

IX. *The Holy Scriptures.*

We believe that the great moments of God's revelation and communication of Himself to men are recorded and interpreted in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

We believe that, while God uttered His Word to man in many portions progressively, the whole is sufficient to declare His mind and will for our salvation. To Israel He made Himself known as a holy and righteous God and a Saviour; the fullness of truth and grace came by Jesus Christ. The writings were collected and preserved by the Church.

We believe that the theme of all Holy Scripture is the redemptive purpose and working of God, and that herein lies its unity.

We believe that in Holy Scripture God claims the complete allegiance of our mind and heart; that the full persuasion of the truth and authority of the Word of God contained in the Scripture is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts; that, using Holy Scripture, the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

So we acknowledge in Holy Scripture the true witness to God's Word and the sure guide to Christian faith and conduct.

CHAPTER IX. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

Revelation. Jer. 1: 9; Gal. 4: 9; Phil. 3: 12.

As I look out from my window I see before me a lovely college quadrangle with lawn and scattered trees. The central building, Victoria College, carries the mind back past the present structure to an older one, a hundred years old and more, which spells the name pioneers. It is inseparably associated with the toil and struggles of the men and women who came to this land on a voyage of discovery—seeking new homes. They sought and found. They cleared the forests, cast in the seed, and their successors dug deep in the earth and discovered untold mineral wealth. From the days of Christopher Columbus onwards this whole continent has had *discovery* as its incentive and watchword: onwards to the Pacific, northwards to the Arctic, downwards into the earth in quest of coal, iron, silver, gold, oil. It has been an epic of human endeavour, personal venture. No wonder such a land has preached the gospel of strenuousness, the religion of humanism. Discovery is a human word: it emphasizes the wealth and knowledge that man goes after.

But there is a knowledge that we do not go after, that presses in upon us. As I so reflect the air grows strangely heavy around me. Thoughts refuse to come. There is a vague feeling of discomfort. There comes an unnatural darkness, then bursts of choppy wind swirl up the leaves. Now the explanation of it all—the thunder rolls and the lightning flashes. The storm had been making me gradually aware of its imminence; there came a sense of something after which I had not gone out in search: there was an invasion of my consciousness from without. So movements stir around my personal world, events gather over my head, experiences culminate in a crisis, and I realize that in the complex God has declared His will for me in a command unsought and unsuspected.

Then my eye falls upon a photograph of a friend of forty years' standing. There he is looking down at me and his presence seems to fill the room. I think away back over the years in school, in college, on summer holidays in long conversations as

we walked across the sands or along the winding roads. And the impression is one of a great indebtedness—a thousand lessons I have learned from him all these years. Of course I sought his company and tried to probe his mind. But chiefly I am aware of a steady *receiving*, gathering, harvesting, not of knowledge only, but much more of friendship, of help, of inspiration, comfort, and all the graces that lie in personality to give. There was always something more to learn. A person may be discovered so far by probing; but from the depths of his nature come the imperishable things—and these we get by his *self-revelation*. "Revelation" is a richer word than "discovery." It tells of more than lands to be settled, more than mineral wealth to be dug up, more than knowledge and abstract truth to be received by the mind. Revelation tells of another personality reaching out towards me, anticipating my needs and forestalling my thoughts, strengthening my will, giving of the manifold gifts of friendship, solace, hope and love.

In the sphere of religion we have often misused the word "discovery." We have pictured the great prophetic souls going out and finding the truth of God in experience. But that is never their way of speaking. As the lamp of God burned in the Temple and Samuel was laid down to sleep, the voice came to him as it had come to Abraham and to Moses. "The Lord took me as I followed the flock," said Amos (7: 15). "Before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee": so Jeremiah (1: 5) assures us he was called. The Psalmists bear witness to this divine initiative: "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me . . . Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down. . . . Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me" (Ps. 139: 1-5).

It is doubtful indeed if "discovery" with its emphasis on human achievement is ever rightly used. When Columbus set out on his historic voyage, was it not because forces and influences planted in his mind *drew* him and *persuaded* him? Our pioneers in this new land had hardly built their log house and cleared their little strip of forest before they were kneeling down to thank God for *leading* them to that goodly land; and they did not rest content till the new settlement had its house of God in the midst: they knew their efforts were not their own. Before men found

silver in the earth, before Newton discovered the law of gravitation, before the scientist discovered the secret of nature in the laboratory, before Euclid worked out his propositions, the divine mind had been there. But if we do make a distinction, it is clear that impersonal things are discovered and personal beings reveal themselves. God is personal, and it is the testimony of Scripture that He has ever been revealing Himself. We are made in His likeness, fashioned for fellowship with Him; and so, if our hearts are open, we may receive His communications. Some would say that since the Fall our natures have been so totally corrupt that we are unable to receive the Divine Word: only by miracle, by sheer supernaturalism, can revelation come; there is no way from man to God, but only a way from God to man. But others will hold with the prologue of the Fourth Gospel that there is a light that lighteneth every man: even the prodigal in the far country remains a son of God who has but to come to himself. At least we have the assurance that God is a self-revealing God, and by His grace His Word has ever been reaching out and finding men, convicting them of sin, and calling them into communion with Himself. To this great truth the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments bear witness.

Communication of Himself. John 1: 14-18.

What is communicated by God to man? To answer that let us reflect on the unveiling of friend to friend. What does a friend convey to us? A mother teaches us to walk, to speak, to give names to this object and that, but is that all? Is it not the giving day by day of herself? Even in the realm of knowledge the teacher whose business it is to instruct—to convey knowledge of mathematics, literature, history—has failed if he has not given something more: the inspiration of his personality, the uplift of his example, the effect of a character and a life that means more than all his knowledge. So in Scripture we find that what God offered to man was not just the truth of His righteousness or the wonder of His majesty. It was that: one aspect of reality came home to this prophet and another to that—to Amos His righteousness and to Hosea His love—but it was never the truth by itself. It was God Himself speaking, the Presence behind the word which was invading the life. What God communicates is never less than Himself, and it is only our sinfulness and obtuseness that

keeps us from grasping that gift in its completeness. Love and the understanding that comes with the years open the secrets of the soul, and knowledge of persons grows from more to more. The climax of fellowship is complete self-giving, and as with the human so with the divine fellowship: God reveals *Himself*, in the rigour of His righteous will, in the richness of His grace, in the depth of His love.

Great Moments. John 12: 27-32; 1 Cor. 2: 1-2.

If again we may compare lofty divine realities to the human, we must expect that this self-revelation of God will have its great moments. In intercourse between persons we have encounters that linger in the memory for ever because in the intimacy of some solemn hour the barriers of reserve were let down and we were permitted to see our friend in a fresh light, in some unsuspected richness of character. Perhaps it was some sorrow that came to us, some need of comfort, some touch of self-pity. And our great-hearted friend drew aside the veil and told us of an episode in his own life that had left a scar; then we knew him in a tenderness we had never suspected. We felt rebuked, ashamed, grief-stricken; and somehow in the mutual sharing we touched a deeper depth of understanding than ever before. After such moving contacts a friend is treasured as a richer possession. So in the divine intercourse there have been glowing points, splendid hours when God showed His name and nature in its strength or compassion. When God made solemn covenant with His people on Sinai, when He confronted Isaiah in the Temple, when He claimed Jeremiah, these were days luminous and awesome. But chiefly in the coming to earth of Jesus Christ, in His life, death, and resurrection, the glory of the Lord shone forth upon man: these are supremely the great moment of His self-revelation.

His Word Only in Scripture? Phil 4: 8-9.

Has God revealed His presence elsewhere than in Scripture? Has He not disclosed Himself in nature and in other faiths? Is there not a general revelation to men in the physical world and in history as well as the special revelation that all Christians know and recognize?

Paul, according to Acts 14: 17, declares that God has not left Himself without a witness "in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." In the many-templed Athens he saw the upsurge of the divine in the reaching after an unknown God: He who gave life and breath and all things is not far from any one of His creatures. He reminded the Romans that the pagan world had evidence of His presence: in the work of His hands His everlasting power and divine nature shone before human eyes from the beginning. They have a law of conscience written in their hearts (Rom. 1: 20ff., 2: 12ff.). Following that line of thought (cf. Heb. 1: 1), we have been ready in these latter days to recognize in the faith of the nations, in Buddhism, in Confucianism, in Hinduism, and in other religions the self-disclosure in imperfect forms of the living and true God, foreshadowings of the perfect revelation in Christ Jesus—an "antechamber" of faith. But we have failed to realize with Paul that these ethnic faiths have often been the futile speculations of darkened minds, evidence of the pride and purblindness of men, perversions that have shut out the glory of God: religious systems have often been a defence mechanism against the will of God rather than a revelation of it. Is it not true that Jesus Himself, in spite of all His largeness of heart, had to condemn in blistering terms the pretensions of Pharisee and Sadducee, that the early Church had to definitely contend with and break away from law and Temple that it might assert its freedom and spirituality? So may it not be that we have as Christians the obligation to present, not appreciation and commendation, but judgment and condemnation of what are half-truths and deceitful make-believe in contrast to the truth and reality of the Gospel? Is that not to be true to the "One who cleanses and consecrates . . . human and national heritages and aspirations and then gives them back . . . infinitely enriched"? If in Christ God did something for men that was utterly unique, there cannot be many ways to salvation, but only one.

As for the seeing of God in nature, how much of that is a sentimental ecstasy over gorgeous colouring of sunrise and sunset, an emotional upsurge that is more beautiful than deep? God's world is terrible as it is lovely, nature is "red in tooth and

¹Dr. Nicol Macnicol, *International Review of Missions*, July, 1938.

claw," and carries in her lap typhoons as well as summer breezes, hissing serpents as well as blue birds. He is nearer God who has looked with awe and horror into the mystery of things, and has had to fight his way to a faith that can see the hand of God in all that fascinating darkness. Only he who has grasped God in a Gethsemane of sorrow and come to walk with Mary in a garden of Resurrection is able to see with clear eyes the God who made the light and shade of the universe. The lilies of the field had glory in the eyes of Jesus because He knew in a more intimate context the Father in heaven. To those who have come to know the self-disclosure of God in the Cross of Calvary nature is not merely beautiful, but sacramental. Experience in a field beyond beauty makes even loveliness more meaningful. How much more grand the sunset to a man who has seen its soft light falling on the mystery of a crucified life passing out into peace at last! How much more radiant the sunrise to a Peter who, having toiled all night and caught nothing, sees the outline of a figure on the shore!

Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,
Flowers with deeper beauties shine,
Since I know, as now I know,
I am His, and He is mine.

In Many Portions Progressively. Heb. 1: 1-5.

The Old Testament is the record of an ever-enlarging, ever-deepening knowledge of God. The God who walks familiarly in the Garden of Eden is very different in aspect from the terrible God of Mount Sinai, or the God who contends with Jeremiah. There is a great stretch of experience between the demand that Agag be hewed in pieces before the Lord and the call to the Servant of the Lord to suffer vicariously for sin. The God who begins as the protector of a single nation comes to be known as the righteous Jehovah who must be Lord of all the peoples. The jealous and avenging God of Nahum who devours the bloody city with fire and sword and canker-worm is one aspect of truth; very different is the graciousness revealed to Jonah: "Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" (Jon. 4: 11). God uttered His word in portions and progressively. There were

times when people needed a stern Elijah as God's spokesman, times when the consolation of an Isaiah were opportune. There were dissolute times that needed the menacing Day of the Lord of an Amos, times when the hard-pressed people were cheered by the vision of the Son of Man of Daniel. Men are not able to receive the full glory of God; the brightness of the light must sometimes be softened and dimmed.

The Barthian school of theologians are concerned to let the specifically New Testament revelation shine out in all its splendour; that might seem to take from the glory of the Old Testament revelation. They recognize that God was there in the life of ancient Israel: the consuming fire passed that way and the evidence remains. "The law is the compression of divine revelation left behind in time, in history, and in the lives of men: it is a heap of clinkers marking a fiery miracle which has taken place, a burnt out crater disclosing the place where God has spoken." All revelation, they maintain, must be read in the light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, when the Eternal decisively broke through into time. Is not that precisely how the Old Testament must be viewed? The Jew reads the Old Testament, and for him it is supreme, the changeless standard. Our eyes must regard it differently: it is to us the avenue of torches that casts the light on the face of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament finds its completion in the New. The ten words given on Sinai are the virile sturdy stem from which spring the flowers of the Beatitudes. The firm lines of the law are the rude sketch over which the artist paints in the finished picture: it is the Gospel that speaks in soft yet strong colours. The righteousness which punishes for three transgressions and for four is but prelude to the love which forgives seventy times seven times. The Day of the Lord that brings vengeance upon the enemies of Israel gives place to a judgment that separates the sheep from the goats, not on lines of nationality, but on principles of humanity. The restored kingdom of Israel broadens its gates to receive many from the East and the West to sit down with Jacob. Thus did Israel come to know throughout the years of travail God the Holy and the Righteous; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. To approach the Holy God of the Old Testament there were proprieties and conditions to be observed as before an awesome Presence, and there were a

¹ Barth, *Romans*, p. 65, Eng. tr.

contractual element and naturalistic limitations attaching to the law of the Righteous One. But with the coming of the Gospel the barriers were down: God was seen as coming out after His own, a Father calling His sons one by one into an intimate and absorbing fellowship.

Holy Scripture. Is. 55: 10-13; 2 Tim. 3: 15-17; 2 Tim. 4: 13.

But both Old and New Testaments have one dominating hope and theme—salvation. No one can read the Psalms without realizing that the saints of the Old Testament were lifted out of earth's sin and failure and found peace and pardon with a forgiving God. His will might lay heavy tasks upon them, but they delighted to do His law. The New Testament is lyrical with a sense of an astonishing deliverance: a graciousness men had not deserved had thrown open the prison doors and led the way to higher levels of existence; those who have been to gaze on Calvary have a new song to sing. That truth that thus waxed from dim to glorious light throughout the generations lies before us in the Scriptures. It is testimony to, and experience of, the mind and character of God—His Majesty, Holiness, Justice, Patience, Long-suffering. It is the record of His will for righteousness among men and nations—a will that steadily shines more clear and directs itself inexorably towards the good of men. It presents itself to us as the way of salvation. We see there that the specific demands of God must vary: a Gideon has a different task from a Paul, but both have a saving faith. The path is dark for the Psalmist many a time; to a John it is bathed in light; but it is the same mercy that greets both at the end of the journey. Jonah flees to Tarshish, and the rich young ruler goes sorrowfully away from Jesus; but the same pursuing love and judgment hang over their decisions. Throughout the chequered story of the saints there are experiences that gladden and testings that chastise, encounters that uplift and calamities that threaten; but the wisdom from above mingles the bitter and the sweet and proffers the cup of salvation. Surely there we too who run may read the mind and the will of God and be guided in the way everlasting.

The Old Testament is a library in itself, the library of the chosen people of God. It is a sifted library. Throughout the centuries there must have been other poets and historians and prophets. But a religious people was concerned to cherish those

books that had nourished their religious life, and so these were preserved. The Spirit of God brooded over them and led them to hand down those books which now make up the Divine library that we know as the Canon of the Old Testament.

Luke 1: 1-4; John 20: 31; 1 John 5: 13; Col. 4: 16; Rev. 1: 11.

The New Testament explains itself. As the Apostle Paul pushed on in his missionary career, he kept touch by letter with the churches he had founded or that his followers had established. Problems arose on which his young converts needed instruction. They wondered what would happen to those who died before the Lord came again, whether it was right to eat meat that had first been laid on the altars of heathen gods before being sold in the market, whether it was right to go to law before heathen courts. Such questions were constantly arising, and a Spirit-filled man like Paul was the one who could give guidance. He wrote answers, and they were so valued that they were passed on to other churches; copies were made and preserved, and gradually central churches came to have a whole collection. When Paul died, others like Peter had to continue the work of keeping touch and giving guidance. As the first disciples died off the need arose for putting down in writing the knowledge of Jesus and His sayings that had at first been passed on orally. So collections of His sayings, stories of His encounters with enemies and enquirers, narratives of His healing miracles, especially all that was remembered of His later ministry and the moving episodes of His death and amazing resurrection—everything indeed that preserved a memory or a glimpse of Him, or any pronouncement that could throw light on the needs of the growing Church—were written down, and so there came into being Gospels. As the Church became mature it wished to depend less on travelling gifted prophets and more on settled ministers and officers, and so the wisdom of a leader like Paul was sought to guide the local churches in the selection of right men: hence arose pastoral letters. The expansion of the Christian movement was a story so amazing that an educated man like Luke felt the urge of the Spirit upon him to write it down: hence the Acts—a book which might have been needed to explain to Paul's Roman judges what Christianity was and what it stood for. As the Jews had loved to picture the end of things, the final punishment of evil and the triumph of

the good, so the Spirit fell upon the author of the Apocalypse and he wrote down his gorgeous visions and messages to the churches in Asia.

There were other books than those that we have in the New Testament today: *e.g.*, we still have small fragments of other Gospels and stories of the infancy of Jesus. But these did not have the appeal of the Gospels we know. There were other epistles and books of lesser insight, compilations for teaching. But, though some of these were included in early collections used by the Church, there was a sifting out of the finest of the wheat and, when heretics began to cause confusion, the selection had to be definite: it was called the Canon—the rule, *i.e.*, that which set the standard. This process took place between the second and fourth centuries. We have only to compare the rejected books with those included in the Canon to see that the Church was guided by the Spirit in making its final choice.

As the coming of Jesus was seen as the fulfilment of the hopes expressed in the long history of the chosen people and especially in the visions of the prophets, it was inevitable that the Old Testament should be treasured alongside of the New. It was from Isaiah that Philip made a convert of the Ethiopian eunuch. It was from the Old Testament that Paul began his arguments in preaching. Indeed in the earliest days, when the leaders were Hebrews like Paul and Peter, they looked on the Old Testament as their Bible, the book that told the story of the promises, the book that fed their souls with the faith of the Psalmists and the prophets. While the New Testament was only in process of being written what could be used to cherish the life of the saints but the books of the Old Testament that looked forward to that salvation the Church was now enjoying? The Church would have been unfaithful to its heritage if it had failed to preserve the Old Testament along with the New.

Herein Its Unity. Acts 8: 26-35; Eph. 4: 3-7; Rev. 21: 5-7.

Wherein lies the unity of all Holy Scripture? That charming writer, Dr. L. P. Jacks, tells us in his autobiography that he set about reading the New Testament to find out what it was all about, and he came to the conclusion that the theme of the whole was immortality. That no doubt is a hope of grand moment, but

do we not probe deeper when we ask on what ground that hope was based? Journey's end is there in the eternal Presence, but what by the way? Jesus said, "I am the way"—but not only the way, but the truth and the life also. It is the New Testament conviction that it was Jesus Christ who opened up the eternal world for men; and this came about by what He accomplished in His life and death. That life and death was a setting forth of the mind and will of the Eternal, the manifesting of a Love at the heart of things that willed to save: that was reality—that God had a redemptive purpose and had brought it to pass. And now there was available to men life as God had planned it, life on the level of the Kingdom, life that could be realized by men only through the power that the Christ imparted. Thus the unity of the New Testament would seem to lie there—in that which put a new song into men's hearts, the fact that God had visited and redeemed His people.

The Old Testament is one long straining forward towards that grand day of visitation and redemption. Jesus summed up the tragedy of Jerusalem in this—that the day the city people had dreamed of and lived for had dawned in that very hour and was rapidly passing to its sunset unrecognized. That was the irretrievable that He wept over. The story of the nation really began in the deliverance from Egypt—but deliverance to what? Sinai pointed to the God who alone could enable them to choose between life and death. The period of the Judges was the seeking after a real liberator. The kings were a long succession of makeshifts for the true king. Exile and dismemberment and the yoke of tyrant after tyrant was a prising the people loose from their earthly affections. In all the frustrations and chastening of the years was the discipline with a purpose to it—the will of a God of righteousness to be also a Saviour. The prophets and the seers were for ever pointing to the unseen figure in the shadow, the Potter who had His hand on the clay and moved the wheel of refining. The one thing that gave meaning and unity to the chequered history of the race was that God was working His purpose out, moving the nation towards a day of redemption, the day that came upon Jerusalem unrecognized: "Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

Thus the theme of all Holy Scripture is one, the redemptive purpose and working of God towards that end. The culmina-

tion of the Old Testament expectation may be seen in the vision of Dan. 7—the coming Kingdom of the saints which the Son of Man received from the hand of God. The long-looked-for divine commonwealth is actually real: it has but to take shape upon the earth. The New Testament declared the Kingdom *has come*: its gates are open and many of the unexpected are pressing into it. This is not a prerogative of any nation, but here all the peoples of the earth merge their identity in a common humanity. What constitutes this common humanity is an indebtedness to the work that Jesus Christ has done: He made all sorts of men new creatures. Redemption has passed from dream to reality: now is the prince of this world cast out. The Now of creation's long travail has come: the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven upon earth.¹

Complete Allegiance. Gal. 1: 6-9; Heb. 4: 12.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." That demand for undivided loyalty lies deep down in the ancient tradition of Israel: it is bound up with Sinai and the hour of sacred covenant. And the claim behind that demand is this: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exod. 20: 2). Elijah and his successors in the prophetic line maintain this call to a unique obedience, and Jesus places the first commandment as still binding: with heart and soul and mind, with the completeness of our being, we are to own the one true God.

With equal decisiveness the New Testament speaks: there is one Lord Jesus: "For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4: 12); there is salvation in none other. And again the demand is based on a claim that a great deliverance has been wrought: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5: 8). Many would hold the Epistle of James the weakest link in the New Testament, the "epistle of straw"; yet even there the double-minded man is condemned: we are to waver not at all, but look to the one God. The Apocalypse lifts the veil at the close of history to show all worship and praise concentrated on one: "Thou art worthy to

¹ Mozley, in *Expository Times*, Aug. 1939.

take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 4: 11, 5: 9).

The Organ of Persuasion. John 16: 7-15; 1 Cor. 2: 7-16.

When Jesus spoke a parable He was accustomed to close with the words, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." It was not enough to utter the word of truth: there must be the receptive heart, the understanding mind. That which was true even of the limpid clarity of the stories told by Jesus is true of all Scripture. The Word of God is not just the sum of words that make up the Bible. But Scripture is God speaking to the understanding through the words.

The voice that sings across the night
Of long-forgotten days and things—
Is there an ear to hear aright
The voice that sings?

The Old Testament is rich in human situations of infinite diversity, and often in the narrative we must re-live the experience of David before Nathan: we listen to a moving story, standing outside it all the while, and then suddenly a voice speaks in our ears: "Thou art the man!" In reading a Psalm we warm to it because there our mood is expressed and the healing words come home to us: there God finds us. In the Gospels particularly, where the penetrating light of Jesus floods the human scene, we often have a sensation like looking into a mirror and gazing at ourselves: I am convicted there as the Pharisee of the parable or as the boastful Peter; the Divine challenge confronts me.

How is it that Scripture thus thrusts home past our defence mechanism? These narratives come from the long ago telling on the face of them how God consoled this saint or stirred that prophet by a living word. But how is that ancient word made living again to me? How does a message from the past become contemporary to me? It is not by the mere study of the historical situation, though that helps to make the past vivid and real; it is not by the exercise of reason, for the clever man may remain cold where the simple mind catches fire; it is not by the glow of the imagination, though that may turn the prose into poetry. The Christian has only one explanation: the Holy Spirit brings the

truth to light. The great Spirit who confronted Elijah in his despair reappears in a new context to confront you and me. Dry bones are re-animated, dead words leap to life, and the creative Spirit has done what the genius of a Shakespeare cannot do with the past—set me down there face to face with God. The Cross is a moving spectacle, a martyr's tragic death; the dramatist can re-enact that before my eyes. But the Holy Spirit takes that story and involves me in it, convicts me as among those who drove the nails and flung the taunts; it strikes deeper than mere drama, a spectacle that purges me by pity or thrills me with horror: it forces me to my knees, to contrition, and to pleading; for it is not pity or horror that grips me, but guilt and shame and personal dishonour. And how to men in that plight the voice of forgiveness should come—that is beyond all reason's explaining: it is a conviction that must be born from above by the actual operation of the gracious Spirit of God.

Especially is it true that the Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ and shows them unto us. In the life of the early Church and all through the centuries that fact has been made manifest. The Apostle Paul met new situations rarely by quoting the words of Jesus, but by following the guiding of the Holy Spirit. Men like Peter knew more of the actual words of Jesus, but that did not keep them from playing false to Him by refusing, for example, to eat at the same table with fellow-Christians just because they did not observe the Jewish scruples about food. Paul, inspired by the Spirit, interpreted his Master's will, and insisted on clearing away wrong ideas that frustrated brotherhood (Gal. 2: 11). The pronouncements of Jesus made in the slave state of Galilee two thousand years ago under the simple conditions of Eastern life do not *automatically* apply to all the problems of our modern complicated industrial organization: to use them in that way is to make His teaching like a new law book or a set of dogmas—the very evil He had to fight against in the legalism of the Pharisees. But the Spirit can and does reinterpret for us the principles that Jesus set forth, and these must be applied in our complex civilization if men and women are to be treated as souls and not as machines.

The truths of the Gospel that were to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness will not find ready entrance to our minds today, for we too are hidebound in our pre-conceptions like the Jews and schooled in scientific ways of thought like

the Greeks. But Christ crucified must be placarded before men's eyes as in Paul's time, and that will be found a power unto salvation. That God should come to earth in the likeness of a man, that He should intervene in the middle of history and do a thing once for all that affected all history, that death should be for Jesus not the extinction of life, but its emancipation—these are truths that the human mind does not find credible by the ordinary laws of thought. But from the beginning of the Christian era intellectuals like Paul and poor slaves like Onesimus have been apprehended by the same power and led to make the same confession—not by argument, but by a persuasion from within which can only be explained as the working of the Holy Spirit of God. The Cross of Christ offends our proud human reason, but it yields its truth to simple faith. Forgiveness seems a contradiction of the laws of retribution, but in the light of experience we come to know it is a fact which transforms life and makes the saddest life strangely glad.

The Church of Christ today owes much to Karl Barth for his recall to the study of the Word of God. Behind Scripture and the Church's preaching is not just a dynamic man, a rare human of charming and commanding personality, but *The Word*; not a somewhat divine, but the Son of God Himself. "Christ being raised from the dead *dieth* no more." Eternity has broken through into time, and is ever at our door. We are confronted with a momentous choice here and now. We are addressed: "God has something quite special to say to each man which concerns him alone. This word . . . says to us always a new thing, which we have never heard from any other one. It is the rock of a 'Thou' flung in our way." "The Word of God needs no Act to complete it; it is itself an Act. . . . If our hearing of a sermon, or our reading of the Bible, does not bring about a corresponding event, it is certain that in the sermon, and in the Bible, we have not heard God's Word. We have only heard human words. For the Word of God always makes history. . . . 'For he *spake* and it was done.' . . . In the event of Revelation time falls away, and what happened in the there and then is spoken to us in the here and now." "Unless the Word of God is understood as decision, it is not understood at all."⁴

⁴ Cf. John McConnachie, *The Barthian Theology and the Man of Today*, pp. 63ff. These phrases are intended to direct the student to the whole exposition.