimes a singular name can stand both for the group, and for part of that group, and for an individual who represents that group. See, for example, Isaiah 49.1-6 where the Servant represents first an individual, then Israel, and then a remnant within Israel. Let us now see how Manson's general interpretation worked with particular texts.

9. Ibid., p.231

10. 'The Son of Man in Daniel, Enoch and the Gospels' in SGE., p.142

Manson's interpretation of the 'Son of Man' is at its best in Mt 25.31-46, where the Son of Man separates the sheep from the goats at the final judgment.¹¹ The problem in this passage is that of identifying the various characters who appear in the scene. Manson says that it is clear that the King's Father is God and that God is not the judge of the scene. The King is Jesus and the King's brethren are the disciples. Jesus as judge, then, is the representative of a group ("my brethren") who are not being judged. Those being judged are the Gentiles and those Jews who did not openly accept the Kingdom. Who or what, then, is the Son of Man? If the Son of Man is the King the concept stands for an individual as in Enoch, but if the Son of Man stands for the King and his brethren then the concept follows the pattern of Daniel 7.13. By looking at the details of the text Manson reckons that the Son of Man is different from the King. On v.40 he comments:

The answer of the King brings out clearly the solidarity of Christ and his brethren. He and his brethren are many, but together they are one - the Son of Man.¹²

11. S., pp.540-4, and T., p.264f. Jeremias counts Mt 25.31-46 as one of the few references to the Son of Man which may well be authentic, see New Testament Theology, Vol 1 The Proclamation of Jesus, p.263, though he casts a certain amount of doubt on this on the following page.

12. S., p.543

Manson's interpretation works less well with Mt 19,28¹³

Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

In his exposition of this passage Manson did not press his communal understanding of the Son of Man.¹⁴ But clearly this type of interpretation would not work here where the Son of Man is explicitly differentiated from the twelve who represent the tribes of Israel, as Manson realized to great effect in his discussion of 'apostolicity' with Kenneth Kirk.¹⁵ There Manson stated that apostleship is limited to the twelve precisely because they represent the twelve tribes. Vincent Taylor noted a number of other passages where a personal reference to the Son of Man cannot be ignored.¹⁶ The main criticism which can be

13. J.Jeremias, op. cit., p.262f. thinks this inauthentic because the parallel Lk 22,28-30 has ἐγώ instead of δ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου and in every parallel where this occurs Jeremias reckons that to be more authentic - the change to δ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is a vaticinium ex eventu by the early Church. If the ἐγώ version in Lk is indeed older then clearly a corporate interpretation cannot be made.

14. T.W.Manson, S., p.508f.

15. CMin., ch.2

16. V.Taylor, The Names of Jesus, p.32. These passages are: Mk 2.10; 9.9; 9.31; 10.33f.; 10.45; 14.21; 14.41; Lk 7.34; 9.58; 11.30; 18.8b; 19.10; and 22.48. A number of these come from the passion narrative and Manson admitted that here Jesus was speaking of himself because his mission had by this time been abandoned by his disciples.

brought against Manson here is not that he has failed to gain an insight into the meaning of the New Testament - he certainly succeeded in doing that - but that he smoothed over a number of difficult passages in order to offer a homogeneous interpretation. And this is precisely the danger of being led too far by one's pre-understanding, when one fails to criticize one's pre-understanding in the light of difficulties in the text. Manson's prior interest in ministry has led here to a startling new insight, but it has also blinkered him to other dimensions of meaning. 'The Son of Man' is a more differentiated concept than Manson would allow.

In order to highlight the individuality of Manson's exegesis let us contrast it with the exegesis of someone who set out with a quite different pre-understanding. Let us briefly see how Bultmann interpreted ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου with a pre-understanding which diminishes interest in the historical life of Jesus and which is eager to diminish any possibility of future eschatology. Bultmann says that the Son of Man sayings in the Synoptic Gospels fall into three groups. Taking these in reverse order, the third group which Bultmann identifies is that in which the Son of Man is said to be at work in the present. Bultmann says that this group is based on a misunderstanding in the translation into Greek:

In Aramaic, the son of man in these sayings was not a messianic title at all, but meant 'man' or 'I'. So this group drops out of the present discussion.¹⁷

17. R.K.Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, vol 1 p.30

The second group describes the Son of Man as suffering death and rising again. These are said to be vaticinia ex eventu, which are not present in Q and which have been read back into the mouth of Jesus, so to speak, by the early Church. The first group of sayings speaks of the Son of Man coming in the future. This group in no way overlaps with the second, and the peculiarity of these sayings is that Jesus speaks of the Son of Man in the third person and does not identify himself with this messianic figure.¹⁸ Bultmann thinks that this group is part of a very primitive tradition: "the predictions of the parousia are old and are probably original words of Jesus".¹⁹ Because of his conclusion about this group, Bultmann refuses to discuss material which is peculiar to Matthew and Luke because they do in fact identify Jesus with the Son of Man and Bultmann simply says that these evangelists have lost the original meaning of the expression.²⁰ Bultmann's final conclusion is that the Son of Man and the Messiah are equivalent expressions because "both mean the eschatological bringer of salvation."²¹ He writes,

18. Ibid., p.29

19. Ibid., p.30

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., p.26 n.1. See also p.49 where he gives the meaning of 'Son of Man' as "a supra-mundane, pre-existent being who at the end of time will come down from heaven to hold judgment and bring salvation." Bultmann does not seem to have considered the possibility that Jesus and the evangelists might not have been using this expression in quite the same way as the author of the Similitudes of Enoch.

further, that Jesus is not this eschatological bringer of salvation, that he did not consider himself to have been the Son of Man, and that the synoptic evangelists and Paul "leave no doubt about it that Jesus's life and work measured by traditional messianic ideas was not messianic."²² Since Bultmann, a number of theologians have gone even further in insisting that not even the first group of the Son of Man sayings goes back to Jesus; all are fabrications of the Church.²³ Surprisingly perhaps, Joachim Jeremias has followed Bultmann's threefold division of the Son of Man sayings and he agrees that only the first group can be reckoned authentic. Jeremias's approach is to exclude those sayings which represent a misunderstanding of the original Aramaic bar nāshā when it meant only 'man', and those sayings where a parallel preserves ἐγώ rather than ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.²⁴ Jeremias also recognizes that Jesus spoke of the Son of Man only in the third person in those sayings which are authentic, but here his interpretation differs from that of Bultmann:

The answer can only be that when Jesus speaks in the third person he makes a distinction not between two different figures, but between his present and the future state of exaltation. The third person expresses the 'mysterious relationship' which exists between Jesus and the Son of man: he is not yet the Son of man,

22. Ibid., p.27

23. F.C.Grant, The Gospel of the Kingdom; J.Knox, The Death of Christ; and H.Cenzelmann, An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament, pp.131-7.

24. J.Jeremias, New Testament Theology, vol 1, pp.260-4

but he will be exalted to be the Son of man.²⁵

Whether one finally identifies Jesus with the Son of Man (with Jeremias) or not (with Bultmann) would seem to depend on christological assumptions which are derived from more than textual analysis of the Synoptic Gospels. If one does identify Jesus with the Son of Man one can agree with Matthew Black when he writes that,

it still seems to me that what Professor Manson wrote in this connection remains the most penetrating insight we have obtained in this century into the mind and intention of Jesus, however much we may differ with details of his exposition.²⁶

25. Ibid., p.276

26. M.Black, 'The Son of Man Problem in Recent Research and Debate', BJRL, 45, 1962-3, p.318. Jeremias, in general agrees with this:

As the universal ruler he is head and representative of the new people of God. His followers share in this rule (Lk 12.32; Matt 19.28 par. Lk 22.28, 30b). This is the correct insight of T.W.Manson's thesis, much discussed in Anglo-Saxon scholarship, that the Son of man is a 'corporate entity'. This view of the Son of man sees rightly that in Dan 7.27 the 'one like a man' is identified with the 'saints of the most high' and that for oriental thought the king or the priest represents his people or his community. [Footnote. T.W.Manson has regularly been ticked off for the one-sidedness with which he originally put forward his thesis of the Son of man as 'corporate personality'. But this is to underestimate the nucleus of truth which can be read off above all from the effect such an idea had on Paul. For without the idea that the one includes the many, Paul could hardly have conceived his ideas of the first and second Adam and the body of Christ.] (New Testament Theology, vol 1, p.274)

The Kingdom of God

We have already seen (pp.198-206 above) that in his scattered remarks in various articles and books T.W.Manson was able to get on quite well, for the most part, without any firm reference to future eschatology. What references there are to future eschatology seem to be largely nominal, a tacit acceptance that there is still something to come, while very often even these future references are dropped in his identification of the Kingdom of God with the ministry of Jesus.²⁷ However, his exposition of the 'Kingdom of God' in The Teaching of Jesus, published in 1931, (and more than half the book is devoted to the Kingdom of God, pp.116-284) presents us with an altogether more careful and balanced account. And at this point I must take issue with two of Manson's commentators who in their individual ways have each been less than fair to Manson. Gösta Lundström, basing his exposition of Manson exclusively on The Teaching of Jesus, has attacked Manson's view of the Kingdom of God for being limited to the present with a not very significant acknowledgement of the Kingdom which is still to come.²⁸

27. See, for example, Manson's statement on p.200 n.119 that the absence of a final cataclysm is a "positive relief".

28. G.Lundström, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus, pp.104-5; 107-113. Lundström says, for example, "Certain English theologians have interpreted the Kingdom of God as a present entity, allowing its futuristic character to sink altogether into the background." (p.104). And in another place, "Manson's interpretation is a manipulation. Nothing remains of the expectation of an imminent end of the world" (p.113).

This may be true of many of Manson's popular articles (which Lundström anyway does not appear to have read) but it is just not true of The Teaching of Jesus as I shall now show. C. Fitzhugh Spragins similarly accuses Manson of having held a liberal view of the Kingdom in the early part of his career where the Kingdom is identified with doing the will of God in the present, but Spragins maintains that Manson gradually moved away from this in his later writings.²⁹ This shift of position is illusory as Manson stated the very same liberal view in an article in 1955.³⁰ We must rather agree with Jeremias when he says that it was one of Manson's main concerns in The Teaching of Jesus to work out the twofold aspect of the Kingdom as present and yet as future.³¹ To what extent Manson was successful in this remains to be seen. What has changed, as Norman Perrin has pointed out, is that in the Teaching Manson used Rabbinic Judaism as the background for Jesus's views on the Kingdom, whereas in The Servant Messiah (published in 1953, though based on lectures given in 1939) Manson used Jewish apocalyptic as the background.³²

Professor Manson is quite clear what the Kingdom of God is not. It is not a mechanical production; it is neither a description of natural evolution nor a programme for social revolution.³³ It is God's rule and it cannot

29. C.F.Spragins, T.W.Manson, Neutestamentler, p.39ff.

30. T.W.Manson, 'The Lord's Prayer (1)', BJRL, 1955-6, p.108f.

31. J.Jeremias, New Testament Theology, vol 1, p.98 n.4

32. N.Perrin, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus, p.95f.

33. T.W.Manson, T., p.116f.

be controlled by man (this assertion must qualify to some extent the judgment that Manson's interpretation is 'liberal' in a pure sense). Manson considered the references to the Kingdom of God separately in the four sources which Streeter had analysed in the Synoptic Gospels.³⁴ The chief characteristic that Manson observed was that the early references speak of the coming of the Kingdom, while the later references speak of entering the Kingdom, though these later sayings are addressed only to the disciples in Mark. The turning point is Peter's confession of faith (Mk 8.29):

There is thus evidence in Mark that in the latter part of the ministry Jesus began to speak of the Kingdom of God as something into which men enter. This way of speaking is employed only when the disciples are the audience, and the first occurrence of the phrase 'enter into the Kingdom of God' is in the period which lies between the Transfiguration and the beginning of the journey to Jerusalem.³⁵

When Manson looked at the use of 'Kingdom of God' in Q, however, he found that Jesus's talk of entering the Kingdom was not restricted to the disciples. But all four sources do support the shift from 'coming' to 'entering' the Kingdom after Peter's confession. There is a single exception: "Thy kingdom come" as it appears in the document L (Lk 11.2). Manson suggests that this has been assimilated from Matthew and was not part of Luke's text.³⁶

34. B.H.Streeter, The Four Gospels (1924)

35. T.W.Manson, T., p.120

36. Ibid., p.129

In fact Manson did not repeat this conjecture in The Sayings of Jesus,³⁷ and the real reason Manson made this unsubstantiated suggestion that "Thy kingdom come" was not written by Luke was that it spoilt the pattern Manson had detected in his sources. This pattern, Manson thought, is reinforced by the fact that Jesus speaks of the Father and about the Son of Man only in the latter part of the ministry. Why did this change come about in the ministry of Jesus?

The most obvious solution to this problem is that Jesus held that the Kingdom had come in some real sense during his own ministry. Further we may suppose that the coming of the Kingdom is to be identified with one or other of the outstanding events which mark the turning-point alike in the teaching and in the ministry. The most plausible conjecture will be that which equates the coming of the Kingdom with Peter's Confession: 'Thou art the Messiah'. This great saying was - one can hardly doubt - evoked in the first instance by the cumulative effect of continuous living with Jesus. It was a spontaneous tribute of the disciple to the master, an attempt to make articulate a growing sense of reverence which mingled with the affection and loyalty and admiration that were already present. But it was more than that. It was an acknowledgement of the authority of Jesus in a new way. To the reverence due from the disciple to the teacher was added a new thing - the loyalty and devotion of a subject to a king. And no mere earthly potentate, but one divinely anointed. It was in fact the recognition of the Kingdom in the person of Jesus: and with that recognition the Kingdom could be said to have come.³⁸

37. S., p.557f.

38. T., p.129f.

The first instance of the coming of the Kingdom, then, is marked by Peter's acknowledgement of Jesus as King, as Messiah. Manson's conclusion is that the Kingdom of God is not spatial, it is not an empire, nor is it political:

The Kingdom here is a personal relation between the King and the subject. The claim on God's part to rule, and the acknowledgement on man's part of that claim, together constitute the actual Kingdom; and Peter's Confession may fairly be regarded as just that acknowledgement that was needed to make the Kingdom de jure into a Kingdom de facto.³⁹

The main weakness of this view is that the Kingdom of God is made into the Kingdom of Christ; the reign of Yahweh had in fact been recognised long before the arrival of Jesus and Peter's confession. No matter, the point here is that Manson characterizes the Kingdom of God as personal and spiritual:

We are thus brought face to face with what may be called the first manifestation of the Kingdom in the world. Primarily the Kingdom is a personal relation between God as King and the individual as subject. Then it appears in the world as a society, something which might be called the People of God. This consists of all those who are linked together by the fact of their common allegiance to one King.... But it cannot be too strongly emphasised that the society is not the Kingdom, but only a manifestation or product of it: and that membership of the society is not entrance into the Kingdom, but only a result of entrance.⁴⁰

This community accepts God as protector, guide and legislator, and responds with loyalty, trust and obedience.⁴¹ Manson

39. Ibid., p.131

40. Ibid., p.134

41. Ibid., p.194

further emphasises that Jesus did not bring the Kingdom of God to men so that they could possess and control it, but he tried to lead men to the Kingdom so that they could enter it if they followed the pattern of Christ's suffering and service as disciples.⁴²

Up to this point it would seem that, as Lundström alleges, Manson's view of God's Kingdom is limited to the present, and certainly this is where the weight of Manson's interpretation lies. But there is more. Manson distinguishes three aspects of the Kingdom. God's Kingdom is non-temporal because it is "a standing claim made by God on the loyalty and obedience of man."⁴³ He says that there is no point in asking whether the Kingdom is present or future just as there is no point in asking whether the Fatherhood of God is present or future. But this last remark is muddled because Manson goes on to show that the second aspect of the Kingdom is that it is present because God is acknowledged to be King and because he claims our obedience in the present. And the third aspect of the Kingdom is future because of a final consummation still to arrive, a consummation which cannot be just personal and spiritual.⁴⁴ Manson provides a list of passages in the New Testament outside the Gospels which refer to a future consummation, and he points in particular to 1 Cor. 15.20-28 which discriminates "between the Kingdom as a present manifestation in the lives of men; the final consummation of the Kingdom

42. Ibid., p.206

43. Ibid., p.135

44. Ibid., p.136

at the Parousia; and the Kingdom as the eternal sovereignty of God."⁴⁵ On this point Manson concludes that the Kingdom is present in the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the Church, that Jesus expected a future 'coming of the Son of Man', and that the present and future dimensions are not contradictory.⁴⁶ It was because of this that in later years Manson was reluctant to adopt Dodd's expression 'realised eschatology'; he preferred 'inaugurated eschatology' or, more often, Jeremias's 'sich realisierende Eschatologie' (which he usually used in the German). If one must criticise Manson, it is not for omitting the future Kingdom, but for relaxing the tension which should be produced by the continual expectation of its immediate arrival. In practice Manson seems to have felt the need to relax this eschatological tension in order to provide breathing-space, so to say, for his prime interest - the ministry of the Church.

Bearing in mind that Manson's major interest in the Kingdom of God was in its presence in Jesus's ministry, let us see how he interpreted selected texts. The interpretation of the Kingdom as a present reality works well with Lk 10,8-11:

Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you; heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near ($\epsilon\chi\theta\iota\kappa\epsilon\nu$) to you'. etc.

Manson's comment on this verse is that the raison d'être

45. Ibid., p.140

46. Ibid., p.140f.

of the mission which is being described here is to proclaim the Kingdom as a "present reality" which has come near "in the person of its members, in their power to help and heal, and in the message itself."⁴⁷ The dealings of these messengers with the people are to be a manifestation of the grace and power of the Kingdom.

Manson is also very much to the point in the controversy about Beelzebul in Lk 11,20/Mt 12,28:

But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you (ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ).

In his commentary on this passage Manson writes that Jesus's exorcisms are a manifestation of the Kingdom and a sign of the struggle between the kingdoms of God and of Satan: "Jesus himself is the medium through which the power of the Kingdom becomes operative."⁴⁸

Lk 17,20-1 shows how Manson's pre-understanding takes him in a direction different from that of Harnack:

Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστίν)."

Harnack interpreted the Kingdom of God quite spiritually and individualistically so that the last phrase for him

47. S., p.367

48. Ibid., p.378

meant 'within you'.⁴⁹ Manson recognizes that 'within you' would be the most natural translation for the Greek ἐντός but that there is an ambiguity in the Aramaic which lies behind it and that ἐντός is only one possible translation of this.⁵⁰ Manson rejects 'within' in this passage because it is the Pharisees who are being addressed and Jesus could hardly say that the Kingdom of God was within them. And secondly the Kingdom here is not a psychological frame of mind but something which is to arrive in history. "The whole weight of the teaching of Jesus", writes Manson, "seems to be in favour of saying, 'Lo, the Kingdom of God is among you.'"⁵¹ The problem is, then, is this a description of a present state of affairs or a prophecy about the future? The Pharisees' question shows that they are thinking of it as something which is future. Jesus's reply may mean that it is idle to ask when the Kingdom will come because it is already present among them, or it may mean that the question cannot be answered because only God knows the answer. This passage is interesting because, given Manson's interest in 'ministry', we would expect him to choose the former interpretation. In fact he resists this temptation and opts, on balance, for the latter view that we cannot calculate the time of its arrival. Manson finally comments:

This interpretation of Lk 17.20f. can be maintained without in any way minimising the importance of those other passages in which the Kingdom appears as a present

49. A. von Harnack, What is Christianity?, pp.52 and 61f.

50. T.W.Manson, S., p.595f.

51. Ibid., p.596

reality at work in the world. The general view of the whole matter of the Kingdom as both present and future can best be realised in the parable of the Seed (Mk 4.26-9).... The ministry of Jesus has set in motion supernatural forces which go on inevitably until they reach their consummation.... The Kingdom is a present reality working towards a future consummation.⁵²

My only difficulty with this interpretation is that there is no sense of tension, no air of crisis. The agricultural image of planting seed brings to mind only patience and cultivation.

This lack of a sense of crisis has an important bearing on Manson's interpretation of the parable of the ten virgins (Mt 25.1-13) where the kingdom of heaven is likened to the maidens who were woken from sleep but at the crucial moment only five of them were prepared for the arrival of the bridegroom.⁵³ Manson notes that the point of the parable is not to stay awake but to be ready. But Manson says that the point of the first four verses seems to be that the foolish maidens have insufficient oil to last through the night and that the moral of the lamps is "perseverance in faith".⁵⁴ Again the stress is on patience rather than immediacy.

The connection between Manson's emphasis on the presence of the Kingdom of God in Jesus and his followers and his overall interest in 'ministry' should now be clear

52. Ibid., p.596f.

53. Ibid., p.534f.

54. Ibid., p.535

enough. And again we can bring out the individuality of Manson's interpretation by contrasting it with that of Bultmann. Bultmann affirms that the 'Kingdom of God' as used by Jesus stands firmly within the Jewish expectation about the end of the world and "God's new future".⁵⁵ He makes Jesus's use of the expression wholly eschatological and wholly future. The language Jesus used was that of Jewish apocalyptic. But while the Kingdom lies entirely in the future it "wholly determines the present."⁵⁶ The future of the Kingdom is the immediate future, it is the next moment. The Kingdom of God is breaking in and now is the time of decision. Jesus is not the Son of Man, but in his own person he "signifies the demand for decision".⁵⁷ Bultmann affirms all this only to show that Jesus's apocalyptic language was mistaken and misleading. To this extent he is like Schweitzer, but while Schweitzer says that all that remains is the "interim ethic", Bultmann determines to interpret Jesus's eschatological Kingdom of God. Bultmann differs from Schweitzer in that Bultmann sees Jesus as a 'thorough-going eschatologist' but not, like Schweitzer, as a 'thorough-going apocalypticist'. Bultmann sticks to his methodological principle that religious mythology has to be interpreted.⁵⁸

55. R.K. Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, vol 1, p.4; see also Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting, p.84

56. Jesus and the Word, p.44

57. Theology of the New Testament, vol 1, p.9

58. 'New Testament and Mythology' in Kerygma and Myth, vol 1, p.12:

First, it must again be stressed that the eschatological message of Jesus, the preaching of the coming of the Kingdom and of the call to repentance, can be understood only when one considers the conception of man which in the last analysis underlies it, and when one remembers that it can have meaning only for him who is ready to question the habitual human self-interpretation and to measure it by this opposed interpretation of human existence. Then it becomes obvious that the attention is not to be turned to the contemporary mythology in terms of which the real meaning of Jesus' teaching finds its outward expression. This mythology ends by abandoning the fundamental insight which gave it birth, the conception of man as forced to decision through a future act of God. To this mythology belongs the expectation of the end of the world as occurring in time, the expectation which in the contemporary situation of Jesus is the natural expression of his conviction that even in the present man stands in the crisis of decision, that the present is for him the last hour.⁵⁹

Bultmann's stress on crisis and decision emphasizes the lack of eschatological tension in Manson's exegesis, but the legitimacy of the other aspects of Bultmann's interpretation is more questionable. The coming of the Kingdom of God is not an event in the world, "it is supernatural, superhistorical".⁶⁰ Because of this it is not already present, as Manson alleged, for it is not an 'it':

Perhaps we may put it schematically like this: whereas the older liberals used criticism to eliminate the mythology of the New Testament, our task today is to use criticism to interpret it.

59. Jesus and the Word, p.47

60. Ibid., p.35

Future and present are not related in the sense that the Kingdom begins as a historical fact in the present and achieves its fulfillment in the future....⁶¹

The call to decision is a call to individuals⁶² and it represents the end of all human interests and possibilities.⁶³

Bultmann compares the Kingdom of God with death, and the only difference he seems to see between them is that death represents annihilation while the Kingdom can be faced positively by Christians. In the former case one can only live the rest of life as a dying man, while Christians can live life positively. This is reminiscent of Iris Murdoch's interpretation of the Good in Plato, which she does not see existing in a non-terrestrial ideal world, but as a metaphor which calls us to a higher form of behaviour and which determines our ethical language and activity.⁶⁴ In Bultmann's interpretation we can see that everything is reduced to existential significance, while Manson's pre-understanding of eschatology and history leads him in a quite different direction towards the actualization of the Kingdom of God.

Peter's Confession: Mk 8.27-30

Throughout his life Professor Manson took the occasion of Peter's confession to have

61. Ibid., p.44

62. Theology of the New Testament, vol 1, p.25

63. Jesus and the Word, p.46

64. Iris Murdoch, 'The Sovereignty of Good over other Concepts' in The Sovereignty of Good, pp.77-104

been a real event, and he believed that Mark's account of the event takes us right back to the ministry of Jesus. As late as 1951 he wrote:

In Mk 8,27-33 it seems to me that we are in contact with the hard - and bitter - facts of history. I should still hold that Caesarea Philippi marks a critical point in the Ministry; but I should want to make some considerable revision of our notions about the nature of the crisis.⁶⁵

Manson went on to say that he did not have space in the context of a review to discuss these revisions and he never indicated what they might be. But the "crisis" remains and we can only discover its nature by examining Manson's early work The Teaching of Jesus. Manson's exegesis is remarkable not for his acceptance of the authenticity of the event of Peter's confession, but because of what he pinned onto it, something of which we have already observed in a different context in the two previous sections.

The general significance of Peter's confession in Mark's narrative is stated as follows:

The most obvious and striking division is that marked by Peter's Confession. It has long been recognised that this event marks a turning-point in the life of our Lord; what is perhaps not so clearly realised is that it marks the close of one period and the beginning of another in the teaching. It is possible to draw up a list of important terms, key-words, that make their first appearance in the recorded utterances of Jesus after this event, and another list of words that form part of the vocabulary of his teaching before the

65. T.W.Manson, Review of R.H.Lightfoot, The Gospel Message of Mark, JTS., 2, 1951, p.201

Confession and afterwards recede into the background or disappear altogether.⁶⁶

The list of these words can be found in the five appendices, and especially the first of these, at the end of The Teaching of Jesus.⁶⁷ But what is of more concern to Manson is the shift in the nature of Jesus's teaching of key concepts. In Mark, Jesus speaks of God as "Father" only after 8.38 and in the main only to his disciples.⁶⁸ Manson finds this pattern confirmed by Q and, in general, by L but not by M (though he noticed that 'my Father' occurs in M only after the confession⁶⁹). While this pattern is true of the four sources which Manson analysed, he did observe that it is not true of the three composite Synoptic Gospels. There is an order in Mark whereas Matthew and Luke are "confused and indecisive".⁷⁰ We are not, then, presented with a choice between the order of Mark and the order of either Matthew or Luke. The choice is between order and disorder. This disproves, Manson observes, Papias's allegation that Mark did not present the correct order of events in Jesus's life: if

66. I., p.13

67. Ibid., pp.320-9

68. Ibid., p.94f. An attempt has been made to give a methodological justification for Manson's classification of synoptic material according to whom it was addressed (i.e. disciples, general public or opponents) by J. Arthur Baird, Audience Criticism and the Historical Jesus. However, the book is not likely to receive much critical support.

69. Ibid., p.97 n.1

70. Ibid., p.24

we do not accept Mark's order there is no order. It is because of this that Manson decided to analyse the sources Mk, Q, M, and L rather than the Gospels as such. Moreover he finds that Mark's order is supported by Q and L, though not by M. The reason why this order is not supported by the composite Gospels of Matthew and Luke is "partly because they are compilations, partly because of editorial modifications of the sources used by St Matthew and St Luke."⁷¹

We have already seen that Manson saw Peter's confession as the turning-point in Jesus's teaching about the Son of Man and the Kingdom of God. Manson claimed that all the authentic uses of 'Son of Man' by Jesus occurred after Peter's confession and were somehow made possible by it. The early sayings about the Kingdom of God speak of its 'coming' whereas after Peter's confession one can 'enter' into the Kingdom. However, there is a curious disjunction (contradiction would be too strong a word) in the relationship between the development of these two concepts which Manson does not seem to have noticed. Manson explained that 'the Son of Man' basically referred to Jesus and the crowds that followed him, but that when the Jews did not respond the concept became limited to Jesus and the Twelve and finally, from the last supper, to Jesus alone. In this development the concept becomes increasingly insular and Jesus becomes increasingly withdrawn. But Manson also maintained that, in the period after Peter's confession,

71. Ibid., p.25

Jesus became increasingly open about the Kingdom of God, increasingly trusting with his disciples. This juxtaposition does not ring true because of the opposing lines of development and one is led to doubt the reliability of Manson's exegesis. His exposition is unquestionably sound, what one doubts is that this pattern can be traced back to Jesus's ministry.

Manson's own summary is as follows:

The decisive point is Peter's declaration: 'Thou art the Christ'.⁷² From this point onwards the life and teaching both move in a new direction. We have to notice a number of striking features in the teaching.

(a) A regular feature of the speech of Jesus before this point is the demand for insight and understanding on the part of his hearers. This is now replaced by a demand for loyalty and endurance on the part of his followers.⁷³

(b) The disciples are admitted much more fully than before into the confidence of Jesus. That this is the

72. In a number of places in Mark (5.41; 7.34; 14.36; 15.34) there occurs an Aramaic expression which is then translated for the Greek reader, which suggests that there is present a very primitive tradition and quite possibly the words of Jesus. But this is not the case in Peter's confession, even though we find in Jn 1.41: Εὐρήκαμεν τὸν Μεσσίαν (ὃς ἔστιν μεθερμηνεύομενον Χριστός).

73. In I., p.204 Manson writes:

It is plain that after Peter's Confession Jesus makes the claim for a loyalty to himself which elsewhere is reserved for God. Loyalty to Jesus is identified with loyalty to the Kingdom.

case we have seen in connection with the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God.

(c) The title 'Son of Man' belongs exclusively to the period after Peter's Confession.

(d) As we have already noticed, the 'coming' of the Kingdom is replaced by 'entrance' into the Kingdom.

(e) There is a subtle yet unmistakable change of tone in the utterances of Jesus. He becomes, if possible, more authoritative, more dogmatic in his speech than before.

(f) To the period after Peter's Confession belongs the enunciation of the three great paradoxes of the Kingdom:

He who would save his life shall lose it, and he who loses his life shall save it.

The last shall be first and the first last.

He who would be chief in the community must be the servant of all.⁷⁴

On the basis of all this Manson says that the meaning of the later utterances must be the "canon of interpretation" for the former, i.e. those which occur after and before Peter's confession.⁷⁵

It might be thought that Manson was remarkably uncritical of Mark's editorship, but that would be unjust. In an article written in 1944 he wrote that we can know what Matthew and Luke did with their sources because we can see how they used Mark, but we can only guess what Mark did with his sources. He was, then, aware that Mark was a redactor. In the same article Manson questioned

74. Ibid., p.201

75. Ibid., p.205

Mark's dating of the last supper,⁷⁶ and no doubt he would have preferred John's version of the length of the ministry. Nor was Manson necessarily being uncritical in accepting Peter's confession as an actual event. It is doubted by Bultmann⁷⁷ and Haenchen (who discusses the German literature on this pericope up to 1963),⁷⁸ but Manson is supported by Jeremias⁷⁹ and K.L.Schmidt.⁸⁰ Nevertheless it seems to have been important for Manson that it should be possible to trace Peter's confession back to the life of Jesus, and he provided the justification for this in seeing Peter's reminiscences behind the Gospel so that the confession in Mark can be accepted as an eye-witness account.⁸¹ Similarly it was important for Manson that the language about the Son of Man and the Kingdom of God should be traceable to Jesus's ministry. That Manson

76. 'The Foundation of the Synoptic Tradition: The Gospel of Mark' in SGE., p.35f.

77. R.K.Bultmann, History of the Synoptic Tradition, pp.257-9

78. E.Haenchen, 'Die Komposition von Mk viii.27 - ix.1 und Par.', NovT., 6, 1963, pp.81-109

79. J.Jeremias, New Testament Theology, vol 1, p.257 n.4

80. K.L.Schmidt, Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu, p.216:

Wir stehen hier auf dem Boden der ältesten Überlieferung. Eine echte Erinnerungstatsache ist hier erhalten geblieben.

This may seem surprizing because Manson vigorously opposed Schmidt's view that Mark had pieced together isolated pericopes of tradition on a theological and topical basis rather than an historical basis (see LifeJ., p.212f.). Obviously it is the origin of Mark's structure which is of crucial importance in Manson's interpretation.

81. T.W.Manson, SGE., pp.33-45

was correct in noticing certain patterns in Mark's narrative is undeniable. But why exactly does Manson want to take it back one stage further? This is partly because of Manson's pre-understanding of 'history' which finds its expression in Peter's mediation between Jesus and Mark (see pp.167-184 above). But there is more than this. Manson seems to be looking for a legitimizing factor for the Church's ministry in the ministry of Jesus rather than in the ministry of the early Church. Bultmann can manage without any such legitimating factor (other than the Dass of Jesus's preaching and death), but Manson cannot. But what is this legitimating factor? Why must the evangelist's narrative be traced back to Jesus? Manson never stated what it was because he does not seem to have ever asked this fundamental question.

The Messianic Secret

In his essay in the Dodd Festschrift, Professor Manson quoted a passage from Schweitzer which claimed that as regards New Testament eschatology there were only two possible solutions. One could either accept, with Schweitzer, that this apocalyptic eschatology was an authentic part of Jesus's teaching, or one could agree with Wrede that it was a dogmatic element imposed by the evangelist.⁸² In the same article Manson suggested that there was a third alternative: realized eschatology, the view that Jesus did propose an eschatology but not an apocalyptic one. Essentially this was an answer to

82. LifeJ., p.211

Schweitzer. It accepts Schweitzer's presupposition that what Jesus said about eschatology in the Gospels is authentic, but it offers another interpretation of the same logia. The Kingdom is not cataclysmic and future and, therefore, a mistake, as Schweitzer suggested, it rather "comes in the Ministry itself".⁸³ Manson, however, set himself the additional task of discovering whether realized eschatology was an answer to Wrede's 'thorough-going scepticism'.⁸⁴

Wrede's argument can be summarised in the following way. In Mark's Gospel Jesus is openly shown to be the Messiah of Jewish expectation. But at the same time this is accompanied by a considerable number of injunctions that this should be kept secret until after the resurrection of Jesus, or at any rate until after the death of the Son of Man (Mk 9.9). The secrecy passages occur throughout Mark. They include the silencing of demons (Mk 1.25, 34; 3.12), commands to keep silent after miracles (1.43ff.; 5.43; 7.36; 8.26), the instruction to say nothing after Peter's confession (8.30) and the Transfiguration (9.9), and the attempts to travel incognito (7.24; 9.30f.). These injunctions to secrecy are not only unexpected but they clash with the disciples' inability to understand the teaching and purpose of Jesus (why, for example,

83. REMS., p.210

84. Ibid.: "I propose to discuss in this paper the question whether the interpretation of the Gospels offered by Realized Eschatology is an adequate answer to the searching questions asked by Wrede half a century ago."

should they be silent about what they do not understand?) and the disciples' failure to understand the death of Jesus. One of Wrede's presuppositions is that all these passages must be explained on the basis of one motive⁸⁵ and this is a presupposition which Manson attacked vigorously.⁸⁶ Wrede suggested that the only way to make sense of all these passages is to suppose that the early Church, which believed Jesus to have been the Messiah even though Jesus had not claimed to have been the Messiah and so was probably not conscious of the fact that he was the Messiah, this Church read back into the pre-resurrection ministry claims by Jesus that he was the Messiah. In order to reconcile this with the crowds' failure to respond to Jesus, the early Church coupled these claims to an acknowledgement of Messianic identity and with commands from Jesus that this should be kept secret from the crowds. Wrede maintained that the Church's earliest belief about Jesus was that he became Messiah after the resurrection, but that at some later date - a date before the composition of Mark - Jesus's life was filled with Messianic content.⁸⁷ So the messianic secret was put into the earliest Gospel by Mark,

85. W.Wrede, Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien, p.46:

Die Exegese hat das fort und fort, bis in die letzte Zeit wiederholte Gebot Jesu von seiner Messiaswürde zu schweigen nicht zu erklären vermocht. Denn sie hat einen einleuchtenden, für den geschichtlichen Jesus denkbaren und auf alle Einzeltälle anwendbaren Beweggrund nicht ermittelt.

86. T.W.Manson, REMS., p.212:

No voice from Heaven has declared that all the injunctions to secrecy in Mark spring from the same motive, and there is no reason on earth why we should suppose that they do.

87. W.Wrede, op. cit., p.228

but had not been created by him.

It must be pointed out that Manson and Wrede approach the text with very different pre-understandings of 'history'. Manson's understanding of 'history' predisposed him to accept the Marcan order, but is logically independent of the decision to accept it; while Wrede's understanding of 'history' made it impossible for him to accept the Marcan order. Manson's outlook is as follows:

I am increasingly convinced that the Marcan story presents in the main an orderly and logical development; and that this development or framework has as good a title to be considered reliable historical material as any particular anecdote incorporated in it.⁸⁸

Wrede on the other hand approaches the text in this way:

Die heutige Evangelienforschung geht durchweg davon aus, dass Markus bei seiner Geschichtserzählung die wirklichen Verhältnisse des Lebens Jesu annähernd deutlich, wenn auch nicht lückenlos, vor Augen habe. Sie setzt voraus, dass er aus dem Leben Jesu heraus denke, die einzelnen Züge seiner Geschichte nach den realen Umständen dieses Lebens, nach den realen Gedanken und Empfindungen Jesu motiviere und die Ereignisse, die er schildert, im geschichtlich-psychologischen Sinne verkette.

Diese Ansicht und dies Verfahren muss prinzipiell als falsch erkannt werden. Es muss offen gesagt werden: Markus hat keine wirkliche Anschauung mehr vom geschichtlichen Leben Jesu.⁸⁹

Manson is predisposed to look for motives which could have led to the use of the messianic secret by Jesus himself. And he is prepared to look for different motives

88. T.W.Manson, LifeJ., p.213

89. W.Wrede, op. cit., p.129

in different contexts. Concerning the commands to silence after the performance of miracles, Manson says that it is impossible to keep the cures themselves secret. What is to be kept secret is the means of the cures. Manson writes that,

it is the method of the cure rather than the cure itself that is to be kept secret.⁹⁰

After examining the text Manson concludes that a healing miracle is the result of co-operation in faith and love between Jesus and the patient. Where faith is weak it may be helped by some word or action of Jesus, but the patient must not suppose that the words and actions are infallible magical techniques.⁹¹ And so these words and actions must remain secret.

Wrede maintained that the predictions of the Passion and the injunctions to secrecy which go with them are vaticinia ex eventu because the predictions cannot be reconciled with the bewilderment of the disciples after the predictions were fulfilled. Manson, however, insists that these predictions are not predictions of the crucifixion of Jesus the Messiah, but predictions of the suffering, death and resurrection of the Son of Man (and we now realize what Manson understood by 'the Son of Man'). Wrede says that the three Passion predictions present us with a complete failure of the disciples' understanding and the absence of any attempt by Jesus to help this lack of understanding. Manson disagrees. He again attempts

90. T.W.Manson, REMS., p.212

91. Ibid., p.213

a corporate interpretation, this time of the Passion predictions. Only at the last supper (Mk 14.18) is the Son of Man identified with Jesus alone. The earlier predictions point to the sufferings of the collective Son of Man which at that time, Jesus no doubt hoped, would have included all his disciples. What the disciples fail to understand is the ideal represented by the suffering Son of Man. Manson further maintains that Jesus did try to help his disciples to understand the role he and they were destined to perform as the Son of Man in suffering and death. The difficulty which the disciples experienced was that they were totally preoccupied by the political, apocalyptic view of the messianic Son of Man.⁹² Manson shows that before the actual resurrection of Jesus from the dead Jews could only have thought of resurrection in communal terms.⁹³ He further draws up an impressive list of passages to show that Jesus predicted in detail the same future for the Son of Man and for the disciples. All are to be delivered up, brought before authorities, treated with hatred and contempt, scourged and put to death.⁹⁴ In terms of function, the Son of Man and the disciples are to be identified. But this pin-points the disciples' failure of understanding. They cannot accept that this inglorious future awaits the Messiah - and themselves too. They do not understand because they do not want to understand. Manson finally

92. Ibid., p.216f.

93. Ibid., p.218

94. Ibid., p.218f.

concludes, in complete opposition to Wrede:

They [the disciples] are willing to postpone the glory and humble themselves to the role of the servant in the meantime. They are not ready or willing to find the supreme glory in the role of the servant.

I suggest that it is here that we meet the real messianic secret and that it is an open secret, given in the words of Mk 10.42-5. Here we have stated in a nutshell the true nature of the Kingdom of God as opposed to the Israelite world-empire that the disciples have in mind. Here we have the messianic task clearly and simply defined. It is and remains a secret until after the Crucifixion and Resurrection, simply because no secret is ever so well kept as that which no one is willing to discover....

Against all this [the failure of Wrede's arguments] we have to place the simple fact that the messianic secret, which undoubtedly exists in the Gospels, is not concerned with the identity of the Messiah but with the nature of his task.⁹⁵

Manson suggests that Jesus was the first to seriously challenge the Jewish messianic tradition:

While others were asking 'Who is the Messiah?', he asked 'What is the Messiah?'.⁹⁶

What remains a secret - an open secret - is the nature of the Kingdom and the role of the Son of Man, the secret that both are to be identified with the ministry.

Here again we have the now familiar motifs of exegesis in terms of ministry, in terms of the suffering, the service and the sacrifice of the group of faithful

95. Ibid., p.219f. My emphasis.

96. Ibid., p.221

followers. Again we have the authentication of the evangelist's text in the life of Jesus.⁹⁷ There is, however, one serious difficulty about Manson's interpretation. Manson has tried to explain the lack of understanding on the part of the disciples so far as the Passion predictions are concerned, but he has lost sight of the commands to secrecy themselves as they stand in the text (e.g. Mk 8.30, "And he charged them to tell no one about him"). The "open secret" of the nature of the Son of Man and his role in the Kingdom is for Manson really no secret at all. At best it is a metaphorical 'secret'. The 'secret' represents only the failure of the disciples to understand what Jesus openly taught them.

The Cursing of the Fig Tree: Mk 11.12-14, 20-25

In a lecture which appeared in the Bulletin of the John Rylands Library entitled 'The Cleansing of the Temple', T.W.Manson presented a very individual interpretation of the cursing of the fig tree.⁹⁸ This article is interesting because it shows how Manson approached the account of a nature miracle, and it shows how Manson gave historical credence to material which a great many other exegetes would say did not deserve it. And having given the material historical credence it

97. Vincent Taylor offers a not dissimilar interpretation in 'The Messianic Secret in Mark', ExpT., LIX, 1947-8, p.150f. It is possible that Manson was not uninfluenced by this article!

98. T.W.Manson, 'The Cleansing of the Temple', BJRL., 33, 1950-51, pp.271-282.

shows to what use he could put it. All this, as we shall see, was to the end of dating the ministry of Jesus as accurately as possible.

Manson's purpose is to show that the period between the healing of Bartimaeus (Mk 10.46-52) and the finding of the empty tomb on the following Sunday morning (Mk 16.1-8) was not in fact a period of one week but of about six months. In order to do this Manson wants to give an alternative date for the cleansing of the Temple to that suggested in Mark's narrative, and his means for doing this is to suggest an early date for the cursing of the fig tree. By means of this and other information in Mark, Manson finally suggests a reconstruction of Jesus's final months. The crux of the matter so far as pre-understanding is concerned is Manson's acceptance of the fig tree story and Mark's redaction of it around the cleansing of the Temple (Mk 11.15-17) as offering reliable historical information. Bultmann thinks that the story was originally a unity and that it has been broken up and inserted into its present position by Mark.⁹⁹ Many commentators deny the historical value of the story and Vincent Taylor suggests that the parable of the fig tree in Luke 13.6-9, or a similar parable, has been transformed into a story of fact.¹⁰⁰ Clearly the story is a difficult one and it is not easy to accept it at its face value. It seems that

99. R.K.Bultmann, History of the Synoptic Tradition, p.218

100. V.Taylor, The Gospel according to St Mark, p.458f. This had been previously suggested by Schwartz, Wellhausen, Weiss and Goguel.

one has either to deny its historical character altogether, or one has to rationalize it, thereby heightening its historical character, and this is what Manson has done.

Manson accepts that the story of the fig tree has a sound historical basis because of his view that Mark used Petrine reminiscences in compiling his Gospel.¹⁰¹ And Peter seems to have taken the occurrence as an arbitrary destruction of a tree. But Manson is predisposed to explain the incident on some other basis. There is no report in the canonical Gospels of any similar incident; the only parallels are in the apocryphal Gospels. Manson comments:

It is a tale of miraculous power wasted in the service of ill-temper (for the supernatural energy employed to blast the unfortunate tree might have been more usefully expended in forcing a crop of figs out of season); and as it stands it is simply incredible.¹⁰²

Manson tries to restore credibility in the story by considering the information Dalman provided about "the yearly vicissitudes of the fig tree"¹⁰³ in Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina, Vol 2.

At the beginning of the year there are neither leaves nor fruit (Dalman 1. p.289f.)

In April there are new leaves (p.331, p.378)

Early in May new figs begin to form, and by the end of the month they are fit to eat. In June early figs are on sale in Jerusalem (p.332, p.379)

101. T.W.Manson, SGE., p.33ff.

102. 'The Cleansing of the Temple', BJRL, 33, 1950-51, p.279

103. Ibid., p.277f.

From August to October the main crop of fruit is gathered (p.561)

During this period the leaves begin to droop and change colour (p.57)

In October and November the leaves fall off, and by December the tree is leafless (p.100, p.255).

Burkitt had suggested that the description of the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem pointed to a celebration of the Feast of the Rededication of the Temple which took place at the end of December. But if the fig tree story is to be connected with the entry into Jerusalem, Manson points out, it cannot have been the Rededication Feast because at that time there would have been no leaves on the trees. Nor is the situation any better if we accept the usual date for the story - one week before the Passover. A very late Passover (the third week in April) and unusually good weather might have produced leaves and immature fruit on the fig trees on the Mount of Olives, but even if this were the case it is unlikely that the fruit would have been fit to eat and no one would have gone to look for fruit. Whoever wrote the last clause of v.13 - "it was not the season for figs" - realized that there was no sense in looking for fruit in the week before the Passover, but it is only that clause that connects the story with the Passover. If that clause is removed as an editorial addition then the story can be dated at any time between May and October when fig trees have leaves and edible fruit. Manson adds:

Now the Feast of Tabernacles falls in this period; and...the peculiar features in the story of the Triumphal Entry are as easily explained by reference

to Tabernacles as by reference to Hanukkah (the Feast of Rededication).¹⁰⁴

Manson cannot accept that the story was produced out of nothing and he insists on holding together this story with the entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the Temple. He rationalizes the fig tree story in the following way:

(a) The incident took place at a time when the leaves of the fig tree were beginning to droop and change colour, but when one might still expect to find a few figs left over from the main crop. Jesus went to the tree in the hope that this would be so. Actually there were none: either there had never been any or they had all been taken already.

(b) Jesus said something in Aramaic which could mean:
 "Let no one ever eat fruit from thee again" or
 "No one shall ever eat fruit from thee again" or
 "One will never eat fruit from thee again".¹⁰⁵

In the first case we have the 'cursing' of the fig tree as it is understood by Peter and Mark: in the second the natural interpretation of the saying would be that Jesus expected 'the Day' (or the destruction of Jerusalem) to come before another fig-harvest fell due: in the third case we should take it to mean that Jesus knew that he would be put to death before the fig tree should again bear figs. It is at least possible that Jesus meant the second or third of these: and that - not for the first time - he was misunderstood.

104. Ibid., p.279

105. Manson adds the following footnote: "These possibilities arise as soon as one puts the Greek of Mark back into Aramaic. They are inevitable partly because there is no distinction of form between the simple imperfect and the jussive in Aramaic."

(c) The 'withering' of the tree remains. If the incident is dated in autumn, it is possible that some combination of circumstances hastened the shedding of the leaves, so that by the next day the tree was bare. It is clear that it stood some distance from the road (ἀπὸ μακρόθεν Mk 11.13); but there is nothing to say that on the second day the disciples went over to study more closely what had happened. If they supposed that Jesus had cursed the tree on the previous day, they may well have imagined, on seeing it leafless, that the curse had taken effect.¹⁰⁶

On this basis Manson supposed, though somewhat hesitantly, that Jesus's entry coincided with the Feast of Tabernacles six month's before Jesus's death. Manson couples this with other historical deductions. Mk 14.1 marks a new beginning with a reference to the Jewish calendar - "It was now two days before the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread" - and it is not directly connected with what has gone before i.e. the Triumphal Entry, the fig tree story, the cleansing of the Temple, various parables and the 'little apocalypse'. Manson accepts the Alexandrian reading of Mk 10.1, καὶ ἐκεῖθεν ἀναστὰς ἔρχεται εἰς τὰ ὄρια τῆς Ἰουδαίας καὶ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, because the alternative readings offer an anachronistic picture of Palestine in 27-33 A.D.¹⁰⁷ Mark 10.1, then, "does not describe a trip from Galilee to Jerusalem but a ministry in Judea and Perea." This is strengthened, argues Manson, by the use of the plural ὄχλοι which suggests that crowds came to Jesus repeatedly over a period of

106. Ibid., p.279f.

107. Ibid., pp.271-3

time.¹⁰⁸ The use of $\pi\acute{\alpha}\lambda\iota\nu$ together with the imperfect $\epsilon\delta\acute{\iota}\delta\alpha\sigma\kappa\epsilon\nu$ probably means that Jesus was returning to Judea and Perea for a further period of teaching. There is nothing improbable in such a ministry. Perea was part of the territory of Herod Antipas and John the Baptist may have had his headquarters there rather than in Judea. If Jesus had spent any appreciable time with John he would have been returning to "familiar ground and known people". Mk 3,8 shows that Jesus had already established his reputation in Judea and Perea though we are not told how he did this. Manson concludes with the following reconstruction of the final stage of the ministry:

I should accordingly outline the course of events thus. Gathering of the five thousand men in the spring of the year, followed by Jesus' withdrawal to the districts of Tyre and Sidon and later to the Decapolis. Next comes a second movement to the north via Bethsaida, in the territory of Herod Philip, towards Caesarea Philippi. This is followed by a secret journey through Galilee ending in Capernaum. The total impression is one of continual movement in and out of Galilee to north and east. Finally comes a movement to the south (Mk 10,1). What route was followed? Usually it is thought that it was a detour through Perea. This must now be seriously questioned; more probably the route was through Samaria into Judea. A ministry in Judea and Perea (in that order, which is Mark's [10,1 and the whole story]) follows. This means that Jesus at some point crossed over the Jordan into Perea territory. The Perea ministry ended for the time being when Jesus went up to Jerusalem (via Jericho) for the Feast of Tabernacles. On this occasion the cleansing of the Temple took place. We are then left with a period

108. Ibid., p.273f.

of some six months (Oct - April) between the cleansing of the Temple (Mk 11. 11-25) and the opening of the Passion narrative proper (Mk 14.1). If this is correct, we can explain one feature of the Passion story that has always been baffling, the sudden volte-face whereby within a week the enthusiastic crowd shouting Hosannas at the Triumphal Entry is transformed into a howling mob demanding the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus. If we are really dealing with two different feasts separated by six months, the change of attitude can be more readily explained as due to a growing sense of disappointment and disillusionment caused by the failure of Jesus to lead a great national uprising.¹⁰⁹

The Last Supper

For Manson, the main problem of the last supper is whether it should be interpreted as a passover meal or not. But his most important attempt to interpret the meal showed, he claimed, that the essential meaning of the meal is independent of whether it was celebrated on 14 Nisan or 15 Nisan. Certainly the date of the meal is of some importance; in a review in the Journal of Theological Studies he discussed the question of whether Jesus drank from the cup:

It is said [in the book under review] that Jesus did not partake of the cup at the Last Supper. The question whether he did or not is of real moment since there are at least two discernable ideas about the cup. It may represent sacrificial suffering (Mark 14.36), which the disciples would be called upon to share (Mark 10.38-40). In that case one

109. Ibid., p.280f.

would expect Jesus to drink. On the other hand it may stand for the shedding of Messianic blood by which the disciples benefit. This would not demand that Jesus should drink and might even exclude his drinking.¹¹⁰

No doubt Manson was predisposed towards the first of these possible conclusions as Jesus's sharing of the cup and, by implication, his sufferings with the disciples would support Manson's interpretation of 'the Son of Man'.

Manson consistently favoured the Johannine dating of the last supper.¹¹¹ He nowhere argued explicitly and fully for his conclusion, but in his review of Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu he mentioned the difficulties that Mark's Passover account makes no mention of the use of lamb and herbs nor have these ever been used in the Christian eucharist, and that $\mu\eta\ \epsilon\nu\ \tau\eta\ \epsilon\omicron\omicron\rho\tau\eta$ need not be translated (as Jeremias does) 'not in the presence of the festal crowd'.¹¹² Manson was not so much convinced by the arguments for the Johannine account as unconvinced by the arguments for the Marcan account. Manson rejected as pure speculation Billerbeck's explanation of a

110. Review of J. Jeremias, Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu, JTS., 1, 1950, p.203

111. 'The Jewish Background' in Christian Worship, ed. by N. Micklethwait, p.47f. (1936)

'The Gospel of Mark' in SGE., p.35f. (1944)

Review of Jeremias, op. cit., p.200f. (1950)

P&J., p.87f. (published posthumously in 1963)

112. JTS., 1, 1950, p.200f.

Pharisaic and Sadducean Passover celebrated on the Thursday and the Friday respectively, thus making the last supper a Passover meal on one reckoning and a non-Passover meal on the other.¹¹³ Manson also rejected the view that - assuming the Johannine account to be correct - this non-Passover meal was a Kiddûsh. In the first place the evidence for the Kiddûsh order of cup and loaf is not very strong. And in the second place the last supper can have been neither a Sabbath Kiddûsh nor a Passover Kiddûsh ushering in the feast, because the Johannine meal anticipated the feast by 24 hours. "There is no evidence for a Passover Kiddûsh which takes place twenty-four hours before the feast."¹¹⁴

Manson supposes the last supper to have been one of a series of meals which Jesus shared with his disciples, and he thinks that there are hints of this series of meals in the Gospels. He accepts the post-resurrection appearance in Luke 24.13-35 as authentic history. What Manson thinks is important about this story is that Cleopas and the other unnamed person who were walking to Emmaus only recognized Jesus when he broke bread with them - and they were not present at the last supper! This seems to imply that, even though the last supper may have been a Passover meal, Jesus presided over other non-Paschal meals with other followers, and that these meals had distinctive

113. 'The Jewish Background' in Christian Worship, p.45; cf. P.Billerbeck, 'Der Todestag Jesu' in his Kommentar, II pp.812-853.

114. Ibid., p.46

recognizable features.¹¹⁵ There are similarities also between the last supper and the feeding of the multitude (Mk 6.39-44; 8.6-8 and parallels). The essential differences are that there is no cup and no words of institution. Yet John attached a long eucharistic discourse to this incident. There are further recorded occasions when Jesus ate not only with his disciples but also with tax collectors and prostitutes (Mk 2.15-17). Manson thinks that Jesus's obscure saying about salt in Mk 9.50b ("Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another") can be explained in the light of a passage documented by Robertson Smith: "If I have eaten the smallest morsel of food with a man, I have nothing further to fear from him; 'there is salt between us', and he is bound not only to do me no harm, but to help and defend me as if I were his brother."¹¹⁶ These meals, then, would be a sacrament of brotherhood. And Lk 22.30 suggests that these meals will continue into the new age; the Messianic banquet is anticipated and realized in the present (just like Manson's interpretation of 'the Kingdom of God'). Manson concludes:

If this is the case, we have a long series of significant common meals, of which the Last Supper is in truth the last. And the Last Supper gains added significance from the fact that the death of the host is imminent. It is this approaching death which gives peculiar meaning to the cup and new meaning to the breaking of the bread. And it is to be noted that all this holds good whether the Last Supper was a Passover meal

115. Ibid., p.47f.

116. Robertson Smith, Religion of the Semites, p.269f., quoted in T.W.Manson, ibid., p.48.

or not. If it was a Passover meal, there would be further meanings in the symbolism drawn from the associations of the rite. But they would be additional to those already involved in the meal in any case. The essential significance of the Last Supper would still be that it was the last of many fellowship-meals, the last because the death of Jesus was at hand.

We are thus brought to a somewhat strange conclusion. The question whether the Last Supper was a Passover meal or not, becomes important chiefly as a means of deciding the chronological question of the date of the Crucifixion. The deepest meaning of the Supper itself is independent of its connexion with the Passover, and must be sought in the purpose and method of the whole ministry of Jesus.¹¹⁷

This interpretation of the eucharist in terms of ministry, community and fellowship can be taken too far, as the following example will show. Manson tried to show what Paul meant in his eucharistic passage, 1 Corinthians 11.17-34. The clue to the meaning of the eucharist in this passage, says Manson, lies in the abuses which Paul was attacking amongst the Christians at Corinth.¹¹⁸ The problem lies in what Paul means by 'the body of Christ'. In 1 Cor. 10, 'the body of Christ' means both the loaf and the Church:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. (1 Cor. 10.16)

117. Ibid., p.49. My emphasis

118. 'The Corinthian Correspondence (1)', SGE., p.202f.

The reference to the cup containing the 'blood of Christ' shows that the 'body of Christ' refers to what is eaten as well as the one Church. This double reference of 'the body of Christ' is also possible in 1 Cor. 11.17-34, even though there is no reference in this passage to 'the body of Christ' as the Church. The central part of this passage is as follows:

For I received from the Lord what I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night that he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. (1 Cor. 11.23-29)

It is clear that the Corinthians were profaning the body and blood of Christ i.e. the sacrament, and, by implication, they were betraying the unity and brotherhood of the Church. But Manson avoids any reference to the 'body' as the sacrament of the death of Jesus and he interprets this passage entirely in terms of disrupting the unity of the Church:

Against them [the Corinthians] he [Paul] insists on its [the eucharist's] significance as the Sacrament of the unity of the Church, the Body of Christ. Failure to discern - and respect - this Body and

this unity entails judgment. It is the same thing as despising the Church of God.

In all this the fundamental thing is the unity of the Church, the body of Christ, and the real fellowship of believers with Him and with one another in the Church.¹¹⁹

Manson's ecclesiological pre-understanding has here led him completely astray. It is quite clear that Paul is saying, in some sense, that at the eucharist we eat the body of Christ and we drink his blood. But Manson says nothing of this, and he even avoids it by speaking of the 'body of Christ' only as the Church. This highlights the danger inherent in the idea of pre-understanding. Our pre-understanding can limit our vision and make us blind to certain perspectives. The remedy is to bring pre-understanding into the open and to constantly criticize it in the light of the texts we are interpreting.

The Resurrection Appearances

"The resurrection of the Lord is vitally important. The Gospel hangs on it."¹²⁰ Manson's own words explain why we must look at his exegesis of the resurrection appearances and the story of the empty tomb. How a Christian chooses to interpret these texts determines to a large extent the type of Gospel message he will believe. And nowhere is pre-understanding more crucially important in interpretation. How one interprets

119. Ibid., p.202

120. 'The Corinthian Correspondence (1)' in SGE., p.205

these texts depends on one's understanding of 'God', 'science' and 'laws of nature', 'history' and 'eschatology'. How one interprets these texts depends also on one's anthropology (in the continental sense of that word i.e. philosophical, not social, anthropology) and on one's understanding of the concept 'resurrection'. Manson, in fact, wrote only a little about these texts. He spoke about his general understanding of the resurrection in a number of places and this has been described in the previous chapter (pp.194-8), but only in two places in his writings is there anything of substance about the New Testament texts which speak about the appearances of Jesus and the empty tomb.

The first piece of exegesis occurs in a posthumously published lecture and covers 1 Corinthians 15. It is a brief exposition of what Paul meant in this passage by 'resurrection'. As the exposition is fairly short it is possible to quote it in full:

In 1 Cor. 15 Paul begins by speaking of 'the Gospel which I preached unto you', and then goes on to state its contents as follows:

- (i) that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures,
- (ii) that he was buried,
- (iii) that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures,
- (iv) that he appeared to various witnesses.

If this is not the case certain consequences follow:

- (a) '...our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain'(14);
- (b) Paul turns out to be a 'false witness to God'(15);
- (c) '...your faith is futile and you are still in

your sins'(17);

(d) '...those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished'(18).

In short, 'we are of all men most to be pitied'(19).

Then leaving suppositions on one side Paul comes back to the facts (νυνὶ δέ). Christ is raised from the dead and is 'the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep'. His resurrection is the first instalment. The process will be completed at the Parousia, when 'those who belong to Christ' will be raised. Then comes the end (τὸ τέλος). The kingdom he will hand over to God, after having subdued every hostile force (ὅταν καταργήσῃ πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ σύναμιν). For he must continue to reign (βασιλεύειν, present) until he put all enemies under foot. The last enemy to be subdued is Death. The end is that God is 'all in all' (πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν).¹²¹

The final chapter in The Servant Messiah is entitled 'The Risen Christ and the Messianic Succession'.¹²²

Manson here discusses the final chapters of the Synoptic Gospels in a general way, and this discussion will quieten any doubts there might be about the previous quotation that Manson agreed with Paul that the resurrection was an event in time. This exposition makes it quite clear that Manson grounded the resurrection in history (unlike Bultmann for example¹²³) and he here explicitly connects the resurrection of Jesus Christ with his own interest in 'ministry'. He has no problems about the meaning of the resurrection on

121. 'The Cosmic Significance of Christ' in P&J., p.24f.; the oddities of style and syntax are Manson's.

122. SerM., pp.89-99

123. R.K.Bultmann, History of the Synoptic Tradition, pp.284-91

the simplest level: Jesus was killed and then was alive again. Manson is quite clear that this is different from the hellenic belief in the immortality of the soul; in this case Jesus was dead and then restored to life, a restoration to life of the body as well as of the soul.¹²⁴ However, if one examines the motives that the Roman and Jewish authorities might have had for killing Jesus, what is the likeliest explanation?

The only possible answer is that they were trying to put a stop to what we call the Ministry, and what they would have called the subversive activities or the dangerous teaching or the pernicious influence of this false prophet or bogus Messiah from Nazareth....

There are many uncertainties to be reckoned with in tracing the history of Jesus and the early Church, but here is one certainty: the Ministry of Jesus was not stopped.¹²⁵

The ministerial task continues: it began with the Apostles and is still being carried out today in the Church. That the Church is still successfully carrying out this task two thousand years later is something like a proof, for Manson, that Jesus has been raised from the dead and is supporting the Church here and now.¹²⁶ The accounts of the resurrection appearances are substantially true: "The Crucified was alive again and active among them."¹²⁷ The resurrection is a validation of the previous ministry

124. T.W.Manson, SerM., pp.89-91

125. Ibid., p.89

126. Ibid., p.98

127. Ibid., p.89

of Jesus,¹²⁸ but more importantly for Manson it is a guarantee for the success of the Church's future. The resurrection of Jesus implies his continued leadership in a continuing ministry.¹²⁹ Nowhere is Manson's exegesis of the resurrection isolated from the ministry. He accepts Paul's account of his experience of the risen Christ on the Damascus road as being "a substantially accurate report"(Acts 26,15-19). But the point Manson makes is that previously Paul had been a vigorous opponent of Christ, and after this experience he began to work for Christ. To experience the risen Christ is to work in his ministry.¹³⁰ We also saw in the previous section on the Last Supper that Manson took Jesus's appearance on the Emmaus road (Lk 24,13-35) as a demonstration that Jesus had celebrated meals with his disciples during the ministry. Manson never treats the resurrection in isolation. But his is not the only way of understanding the resurrection and his very individual exegesis is an indication of the pre-understanding with which he approached the text.

The Lord's Prayer

Professor Manson wrote about the Lord's

128. Ibid., p.92f.

129. Ibid., p.95f.

130. Ibid., pp.92f. and 97f.

Prayer on three separate occasions, in 1931,¹³¹ in 1937,¹³² and in 1955.¹³³ The first and third of these interpretations are in general agreement and are non-eschatological, while the second is quite different and is much more strongly eschatological in character. This is a slight exaggeration because the only major differences concern the interpretation of 'Thy kingdom' and 'Thy will', but the tone of the second exposition in The Sayings of Jesus is very different from the basic line taken by Manson in his two late articles of 1955. It is curious that there is little sign of development between the interpretation of 1931 and that of 1955, while the second interpretation is completely ignored (its eschatological tendency is not even refuted) in the later articles. That Manson chose to ignore the eschatological tendency of his second interpretation is also curious because of the very strongly eschatological expositions by Jeremias¹³⁴ and Ernst Lohmeyer¹³⁵ of which the

131. T., pp.113-5

132. S., pp.459-63 and 557-8

133. 'The Lord's Prayer I' and 'The Lord's Prayer II', BJRL., 38, 1955-6, pp. 99-113 and 436-448.

134. J.Jeremias, New Testament Theology, vol 1, pp.193-203, which is a condensed version of 'The Lord's Prayer in the Light of Recent Research' in The Prayers of Jesus, pp.82-107.

135. E.Lohmeyer, The Lord's Prayer: "...all is focused on the imminent future, and even the one petition that speaks of 'today' puts this very 'today' in the context of the coming age and the coming world."(p.278)

latter appeared in Germany in 1952 only three years before Manson's final interpretation.

The Lord's Prayer occurs in two different versions in Mt 6.9-13 and Lk 11.2-4, and the first problem is to reconstruct the original text. Jeremias's conclusion is that the shorter length of Luke is original because it is entirely contained within Matthew and liturgical use tends to lengthen prayers. But, Jeremias supposes, the wording of Matthew is closer to what would have been the original Aramaic.¹³⁶ He also concludes that the two versions represent the versions in use in two liturgically independent Churches: Matthew in the Jewish-Christian Church, and Luke in the Gentile-Christian Church. Compared with this Manson is very conservative.¹³⁷ He adopts Matthew's length, with the exception of the opening 'Our Father who art in heaven', and Luke's wording in the petition for forgiveness:

Father, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

136. J. Jeremias, New Testament Theology, vol 1, p.195f.

137. In The Sayings of Jesus, Manson offers as the original exactly the same version as Jeremias, viz.:

Father, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy Kingdom come.

Give us this day our bread for the coming day.

And forgive us our sins, as we also have forgiven those who have wronged us.

And bring us not into temptation. (p.558)

Give us this day our bread for the coming day,
 And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who
 trespass against us.
 And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from
 the evil.¹³⁸

The one place where Manson was prepared to emend the text,
 and there he agrees with Jeremias,¹³⁹ was in adopting

Luke's Abba:

I do not myself think there is any room for serious
 doubt. We know from other places in the Gospels that
 the form of address used by our Lord in prayer was,
 in fact, the simple word "Father". This appears
 from the most solemn and impressive of all the prayers,
 that in Gethsamane; and it is corroborated by the
 teaching of St Paul in Romans viii.15 and Galatians
 iv.6, where he indicates to us that one of the primary
 results of the working of the Holy Spirit in the
 hearts of Christians is that they are able to address
 God as "Father" simply. More than that, Paul uses the
 same word that is used by Jesus - the Aramaic Abba.
 That seems to me to make it very probable that the
 intention of our Lord was that his disciples should
 learn to pray to God in the same way as he did himself.
 Why then do we have in Matthew "Our Father who art in
 heaven"? There need be little hesitation about the
 answer to that question, since "Our Father who art in
 heaven" is a stock phrase of Jewish Synagogue piety -
 one way in which a reverent and devout Jew spoke to
 God.¹⁴⁰

Manson also suggested that Jesus was proposing a new
 alternative to the Jewish address to God; instead of
 calling God "Adonai - Lord", Christians should call God

138. 'The Lord's Prayer II', BJRL., 38, 1955-6, p.436

139. J.Jeremias, New Testament Theology, vol 1, p.196f.

140. T.W.Manson, 'The Lord's Prayer I', BJRL., 38, 1955-6,
 p.104f.

"Abba - Father".¹⁴¹ In fact in his earliest work, Manson said that "the Lord's Prayer is the sum of the teaching of Jesus on the Fatherhood of God".¹⁴²

In The Sayings of Jesus Manson thought that the Kingdom "is certainly the final consummation...still future and an object of hope rather than experience",¹⁴³ and in this he agreed with Jeremias.¹⁴⁴ He also agreed that God's "will" had an eschatological reference, a reference to that time when his will will be fully achieved, though he thought that it did not have an exclusively future connotation. Tertullian had reversed these two petitions so that the doing of God's will would precede the coming of his future Kingdom, but Manson, when he later reverted to an interpretation which reflected the view of the Kingdom of God to be found in The Teaching of Jesus, thought that Tertullian was wrong:

Tertullian is apparently not in favour of any interpretation of the coming of the kingdom simply in terms of man's obedience to the will of God here and now. In this he is surely wrong.¹⁴⁵

So Manson seems to remove completely all possible eschatological content from the Lord's Prayer. He thinks that the meaning of the coming of the Kingdom is elucidated by the petition "thy will be done on earth as it is in

141. 'The Lord's Prayer II', BJRL., 38, 1955-6, p.437

142. T., p.115

143. S., p.461

144. J.Jeremias, New Testament Theology, vol 1, p.198f.

145. T.W.Manson, 'The Lord's Prayer I', BJRL., 38, 1955-6 p.108

heaven". The coming of the Kingdom means exactly the same as the doing of God's will: "thy kingdom come" means "thy will be done". And the Kingdom has a threefold time reference, as has the doing of God's will, which is the same as that which we find in his exposition of the Kingdom of God in The Teaching of Jesus. It is eternal, it is present, and it is future. We pray that God's will may always be done, we pray that his will may be done by men here and now, and that it may be done fully at the future consummation.¹⁴⁶ So there is finally an eschatological reference in Manson's interpretation but it is not a strong one, for primarily the coming of God's Kingdom and the doing of his will are to be looked for and worked for in the present. At this point I must criticize the exposition of Manson's theology offered by C.F.Spragins. He criticized Manson for identifying the coming of the Kingdom with the doing of God's will and he called Manson's position 'liberal'. He showed that this could be found in The Teaching of Jesus but claimed that Manson never repeated it.¹⁴⁷ Yet here more than twenty years later in the two articles on the Lord's Prayer we see the same liberal interpretation. It must be said that Manson never abandoned this liberalism.

146. 'The Lord's Prayer II', BJRL., 38, 1955-6, p.439f.

147. C.F.Spragins, T.W.Manson: Neutestamentler, p.39ff. Spragins also criticizes Jeremias's interpretation of the Lord's Prayer for being excessively eschatological without realizing that Jeremias is supported totally by Lohmeyer and by Manson's own modified-eschatological interpretation in The Sayings of Jesus.

But this interpretation is not so much liberal as semi-Pelagian, or so it seems outside the wider context of a theology of grace. What one really misses here is a theology of sin and judgment, grace and free will. It may be objected on Manson's behalf that he was not a dogmatic theologian and was not competent to offer such a theology, but that does not prevent his being labelled 'semi-Pelagian'. Manson could only have cleared himself of this charge by clarifying his position within a theology of grace, and this he never did. What this criticism of Manson does show, besides Manson's own shortcomings, is the inextricable interconnection and interdependence of biblical exegesis and dogmatic theology.

When we pray in the Lord's Prayer for bread, the problem is to know what sort of bread is being prayed for, and the key to this is the meaning of ἑπιούσιος. Is it derived from ἐπί-οὐσία in which case it would mean 'real', 'true' or 'substantial', or is it derived from the verb ἐπιέναι, which would mean 'tomorrow's bread'. For the word ἑπιούσιος, which occurs in both accounts of this prayer, does not appear anywhere else in the New Testament. Indeed it has only been observed in one other manuscript, published by Flinders Petrie in 1889 and now no longer extant, and there it probably refers to the daily rations which were given to household slaves in the evening and which were to suffice during the following day. The language of this papyrus is similar to that of a latin wall inscription where the ἑπιουσ... of the papyrus (probably an abbreviation of ἐπιουσίων) corresponds to

diaria on the wall inscription, which means 'daily'. So τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον, if it has the same meaning as the papyrus and wall inscription, would refer to the bread which would keep us alive for the next twenty four hours. Manson accepts that this is the derivation of the petition for bread in the prayer and he accepts the consequent interpretation:

The picture that is presented in this petition, if this is the right way to understand epiousios, is the picture of the follower of Jesus doing his daily tasks as God wills and receiving from God's hands whatever is needed to keep him going at work for another day.¹⁴⁸

Jeremias, on the other hand, is more convinced by Jerome than the admittedly weak manuscript evidence which Manson used. Jerome reported that the Gospel of the Nazarenes used mahar. This Gospel was in fact a Targum-like translation of Matthew into Aramaic, but Jeremias thinks that at this point it is older than Matthew because the translator would not have translated Matthew's Greek back into Aramaic, he would have quoted from memory the Lord's Prayer as it was used in the Nazarene liturgy. In which case mahar is the Aramaic that underlies ἐπιούσιος.

Jerome also adds an interpretation: mahar quod dicitur crastinum, ut sit sensus: panem nostrum crastinum, id est futurum, da nobis hodie. Jeremias thinks that the future bread which is asked for is tomorrow's bread, but that 'tomorrow' has the primary meaning of "God's tomorrow, the future, i.e. the 'end-time'".¹⁴⁹ Christians ask for

148. T.W.Manson, 'The Lord's Prayer I', BJRL., 38, 1955-6, p.111f.

149. J.Jeremias, New Testament Theology, vol 1, p.200

the bread of salvation, the Messianic banquet, to be given today.

The request for forgiveness poses fewer problems. Manson adopts the present tense of Luke in the apodosis ἀφίόμεν to Matthew's aorist ἀφήκαμεν in order to avoid any suggestion of a do ut des attitude.¹⁵⁰ But whereas Jeremias sees this as a request here and now for God's eschatological forgiveness,¹⁵¹ Manson is more concerned that we should share here and now God's forgiving disposition:

Now the implication of that, I think, is that genuine communion with God is somehow blocked by disharmony with one's neighbour. Human beings out of harmony with one another are thereby prevented from being in harmony with God. Another way of putting that is to say that to have a hard and unforgiving spirit is to have in oneself the most effective obstacle to the receiving of God's forgiveness.¹⁵²

The meaning of 'temptation' for the modern reader is that of moral temptation, and the last part of the prayer seems to suggest that God might lead us into moral temptation and we pray that he should not. But πειρασμός as Manson points out, means not only that but also 'trial' and 'testing'. We find similar language

150. T.W.Manson, 'The Lord's Prayer I', BJRL., 38, 1955-6, p.109

151. J.Jeremias, New Testament Theology, vol 1, p.201

152. T.W.Manson, 'The Lord's Prayer I', BJRL., 38, 1955-6, p.109

in Mk 14.38 and parallels, ἵνα μὴ ἔλθητε εἰς πειρασμόν which refers to a trial of ultimate eschatological significance - it is the temptation to apostasy. Manson writes:

We may conclude that "temptation" in the Lord's Prayer stands for those forces which would entice or drive God's servants into disloyalty to him; and since to fall into such disloyalty is to fall under the greatest misfortune possible, it is very right and proper that one should ask to be spared the trial. At the same time it is of the very nature of the case that he who prays this prayer should be ready and willing to undergo the trial, if need be, in the service of the Kingdom. In that event the second part of the petition, "Deliver us from the evil" appears in its full significance.¹⁵³

The meaning of "deliver" is that we should be snatched away from pressing dangers. But what is τοῦ πονηροῦ? It could be neuter and refer in the abstract to 'misfortune', but Manson thinks this to have been unlikely in the first century. It could be neuter and refer to evil action, but such a moralistic interpretation would necessitate our understanding πειρασμός in the previous petition as 'moral temptation'. Manson thinks it more likely that its gender is masculine and refers to the Devil, the leader of the forces of evil. But having rejected a moralistic interpretation of this petition in favour of a religious and eschatological interpretation, Manson's final sentence is somewhat pallid:

The whole petition says in effect to God: "If possible let us serve thee in peace and quietness; but keep us faithful come what may."¹⁵⁴

153. 'The Lord's Prayer II', BJRL., 38, 1955-6, p.445

154. Ibid., p.448

Manson summed up the meaning of the prayer in the following lengthy passage:

At this point I venture to state my own conclusions, for what they are worth, as a kind of summing up of the discussion so far. I think that the Prayer probably began with the simple address "Father". That set the tone of the prayer as a whole. It is a way of expressing at the outset a simple, direct trust and love akin to that shown by our Lord himself in his earthly life. This is followed by the petition that God's name may be sanctified. That is, the address is intimate and familiar but is accompanied by all the reverence and devotion that are due from man to God; and, as the early Fathers said, this petition means in the first instance "hallowed by me". "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" I think are sufficiently near to the original and I think they belong together and the second half is explanatory of the first. "Thy kingdom come" means first and foremost "thy kingdom come in my case." Our Lord's prayer in Gethsemane explains perfectly what is meant both by "thy kingdom come" and by "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". Complete obedience on the part of him who prays is the explanation - and the realization - of the kingly rule of the divine Father. The second part of the Lord's Prayer is the request for the things that are necessary in order to be good and faithful servants of the heavenly king: enough material provision to do one's work efficiently; a gracious and forgiving attitude to us in the mistakes and disobedience that none of us can hope to avoid, coupled with the acknowledgement that if we are to have that, we must be prepared to show a forgiving and kindly spirit to our neighbours in their mistakes and disobedience and trespasses. The request regarding temptation...ought to be understood as a request that we should not have to face trials or temptations that might lead us into absolute disloyalty. That goes with the final petition, for deliverance from the powers that are hostile to the

will of God.

This, then, I think is the substance of the prayer in what seems to me to be its original form. It is a proclamation and personal acknowledgement of the kingship of the divine Father made in confident love, deep reverence, and willing obedience; and this is joined with a request to him for all things that are needed in order that we may be in the fullest and most real sense his loyal subjects and servants as long as we live.¹⁵⁵

Manson's interpretation, then, is individualistic and, in general, non-eschatological. And, in the light of the earlier exegesis of his which we have examined, his concluding paragraph is what we would expect:

When we look at the Prayer as a whole, it points to a God who is to be loved, honoured, obeyed and trusted in all circumstances. When we look at the ministry of Jesus we see the prayer prayed and the answer given; and it becomes plain that the best exposition of the Lord's Prayer is the life, death and resurrection of him who prayed it.¹⁵⁶

Joachim Jeremias has attempted to present the original meaning of the prayer, the meaning it would have had for Jesus and for the disciples and the primitive Church. He does not say so explicitly but his general interest in the ipsissima vox Jesu and his reconstruction of the prayer in Aramaic show that this is so. Manson in his interpretation is no more explicit about what he is trying to do. He does claim to offer the original form of the prayer, but the meaning he gives to the petitions

155. 'The Lord's Prayer I', BJRL., 38, 1955-6, p.112f.

156. 'The Lord's Prayer II', BJRL., 38, 1955-6, p.448.

My emphasis.

has a quite different ring from the meaning suggested by Jeremias. Why have they offered such distinct interpretations of the same text? This is the general problem I have been dealing with throughout and the answer for the most part, I suggest, is that they do not share the same pre-understanding. But there may be another factor in the interpretation of the text at present under review. Manson's exegesis coincides better with the needs of the Christians of Manson's own lifetime, Christian congregations that did not experience any great eschatological tension. This is what we would expect in view of Manson's own practical interest in the Church's ministry. It may be, then, that, perhaps without being entirely conscious of the fact, he was offering a 'modern' interpretation of the text, while Jeremias was offering a more 'archaic' interpretation (though one may argue that the more archaic interpretation is the more modern). In other words it seems likely that they were each working in different historical contexts with different interests. In which case it is more difficult to argue that one of them was right and the other wrong. If they had both been offering the original meaning or the modern meaning, then logically one of them would have been wrong, or both of them might have been wrong, or both of them might have been right but in different respects; that is to say, they could not both have been correct. But if they were in fact working in different historical contexts it may be that Jeremias has indeed offered the original meaning (or something like it), and it may be that Manson has indeed offered some valuable insights for the modern reader (the reader alone must

decide). The meaning of a text need not be exhausted by any one interpretation. But it would be helpful if exegetes in all similar circumstances were clear and explicit about the kind of interpretation they were offering.

Now that we have surveyed the exegesis of T.W.Manson we may note the predominantly 'historical' approach to the text coupled with an acceptance of the historicity of the order of Mark's Gospel, where 'historical' has a sense not entirely dissimilar from that of nineteenth century liberalism. His attention is constantly focused on the ministry of Jesus. And there is a marked tendency to remove future eschatology from the Gospels. We shall now examine the work of Manson's contemporary, R.H.Lightfoot, who adopted a very different stance which is at the same time both more modern and more old-fashioned than that of Manson.

CHAPTER SIX

CHAPTER SIXR.H.LIGHTFOOT: PRE-UNDERSTANDING ANALYSEDMethodology and Pre-understanding

Around 1930 R.H.Lightfoot became convinced that T.W.Manson and C.H.Dodd, though he admitted that they were better scholars than he was, had misjudged the historical value of the Gospels. C.H.Dodd advised him that if he thought that this was the case he should learn German and visit Germany to become acquainted with the recent work of Bultmann and Dibelius. He went to Germany in 1931 when he also met Ernst Lohmeyer who had a lasting effect on Lightfoot.¹ When he returned from Germany Lightfoot overcame his excessive modesty and nervousness and he applied to give the Bampton Lectures in Oxford. This he did in 1934 under the title 'History and Interpretation in the Gospels' despite his initial difficulty in actually producing the lectures. (There is a story, which speaks volumes about Lightfoot's character, that when he was once asked to tea in Oxford he replied that he could not come because he had to write a university sermon for the following month!) These lectures were Lightfoot's attempt to introduce form criticism to an English audience (despite the fact that Vincent Taylor's The Formation of the Gospel Tradition had been published

1. D.E.Nineham, 'Robert Henry Lightfoot 1883-1953', in Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R.H.Lightfoot, ed. by D.E.Nineham, p.ixf.

in 1933) and Austin Farrer testifies to the effect Lightfoot had on his generation:

Some of Dr Lightfoot's readers may have felt that under his guidance they were rediscovering the evangelist and losing the facts of the evangel. Whatever the loss may be, the gain is solid and unmistakable - by Dr Lightfoot's aid we find ourselves in touch with St Mark, a living Christian mind, and a mind of great power. And this discovery comes like water in the desert to men who have been trained to see in his gospel a row of impersonal anecdotes strung together by a colourless compiler.²

R.H.Lightfoot's first book, History and Interpretation in the Gospels, is a very unusual and very remarkable presentation of form criticism. The chief characteristics of form criticism are that it attempts to analyse the literary elements which make up the Gospels and to classify them according to their literary type (though the delineation of these types is necessarily arbitrary). The literary stylisation of these forms, it is hoped, will reflect the views and activities of the apostolic church in which the gospel material was preserved - or in which it originated.³ R.H.Lightfoot, on the other hand,

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2. A.M.Farrer, A Study in Mark, p.6f. See also S.Neill, The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1961, pp.251-3
3. Cf. J.Rohde, Rediscovering the Teaching of the Evangelists, p.4f.:

The most important insights and presuppositions of the form-critical method as applied to the synoptic gospels may perhaps be summarised in six statements:

- (1) The synoptic gospels are not homogeneous compositions, but collections of small units.
- (2) In the pre-literary stage only small units (single stories, short groups of sayings, single

devotes only a few pages to a description of these literary forms.⁴ In his version of form criticism he looks at the structure of each Gospel as a whole in order to identify patterns, usually of geography and chronology, which show how the evangelist has used traditional material so that he can communicate his own understanding of Jesus and the gospel. In other words, R.H.Lightfoot discovered redaction criticism twenty years before it was invented. Norman Perrin makes this point, though he does not make it clear that Lightfoot had not realized that he was doing anything other than describing the methodology of form criticism:

In the first two Bampton Lectures Lightfoot reviews critical work on the synoptic Gospels, with special reference to Wrede and Wellhausen, and relying mainly on Dibelius, presents the main tenets of Formgeschichte (Lightfoot does not use "form criticism" but retains

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- logia) were handed on in the oral tradition.
- (3) When the small units have been detached from the framework of the synoptic gospels, definite characteristic genres can be recognized (short stories, paradigms, legends, etc.). During their pre-literary oral transmission, the individual genres had a particular Sitz im Leben in the Christian community.
- (4) The evangelists collected the small units and strung them together loosely to form their gospels, the first one being Mark, the creator of the genre 'gospel'. Matthew and Luke certainly used Mark, but in addition they also drew material from oral tradition (sayings-material from the source Q).
- (5) The synoptic gospels are not biographies in the historical sense, but testimonies to the faith of primitive Christianity.
- (6) The Easter faith of the community did not remain without influence on the accounts of Jesus' life. They have been fashioned under the influence of the community's theology.

4. R.H.Lightfoot, H&I., pp.42-56

the German term)⁵ as they would apply to the Gospel of Mark. It is the third lecture that is most interesting in our particular context because here Lightfoot attempts "to examine the doctrine set forth in this gospel (Mark)" in the light of the discipline of form criticism and finds "interpretation continually present in a book most of us were taught to regard as almost exclusively historical." To all intents and purposes this lecture is an exercise in redaction criticism.... Over and over again narrative features of the Gospel, or aspects of the arrangement of the material, or evident selection of transitional material is explained in terms of the evangelist's theological purpose just as they would be by a redaction critic today.⁶

This tribute to Lightfoot's unconscious anticipation of Redaktionsgeschichte serves to introduce us to the basic problem of analysing his exegesis as a whole and of uncovering the pre-understanding which controls this exegesis. The difficulty is that there is a fundamental dichotomy in Lightfoot's thought in that this advanced methodology is linked to a very conservative spirituality and the two only marginally come to terms with each other. And this difficulty itself derives from an almost total lack of self-reflection and critical self-awareness on Lightfoot's part which has resulted in conceptual fuzziness and exegetical inconsistencies - in his work as a whole. Lightfoot's advanced methodology is reflected in his first three books, History and Interpretation in the Gospels, Locality and Doctrine in the Gospels, and The Gospel

5. This is just not true.

6. N.Perrin, What is Redaction Criticism?, p.23f.

Message of St Mark, whereas his conservative other-worldly spirituality dominates his commentary on John's Gospel and his unpublished sermons. It is, however, possible to make some connection between these two dimensions of Lightfoot's work as I shall show below when I discuss what I consider to be Lightfoot's cognitive-interest and his concept of 'history'.

The introduction of this criticism of Lightfoot's lack of critical self-awareness provides a suitable point for examining his awareness of the importance of pre-understanding. Lightfoot seems to have only related presuppositions to misunderstanding; his model for correct understanding was that of an understanding without presuppositions. For example, he thought that the nineteenth century misunderstanding of the Gospels was caused by presuppositions peculiar to that century, and the following passage suggests that Lightfoot thought that further intense study by twentieth century scholars had removed these presuppositions:

If it be asked how this new view of St Mark's gospel has come into being, and on what grounds it is based, the answer must be that it is due to a more thorough study of this gospel, in the light of the problems raised by Wrede, Wellhausen and others. The earlier view with regard to St Mark, as we have seen, was due to contemporary presuppositions, and to an imperfect appreciation of the contents of the book. It is not so much that new light has come from history, or, subject to certain reservations, that fresh conclusions have been drawn from what is now known of contemporary belief and expectation. The increased emphasis on eschatology, due chiefly to the work of Albert Schweitzer, has been indeed of influence, but on the whole the change

is due to further study and a fresh reconstruction from internal evidence.⁷

Lightfoot used this same model when speaking of conversion. When we are converted to something - God, or Jesus, or whatever - we usually begin by misunderstanding it because of "preconceived ideas of our own, which must gradually fade, or perhaps rather be transformed, as we come more closely to know the reality."⁸ Elsewhere Lightfoot speaks just as easily of our reading a text "without presuppositions".⁹ When Lightfoot related the nineteenth century understanding of the New Testament with nineteenth century presuppositions he was quite correct, but he failed to go on from there to reflect on the relativity of his own historical position - though he had this failing in common with most exegetical scholars of any generation. Similarly he spoke of the influence which the practical needs of the early church had on the preservation and presentation of the Gospel material,¹⁰ but he failed to reflect on the practical needs of his own ecclesial situation and his mid-twentieth century understanding of the Gospels.

There is one further hermeneutical tendency of Lightfoot's (and of many other exegetes too) which is not directly related to the problem of pre-understanding, but which still needs to be criticized. Lightfoot is a strong exponent of the psychological method of understanding,

7. R.H.Lightfoot, H&I., p.24f.

8. J., p.47

9. L&D., p.55

10. H&I., p.217

usually known by literary critics as 'the intentional fallacy',¹¹ This technique supposes that in order to understand a text correctly we must understand what the author intended to mean by the text. Lightfoot writes as follows:

One great aim which I suggest that we should keep before us in these lectures is to seek to look at this [Mark's] gospel through the eyes of its first readers. What did the evangelist wish them to learn? What are his assumptions and his outlook? What is his purpose, and what means does he use to accomplish it? If we keep these questions steadily before us, we are more likely to refrain from putting to the evangelist questions which he was not concerned to answer, and in this way we may not only avoid any sense of disappointment with his book, but also discover what a very remarkable work, as I am persuaded, it actually is.¹²

However, any attempt to understand the intention of the author of a past text is bound to be an unreal task because the only evidence we have of his intention is the text itself. We can understand the author and his intention only by understanding the text. It is illusory to suppose that there is any other way by which we can understand the author's psyche which will then allow us to understand the text correctly. How can we ever be sure that we understand the author's intention? The only confirmation we can have is from the text, but it is the meaning of the text which is in question. Background information about the author may be helpful, but in the case of St Mark's

11. See W.K.Wimstatt Jnr and M.C.Beardsley, The Verbal Icon, pp.3-18; this has been challenged by E.D.Hirsch Jnr, Validity in Interpretation, pp.1-23.

12. R.H.Lightfoot, GMM., p.14

Gospel there is no background information other than rudimentary patristic citations of the Gospel's authorship. We cannot be certain who Mark was, or even what his nationality was. How then can we, so to speak, get inside his psyche? Further, the text may mean more (if there are hidden reserves of meaning) than the author intended (Roman Catholic and some Protestant scholars have traditionally referred to the sensus plenior of scripture), or the text may mean less than the author intended (if the author botched his job). In either case any critical talk about 'intention' can only fog the issue at stake in understanding the meaning of a text, and Occam's razor demands, in consequence, that we should not use such language.

Cognitive-Interest

There is not in R.H.Lightfoot any obvious cognitive-interest, at any rate not one which can immediately be related to the Marxist idea of 'praxis' as there was with T.W.Manson. Manson's interest in 'ministry' is quite obvious when the whole of his work is examined and it is clearly practical in the sense that it is related to human activity. What we do find in Lightfoot is the recurrence of a rather old fashioned (relatively speaking) other-worldly, neo-platonic spirituality, which seems to be the reverse of a practical interest. But a cognitive-interest it is because it dominates Lightfoot's general approach to Christianity and theology, it controls much of his exegesis, and surprizingly perhaps it provides the motivation for his comparatively advanced methodology. This spiritual interest occurs only occasionally in his Bampton Lectures, but even there, in the Preface,

Lightfoot uses a quotation from Origen as an epistemological principle for interpreting the Gospels:

It was the purpose of the four evangelists, Origen says, "to give the truth, where possible, at once spiritually and corporeally, but where this was not possible, to prefer the spiritual to the corporeal, the true spiritual meaning often being preserved, as one might say, in the corporeal falsehood."¹³

Lightfoot later speaks of Mark's Gospel being "mysterious" because it is an attempt "to set down in the form of an historical narrative truths which cannot receive their full expression in that form."¹⁴

R.H.Lightfoot was an extremely religious man who communicated an intense piety especially when celebrating the eucharist.¹⁵ This personal piety kept him apart from any interest in ecclesiastical politics, the hierarchical structure of the Church and from sacramental theology, and an example of the latter tendency may be seen in his interpretation of those New Testament texts which deal with the last supper. His philosophical and theological Weltanschauung is summed up in an article by Dean Inge on the theology of John's Gospel.¹⁶ Inge wrote extensively

13. H&I., p.xiv, quoting Origen, Commentary on St John's Gospel, x. 4.

14. Ibid., p.21

15. D.E.Nineham, 'Robert Henry Lightfoot 1883-1953' in Studies in the Gospels, ed. by D.E.Nineham, p.xiii. Lightfoot's piety is suggested by his capitalization of 'He' and 'His', by his use of 'the Lord' and 'their Master' for Jesus, and by his use of 'St Mark' and 'St Peter' and so forth.

16. W.R.Inge, 'The Theology of the Fourth Gospel' in Essays

in his life-time advocating a Christian neo-platonism. His article which so influenced Lightfoot makes rather extraordinary reading in the nineteen seventies, but it has tremendous literary panache. Inge sees the fourth evangelist exclusively as a platonist, and happily quotes Faust to sum up his theology: "Alles vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichniss".¹⁷ He maintained that John's Gospel rests on a philosophy whose chief characteristics are Idealism, Mysticism and Symbolism.¹⁸ Under Idealism Inge wrote a small essay on Plato's Ideas, a Christianized version of which he ascribed to John, and Inge's point about Symbolism was taken up by Lightfoot in much of his exegesis of the Fourth Gospel as we shall see. Lightfoot, however, is never as extreme as Inge in making John out to be a Greek philosopher; he suggests that there is rather an equal balance between Jewish and Greek thought in the Fourth Gospel. The historical, earthly reality of Christianity comes from Judaism, while the non-temporal, spiritual dimension comes from Greek thought.¹⁹ And these two aspects correspond to the history and interpretation which Lightfoot finds in all the Gospels.

Lightfoot's spiritual interest expresses itself,

on Some Biblical Questions of the Day (Cambridge Biblical Essays) ed. by H.B.Swete, pp.251-288.

17. Ibid., p.257, quoting Goethe's Faust, Part 2, Act 5, Lines 12104-5, the beginning of the final chorus by the Chorus Mysticus.
18. Ibid., pp.258-262
19. R.H.Lightfoot, J., p.49ff.

under the formative influence of Inge, repeatedly in the form of a philosophical dualism. Lightfoot speaks of this dualism as a distinction between heaven and earth: "A knowledge of earth could be the pathway to a knowledge of heaven."²⁰ He speaks of Jesus feeding the multitude "physically and spiritually".²¹ He uses John's concept of 'flesh' to emphasize this duality:

In John the word 'flesh' is used to describe the realm of the (merely) human, in contrast to the realm of the divine; the (merely) earthly, as opposed to the heavenly; the (merely) material, as opposed to the spiritual....²²

Lightfoot speaks of our "merely human birth" as opposed to our divine rebirth,²³ and of "the unseen world".²⁴ He makes the distinction between the "temporal" and "eternal aspects" of Jesus's character.²⁵ This dualism is at its most marked in the Fourth Gospel, the one which most attracted Lightfoot:

The first three gospels consist chiefly of surviving historical traditions of the Lord's deeds and words; St John's gospel, though it also contains historical traditions, is chiefly devoted to making clear the religious and spiritual meaning and implications of these traditions.²⁶

20. Ibid., p.44. This statement is not consistent with some of the quotations which follow; this is a mark of Lightfoot's lack of critical self-reflection.

21. Ibid., p.64

22. Ibid., p.83

23. Ibid., p.259

24. Ibid., p.241

25. Ibid., p.56

26. Bowdoin Lectures 1937-8, given at Bowdoin College, New Brunswick (unpublished), 1st Lecture.

The spiritual meaning of Jesus's deeds and words is expressed as follows:

In and by itself the fleshly or earthly is barren; it only becomes life-giving if and when it is penetrated by the spiritual or heavenly....²⁷

The religious philosophy of St John, if we may so speak, regards that which exists or happens in this world as deriving its importance and value from the fact that it represents, or embodies, an invisible and eternal reality.²⁸

Lightfoot sometimes speaks of an inner-outer distinction, but still in dualistic terms:

It seems, then, that the Person of the Lord is set before the reader of St John's gospel chiefly, although not exclusively, in the light of an inner truth or reality usually thought to be, if existent at all, at any rate concealed from men's eyes, as long as they live in this world.²⁹

Lightfoot also held a platonic view of time in which, for Jesus at least, all aspects of his life were somehow present at the same moment: "...His Person includes in itself, at all times and in all places, incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension...."³⁰ This is complemented by a platonic epistemology where knowledge - true, religious, knowledge - becomes a sharing in the non-temporal, non-locatable world of the spirit. Lightfoot

27. J., p.14

28. Ibid., p.23

29. Ibid., p.61

30. Ibid., p.132

speaks of the disciples having "to rise to what we may describe as a spiritual understanding, an understanding not bounded by material physical considerations."³¹

Elsewhere he refers to the disciples' "supernatural knowledge".³²

It is because of this that he can speak of the reader of John's Gospel approaching the text as a worshipper.³³

And it would be worth bearing in mind that when we come to examine Lightfoot's account of the influence of the redactor's theology on the historical tradition of Jesus, the background to Lightfoot's concept of 'theology' is a platonic epistemology in which knowledge and understanding are located outside the world as we know it.

There is no consistency in Lightfoot's description of the relationship between the two worlds, though a pattern does finally emerge. In the natural state of things "the gulf between flesh and spirit is absolute",³⁴ "the gulf between flesh and spirit can only be spanned from above."³⁵ In this context, Lightfoot has a platonic christology in which Christ bridges the gulf between the two worlds. He sees Jesus as a "bridge" or a "ladder" as in this quotation from an unpublished lecture: "The Incarnation is a ladder fixed between the divine and the

31. Ibid., p.154

32. H&I., p.78

33. J., p.306

34. Ibid., p.116. On p.145 he speaks of "the immeasurable gulf"; see also n.20 above.

35. Ibid., p.117

human, the real and unreal."³⁶ Lightfoot's other metaphor for the incarnation is 'the unveiling of heaven'. Again he says that "...in the Lord's ministry, being that of the Word become flesh, heaven, as we may say, has come down to earth, and eternity is made manifest in time...."³⁷ It is because of Christ's role as the bridge across what was formerly thought to be unbridgeable that Lightfoot can speak of "the superhuman character of Jesus",³⁸ and of his "supernatural Being",³⁹ of "the supernatural Son of man",⁴⁰ and we see an "unearthly light" on the path Jesus is treading.⁴¹ Now that Jesus has bridged the two worlds of matter and spirit, Christians too can share in them both. In one sermon Lightfoot even speaks of our meeting spirits in the street (he means meeting other people in their inner spiritual dimension).⁴² His view of daily Christian life receives typical expression in the following sermon:

For in religion the distinction between earth and Heaven is not final. Even if we are compelled, as we are, through our weakness, to regard them to the end as more or less distinct, we ought to make it our aim to pass from the one to the other, and vice versa, many times each day. And we have not very far to go.

36. Unpublished lecture on New Testament Theology headed 'Lectures about 1919-28', p.16

37. J., p.175

38. H&I., p.186

39. GMM., p.43

40. Ibid., p.51

41. Ibid., p.12

42. Unpublished sermon on John 16.7, dated 20.5.17

There is not much between the two.⁴³

It should now be clear that Lightfoot's theology was dominated by a very individual Christianized version of neo-platonism, though this was never worked out systematically. It is also clear that this acted as a cognitive-interest for Lightfoot, and this will be brought out when we look at some of his exegesis. But in abstracting the significance of Christ and Christianity from the present world and locating it in a spiritual, eternal realm, it looks as though Lightfoot had a remarkably unpractical cognitive-interest. Such a spiritual, other-worldly interest would appear to have no social or political relevance, and this would agree with his judgment that Jesus had no "political ambitions".⁴⁴ But as Sartre has said, to refuse to make a choice is to make a choice. And to claim that Christ and Christianity have no socio-political relevance is itself a socio-political judgment. To interpret the New Testament entirely in a spiritual, other-worldly manner has implications for the role of Christianity in society - extremely conservative theological and political implications. So while there is no direct connection between a spiritualizing exegesis and one's socio-political views, such a form of exegesis can be used to buttress a conservative political position

43. 'Be Children: Be Men' preached in Hertford College Chapel, Oxford and published in The Christian World Pulpit, 27th November, 1930, p.257f.

44. J., p.253

by refusing to allow Christianity and the New Testament to criticize the political status quo. Now it would not be quite legitimate to suggest that there is an (unconscious) conservative political basis for Lightfoot's exegesis simply from speculation founded on the evidence of his dualism. But among his unpublished papers there exists a small number of sermons in which he expressed extremely conservative opinions about social and political affairs, opinions which could indeed have come from a previous century, as could - so it is said - his social manners. One further point should be made in parenthesis, so to speak, about these sermons. Many of them were written before the 1914-18 war and they were repeated time and again unchanged until shortly before he died. That is to say, because of his other-worldly theology Lightfoot was able to repeat the same sermons in a period which included two world wars, the depression and the invention and use of the atomic bomb.

Lightfoot never suggested that Jesus was not interested in people, but the interest was always in individuals and not social groups.⁴⁵ But note Lightfoot's opinion of Jesus's attitude to poverty:

It should be remembered that Our Lord showed no particular eagerness to abolish poverty, where the necessities of life are secure, to be from the point of view of

45. Lecture on New Testament Theology, p.7: "Our Lord's detachment from external things was combined with the most intense interest in a love for the personalities of men and women."

spiritual wealth, preferable to that of the rich - and it is the acceptance of this standard which makes a man a Christian.⁴⁶

In a sermon given as late as April, 1951 in Gloucester Cathedral he appealed to the traditional virtues of the English gentleman as a means of preserving the greatness of England's past, and in a much earlier sermon he even referred to "Paul, the Christian gentleman".⁴⁷ Elsewhere he referred to nationalism and patriotism as "the strongest and also the noblest emotion uniting large masses of men." And he continues: "Those who cannot feel this loyalty to such a country as ours are not to be envied; while to those who wish to abolish love of country as an evil thing, may we not say, He that loveth not his home and country which he has seen, how shall he love humanity in general, which he has not seen?"⁴⁸ Lightfoot was rather more lenient with the rich than was the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels:

As a matter of experience, the man who is surrounded and burdened with superfluous wealth hardly ever 'enters the Kingdom of God': not only has he few if any chances of disciplining his character, but he is often too much pre-occupied. In many cases he really has no time to guard both his wealth and to save his soul.⁴⁹

And finally here is part of a sermon preached in 1930:

I do not think that as Christians we are bound to attach

46. Ibid., p.10

47. Sermon on Philemon given in Haslemere Parish Church on 7th November, 1909.

48. Sermon on Psalm 133.1, undated.

49. Sermon on John 18.36 'My Kingdom is not of this world', Haslemere Parish Church, 12th December, 1909. My emphases.

ourselves to one political party rather than another. Historically it is quite untrue that Jesus came to preach an economic revolution. The Gospel is a message of spiritual redemption, not of social reform. Some of the Old Testament prophets plunged into the turbid waters of political agitation: Jesus walked over them dry shod. He was willing to identify himself with the apocalyptic hopes of those around him, which almost destroyed their interest in the future of society.... The plain truth is that Jesus did not concern himself with any form of government, ecclesiastical or temporal; that he disclaimed any attempt to entangle him in questions of distribution; and that he was not interested in the paraphernalia of civilization, beyond the very simplest necessities and comforts.... Still less is it true to say that Revolution is the Christian's business. This is the language of exaggeration and it is most mischievous. The large majority of business men live, not by robbing their fellows, but by serving them.... The system [Capitalism] indeed requires and has created, a higher average level of integrity and honest service than any other that the world has seen.⁵⁰

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50. Sermon on Matthew 13.52 given in 1930. This was preached just before the height of the depression, about which Eric Hobsbawm has written in Industry and Empire, p.208f.:

At all times between 1921 and 1938 at least one out of every ten citizens of working age was out of a job. In seven out of these eighteen years at least three out of every twenty were unemployed, in the worst years one out of five. In absolute figures unemployment ranged from a minimum of rather over a million to a maximum (1932) of just under three million; at all events, according to the official figures, which for various reasons understated it. In particular industries and regions the record was even blacker. At its peak (1931-2) 34.5 per cent of coal miners, 36.3 per cent of pottery-workers, 43.2 per cent of cotton operatives, 43.8 per cent of pig-iron workers, 47.9 per cent of steel workers, and 62 per cent - or almost two in three - of shipbuilders and ship-repairers were out of work.

History

R.H. Lightfoot developed his concept of 'history' in opposition to the trend current in New Testament criticism in Britain in the nineteen thirties. And it was by means of his re-evaluation of the historical value of the Gospels that Lightfoot made his very considerable contribution to these studies. His work was not immediately received with any marked enthusiasm in this country, and while he received some good reviews in the United States he was quite upset by some of the vilification he encountered from his colleagues in Britain. Nonetheless, time has proved Lightfoot to have been on the side of the angels in this matter. His attitude is summed up in the introduction to his Bampton Lectures:

Confining ourselves for the moment to St Mark and St John, we may say that both their gospels are constructions, works put together and arranged in accordance with a definite plan and purpose, which is never long forgotten; and in neither case was the plain record of historical fact the chief purpose of the author. Both books were written, not by or for historians, but by and for disciples, in order to awaken faith and love. They are presentations of a revelation rather than biographies, and the history which they contain is therefore viewed in a peculiar light.⁵¹

Lightfoot held a middle position about the historical value of the Gospels. On the one hand he dissociated himself from the extreme view that the only historical fact recorded in the Gospels was the death of Jesus,⁵²

51. H&I., p.xiif.

52. Ibid., p.xv

and on the other hand he could not agree with C.H.Dodd that there was a chronologically reliable outline of Jesus's ministry.⁵³ The structure of each Gospel was the work of each evangelist, and it was not a chronologically accurate structure. The dominant theme in Lightfoot's early books on the Gospels is that in them there is not a bare report of historical fact, but historical material and an editorial interpretation. There is history and theology, fact and meaning. Working in his own historical context, however, Lightfoot was not able to use 'history' to refer to the totality of fact and interpretation. 'History' was always used in something like its positivist sense of 'what actually happened' and historians are those who investigate 'what actually happened', while at the same time Lightfoot was clearly struggling to be free of this positivist sense of 'history'. One mark of this is Lightfoot's use of the word 'historicity'. This is now normally used as the translation of Geschichtlichkeit and refers to what Lightfoot means by 'interpretation', but he used 'historicity' to refer to the factuality of history - Historisch-keit:

It thus becomes clear that the great value attached in recent years to St Mark's gospel was due above all to what was believed to be its historicity, its closeness to the facts.⁵⁴

In other words we can see Lightfoot moving away from Ranke's idea of scientific history, but he was not yet able to use the German concept of Geschichtlichkeit.

53. Ibid., p.97 n.1

54. Ibid., p.13

It does not seem that, for Lightfoot, objective history has its own inherent significance the extrapolation of which is part of the historian's job. It is rather that objective history has to be given a suitable interpretation - and this is what the evangelists, and behind them the communities of the early church, had to do. The historical narratives have absorbed interpretation, so to say.⁵⁵ It is this positivist understanding of 'history' which allows Lightfoot to speak of "a merely historical account of Jesus",⁵⁶ "the facts, now in the past, of the life and suffering and death of Jesus".⁵⁷ He can contrast the account of the ministry of Jesus with the "more historic passion narrative".⁵⁸ Never at any stage did Lightfoot accuse his more conservative colleagues of having a mistaken understanding of 'history'; his point was that the Gospels contain more than history and the critic ought to be looking for more than history. And this 'looking for more than history' in Lightfoot's case is a result of his platonist epistemology, for in such an epistemology the history of this world is only a pale

55. Ibid., p.24:

St Mark's gospel is probably in certain respects as much the production of the church as of a single writer, and it reveals most definite doctrinal influence. Here also interpretation and selection will have been at work. This is indeed less obvious than in the case of St John's gospel, partly because St Mark's doctrine is simpler, but also because the doctrine is not interwoven with the narrative to the same extent as it is in the gospel of St John. It is present and it is growing; but in its Marcan stage it is still to some extent many-sided, fluid, even tentative.

56. Ibid., p.82

57. Ibid., p.102

58. Ibid., p.105

shadow of the real, ideal (divine) world. Scientific history which restricts itself to what happened in this world does not tell us all we need to know about Christianity. In the nineteen fifties Lightfoot wrote:

In the last twenty five years, however, many of us have been forced to the conclusion that this method of approach to Mark, what I may call this primarily historical method of approach, is an error. The matter is of course one of degree; we may confidently believe that there is much historical material of the highest value in Mark, especially as, among the four gospels, this one is nearest to the actual events; but in the last resort this evangelist's purpose is theological, rather than merely historical; or to put the matter in another way, the historical material is being used for a theological purpose.⁵⁹

The Gospels were designed to communicate the truth about Jesus Christ, "and of this truth the historical events of His life, however important and however prominent in Mark, only form a part."⁶⁰ It is because history, positivist history, cannot do justice to the New Testament texts or to Jesus Christ that Lightfoot explicitly set himself against nineteenth century liberalism and opened himself to the influence of Wrede and Wellhausen.⁶¹

Lightfoot's general assessment of the New Testament rested very largely on his understanding of 'history', and this led him to diverge from his predecessors about, among other things, the suitability of the present ending

59. GMM., p.16

60. Ibid., p.17

61. Ibid., pp.6 and 98f.

of Mark's Gospel:

Our answer to this question is likely to depend to a large extent upon our conception and interpretation of St Mark's gospel as a whole. It will be remembered for example that Professor Burkitt was ever a champion of the "historical" character of the earliest gospel.... From such a point of view the ending is indeed impossible, intolerable.⁶²

Lightfoot found the Mk 16.8 ending tolerable and possible precisely because he had moved on to a different understanding of history. History had two layers for him, fact and interpretation. And these two layers are to be found in all the Gospels:

It thus becomes clear that the great value attached in recent years to St Mark's gospel was due above all to what was believed to be its historicity, its closeness to the facts. Hence it is not surprising that during the same period interest in St John's gospel tended, if not to diminish, at any rate to assume a different form. Not only was it generally agreed that...it is certainly the latest of the four, but also that there can be little doubt that here the evangelist is as intent upon the presentation of the meaning of the fact, as he is upon the fact itself. St John has his own view of the significance of the history which lies behind the gospel story, and he wrote to impress this view upon his readers. He is, indeed, determined that they shall not miss it. He does not lose his hold upon historic fact, but with him interpretation is predominant, and we may not unfairly say that interpretation has been the chief object of suspicion in modern study of the gospels.... No theory of the study of his [John's] gospel has at present won any wide acceptance, nor has it been found possible to separate with any confidence the history which he

62. L&D., pp. 19 and 20

gives and his interpretation of the history.

It is true, no doubt, that the presence of interpretation in the record would be generally admitted also in the gospels of St Matthew and St Luke, but here, it has usually been thought, only to a very much more limited extent.... But when we arrive at St Mark's gospel the temptation to believe that we are at the other end of the scale has proved strong.... It is claimed that here at any rate we have historic fact without interpretation. And from this presumption it is no great step to the belief that since St Mark's gospel is primarily a record of fact, we can and must attach to its facts the interpretation which seems to us the best or worthiest. The question has not been sufficiently examined, whether St Mark's gospel is indeed so purely historical as it is often thought to be, and whether a careful and candid investigation will not reveal interpretation already present, and in a large measure, within our earliest gospel.⁶³

Lightfoot goes on to show that Mark's Gospel as a whole has been designed not so much to describe the historical course of Jesus's ministry as to present his messiahship. He also suggests that "the first thirteen verses of St Mark will form a theological at least as much as an historical introduction to the gospel."⁶⁴ He showed how the evangelist used Old Testament quotations to support didactic motives, though he could also use the idea of the evangelist's theological interpretation to escape from genuine historical problems which caused him some embarrassment.⁶⁵

63. H&I., pp.13-15

64. Ibid., p.64

65. See, for example, ibid., p.156, where he writes:

We must all have been impressed with the parallels between St Mark's passion narrative and certain verses of the 22nd, 31st, and 69th psalms, and

Lightfoot's principal achievement was his discussion of the topographical structure of the Gospels, the impetus for which he owed to Ernst Lohmeyer's Galiläa und Jerusalem. It is difficult to present such a broad ranging interpretation as an exegetical example in the following chapter, so I will here give a very brief summary of Lightfoot's conclusions. Lightfoot saw that each Gospel presents a different geographical background for the history of Jesus's mission. He therefore supposed that each evangelist had presented a topographical structure for the ministry which indicated the evangelist's interpretation of the relation between Jesus and the various geographical areas of Palestine.

For St Mark Galilee is the scene of ultimate importance in the ministry of Jesus Christ; in Galilee alone occurs the conquest of evil, as represented by the exorcisms of the demons, in which Mark sees great significance; and from Galilee alone proceeds the preaching and extension of the gospel, whether by the Lord or by the disciples. This importance which is assigned to Galilee rests not only on historical grounds, but on doctrinal or, more precisely, eschatological considerations; it rests above all on the conception of Jesus as the Son of man.

St Luke on the other hand records the ministry in such a way that the three chief districts of Palestine

perhaps also the 53rd chapter of Isaiah; especially the distribution of the garments, the mocking of the crucified, the offering of vinegar. And we shall not do justice to the purpose of the writer, if we merely consider whether these and like passages in his record are all historical or not. We must ask with what purpose he included them, and how they are designed to confirm the reader, or perhaps rather the worshipper, in his confidence in the divine significance of a terrible event.

are equally the scene of the ministry of Jesus Christ.⁶⁶ In Mark and Matthew Jerusalem is where Jesus is rejected and killed, it is no more than the place that has to be endured for Jesus to complete his mission. In Luke, Jesus passes from one district to another, with Jerusalem as the culmination of his ministry. In John's Gospel, however, Jerusalem is the home country of Jesus, and it seems only an historical accident that Jesus had been born in Galilee. Jesus's mission, in the Fourth Gospel, is concentrated in Judea.

It must be pointed out that while Lightfoot reckoned that the historical background of Jesus has been refracted in various ways in the Gospels, he nowhere suggested that the history of Jesus was of a different sort from ordinary history. In much of his exegesis of the Fourth Gospel Lightfoot supposes that the divine world has been introduced into the material world, but the life of Jesus is nevertheless a part of world history. There is no suggestion of Barth's distinction between Geschichte and Urgeschichte, or, with Cullmann, between Weltgeschichte and Heilsgeschichte. Lightfoot's tendency is against any such distinction: "The growth and the experience of the Church had shown that the Lord's life was not only an event in Jewish history, but also in world history."⁶⁷

66. L&D., p.142f.

67. J., p.49. See also ibid., p.32 and L&D., p.113

Lightfoot's task in the Bampton Lectures and the book which followed, Locality and Doctrine in the Gospels, was to analyse the structure of the Gospels.⁶⁸ While the basic material which found its way into the Gospels was preserved, transformed and perhaps even created to some extent by the Church of the first three decades, the structure of the Gospels is due to the evangelists themselves, the redactors. So Lightfoot was led to ask why Jesus's ministry in Galilee plays a different role in each of the Gospels, and why for example the cleansing of the Jerusalem Temple is placed at the beginning of John and at the end of Mark.⁶⁹ In Lightfoot's presentation of form criticism, unlike classical form criticism as it had been developed in Germany, he speaks of the influence of the evangelist rather than of the anonymous community:

It is significant that St Matthew and St Luke, especially the latter, very seldom leave the sections in isolation. Their tendency is to weave them together, and thereby to work their way towards an increasingly literary form. But it is clear that even St Mark has taken a long step forward in this direction. It is possible to show, with a high degree of probability, that it is he, to a large extent, who has arranged the order of his gospel and imposed the framework on the originally isolated sections, thereby welding them together and giving some kind of unity, cohesion and forward movement to the narrative.⁷⁰

This editorial structure is itself interpretative and the

68. H&I., p.98: "Our task in the present lecture is to examine the content and structure of the gospel of St Mark in the light of its main purpose.

69. GMM., pp.60-79

70. H&I., p.36f.

fact that St Luke has offered a more orderly and polished literary narrative, which itself seems to have been a presumption for historical veracity, makes one doubt its authenticity. And the very roughness of Mark's Gospel emphasizes its real historical value and the difficulty Mark must have had in producing an historical narrative at all.⁷¹ As we proceed from Gospel to Gospel we might expect an increase in the doctrinal content and a consequent decrease in historical reliability, but Lightfoot does not think that this is necessarily the case. In John's Gospel there is more interpretation than in the Synoptic Gospels but here history and interpretation are not simply held in balance but are fused together leaving no problems like those associated with the messianic secret in Mark. In the last Gospel Jesus's words interpret his works,⁷² the final discourses interpret the passion narrative.⁷³ There are indeed some inconsistencies; compare his remark that "his [John's] interest is in the theological development of the narrative rather than in its complete historical consistency"⁷⁴ with: "That St John was altogether indifferent to historical fact is out of the question; no evangelist is more insistent than he on the historical truth which he regards as essential to the Gospel."⁷⁵ But despite these apparently inconsistent

71. Ibid., p.183f.

72. J., p.19

73. Ibid., p.319

74. Ibid., p.185

75. Ibid., p.30

though in fact reconcilable statements, Lightfoot regarded the Fourth Gospel as the pinnacle of Gospel writing, and he even went on to state that it should be used as a hermeneutical key for interpreting the Synoptic Gospels⁷⁶ (an important point when it comes to discovering what Lightfoot understood by 'Son of Man' and 'Kingdom of God'). The ideal relation, then, between history and interpretation occurs in John's Gospel:

Only when we reach St John's Gospel do we find a completely developed construction, as we may call it, of the ministry, in which all the component parts are carefully and elaborately set forth in reference to one central theme.

It is no longer necessary or indeed possible to distinguish between the framework, or the interpretation generally, and the content of the earlier historical tradition; here they are indissolubly fused.⁷⁷

The fact that Lightfoot saw in the Gospels the mature reflection of the evangelists prevented him seeing the Gospels simply as a collection of historical data; it also prevented him seeing what historical data there is in the Gospels as a bare relation between point A and point B, where point A represents what happened (and what we are interested in) and point B represents the twentieth century reader. Lightfoot saw that there is a continuum of historical points between the life of Jesus and the text of the New Testament, and between the text and ourselves. Bridging these two time gaps between Jesus and the New Testament, and between the New Testament and ourselves

76. Ibid., p.34

77. H&I., p.189 and p.224

constitutes the basis of the hermeneutical problem so far as theology is concerned. Whereas earlier critics thought they had immediate access to the text with uncomplicated historical information about Jesus, Lightfoot was aware that we understand the text in the light of how successive generations of Christians have understood it (though in practice he seems to limit these generations to the first four or five centuries of the Christian era), and that the evangelists themselves understood Jesus in the light of how the earliest communities had understood him. Lightfoot did not develop this sufficiently to form a satisfactory critical basis for interpreting the Gospels, but within his concept of 'history' there is a sense of the historicity of interpreted tradition. He speaks of the "transmission" of tradition,⁷⁸ and of the religious interests of the early communities in shaping the tradition.⁷⁹ This ecclesiological context of historical tradition led Lightfoot to be interested in and to interpret the last supper, for example, in a way which was not possible for T.W.Manson. But we shall see more of Lightfoot's ecclesiology in the next section where it may be contrasted with Manson's interest in 'ministry'.

We can now sum up the chief characteristics of Lightfoot's concept of 'history'. He struggled to free himself from a positivist understanding of history, and saw factual history made acceptable only when it is

78. Ibid., p.29

79. GMM., p.102

interpreted in a social or ecclesial context. This, prompted by his other-worldly religious instinct, led him to look for editorial interpretation, but this in no sense allowed him to abandon the fundamental historical reliability of the Gospels even though he spent little effort (presumably from lack of interest) in demonstrating the historical veracity of individual pericopes in the way that, for example, T.W.Manson did. How much then, according to R.H.Lightfoot, is there of the historical Jesus in the Gospels? On the basis of our analysis so far we would expect there to be quite a lot, even if Lightfoot does not trouble to demonstrate just how much. The closing paragraph of his Bampton Lectures, then, comes as something of a surprize (rather as it provided such a shock for British biblical critics in 1935):

It seems, then, that the form of the earthly no less than of the heavenly Christ is for the most part hidden from us. For all the inestimable value of the gospels, they yield us little more than a whisper of his voice; we trace in them but the outskirts of his ways. Only when we see him hereafter in his fullness shall we know him also as he was on earth.⁸⁰

When applied to the historical character of Jesus Christ, this is very close to Bultmann's classic statement:

I do indeed think that we can know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist.⁸¹

But even in the introduction to the Bampton Lectures,

80. H&I., p.225

81. R.K.Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, p.14

Lightfoot had said that "in my opinion the historical value of St Mark's gospel is considerable, but perhaps not always for the reasons usually alleged, such as Petrine reminiscence."⁸² And he later added in a footnote: "A warning, however, should be given that the latter writer [Bultmann] is apt to set forth conclusions which will seem to many needlessly negative in character."⁸³ Lightfoot finally made his true position clear in an article originally published in 1941:

It will readily be seen how liable the method [form criticism] is to exaggeration and abuse. Some of its exponents indeed have tended to assume that any story or saying, which could conceivably have been applied in an apologetic or dogmatic interest, is as likely as not to have been created for the purpose, and probably therefore has no foundation in fact. The tendency to modify the narrative for particular purposes is undoubtedly present in the gospels, and was recognized long before form criticism was heard of; but there is no reason to suppose that it is present to a disconcerting degree, or to call in question the reliability of the record as a whole.... It may be said at once that, in the belief of those best entitled to express an opinion on the subject, the historical basis of Christianity, more essential to it than to any of the great religions of the world, is in no danger whatsoever and also that with the help of the gospels the main features of the Lord's character and teaching may become truly and well known to careful thought and study.⁸⁴

At this point Lightfoot added a footnote referring to the

82. R.H.Lightfoot, H&I., p.xv

83. Ibid., p.43 n.1

84. GMM., p.102f., originally published in ExpT., 1941-2 pp.51-4.

notorious last paragraph in the Bampton Lectures, in which he pointed out that it contained a veiled reference to Job 26,14:

Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways;
and how small a whisper do we hear of him!
But the thunder of his power who can understand?

But this describes the majesty of God and it now seems clear that Lightfoot did not use this quotation from Job to refer to the human character of Jesus; it seems primarily to refer to Jesus's divinity, to Jesus as representative of the spiritual world who has been "clothed with our human nature" to use Lightfoot's own platonic language.⁸⁵

Lightfoot's use of a quotation which describes the majesty of God to say something about "the earthly no less than of the heavenly Christ", taken in isolation from the rest of Lightfoot's writings, suggests a docetic christology.

In fact he was not a Docetist, but only because his use of the Job quotation does not reflect his true position.

At the close of this article Lightfoot makes it clear that the gains of the form critical method will be in uncovering the religious significance of the Gospels,⁸⁶ and we have already seen that religion for Lightfoot essentially pointed to a platonic outer world. It can be seen then that it was his religious instinct which led Lightfoot to look towards the form critical method as a means of escaping from the scientific-historical outlook of his colleagues. And it is small wonder that they missed the significance of Lightfoot's allusion to Job.

85. J., p.331

86. GMM., p.105

Ecclesiology

R.H. Lightfoot's account of the relationship between history and interpretation was supported by an ecclesiology which made possible a social theory of meaning. This is itself an interpretation of Lightfoot because he was not enough of a reflective thinker to develop an ecclesiology in his writings and so there is no explicit social theory of meaning, but it is possible to reconstruct the rudiments of his implied ecclesiology and this makes it clear that Lightfoot thought that Jesus Christ can only be understood in a social context. Lightfoot speaks of the "transmission" of historical traditions,⁸⁷ of "the historical tradition, as it has been handed down in the Church through successive generations",⁸⁸ and he emphasized the part which the community played in the perpetuation and formation of tradition. This insistence that our understanding of Jesus is mediated to us by the early Church was a more startling idea then than it is now, and of course by the time that Lightfoot gave his Bampton Lectures such an idea was no longer novel in Germany. The importance and necessity of the Church as the preserver of the tradition about Jesus is clear when Lightfoot refers to the Church as "the legacy of the Lord Jesus to the world".⁸⁹ And when he says that "the present form and the setting of the contents of the Gospels has probably been partly determined by the

87. H&I., p.29

88. J., p.168

89. GMN., p.20

experience and development of the Church in the period between the ministry of our Lord and the time when they were written"⁹⁰ it is only one further short step to talk about "the Church's Gospel".⁹¹ While the Church provided an indispensable social context for the preservation of the tradition about Jesus it has also moulded that tradition to satisfy its own interests, both practical interests and the interest of understanding the historical figure of Jesus from whom the tradition is derived. For at no stage do the Gospels present a purely past-historical picture of Jesus, he is always presented as the Christ. In moving towards this goal of understanding Jesus, Lightfoot regards all the Synoptic Gospels as provisional and tentative as they advance a "progressive interpretation of an historic figure".⁹² The one Gospel which is neither provisional nor tentative is the last Gospel. Similarly, Lightfoot sees the Quicumque vult creed as a legitimate extension of the Church's understanding of its founder.⁹³

90. 'The Critical Approach to the Bible in the Nineteenth Century' in The Interpretation of the Bible, ed. by C.W.Dugmore, p.87. In this quotation "probably" and "partly" should be taken as psychological stutters rather than as logical qualifications; this characteristic of Lightfoot's is best seen in the following famous line: "I must be allowed to say dogmatically that in the fourth gospel Judas is probably 'the man of sin', the 'anti-Christ' (GMM., p.52).

91. GMM., p.47

92. H&I., p.218

93. J., p.43

Lightfoot could not agree with Burkitt in his attempt to reconstruct the end of Mark's Gospel because he did not just see it as the polished literary product of an individual "but as the culmination of a considerable process of growth." Lightfoot went on:

In the course of this process oral and for the most part anonymous traditions with regard to the ministry and passion of the Lord will gradually have taken shape, partly though not solely in order to meet the circumstances and experience of the growing and expanding church, and they will finally have been put together, no doubt by an individual writer, but one acting under the sanction and on behalf of the church.⁹⁴

While Lightfoot for the most part thought that the interpretative transformation carried out by the Church on the tradition was no bad thing, when discussing Mark's Gospel he sometimes betrayed a feeling that in that Gospel history and interpretation were imperfectly related. He made it clear that "no judgement can be passed a priori upon the value of the tradition in St Mark, because we are entirely unable to control it by means of other earlier sources."⁹⁵ But we must expect the process of interpretation which we find in the other Gospels to be present in this one too. In the earliest Gospel we see "signs of increasing tension...between the narrative of fact, and the significance seen in it by the early church...."⁹⁶ On the following page Lightfoot speaks of a "contrast" between facts and the significance assigned

94. L&D., p.21

95. H&I., p.18

96. Ibid., p.81

to them, and later he refers to them not being fully harmonized though he admits that this was not possible at that historical stage.⁹⁷ John's Gospel, from a later period of the first century, has overcome these tensions, contrasts and lack of harmonization, but only by bursting the bonds of tradition,⁹⁸ or at any rate by restructuring the synoptic tradition. It is clear that, for Lightfoot, the Fourth Gospel is the greatest, but his most considered judgment of the early Church's historical understanding of Jesus is that:

There is no one unchanging explanation of the person of Jesus in the books of the New Testament. Even in the same writer or in the same book conflicting explanations may stand side by side, without any sense, as it seems, on the part of the writer, of difficulty or consistency; nor were any of the synoptic writers, strictly speaking, theologians.

All through the first century, and indeed much later, the church was feeling its way towards a permanent and satisfactory doctrine of the person of Christ.⁹⁹

While Lightfoot handled the New Testament with a very cogent account of the ecclesial context in which Jesus's life and death had been understood in the first century, he did not go on to reflect on the relationship between the interests of the twentieth century to which he belonged and its understanding of Jesus Christ and the New Testament. Nor did he reflect on the historically

97. Ibid., p.103

98. Ibid., p.166

99. Ibid., p.216

mediated understanding of Christians in the eighteen centuries which lay between the apostolic age and himself. At one point there is a hint of these twentieth century interests, but this is nowhere developed.¹⁰⁰ What Lightfoot could not understand was the historical relativity of his own understanding of the Gospels. There would have been a basis for this if he could have developed his ecclesiology, but he was not finally sufficiently interested in the Church.¹⁰¹

T.W.Manson emphasized the importance of fixing the moment when the history of the Church began (see p.162f. above). The decision we make about the origin of the Church will determine the understanding we have of the nature of the Church - or vice versa, the point is that they are inter-related. Manson thought that the Church began with the calling of the disciples to share the ministry of Jesus, as opposed to the picture of the Church as the redeemed society inaugurated at Pentecost. Manson saw the Church as a centre of social and ethical

100. Ibid., p.xiv, where Lightfoot writes:

In the interest of the welfare and efficiency of the church, which depend in the last resort on a right judgment and a correct appreciation of its Master, I hope that critics will pause, not once nor twice but many times, before they decide to level the charge against me that I destroy and do not build.

101. R.H.Lightfoot was a low church Anglican, with a very individualistic spirituality and piety, and he avoided any involvement in the theology about and politics of the Church.

activity, as a ministry. With R.H.Lightfoot we find that there is absolutely no consistency in his statements about when the Church began. He speaks of the Church beginning in Mark's Gospel at 3.13ff. with the calling of the twelve,¹⁰² or alternatively at Mk 1.16ff. with the calling of the pairs of brothers.¹⁰³ Elsewhere he refers to Mk 13 as Jesus's farewell to the Church as though it already existed,¹⁰⁴ while later in the same book he says that the Church began at Pentecost.¹⁰⁵ Clearly Lightfoot was unsure in his own mind and did not appreciate the point that was at stake, but his general remarks about the nature of the Church in his commentary on the Fourth Gospel make it clear that he had a very different, more 'catholic' understanding of the Church than Manson. Lightfoot describes Jesus's ministry not as something to be copied as did Manson, but as an unveiling of heaven.¹⁰⁶ The purpose of the ministry of Jesus is to provoke belief, to separate the disciples from the world and to consecrate them in truth. Lightfoot speaks of the Church represented by the disciples as "His new shrine",¹⁰⁷ and says that

102. H&I., p.111, and L&D., p.119

103. L&D., p.116

104. GMM., p.50

105. Ibid., p.95, and H&I., p.82

106. J., p.252: "At 1.51 the Lord promised disciples that in the ministry and work of the Son of man they would see heaven unveiled, and perfect intercourse between heaven and earth."

107. Ibid., p.245

"a new shrine will arise in which a spiritual and true worship will be offered to the Father,"¹⁰⁸ All these references point to a concept of the Church as 'the redeemed society' as Manson put it, which had been inaugurated at Pentecost. The purpose of being a member of the Christian Church seems to be that one is put in direct touch with God, with the spiritual world. So again, even in Lightfoot's ecclesiology, we appear to be faced with a form of neo-platonism.

Revelation

How an exegete interprets scripture depends on whether and in what sense he thinks that scripture reveals God. Lightfoot thought that the New Testament was revelatory partly because he understood that the meaning of scripture could not be accounted for entirely in terms of history:

They [the Gospels] are presentations of revelation rather than biographies, and the history which they contain is therefore to be viewed in a peculiar light.¹⁰⁹

Again Lightfoot is clear that the 'revelation' in the Gospels is not just something which has been put there by the evangelist; there is some sense in which the Gospels are independent of both the evangelist and the community to which he belonged:

St Mark's record must always be treated as a gospel, in which the will of God can be discerned, as it was

108. Ibid., p.319

109. H&I., p.xiii

revealed, or believed to be revealed, in scripture.¹¹⁰ The essential characteristic of revelation is that it is God who is revealed; revelation is in some sense a theophany. Lightfoot speaks of the baptism of Jesus being followed by a revelation to Jesus and of the transfiguration being a "secret revelation" to the three disciples who were present.¹¹¹ But what seems to be revealed in each of these cases is the relationship of the Son to the Father. Elsewhere Lightfoot describes revelation as a disclosure by God of himself to man,¹¹² and of revelation being complete only when the reader responds to this disclosure.¹¹³ He also relates revelation to the fear of God,¹¹⁴ and if awesome experiences can be counted as revelatory one wonders if, in Lightfoot's view, all spiritual experiences count as revelations of God. If this were the case such spiritual experiences would have to be self-authenticating and this would introduce problems of theological legitimation.

Lightfoot's more commonly expressed view was that revelation was to be identified with Jesus, or more precisely with Jesus in his historical life on earth. He contrasts this view with the older Jewish emphasis on the Old Testament scriptures:

110. Ibid., p.157

111. Ibid., p.65 and p.122

112. 'The Critical Approach to the Bible in the Nineteenth Century' in C.W.Dugmore, op. cit., p.88; and GMM., p.69

113. C.W.Dugmore, op. cit., p.91

114. GMM., p.88

A Jewish reader could not fail to perceive that, according to St John, the revelation of God is to be sought no longer in the written word of the scriptures but in Him of whom they spoke, the Word made flesh.¹¹⁵

Lightfoot refers to "the revelation of the Incarnation",¹¹⁶ and it is because of this that he can speak of Galilee - as represented in Mark's Gospel - as "the seat of revelation" or "the land of revelation".¹¹⁷ And elsewhere he says more fully:

Galilee and Jerusalem therefore stand in opposition to each other, as the story of the gospel runs in St Mark. The despised and more or less outlawed Galilee is shewn to have been chosen by God as the seat of the gospel and of the revelation of the Son of man, while the sacred city of Jerusalem, the home of Jewish piety and patriotism, has become the centre of relentless hostility and sin.¹¹⁸

Revelation is also identified with "the Galilean ministry"¹¹⁹ and revelation is said to progress steadily in Luke's Gospel, that is as Jesus moves on from Galilee to Samaria and on to Jerusalem.¹²⁰ Lightfoot refers to Jesus's self-revelation in the Passion,¹²¹ to the revelation of Jesus as Master on the mountain in Mt.28 before he finally leaves his disciples,¹²² and of the "revelation of his

115. Unpublished lecture On John

116. C.W.Dugmore, op. cit., p.87

117. R.H.Lightfoot, L&D., p.26f.

118. Ibid., p.124f.

119. Ibid., p.123

120. Ibid., p.156

121. GMM., p.51

122. L&D., p.97

glory" in the ministry, crucifixion, resurrection and parousia of Jesus.¹²³

In his commentary on the Fourth Gospel Lightfoot is very explicit in speaking about Jesus and his self-revelation, of "the Lord's revelation of Himself".¹²⁴ But then Lightfoot seems to shift his ground slightly when he says:

There can be no doubt that the evangelist [John] believes himself to be giving the true interpretation not only of Christian revelation, but of the historical Lord himself.¹²⁵

In this quotation Lightfoot holds apart the interpretation of the historical Jesus and the interpretation of 'Christian revelation'. The two are not at this point identified. That is to say in one respect Jesus reveals something about himself and in another respect he points to something beyond himself. This position is maintained in other passages in this commentary:

He [John] has his own view of the Incarnation, and of its place in the world's history, and the dominating idea of his gospel is that of the Son as the full and complete revelation of the Father.¹²⁶

God has now made a full and complete revelation of Himself in the person of His Son.¹²⁷

As regards the nature of the Lord's glory, it is

123. Ibid., p.42

124. J., p.307; see also p.125 and p.270

125. Ibid., p.4f.

126. Ibid., p.32

127. Ibid., p.59

enough at present to say that it is His revelation of the Being and the character of the Father,¹²⁸

The Son is the revelation of the Father.¹²⁹

There is no absolute consistency amongst these uses of 'revelation' but if we are to pay R.H.Lightfoot the compliment of regarding them as the variegated expression of a concept which was self-consistent in his own mind it is possible to reconstruct this concept by referring back to his christology (see p.288ff. above). This is a platonic christology where Jesus acts as a ladder or a bridge between two distinct worlds of spirit and matter. So Jesus Christ can be identified with revelation in so far as he is the divine representative of the spiritual world, though ultimately revelation is of God and the divine world to which we aspire, rather than of Jesus. In Jesus, because of his divine and human nature, the two worlds are brought close together.

The promise given in Jn 1.51 to disciples was that they should see the heaven opened, and the unbroken activity or commerce which joins earth and heaven in and through their Lord - this and nothing else. That therefore which the Lord reveals in John is no particular fact or piece of knowledge, without reference to Himself, nor is it any exceptional or temporary illumination; that which he reveals and imparts, both in word and in action, is a life; and the life which he reveals is the life of God, as made known in Himself, the Word become flesh.¹³⁰

As we would expect, then, Lightfoot has a platonic concept

128. Ibid., p.102

129. Ibid., p.246

130. Ibid., p.142

of 'revelation' in which we are given a view of the life of God in Jesus who has bridged the gap between heaven and earth.

In Jn 3.1-21, to a friendly representative of the old order at its best [i.e. Nicodemus], the Lord reveals two truths: first, that the opening of heaven to earth, promised at 1.51, which we may paraphrase as the full revelation of God to man, is not due to any activity or effort on man's part, but solely to the descent therefrom of One who alone is able to bridge the gulf between them; and secondly, that only he who is reborn from above, by means of water and spirit, can understand these things and see or enter into the Kingdom of God, which is or gives eternal life.¹³¹

So Christians can be said to be "divinely enlightened",¹³² for they have "a spiritual apprehension of the revelation recorded in this gospel."¹³³

Resurrection and Eschatology

Lightfoot makes a number of clear statements affirming the factuality of the resurrection of Jesus. He refers to the "fact of the resurrection"¹³⁴ and "the reality of the resurrection".¹³⁵ He also speaks of the disciples seeing Jesus after the resurrection.¹³⁶ Nor does he anywhere deny either the possibility or the

131. GMM., p.73

132. Ibid., p.112

133. L&D., p.94

134. Ibid., pp.27, 51 and 106

135. Ibid., p.102

136. H&I., p.153f.

reality of Jesus's resurrection. He does, however, make a clear distinction between the resurrection as whatever happened to Jesus inside the tomb and the appearances recorded by the evangelists after the discovery of the empty tomb. Nevertheless, Lightfoot seems to have had difficulty in giving any clear significance to the resurrection, and this is hardly surprizing given his neo-platonist presuppositions. He does not - with one exception (see p.363 below) - speak of a future general resurrection, and he fails also to suggest a consistent meaning for Jesus's resurrection. At one point Lightfoot connects the raising of Jesus with the founding of his Church,¹³⁷ elsewhere the resurrection is identified with the exaltation of Jesus to his Father's side.¹³⁸ Again he writes:

In His Father's house there is room enough and to spare; let them rest assured of it; for the very purpose of their Master's journey (i.e. His death, resurrection, and ascension) is to prepare a place for them there.¹³⁹

In April and May, 1911, Lightfoot gave a series of three sermons in Haslemere Parish Church on 'Immortality' (these sermons may well have been repeated many times as was Lightfoot's habit). In them the author performs the remarkable feat of not once mentioning the traditional Christian belief of the resurrection of all Christians. What he did was to offer a platonic sort of proof for the indestructibility of the soul, as in this quotation: "The very idea of personality - of a permanent self which

137. GMM., p.76

138. Ibid., p.93

139. J., p.269

persists through and in spite of all kinds of change - is itself a claim on immortality." And in another undated and untitled sermon on St Paul's treatise on the resurrection Lightfoot wrote the extraordinary line: "In 1 Cor 15 Paul justifies Christian hope of immortality".

With Lightfoot's platonic, spiritualizing attitude to the New Testament we would not expect him to make very much of its eschatology; nor does he, though he is not as anti-eschatological as we might by this stage expect. In general, however, he is opposed to Jewish Messianism and he is opposed to both Schweitzer and Weiss (though he does not name them explicitly) for suggesting that Jesus was an eschatological preacher who was mistaken in his eschatological expectations. Of such 'eschatologists' he wrote:

But...I am still persuaded that the eschatologists have done great violence to the documents.

Doubtless the eschatologists have done good work in shewing conclusively that the Christ of the Synoptic Gospels is not the humanitarian Jesus of liberalism. Nevertheless, the price that the extreme eschatologists demand is ruinous.¹⁴⁰

Lightfoot is repeatedly suspicious of the future and tries to devalue anything which is connected with Jewish Messianism. He even suggests that the Messianic is without any religious, i.e. spiritual, meaning:

In view of the subordinate place assigned to messianic doctrine in this gospel [John] it seems unlikely that the great words of the Baptist's witness to the Lord in 1.29 should be simply a messianic title [footnote:

140. Unpublished lecture On John

As is maintained by Dr C.H.Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, pp.230-8.] without deep religious significance.¹⁴¹

Again Lightfoot paraphrases some of Jesus's words in Jn 11.9-10:

Let them turn from their wishful thoughts about the (messianic) future to live and act in the present, while the light is still at their disposal, and can show them whence they come and whither they go.¹⁴²

But in this passage he misses the point of future eschatology, for the point is that one's attention is focussed not on the present moment nor on a distant future, but on the moment which immediately follows the present. That is to say future eschatology should not make one look towards a distant future but towards the immediate future, the next moment. And it is true that Jewish expectation of God's future led some of them to act politically in the present, that is their contemporary present. But in view of R.H.Lightfoot's highly conservative political outlook this political action is precisely what he would not have wanted and might suggest why he preferred to spiritualize, and hellenize, Jewish eschatological expectations. This can be seen in one of Lightfoot's references to the realization of God's Kingdom in Jesus's presence - necessarily a spiritual rather than a political kingdom - which he opposes to the Jewish understanding of the Kingdom of God:

For with the arrival of Jesus on the scene the hour

141. J., p.96; see also ibid., p.356 and p.372ff below.

142. Ibid., p.245

may be said in some sense to be striking, as is indeed suggested in the summary of the latter's [i.e. John the Baptist's] preaching in Mk 1.15, and this is an idea which was foreign, if not impossible to Jewish thought. For to the Jew the arrival of the hour would necessarily mean an external transformation, and to all appearances this had not yet occurred.¹⁴³

Lightfoot's suspicion of future eschatology can be seen in these passages from his lectures on New Testament theology, the first of which describes the Jew, as opposed to the Christian, as a materialist who looks to the future:

[For the Jew] The real as opposed to the apparent, the divine as opposed to the human, were for him the future as opposed to the present. He was also a stubborn materialist. To him the world as we know it is the real world; its goods and evils are real goods and evils. There is no true grasp of the Doctrine of the Cross in Judaism, and for it the revelation of God had to be given mainly through human history, with occasional interventions by miracle. To the Jews a world in which their God never arbitrarily intervened would be like a kingdom which never saw or heard of its sovereign.

The Synoptic Gospels, though it may be that they give a more accurate picture than St John does of the circumstances of our Lord's ministry and of the manner and style of his teaching, are obviously pervaded throughout with the idea of the coming Messianic kingdom.

But by contrast:

Paul's apocalyptic views are not central, and even lay outside his deepest Christian thought.

143. H&I., p.107f.

And Lightfoot refers to,

the completely spiritual religion of St John in whose gospel there is no trace whatever of purely Jewish eschatology or apocalyptic.¹⁴⁴

He also says of John's Gospel:

By the Logos Doctrine Christianity was lifted entirely above Jewish Messianism.¹⁴⁵

And yet paradoxically he was also prepared to say in an unmarked sermon: "The Kingdom of God on earth remains a hope for the future."

Lightfoot adopted a difficult and uneasy stance in his understanding of eschatology. On the one hand he was obviously not attracted to Jewish hopes for the future and he could not fit these hopes into his neo-platonic world-view. And yet on the other hand he no doubt felt constrained by the New Testament texts as a whole, despite his attraction to St John, to maintain some element of a hope for the future. His attempt to spiritualize traditional eschatology can be seen in this passage:

The Christianity of the New Testament, we are now often told, with a certain measure of truth began as a religion of the former type, and ended as a religion of the latter type. Certainly the former type is as typically Jewish as the latter is Greek. All through St Paul's epistles we can trace the gradual evanescence of the simple Messianic belief, and the approximation to the spiritual religion which we find in its completest

144. Unpublished lectures on New Testament Theology, pp. 16, 15, 19 and 20. Note the extreme platonism of the first paragraph.

145. Ibid., p.68

form in the gospel according to St John. There is, it is admitted by all, abundant justification for a spiritualized eschatology within the covers of the New Testament.¹⁴⁶

And yet Lightfoot goes on to say that despite such "abundant justification" he believes that a synthesis of the two types is necessary. Lightfoot's inclination was always in the direction of a realized eschatology and even where he includes a reference towards a future fulfilment this does not substantially alter his preference for an interpretation of the Kingdom of God (or salvation, or whatever) as being already present. After quoting a passage from C.H.Dodd on realized eschatology, he wrote:

On this view therefore the second advent is not so much the final, supreme fact, to which all else is preparatory; rather, it is the impending verification of the Church's faith that, with the coming of Jesus Christ, heaven has descended to earth, God and man are at one; or, in more philosophical language, that the work accomplished once and for all by Jesus Christ has absolute value. The purpose of the Lord's manifestation in the future is not so much to introduce a new order of things, but rather to complete that which already exists.¹⁴⁷

Repeating an idea of T.W.Manson's, Lightfoot says that what lies still in the future will not be a difference of kind from present Christian existence, but only a difference of degree.¹⁴⁸ The promise in the Fourth

146. P.2 of unmarked, handwritten notes on the subject of the Kingdom of God.

147. GMM., p.8

148. J., p.26

Gospel that the disciples would "be allowed to see the unveiling of heaven itself in the unbroken intercourse between His Father and Himself, the Son of man" would "be realized in the coming ministry, not in some distant future."¹⁴⁹ Lightfoot says again:

In St John's gospel the whole message of salvation is found within the life of Jesus Christ on earth, if this be taken to include and to receive its consummation in the passion and the death. Step by step through his gospel he shews that the historic life of Jesus Christ has brought to the world all that had been hitherto associated with the thought of the future consummation.¹⁵⁰

Lightfoot's most balanced and all-inclusive statement occurs in the following extract:

The gospel preaching, so far as it was concerned with events which had already taken place, concentrated attention on three things in particular, the life, the death, and the resurrection of the Lord; and these events had indeed their essential and permanent connection with all that had preceded and led up to them; but the events themselves were not proclaimed as merely one more link in a continuous chain; they represented an end as well as a beginning, for in them the church had been led to discern the fulfilment of the promises of God. It had therefore now become possible for men to taste the powers of the age to come; the kingdom of God was no longer only a matter of hope and expectation; the fulness of the time had come and a new age or order was inaugurated.

In the light of this conception, it is not altogether sufficient to say that the apostolic preaching of the

149. GMM., p.74

150. L&D., p.157. My emphasis.

gospel on the one hand looked back to the ministry, the death and the resurrection of the Lord, and on the other hand looked forward to his future coming. Such a statement fails to do justice to the close and essential interconnection of past and future in the earliest preaching of the gospel, for the saving events of the past were now seen in an 'absolute' or 'eschatological' light; and conversely the future, whatever it might hold in store, was to some extent already known or guaranteed owing to its essential connection with the part of the gospel which, already a matter of past history, had received a living embodiment in the church under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The eschatology of the early church is thus twofold. On the one hand we have 'realized eschatology': the belief that with the coming of Jesus Christ the fulness of time has arrived, the prophecies are fulfilled, the kingdom of God is no longer wholly a matter of the future. On the other hand we have an eschatology which still looks to the future for the consummation of that which is already known and present. This 'realized eschatology' is common to all the four evangelists. They differ however with regard to the relation conceived to exist between the fulfilment which is already matter of history, and the further fulfilment which belongs to the future.¹⁵¹

When Lightfoot says that the evangelists differ in the relationship between the two types of eschatology, it should be remembered that his own preference was for the Fourth Gospel where, he claims, there is barely any trace of future eschatology. Nevertheless we can see that Lightfoot's preference for realized eschatology did not lead him to abandon future eschatology entirely. In fact his understanding of eschatology is remarkably

151. *Ibid.*, pp. 109-111

similar to that of T.W.Manson, though it has not been worked out so carefully. How this affects Lightfoot's interpretation of the eschatological texts of the New Testament, however, remains to be seen.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHAPTER SEVENR.H.LIGHTFOOT: PRE-UNDERSTANDING AT WORK

The purpose of this chapter is again to take some examples of R.H.Lightfoot's exegesis and to relate the general trends of his interpretation to his pre-understanding which we have just outlined in the previous chapter. However, Lightfoot's exegesis is not easy to summarize or even to describe. His exegesis is rarely systematic and he came nowhere near to writing a theology of the New Testament or a theology of the Gospels (as T.W.Manson almost did in his Teaching of Jesus). His exegesis is often disparate and piecemeal, so that his interpretation of a text or of a concept of the New Testament frequently has to be pieced together from a variety of sources and from a mass of odd references. Lightfoot's talent was for simplifying German authors and for juxtaposing texts, but we very often find that he does not tell us what a text or concept means. This is true even of his commentary on John's Gospel which is more often a spiritual meditation on the text rather than an explanation of it. Two of the examples used in this chapter are ones which Lightfoot did not work out with any rigour, but this is in itself of significance as it shows where Lightfoot's interests did not lie. Nor do we find the range of exegesis that we had with T.W.Manson; Lightfoot did not publish very much and a certain amount of what he did publish is repetitive. What Lightfoot

offers the reader is a technique, or better, a style of New Testament writing, but he is not the person to go to for a general interpretation of the theology of the New Testament. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, it is still possible to analyse Lightfoot by relating his pre-understanding to his exegesis.

The Messianic Secret

Under the heading of 'Peter's Confession: Mk 8.27-30' we saw how T.W.Manson interpreted this text as representing a real historical event which proved to be a turning point in the teaching of Jesus, how Jesus's teaching, particularly on the Son of Man and the Kingdom of God, moved in a wholly new direction after this event (pp.231-238). R.H.Lightfoot dealt with this text in a quite different way by concentrating on the secrecy motif in Mk 8.30 to the exclusion of the part it might have played in Jesus's ministry as a whole. This is because Lightfoot did not regard the structure of Mark's narrative as offering an historically reliable order, chronologically or geographically, for Jesus's ministry. He did not, however, totally abandon the historical character of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi, as we shall see, as did Rudolf Bultmann.¹ What underlies any interpretation

1. R.K.Bultmann, History of the Synoptic Tradition, p.257f.:

This passage can be characterised as legend. In no sense does the naming of the place in v.27a ensure the historical character of what is told.... The fact that Jesus takes the initiative with his question itself suggests that this narrative is secondary, as does the content of the question altogether. Why

of this passage, then, is the exegete's concept of 'history'. By examining an interpretation of this passage we will get some suggestion of the exegete's understanding of 'history'. Manson's inclination towards scientific historiography encouraged him to accept the historicity of the Caesarea Philippi incident and of its relation to the rest of the ministry, and of necessity he rejected Wrede's redactional account of the messianic secrecy motif in Mark (see pp.238-245 above). Lightfoot, with his rather different understanding of 'history', did exactly the opposite.

The first half of Mark's Gospel contains a large number of miracle stories which, Lightfoot says, have been included to bear witness to Jesus's messiahship without leading to explicit proclamations of this:

The first half of the book is largely occupied with descriptions of the Lord's mighty works or acts of power. There are twelve of these in all in Mark, and ten of them occur before Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi; in other words an overwhelming proportion of them is found in the first half of the book. We may say with some confidence that to St Mark and his readers these mighty acts of benevolence are certainly evidence of the Lord's Messiahship; but the evangelist is careful to make clear that they were not thus regarded at the time when they were actually performed.

does Jesus ask about something on which he is bound to be every bit as informed as his disciples? The question is intended simply to provoke an answer; in other words, it is a literary device.... This then is a legend of faith; faith in the Messiahship of Jesus is traced back to a story of the first Messianic confession which Peter made about Jesus.

They were received, it is true, with overwhelming amazement and awe, but they do not lead to a confession of Messiahship, at any rate by the majority of those who witnessed them; and when the demons, who are regarded as possessing spiritual insight, acknowledge the presence of their conqueror, silence is enjoined upon them.²

The secrecy motif, then, does not seem to be a part of the historical ministry of Jesus, but is an idea which has been introduced by the evangelist to structure his narrative and obviate certain objections from Jewish opponents:

Part of St Mark's purpose may be to emphasize that the Lord's conduct, in spite of the great impression which He made, was wholly free from any effort to arouse public excitement, which indeed He did His utmost to suppress; and that it gave no colour whatever to a charge of seditious messianic activity. The Lord is not represented in these chapters as drawing attention to His person, but from time to time the evangelist shows his readers that there is a secret about Him and His work. The events which are taking place are concerned with something which is not apparent on the surface.³

In his earlier Bampton Lectures, Lightfoot ascribed the messianic secrecy to the more familiar motive of the evangelist's having to reconcile the contradiction between Jesus being recognized by the Church as the Messiah, the Son of God, and his having been rejected and executed by the Jews.

St Mark, however, was faced with a peculiar problem. He is making an attempt - the first, so far as we know -

2. R.H.Lightfoot, GMM., p.36f.

3. Ibid., p.37

to set forth, in more or less connected form, a narrative of Jesus' public life; and the latter is put before us from the beginning as the Christ, the Son of God: the fulfilment, that is, not only of Jewish but of all men's hopes. This was the conviction and the doctrine of the church for which the evangelist wrote, and it gives the keynote to his gospel. And yet it was also the case that Jesus had not been generally recognized as such on earth, and that his own nation, instead of finding its own expectations realized in him, had brought him to the cross.

This contradiction between what we may call outward fact and inward faith is accounted for in St Mark's gospel by the secrecy ascribed to the truth of the Messiahship of Jesus. In this is found the explanation both of the lack of recognition, and of the rejection. According to this gospel the nature of Jesus is known during the greater part of the ministry to no one but himself. Only towards the close is it set forth by St Peter, but at once the same injunction of secrecy or silence is laid upon the disciples as previously upon the demons; and the only result of the insight, which the disciples now have, is that they are able to receive instruction in the meaning and duties of Messiahship, and in the implications for themselves.⁴

Lightfoot follows this opening statement with a general account of how in the early chapters of Mark's Gospel the demons and the people who have been healed by Jesus are, artificially and unrealistically, told to be silent about his identity. Lightfoot also adds that the secrecy motif only finds its place in a connected narrative where separate incidents have been brought together. Individual

4. H&I., p.66f.

pericopes would not demand any explanation of secrecy.⁵ Up to this point the identity of Jesus as the Messiah has, in general, gone unrecognized even by his disciples. But at Mk 8.27ff. the evangelist presents St Peter, on behalf of the disciples as a whole, confessing that Jesus is the anointed one. So from this point the disciples too are told to tell no one of Jesus's identity until after his death. Lightfoot then adds that from this point onwards Jesus makes it clear that he is not the eschatological Messiah of Jewish expectation and the evangelist replaces this title with "the mysterious title Son of man".⁶

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5. Ibid., pp.68-74. That Lightfoot ascribes the secrecy motif to the evangelist is clear from the following quotations:

In these, the almost stereotyped form of the commands to silence strengthens the belief that these also, like the injunctions to the demons, are due to the evangelist, who wishes his readers to see in these mighty works of Jesus a revelation of Messiahship.

In St Mark, indeed, unlike St Matthew and St Luke, the Messiahship is strictly veiled....

St Mark adheres (almost) faithfully to his general plan, according to which no human being is admitted to the secret or meaning of Messiahship before 8.27ff.; and those who then confess it are, like the demons earlier, at once commanded to secrecy and silence. These limits are overstepped in St Matthew and St Luke; see e.g. Mt 14.33, Lk 4.21. In their gospels St Peter's words at 8.29 cannot have the same signal importance that they have in St Mark. (H&I., pp.72, 83, and 221 n.2)

6. Ibid., p.80

There then occurs the following footnote which requires separate comment:

For the significance of the expression "the Son of man" in this connexion, see T.W.Manson, The Teaching of Jesus, pp.231ff.(Cambridge, 1931).⁷

If we recall, Manson said that the Son of Man did not point to a divine individual of the future, but to a vocation in the present, a vocation of suffering and sacrifice (pp.208-218 above). Manson supposed that the Son of Man was a communal concept which referred not only to Jesus but also to his disciples and to all Christians in so far as they are prepared to share Jesus's own vocation of service and sacrifice, and Manson thought that the concept became restricted to Jesus and the twelve and then to Jesus alone only by historical accident, the accident that Jesus was misunderstood and abandoned by his followers. This interpretation is dependent on two things: first, it rests on Manson's ecclesiology, his interest in the practical activities of the ministry in which all Christians share; and secondly, on his concept of 'history' which leads to the view that this meaning (i.e. Mark's as understood by Manson) of 'Son of Man' which is derived from the structure of Mark's Gospel is not redactional but represents Jesus's actual teaching. If the latter were not true we could say that Manson's interpretation of the Son of Man may be true for Mark's Gospel but it is not true absolutely. Manson's position is perfectly consistent, but Lightfoot's is not if, as the footnote suggests, he wants to adopt Manson's interpretation of

7. Ibid.

'Son of Man'. This is because Lightfoot, as we saw in the previous chapter, does not share Manson's ecclesiology based on 'ministry', and he does not share his view of 'history' or of the historical veracity of Mark's narrative. Lightfoot cannot logically adopt Manson's understanding of 'Son of Man' when he has shown that the narrative structure of this gospel originated with the evangelist. A number of questions, then, remain to be answered: What did the 'Son of Man' mean for Jesus? for Matthew? Luke? and John? for Jews of the first century? for the early Church? and for us? What then does 'Son of Man' mean? These are complex questions which are not dealt with satisfactorily in the footnote of Lightfoot's which we have quoted above.

While Lightfoot makes it clear that the secrecy motif has been created by the evangelist,⁸ he also makes it clear that the incident as a whole has an historical (historisch) basis. He writes:

I think it is open to question whether the scene near Caesarea Philippi is meant to describe the first acknowledgement by the disciples of their Master's Messiahship; that it is in fact a divinely granted discovery by St Peter, made by him for the first time at this moment.... The evangelist, however, may have been thinking not so much of the contrast between a previously unenlightened and now suddenly enlightened Peter, as of the contrast between those who perceive and confess the divine nature and office of the Lord, however and whenever they may have gained this knowledge, and those who in St Paul's words still only

8. This was not Wrede's view, see p.240 above.

know Him after the flesh. For the Lord has just asked His disciples, as they walk together, 'Who do men say that I am?' that is, what does the world say about me? and he has received answers which show that popular opinion ascribes to Him high roles indeed - John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the prophets - but all of them roles of preparation, not the one final role of fulfilment, consummation, of the achievement of salvation. The question is then renewed to them: But you, you who form the nucleus of the new Israel, you, to whom has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, you, whom I have called and chosen, who have consorted with me, who do you say that I am? And I suggest that St Peter's reply, 'Thou art the Messiah', should perhaps be taken as his and his fellow disciples' acknowledgement and confession of their Master's person and office, owing to their inner knowledge of Him, in contrast to the opinion of the world about Him, than as a first and unrelated discovery, at that moment, by St Peter.⁹

By this point Lightfoot has developed a complex and difficult position because he has given the incident at Caesarea Philippi a sound historical basis; Jesus (in an oblique way) claims to be the Messiah, Peter confesses (though not here for the first time) that Jesus is the Messiah, but the injunction to keep silent does not derive historically from Jesus but from the evangelist. So what really happened to claims about Jesus's identity? Were they ignored by the populace, rejected, or what? Wrede solved the problem by supposing that Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah and the disciples never acknowledged him to be the Messiah. But this solution has been rejected by Lightfoot and he seems to be trapped

9. GMM., p.33f.

between an historical approach to the text (Manson) and a redactional approach to the text (Wrede and Bultmann). Lightfoot's only alternative seems to be that the Jews culpably executed Jesus because they either ignored his messianic claims or because they deliberately rejected them, which is a consequence which has been avoided by Mark, Manson and Wrede.

The Cursing of the Fig Tree

R.H.Lightfoot's interpretation of the cursing of the fig tree (Mk 11.12-14; 20-25) again allows direct comparison with T.W.Manson who used details of climatology and the fig harvest as a means of dating this incident, together with the entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the Temple, six months before the crucifixion (see pp.245-252 above). Manson, then, gave a revised general chronology for Jesus's ministry, the final six months of which depend on his dating of the story of the fig tree.

Lightfoot's longest account of this incident can be found in the Speaker's Lectures which he gave in Oxford in 1930:

But before proceeding to what happened at the Temple, Mark pauses to narrate the first part of a curious little incident, the very unimportance of which suggests its great importance in his eyes. The following considerations may be kept in mind in trying to understand why the incident of the fig tree had this importance for him.

1. Between 11.11 and 11.15 the word ἔρχεσθαι, or some

compound of it, occurs no less than 7 times.

2. In a neighbouring context 13.28-9 Jesus uses the picture of a ripening fig tree as a vehicle for the climax of his teaching. In this other context he points out that a fig tree putting forth leaves obviously implies the near approach of summer, and he uses this illustration to teach that an imminent (v.30) crisis of extreme distress will imply that something unnamed - interpreted by Luke as ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ - ἐγγύς ἐστὶν ἐπὶ θύραις.

3. To return to the present context, 11.13, the presence of leaves implies in accordance with 13.28 that the time is (almost) ripe: there should be fruit somewhere, but it is not on this tree.

We may perhaps say with some confidence that to Jesus the tree symbolised in some form the Jewish Church or Nation; and he had come from afar (v.13) to the central sanctuary, because the time was ripe, 1.15; but his scrutiny of the previous evening had been enough to show him that he did not find there what he sought.

v.14 ἀποκριθεὶς, Mk only. In view of the train of thought which was, we have some reason to believe, at this moment filling Jesus's mind, it may be that, as soon as he found that the fig tree had no fruit, the question occurred to him whether it might not be a (divinely given) figure, for him, of those who held authority (v.28) in that of which he himself was a member according to the flesh, that is, of Israel, and of everything for which they stood, and therefore it may be a sign for him (sic). Was this ancestral religion whose outward λατρεία or service of God was to all appearances stronger than its inward state, able to be the vehicle of that which was about to be?

According to our tradition, this question in different forms had been before his mind more than once already, 7.14-23, cf. Lk 10.38ff.; but it now returns as an ultimate issue: and it is important to observe that according to Mark no sign is given until Jesus

has gone forward and has acted outwardly in faith (Cleansing). He makes the venture, and only after the action has been carried through, is he allowed to know that he has acted rightly.

It should further be noted that having gone forward and acted according to what he had reason to believe to be the will of God, he did not need the sign he may have craved the day before. It does not occur to him to think any more of the fig tree; it is Peter on the next day whose memory is aroused by the change in its appearance, who draws attention to it. Jesus is now only concerned to impart to his hearers what he himself has proved true (Cleansing), although the strength of the language and the metaphors used are sufficient proof of the tension he has undergone. In v.21 the implication of Peter's ejaculation appears to be 'How marvellous'. In the reply of Jesus in v.22 there is no doubt a reference to Ps 46.12.... In any case, whether the words are understood as the expression of a wish or of a fact, they imply that that which has borne fruit will do so no more; there will still indeed be fruit, but the tree in front of Jesus will not bear it.¹⁰

The chief characteristics of this passage are that the fig tree is of great importance to the evangelist, it is built round and expresses the same significance as the cleansing of the Temple; the fig tree represents the Temple which in turn represents the Jewish worship of God, and the apparent outward health of the tree is contrasted with its inner sickness. The tree then is a symbol for the Judaism of Jesus's day. Something is going to bear the fruit of Jesus's ministry, but it is not going to be official Judaism. At a later date Lightfoot wrote:

10. Speaker's Lectures, 4, 23.5.30, unpublished.

It is most significant that the Lord's violent action in the Jewish temple is set between the two halves of the story of the barren fig tree, which was destroyed because of its unfruitfulness. We are meant to see that Judaism itself is doomed; it cannot endure the revelation of the coming of the Son, that is...of the glory of God.¹¹

The symbolic interpretation of this incident given in the Speaker's Lectures was written before Lightfoot travelled to Germany, but he does not seem to have changed his interpretation in later years. In the Bampton Lectures he said that the fig tree symbolized "both the Jewish nation and the temple worship."¹² Its position in the text is due to its "symbolical significance"¹³ and it contains "a symbolical reference in some way or another to Jerusalem".¹⁴ Again in 1949, he wrote: "The incident of the withered fig tree suggests that the existing order of Judaism is doomed."¹⁵

This symbolic interpretation is reinforced when Lightfoot writes that the entry into Jerusalem and the Temple cleansing (and a fortiori the cursing of the fig tree) at an earlier stage in the tradition may "perhaps have been vitally connected with, and have formed the immediate introduction to, the Passion narrative."¹⁶ This directly contradicts Manson's account of the last

11. GMM., p.45

12. H&I., p.86 n.2

13. L&D., p.123

14. Ibid., p.141

15. GMM., p.48

16. Ibid., p.61

months of Jesus's ministry, but this is not surprizing as Lightfoot, with his redactional evaluation of the evangelist's narrative, could hardly have accepted Manson's historicizing interpretation of the fig tree incident. Lightfoot did not, however, ignore the problem of whether the incident, in view of its connection with the cleansing of the Temple, took place at the beginning of the ministry or at the end. Nor did he at any point doubt that the cleansing and the withering of the fig tree were historical events.

Whether in fact the incident took place early or late in the ministry, it is not possible to say with certainty, since the other evangelists [other than John], in whose gospels, unlike that of St John, the Lord only comes to Jerusalem once, and at the end, naturally place it late. If we have to make a choice, we shall probably be right to give the preference to the synoptic rather than to the Johannine setting of the incident; it is an act unparalleled in all that we know of the Lord's life, and likely to have occurred towards the climax of events. It must also have produced extreme tension and excitement; and this condition of affairs is expressed much more clearly by St Mark...than by St John.¹⁷

In his last published work Lightfoot wrote this extraordinary note:

Good reasons can be given for thinking that, according to St Mark, six months or more may have elapsed between the Lord's final departure from Galilee [9.30, 33; 10.1] and the passover in Jerusalem, when he died (chs. 14 to 16). [Footnote: See an article by Dr T.W.Manson in the Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, vol 33, no.2,

17. Ibid., p.77

March, 1951, pp.271-82.¹⁸

But Lightfoot could only accept this six month interval between the entry into Jerusalem and the crucifixion if he could also have accepted Manson's use of the withering of the fig tree as offering precise historical information, and this in all his earlier published material and in his Speaker's Lectures Lightfoot had declined to do. Nor is there any reason for supposing that he had altered his interpretation of this incident late in life as there is much more symbolic exegesis in his commentary on John than in any of his previous books.

Manson, then, with his historical presuppositions takes the withering of the fig tree as a distinct historical incident and he relates it with great ingenuity to the life and ministry of Jesus and his disciples: Lightfoot treats it as a symbol of the demise of Judaism and relates it primarily to the redactional activity of the evangelist. But what is the origin of Lightfoot's preference for a symbolic interpretation (in addition to his dislike of using the text as an historical source)? I suggest that it is rooted in his attraction to platonism and to this extent is not dissimilar to Patristic allegorical exegesis. This is not to say that all symbolic interpretations derive from platonism or dualism, but a platonic or dualistic outlook is likely to find symbolism congenial. Lightfoot's predisposition for the platonic dualism of appearance and reality, and so for symbolism, can be seen

18. J., p.37

when he writes:

Thus in Mark the incident [the Temple cleansing] is placed between the two sections dealing with the withering of the fig tree, which, the Lord finds, had indeed the appearance of abundant life but no actual fruit.¹⁹

Eschatological Texts

In this section I want to look not so much at individual texts which have some eschatological content as at eschatological concepts which are scattered throughout the text of all four Gospels. It will be seen that R.H.Lightfoot's exegesis of the first two of these is neither systematic nor particularly specific, but it is highly significant that Lightfoot could allow himself to be imprecise in such important areas. The point is that Lightfoot never really tells the reader what 'the Son of Man' and 'the Kingdom of God' mean. Nevertheless it is important to reconstruct Lightfoot's understanding of these ideas in order to see what sense he gave to eschatological texts.

a) Son of Man

A number of Lightfoot's references to 'the Son of Man' suggest to the reader that the concept is not immediately intelligible. He describes it as a "mysterious title"²⁰ and a "mysterious expression",²¹ and he says

19. GMM., p.78. My emphasis.

20. H&I., p.80

21. GMM., p.37

that "it is never explained in the gospels."²² Lightfoot's one specific point is that whereas it is a messianic and apocalyptic concept in Jewish literature, in the Gospels it is associated with suffering and death.²³ We have already seen that at one point in the Bampton Lectures Lightfoot included a footnote in which he referred the reader to T.W.Manson's Teaching of Jesus for an explanation of 'the Son of Man' (see p.338 above) and he also hinted at the correctness of Manson's communal interpretation in two other places.²⁴ It has already been shown that Manson's interpretation depended on his estimate of the historical reliability of Mark's narrative which in turn depended on his concept of 'history', and it was also supported by his interest in 'ministry'. Lightfoot on the other hand neither shared Manson's understanding of 'history' nor his interest in 'ministry'. However, Lightfoot's tacit assumption of the meaning of 'the Son of Man' was quite different from that of Manson and his instruction to read Manson must be regarded as no more than a temporary aberration. The three main marks of Manson's interpretation were that 'Son of Man' referred to a group rather than an individual, it describes a vocation rather than a personal identity, and it points to the present rather than the future. Lightfoot repeatedly differs from Manson on all three points, though on the last point he thought the synoptic evangelists were using the idea to refer to the future while he himself

22. L&D., p.35 n.2

23. GMM., p.42, and J., p.104

24. GMM., pp.42 and 44

finally preferred a present connotation.

There is no question that Lightfoot identified the Son of Man with an individual, and with Jesus Christ: "the Son of man, identified silently with the person of the speaker [Jesus]";²⁵ "the disciples' Master, here tacitly identified with the apocalyptic Son of man";²⁶ "the speaker, in his character of Son of man";²⁷ "Jesus Christ, whom he [Mark] believes to be the Son of man";²⁸ "He...is none the less the supernatural Son of man";²⁹ "There is obviously a tacit identification of the Prisoner with the expected Son of man, whom one day every eye shall see as both Judge and Saviour".³⁰ And in a comment on Mk 8.33b, in direct contradiction to Manson, he said that: "This section tacitly assumes that Jesus is the Son of man, and his fate is that of the Son of man."³¹ Lightfoot often seems to use 'Son of Man' as a title for Jesus which does not have any specifically determinable content. There are a couple of places where Lightfoot implies that the appearance of the Son of Man lies in the future when he speaks of "the apocalyptic Son of man"³² and "the doctrine of the coming of the Son of man to

25. H&I., p.112

26. Ibid., p.125

27. Ibid., p.179

28. L&D., p.40

29. GMM., p.51

30. Ibid., p.54

31. Lectures on Mark, unpublished.

32. H&I., p.125

judgement and therewith the consummation."³³ But while that might be true for Mark, it is not necessarily Lightfoot's own view:

In the life and work of Jesus Christ, above all in his death and resurrection, and in the life of the Church which resulted therefrom, believers had found the inauguration of a new dispensation, although they still expected, when this gospel was written, that a consummation would take place at the supernatural appearance of their Master as the Son of man with great power and glory.³⁴

The early Church, then, seems to have been mistaken in expecting a future appearance of the Son of Man, and elsewhere Lightfoot thinks it possible to interpret the consummation in Mark (though not in Matthew and Luke) as the appearance of the risen Jesus in Galilee, the appearance of whom is pointed to, but not described, in the last chapter of Mark.³⁵ And there is no room here for a future Son of Man.

Lightfoot's interpretation of 'the Son of Man' as it appears in John's Gospel deserves to be treated separately both by virtue of its intrinsic content and by virtue of the following methodological principle:

It seems that St John's gospel, if considered by itself in isolation, is a riddle; but if it is regarded as the crown and completion of our gospel records, it falls forthwith into place. It may indeed have become increasingly clear, at any rate in certain quarters of the Church, that such a gospel

33. L&D., p.26

34. Ibid., p.114f.

35. See L&D., pp.63-5 and 76-7

as St John's was needed, and that an interpretation of the Person of the Lord chiefly in terms of the Jewish Messiah...was rapidly becoming inadequate as an interpretation of Him who was now worshipped by Gentile even more than by Jewish Christians.... Let the reader attempt the almost impossible task of forgetting, for the moment, the existence of St John's gospel and all that he has learned from it and by means of it in reference to the Lord's incarnate life, and then let him consider whether he would not find considerable difficulty in answering certain questions which might be put to him. How, for example, is he to answer the question, 'What think ye of Christ?' In what sense is he to regard the Lord as the Jewish Messiah? What is the relation between His coming as Jesus of Nazareth and the future coming of the Son of man? What is the meaning of the mysterious title, the Son of man?³⁶

Lightfoot sees a complex of meaning in 'Son of Man' as it appears in the Fourth Gospel. In the first place it refers to Jesus's human nature as a counterpart to his divine nature, as in the Chalcedonian tradition.³⁷ In this Gospel, and in Lightfoot's own mind too if we are to accept the above long quotation at its face value, the Son of Man's function lies entirely in the present, the present of Jesus's life. This expression points to Jesus as a judge, but a present judge not a judge who waits at the end of time.³⁸ Similarly, the Son of Man's function has been completed at the crucifixion: "His work is complete, the Son of man can now rest."³⁹ And

36. J., p.32

37. Ibid., pp.61 and 312

38. Ibid., p.203

39. Ibid., p.319

the "glory or triumph of the Son of man" is identified with the "imparting [of] His own self to the disciples", and this is said to be "now an accomplished fact".⁴⁰

The Son of Man's role in the present is finally transformed into a platonic function. Lightfoot speaks of "the ladder" by which "the Son of man has joined heaven and earth in an indissoluble union".⁴¹ And he also says:

It is to be their [the disciples] privilege to see an unveiling of heaven, and a perfect contact between heaven and earth, because of the presence with them of their Lord, the Son of man.⁴²

At another point Lightfoot associates the Son of Man with an ideal (platonic) humanity which he imparts to believers.⁴³

And when commenting on Jn 6.27 he writes:

The Son of man, and He only, has bridged the otherwise impassable gulf between heaven and earth, the visible and the invisible, and also that, if He is to accomplish His task of giving life to the believer, He must be lifted up, an expression which in John refers outwardly indeed to the physical elevation of the Lord's body on the cross, but inwardly to His 'exaltation' or return to the Father, which according to St John that elevation effected.⁴⁴

So finally we can see that not only did Lightfoot in practice ignore and reject Manson's communal interpretation -

40. Ibid., p.73. This platonic interpretation is specifically rejected by C.H.Dodd, see The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, p.248f.

41. Ibid., p.99

42. Ibid., p.93

43. Ibid., p.104

44. Ibid., p.167

as we would expect with his pre-understanding of 'history' and 'ministry' - but he found in this title 'Son of Man' the perfect vehicle for expressing his platonic world-view and Jesus's role in it.⁴⁵

b) The Kingdom of God

This is the other eschatological concept that Lightfoot does not explain in any systematic way. This would be very odd if we were to accept as his considered judgment Lightfoot's opinion that the Kingdom of God was Jesus's "greatest theme".⁴⁶ But Lightfoot's fragmented exegesis is more consistent with his view that the Kingdom of God is much less important (in Mark's Gospel) than is often supposed and that it is overshadowed by what Mark has to say about Jesus as Messiah.⁴⁷ And in a later work he adds: "Important as is the kingdom of God, it is not the centre of gravity of the Christian faith."⁴⁸

When we ask what 'the Kingdom of God' represents Lightfoot offers us a variety of alternative expressions

45. For an alternative interpretation which in some respects is similar to Manson's interpretation of 'the Son of Man' in Mark, see C.H.Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, p.248f.; see also R.Schnackenburg, 'Der Menschensohn im Johannesevangelium', NTS, 11, 1965 pp.123-137.

46. R.H.Lightfoot, GMM., p.112

47. H&I., p.60f.

48. J., p.42

most of which have a predominantly spiritual rather than a political or ecclesial meaning. He twice says that the Kingdom of God represents "eternal life".⁴⁹ Elsewhere he supposes that the expression stands for "the era of salvation"⁵⁰ or just "salvation":

In 10.23-7, after the decision against discipleship made by an aspirant who none the less aroused the Lord's affection 10.21, the Lord has been saying how difficult, indeed impossible but for divine help, is entry into the kingdom of God, and therewith salvation.⁵¹

In another place he identifies it with the messianic age but this is associated with his own individual version of a realized eschatology rather than with a future cosmic crisis. He writes:

And yet, if we are right in regarding the cleansing as a sign or token that with the Lord's arrival at Jerusalem the messianic age, indeed the kingdom of God, was at the doors....⁵²

If the Kingdom was "at the doors" when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem (Lightfoot is commenting on the cleansing of the Temple in Mark's Gospel in the above quotation) it is identified neither with Jesus's ministry nor with the crisis envisaged in, for example, First Thessalonians, but, it would seem, with either the death of Jesus or his resurrection. In fact he associates the Kingdom of

49. H&I., p.80; GMM., p.73

50. GMM., p.20

51. Ibid., p.110f.

52. Ibid., p.67

God with Jesus's death in his commentary on John.⁵³ In one of the few places where he interprets a text which contains this expression, Mk 1.15, Lightfoot offers the translation: 'The time if fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at the doors' in contrast to C.H.Dodd's 'It is the climax of all time: God's Kingdom is upon you'.⁵⁴ Lightfoot is obviously hesitant about committing himself to Dodd's realized eschatology, while at the same time excluding any possibility of a 'thorough-going' eschatology. He seems to be closer to sich realisierende Eschatologie, but he nowhere used this expression coined by Jeremias and taken up by T.W.Manson. His translation of Mk 1.15, however, fails to make any direct connection with the quotation which brings the Kingdom of God close to Jesus's death or resurrection, even though both occur in the same book. But this inconsistency points to Lightfoot's evident lack of interest in the concept and in eschatology generally.

In an early unmarked sermon Lightfoot did say that "The kingdom of God upon earth remains a hope for the future" but this does not express his basic attitude. In the Hampton Lectures, again commenting on Mk 1.15, he said that "with the arrival of Jesus on the scene the hour may be said in some sense already to be striking, as is indeed suggested in a summary of the latter's preaching in Mk 1.15." And Lightfoot adds in a footnote:

53. J., p.319

54. GMM., p.20

"The words are probably stronger than is often thought, implying 'The time of fulfilment has come, the kingdom of God has appeared'."⁵⁵ The Kingdom, then, is a present rather than a future reality, but Lightfoot's later comment on Mk 1.15 in The Gospel Message of St Mark shows him being less committed to Dodd's interpretation than here. A few pages further on Lightfoot writes:

And yet the gospel opened with the proclamation of the arrival (in some sense) of the kingdom of God. In these parables [in chapter 4] a supreme confidence is expressed in the certain triumph of good, and of the kingdom, which we may say is tacitly identified with the cause and work of Jesus, and of his followers.⁵⁶

In what sense the Kingdom is present is not explained, but Lightfoot's tacit identification of the Kingdom with the ministry of Jesus and his disciples looks like another case of Lightfoot's having borrowed an idea from Manson which has not been absorbed into Lightfoot's overall pattern of thought - and it is difficult to see how it could have been so absorbed with their very different forms of pre-understanding. Nevertheless Lightfoot did make this same identification in interpreting Mk 1.21-34:

As an alternative...we may suppose...that St Mark desires to give at the outset a picture of typical activities of Jesus Christ under the form of events loosely represented as occurring more or less within twenty-four hours; to borrow a phrase from the pastoral epistles, it is the day of the manifestation, or epiphany, of our Saviour Jesus Christ; and although God's day, that is, a sabbath, it is one of intense activity and unceasing strain for the Lord. The

55. H&I., p.106f.

56. Ibid., p.112

typical activities presented are the call to follow, the teaching with authority, at first at any rate in the synagogue, the healing of both mind and body, the supreme impression made in word and deed, the retirement for solitude and prayer owing to the ceaseless crowding; and the constant journeying. If this is correct, it is remarkable how strongly the influence of the historic life and activities of Jesus Christ has made itself felt upon the traditional aspect of the day of the Lord, and the coming of the kingdom of God.⁵⁷

If we go through this passage from the end back to the beginning we find that Lightfoot has taken 'the Kingdom of God' (prompted no doubt to the reference to it in Mk 1.15) and he has identified it with 'the day of the Lord'; this Old Testament idea here has two meanings: a) the sabbath, and b) the first day of Jesus's ministry (in Mark's Gospel). And on the first day of Jesus's ministry he preached, taught, healed and prayed. So we have the following equation: the Kingdom of God = the day of the Lord = the first day of Jesus's ministry = preaching, teaching etc. Whether such an interpretation can be justified is another matter, but it is not consistent with the meaning Lightfoot gives elsewhere to 'the Kingdom of God'.

On the whole Lightfoot suggests that the Kingdom of God is not a set of activities in which we participate, but a spiritual presence which we may share and this is given a decidedly platonic twist:

The kingdom of God which was to have been inaugurated

57. GMM., p.24f.

for Jews at Jerusalem in the lifetime of the first Christians proved to be the eternal presence of the spiritual unseen world (Lk 17.21) which is the true home of all men and accessible to each and all at any time - a blessed state which can in part be ours now but can only be won fully through the grave and the gate of death (1 Cor 15.50). And so it has been through all the ages. Men have again and again tried to limit the character and life of Christ by their own interpretation of it; in other words to imprison within fixed limits or a system that which is essentially spiritual and infinite.⁵⁸

And again commenting on Jn 18.37:

In 18.36 the Lord has declared that His Kingdom does not derive or originate from this world. In 18.37 He adds that the purpose of His birth and entrance into the world was to bear witness to the truth. Clearly, therefore, although even now men can be 'of the truth', it belongs to that which is 'above' [19.11], to a higher order of being than is capable of full realization in this world.⁵⁹

Lightfoot, then, has no fixed interpretation of 'the Kingdom of God' and he moves between a spiritual, platonic meaning and a hesitant realized eschatological interpretation which associates the Kingdom sometimes with Jesus's ministry and sometimes with his death. Ultimately the spiritual interpretation would be more consistent with the concepts which make up his pre-understanding.

58. New Testament Theology, 1 'The Origins of Christianity', p.3f., unpublished and marked in pencil 'Lectures about 1919-28'.

59. J., p.324

c) Parousia

Παρουσία is an ambiguous word and its meaning depends on whether it refers to a past, present or future act. Its normal meaning is 'coming' and if this is used of Jesus Christ in the past it would refer to his incarnation. However, Arndt and Gingrich do not find any trace of this meaning in the New Testament.⁶⁰ When used of a present act, it should be translated 'presence'. And when used of the future, it refers to the future advent of the glorified Christ, and this is its normal meaning in the New Testament according to Arndt and Gingrich. This last contention, however, has been widely disputed and the best known case in this country in favour of always translating παρουσία as 'presence' has been put forward by J.A.T. Robinson.⁶¹ Whether one inclines towards 'coming' (in its future sense) or 'presence' as a correct translation depends in part on the textual evidence and in part on one's eschatological pre-understanding.

When discussing the resurrection narrative in Mark's Gospel, Lightfoot wrote:

If we are right in believing that in St Mark the central figure is tacitly identified with the Son

60. W.F.Arndt and F.W.Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Christian Literature, p.635. They refer to Ignatius's Letter to the Philadelphians 9.2, and The Preaching of Peter 4, p.15, 33.

61. J.A.T.Robinson, Jesus and His Coming (1957)

of man of Jewish expectation, it seems probable that the evangelist and his readers in the light of the resurrection would expect to see their Master made manifest as the Son of man and coming with great power and glory. In St Mark the cardinal features of the gospel are the ministry, death and resurrection, and the expected coming. It must therefore be regarded as possible that Mk 14.28 and 16.7 rightly interpreted point to an expectation on the part of certain sections of the early church that the death and resurrection were to be followed closely by the parousia or presence of the risen Christ as the Son of man, which would take place in Galilee. If so, the verses are to be understood as an invitation to the disciples to proceed thither in anticipation of an imminent event, which would be the consummation.⁶²

In this passage we can see how Lightfoot begins with a "coming with great power and glory" and finishes with a "presence". He goes on to explain (as is suggested in the last sentence of the passage) that, in Mark's narrative, the consummation, the final coming, is to be identified with the resurrection appearances which are pointed to in Mk 16.7 but which are not described. The details of Lightfoot's interpretation of the resurrection appearances are better dealt with elsewhere, but for the moment we can see how a possible future coming would be interpreted as a spiritual presence here and now in virtue of his appearance there and then. This is exactly what Lightfoot did in an excursus in the Bampton Lectures, for in discussing "the relationship between the crucifixion and the expected final consummation"⁶³ he finds the satisfactory solution in John's Gospel where "the disciples

62. R.H.Lightfoot, L&D., p.62f.

63. H&I., p.94

are bidden to find the parousia or expected presence of their Master in the coming of the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of truth, which is only made possible by his bodily departure."⁶⁴

Lightfoot is more explicit in his commentary on the Fourth Gospel:

His life, death, and resurrection...were the prelude to His real 'Presence'; for this, and not 'Coming' or 'Return', is the meaning of the word parousia used in the New Testament for what we now usually speak of as the Second Coming.⁶⁵

Again he writes:

In the fourth gospel, on the other hand, while the future still has its part to play (the expression 'the last day' - curiously enough, a term peculiar to this gospel in the New Testament - occurs in reference to what we call 'the end of the world' six times, although it is now a distant future, which is never brought into direct connexion with the Lord's parousia or presence), the Lord is presented at the beginning, middle and end of His ministry as unchanging and unchanged, and that which had been thought to belong to the future, and to be at present utterly beyond men's grasp, is shown to be already in their hands, if they can receive it and enter into it.⁶⁶

So, according to Lightfoot, there still remains something of a future eschatology in John's Gospel, but whatever it is that lies in the future it is not the parousia of Jesus Christ. In this Gospel the expected coming or

64. Ibid., p.96

65. J., p.46

66. Ibid., p.43

presence of Christ is the presence of the Spirit.⁶⁷ If we want to see how Lightfoot comments on a particular text we may turn to Jn 14.3 ("And when I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" - the verb is ἔρχομαι) where the 'coming' has been transformed into a 'reception'.

14.3 It is often thought that this is the one passage in John in which we hear of a final return of the Lord, a 'parousia' similar to that described in the other gospels. No doubt it is true that John speaks of 'the last day'; but this expression does not occur here; and it also seems unlikely that, if he desired the Lord's words here to be understood in this way, the reference, in the case of a belief held so strongly in the early Church, would be so brief. On the other hand, the Lord's 'coming again', as mentioned here, is perhaps unlikely to be the same as His 'coming' within a little while, which is promised in 14.18-9, as also in 16.16-22. The 'coming' in 14.18,19 and 16.16-22 is undoubtedly a coming of the Lord to His disciples while they are still active in the world, whereas the coming in 14.3 seems to refer to the final reception of the disciples by their Master in His Father's house. Hence His words here are perhaps best understood in the light of 17.24, which speaks of a vision, one day to be granted to the disciples (but not, it seems, while they live in the world), of the unveiled glory of the Lord, a glory granted to Him by the Father's love. Then indeed He will receive them to Himself....⁶⁸

67. Ibid., p.49

68. Ibid., p.275f.

d) The Last Day

Lightfoot's comments on ἡ ἔσχατη ἡμέρα are few but significant, for while he says that the future eschatology of the early Church has been consistently reduced in the Fourth Gospel, he admits that a little remains and that little is found in the evangelist's use of 'the last day'. So while Lightfoot reduces future eschatology as much as possible - as we have seen in the three previous examples - we have here the one expression where the reference to the future is maintained. Future eschatology does not lie easily with a platonic spirituality but no doubt Lightfoot felt constrained by the text to keep some element of a future consummation. It is after all very difficult to interpret "I will raise you up on the last day" as an expression of realized eschatology, though Bultmann did the next best thing by ascribing the saying to the redactor. We have already noticed one of Lightfoot's references to 'the last day' when he said: "the expression 'the last day' - curiously enough, a term peculiar to this gospel in the New Testament - occurs in reference to what we call 'the end of the world' six times, although it is now a distant future, which is never brought into direct connection with the Lord's parousia or presence."⁶⁹

Lightfoot's only lengthy exegesis of 'the last day' is to be found in his comment on Jn 6.39:

6.39. 'the last day'. This expression, in the N.T.

69. Ibid., p.43

found only in John, occurs on the Lord's lips four times in this chapter, at verses 39, 40, 44, 54 and at 12.48. It is also used by Martha at 11.24; and, in the narrative, in a different connexion, of 'the last day' of the feast of the tabernacles [7.37]. Just as at 1.3, at the prologue, the universe is said, in accordance with fundamental Hebrew beliefs, to have been created at a definite time in the past, so here it is regarded as subject to a definite limit in the future. The doctrine expressed here may be summed up in the words of 1 Jn 2.17, 'the world passeth away...but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever'.

The twofold teaching of this chapter (Jn 6) on the present and the future aspect of eternal life is exactly parallel to that of 5.24-29 (cf. also 11.23-26). He who, drawn by the Father, comes to the Lord and believes in Him, he who eats the flesh of the Son of man and drinks His blood, he abides in the Lord and the Lord abides in him; he has eternal life and the Lord will raise him up on the last day. A distinction between the two aspects of eternal life, however, may be noted. Whereas the final paragraphs of this chapter seem to show that in spite of the Lord's choice of disciples and His present gift of eternal life to the believer, that choice may be annulled and that gift may be forfeited (cf. 17.12), at the last day, we may assume, no such danger will remain.⁷⁰

This is the only passage in the whole of Lightfoot's published work where he refers to the possibility of a future resurrection of all Christian believers. This expression, 'the last day', proves to be the exception in Lightfoot's eschatological exegesis, for here there is no platonizing and no obvious reduction of Jesus's

70. Ibid., p.167f.

role in the future. In general, however, we can see that his approach to eschatological texts is broadly consistent with his eschatological pre-understanding as we described it in the previous chapter. Lightfoot does not, on the whole, like future eschatology and is not especially interested in manifestations of it. Where possible he interprets it in a present rather than in a future sense and where possible he gives a platonic interpretation - as with the Son of Man, the Kingdom of God and the Parousia. But he clearly was unable, because of the emphatic meaning of the text, to do this with the Last Day and here we find conventional future exegesis.

The Last Supper

Under this heading I would like to examine Lightfoot's solution to the problem of dating the last supper, that is deciding whether it was held on 14 Nisan as John says or whether it was a passover meal on 15 Nisan as Mark suggests. And I also want to show what sense Lightfoot gives to the injunction to eat Christ's flesh and to drink his blood in Jn 6. The answer to the first problem will highlight the exegete's preconception of 'history' and, in Lightfoot's case, 'eschatology'. The answer to the second problem will reflect the exegete's sacramental theology (or lack of it) which in turn will form part of a wider ecclesiology, and the extent to which it reflects an ecclesiology will depend upon the exegete's practical interest, or, in Lightfoot's case, his spirituality.

Both Mark (followed by Matthew and Luke) and John are specific about the date of Jesus's last meal in an upper room in a house in Jerusalem. Mark (14.12, 14, 16) says that Jesus celebrated the passover with his disciples, was arrested later in the night and was executed later on 15 Nisan, a few hours before the beginning of the sabbath. John (18.28, 39; 19.14) says that Jesus shared a meal with his disciples on 14 Nisan in the evening, was arrested and then executed later on that day while the passover lambs were being ritually slaughtered in the Temple, and a few hours later the passover and the sabbath were simultaneously celebrated, though not by Jesus's disciples, after Jesus had been laid in a stone tomb. Despite this specific dating on John's part we might be tempted to suppose that he might be wrong on this point because the fourth evangelist in general does not lay great stress on historical reliability. And this is the view taken by Lightfoot in the following general statement:

We have found that the synoptic writers are probably not uninfluenced by doctrinal beliefs and purposes in their treatment of the topographical traditions of the gospel story; and this is even more true in the case of St John. He has, it appears, accurate knowledge of Palestinian localities and of the Jewish feasts, but it seems probable that no evangelist more readily subordinates the traditions which had come to him about the ministry, including its topographical setting, to the religious purpose which prompted him to write his gospel.... In any case for the sake of his purpose he handles details of time and place with a considerable and fearless freedom.⁷¹

71. L&D., p.144

It is all the more surprizing, then, to find that Lightfoot prefers John's date for the last supper. Lightfoot's concept of history is such that he pays only a little attention to accurately fixing the date of the meal. What he does is to balance the New Testament texts on each side of the problem. And it must be said that his presentation of the textual evidence is tendentious, for he claims that John's non-passover date is supported by John, Paul and the synoptic tradition with the exception, on the other side of the balance, of five verses in Mark (14.12-16) and their equivalent in Matthew and Luke.⁷² But Lightfoot goes on to show what is probably his chief reason for preferring John's date. He wants to avoid identifying the last supper, and a fortiori the Church's eucharist, with the passover because the passover meal had a future, messianic dimension. Lightfoot admits that Mk 14.12-16 represents an alternative, primitive tradition, but it is a tradition which he thinks is not the best Christian, theological tradition and which he therefore would prefer to be historically inaccurate. The relevant passage is as follows:

If it be asked why St Mark, in defiance of historical probability and indeed of the rest of his own narrative, identifies in this section the last supper with the passover, the following suggestion may be made.

It was remarked above that, at the beginning of our era, the Jewish passover was regarded not only as commemorative of a past event, the deliverance from Egypt, but also as containing in itself the pledge of a future great deliverance. St Paul's

72. H&I., p.140

words in 1 Cor 11.26 show that the church's Eucharist, which was the Christian equivalent of the Jewish passover, had a similar double reference from very early times. On the one hand, it commemorated the passion of the Lord, a past event; on the other, it looked forward to and was probably considered to be a pledge and earnest of his future coming.

Doubtless this second aspect, which has always been represented in the Eucharist, was very strongly emphasized in the first two generations of the church's life, and it is possible that St Mark, when setting forth the historical events connected with the last supper and the passion, desired to emphasize the future deliverance to be effected by the latter, of which the Christian Eucharist was the permanent reminder, and that he does this by identifying, in Mk 14.12-16, the last supper with the paschal meal.⁷³

It must be noted that Lightfoot does not want to remove the future dimension of the eucharist entirely, but he does want to reduce it considerably and he has done this by interpreting Mk 14.12-16 as a redactional device which has been introduced (though not fabricated) by the evangelist to incorporate a brief reference to the future promise of the passover-eucharist.

There is no detailed account of the last supper in the Fourth Gospel and Jn 6 has traditionally been interpreted as representing John's eucharistic teaching, though many exegetes have not interpreted this chapter in this way. Lightfoot, however, does connect Jn 6 with the eucharist and with Jesus's death on the cross.

Further, the two events narrated in the earlier gospels, the Lord's feeding of the multitude and

73. Ibid., p.140f.

His last meal with His disciples, were regarded in the Church from an early date as foretastes of the anticipated banquet in the kingdom of God. It is therefore noteworthy that in this chapter which, as we have seen, includes a narrative [6.1-14] of the feeding of the multitude and an almost direct reference [6.51-59] to the Eucharist, the Church's continued memorial of the last supper, St John emphasizes that the Lord is the Giver of the food to each, at the cost of His own life and death.⁷⁴

In the traditional catholic interpretation, the verses which Lightfoot takes to refer to the eucharist, 6.51-9, the verses which speak of the necessity of eating and drinking Christ's body and blood, have been interpreted with a strong sense of literalism. I say 'with a strong sense of literalism' because an interpretation which is absolutely literal would involve the eating of raw meat; in the catholic interpretation the words of necessity have been interpreted spiritually, but nevertheless the bread and wine of the eucharistic meal are identified in some real sense with the body and blood of Christ. Lightfoot avoids any such clear identification. When we eat the body and drink the blood of Christ (which, it is suggested, is a metaphor for sharing Jesus's life and work), says Lightfoot, we consume or absorb the Spirit:

The Son of man is to return, by the ascent of the cross, to the Father. At present the Spirit has descended and abides on Him alone; but after His return to the Father those who, remaining in the world and eating His flesh and drinking His blood, share in His life and death, will, as a result of His completed work, also be partakers of the Spirit, and so will have life.

74. J., p.156

If, after the emphasis laid in 6.53-8 on the necessity of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man, it is thought strange that at 6.63 we read that 'the flesh profiteth nothing', it is to be remembered (1) that in 3.6 the gulf between flesh and spirit was said to be, in itself and apart from the 'descent' of the Son of man, absolute and unbridgeable; and (2) that the flesh spoken of in 6.53-8 is the flesh of the Son of man, the incarnate Word, on whom, and on whom alone during His ministry, the Spirit abode in full measure.⁷⁵

While Lightfoot has retained the language of consuming flesh and blood, the purpose of eating the eucharistic bread and wine no longer seems to be to encounter the physicality of Jesus Christ, but to encounter and absorb the Spirit. This becomes clearer when we look at Lightfoot's christology. He tells us that "in Hebrew parlance the expression 'flesh and blood' is normally used for man, for physical, visible humanity, considered...apart from God, apart from the divine, regarded as immaterial and unseen."⁷⁶ This is not, however, the case with Jesus.

But in the case of the Lord, the Son of man, no such separation is conceivable, since He is the Word become flesh. And we now learn that a condition of eternal life, and of being raised up on the last day by the Lord, is not only belief on Him, but a partaking of His flesh and blood.⁷⁷

So the flesh and blood made available at the eucharist are not ordinary flesh and blood, they are spiritualized

75. Ibid., p.163

76. Ibid., p.162

77. Ibid.

and divinized flesh and blood. The purpose of eating it is to absorb the Spirit and transform our material flesh and blood. This eucharistic theology is almost identical with that of Apollinarius of Laodicea, who was condemned at the Council of Constantinople in 381.⁷⁸ In Lightfoot's interpretation we do not eat flesh, but Spirit, or at least spiritualized flesh.

In a passage from a lecture given in 1940 Lightfoot makes flesh the equivalent, not this time of spirit, but of life:

According to this passage (Jn 6.49-51), Jesus is the living bread, by which a man is enabled to live for ever; and the bread is his flesh - may we say his life - which he will give for the life of the world.⁷⁹

Lightfoot moves in a similar, though somewhat different, direction in interpreting Mk 14.22, 24, the words of institution at the last supper:

The loaf is blessed, thanksgiving is offered over the wine; both actions probably customary at a solemn feast. But the words used carry a new and great significance, implying that a new covenant and sacrifice

78. See J.N.D.Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, p.294f.

79. Lecture to the Origen Society, Oxford, 1 May 1940. For a similar view see W.Temple, Readings in the Fourth Gospel, pp.92-7, from which we extract the sentences:

To 'eat the flesh' and to 'drink the blood' of the Son of Man are not the same. The former is to receive the power of self-giving and self-sacrifice to the uttermost. The latter is to receive, in and through that self-giving and self-sacrifice, the life that is triumphant over death and united to God.(p.92)

is taking the place of the Passover atoning sacrifice in Egypt, when God established his covenant with Israel. Thus, as regards the loaf, a new community, drawing its life from the Lord, is to take the place of the old Israel. As regards the wine, by the Lord's self-sacrifice a new relationship with God is now to become possible for those who share in his sacrifice and form the other party to the covenant.⁸⁰

Here bread = body of Christ = new community or Church (following Paul's metaphor); it follows that 'this is my body' means in effect 'this is my Church'. We can see, then, how Lightfoot consistently shied away from the traditional catholic interpretation of the eucharistic texts (though that need not be taken to mean that the traditional interpretation is correct and Lightfoot wrong). In different passages 'flesh' is taken to mean 'spirit', 'life' and 'a new community', but it is never taken to mean 'flesh' even though John's original language has been retained. This exegesis undoubtedly reflects Lightfoot's non-materialist spirituality and it would also correspond to his low-church Anglican ecclesiology which did not have much of a place for sacramental theology.⁸¹

The Lamb of God

R.H.Lightfoot took issue with C.H.Dodd over the interpretation of 'the Lamb of God' in Jn 1.29 & 36.

80. Lectures on Mark, unpublished, pages unnumbered.

81. For a more common Anglican interpretation see E.C.Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, pp.304-7.

There are four possible interpretations. The Lamb of God could be:

(i) the lamb of the sin-offering; (ii) the paschal lamb; (iii) the $\alpha\mu\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$ of Is 53, i.e. the suffering servant; (iv) the young ram which is $\alpha\rho\chi\omega\nu$ και $\eta\gamma\acute{o}\upsilon\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$ τῶν προβάτων i.e. the Messiah as 'King of Israel'.⁸²

Dodd favours the fourth interpretation,⁸³ while Lightfoot prefers the second.⁸⁴ (The third possible interpretation was suggested by Burney⁸⁵ and is looked on sympathetically by C.K.Barrett.⁸⁶) Dodd's evidence for a messianic interpretation is as follows. He thinks that the Jewish apocalypses form the background both for John's Gospel and the Revelation of John and that $\alpha\mu\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$ in the Gospel, and $\alpha\rho\nu\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu$ in Revelation refer to the bell-wether of the flock. This animal was a horned ram, a young adult animal that led the flock and fought on its behalf. There is no suggestion here of an innocent infant sheep. This $\alpha\mu\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$ in Jn 1.29 is said to remove sin and this was no function of the paschal lamb. The context (Jn 1.41) shows that the evangelist identified the lamb with the Messiah. Dodd thinks 'the Lamb of God' is a messianic title, the equivalent of 'the King of Israel', so that 'God's lamb who removes the sin of the world' means 'God's Messiah who makes an end of sin'.

82. C.H.Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, p.233

83. Ibid., pp.236-8

84. R.H.Lightfoot, J., p.96f., p.327., pp.349-356 (esp. p.356).

85. C.F.Burney, The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel, pp.104-

86. C.K.Barrett, The Gospel according to St John, p.146f.

Lightfoot supposes that 'the Lamb of God' points to Jesus as the true passover sacrifice, the replacement and transformation of the animal used in the Jewish ceremony. Lightfoot thinks that the evangelist is drawing on the Old Testament for the sacrificial language used here rather than on non-canonical apocalyptic sources for the background of 'the Lamb'. The identification of Christ as the paschal victim is very early as we can see from 1 Cor 5.7. And Lightfoot considers that the Jewish passover is used to interpret Jesus's death throughout the Gospel, and that there is great stress in this Gospel on Jesus's self-oblation. One further problem is how Jn 19.36 should be interpreted. It is usually cited as evidence to support each particular argument, but its meaning is unclear and how it is interpreted really depends on the final conclusion that the exegete is drawn towards. 'Not a bone of his shall be broken' (συντριβήσεται) could point to Ex 12.46 (συντρίψετε) and Num 9.12 (συντρίψουσιν) which describe the paschal lamb. Or it might be a free citation of Ps 33(34).21 where the Greek verb is the same (ἐν ἔσ αὐτῶν οὐ συντριβήσεται). But this psalm is about the righteous man, and there is no hint of the passover lamb.

How one balances the evidence, however, is not my chief concern here. I want only to note the nature of the theological positions to which Dodd and Lightfoot have committed themselves in their interpretations. This is another way of saying that I want to note what

forms of pre-understanding they each bring to the text, for this is likely to have influenced the way in which they have dealt with the relevant evidence. Dodd's interpretation is messianic, apocalyptic (though he admits that the evangelist John has no sympathy with apocalyptic eschatology), with an element of social commitment in so far as the ram fights on behalf of his flock to remove sin. It must be admitted, however, that Dodd's interpretation is rather surprizing in view of his early advocacy of realized eschatology. Lightfoot's interpretation, on the other hand, is religious in the sense that it is devotional; and he has allied himself to symbolism and typology - Jesus is the symbol or type of the passover sacrifice. Jesus as the paschal lamb is a symbol which has had considerable influence over the centuries on Christian iconography, which can be seen at its best in the Adoration of the Lamb by the van Eyck brothers in St Bavon's Cathedral, Ghent. And it is this devotional, symbolic tradition with which Lightfoot has aligned himself. Lightfoot's interpretation can also be called 'religious' because of the way in which he refutes Dodd, though it should be noted that Lightfoot uses the word 'religious' in an individual way where it becomes the equivalent of 'devotional'.

If, then, Professor Dodd's view is correct, Christian thought has poured into these passages a wealth of religious interpretation and devotion, which the evangelist at any rate did not intend them to bear. The matter is one of great complexity; but after considering to the best of my ability the difficulties which can be urged against the paschal interpretations of these passages, I still think that the 'reduced'

interpretation which Dr Dodd offers is, if not improbable, at least unproven.⁸⁷

Lightfoot's interpretation is also platonic because it suggests that the Jewish passover was a shadow of the true paschal sacrifice. In this passage we can also see further evidence of Lightfoot's attitude to messianism when he refers to Dodd's "reduced interpretation".

The Trial of Jesus

Lightfoot's commentary on the trial of Jesus in John's Gospel is a kind of political allegory. As with 'the Lamb of God', Lightfoot opts for a symbolic interpretation with very strong devotional overtones. In this case Jesus represents the divine and, one might say, the Church; the Jews represent the world (in the Johannine sense); and Pilate represents the State. The trial of Jesus, then, shows us how Lightfoot could interpret a text in the light of his own political views. (It might also be added that Lightfoot's use of symbols becomes rather undisciplined in the pages which follow, where the seamless robe is taken to represent the Church, John and Jesus's mother by the cross represent the Church, the unbroken fishing net represents the Church, Mary is contrasted with Eve, and the Garden of Gethsemane is contrasted with the Garden of Eden. But, while this is typical of Lightfoot's approach to the text of the Fourth Gospel, it does not directly affect our analysis of

87. R.H.Lightfoot, J., p.356

Lightfoot's account of Jesus's trial.) There are three fundamental options available: the Manichaean in which the State and politics are to be condemned as evil by the Church; politics and the Church are inter-related; politics and the Church are not necessarily opposed but they are mutually independent and the Church must view politics with suspicion. We can see that Lightfoot held the third position by the way in which he interprets John's account of the trial of Jesus.

Jesus and Pilate are not necessarily in conflict, but Lightfoot suggests that Pilate, in view of his position, is inexorably led to condemn and execute Jesus:

It is sometimes thought that the purpose of the account in John, which, like that in Luke, strongly emphasizes Pilate's conviction of the Lord's innocence, is to prove that the Roman empire had nothing to fear from the activity and preaching of the Church. But although the record in John does make clear the nature of the Lord's authority and shows that it need not come into conflict with the civil authority, yet the narrative also describes a prolonged struggle between the secular authority, represented by Pilate, and the Jews, who in this case represent 'the world', and shows how and why the secular authority is in the end borne down by and yields to the pressure of the world. St John's story thus reveals how, by the cross, the whole world, including the State, is brought under the judgement of God.⁸⁸

Lightfoot portrays Pilate trapped between Jesus who represents the truth and the demands of the Jews who want to destroy Jesus. Pilate must decide between them and

88. Ibid., p.309

finally, of course, he is led to condemn Jesus. While the Jews wanted to execute Jesus for strictly religious reasons, Lightfoot supposes that they brought him before Pilate on a trumped up political charge:

Since there is no decisive evidence, apart from this passage [18.31], that the Jews could not, for religious offences, pronounce and execute the death sentence, it seems probable that, as 18.33 suggests, they seek here to achieve the Lord's death by means of a political charge, on the ground of His claiming a (revolutionary) kingship.⁸⁹

It is only at 19.7 that the Jews show that they have brought Jesus before Pilate for religious reasons, and Lightfoot implies that Jesus was not in fact guilty of any political offence against Rome. Under questioning "The Lord now implies that a kingship does belong to Him, but makes it clear that it has no secular or political origin or quality.... If, then, Pilate will listen to the Lord's voice, he will recognize, both as a man and as procurator, in what sense the Prisoner is a king, and will acknowledge His kingship without loss, to the State, of its authority."⁹⁰ Jesus's kingship "need not come into political conflict with the State"⁹¹ but when conflict is forced upon them it is the State which must yield:

When Pilate, seeking to persuade the Prisoner to answer, points out that His fate rests entirely in his hands, the Lord, disregarding the matter of His own condemnation or release, reminds Pilate that the

89. Ibid., p.309f.

90. Ibid., p.311

91. Ibid.

authority of the State is derived not from 'the world', but 'from above'; it is divinely given.⁹²

This, of course, is a platonic view of secular authority and, while this platonism is undoubtedly present in John's Gospel at this point, it is an image which Lightfoot finds very attractive. Lightfoot's concept of the Church is not dissimilar to Luther's view of the two kingdoms in which the State has a divinely derived authority to execute judgment and impose law and order on the lawless (i.e. non-Christians and wayward Christians), while the Church keeps out of secular matters. This is exemplified in a comment by Lightfoot, in a sermon, on Paul's letter to Philemon:

St Paul regards even slavery as a thing indifferent and apparently advises the slave not to seize the opportunity of gaining his freedom.⁹³

What is required is "filial communion with our heavenly Father". For most exegetes Paul's attitude to slavery presents a very considerable problem, but this does not seem to be the case for Lightfoot as he cites Paul's letter to Philemon in direct support of Jn 18.36 ('My kingship is not of this world') on which he was preaching. It is impossible to believe that Lightfoot would not have in fact condemned slavery but at least he could use Paul's text to support the idea of the mutual independence of the Church and the State.

92. Ibid., p.313

93. Sermon on Jn 18.36, 'My Kingdom is not of this World', first given in Haslemere Parish Church, 12 December, 1909.

The Resurrection Appearances: Jn 20.1-29

We have already suggested that Lightfoot was not consistent in the meaning he ascribed to the resurrection in his occasional references to it. This is not quite true, however, of his more specific exegesis. It is true that he ascribed different purposes to each evangelist in their respective resurrection narratives,⁹⁴ but we may examine Lightfoot's interpretation of the resurrection appearances as they occur in the Fourth Gospel, to the exclusion of the other resurrection narratives, because John was "the last and greatest evangelist".⁹⁵ Evidently Lightfoot thought that John's account of the resurrection appearances was the most satisfactory.

Lightfoot was quite explicit that Jesus's resurrection and his subsequent appearance to his disciples were real historical and physical events:

But even if the reader is fortunate enough to be already fully assured of the spiritual truth of the secret thus taught by St John, the latter will not allow him to forget that the Christian religion is one of divine incarnation, and that its truth must be found to prevail in the realm of flesh and blood, subject as these are to space and time, as well as in the realm of spirit. For this reason the return of the Lord in the flesh to His disciples, and the fulfilment of His promises to them, must find their place in St John's record, as matters of history which actually took place. Hence the two points on which St John lays emphasis in his resurrection narratives are, first, the resumption

94. See L&D., pp.49-101

95. Ibid., p.89

by the Lord of personal relations and intercourse with those who had followed Him during the ministry and, secondly, the identity of the Lord's risen body with the body which suffered and was laid in the tomb.⁹⁶

The factuality and historicity of Jesus's resurrection is emphasized in all the Gospels with the exception only of Mark where only the empty tomb is described. In Luke's Gospel "the purpose of the appearances which are now to be described, in Lk 24.13-31 and 33-51, is above all to confirm belief in the identity of the risen and therefore victorious Messiah with the crucified and suffering Jesus."⁹⁷ In John's Gospel, however, this matter of factual identification is not enough.

On the other hand, the purpose of the "resurrection appearances" in St John is by no means simply to assure the disciples that their Lord is risen. Perhaps we may say that in this gospel no appearance of the risen Lord is altogether an end in itself.⁹⁸

Something more is required in addition to the appearance of the risen Jesus. This something more is the inauguration of the spiritual life in which "intercourse with Him is in future not to depend on physical proximity, sight, or sound."⁹⁹ The resurrection of Jesus does not, for Lightfoot, have any apocalyptic significance by which, for example, the future general resurrection is guaranteed. Lightfoot suggests, on the other hand, that what is guaranteed in the future by the resurrection of Jesus

96. J., p.330

97. L&D., p.87

98. Ibid., p.100

99. J., p.331

is the spiritual life of all Christians:

On the other hand the "seeing" of the Lord mentioned in Jn 16.16-22 should by no means be regarded as being satisfied by such brief resurrection-appearances as are narrated in Jn 20, 21 or Lk 24 or 1 Cor 15.5-8. The "sight" of their Lord promised to the disciples in St John includes their knowledge of communion with him as the bread of life, the light, the truth, the true vine, and the resurrection.¹⁰⁰

Whereas in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke the ascension of Jesus comes after the resurrection appearances, in John's Gospel, Lightfoot insists, the ascension to the Father follows the resurrection but precedes the resurrection appearances to the disciples:

According to St John, at the first reunion of the Lord with his disciples on that "first day of the week", as soon as they have been assured that they see him, that it is their Master, he fulfils to them the promise which he made at the last supper with regard to his return; they are commissioned, and they receive the Holy Spirit; and this is his own presence, the presence of the Son of man, under another and more abiding form. For it is probable that the ascension is regarded as having taken place before this meeting. In St John the ascension of the Lord to the Father is secret and is treated with very great reserve; but we notice that the message sent to the disciples, before they see their Master, is that he is now ascending; presumably therefore at the time when he himself sees and speaks with them, that of which he spoke in the message has now taken place; otherwise why had the message been sent, if he could have told them its content later the same day? We may observe also that on the morning of the day Mary Magdalene was bidden not to touch her

100. L&D., p.74

Master, because he had not yet ascended to the Father; but at the second meeting with the disciples a week later, St Thomas is expressly invited to do that which had been refused to Mary Magdalene; presumably, therefore, the reason given - that the ascension to the Father had not yet occurred - had in the meantime, that is at any rate before the second meeting, ceased to be a difficulty. But on all grounds it is probable that the return to the Father is regarded as taking place between the appearance to Mary Magdalene and the giving of the Holy Spirit; and St John would thus be following the earlier tradition, in so far as the giving of the Holy Spirit takes place after the ascension.¹⁰¹

We may well wonder why Lightfoot makes so much of placing the ascension to the Father before Jesus's appearance to the disciples. The answer surely, in view of Lightfoot's general attitude to future eschatology, is that, in his interpretation of Jn 20, Jesus's return, his parousia (as presence), and the consummation are all now identifiable with the post-resurrection appearances. Once this identification has been made there is no place left for a future eschatology for which we are still waiting. There is, as Lightfoot admits, still something which awaits us in the future but - on the basis of Lightfoot's interpretation of Jn 20 - this can only be our appearance before the Father after our death.

There are, then, two consequences of Lightfoot's exegesis of the resurrection appearances in Jn 20:

i) future eschatology is collapsed into the spiritual presence of Jesus - and Lightfoot effects the same thing

101. Ibid., p.98f.; see also J., p.331

in his interpretation of Mk 16.1-8 as we shall see in the following section; and ii) the purpose of Jesus's post-resurrection appearance is to impart the Holy Spirit to the disciples. That it is the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus which makes our spiritual lives effective and actual can be seen in an extract from an Easter Day sermon on Jn 12.24 given by Lightfoot. He argues that there is evidence enough for the fact of Jesus's having been raised, but he wonders why some continue to doubt it:

Why is there this difference of opinion? Is it not mainly because some think of the resurrection as an isolated and unparalleled portent, while to others it is the explanation of a living fact, which is confirmed by experience and observation. The Christian believes that Jesus Christ rose largely because he sees and feels that Jesus Christ is risen.... If anyone wishes to know the truth about the resurrection, let him try to find out by his own experience what the death unto sin and the new birth unto righteousness mean: let him spiritually die and rise in Christ. Then he will gradually come to know the reality of which the physical birth, death and resurrection of our Lord are the sacraments.¹⁰²

For Manson the reality of Jesus's resurrection was authenticated by the continuation after two thousand years of the Church's ministry (see p.261 above), but for Lightfoot it is the power of the spiritual life.

102. Sermon on Jn 12.24, Easter Day, year and location not stated.

The Ending of Mark: Mk 16.1-8

The end of Mark's Gospel is notoriously abrupt and there seem to be three possible solutions to the problem:

1. The author had intended to proceed farther, but was prevented from doing so, whether by death or for some other reason.
2. The author did proceed farther, but at a very early date all that he wrote after 16.8 was lost.
3. The author ended his work, intentionally, at 16.8.¹⁰³

Lightfoot, unlike Manson¹⁰⁴ and Dodd,¹⁰⁵ favoured the third explanation and he did so for two sets of reasons,

i) philological and ii) theological. His philological reasons for accepting the ending of v.8 were designed to meet three objections and can be summarized very briefly. In the first place it is often argued that a sentence cannot end with $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho$. Lightfoot produced abundant evidence to show that a Greek sentence can and often does end with $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho$.¹⁰⁶ In the second place it is often suggested that $\acute{\epsilon}\phi\omicron\beta\omicron\upsilon\acute{\nu}\tau\omicron$ is unlikely to have been used absolutely but would need to be completed with an accusative, or an infinitive, or $\mu\acute{\eta}$ with a clause. Lightfoot again showed that $\acute{\epsilon}\phi\omicron\beta\omicron\upsilon\acute{\nu}\tau\omicron$ can be used absolutely and, moreover, that Mark himself uses it absolutely.¹⁰⁷ The third objection is a psychological

103. GMM., p.80

104. T.W.Manson, SerM., pp.93-9

105. C.H.Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, p.440 n.

106. R.H.Lightfoot, L&D., pp.10-16; see also GMM., p.85f.

107. L&D., pp.16-18; see also GMM., p.86f.

rather than a philological one, for it is often asked why the women were silent. They were silent because they were afraid. But of what were they afraid that would make them silent? In other words something further is expected after v.8 to explain why the women were silent. Lightfoot shows that silence is the appropriate reaction to a manifestation of divine power throughout the Old and New Testaments and especially in Mark's Gospel.¹⁰⁸ But the textual evidence that Lightfoot produces is not his major reason for accepting the women's silence as a suitable end for the Gospel.

Lightfoot's philological evidence would have been enough for accepting 16.8 as a possible ending for Mark's Gospel, but he also had a very individual theological reason for finding 16.8 a satisfactory ending. On the one hand he admitted that an exegete who adopted a primarily historical approach to the Gospel would find the absence of any description of the resurrection appearances intolerable. Lightfoot's interpretation of the resurrection appearances, on the other hand, demands that they are not described. Furthermore, Lightfoot was not primarily interested in philological arguments, for "the problem...also deserves study on the religious side."¹⁰⁹

R.H.Lightfoot's justification for accepting 16.8

108. L&D., pp.29-35; see also GMM., pp.87-92

109. GMM., p.80

as the end of Mark was developed from an idea of Ernst Lohmeyer's whereby 16.8 "is only tolerable, as a satisfactory conclusion to the gospel, if 16.7 points forward to an event in Galilee which is much more than an 'appearance' of the risen Christ."¹¹⁰ The appearance pointed to by 16.7 is "much more" because it is identified with the parousia:

Aber auch bei Johannes (nicht bei Paulus, der andere Ausdrücke verwendet) ist: "Ihr werdet Ihn sehen", der feste Ausdruck für die Parusie des Herrn; und er entstammt der apokalyptischen Prophetie des Menschensohnes, die auch Jesus verwendet: Ihr werdet sehen den Menschensohn (14.62 vgl. 13.26, auch 9.1). Dann kündigt dieses Wort keine Erscheinungen des Auferstandenen an, zum mindesten nicht solche, die die Tatsache der Auferstehung bezeugen, sondern es spricht von der Parusie, die alles bisherige eschatologische Geschehen vollendet.¹¹¹

"You will see him", maintains Lightfoot, would have brought to the Jewish mind the suggestion of the consummation and the final judgment by the Son of Man.¹¹²

Lightfoot makes a clear distinction between the resurrection as that which took place inside the tomb, the evidence for which is to be found in the discovery of the empty tomb and the angel's message,¹¹³ and

110. L&D., p.6 n.1

111. E.Lohmeyer, Das Evangelium des Markus, p.356

112. R.H.Lightfoot, L&D., p.36

113. Ibid., p.37 n.1; see also E.Lohmeyer, op. cit., p.359f., a translation of which is to be found in L&D., pp.45-8.

Jesus's appearances after the resurrection which are independent of it. In contrast to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark makes the resurrection an introduction to the consummation. It is because the angel's message tells the disciples to expect the parousia, judgment and the consummation immediately in Galilee that the women are afraid and silent:

The women who were the first to receive evidence of the reversal of their Master's death by his resurrection are represented as having been utterly overcome by the further news of the imminent completion of the action of salvation, with the appearance of their Master to his followers in Galilee, and we read that they went out and fled from the tomb, in the grip of trembling and amazement, and that they remained silent, owing to their fear.¹¹⁴

Elsewhere Lightfoot points out that "to the fact of the resurrection St Mark has given full expression in 16.1-8 - a point which, as we have seen, is sometimes overlooked"¹¹⁵ despite the fact that there are no resurrection appearances in Mk 16.1-8. This is because Lightfoot makes the empty tomb the evidence for the resurrection, and he makes the post-resurrection appearances (which are not described) the evidence for the parousia. What we have in Mk 16.1-8, then, is an account of the resurrection and a message predicting the immediate parousia in Galilee, and it is that latter event which is not described by Mark. Lightfoot states his position as follows:

We have to ask ourselves, from a consideration of

114. Ibid., p.38

115. GMM., p.93

St Mark's gospel as a whole, what expectation with regard to their Master and his future state or office is likely, so far as we can judge, to have been in the minds of the writer and the readers of this book; or, to put the question in a slightly different way, what climax with regard to their Master would be most clearly in accord with the previous teaching of this gospel. And here the answer is not doubtful. There is no suggestion in St Mark that the disciples expected to enjoy after the crucifixion and resurrection a longer or shorter period of occasional communing or intercourse with their Master before his last complete withdrawal and then to await the final consummation. He of whom suffering, death and resurrection are predicated in the three instructions and elsewhere in the gospel is the Son of man. If we are right in believing that in St Mark the central figure is tacitly identified with the Son of man of Jewish expectation, it seems probable that the evangelist and his readers in the light of the resurrection would expect to see their Master made manifest as the Son of man and coming with great power and glory. In St Mark the cardinal features of the gospel are the ministry, the death and resurrection, and the expected coming. It must therefore be regarded as possible that Mk 14.28 and 16.7 rightly interpreted point to an expectation on the part of certain sections of the early church that the death and resurrection were to be followed closely by the parousia or presence of the risen Christ as the Son of man, which would take place in Galilee. If so, the verses are to be understood as an invitation to the disciples to proceed thither in anticipation of an imminent event, which would be the consummation....

In that case the divine promise at the tomb is that the parousia will take place in Galilee, the risen Jesus being identified with the Son of man of 13.26. Galilee, not Jerusalem, is thus to be the centre of interest and expectation for disciples; and the

consummation, not a temporary appearance, is the purpose of the "preventing" thither.¹¹⁶

Lightfoot then goes on to summarize the total structure of Mark's Gospel with particular reference to the last chapter:

On this view, the plan of St Mark's gospel, the book of the divine message and action of salvation, will be this: first, the heralding by St John the Baptist of the imminent day of the Lord with the coming of the mightier than he; then the ministry in and round about Galilee; then the journey and the last days in Jerusalem, ending with the crucifixion, this being followed by the resurrection in the same place; all this to be consummated by the expected coming of the risen Christ as the Son of man in Galilee, the whole record being vitally interconnected as the narrative of a decisive final divine event, wherein and whereby the kingdom of God has come near.

Accordingly, if this interpretation is possible, it should not be too readily assumed that St Mark is a witness to "appearances" of the risen Lord in Galilee. It may be, to judge from the plan and statements of his book, especially if, as is possible, it ends and was meant to end at 16.8, that St Mark should be regarded as a witness to an expectation of one appearance or manifestation of the crucified and risen Lord in Galilee; and that this appearance or manifestation was to be the consummation itself.¹¹⁷

In the light of this interpretation Lightfoot can say:

For according to the view here taken, St Mark's gospel in the full meaning of this word could not be complete. If it may be said to begin at 1.1, it certainly does not end at 16.8, except as a literary document; and

116. L&D., pp.62-4

117. Ibid., p.65

its character as a literary document should probably be regarded as altogether subordinate to its character as an expression of the gospel.¹¹⁸

This identification of the post-resurrection appearances with the final coming of the Son of Man, which Lightfoot developed from a suggestion by Lohmeyer, was not repeated in the chapter 'St Mark's Gospel - Complete or Incomplete?' in The Gospel Message of St Mark. Whether Lightfoot had by this time abandoned the idea is not clear, but instead he defends Mk 16.8 as the original ending by means of another 'religious' argument. He here thinks it appropriate that Mark should end on the note of the fear of God as he thinks it opportune that we should re-appropriate the awe of God into our spiritual lives, just as a previous generation had done.¹¹⁹

We must note that by identifying the post-resurrection appearances with the parousia in Mark, Lightfoot has achieved the same result as his interpretation of the appearances in Jn 20. He has collapsed future eschatology into a past event, the appearances. So, the parousia is not something we are still waiting for, it is something which happened in the past and which is continued into the present by the spiritual and sacramental presence of Christ. Except that Lightfoot never makes it clear whether Mark himself (writing about 70 A.D.) thought that the appearances and parousia had in fact happened

118. Ibid., p.44

119. GMM., p.97; see also L&D., p.45

in Galilee and were to be identified. In other words, was Mark still waiting for the parousia in 70 A.D.? and must we still wait for it in 1974 A.D.? For Lightfoot, however, it is clear that Christ has appeared, the parousia has occurred and is not still to be looked for in the future. But our main concern here is to observe the theological reasons which Lightfoot put forward for solving a textual problem, the problem of where Mark's Gospel ends. And it will be noticed that these theological arguments are wholly in accord with Lightfoot's historical and eschatological pre-understanding.

S U M M A R Y A N D C O N C L U S I O N S

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

In the introduction we described the fundamental problem with which the thesis was to be concerned: why do exegetes interpret the New Testament as they do? The task of the thesis was to lay a theoretical foundation to account for fundamental differences in interpretation among New Testament exegetes. We suggested that language is not a system of tools which refers to objects in the world and which allows a simple objective understanding of the world (and of texts). Language structures and reveals our world. In interpreting a text we bring a personal and social prior understanding to bear on the text, and the text must be integrated into that world of understanding. The project of the thesis was to examine the role of pre-understanding in New Testament exegesis, to give that pre-understanding specific content, and to show the relationship between pre-understanding and exegesis in the work of T.W.Manson and R.H.Lightfoot as a means of substantiating the theoretical part of the thesis.

In the first chapter we described and criticized a number of forms of the hermeneutical circle as it has appeared in philosophical hermeneutics. The attempt was to show that understanding necessarily presupposes pre-understanding. We first looked at the Formal Hermeneutics of Schleiermacher and Dilthey in which the hermeneutical circle is on the one hand the inter-relation of parts

and whole in the text, and on the other hand the understanding of author and reader as a 'communion of souls'. We also saw how, on this model, the circle dissolves into perfect understanding. This is not the case with Heidegger's *Existential Hermeneutics* in which understanding always remains conditioned by pre-understanding. But here the hermeneutical circle is constituted by the human (Dasein) understanding of Being (Sein); the circle consists of a movement between our understanding of ourselves and of reality. We also saw how Bultmann interprets religious texts with the object of deepening self-understanding so that the individual can take decisions for the future. In the *Reflective Hermeneutics* of Paul Ricoeur there is a long reflective movement between belief in the content of the text and subsequent understanding of the text. We modified this model so that an initial provisional faith in the content of the text can lead to understanding, and so to a firmer belief, and deeper understanding, and so on. On this model the circular movement does not spiral away into perfect understanding because the historical distance between the interpreter and the author of the text is reflected in this model in the refusal to allow the dissolution of the circular movement. While this provisional belief is necessary for a sympathetic reading of the text, it is a personal subject who trusts the text and the text has to be integrated into that subject's prior understanding of reality. The concepts which make up our understanding of the world are multifarious. The concepts which constitute our pre-understanding of New Testament texts include 'history', 'revelation', 'miracle',

'resurrection' and 'eschatology'. In the first excursus we saw some of the presuppositions which have been at work in historiography, and in the second excursus we saw how Tillich, Bultmann and Cullmann have discussed the idea of 'pre-understanding'.

In the second chapter we attempted to lay a dogmatic theological basis for New Testament pre-understanding. By examining the concepts of 'history', 'revelation' etc. in six German dogmatic theologians of the twentieth century we got some idea of the wide range of possible understandings of these concepts. We saw how Harnack proposed a positivistic 'scientific' theology at the turn of the century, and how Karl Barth retreated into a theology of an authoritative revelation after the first world war. We saw how Bultmann preserved the idea of an authoritative revelation but in the context of an existential quest for self-understanding, and how Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling continued this movement while moving back towards the historical Jesus as a legitimation of the Church's kerygma. Heinrich Ott, by contrast, has proposed an extreme concept of history which precludes the possibility of research into the past. And finally we saw how Wolfhart Pannenberg has reacted against all Lutheran theology since Barth and has attempted to move dogmatics in a new direction. It can be seen that the concepts under discussion form an integrated matrix in each author and, while each concept is usually understood in a different way, the balance of understanding between the concepts in each theologian's matrix is quite different.

The third chapter expounded the main ideas of Jürgen Habermas's Erkenntnis und Interesse. Knowledge results from practical interests. There is no knowledge which is not initiated and in some measure determined by practical cognitive interests. This applies to the sciences seen as a whole, and to the motivation of each scientist, i.e. each exegete in our case. We also saw how the Bible can be interpreted quite legitimately under the influence of non-theological interests. This is the consequence of there being multiple layers of meaning in the text and the irreducible plurality of possible interpretations. That is to say, there is not necessarily just one single correct interpretation. We saw how Erich Auerbach interpreted the story of Abraham and Isaac from a literary point of view by contrasting it with a passage from Homer; how Gardavsky interpreted the story of Jacob in a Marxist perspective; and how Edmund Leach interpreted the narrative of Solomon's succession to the throne in terms of structural anthropology.

The first two chapters of the second part of the thesis, chapters four and five, consisted of a detailed examination of the writings of T.W.Manson. In the first of these chapters we showed that he was unaware of the role of pre-understanding, and we also described his practical cognitive-interest which was an interest in 'ministry', the ministry of Christians in the contemporary Church and the ministry of Jesus and his disciples. We saw that while Manson repudiated a positivistic understanding of 'history' his tendency was to move strongly

towards such a concept in which details of past events can be firmly determined, principally the past events of Jesus's ministry. 'Revelation' from God is accepted and is focussed on the ministry of Jesus. 'Resurrection' and 'eschatology' are similarly identified very closely with Jesus's ministry. Eschatology, for example, is, for the most part, realized in the ministry of Jesus.

In the fifth chapter we showed how these concepts of pre-understanding have affected Manson's exegesis. The very original exegesis of 'the Son of Man' is given a communal, ministerial interpretation. 'The Kingdom of God' is related to the ministry of Jesus and is determined by Manson's understanding of realized eschatology. Peter's confession has been treated in a strictly historical manner and the historical reliability of Mark's narrative was accepted in order to trace a development in Jesus's teaching. Manson accepted the historical basis of the messianic secret as an actual part of Jesus's ministry. The cursing of the fig tree was used to provide historical material in order to date more accurately the last months of Jesus's ministry. Manson judged the last supper to have been a passover meal but made its true meaning to be independent of that fact; its true meaning is interpreted in terms of ministry, community and fellowship. The resurrection appearances show that Christ is still active in the ministry of the Church. And we finally saw how Manson's interpretation of the Lord's Prayer is individualistic and non-eschatological.

Chapter six and chapter seven repeated the same technique with the writings of R.H.Lightfoot. We noted how Lightfoot was less reflective, less consistent and less systematic than Manson. Lightfoot's exegesis is dominated by a neo-platonic spirituality which he discovered in the works of Dean Inge. This other-worldly spirituality is in perfect conformity with his very conservative political opinions, and to this extent his spiritual cognitive-interest can be said to be practical. This led to a shift in his understanding of history, for his platonism encouraged him to look for theological interpretation of 'the divine' rather than historical facts about 'the earthly'. We saw how Lightfoot's advanced historical methodology was a result of his flight from the mundane, the earthly. The practical interest of a theologian will in part determine his ecclesiology and we saw how Lightfoot's ecclesiology is very different from that of Manson: in the former the Church is a vehicle of the divine and is a redeemed society, in the latter the Church is a group of, shall we say, suffering servants. We then described how Lightfoot's concept of 'revelation' is associated with a platonic christology in which Jesus is the bridge between the spiritual world and the earth. We noticed that Lightfoot accepted the factuality of the resurrection but also how he tended to avoid discussion of its meaning. And finally we saw how Lightfoot had a strong antipathy for future eschatology.

In the seventh and last chapter we looked at some examples of Lightfoot's exegesis. He accepted the historicity of Jesus's claim to be the Messiah but

combined this with a belief that the messianic secret had been constructed by the redactor. He also declined to use the cursing of the fig tree to provide historical information, but interpreted it symbolically. We examined a range of eschatological concepts and saw how Lightfoot interpreted 'Son of Man', 'Kingdom of God' and 'Parousia' in a present rather than a future sense. The only element of future eschatology is to be found in his interpretation of 'the last day'. He accepted John's dating of the last supper as a non-passover meal, and interpreted the meal symbolically whereby the elements represent, alternately, the Spirit and the Church. The Lamb of God is interpreted non-messianically and devotionally. We found that Lightfoot's exegesis of the trial of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel was a form of political allegory in which he showed how the Church and the State are mutually independent, except when the State tries to impose its authority on the Church in which case the State must yield. We finally showed that Lightfoot's interpretation of the resurrection appearances associated the appearance of Christ with the gift of the Spirit and the indefinite delay of any possible future eschatology. And he accepted that Mark deliberately ended his Gospel at 16.8 because of his dislike of future eschatology.

Conclusions

I want to state very briefly the conclusions which may be drawn from this study. We must first note not only the actuality of pre-understanding as a factor in the understanding of biblical texts, but we must also note the very important, indeed crucial, role it has to play. In interpreting a text (or in assessing an interpretation made by some other exegete) we must take account of the pre-understanding which we ourselves (or the exegete) bring to the text at least as much as the historical and philological evidence used to justify the interpretation. It may be an exaggeration to suppose that assessing an interpretation in this way, as in our examples from T.W.Manson and R.H.Lightfoot, amounts to a new technique, but it does supply a whole new perspective in New Testament exegesis. I must of course add the rider that when assessing the interpretation of another exegete we will only be able to uncover his pre-understanding with any reliability if we place that interpretation in the context of the whole life-work of that exegete. We must also remember that the exegete's interpretation is itself an historical text which must in turn be interpreted through our own pre-understanding. Further, pre-understanding is a complex of concepts and interest(s) and not all of these will be evident in any one exegetical example. But some - at least one - of these concepts will be there.

A number of practical conclusions for the exegete may be drawn. He must be conscious of the conceptual

matrix which constitutes his own pre-understanding, and of the prior practical interest he has in interpreting the text. And he would help his readers enormously if he could be explicit in his publications about this pre-understanding. He must be sure that his understanding of the concepts of pre-understanding stands up to philosophical and theological criticism, and that there is an inner coherence between these concepts. He must be aware of other forms of pre-understanding and be satisfied that his pre-understanding is the most satisfactory of those available. He must put his pre-understanding to work on the text consciously and deliberately so that there may be an inner consistency between his pre-understanding and his exegesis. If the exegete senses that part of his work is for any reason unsatisfactory (i.e. if his interpretation does not ring true), he must make his intuitive understanding of the text reflect back upon and criticize the concepts of his pre-understanding - for the process of understanding always remains circular. Only if all this is carried out consciously and explicitly and systematically can clarity of understanding be achieved. And the exegete should also be aware that his interpretation, no matter how satisfactory it may be in itself, will always be limited by his cognitive-interest. Equally valid, alternative interpretations will always be possible.

Let us reflect for a moment on the achievement of Manson and Lightfoot. The purpose of the second part of this thesis has been to clarify and understand the work

of these two. The reader may draw his own conclusions about the reliability of their interpretations - and this, in some measure, will depend on the reader's own pre-understanding. We may, however, in consequence of the general conclusions outlined in the previous paragraph, note the perspicacity of Manson's writings. He does not seem to have been aware of the role of pre-understanding (which is hardly surprizing for one of his generation) but he was conscious of the importance of dogmatic theology in the general assessment of the New Testament and he attempted to clarify his own position vis-à-vis other dogmatic theologians of his age (e.g. Harnack and Bultmann). He was also beautifully consistent throughout his work. One need not always agree either with his pre-understanding or with individual pieces of his exegesis, but one can only admire his masterly achievement. The same cannot in all honesty be said of Lightfoot. His achievement was considerable and his influence on some of his pupils was very great, but reservations must be made whether or not one is sympathetic to his pre-understanding and his interpretation of the New Testament. Lightfoot was not a reflective person, he does not seem to have been aware of the importance of dogmatic thinking for New Testament interpretation, and he showed no great critical ability in assessing the conceptual background of scripture. We may remember how he borrowed ideas from Manson which had been derived from a form of pre-understanding which in some respects was incompatible with his own; and these Manson-derived interpretations did not fit in with the rest of Lightfoot's work. Nor was Lightfoot's interpretation

always self-consistent: he often offered various and sometimes opposed interpretations of a single text or of a single concept. This lack of self-awareness, this lack of reflection and this lack of consistency detract from the many virtues of Lightfoot as an exegete. We may also note the paradox (and this is not necessarily a criticism) that Lightfoot is famous for his comparatively advanced historical methodology, while the primary characteristic of his work - and it is from this that his historical methodology was originally derived - is a comparatively old-fashioned neo-platonic spirituality.

Finally, in order to illustrate the methodological advance that is possible when pre-understanding is taken into account let us observe a passage written by Stephen Neill only twelve years ago (and first published only eight years ago in 1966). Among the outstanding tasks that remain for New Testament scholars Neill refers to the bewildering variety of meanings of 'history' which are to be found in biblical theology.¹ He then discusses the apparent insolubility of New Testament eschatology:

We must come back in the end to the question of eschatology. What is the Church's hope for the future? An extraordinary variety of views on this subject is still held by scholars. Some think that Jesus never spoke at all of his own coming again in glory; the words which suggest this are all editorial additions or explanations supplied by the faith of the early Church. Others hold that this 'coming of the Son of

1. S.Neill, The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1961, p.342

man' was central to the proclamation of Jesus, and that the disciples had rightly so understood it. Some have condemned Luke for bringing the life of the Church into relation to 'history', and so reducing the 'eschatological tension', which is the only true condition of the Church's life. Some seem to bring eschatology entirely into the present; to live eschatologically is to live as though every moment is the moment of decision, in which history is made and the future is determined. It is not perfectly clear how this differs from 'life in the Spirit' as this has been understood in earlier periods of the Church's life. Some maintain that history is moving to a great and final crisis, but that 'the end of history is beyond history'. Others hold that the New Testament clearly speaks of a final triumph of God in time and space, though we can no more conceive of what this triumph might be like than the saints of the Old Testament, for all their forward-looking and eager yearning, could really foresee and picture the Incarnation of the Son of God. Clearly not all of these views can be right. What are the sources and origins of these divisions? We are all trying to interpret the same texts. Why is it that we interpret them so differently? Is it possible to eliminate some of these divisions, and to draw nearer to agreement? Or are we here face to face with a problem that will never be solved?²

What may have seemed an insoluble problem only a few years ago can now be solved. The origin of our disagreements, some of them at least, can now be traced. Our disagreements can be explained and possibly even overcome in a hermeneutical critique of pre-understanding.

2. Ibid., p.345

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