

§ 4

THE WORD OF GOD IN ITS THREEFOLD FORM

The presupposition which makes proclamation proclamation and therewith makes the Church the Church is the Word of God. This attests itself in Holy Scripture in the word of the prophets and apostles to whom it was originally and once and for all spoken by God's revelation.

1. THE WORD OF GOD PREACHED

We have to speak about the presupposition which makes proclamation proclamation and therewith makes the Church the Church. Proclamation must ever and again become proclamation. From being an action which, coming forward with the corresponding claim and surrounded with the corresponding expectation, wants to be and should be proclamation, it must become an action which is proclamation. And because the event of real proclamation is the function of the Church's life which governs all others, we have to say that in this event the Church itself must ever and again become the Church. Proclamation and the Church are, of course, simply and visibly there just as the bread and wine of Communion are simply and visibly there and the distributing, eating and drinking of the bread and wine in Communion take place simply and visibly. They are not simply and visibly there, however, as that which they want to be and should be, as theologically relevant entities, as realities of revelation and faith. They have ever and again to come into being as this.

The connexion with the Lord's Supper is not to be regarded as just incidental. What applies to proclamation and the Church generally cannot be better illustrated than by the sacrament. Calvin says of the tree of life in Paradise and of Noah's rainbow: *Non quod arbor praestaret illis immortalitatem . . . aut arcus coercendis aquis foret efficax . . . sed quia notam a verbo Dei insculptam habebant, ut documenta essent testamentorum eius ac sigilla. Et antea quidem arbor erat arbor, arcus arcus; ubi inscripta fuerunt verbo Dei, indita est nova forma, ut inciperent esse quod prius non erant* (Instit. IV, 14, 18). And H. Bullinger says of the earthly elements in the sacrament: *Verbo Dei fiunt, quae antea non fuerunt, sacramenta. Consecrantur enim verbo et sanctificata esse ostenduntur ab eo qui instituit*. For this reason and to this degree they are not called mere water, bread and wine but, without any change of nature, the bath of regeneration and the body and blood of the Lord (Conf. Helvet. post., 1562, art. 19 in K. Müller, p. 207, l. 11 f. and 34 f.). It would be very out of place to recoil from terms like *feri* and *nova forma* as used here by Reformed authors just because they bring to light a problem which cannot be easily dismissed, namely, that of the Roman

Catholic doctrine of change. In the sacrament and in preaching and in the whole life of the Church it is always true that the existence of the earthly body acquires a new form from the heavenly Head, that it becomes the actuality of revelation and faith. Again, it would be very out of place to regard it as a nominalistic softening of this becoming when, e.g., Bullinger so plainly rejects the doctrine of transubstantiation here and so firmly regards the new designation of the elements as just a designation. This designation is not an arbitrarily imported meaning but the *nota a verbo Dei insculpta*. We only show our failure to understand what it means that the earthly reality acquires this new *nota* by the Word of God if we regard this view of the new becoming as less realistic than that expressed in the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation or the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation.

The presupposition of this event is the Word of God. Between this central concept of our prolegomena and dogmatics generally on the one side and the concept of proclamation on the other there are four decisive connexions whose mutual relation may be compared to that of four concentric circles. These we must now analyse.

1. The Word of God is the commission upon whose givenness proclamation must rest if it is to be real proclamation. The necessity of proclamation does not find an objective foundation in the fact that certain circumstances and scales of value immanent in the existence of man and things crave to be known and declared. The answer to this craving is not proclamation but fundamentally secular science, and there can be no question but that all the circumstances and scales of value which might be regarded as possible objects of Church proclamation belong to the sphere of secular science and stand in no need of proclamation by preaching and sacrament. Again, the necessity of proclamation does not find a subjective basis in the fact that certain personal convictions of certain men call for this particular articulation. For in so far as these convictions are capable of rational presentation, the persons concerned should be referred again to the way of scientific exposition, and in so far as they are wholly or predominantly irrational they should be referred to the possibility of musical, poetic or artistic expression. In relation to all such objective or subjective motives, and the more so the more seriousness and worth they claim, one might well ask whether, quite apart from any scientific or artistic presentation, they might not be brought to primary expression in a practical moral and political attitude appropriate to them. However that may be, in presupposing such motives we lose all insight into the necessity of proclamation. Naturally such motives too will necessarily come into play, as everywhere, so also in the Church, even when it is a matter of proclamation. To speak even more plainly, these are the human motives of all alleged proclamation, and we cannot intrinsically have any others. It is not the case that we are able to reach above them and grasp and establish something higher, a motive which will be the necessary basis and actualisation of alleged proclamation. What more

could we establish than circumstances and scales of value on the one side and convictions on the other? The fact that we are unable to indicate or establish a higher motive than these, and hence a real necessity of Church proclamation, and hence proclamation as real proclamation, is the very thing we acknowledge and confirm when we describe the commission to which it may be traced back as the Word of God. Certainly in so doing we are by implication speaking objectively of a circumstance and scale of values and subjectively of a personal conviction. This human motivation is the medium above which we can as little rise as we can cast off our shadows. But it is also the medium above which we will not want to rise because it is the place where we are to expect the divine commission. God's Word means in this context God's positive command: *God's* positive command, and hence a motive which acts according to its own absolutely superior principle even though present and at work within the whole unavoidable world of human motivations; God's *positive command*, and hence a motive which in its divinity is not present and at work in the way that circumstances and scales of value are over us and convictions in us, i.e., which we are not able to establish because we cannot grasp at it, but rather which is present and at work when and where it wills to be present and to be at work. No proclamation does not also rest on those human motives which are there and which have to be established. But no proclamation is real proclamation to the degree that over and above all this it does not rest on the commission which we cannot in any way take to ourselves, which we cannot in any way take for granted, which we can only receive and have in the act of receiving, which comes upon us and the whole world of our motivations absolutely from without, which lifts us up and controls us as a command that goes forth in a way we cannot foresee, and to which, as stated earlier, we can only take up an attitude by repeating it as we think we have heard it and by trying to conform to it as well or badly as we can. Real proclamation, then, means the Word of God preached and the Word of God preached means in this first and outermost circle man's talk about God on the basis of God's own direction, which fundamentally transcends all human causation, which cannot, then, be put on a human basis, but which simply takes place, and has to be acknowledged, as a fact.

"So say ye now: 'whom God hath sent.' That is, God's Word is not named unless it is sent. That is, let none think that God's Word cometh to earth of man's device. If it is to be God's Word, it must be sent. Otherwise it is impossible that Holy Writ could be understood or expounded by any arbitrary device. It availeth not that one should speak and he is not called, for God's Word cometh alone because He sendeth it. Where not, the whole world cannot utter what could redeem from sins and comfort the consciences. If He had not sent the Word and the office, we had nought. Therefore we should neither utter nor hear aught

save only God's Word. If it is invented by man's choice and device, avoid it. It cometh not except it be sent from heaven. And let him that hath dealings with monks ask whether their thing is God's Word. Then wilt thou hear them allege it is done of good intent to honour God. Hence 'tis service of God and God's Word. But there is more to it than good intent to do God service and pay for sins. From thy heart floweth the device, the opinion. But say thou whether God hath sent it from heaven, also whether He hath commanded it. Yea, is it done to God's honour? The wickeder it is, and a double blasphemy, that thou calledst that God's Word and service of God which thou thyself hast invented. Thus hath the Pope led the world astray under the name and title of the Church. But without God's sending cometh no Word into the world. Hath it grown out of my heart, cling I to Chrysostom, Augustine and Ambrose, 'tis not then God's Word. For there is a vast difference 'twixt the Word that is sent from heaven and that which of my own choice and device I invent. Holy Writ, so it be grown on earth, thus saith John: He that is of the earth speaketh earthly things. Thus we must learn to set our blessedness soundly on the power of God's Word and not on our own device or opinion" (Luther, *Ausl. des 3. und 4. Kap. Joh.*, 1538 f., *W.A.*, 47, p. 193, l. 10).

2. The Word of God is the theme which must be given to proclamation as such if it is to be real proclamation. Proclamation is asked how far it is proclamation of something, objective proclamation, proclamation of a real theme. Again we must assert that in so far as this theme belongs to the sphere of objects of human apprehension and thought, to the sphere of objects of external or internal contemplation, it is hard to see to what extent it should be proclaimed by preaching and sacrament. Would not scientific, artistic, or even ethico-political presentation and publication be incomparably more appropriate to themes of this class? Again we must admit, of course, that we have no objects but those of outer and inner perception. This must be said even of the object of proclamation. If we have it as an object at all, it is as an object of outer or inner perception, of experience and thought. If we did not have it thus, we should not have it at all. But to the extent that we only have it thus, we do not have it as a possible object of proclamation. Metaphysics or psychology could then take charge of it, and indeed would have to do so. But these are the very sciences that cannot take charge of a theme that is worth proclaiming. In calling the object or theme of proclamation God's Word we mean that it is not merely or even primarily the object of human perception. It must become the object of human perception to be capable of being proclaimed. But to the extent that it is really proclaimed it is not at all the object of human perception. It is proclaimed to the degree that it presents and places itself as an object over against us and the whole world of all our objects, certainly in the unavoidable medium of perceptual objectivity, but in this medium as the object which can never in any sense be our possession, to which we can never point back as to a datum, which is a presupposition in the sense and only in the sense that it sets itself where we cannot possibly set it. We have it as

it gives itself to us if we have it. In this way, in contrast to all the objects of metaphysics or psychology, it is the object of proclamation. Between this object and preaching and sacrament as the means to present and impart it there should be an inner connexion. Preaching and sacrament are, as we have seen, the promise of future revelation on the basis of the revelation that has already occurred. How, then, can one speak of this object except in the form of this promise, which is quite distinct from that of science, art, or politics? Real proclamation, then, means God's Word preached, and in this second circle God's Word preached means human talk about God on the basis of the self-objectification of God which is not just there, which cannot be predicted, which does not fit into any plan, which is real only in the freedom of His grace, and in virtue of which He wills at specific times to be the object of this talk, and is so according to His good-pleasure.

There are some excellent delimitations on this point in H. M. Müller, *Glaube und Erfahrung bei Luther*, 1929: "The concrete, contingent givenness of faith, and to that extent the gift itself, is still something that can only be declared in the proclamation of the Gospel; it remains declaration" (p. 95). "Preaching as impartation of the promise is precisely not the transmission of revelation; it is an indication of the occurrence of revelation" (p. 119, cf. also p. 41, 149, 150, 162, 196, etc.).

3. The Word of God is the judgment in virtue of which alone proclamation can be real proclamation. Proclamation is also asked whether it is true. What is to decide this? What is the criterion here? One usually judges the truth of human speech by the nature of its theme on the one side and by the situation and concern of the speaker on the other. Naturally this may and must apply to Church proclamation too. It lies within the realm of human speech. The one who proclaims must submit to the question: What do you know of the thing you speak of? And: What is your concern in speaking of it? He has to let his work be judged by these questions. The only point is that what he says is not affected as proclamation by such judgments. What is assessed by them is its scientific or ethico-political or aesthetic character. Intrinsically proclamation as it takes place in preaching and sacrament presupposes that neither the nature of its object nor the situation or concern of the speaker is or can be so clear to any man as to put him in a position to pronounce on its truth. If there is to be any assessment at all of Church proclamation as such it must be from another angle. It is this fundamentally different aspect of the judgment to be made on Church proclamation that we have in view and describe when we acknowledge it to be the Word of God. We are not denying thereby that proclamation is subject to other criteria too. We are simply affirming that in fact we only know these other criteria in judging it here and now, that we are in no position to pronounce upon

its truth in any other way. But here and now we have 1. to recollect that, even though it is not known to anyone, a different criterion from these others has given itself to be known and 2. to expect that this criterion which we do not know now, or know only from this recollection, will give itself to be known again. This criterion which is recollected and expected, though not at our disposal in our own or any present, is the Word of God. We cannot "handle" this criterion. It is the criterion which handles itself and is in no other hands. We can handle the other criteria in recollection and expectation of this criterion. But its judgment alone is absolutely binding and inviolable. Proclamation becomes real proclamation when it is endorsed by this judgment. Real proclamation, therefore, is the Word of God preached, and in this third inner circle the Word of God preached means human talk about God which by God's own judgment, that cannot be anticipated and never passes under our control, is true with reference both to the proclaimed object and also to the proclaiming subject, so that it is talk which has to be listened to and which rightly demands obedience.

4. Finally—and only here do we make the decisive point—the Word of God is the event itself in which proclamation becomes real proclamation. It is not just the commission that man must have received. It is not just the theme or object that must enter the field in contrast to human talk. It is not just the judgment by which it must be confirmed as true. From all these angles the actualisation of proclamation might still be understood as an external and accidental characterisation, as a kind of clothing or enlightening of an event which as such is ultimately still the event of the willing and doing of proclaiming man. And then, of course, one misunderstands the significance of the "garment" or "light" in question, what it means that proclamation becomes real as God commands, God comes on the scene, God judges. But in this case who will not constantly misunderstand? Understanding of the subject in this statement has to render quite impossible all nominalistic misunderstandings regarding the predicate. But it lies deeply in the nature of the case that the nominalistic misunderstanding cannot be rooted out unequivocally and definitively. It is the miracle of revelation and faith when the misunderstanding does not constantly recur, when proclamation is for us not just human willing and doing characterised in some way but also and primarily and decisively God's own act, when human talk about God is for us not just that, but also and primarily and decisively God's own speech. It is this miracle that in the fourth and innermost circle of our deliberations we have not so much to explain as rather to evaluate as this specific miracle. "Not only—but also and primarily and decisively" is how the formula must run. The "not only—but also" means first that human talk, with its motives and themes and the judgments among which it stands

as human talk, is there even while God's Word is there. The miracle of real proclamation does not consist in the fact that the willing and doing of proclaiming man with all its conditioning and in all its problems is set aside, that in some way a disappearance takes place and a gap arises in the reality of nature, and that in some way there steps into this gap naked divine reality scarcely concealed by a mere remaining appearance of human reality.

The decisive principle in the Roman Catholic doctrine of change is that through priestly consecration there takes place a *conversio totius substantiae panis in substantiam corporis Christi Domini nostri et totius substantiae vini in substantiam sanguinis eius* (*Trid. sess. XIII, Decr. de ss. Euch. cap., 4*), and this in such a way that only the *accidentia* of bread and wine remain *sine subjecto* (*ib. can. 2 and Conc. Constantiense 1415 Errores Joannis Wicleff 2, Denz., No. 582*).

The willing and doing of proclaiming man, however, is not in any sense set aside in real proclamation. As Christ became true man and remains true man to all eternity, real proclamation becomes an event on the level of all other human events. It can be seen and heard on this level, and its being seen and heard thus is no mere appearance but must take place in full essentiality. Without the ambivalence, the liability to misunderstanding and the vulnerability with which this takes place, with which it is itself one event among many others, it could not be real proclamation. But as Christ is not just true man, so it is not just the willing and doing of proclaiming man. It is also and indeed it is primarily and decisively the divine willing and doing. Precisely for this reason the human element is not set aside. What seems to be the burning question of the nature of the co-existence and co-operation of the two factors is a highly irrelevant question. God and the human element are not two co-existing and co-operating factors. The human element is what God created. Only in the state of disobedience is it a factor standing over against God. In the state of obedience it is service of God. Between God and true service of God there can be no rivalry. Service of God does not have to be removed in order that God Himself may be honoured in it. Where God is truly served, there—with no removal of the human element, with the full and essential presence and operation of the human element in all its humanity—the willing and doing of God is not just present as a first or second co-operating factor; it is present as the first and decisive thing as befits God the Creator and Lord. Without depriving the human element of its freedom, its earthly substance, its humanity, without obliterating the human subject, or making its activity a purely mechanical event, God is the subject from whom human action must receive its new and true name: not just a title tacked on; no, the name which belongs to it as essentially and primarily as possible in the full supremacy of the will of its Creator and

Lord. Where Church proclamation takes place according to this will of God, where it rests on the divine commission, where God Himself gives Himself to it as its theme, where it is true according to His judgment, where, in short, it is service of God, there on the one hand its character as an event that can be seen and heard on earth is not set aside.

Bread remains bread and wine wine, to put it in eucharistic terms. The realism of sacramental consecration does not imply destruction of the signs' own existence.

On the other hand, through the new robe of righteousness thrown over it, even in its earthly character it becomes a new event, the event of God's own speaking in the sphere of earthly events, the event of the authoritative vicariate of Jesus Christ. Real proclamation as this new event, in which the event of human talk is not set aside by God but exalted, is the Word of God. Again, then, real proclamation means the Word of God preached. Only now is it clear that "preached" belongs to the predicate, and to what degree. The Word of God preached means in this fourth and innermost circle man's talk about God in which and through which God speaks about Himself.

Adolf Harnack in a fine essay ("*Christus praesens—Vicarius Christi*," *Sitz.-Berichte der preuss. Akad. d. Wiss.*, 1927, p. 415 f.) has shown how there could be and was a movement from the concept "Word of God" through the "adoption of the Church into the main theological equations" (God, Christ, Spirit, etc.) to the doctrine of the infallibility of the papacy. In fact we are confronted here not merely by the problem of the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation but also by the problem of the Roman Catholic view of all that may be summed up under the concept of ecclesiastical *potestas*.

In itself it might well be wholly in line with our concept of the Word of God preached when Gregory of Nyssa (in actual analogy to the new qualification of the elements in the sacraments) says of the priest that up to yesterday he was simply one of many, one of the people, but now in virtue of his consecration as a priest he has become a *καθηγούμενος, προεβρος, διδάσκαλος εὐσεβείας, μυστηρίων λαυθάνόντων μυσταγωγός* (*Or. in diem luminum*); or when Ambrose explains to baptismal candidates with reference to the Christian priest: *Vidisti illic levitam, vidisti summum sacerdotem. Noli considerari corporum figuras, sed mysteriorum gratiam . . . Quid tradiderit considera* (*De myst.*, 2, 6). *Non merita personarum considerare, sed officia sacerdotum* (*ib.*, 5, 27); or when Augustine with special regard to the Christian preacher insists: *Boni fideles non quemlibet hominum, sed ipsum Dominum obedienter audiunt*—the *locus superior sedis ecclesiasticae* from which the speaker speaks, even though he be personally the very reverse of good, forces him of itself to say what is good (*De doctr. christ.*, IV, 27); or when he describes the earthly utterance of God's voice as follows, *quod creaturae motus expressit eam, serviens aeternae voluntati tuae ipse temporalis* (*Conf.*, XI, 6, 8); or when he says of the *doctrina de superiore loco in conspectu omnium personarum* that it is always entails the decision concerning the hearers that *et qui faciunt audiant ad praemium et qui non faciunt audiant ad iudicium* (*De civ. Dei*, II, 28).

This absolute singling out of the function of Church proclamation is intrinsically something which is common in the Reformers too: "Now I and any man that speaketh Christ's Word may freely boast that his mouth is Christ's

mouth. I am sure my word is not mine but Christ's Word and so my mouth must also be His whose Word it speaketh" (Luther, *Eine treue Vermahnung*, 1522, *W.A.*, 8, p. 263, l. 13). "Hereby all men on earth are subject to the preaching office, as the apostles and their successors lead on God's behalf, so that they must be submissive to the same and follow it if they would have God's grace and be saved" (*Pred. über Joh. 16th*, 1533, *E.A.*, 3, p. 434). "That is a power against which emperor and king are naught, that an apostle, yea every disciple of Christ, may pronounce a judgment on the whole world that sin should go. And such judgment should be so powerful and certain as if Christ Himself had uttered it. . . ." (*Predigt über Joh. 20th*, 1533, *W.A.*, 52, p. 269, l. 18). 'Tis a right excellent thing that every honest pastor's and preacher's mouth is Christ's mouth and his word and forgiveness Christ's Word and forgiveness. If thou hast sin and dost confess the same and believest in Christ, the pastor and preacher shall forgive thee that same sin in Christ's name, and the words he saith to thee on God's behalf thou shalt receive, as if Christ Himself had said them to thee. We rightly call the pastor's or preacher's word God's Word. For his office is not his but God's, and the word he preacheth is not his but God's" (Sermon on the same text, 1534, *E.A.*, 3, p. 376). "On the last day God will say to me: Hast thou also preached that? and I shall then say, Yea, then God shall say to thee, Hast thou also heard that? and thou shalt say, Yea, and He saith further, Why then hast thou not believed? and thou then sayest, Oh, I held it for a word of man since some poor chaplain or village parson said it. So then shall that same word which sticketh in thine heart accuse thee and be thine accuser and judge at the last day. For it is God's Word, 'tis God Himself thou hast heard, as Christ saith, 'He that heareth you heareth me,' and I have satisfied mine office for the judgment and before God when I have shown thee thy sins and iniquities and chastised thee for them, and am clean of thy blood. See thou then to it how thou standest" (*Ausl. des dritten und vierten Kap. Joh.*, *W.A.*, 47, p. 120, l. 28). "Hence might I be glad and say, God who hath created heaven and earth, who is the divine majesty, hath spoken with me. How? Through my brother man. He doth it to us for good, namely, for love and friendship. But when a man seeth a preacher he thinketh, This is a poor wretched man, and none considereth that beneath lieth the divine majesty. An angel might make heaven full of fire that lightning and thunder should strike and heaven and earth become black and everything collapse. Why then wilt thou not hear God who maketh Himself like a weak man and hideth Himself and holdeth Himself like the dear apostles? Therefore it is not a preacher's word but God's Word. Since it is God's Word thou shouldest start back thereat or be glad" (*ib.*, p. 213, l. 26). "If thou hear me who am a preacher, and hear and believe me none otherwise than another man, thou art condemned with me. . . . Therefore thou shouldest not hear me as a man that preacheth man's word. If thou hearest me thus, 'twere much better thou heardest me not at all. Thus too thy pastor shouldest thou not hear as a man that speaketh and preacheth man's word, but shouldest hear him as Him that speaketh the Word out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. . . ." (Sermon delivered in Merseburg, 1545, *W.A.*, 51, p. 15, l. 30, 36). *Repraesentant Christi personam propter vocationem ecclesiae, non repraesentant proprias personas ut testatur Christus: qui vos audit, me audit. Cum verbum Christi, cum sacramenta porrigunt, Christi vice et loco porrigunt* (Melancthon, *Apol. De ecclesia*, *C.R.*, 27, 529). Calvin, too declares most emphatically that God is certainly not bound to the human word about Him and can draw His own to Himself by some direct way. Nevertheless it has obviously pleased Him to let us ripen into the manhood of Christ *educatione ecclesiae* and thus, without ceasing Himself and alone to rule in the Church, without abdicating His rights and honour to a man, to avail Himself of man's word

as a *vicaria opera*. It may thus be said of Christian preaching: *Deus ipse in medium prodit, et quatenus huius ordinis autor est, vult se praesentem in sua institutione agnoscere*. This is a proof that man can actually become God's temple. It is also a decisive test of our humility before God that we learn to render obedience to His Word not as one spoken directly from heaven but just as it meets us on the lips of a *homuncio quispiam ex pulvere emersus* who is in no connexion better than ourselves. Finally it is the strongest bond of the mutual love in which God wants to bind us together that in preaching He sets His Word on the lips of a fellow-man and thereby forbids us to try to satisfy ourselves (Sermon on Lk. 11th, *C.R.*, 46, 39; *Instit.*, IV, 1, 5 and 3, 1; cf. E. Brunner, *Gott und Mensch*, 1930, p. 65). The relation between the order that in preaching *homines* are to be instructed *per homines* and Christian *charitas* is already an insight of Augustine's (*De doctr. christ.*, *Prol.*, 6).

In the light of this concept of the Word of God preached, the familiar singling out of the bishop's office as first espoused especially by Ignatius of Antioch, then by Irenaeus, Tertullian and Cyprian, cannot be called intrinsically impossible. One can neither estimate the Roman Catholic position correctly nor take up the correct Evangelical position if (with Harnack, *op. cit.*, p. 446) one takes offence already at the idea of vicariate or succession. One would have to deny *Christus praesens* to deny in principle the *vicarius Christi*. The difference between Roman Catholic dogmatics and ourselves, which, of course, we must always keep in view, cannot refer to the fact of this vicariate or succession, but only to its manner. The three questions which follow are decisive in this regard. 1. How does a man become *vicarius Christi* and *successor Petri*? According to Roman Catholic teaching he does so through his place at the bottom of a list of bishops that goes back without a break to an apostle, finally to Peter, and last of all to Christ as the Founder of the Church. We ask how the secular, historico-juridical fact of such a list can come to vouch for the regularity of ecclesiastical office. What does this documentary succession have to do with real, i.e., spiritual succession? 2. How does this vicariate or succession arise? According to Roman Catholic teaching it consists in a character which by ordination a bishop or priest receives for life in addition to his humanity. We ask how there can be a character for life if ordination can relate only to the official acts of the person ordained and even in respect of these acts cannot try to mean more than the proclamation of a promise? 3. In what consists this vicariate or succession? According to Roman Catholic teaching it consists in the permanent authority of the teaching office to establish and proclaim irreformable definitions in matters of faith and morals. We ask how far the exercise of this permanent authority of a human court to speak irreformably can still be understood as service of God. How far does one have here only a representation and not rather a supplanting of Christ? To summarise all three questions: Is not vicariate in the Roman Catholic sense one in which only the accidents of vicariate are retained while in substance it is simply the rule of Christ equated with that of the Church? We realise that this whole doctrine is a genuinely significant attempt to come to terms with the problem of real proclamation. But does not this solution mean that proclamation is dehumanised through the ideas of historical succession, *character indelebilis* and the possibility of irreformable definitions, i.e., that it is set in a sphere in which it can only in appearance imply human action that is vulnerable, responsible, surpassable, and consequently serviceable? It is a consistent but still an incomprehensible fact that on the day of his consecration Innocent III simply preached about himself (Harnack, *op. cit.*, p. 441). Roman Catholic dogmatics is naturally aware of the lordship of Christ as a lordship not only in His Church but also over His Church. But where can this lordship of Christ over His Church take concrete shape in this system, where can it come into proper play, when all

its power has already been fully transferred to the Church, when its power is simply present in the Church? And if it has no play of its own, is it distinguished in any way but name only from the power that is exercised in the Church by men without break, hindrance, or limit? Certainly a Roman Catholic could approve of Luther's interpretation of the metaphor of the Good Shepherd in Jn. 10: "Thus He refers the right shepherd's office, which is to help the rule of consciences and souls, to His own person alone, when He who alone hath done and accomplished it, the work of our redemption, who hath laid down His body and life for His sheep and founded the office, plies and upholds it, that through it He brings them to Himself and rules and sustains them. And thus the whole preaching of the Gospel is included where and when and by whom it is preached, who after Christ are also called shepherds, not on account of their own persons (for such can no one be save Christ Himself), but because they are in the office that is proper to Christ alone, and He exercises it through them and works in the same" (*Crucigers Sommerpostille*, 1543, *W.A.*, 21, p. 323, l. 3). But on the question as to what "person" means here there is an inexorable parting of the ways. According to the Evangelical view one can no longer speak of an action of Christ's person in and over the Church when human authorities in the Church are deprived of their humanity in the way described and when Christ's own decisions are swallowed up in the decisions of these authorities. What can become, as shown, the endowment, quality, power and dignity of other persons ceases to this degree to be itself active person. Personal presence implies the possibility of absence as well. A personal gift implies the possibility of its refusal. This limitation of the power of the Church by the person of Christ is needed to prove that the Church is the true Church which serves Christ and which thus has a share in the benefits of His lordship, presence and gifts. But this limitation is ruled out by the doctrines of historical succession, indelible character, and the possibility of irreformable definitions. Hence we must reject these doctrines. In the sermon just quoted Luther continues: "Therefore 'tis thus also in this spiritual rule of consciences, where Christ doth not Himself through His shepherd's office guard, lead and guide, no other preaching helpeth or availeth aught, no matter if it be otherwise good and right. For it cannot stand in straits against the devil when he opens wide hell's vengeance through fear of sins and eternal death. For if it comes to that the poor sheep standeth alone and forsaken, all by itself; and its act, directed by the doctrine of the law and our works, hath neither help nor stay more with which to comfort itself and find rescue" (*ib.*, p. 324, l. 17). Then in a later sermon on the same text he says more belligerently: "That such preaching be used aright and be good and profitable, they must not enter into the sheepfold themselves like the others, nor imagine themselves to be shepherds, but only door-keepers and servants of the true Shepherd Christ, who keep the sheep in watch and ward that naught strange break in on them. And they make way for the Shepherd and give place to Him who Himself leadeth them out and in to pasture. Therefore let such office be ordered not to point to self but to open up to the Shepherd that the sheep may hear Him and be pastured by Him" (*ib.*, p. 501, l. 8). In the Confession of the Synod of Strassburg in 1533 (cf. *Reformierte Kirchenzeitung*, 1931, No. 27, p. 211) Article 6 reads: "Faith cometh from hearing. Yet neither is he that planteth aught nor he that watereth, but God who giveth the increase is all. Hence injury is done to the divine grace and work if to the words and acts of evangelical preaching and sacraments they would ascribe some power to cleanse us from sins, which power they have in themselves be they but preached and administered by men, while those to whom they impart the Word and sacrament may believe as they like. . . ." And again Calvin has finely said what needs to be said about the Evangelical view of the relation (excluding any *opus operatum*) between God and man in the ecclesiastical office:

Et certe quum nobis constet Dei negotium hic nos et curare et agere, ipsum sibi operique suo minime defuturum confidimus. Caeterum qualiscunque exitus erit, nunquam nos coepisse, aut huc usque progressos esse poenitebit. Nobis Spiritus sanctus doctrinae nostrae fidelis est ac certus testis. Scimus, inquam, esse aeternam Dei veritatem quam praedicamus. Ministerium nostrum ut mundo sit salutare, optamus quidem, sicut par est: verum ut id consequamur, Dei est praestare, non nostrum (Suppl. Exhort., 1543, C.R., 6, 534). But we can also sum up our objection to the Roman Catholic doctrine in the direction given to the preacher by the greatest Catholic theologian, Augustine: *Oret, ut Dominus sermonem bonum det in os eius (De doctr. chr., IV, 15).* What does it mean if this *oret* is taken not merely as an ascetic and homiletic suggestion but more seriously in its material content, much more strictly than it need be even according to Augustine's own view? Must we really pray for the *sermo bonus*? Can we only pray for it? Is Christ's action, real proclamation, the Word of God preached, tied to the ecclesiastical office and consequently to a human act, or conversely, as one might conclude from this *oret*, are the office and act tied to the action of Christ, to the actualising of proclamation by God, to the Word of God preached? From the standpoint of our theses this question is the puzzling cleft which has cut right across the Church during the last 400 years.

2. THE WORD OF GOD WRITTEN

We have said that Church proclamation must be ventured in recollection of past revelation and in expectation of coming revelation. The basis of expectation is obviously identical here with the object of recollection. Hoping for what we cannot see, what we cannot assume to be present, we speak of an actualised proclamation, of a Word of God preached in the Church, on the basis that God's Word has already been spoken, that revelation has already taken place. We speak in recollection.

What is the meaning of this recollection of past revelation? Recollection of God's enacted revelation might mean the actualisation of a revelation of God originally immanent in the existence of every man, i.e., of man's own original awareness of God. In this case recollection of God's enacted revelation would be identical with the discovery and fresh appropriation of a long hidden, forgotten and unused part, and indeed the most central and significant part, of the timeless essential constitution of man himself, namely, his relation to the eternal or absolute.

Augustine, following Plato's doctrine of *anamnesis*, understood *memoria* along these lines. *Unde adest nisi ex memoria? Nam et cum ab alio commoniti recognoscimus, inde adest. Non enim quasi novum credimus, sed recordantes approbamus hoc esse quod dictum est. Si autem penitus aboleatur ex anima, nec admoniti reminiscimur. Neque enim omni modo adhuc obliti sumus, quod vel iam oblitos nos esse meminimus (Conf., X, 19, 28).* According to Augustine God is what we all seek as we all seek a *vita beata*. How is it that we want to be happy, that we love this *vita beata*? We obviously know it already. *Nimirum habemus eam nescio quomodo. . . . Neque enim amaremus eam nisi nossemus (ib., 28, 29).* Knowledge of God, therefore, can only be a confirmation of this that is already

known before about God: *Neque enim aliquid de te inveni, quod non meminissem ex quo didici te. Nam ex quo didici te, non sum oblitus tui. Ubi enim inveni veritatem, ibi inveni Deum meum ipsam veritatem, quam, ex quo didici, non sum oblitus (ib., 24, 35).* Much later we find a very similar line of argument when it is a matter of introducing Cartesianism into theology. What is the use of instruction or teaching, thought A. Heidan (*Corp. theol. christ.*, 1686, Loc. I, p. 9), *nisi ex nobis ideam Dei formare possimus.* The *idea Dei* does not come to us from without (*aliunde*). It is *potentia nobis semper inexistens*. Along these lines, as Augustine already brought out quite clearly, recollection means inwardness, man's return from the distractions of the outside world and re-entry into himself to find God there. *Sero te amavi, pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova! Sero te amavi! Et ecce intus eras et ego foris et ibi te quaerebam . . . mecum eras et tecum non eram (Conf., X, 27, 38).*

Is the recollection of God's revelation on which the venture of Church proclamation is ventured this kind of recollection? One cannot prove *a priori* that this is impossible. Why could it not have pleased God to be immanent to His Church as the foundation which was hidden for a time, but which steadily endured because it had been timelessly laid, so that standing on it need be only a matter of profound self-reflection? Why should not God have let the Church be grounded upon itself as the Church, so that it could continually ground itself upon itself by continually returning to itself as such, this being recollection of God's past revelation? Why not?

The Neo-Platonist and the Catholic churchman could obviously exist quite well in personal union in Augustine. Why should not both have been right?

The concept of the divine freedom or potency provides no reason why this should be impossible. The real reason is that God did not make this specific use of His freedom or potency. The reason is thus a fact which points in a very different direction.

Here, too, we must begin exegetically, conscious that what we pursue is Evangelical and Reformation exegesis of the reality of the Church. The Church is not alone in relation to God's Word. It is not referred to itself or consequently to self-reflection. It has not the confidence to appeal to itself as the source of the divine Word in support of the venture of proclamation. It does not seek in the hidden depths of its own existence the commission, the object, the judgment and the event in recollection of which it is validated in its proclamation and believes it is summoned to proclamation. The return to its own being on the basis of which alone it may actually venture its proclamation does indeed mean for it a return to its own being, but to its self-transcendent being, to Jesus Christ as the heavenly Head to whom it, the earthly body, is attached as such, but in relation to whom it is also distinct as such, who has the Church within Himself but whom the Church does not have within itself, between whom and it there is no reversible or alternating relation, just as the relation between master and servant is not reversible. He is immanent in it only as He is

transcendent to it. This is the fact which makes the recollection of God's past revelation different from reflection on its own timeless ground of being. It has pleased God to be its God in another way than that of pure immanence.

But this fact must be described more precisely. The distinction of the Head from the body and the superiority of the Head over the body find concrete expression in the fact that proclamation in the Church is confronted by a factor which is very like it as a phenomenon, which is temporal as it is, and yet which is different from it and in order superior to it. This factor is Holy Scripture. Holy Scripture is the concrete form of the reason why the recollection on the basis of which we expect God's revelation cannot be recollection of a timeless being of the Church. It is the bolt which in fact shuts out Platonic *anamnesis* here. It does so in the first instance simply because it is there and tells us what is the past revelation of God that we have to recollect. It does so in the first instance simply by the fact that it is the Canon.

Kanón means rod, then ruler, standard, model, assigned district. In the ecclesiastical vocabulary of the first three hundred years it was used for that which stands fast as normative, i.e., apostolic, in the Church, the *regula fidei*, i.e., the norm of faith, or the Church's doctrine of faith. From this (only apparently) wider concept of the *kanón tēs alētheias* or *tēs pisteως* there then develops from the 4th century onwards the more specialised idea of the Canon of Holy Scripture, i.e., the list of biblical books which are recognised as normative, because apostolic.

With its acknowledgment of the presence of the Canon the Church expresses the fact that it is not left to itself in its proclamation, that the commission on the ground of which it proclaims, the object which it proclaims, the judgment under which its proclamation stands and the event of real proclamation must all come from elsewhere, from without, and very concretely from without, in all the externality of the concrete Canon as a categorical imperative which is also historical, which speaks in time. And with its acknowledgement that this Canon is in fact identical with the Bible of the Old and New Testaments, with the word of the prophets and apostles, it expresses the truth that this reference of its proclamation to something that is concretely external is not a general principle, nor a mere determination of form whose content might be this or might be quite different, but that this reference is wholly determined in content, that it is a received direction and effected connexion, that this part of past history consisting of specific texts constitutes the working instructions or marching orders by which not just the Church's proclamation but the very Church itself stands or falls, which are not in any circumstances, not even hypothetically, to be lost to view, and which are not in any circumstances,

not even hypothetically, to be regarded as replaced by others, if proclamation and the Church itself are not to be lost to view.

For a better understanding one should note first what we have called the similarity as phenomena between Church proclamation and this second entity which confronts it in the Church, namely, the Canon of Holy Scripture. This consists in the fact that in Holy Scripture, too, the writing is obviously not primary, but secondary. It is itself the deposit of what was once proclamation by human lips. In its form as Scripture, however, it does not seek to be a historical monument but rather a Church document, written proclamation. The two entities may thus be set initially under a single genus, Scripture as the commencement and present-day preaching as the continuation of one and the same event, Jeremiah and Paul at the beginning and the modern preacher of the Gospel at the end of one and the same series.

Luther had a good grasp of this relationship. On the one hand: "The Gospel simply means a preaching and crying out loud of God's grace and mercy merited and won by the Lord Christ with His death. And it is properly not what stands in books or is made up of letters, but rather an oral preaching and lively word and a voice that rings out in the whole world and is publicly cried out loud that it may be everywhere heard" (*Ep. S. Petri gepredigt unnd ausgelegt*, 1523, *W.A.*, 12, p. 259, l. 8). On the other hand: "For we have John Baptist's word and spirit, and we parsons and preachers are in our time what John Baptist was in his time. We let John Baptist's finger point and his voice sound: 'Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world'; we deliver John Baptist's sermon, point to Christ and say: This is the one true Saviour whom you should worship and to whom you should cleave. Such preaching must endure to the last day, even though it abide not in all places, all the time, alike, yet must it abide" (Sermon on Mt. 11th, *E.A.*, 1, p. 159).

In this similarity as phenomena, however, there is also to be found between Holy Scripture and present-day proclamation a dissimilarity in order, namely the supremacy, the absolutely constitutive significance of the former for the latter, the determination of the reality of present-day proclamation by its foundation upon Holy Scripture and its relation to this, the basic singling out of the written word of the prophets and apostles over all the later words of men which have been spoken and are to be spoken to-day in the Church. If what we have said is true, if the Church is not alone in respect of its proclamation but finds itself in a concrete confrontation in which it is mindful of the past revelation of God, and if the concrete form of its opposite is really the biblical word of the prophets and apostles, then obviously the latter must have fundamental distinction in relation to it. If the vicariate of Church proclamation is authentic, i.e., if the Church in its proclamation does not find its basis secretly in itself but in the Other who is its Lord without the Church ever becoming His lord, then the concrete form of vicariate must be succession.

This concept from the Roman Catholic definition of the ecclesiastical office is also one which intrinsically need not give rise to any objection. The series God, Christ, apostle, bishop, community as it begins to appear in Church writings at the beginning of the 2nd century (e.g., Clement of Rome *ad Cor.*, 42 and 44) becomes a criterion which is applied almost formally by Irenaeus: "Where there is *traditio* or *successio apostolorum*, there is the Church (e.g., *C. o. haer.*, 111, 2, 2; 3, 1; 4, 1; IV, 26, 2, 5; 33, 8; V, 20), and it is used in fighting heretics from the standpoint of the question of their relation to the apostolic origin of the Church: *Edant ergo origines ecclesiarum suarum, evolant ordinem episcoporum suorum ita per successionem ab initio decurrentem, ut primus ille episcopus aliquem ex apostolis . . . habuerit auctorem et antecessorem . . . exhibent quos ab apostolis in episcopatum constitutos apostolici seminis traduces habeant* (Tertullian, *De praescr. haer.*, 32). In itself all this can have its proper place as an expression of awareness of the concreteness of the form in which Christ and His Church are combined and yet contrasted. Apostolicity is in fact one of the decisive notes of the true Church (*credo unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam*). In virtue of its direct relation to the transcendent character of what is Christian it is also the decisive mark of true Church proclamation. The Evangelical Church says and confesses the same with its Scripture principle: "Now when He says, Ye also shall bear witness, for ye have been with me from the beginning, He thereby specially depicts the apostles for all preachers and confirms their preaching so that all the world should be bound to their word, and believe the same without any contradiction and be certain that all they preach and teach is right doctrine and the Holy Ghost's preaching which they have heard and received from Him. As 1 Jn. 1 adduces such witness and says: 'That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we have beheld . . . of the Word of life, that declare we unto you.' Such witness have no preachers on earth save the apostles only, for the others are hereby commanded that they should all follow in the apostles' footsteps, abide by the same doctrine and preach nothing more nor otherwise. And moreover the right sign is shown by which one may know and test such preaching of the Holy Ghost, for He saith: 'The Holy Ghost shall testify of me'" etc. (Luther, *Crucigers Sommerpostille*, *W.A.*, 21, p. 426, l. 2). Here again, then, the difference between the Evangelical view and the Roman Catholic view is not in respect of the *That* but the *How*. And even in respect of the *How* no objection in principle can be raised on our part against the concentration of the apostolate in Peter or the possibility of a primacy in the Church which might be that of the Roman community. The protest of Protestantism in this question of succession is directed solely and simply against the fact that the *Tu es Petrus*, etc., is mechanically transferred over Peter's head to every succeeding Roman bishop as a second, third and hundredth Peter, as if the succession and tradition of the Peter of Mt. 16, to whom flesh and blood had not revealed such things, could be related to any succession but a spiritual one, or as if, being spiritual, it could be tied to the secular circumstance of a list of bishops of this kind. "The visibility and the related stability of the Church demand, then, an ecclesiastical ordination which begins with Christ, the starting-point, and continues in unbroken sequence, so that, as the apostles were sent by the Saviour, they in turn appointed bishops, these again gave themselves successors, and so on to our own day. By this succession of bishops which began with the Saviour and has continued without a break it may be pre-eminently seen as by a sign which is the true Church founded by Him" (J. A. Möhler, *Symbolik*, 3rd edn., 1834, p. 396). It is to this that we can only say No. *Est enim ecclesia coetus non alligatus ad ordinariam successionem, sed ad verbum Dei. Ibi renascitur ecclesia, ubi Deus restituit doctrinam et dat Spiritum sanctum* (Melancthon, *De ecclesia et de auctoritate verbi Dei*, 1539, *C.R.*, 22, 598). And the reason for the

protest is that in these circumstances apostolicity necessarily ceases to be a divine gift and human task and becomes an assured human possession, that it is "pre-eminently" understood in a mechanically historical and legal way, that it can no longer be a norm which confronts the Church with direction and judgment, that in contrast it falls completely under the *judicium ecclesiae*, the control of the second or third or hundredth Peter. Spiritual succession obviously presupposes that the *successor* is spiritually but not mechanically identical with the *antecessor*, so that the *antecessor* still has elbow-room of his own as distinct from the *successor*. Such elbow-room, however, is not given to Peter in the Roman Catholic system. Here the *antecessor* is taken up and absorbed in the *successor*. What constitutes the apostolicity of proclamation here is the watch at Peter's grave. On this presupposition neither Peter, the apostolate, nor the Holy Spirit is any longer a free power in the Church and over against the Church. On this presupposition the Church is again left to itself and referred to itself and its self-reflection. This is why we cannot endorse the Roman Catholic doctrine of succession. Nor especially can we endorse the form in which it is presented and espoused by Friedrich Heiler, *Im Ringen um die Kirche*, 1931, p. 479 (cf. esp. the "four grounds" p. 506 f.); theologically this form can only be called dilettante whether from the Roman Catholic or the Evangelical standpoint.

The apostolic succession of the Church must mean that it is guided by the Canon, that is, by the prophetic and apostolic word as the necessary rule of every word that is valid in the Church. It must mean that the Church enters into the succession of the prophets and apostles in their office of proclamation, and does so in such a way that their proclamation freely and independently precedes, while that of the Church is related to it, is ventured in obedience on the basis of it, is measured by it, and replaces it only as and to the extent that it conforms to it. It must mean that the Church always admits the free power of their proclamation over it. As far as the idea of a living succession is concerned everything depends on the *antecessor* being regarded as alive and having free power over against the *successor*. But if, as here, the *antecessor* has long since died, this can happen only if his proclamation has been fixed in writing and if it is acknowledged that he still has life and free power over the Church to-day in this written word of his. On the written nature of the Canon, on its character as *scriptura sacra*, hangs his autonomy and independence, and consequently his free power over against the Church and the living nature of the succession. Naturally it might also have pleased God to give His Church the Canon in the form of an unwritten prophetic and apostolic tradition propagating itself from spirit to spirit and mouth to mouth.

In this case it might be legitimate and it might make sense that the grave of Peter should be the central shrine of the Church. Canon might be the event of tradition, i.e., "the distinctive Christian meaning present in the Church and propagating itself by Church education . . . the living word continually alive in the hearts of believers" (J. A. Möhler, *Symbolik*, 3rd edn., 1834, p. 371).

Now one cannot wish to contest the fact that there is something of this kind in the Church apart from the real Canon. But one must also say that if it had pleased God to make this unwritten spiritual-oral tradition the Canon of His Church, the Canon would be as little distinguishable from the life of the Church as the blood of our fathers coursing through our veins is distinguishable from our own blood. In other words, the Church would again be left alone and referred to itself, to its own vitality. Whatever there may be of such spiritual-oral tradition in the Church, since it does not have written form it obviously cannot have the character of an authority irremovably confronting the Church. In unwritten tradition the Church is not addressed; it is engaged in dialogue with itself.

The saying of Papias: οὐ γὰρ τὰ ἐκ τῶν βιβλίων τοσούτον με ὠφελεῖν ὑπελάμβανον ὅσον τὰ παρὰ ζώσης φωνῆς καὶ μενούσης (Euseb., *H.E.*, III, 39, 4), is an indication of the change which came already at the beginning of the 2nd century and which was so disastrous in its effects. Living quality was now no longer sought and found in the written word of the apostles themselves but in the "voice" of those contemporaries who had known the apostles and preference was given to this "living and lasting voice" over the books, i.e., the apostolic writings. We are at the end of the same development—the living quality has now completely passed from *antecessor* to *successor*—when Karl Adam (*Das Wesen des Katholizismus*, 4th edn., 1927, p. 162) can speak of the "dead word" of the Bible in contrast to the "vitality" of Church tradition. But are we on another path, and not still in the middle of the same one, when Lessing refuses to suspend "no less than all eternity" "on a spider's thread," i.e., the word of the first witnesses (*Eine Duplik*, *Lessings Theol. Schr.*, ed. C. Gross, II, 2, p. 34)? For here again the *regula fidei* is not identical with Scripture (*Nötige Antwort*, *ib.*, II, 2, p. 215 f.). Only the enduring miracle of religion and not Scripture is the decisive proof of Christianity (*Eine Duplik*, *ib.*, II, 2, p. 33). "It must surely be possible that everything written by the apostles should be lost again and the religion taught by them would still persist" (*Fragm. eines Unbekannten*, *ib.*, II, 1, p. 262). Really? his opponent M. Goeze asked and Lessing answered defiantly: "God preserve me from thinking so poorly of Christ's teaching as to dare to answer this question with an outright negative. No, I will not utter this negative even though an angel from heaven dictated it to me. Even less when a mere Lutheran parson wants to put it on my lips" (*Axiomata*, *ib.*, II, 2, p. 118). With more right than the first words of John's Gospel, so Lessing thought, the Testament of John: "Little children, love one another," ought to be there in golden letters for all to read in the most visible place in all churches (*Das Test. Joh.*, *ib.*, II, 2, p. 19). "It is, of course, apocryphal, this testament, but no less divine for that" (*Über den Beweis . . .*, *ib.*, II, 2, p. 14). Who does not feel reminded by this last statement that with Holy Scripture the Council of Trent too *nec non traditiones ipsas, tum ad fidem, tum ad mores pertinentes, tanquam vel oratenus a Christo vel a Spiritu sancto dictatas et continua successione in Ecclesia catholica conservatas, pari pietatis affectu et reverentia suscipit et veneratur* (*Trid. sess. IV Recipiuntur libri . . .*). Was Lessing guilty of catholicising or was the Council of Trent guilty of modernising (which began, of course, with Papias)? How are these two trends related to one another? One thing is certain; they agree in their effect, the granting of relative independence to the Church *vis-à-vis* the Canon of Holy Scripture, i.e., relative devaluation of this Canon.

If, then, apart from the undeniable vitality of the Church itself there stands confronting it a concrete authority with its own vitality, an authority whose pronouncement is not the Church's dialogue with itself but an address to the Church, and which can have *vis-à-vis* the Church the position of a free power and therefore of a criterion, then obviously in its writtenness as "Bible" it must be distinguished from and given precedence over the purely spiritual and oral life of ecclesiastical tradition. It is true that this real, biblical Canon is constantly exposed to absorption into the life, thought and utterance of the Church inasmuch as it continually seeks to be understood afresh and hence expounded and interpreted. Exegesis is always a combination of taking and giving, of reading out and reading in. Thus exegesis, without which the norm cannot assert itself as a norm, entails the constant danger that the Bible will be taken prisoner by the Church, that its own life will be absorbed into the life of the Church, that its free power will be transformed into the authority of the Church, in short, that it will lose its character as a norm magisterially confronting the Church. All exegesis can become predominantly interposition rather than exposition and to that degree it can fall back into the Church's dialogue with itself. Nor will one banish the danger, but only conjure it up properly and make it acute, by making correct exposition dependent on the judgment of a definitive and decisive teaching office in the Church or on the judgment of a historico-critical scholarship which comports itself with equal infallibility. If we assume that one or other of these authorities is worthy of the Church's highest confidence, then either way the Church goes astray in respect of the Bible by thinking that in one way or the other it can and should control correct exposition, and thereby set up a norm over the norm, and thereby capture the true norm for itself. The exegesis of the Bible should rather be left open on all sides, not for the sake of free thought, as Liberalism would demand, but for the sake of a free Bible. Here as everywhere the defence against possible violence to the text must be left to the text itself, which in fact has always succeeded in doing something a purely spiritual and oral tradition cannot do, namely, maintaining its own life against the encroachments of individual or total periods and tendencies in the Church, victoriously asserting this life in ever new developments, and thus creating recognition for itself as a norm.

"Inward truth," in spite of Lessing's protest (*Axiomata*, *op. cit.*, II, 2, p. 127), is "a wax nose that any knave can mould as he will to suit his own face," and if Counter-Reformation polemics did apply the same excellent metaphor to the Bible (*scriptura est tanquam nasus cereus; quia flecti potest hinc inde*, quoted by Calvin, *Articuli Fac. Paris. cum Antidoto*, 1544, C.R., 7, 31), this simply proves to us how right it is to demand free exegesis for the sake of a free Bible.

Already as a text the canonical text has the character of a free power. All the Church need do is just this: After any exegesis propounded in it, even the very best, it has to realise afresh the distinction between text and commentary and to let the text speak again without let or hindrance, so that it will experience the lordship of this free power and find in the Bible the partner or counterpart which the Church must find in it if it is to take the living *successio apostolorum* seriously.

Now we must also ask, of course, how it comes about that the prophetic and apostolic word in particular takes up this normative position over against the Church and its proclamation. We have tried to make it clear that it must be a written word, a text, to be a true Canon as distinct from the Church's own life. But obviously the fact that it is written does not alone make it the norm. There are other texts about which much the same might be said regarding their exegesis or the free power residing within them. And finally a large part of the non-canonical tradition is also present as text, e.g., in so far as it has been given fixed form in dogma. What is it that makes the Bible of the Old and New Testaments the Canon? Why must the Church's recollection of God's past revelation always have the Bible as its concrete object? It is no evasion of this question, which we are always right to raise afresh, if in the first instance we reply at once that the Bible constitutes itself the Canon. It is the Canon because it imposed itself upon the Church as such, and continually does so. The Church's recollection of God's past revelation has the Bible specifically as its object because in fact this object and no other is the promise of future divine revelation which can make proclamation a duty for the Church and which can give it joy and courage for this duty. If we thought we could say why this is so, we should again be acting as if we had in our hands a measure by which we could measure the Bible and on this basis assign it its distinctive position. Our ultimate and decisive wisdom would then be once again the wisdom of a self-dialogue, even if a self-dialogue about the Bible. No, the Bible is the Canon just because it is so. It is so by imposing itself as such. And if we can only register this event (as such) as the reality in which the Church is the Church, nevertheless, when this is done, it is not impossible afterwards, exegetically, to state in what this self-imposing consists and how far it sets a limit to the wisdom of our dialogue with ourselves. At this point we should already refer in advance to the content of Holy Scripture. The prophetic and apostolic word is the word, witness, proclamation and preaching of Jesus Christ. The promise given to the Church in this Word is the promise of God's mercy which is uttered in the person of Him who is very God and very Man and which takes up our cause when we could not help ourselves at all because of our enmity against God. The promise of this Word is thus

Immanuel, God with us—with us who have brought ourselves, and continually bring ourselves again, into the dire straits of not being able to be with God. Holy Scripture is the word of men who yearned, waited and hoped for this Immanuel and who finally saw, heard and handled it in Jesus Christ. Holy Scripture declares, attests and proclaims it. And by its declaration, attestation and proclamation it promises that it applies to us also and to us specifically. The man who so hears their word that he grasps and accepts its promise, believes. And this grasping and accepting of the promise: Immanuel with us sinners, in the word of the prophets and apostles, this is the faith of the Church. In this faith it recollects the past revelation of God and in this faith it expects the future revelation that has yet to come. It recollects the incarnation of the eternal Word and the reconciliation accomplished in Him, and it expects the future of Jesus Christ and its own redemption from the power of evil. Thus Scripture imposes itself in virtue of this its content. In distinction from all other scripture the Scripture with this content—really this!—is Holy Scripture. When the Church heard this word—and it heard it only in the prophets and apostles and nowhere else—it heard a magisterial and ultimate word which it could not ever again confuse or place on a level with any other word. The Scripture with this content sets a natural limit for recollection in the form of self-dialogue. If “Immanuel, with us sinners” is true, then our own deepest ground of being, whatever we think concerning it, cannot be the past revelation of God, and the return to ourselves, however significant it may be in other ways, has nothing whatever to do with the return to God’s revelation. The Scripture with this content must confront the life of the Church, which can be life only in this relation, as an entity full of its own vitality and free power, as a criterion which cannot be dissolved into the historical life of the Church. Finally, the Scripture with this content must always become again and again the thing we started with, the object of authentic recollection in which the Church with its proclamation looks and moves forward to the future. “I believe, therefore do I speak” (Ps. 116¹⁰). Hearing this word with faith in its promise demands proclamation and makes it possible.

The great historical example of this discovery of the Canon that is given to the Church in the Bible in virtue of its content is the early period of the Reformation. What took place in Wittenberg and Zürich in the twenties of the 16th century and in Geneva in the thirties is like a book of illustrations of what has just been said. The Church perceives again that it does not have Christ with His gifts in itself; it must be found by His Word which comes to it from without (“Salvation has come to us of grace and pure goodness. . .”). But it perceives this because His Word, and in this He Himself, has already found it, because it is no longer left to itself, because He has already come on the scene to comfort and to judge as its partner and counterpart in the biblical word, because, concretely,

the Old and New Testaments have already spoken to it and already forced themselves on it as the “canon of truth.” Its proclamation is again placed under the necessity of becoming a succession, an obedient following of the prophetic and apostolic word. Hence the Bible is now important to it again as a book, in its supremacy and freedom over against the Church itself, above everything, even its own exegesis of the book, and in its singularity, which consists in and is established by the fact that it is the book of Christ, of the promise of grace, which is not to be heard anywhere else and which puts an end to the distress and pride of the man who stands on himself and takes counsel with himself. And because this book is there as the Canon, it must be preached, as in that age it was preached, with a volume and intensity that surprises us to-day. Because it is there as the Canon, with the Bible and in the Bible and through the Bible the Church discovers in a completely new way what Church proclamation really is.

All that remains now is to add a final word. Presupposing that we are right about the fact described, that by Holy Scripture the Church is summoned and directed to its proclamation and empowered for it, this implies that Holy Scripture, too, is the Word of God. It is so in exactly the same sense in which we have said this of the event of real proclamation. Recollection of God’s past revelation, discovery of the Canon, faith in the promise of the prophetic and apostolic word, or better, the self-imposing of the Bible in virtue of its content, and therefore the existence of real apostolic succession, is also an event, and is to be understood only as an event. In this event the Bible is God’s Word. That is to say, in this event the human prophetic and apostolic word is a representative of God’s Word in the same way as the word of the modern preacher is to be in the event of real proclamation: a human word which has God’s commission to us behind it, a human word to which God has given Himself as object, a human word which is recognised and accepted by God as good, a human word in which God’s own address to us is an event. The fact that God’s own address becomes an event in the human word of the Bible is, however, God’s affair and not ours. This is what we mean when we call the Bible God’s Word. We confess and acknowledge therewith that the recollection of God’s past revelation, without which the enterprise of Church proclamation would be impossible, is just as much God’s grace and gift as is the actualisation our own proclamation needs. It is not in our own power to make this recollection, not even in the form of our grasping at the Bible. Only when and as the Bible grasps at us, when we are thus reminded, is this recollection achieved. If this takes place, if the Bible speaks to us thus of the promise, if the prophets and apostles tell us what they have to tell us, if their word imposes itself on us and if the Church in its confrontation with the Bible thus becomes again and again what it is, all this is God’s decision and not ours, all this is grace and not our work. The Bible is God’s Word to the extent that God causes it to be His Word, to the extent that He speaks through it. In this second equation no less than the first (namely, that Church

proclamation is God's Word) we cannot abstract from the free action of God in and by which He causes it to be true to us and for us here and now that the biblical word of man is His own Word. The statement that the Bible is God's Word is a confession of faith, a statement of the faith which hears God Himself speak through the biblical word of man. To be sure it is a statement which, when venturing it in faith, we accept as true even apart from our faith and beyond all our faith and even in face of our lack of faith. We do not accept it as a description of our experience of the Bible. We accept it as a description of God's action in the Bible, whatever may be the experiences we have or do not have in this connexion. But this is precisely the faith which in this way sees and reaches beyond itself and all related or unrelated experiences to God's action, namely, to the fact that God's action on man has become an event, and not therefore that man has grasped at the Bible but that the Bible has grasped at man. The Bible, then, becomes God's Word in this event, and in the statement that the Bible is God's Word the little word "is" refers to its being in this becoming. It does not become God's Word because we accord it faith but in the fact that it becomes revelation to us. But the fact that it becomes revelation to us beyond all our faith, that it is God's Word even in spite of our lack of faith, is something we can accept and confess as true to us and for us only in faith, in faith as opposed to unbelief, in the faith in which we look away from our faith and unbelief to the act of God, but in faith and not in unbelief, and therefore precisely not in abstraction from the act of God in virtue of which the Bible must become again and again His Word to us.

In the struggle against Calvinists, Schwenckfeldians, Quakers, etc., Lutheran orthodoxy developed a doctrine of the *efficacia Verbi divini etiam ante et extra usum*. The Word of God preached and written has its own divine power no matter what may be its effect on those who hear or read. In the Bible and preaching there takes place a divine *actus purus* no matter how it stands with the *actus secundus* in the hearts of men (Quenstedt, *Theol. did. pol.*, 1685, I, cap. 4, sect. 2, qu. 16; Hollaz, *Ex. theol. acroam.*, 1707, III, 2, 1, qu. 4). Now in so far as the concern of this doctrine is to prove the truth of the statement of faith that the Bible and preaching are God's Word in its full compass as independent of subjective experience and superior to it, we must certainly concur. But the doctrine was trying to do more than this, and here we cannot accept it. Quenstedt even denied that the Bible is an *instrumentum* which requires *novo motu et elevatione nova ad effectum novum ultra propriam suam naturalem virtutem producendum*. The Bible and preaching are rather *media* in which *summa vis et efficacia* intrinsically and permanently reside (*ib.*, *ekth.* 7). The Bible, so Hollaz thinks, is God's saving Word in the same way as the sun gives warmth even behind clouds, or as a seed of grain has force even in the unfruitful earth, or as the hand of a sleeping man is a living hand. Hollaz also declares in blunt terms that the Word of God is not an *actio* but a *vis*, a *potentia*, which as such has *efficacia* even *extra usum*, in other words a *vis hyperphysica analogia efficaciae physicae i.e. vera et realis*. As though the theological criterion of truth and reality could and should be the analogy to the

physical! A force comparable to sunshine or the thrust of a seed certainly needs no *nova elevatio*. It is there as natural forces are there. But is God's Word there in that way? If it is really Word? And if it is the Word of the God who is person? One surely has to choose between the terms Word of God and *vis hyperphysica*, and in Evangelical theology there should not really be any doubt about the choice.

3. THE WORD OF GOD REVEALED

The Bible is the concrete means by which the Church recollects God's past revelation, is called to expectation of His future revelation, and is thus summoned and guided to proclamation and empowered for it. The Bible, then, is not in itself and as such God's past revelation, just as Church proclamation is not in itself and as such the expected future revelation. The Bible, speaking to us and heard by us as God's Word, bears witness to past revelation. Proclamation, speaking to us and heard by us as God's Word, promises future revelation. The Bible is God's Word as it really bears witness to revelation, and proclamation is God's Word as it really promises revelation. The promise in proclamation, however, rests on the attestation in the Bible. The hope of future revelation rests on faith in that which has taken place once and for all. Thus the decisive relation of the Church to revelation is its attestation by the Bible. Its attestation! Once again, the Bible is not in itself and as such God's past revelation. As it is God's Word it bears witness to God's past revelation, and it is God's past revelation in the form of attestation. When the Canon, the staff which commands and sets moving and points the way, is moved by a living stretched-out hand, just as the water was moved in the Pool of Bethesda that it might thereby become a means of healing, then it bears witness, and by this act of witness it establishes the relation of the Church to revelation, and therewith establishes the Church itself as the true Church, and therewith its proclamation as true proclamation. By its witness! Witnessing means pointing in a specific direction beyond the self and on to another. Witnessing is thus service to this other in which the witness vouches for the truth of the other, the service which consists in referring to this other. This service is constitutive for the concept of the prophet and also for that of the apostle; the time has not yet come to speak of the difference between them.

When Paul writes of himself in 1 Cor. 9¹⁶: *ἐὰν γὰρ εὐαγγελίζωμαι, οὐκ ἔστιν μοι καὶ χάρις· ἀνάγκη γὰρ μοι ἐπικείται· οὐαὶ γὰρ μοι ἔστιν ἐὰν μὴ εὐαγγελίσωμαι*, he is hereby describing (cf., e.g., Jer. 20⁷⁻⁹) the situation that is common to both the prophet and the apostle.

Standing in this service, the biblical witnesses point beyond themselves. If we understand them as witnesses, and only as such do

we authentically understand them, i.e., as they understand themselves, then their self, which in its inner and outer determination and movement constitutes as it were the matter of their service, must be decisively understood by us from the standpoint of its form as a reference away from themselves. They do not speak and write for their own sakes, nor for the sake of their deepest inner possession or need; they speak and write, as ordered, about that other. They do not try to push themselves, not even as the champions or advocates of the cause they represent; beyond all immanent teleology they are forced to speak and write about that other. They do not want to offer and commend themselves to the Church, and especially not their own particular experience of God and relationship to God, but through themselves that other. And not even "through themselves" in the sense that man himself must be a more or less perfect organ for the revelation of objective facts and values or subjective stimulations (as is true enough in the achievements of science, politics and art), but through themselves in such a way that what makes man a witness is solely and exclusively that other, the thing attested, which constrains and limits the perfect or imperfect human organ from without.

At this point we cannot reflect assiduously enough "on the difference between an apostle and a genius" (Kierkegaard, 1847). The model of the biblical witness in his unity of form is John the Baptist, who stands so notably at midpoint between the Old Testament and the New, between the prophets and the apostles: *Ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος, ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ, ὄνομα αὐτῷ Ἰωάννης. οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν, ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός, ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι' αὐτοῦ. οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ' ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός* (Jn. 1st, cf. 3²⁷). In this connexion one might recall John the Baptist in Grünewald's Crucifixion, especially his prodigious index finger. Could anyone point away from himself more impressively and completely (*illum oportet crescere me autem minui*)? And could anyone point more impressively and realistically than here to what is indicated? This is what the Fourth Evangelist wanted to say about this John, and therefore about another John, and therefore quite unmistakably about every "John."

Why and in what respect does the biblical witness have authority? Because and in the fact that he claims no authority for himself, that his witness amounts to letting that other itself be its own authority. We thus do the Bible poor and unwelcome honour if we equate it directly with this other, with revelation itself.

This may happen when we seek and think we find revelation in the heroic religious personality of the biblical witness. But it may also happen in the form of a general, uniform and permanent inspiredness of the Bible, which we shall have to speak about later. In the work already mentioned (*Der Begriff des Auserwählten*, ed. T. Haecker, 1917, p. 314), Kierkegaard very rightly says that mistaking an apostle for a genius is to be seen not only on the side of heterodoxy but also on that of hyperorthodoxy, and on that of thoughtlessness in general. We should not in fact forget that the historical view of the Bible with its cult of

heroes and the doctrine of mechanical inspiration are both products of the same age and spirit. A common feature is that they both represent means whereby Renaissance man tried to control the Bible and also tried to set up obstacles to stop it controlling him, as indeed it ought to do.

The direct identification between revelation and the Bible which is in fact at issue is not one that we can presuppose or anticipate. It takes place as an event when and where the biblical word becomes God's Word, i.e., when and where the biblical word comes into play as a word of witness, when and where John's finger does not point in vain but really indicates, when and where we are enabled by means of his word to see and hear what he saw and heard. Thus in the event of God's Word revelation and the Bible are indeed one, and literally so.

"For this preaching means: 'Fear not, for unto you is born this day the Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' Men's words which have grown up in the hearts of men are not like that. For the wisest folk on earth know naught thereof. But this preaching rang down from heaven, of which same, God be praised for ever, we are become partakers. For 'tis all the same if thou hearest or readest this preaching as if thou hadst heard it from the angel himself. For the shepherds too saw not the angels, they saw but the light and the glory. But the words of the angels they heard, which we still hear in preaching, may still be read in the Book, if we will but open our eyes and our ears and learn and use aright such preaching" (Luther, *Predigt von der Engel Lobgesang*, 1544, *W.A.*, 52, p. 50, l. 13).

But for this very reason one needs to see that they are not always the same and also to what extent they are not always the same, to what extent their union is really an event. Purely formally, the revelation to which the biblical witnesses direct their gaze as they look and point away from themselves is to be distinguished from the word of the witnesses in exactly the same way as an event itself is to be distinguished from even the best and most faithful account of it. But this distinction is trifling compared with the fact, for which there is no analogy, that in revelation our concern is with the coming Jesus Christ and finally, when the time was fulfilled, the Jesus Christ who has come. Literally, and this time really directly, we are thus concerned with God's own Word spoken by God Himself. What we have in the Bible are in any case human attempts to repeat and reproduce this Word of God in human words and thoughts and in specific human situations, e.g., with reference to the complications of the political position of Israel as a buffer between Egypt and Babylon, or with reference to the errors and confusions in the Christian Church at Corinth between A.D. 50 and 60. On the one hand *Deus dixit*, on the other *Paulus dixit*. These are two different things. And precisely because they are not two things but become one and the same thing in the event of the Word of God, we must maintain that it is by no means self-evident or intrinsically one that revelation should be understood

primarily as the superior principle and the Bible primarily as the subordinate principle.

As early as the epistles of Ignatius of Antioch (e.g., *Ad Magn.*, 13, 2) a model is found for the hierarchical church-bishop relation in the apostle-Christ relation. Augustine in his first homily on John's Gospel compares the biblical witnesses to the hills from which help comes according to Ps. 121: Yet not from the hills themselves but from the Lord who made heaven and earth and who is over these hills. For: *Audeo dicere fratres mei, forsitan nec ipse Joannes dixit ut est, sed et ipse ut potuit; quia de Deo homo dixit: Et quidem inspiratus a Deo sed tamen homo. Quia inspiratus, dixit aliquid; si non inspiratus esset, dixisset nihil: Quia vero homo inspiratus, non totum quod est dixit, sed quod potuit homo dixit.* One has to distinguish, says Augustine in another passage, between what *veritas incommutabilis per se ipsam ineffabiliter loquitur rationalis creaturae mentibus* and its expression *per mutabilem creaturam* by means of spiritual images and a physical voice (*De civ. Dei*, XVI, 6, 1). Anselm distinguishes in the same way between the directly (*sine humana doctrina*) enacted divine sowing in the hearts of the prophets and apostles and the increase from the resultant harvest with which we now work (*De concordia qu.*, III, 6). Holy Scripture is *super solidam veritatem . . . velut super firmum fundamentum fundata* (*Cur Deus homo?* II, 19); it is not, then, just identical with it. Luther speaks of the same direct revelation when he distinguishes between the prophets on the one side and the wise men and scribes on the other: "They are prophets which preach out of the mere inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which have not drawn it from Scripture or through men, as Moses and Amos were. And these are the highest and best which are wise and know how to make others wise, and to set out and expound Scripture; such were almost all the patriarchs before and with Moses, and after him many too, especially the apostles, who were laymen and sorely unlettered folk as Luke saith in Ac. 5, 'ignorant of Scripture'" (*Kirchenpostille*, 1522, W.A., 10¹, p. 271, l. 21). On the other hand wise men and scribes already presuppose the existence of prophetic Scripture. Even Calvin, who approximated revelation and Scripture much more closely than Augustine did, says in the very passage which is most frequently quoted, and with a plain reservation, that Holy Scripture has with believers the authority appropriate to it, *ubi statuunt e coelo fluxisse, ac si vivae ipsae Dei voces illic exaudirentur* (*Instit.*, I, 7, 1), and in the decisive passage his formulation of the doctrine of Scripture is that *summa Scripturae probatio passim a Dei loquentis persona sumitur* (*ib.*, 7, 4). Even in the orthodoxy of the following age with its fatal slide into the doctrine of inspiredness, recollection of a conscious distinction lives on in the most varied ways. According to Bullinger (*Comp. rel. christ.*, 1598, p. 5, quoted according to A. Schweizer, *Glaubensl. d. ev. ref. Kirche*, Vol. 1, 1844, p. 200) we must say: *Litterae, verba caro sunt, sententiae vero Dei.* According to W. Musculus (*Loci comm.*, 1564, p. 73, Schweizer, *op. cit.*, p. 199) Holy Scripture is called holy *quoniam de sacris rebus loquuntur*. According to Peter Martyr (*Loci comm.*, 1580, p. 13, Schweizer, *op. cit.*, p. 200) Holy Scripture is an *expressio quaedam sapientiae Dei*. According to J. Gerhard (*Loci theol.*, 1610, *Prooem.* 18) the *verbum externum Dei* goes forth one way *per inspirationem* and another way *per sermonem externum*, i.e., through angels, men, or human writings. In the *Syn. pur. Theol. Leid.*, 1624, *Disp.* 1, 8 we read: *Sacrae Theologiae revelatio a Deo prophetis et Apostolis facta, est immediata, quae autem per hos Ecclesiae Dei manifestata est, mediata est.* And frequently along the lines and even in the words of this very distinction the period of high orthodoxy (e.g., B. Bucan, *Instit. Theol.*, 1605, *Loc.* 4, 16), both Reformed (e.g., F. Turretini, *Instit. theol. elenct.*, 1679, *Loc.*, 2, *qu.* 2, 5 f.) and Lutheran (Quenstedt, *Theol. did. pol.*, 1686, I, *cap.* 4, *sect.* 2, *qu.* 3, *ekth.* 3 and

I, 7, 1, *thes.* 1, n. 2; Baier, *Comp. theol. pos.*, 1686, *Prol.* 2, 1; Hollaz, *Ex theol. acroam.*, 1707, *Prol.* 3, *qu.* 2), for all its concentration on Scripture as such, could still find a place for discussion of revelation itself as this is to be distinguished from Scripture because it alone is what establishes it as inspired Scripture.

Revelation engenders the Scripture which attests it: as the commission or burden laid on the prophets and apostles, as the object which introduces itself in distinction from them, as both the judge and the guarantor of the truth of what they say, and as the event of inspiration in which they become speakers and writers of the Word of God. Because revelation engenders the Bible that attests it, because Jesus Christ has called the Old and New Testaments into existence, because Holy Scripture is the record of a unique hearing of a unique call and a unique obedience to a unique command, therefore it could become the Canon, and again and again it can become the "living" Canon, the publisher of revelation, the summons and command of God, God's Word to us. If in the prophets and apostles the Church has a concrete counterpart by which it is reminded of God's past revelation, set in expectation of future revelation, and thus summoned to proclamation and empowered for it, this takes place because it really has in them the publishers of past revelation. But the prophets and apostles did not appoint themselves the publishers of revelation, nor are they ever this intrinsically or as a matter of course. What makes them this is the occurrence of God's revelation itself apart from their own existence. The occurrence, and so we must call this thing that happened to them: *Deus dixit*. What has engendered Scripture and what Scripture for its part attests has happened truly and definitively, once and once-for-all. We have already discussed in outline what it was that happened: God was with us, with us His enemies, with us who were visited and smitten by His wrath. God was with us in all the reality and fullness with which He does what He does. He was with us as one of us. His Word became flesh of our flesh, blood of our blood. His glory was seen here in the depths of our situation, and the full depths of our situation were disclosed for the first time when illumined then and there by the Lord's glory, when in His Word He came down to the lowest parts of the earth (Eph. 4⁹), in order that there and in that way He might rob death of its power and bring life and immortality to light (2 Tim. 1¹⁰). This happened, and this is what the Old Testament as a word of prophecy and the New Testament as a word of fulfilment both proclaim as having happened, as having happened conclusively, totally, and sufficiently. This makes the biblical witnesses remarkable figures like John who cannot be brought under any morphology of genius. This is why it is true of them, though in different ways: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (Ps. 69⁹). This is why, although they seek

no authority, even with their fallible human word they can continually claim and enjoy the most unheard-of authority. This came upon them, and through them it constantly seeks to come afresh upon the Church and to be cried aloud as absolutely the most urgent thing that any age and any man in any age and any man in any respect can and must hear: This "God with us" has happened. It has happened in human history and as a part of human history. Yet it has not happened as other parts of this history usually happen. It does not need to be continued or completed. It does not point beyond itself or merely strive after a distant goal. It is incapable of any exegesis or of even the slightest addition or subtraction. Its form cannot be changed. It has happened as self-moved being in the stream of becoming. It has happened as completed event, fulfilled time, in the sea of the incomplete and changeable and self-changing.

A bit of apocryphal Christian legend from the 2nd century might be mentioned here because for all its historical foolishness it shows very clearly what fulfilled time would look like if we were able to view it. In the so-called *Protevangelium of James*, chap. 18, Joseph, the foster-parent of Jesus, tells us what he is supposed to have experienced in the environs of Bethlehem on the night of the Lord's nativity: "But I, Joseph, went about and went not about. And I looked up at the vault of heaven and saw it stand still, and I looked up into the air and saw it fixed, and I saw the birds of heaven immovable, and I looked on the ground and saw a dish standing there and labourers lying down and their hands in the dish, and the chawers chewed not, and those on the point of lifting out brought nothing up, and those who wanted to bring to their mouths brought nothing to their mouths, but all faces were directed upwards, and lo, sheep were being driven and remained standing, and the shepherd raised his hand to smite them and his hand stayed up, and I looked at the water in the river and saw the mouths of the goats held down to it and they did not drink; and suddenly everything resumed its course" (*NT Apokryph*, ed. F. Hennecke, 2nd edn., 1924, p. 91). If in its perfect divine actuality fulfilled time is to be the one and only truly moved and moving time, then it does indeed mean suspension, the total relativising of all other time and of its apparently moved and moving content.

This fulfilled time which is identical with Jesus Christ, this absolute event in relation to which every other event is not yet event or has ceased to be so, this "It is finished," this *Deus dixit* for which there are no analogies, is the revelation attested in the Bible. To understand the Bible from beginning to end, from verse to verse, is to understand how everything in it relates to this as its invisible-visible centre. But since this is so we have to say that we are in no position to understand the Bible ourselves. It can only be that the Bible gives itself to be understood by us, so that we come to hear the Bible as God's Word. To hear the Bible as God's Word means, therefore, that then and there, in the undoubtedly very modest, changing, perhaps increasing but possibly also decreasing compass in which it is true at any given time for an individual, we hear the human words of the Bible as the bearers

of this eternal Word, based on this centre and having it in view again in everything they say. When the Bible itself is revelation in this way, it establishes the Church and makes its proclamation necessary and possible. The unity of revelation guarantees the unity of the biblical witness in and in spite of all its multiplicity and even contradictoriness. The unity of the Bible guarantees the unity of the Church in and in spite of the difference in the proportion of faith in which the Bible becomes revelation to this man and that man and to this man and that man to-day and to-morrow. On this basis the unity of the Church guarantees the unity of proclamation.

According to all that has been said revelation is originally and directly what the Bible and Church proclamation are derivatively and indirectly, i.e., God's Word. We have said of Church proclamation that it must continually become God's Word. And we have said the same of the Bible: It must continually become God's Word. The reference of this "continually," of course, is not to human experience, as though our reaction to this event or our attitude to it could be constitutive for its reality and content. The reference is to the freedom of God's Word. *Ubi et quando visum est Deo*, not intrinsically but in virtue of the divine decision taken ever and anon in the Bible and proclamation as the free God uses them, the Bible and proclamation are God's Word. But this cannot be said about revelation. When we speak about revelation we are confronted by the divine act itself and as such, which we have already had to bear in mind as the basis and boundary, the presupposition and proviso, of what had to be said about the Bible and proclamation. For (1) proclamation is real proclamation, i.e., the promise of future revelation, only as the repetition of the biblical witness to past revelation, and (2) the Bible is real witness, i.e., the factual recollection of past revelation, only in its relation to this past revelation attested in it. This being so, the freedom of God's grace is the basis and boundary, the presupposition and proviso, of the statements according to which the Bible and proclamation are the Word of God. The decisive content of these statements, the positive thing they state and the evident negations by which this is surrounded, the relation in which the statements are true, is their relation to revelation. But revelation is simply the freedom of God's grace. It is naturally not the principle of this freedom. This principle is only the obviously necessary product of human reflection on this freedom. It is rather the event in which the free God causes His free grace to rule and work. In this event of God's grace proclamation and the Bible are "held" in the three senses of the term: (1) "held up on high," singled out, made visible and familiar, to the degree that the Bible seeks to bear witness to this event and proclamation seeks to repeat this attestation, to the degree that in the Bible and proclamation this event

is what is really meant in the human talk; (2) "held in place," relativised, limited, to the degree that this event is also the boundary of what proclamation and the Bible can try to accomplish in and of themselves, the boundary which we obviously cannot think is set aside by what men wanted and want to say; and (3) "held in store," preserved, secured, to the degree that this event is the confirmation and ratification, the fulfilment of what proclamation and the Bible achieve in and of themselves, the presence of what is meant in the human word of the Bible and proclamation. Precisely in view of revelation, or on the basis of it, one may thus say of proclamation and the Bible that they are God's Word, that they continually become God's Word. But for this very reason one cannot say the same of revelation. One has to say the exact opposite, namely, that revelation becomes God's Word, i.e., in the Bible and proclamation, because it is this Word in itself. It is this that "holds" the Bible and proclamation in that threefold sense. Revelation is itself the divine decision which is taken in the Bible and proclamation, which makes use of them, which thus confirms, ratifies and fulfils them. It is itself the Word of God which the Bible and proclamation are as they become it.

οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ θεοῦ λαλεῖν· οὐ γὰρ ἐκ μέτρου διδωσιν τὸ πνεῦμα. ὁ πατὴρ ἀγαπᾷ τὸν υἱόν, καὶ πάντα δέδωκεν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ. ὁ πιστεύων εἰς τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον· ὁ δὲ ἀπειθῶν τῷ υἱῷ οὐκ ὀψεται ζωὴν, ἀλλ' ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μένει ἐπ' αὐτόν (Jn. 3³⁴⁻³⁶).

It does not stand, therefore, under any condition—one can say this only of our knowledge of revelation—but is itself the condition. Of it one may say, not *ubi et quando*, but *illic et tunc visum est Deo*. The reference here is not to a possibility still to be realised but to the reality of the Word of God as the basis of all possible self-realizations. *Ubi et quando* can and must be said because ultimately or primarily we have to say *illic et tunc*. Because there is a moving hand there is also a moved and moving Canon and a commissioned, objective, true and actual proclamation in obedience to this Canon. When we say "Word of God revealed," then in distinction from the "written" and "preached" of the two other forms of the Word of God, "revealed" does not belong to the predicate. It is simply a paraphrase, a second designation of the subject. If "written" and "preached" denote the twofold concrete relation in which the Word of God is spoken to us, revelation denotes the Word of God itself in the act of its being spoken in time. Above this act there is nothing other or higher on which it might be based or from which it might be derived unless it was from the transcendence of the eternal Word of God that it came forth in revelation. It is the condition which conditions all things without itself being conditioned. This is what we are saying when we call it revelation. Revelation, *revelatio*, ἀποκάλυψις, means the

unveiling of what is veiled. If this is meant strictly and properly, then all that is distinct from revelation is concealment, the hiddenness of the veiled.

The revealed Word of God is the mystery not made known to the aeons but veiled, Rom. 16²⁵; Col. 1²⁶; Eph. 3⁹. But this means that no other reason is to be sought or suggested for its disclosure than the actual disclosing itself. It is in the *νῦν* qualified by ἀποκάλυψις or φανέρωσις that the witness of revelation speaks as such. In this alone can it be understood as unveiled. The final word on the qualification is simply a reference to the will of God: κατ' ἐπιταγὴν τοῦ αἰωνίου θεοῦ (Rom. 16²⁵), οἷς ἠθέλησεν ὁ θεὸς γνωρίσαι . . . (Col. 1²⁶). "Christian faith and Christian life stand in the one little word revelation by God, for where this is not present, no heart can ever be rightly aware of this mystery, which was hidden from the world. Now God revealeth it only to His eternally elected saints, to whom He will have it made known, otherwise it is hidden from everyone and remaineth a proper mystery. What good can the free or enslaved and captive will say or do about that? How will it come in its own might to this light and mystery? If the almighty strong God hide it from it, by no preparation or good work will it ever reach thereto. No creature can come to this knowledge. Christ alone revealeth it to it in the heart. There all merit falleth to the ground, all the powers and abilities of reason, and count for nought with God. Christ alone must give it" (Luther, Sermon on Mt. 11²⁵⁻³⁰, 1527, *W.A.*, 23, p. 689, l. 4).

All revelation, then, must be thought of as revealing, i.e., as conditioned by the act of revelation. The event in which revelation occurs must be seen in connexion with what has happened once and for all in this act. All fulfilled time must be seen as filled with the fullness of this time. Revelation itself, however, is not referred to anything other, higher, or earlier. Revelation as such is not relative. Revelation in fact does not differ from the person of Jesus Christ nor from the reconciliation accomplished in Him. To say revelation is to say "The Word became flesh." To be sure, one can say something quite different by revelation, something purely formal, and relative as such. But to say this is not to say what the Bible means by the word or what Church proclamation is referring to when it refers to the Bible or what must be called revelation in Christian dogmatics if this is to take itself seriously as such. When in the word revelation we say "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," then we are saying something which can have only an intertrinitarian basis in the will of the Father and the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit, in the eternal decree of the triune God, so that it can be established only as knowledge of God from God, of light in light. The same applies if instead of Jesus Christ we say concretely "God with us." It is true that in the term revelation we might have something relative rather than this absolute in view, but the Bible is thinking only of this absolute, and in the knowledge of this absolute the Church with the help of the Bible recalls past revelation, and a dogmatics that works in the sphere of the Church and not in a vacuum has also to cling to it. But to say "God with us" is to say

something which has no basis or possibility outside itself, which can in no sense be explained in terms of man and man's situation, but only as knowledge of God from God, as free and unmerited grace. As the Bible bears witness to God's revelation and as Church proclamation takes up this witness in obedience, both renounce any foundation apart from that which God has given once and for all by speaking. The Bible and proclamation both appeal to this fact that has been given here and now. They cannot reproduce it as a given fact. They cannot bring it on the scene themselves. They can only attest and proclaim it. To bring it about that the *Deus dixit* is present with the Church in its various times and situations is not in the power of the Bible or proclamation. The *Deus dixit* is true—now the *ubi et quando* must come into force again—where it is true, i.e., where and when God, in speaking once and for all, wills according to His eternal counsel that it be true, where and when God by His activating, ratifying and fulfilling of the word of the Bible and preaching lets it become true. This being and becoming true of revelation consists, then, in the fact that the Church really recollects past revelation, and in faith receives, grasps and really proclaims the biblical witness of it as the real promise of future revelation, future revelation here being simply that which has taken place once and for all but it now directed to us too, just as the Christ who comes again is no other than the Christ who has come, but this Christ as the One who now comes also to us. The "God with us" becomes actual for us *hic et nunc* as the promise received and grasped in faith because it is *illic et tunc* a divine act. It is thus that which is true in and for itself, and it becomes true for us as recollection and also as promise, as recollection of Christ come in the flesh and as hope of Christ coming again in glory. It is Jesus Christ Himself who here speaks for Himself and needs no witness apart from His Holy Spirit and the faith that rejoices in His promise received and grasped. This independent and unsurpassable origin of the Word of God that comes to us is what we have in view when we speak of its third form, or materially we should rather say its first form, i.e., its form as the Word of God revealed.

4. THE UNITY OF THE WORD OF GOD

We have been speaking of three different forms of the Word of God and not of three different Words of God. In this threefold form and not otherwise—but also as the one Word only in this threefold form—the Word of God is given to us and we must try to understand it conceptually. It is one and the same whether we understand it as revelation, Bible, or proclamation. There is no distinction of degree or value between the three forms. For to the extent that proclamation really

rests on recollection of the revelation attested in the Bible and is thus obedient repetition of the biblical witness, it is no less the Word of God than the Bible. And to the extent that the Bible really attests revelation it is no less the Word of God than revelation itself. As the Bible and proclamation become God's Word in virtue of the actuality of revelation they are God's Word: the one Word of God within which there can be neither a more nor a less. Nor should we ever try to understand the three forms of God's Word in isolation. The first, revelation, is the form that underlies the other two. But it is the very one that never meets us anywhere in abstract form. We know it only indirectly, from Scripture and proclamation. The direct Word of God meets us only in this twofold mediacy. But Scripture too, to become God's Word for us, must be proclaimed in the Church. So, to give a survey of the whole, the following brief schedule of mutual relations may be drawn up.

The revealed Word of God we know only from the Scripture adopted by Church proclamation or the proclamation of the Church based on Scripture.

The written Word of God we know only through the revelation which fulfils proclamation or through the proclamation fulfilled by revelation.

The preached Word of God we know only through the revelation attested in Scripture or the Scripture which attests revelation.

There is only one analogy to this doctrine of the Word of God. Or, more accurately, the doctrine of the Word of God is itself the only analogy to the doctrine which will be our fundamental concern as we develop the concept of revelation. This is the doctrine of the trinity of God. In the fact that we can substitute for revelation, Scripture and proclamation the names of the divine persons Father, Son and Holy Spirit and *vice versa*, that in the one case as in the other we shall encounter the same basic determinations and mutual relationships, and that the decisive difficulty and also the decisive clarity is the same in both—in all this one may see specific support for the inner necessity and correctness of our present exposition of the Word of God.

The doctrine of the three forms of the Word of God in the sketch attempted here is not new. We have seen in detail how revelation, Scripture and proclamation have from the very first stamped themselves on Christian thought as special forms of God's Word. Some passages in Luther are especially relevant here. Already in the *Dictata super Psalterium* (1513-16) Luther says (on Ps. 45¹): *Quod verbum Dei triplici modo dicitur*: 1. There is a speaking by God *per verbum externum et linguam ad aures hominum*, whose model Luther sees in the word of the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets under the veil of the mere letter. 2. There is a Word of God which He now speaks through His Spirit to His saints on earth, namely, in His Son, this being a *verbum consummans et abbreviatum* compared to the prophetic Word, but still wrapped in manifold veils. 3. There is

a Word that God the Father speaks in Himself and to the saints in eternal glory. So we shall hear it one day, *cum nobis verbum suum ipse sine ullo medio revelabit. Unico et simplicissimo verbo suo* will He then satisfy us, and the Spirit Himself will then be the one sacrament in place of all signs (*W.A.*, 3, p. 262, l. 5). That scant justice is done here to the first form, the *verbum externum* of preaching, and that its significance is not understood, may be seen already from the fact that Luther saw no way to carry out the Trinitarian articulation which he obviously had in mind in relation to the second and third forms, because he could not very well relate to the Holy Spirit what he then regarded as a *verbum externum*. How he conceived of the advance from the first to the second form is also not clear in detail. Furthermore the separation between the Word that the Father speaks *in se ipso* in the third form and *in filio* in the second should not be made in the way it is. On the whole, however, the three forms, up to and including the eschatologically characterised third form, are very accurately perceived and described. There is an interesting variation on the theme in the already quoted sermon on Mt. 23^{34f.} (*Kirchenpostille*, 1522, *W.A.*, 10¹, p. 272, l. 17), which refers to "the three ways in which the truth may be revealed: Scripture, word, thought; Scripture by books, word by the mouth, thought by the heart. One cannot conceive the doctrine in any way save heart, mouth, and Scripture." The last form here, called thought, is simply our "revelation" in virtue of which Scripture and preaching reach man and touch his heart. More important is a passage in a sermon on the wise men (from the same *Kirchenpostille* of 1522). This surprises us especially by the completely new and one might almost say exaggerated value that the *verbum externum* or proclamation now has in Luther. "The oral and public sermon . . . the voice or word cried forth by the mouth" is now for him the light referred to in 2 Cor. 4⁶; 2 Pet. 1¹⁹. "Now Scripture is not understood until the light ariseth." Scripture here is primarily the prophetic word to be found in the Old Testament. At first Luther simply contrasts the New Testament with this as living, i.e., oral proclamation whose task is to open up the prophetic word which is closed in its written form. "For through the Gospel the prophets are opened up, therefore the star must first rise and be seen. For in the New Testament preaching should be done publicly with a living voice and should bring forth to speech and hearing what was hitherto hidden in letters and secret guise. For the New Testament is nought other than an opening and revealing of the Old Testament, as is shown in Rev. 5, where the Lamb of God openeth the book with seven seals. We also see in the apostles how all their preaching was nought but bringing forth Scripture and building thereon." And now Luther has the astonishing continuation: "Therefore even Christ Himself wrote not down His teaching, as Moses did his, but did it orally and gave no command to write it. The apostles, too, wrote little, and not all of them that. . . . Even those who did write no more than point us to the ancient Scripture, as the angel pointed the shepherds to the manger and the swaddling clothes. And the star pointed the magi to Bethlehem. Therefore 'tis not like the New Testament to write books about Christian doctrine, but without books there should be in all places good, learned, spiritual, diligent preachers who draw the living word out of ancient writ and unceasingly din it into the people as the apostles did. For ere they wrote they first had preached to the people and converted them by the living voice, which was their proper apostolic and New Testament work. This is likewise the right star which sheweth Christ's birth and the angelic message telling of the swaddling bands and the crib. But man's need to write books is a great injury and it is a violation of the Spirit that the need hath compelled it and is not the way of the New Testament. . . ." New Testament Scripture as an adjunct or interpretation of the Old Testament is regarded as a defensive measure against corruption in the Church. "There finally had to be resort to that, and

need was that some sheep should be saved from the wolves: so men began to write, and yet through writing, so far as possible, to bring Christ's little sheep into Scripture, and they prepared thereby that the sheep should be able to pasture themselves and guard themselves against the wolves when their shepherds would not pasture them or turned wolves." But it would have been better if other books had not been written in the Church. And the star of Bethlehem, the star of the wise men, should be in every case "the lively preaching and simple revelation of Christ as the same is hid and promised in Scripture; therefore he that seeth the star knoweth assuredly the King of the Jews, the newborn Christ; for the Gospel teacheth nought but Christ, and Scripture likewise hath nought but Christ. But whoso knoweth not Christ may hear the Gospel or hold the book right in his hands, but understanding of it he hath not yet, for to have the Gospel without understanding is to have no Gospel. And to have Scripture without the knowledge of Christ is to have no Scripture, and is none other than to let this star shine and yet not perceive it" (*W.A.*, 10¹, pp. 625-28). This exaggerated thought is by no means an isolated one in Luther at this period. For him the Old and the New Testament are related as the written word on the one side and the word preached on the other. "Thus the books of Moses and the prophets are also Gospel, since they have preached and described beforehand the same thing about Christ as the apostles have preached and written after. Yet there is a difference between them. For if both are written on paper as regards the letter, the Gospel or the New Testament should not really be written but put in the living voice, which then soundeth forth and is heard everywhere in the world. That it is also written is surplus. But the Old Testament is put only in writing and is thus called 'a letter,' and so the apostles call it 'writ,' for it hath pointed only to the coming Christ. But the Gospel is a living sermon about Christ already come" (*Ep. S. Petri*, 1523, *W.A.*, 12, p. 275, l. 5; cf. also 259, 8; 556, 9). It need hardly be shown, of course, that in other passages Luther attached supreme importance to the written New Testament, that he did not treat it as a necessary evil, and that it is thus quite wrong to hold him systematically to this distinction. But one may still learn from the distinction how he viewed the relation between Scripture and preaching generally. Both have the same theme and content, and this in such a way that preaching takes it first from Scripture and can thus be no other than scriptural exposition, but also in such a way that it always draws from Scripture in the form of living proclamation and has thus to become God's Word to us. Allegorising on Lk. 2¹² at the same period, Luther summed up his view as follows: "Christ is completely wrapped in Scripture as the body in the swaddling clothes. Preaching is the crib in which he lies and is set, and from it we get food and provender" (Sermon on Lk. 2, 1523, *W.A.*, 12, p. 418, l. 24). Protestant orthodoxy, which at the peak of its development had no liking for talk about the distinction between the forms of the Word of God and the fluidity of their mutual relations, emphasised the more zealously something which is equally true and instructive in itself, namely, their unity. With reference to the unity of the Word of God to the biblical witnesses and through them: *hae distinctiones non faciunt essentialiam aliquam differentiam inter verbum Dei hominibus communicatum, sed tantum distinctos communicationis et revelationis modos expriment* (J. Gerhard, *Loci theol.*, 1610, Prooem. 18), *Distinctio Verbi in ἀπαφὸν et ἑρραφὸν non est divisio generis in species . . . quasi alius esset Verbum non scriptum a scripto; sed est distinctio subjecti in sua accidentia, quia eidem Verbo accidit, ut fuerit non scriptum olim et nunc sit scriptum* (F. Turretini, *Instit. theol. el.*, 1679, Loc. 2, qu. 2, 4). *Nec vero aliud est verbum Dei quod a Deo vel quod inspiratum viris Dei, quam quod in scriptura traditur, aut praedicatur, vel mente humana reconditur* (Hollaz, *Ex. theol. acrom.*, 1707, III, 2, 1). All this is true. Yet in the statements of this period of

transition one misses painfully the Reformers' insight into the dynamics of the mutual relationships of the three forms. Its absence comes to light in the theory of inspiration, which implies a freezing, as if were, of the relation between Scripture and revelation. But it may be seen especially in the fact that the theologians of this period hardly seem to have any more a true and essential awareness of the third form of the Word of God, proclamation. Preaching is called "God's Word" in them too, but the real connecting point between revelation and Scripture in the present is increasingly something far different from the act of Church proclamation: it is the knowledge, faith, sanctification and blessedness of the individual. But this means that the unity of revelation and Scripture, however stiff the objectivity in which it is arrayed, takes on more and more the aspect, not of God's dealings with His Church, but rather of a private divine institution for so many private persons, preaching and the sacraments being adequate instruments of this as the so-called *media salutis*. Forgetting that the correlate of revelation and Scripture is not in the first instance the saving or amending of the individual but (on the same level as revelation and Scripture) proclamation as the service of God, the Church forgot nothing less than itself. From being a place for the service of God, through which as such men are also helped, it now made itself a place for the finest service of men in which God will finally have to figure as the supremely objective and supremely miraculous means, yet only as a means. Boasting of the objectivity with which the Word of God was invested, especially in its biblical form, was only the expression of a bad conscience. It helped to conceal the fact that the men of this age no longer knew what they were really saying when they said "Word of God," that they no longer knew that they were talking about the present-day action, not of man in his relation to God, but of God in His relation to man, and therefore about the Church. When they no longer knew this, was it surprising that the rising Modernism of the new age discovered that the goal of the finest service of man could be reached by a simpler and less miraculous way than that which orthodoxy still espoused with great external but not so great internal fidelity? Was it surprising if the objectivity which orthodoxy still claimed for revelation and Scripture, and theoretically for preaching and the sacraments too, struck one bright mind and thousands of bright minds and even pious hearts as more and more a superfluous idol which it could only seem to them a good work, well-pleasing to God, to smash in pieces? The catastrophic crash of orthodoxy in the 18th century, the consequences of which we still have to carry to this day, is no more puzzling than the collapse of a house whose foundations are giving way. Responsibility for the disaster must be borne, not by the philosophy of the world which had become critical, but by the theology of the Church which had become too uncritical, which no longer understood itself at the centre. For all our great respect for the work done by orthodoxy, and for all our understanding of the ultimate intentions of this work, our task to-day must be the different one of re-adopting Luther's concepts and taking proclamation seriously again as the work of the Church in and through which God is to be served and not man, and God is to speak. On that basis we must then try to understand once again in what sense first the Bible, and even before that revelation, is really the Word of God. It was here that forgetfulness set in before the disaster of the 18th century. It is here obviously that new reflection must begin. Hence the direct object of dogmatics to-day must be Church proclamation

§ 5

THE NATURE OF THE WORD OF GOD

The Word of God in all its three forms is God's speech to man.
For this reason it occurs, applies and works in God's act on man.
But as such it occurs in God's way which differs from all other occurrence, i.e., in the mystery of God.

I. THE QUESTION OF THE NATURE OF THE WORD OF GOD

At this point we have to deviate in two ways especially from the first edition of this book. We refer first to the discussions in the original § 5, 1. There, after establishing the concept of the Word of God in its threefold form by means of an analysis of Church proclamation, we made a transition from a phenomenological treatment to an existential treatment, i.e., from thinking in terms of an outward observer to thinking in terms of an existential participant. Objection was rightly raised against this section from various quarters (cf. F. Gogarten, "Karl Barths Dogmatik," *Theol. Rundschau*, 1929, p. 70 f.; T. Siegfried, *Das Wort und die Existenz*, I, 1930, p. 35 f., 250 f.). It might be asked whether the concepts of phenomenological and existential thought are properly specified and distinguished in this way. It might also be asked whether existential thinking is more than a particular form of phenomenological thinking or whether there is not even some point where the two coincide. It might thus be asked whether the idea of transition from the one to the other is not in any case impossible. But these are philosophical rather than theological questions. The objection that I have since made against myself is that these concepts, whatever their content and mutual relation may be, cannot in any way constitute or signify decisive turning-points on the way of dogmatic thought as seemed there to be presupposed. No matter how philosophers may or may not reach an understanding on these matters, they will do so as philosophers and not as theologians. That is, they will not do so out of any responsible regard for the theme of theology. Hence theology cannot learn anything from them and ought not to do so, unless it is ready to let them intrude a philosophical theme instead of its own, as has always happened when it has accepted material instruction from any philosophy. Now at this point in the first edition it was not my purpose to take up a philosophical theme in this way. When I spoke of "transition" this was meant to be much more innocuous and incidental than it has been taken to be. It is obvious that in dogmatics as in any science, while we do not have to use a specifically philosophical or any other vocabulary, we may do so when it lends itself to the incidental illustration or bringing into focus of what is said with theological intent, when the meaning and purpose of the linguistic borrowing is fixed with relative certainty by the context, and when there is comparatively little danger of the misunderstanding that theological statements are being supported by a reference to philosophical statements, or that a philosophical theme is being substituted for the theological. In the section at issue, however, this misunderstanding was relatively close, and it arose immediately. To my horror T. Siegfried (*op. cit.*,