

The purpose of this study is to point up and assess certain theological positions which threaten our Church. The assignment has been specific. I am to tackle three problems. 1. Problem I deals with the doctrine of Scripture. Our doctrine of Scripture which is derived from the claims of Scripture itself and which has been articulated by the Church Fathers, Luther and Lutheran Orthodoxy is no longer a viable position for the over-whelming number of theologians outside our fellowship. Our doctrine of the nature and authority and power of Scripture is simply rejected. 2. Problem II deals with the historico-critical method. Theologians today in reading and interpreting Scripture are commonly employing a method which is not compatible with our doctrine of Scripture, and yet to varying degrees the method is employed by us. 3. Problem III deals with the Ecumenical Movement. This great movement assumes a doctrine of the Church and of Church fellowship which differs from our historic position.

The present study will attempt to describe and analyze the broad movements which must be included under the three problems listed above. Seeing these movements as dangers the study will attempt to criticize them; it will be frankly polemical (this I understand to be in the nature of my assignment). I therefore have no interest in marking out various possible "insights" which may be apparent in these movements. In fact, it is hardly possible to recognize a contribution or insight of a particular system, until the system itself is grasped in the light of its origins, presuppositions and purposes. My method, then, will be to describe each movement as something synthetic, as a system, which is based on certain definite postulates, which has its own Sitz im Leben, and which directs itself toward various definite goals. That any movement, whether philosophical or theological (say, Logical Positivism, Pragmatism, or modern Biblical Theology), is purely a method is a totally false assumption, as I hope to demonstrate in the course of this study.

THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

PROBLEM I

The Lutheran doctrine of Scripture begins with the fact that the Sacred Scriptures are truly (vere et proprie) the Word of God, the product of His breath (2 Tim. 3:16). It is not necessary for me at this time to illustrate that this is the claim of the Scriptures and of our Lord Himself; but I do feel it incumbent upon me to stress what is meant by and involved in the statement, Scripture is the Word of God. In the seventeenth century a battle for verbal inspiration was fought. Since that time orthodox theology has spoken of the content and the very words of Scripture as being God-breathed. Verbal inspiration, however, is in danger of becoming a shibboleth today (when theologians such as Karl Barth and John Baillie use the terminology), unless we recognize and carry out the practical, necessary and Biblical corollaries of the doctrine, viz. that Scripture which is the written Word of God carries with it the power, the truthfulness and the authority of very God. This is most important: all the so-called properties of Scripture (however the theologians may list them) are predicated on its divine origin (Cf. 2 Tim. 3:15-17).

A. THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

Let us at this point address ourselves specifically to the matter of Scripture's authority. Believing Scripture to be God's Word, we have taught that Scripture is our theological principium cognoscendi. It is "the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged" (Formula of Concord, Epit. I, 1). The authority of Scripture is the authority of God speaking. This normative authority (autopistia) of Scripture has for some two hundred years now been questioned in the Christian Church. And today with greater force than before the challenge is hurled at us: is the sola scriptura principle as it was articulated by Luther and the Lutheran Confessions any longer tenable, when a scientific world view and particularly historical science have imposed themselves upon the Christian Church? That is to say, can we stay any longer with the very words of Scripture and build our doctrine on these alone, as was the practice of Christ and the apostles in their use of the Old Testament?

Our answer will be prompt and unabashed. But we must bear in mind that many who speak loudly about the authority of the Scriptures are in fact equivocating and corrupting the Scripture principle, and this because they have in most cases abandoned the basis of Scripture's authority, viz. the doctrine that Scripture is the Word of God. In modern Protestant circles I have found the only exception in this matter to be Werner Elert. I will now simply sketch in broadest lines some of the modern approaches to Scripture which undermine the sola scriptura principle. One may discern that behind these approaches to Scripture's authority lies in most cases an assumption viz. that Scripture in itself is not God's Word.

1. The sola scriptura principle is vitiated when the Church is made a source of doctrine. This is of course still the position of Rome. In the apostolic letter of Leo XIII (1902), entitled Vigilantiae, we are told, "The nature of the divine books is such that in order to dissipate the religious obscurity with which they are shrouded we must never count on the laws of hermeneutics, but must address ourselves to the Church, which has been given by God to mankind as a guide and teacher." We can see that when the Roman Church becomes a sine qua non for reading and understanding Scripture, the Church has been established as a source of theology in addition to Scripture. The Roman Church, however, insists on the doctrine of Scripture's verbal inspiration and inerrancy.

2. The Scripture principle is vitiated when the original Christian kerygma is made a source of doctrine. This is the position of Heinrich Schlier, one time pupil of Bultmann and now Roman Catholic. Schlier believes that the original kerygma is the normative apostolic Word, that this kerygma is prior both in time and intrinsically to the gospel accounts of Christ which are built around the kerygma. Thus, dogma (kerygma) is the basis of Scripture, not Scripture the basis of dogma. The so-called regula fidei is not a pedagogic summary of Scripture as we have formerly thought, but it is the nucleus of the Scriptures and the canon for interpreting them (Cf. "Kerygma and Sophia, zur neutestament-lichen Grundlegung des Dogmas" in Evangelische Theologie. 1950-1, p. 481ff). This view, built upon Bultmann's form criticism, leads to scepticism and confusion; for

Scripture will always be our chief source for determining the apostolic kerygma, and yet here the kerygma becomes more fundamental than Scripture. The view assumes that Scripture as such does not exhibit the authoritative kerygma. We notice here a curious congeniality between form criticism à la Bultmann and the Roman view concerning authority and dogma. We recall how Aquinas made not Scripture but the articles of faith the source of theology (Summa Theologica, I, 2, 1).

3. The Scripture principle is vitiated when the material principle is substituted for the formal principle of theology. Such a substitution is subtly implied by both Barth and Brunner when they emphasize in contexts dealing with Scripture's authority that Christ is the Lord of Scripture (Barth, Church Dogmatics, I, 2, 513; Brunner, Revelation and Reason, 169) and when in similar contexts they emphasize the humanity of Scripture and its position as an account of revelation which is alone divinely authoritative (Barth, op. cit., 462; Brunner, op. cit., 127). Following this lead Martin Heineken says, "What is the Word of God and what is not the Word of God must be judged by the Word of God itself, i.e. in other words, it must be judged from the center of the message, i.e. from Christ" (The Voice, 43). We see here a confusion between the material principle which is the source of our Christianity and the formal principle which is the source of our theology. The two principles must not be pitted against each other as Heineken does, but they stand together.

4. The Scripture principle is vitiated when modern scholarship is made in effect a source of theology. Leonard Hodgson ("God and the Bible" in On the Authority of the Bible, London, 1960), a conservative theologian on many counts, illustrates the tendency to enhance the prestige of modern scholarship even above the Scriptures themselves. Hodgson rejects the opinion that to have a revelation we require an ultimate source of authority somewhere within creation. We cannot accept the "pre-critical acceptance of biblical statements as they stand," he says. Nor can we hold to the notion that any statement of truth is immune to criticism. All such ideas must be left behind because of the contributions of modern theological scholarship which is a gift of God and may be considered to be given as one of the channels of God's self-revelation. Thus, we stand on the shoulders of our fathers. We actually have a better theology than St. Peter who in his first sermon, for instance, had a wrong idea of the Church as a group with a "superior status in relation to God," an idea which was "inconsistent with the revelation of God in Christ." To Hodgson revelation is education; and, although we have the same Scriptures which have always been in the Church, God reveals to us a deeper understanding than even the prophets and apostles had.

5. The scripture principle is vitiated when it is virtually replaced by some sort of vague sola revelatio principle. This approach which has much in common with the third view outlined above is employed by Regin Preter (Skabelse og Genlsing, 88ff; Biblical Authority Today, ed. A. Richardson 98ff.). Preter first undermines the traditional view of the autopistia of Scripture by denying that Scripture is a collection of revealed truths and insisting that it is only a "witness" to revelation. The older teaching, he says, is deistic, it straitjackets the Holy Spirit, and it refuses to face up to the facts introduced by the historico-critical method of interpretation. Therefore, although we may use the sola

scriptura terminology, the real authority is the revelation of God to which Scripture is an errant response.

6. The sola scriptura principle is undermined by the tendency today in line with views 3 and 5 to substitute the so-called causative authority of Scripture for the normative authority of Scripture, or to confuse the two. Let me define my terms. The causative authority of Scripture is that authority, or power, of Scripture whereby it authenticates itself to me as the Word of God (cf. 1 Cor. 2:4-5). The normative authority of Scripture, or what our older theologians have called its "canonical authority", is that authority according to which Scripture as the Word of God is the source and norm for all teaching in the Church (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Rom. 15:4). To illustrate how these two concepts may be confused I quote from an American Lutheran (W. A. Quanbeck, Stewardship in Contemporary Theology, ed. by T. K. Thompson, New York, 1961. P. 40): "The authority of the Gospels . . . resides in the message which they bring, and from which they take their name--the Gospel. It is the gospel which is authoritative as it communicates the good news of what God has done in Christ for us . . . It is the gospel in the Gospels which is authoritative, with an authority not of a law code but of the personal God who addresses us in it." Now the author is actually talking about the causative authority of Scripture, or what our older theologians have called the efficacia verbi, the power of the Gospel, a power which the Gospel possesses in whatever form it may come. But reading the statement in its wider context one would get the impression that this is a definition of Scripture's authority also in the normative sense, and that is all that can be said about the matter.

7. The sola scriptura principle is vitiated when Scripture is represented as a mere record of revelation. This fact will be brought out in the following section.

8. The sola scriptura principle is vitiated by the proponents of form criticism. This fact will be brought out in a later section on the historico-critical method.

B. SCRIPTURE AS A MODE OF REVELATION

Consonant with our conviction that Scripture is, properly speaking, God's Word, our Church has always taught that Scripture is truly revelation. I now propose to analyze the doctrine of revelation in contemporary theology, and thus to indicate how modern theology thereby threatens our doctrine of Scripture and of revelation. First a few words by way of background to the discussion.

Modern theology has spoken with renewed emphasis and vigor on the subject of divine revelation and its underlying importance for the Church. Such an emphasis has been both necessary and welcome, and this for two reasons. First, we must consider that these theologians (Barth, Brunner, and many who have concerned themselves with Biblical theology) have emerged--and sometimes only after intense struggle--from a period dominated by classical Liberalism, evolutionism and pantheistic Idealism. Kant's denial of any rational or factual knowledge of transcendent reality seemed to cow an entire era of theologians.

Following his lead, Ritschl reduced all theology to a matter of value judgments to which there was no corresponding reality and the only basis of which was the enlightened reason of the believer. Thus, there was no need and no place for revelation. Unable to answer Kant, Schleiermacher retreated into subjectivism, making Christianity not a matter of cognitive knowledge at all, but a matter of feeling, a dependence upon God. The Bible for him was ex hypothesi not a revelation expressing God's thoughts toward man, but rather a book expressing man's thoughts toward God, man's religious experiences. And so it went through the century, Luthardt drawing his theology from the "Christian consciousness", Kahnis from the "consciousness of the Church", these theologians all the time turning their faces persistently in the wrong direction, away from that revelation which is the Scriptures of God, either ignoring the concept of revelation altogether or, by centering it exclusively in God's past acts of which there is no reliable witness, thus making the revelation (whatever it is) quite inaccessible.

The strong emphasis of modern theology upon the doctrine of revelation is necessary and welcome secondly because of the climate and Zeitgeist of our own day which lies under the heavy influence of scientism, positivism, Whiteheadianism and Pragmatism with its immanent (non-existent) god. None of these movements could have any possible concern with a special revelation; in fact, special revelation is impossible on their terms. All these ideologies are committed to a rigid Humean empiricism coupled with a simple and unquestioning adherence to the uniformity of nature (with the exception of Whitehead who seems uneasy about evolution as a unifying principle, about an immanent god and about the scientific method as the method of knowledge.)

It is not strange, then, that in such a climate Barth and even Brunner will appear as new prophets and even champions of conservative theology and that their systems will be dubbed a "theology of the Word".

As a matter of record, however, we must point out that this stress upon the doctrine of revelation is not new; it is merely new in certain circles. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries before and after the devastation wreaked upon natural religion and natural theology by Hume, Kant and even by the proponents of natural theology like John Stuart Mill, many theologians were writing prodigious works on the subject of supernatural revelation. Bishop P. Browne and H. Prideaux had argued that revelation was the Gospel which was a series of propositions to which faith gives assent. On the other side was the practical anti-intellectualism (in the wake of Kant) of such men as S. T. Coleridge, Julius Hare, and F. D. Maurice who like many continental theologians (Kierkegaard) taught a subjective view of revelation. To them revelation was the encounter with the divine, the bestowal of faith. Coleridge broke totally with Schleiermacher who insisted that revelation was not an inbreaking of God, but merely the upsurging of human personality, pious self-consciousness. Coleridge's reaction against Schleiermacher and his position on revelation is remarkably similar to that of Barth today. To him, as for Barth, Scripture was not revelation but the possibility of revelation. Even in the seventeenth century, before the later intense interest in natural revelation and apologetics, there was in certain quarters serious study concerning the nature and mode of special revelation. One might

refer merely to Abraham Calov, a Lutheran, who devoted most of the first volume of his great Systema to a discussion of divine revelation, offering a presentation unequalled in depth and scope even by A. Hoenecke who of modern Lutherans gives most attention to the idea.

But somehow the great interest and many writings on the subject of revelation did not catch on until modern Biblical theology and Neo-orthodoxy arrived on the scene and dealt with the theme. What, then is the position of modern theology which has influenced the thinking of so many on this important matter? How are we to interpret and assess it?

I. TWO CONTEMPORARY VIEWS OF REVELATION

Modern theology may be divided into two great movements, Neo-orthodoxy and Biblical theology, both of which impinge upon almost every segment of Christianity. We cannot isolate ourselves from these two movements and avoid grappling with what they have said on the subject of revelation. Modern theology wavers between two poles of opinion, between two extreme positions, in speaking of revelation. When pressed, these theologians often revert from one position to the other, and it is therefore difficult in some cases to describe a precise opinion of these men.

A. Position A makes of revelation a confrontation of God with man. This encounter is always on the personal level. Brunner calls it "personal correspondence" (Divine-Human Encounter, Philadelphia, 1943, p. 94ff.). Personal correspondence is opposed to the usual subject-object antithesis: it is rather subject-subject. God does not reveal something, but Himself. In ordinary personal relationships there is always a blurring of the "thou" and "something" about the "thou". "But when God speaks with me the relation to a "something" stops in an unconditional sense, not simply in a conditional sense as in an ordinary human encounter" (Ibid., p. 86). Thus revelation cannot be "communication", but is rather "communion". Bultmann calls it "personal address" (Existence and Faith, New York, 1960, 64). "God does not give us information by communication; He gives us Himself in communion" (Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought, New York, 1956, p. 47). That revelation is in no sense a communication of information is sometimes pushed to the point where such a communication is not even involved in revelation (thus Brunner, Bultmann and emphatically Nygren, En Bok om Biblen, "Revelation and Scripture", translation mimeographed at Luther Seminary, St. Paul). To Bultmann revelation is neither an illumination in the sense of a communication of knowledge nor is it to be construed as a "cosmic process which takes place outside of us and of which the world would merely bring a report" (op. cit. 78). The result is that "there is nothing revealed on the basis of which one believes. It is only in faith that the object of faith is disclosed; therefore, faith itself belongs to revelation" (Ibid. 79). Consistent with this view that revelation is address is the opinion that revelation is always contemporary. According to Heineken, revelation is always "contemporaneous", i. e. "it is always in the now". Always involving the recipient of the revelation, revelation is an ongoing activity of God, wherever and whenever God imparts Himself. It does not have the ephapax of the incarnation and the atonement ("The meaning of Revelation" from The Voice, St. Paul,

1958, p. 23. Cf. also Bultmann, Myth and Christianity, New York, 1958, 68).

Summing up, we might make the following observations concerning Position A:

1. It seeks to be monergistic, making God the author of every revelation. A strong stress is placed on God's sovereignty. Thus, revelation occurs only ubi et quando God wills. After all, if revelation is God's address to man, then it is He in His sovereign grace who chooses the time and place of this direct encounter.

2. The revelation of God is a self-disclosure. The content (objectum) of revelation is God Himself. And He reveals Himself always as subject.

3. The place of Scripture in revelation is rather vague. Scripture for Barth is merely the "possibility" of revelation or the "occasion" for revelation (Reid, The Authority of Scripture, New York, 1957, p. 196). For Bultmann Scripture would appear to be merely the locus of the kerygma by which God addresses man. Brunner calls Scripture a "witness to the revelation" (Revelation and Reason, p. 118ff), but this can only pertain to past revelations and therefore seems irrelevant to the question of revelation as encounter which is Brunner's real concern. Modern theology seems to be rather embarrassed to find any open niche for Scripture in its doctrine of revelation.

4. Revelation is practically identified with the call or with conversion. This is seen from the fact that there is no revelation apart from faith (Bultmann, Heinecken, Barth, Baillie).

5. Closely associated with this position is the conviction that faith is in no sense directed toward facts about Christ. The emphasis is totally on faith in, it is never a matter of faith that (Brunner, op. cit. 38ff; Baillie, op. cit. 47). The noetic element in faith is played down or denied. By way of rebuttal we must cite such passages as Rom. 10:9; 1 Th. 4:14; 1 John 5:5; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:8; Rom. 5:4; Luke 24:45; Acts 24:14; 1 Tim. 1:15; Acts 26:27. These passages all make Scripture or some particular doctrine the object of faith. At this point Neo-orthodoxy comes perilously close to the old position of Schleiermacher and Ritschl who made the Person, not the work of Christ, the object of faith. Neo-orthodoxy often appears to have a faith in Christ abstracted from everything that can be said about Him, a sort of modern Protestant fides implicita.

6. Position A emphasizes the dynamic nature of revelation almost to the exclusion of its informative (dianoetic) nature and purpose. Again this leads either to subjectivism or mysticism. Nygren (op. cit.) is the most adamant on this point. According to him, the so-called "static and intellectualistic view" of revelation, that it is the "communication of formerly hidden knowledge", must be utterly rejected. "Not a fiber of its roots must remain." We reply with our hearty agreement that revelation is always dynamic, charged with the very attributes of God and conveying God Himself (Cf. Isa. 45:23; Ps. 107:20; 148:8; Gal. 1:16). This is an old Lutheran emphasis which must not be neglected. But on the

other hand God does reveal information (Gal. 2:2; 1:12). God has revealed to Paul the Gospel which is a verbal, informative message. Again certain factual information is revealed to Simeon before he died (Luke 2:26). On his final journey to Rome information was revealed Paul about his shipwreck, the survival of all passengers, and his eventual arrival in Rome (Acts 27:22). Peter says that information was revealed to the Old Testament prophets that their predictions were meant for our time rather than their own (1 Pet. 1:12). At this point we observe the great weakness of position A. What does this so-called "encounter with God" which is revelation really mean? One gets the impression that this revelation is only some vague, ineffable meeting with a Thou (Buber). And if Jesus is still in His grave--as Bultmann who is a chief exponent of position A maintains (op. cit. 60) -- how in all the world do I meet Him? Wilhelm Mundle is certainly correct when he comments, "Without the living Lord there is neither a 'Christ event' nor a 'Heilsgeschichte'" ("Die Krisis des Theologischen Historismus und ihre Überwindung," in Lutherischer Rundblick, 9, 3, 124).

7. Position A has a strong and sometimes healthy emphasis (Nygren) on the contemporaneousness of revelation; not always in the sense of Deus loquens, however. The emphasis is upon Deus revelans, not upon Deus revelatus. Revelation is therefore not a datum. To varying degrees this cuts off revelation from history, from God's great acts of redemption (which are fully historical, and necessarily so if Christianity is to be an historical religion, and not degenerate into a form of docetism or transcendentalism). To Bultmann, for instance, there is no factuality behind any of the redemptive "myths" connected with Christ's activity recounted in the New Testament. The only historical and real referent he has for revelation is the so-called kerygma which is merely the theology of the early Church.

8. The means of grace are played down on this view. In the case of none of the theologians espousing position A are the Word and Sacraments per se powerful to confer forgiveness or work faith. This is in line with the general existentialist orientation.

B. Position B describes revelation as an act of God, sometimes as an act plus human appreciation of it. Whereas position A is held chiefly by systematic theologians (including Bultmann however), position B is more popular with those who interest themselves in Biblical theology. Position B avoids the supremely subjectivistic element in position A. Position B does not seem to be oriented so strongly in existentialism.

We offer G. Ernest Wright as a rather typical proponent of this position. To him (God Who Acts, Chicago, 1952) Biblical Theology is the theology of recital, the theology which recounts the formative events of Israel's history as the redemptive handiwork of God (p. 38ff). This was Israel's faith, a uniquely Israelitish insight. Wright does not say, so far as I can discern, that God revealed this unique understanding to Israel, but it appears that Israel worked this out for herself. Thus, for instance, Israel takes over an older Canaanitish myth and works it into an account of creation which fits this framework. In a later book with Reginald Fuller this position becomes a little more articulate:

boiled down, it implies that the history of Israel was a series of natural events, that is, events which in every case could be explained by natural causes and were not necessarily wonders or miracles to those outside of Israel. Revelation seems, then, to be the addition of an interpretation which takes God into the picture. The interpretation makes these events revelatory. Thus the same event becomes something quite different when interpreted. The believer (in retrospect) sees it one way, the outsider another. (The Book of Acts of God, New York, 1960). Here we seem to have the same old historical rationalism espoused by De Wette over a century ago (Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in die kanonischen und apokryphischen Bücher des alten Testaments. Berlin, 1833. p. 183ff).

Some direct comment is necessary concerning this position. Operating with a naturalistic world view the position makes miracles and all divine intervention into our cosmos something less than what they must be (if they are miracles and wonders at all) and something less than they were thought to be by those who record them. As a matter of fact the Bible is filled with accounts of divine intervention into our realm, and that of a stupendous nature. It is true that the full meaning of all that was transpiring in the history of God's people was not open to Pharaoh, Sennacherib, the Amorites in Gideon, the Canaanites and others. But certainly all these people must have known that something awful and supernatural was happening. To deny that these events occurred is actually to take away the basis for Israel's faith in God's Lordship and redemptive activity and to represent her faith either as naïve or fraudulent, at any rate something we today could hardly respect. If these events did not take place as they were recorded, Israel's interpretation is merely pious guesswork. Thus we see modern theology operating with a system of a closed universe. Something happened to engender Israel's faith, but not something truly miraculous, nothing which represents God breaking through our time-space continuum. And so modern theology has become deistic. Revelation is merely the human understanding of a natural event (Classical Liberalism). It is striking how similar this view is to the position of Strauss, who held to Christ's supernatural birth, miracles, resurrection and ascension, "however much their reality as historic facts may be called into question" (Cf. Pflüger, The Development of Theology in Germany since Kant, London, 1890. p. 216). We might pause at this point briefly to note what Langdon Gilkey, who considers himself Neo-orthodox, has to say about the view of Wright and A. Anderson outlined above (Cf. "Cosmology, Ontology, and the Travail of Biblical Language" in JR. 41 (July), p. 194 ff.). Gilkey points out that on Wright's thesis the Bible is not a witness to the acts of God but merely a witness to what the Hebrews believed concerning God's acts and words: that is to say, it is a witness to Hebrew religion. When Wright and Anderson speak of God's acts and words they are not speaking univocally (which would mean that God acted and spoke in time and space), but they are using the terms analogically. And since they never explain what they mean, they are in fact using the terms equivocally. Gilkey goes on to observe that if the verbs in the Bible are not to be taken univocally, can we say that they have any intelligible content at all? What then becomes of the so-called "mighty acts" of God? They become (if they are anything at all) the religious response to an ordinary event within time and space. Thus, the term "mightyact" becomes an equivocation, if not deception. With telling clarity and even pathos Gilkey concludes, "As neo-orthodox men looking for a word from the Bible, we have induced from all these

cases the logical generalization that God is he who acts and speaks. This general truth about God we then assert while denying all the particular cases on the basis of which the generalization was first made. Consequently, biblical theology is left with a set of theological abstractions, more abstract than the dogmas of scholasticism." Surely here is a testimonium paupertatis.

Now the fact of the matter is that God's interpretation of His relation to Israel (e.g. His sovereignty, His Lordship, His providence, His redemptive purpose and activity) is bolstered and attested by His mighty acts (the Exodus, the story of Gideon, Jericho, etc.). Modern theology (Wright, Bultmann, Fuller et al. reverse this order. It is not a matter of Israel interpolating or embellishing some harrowing escape or victory which she may have experienced; it is a matter of her miraculous escape or victory vindicating God's previous word of promise and comfort. In other words, the right order in speaking of revelation is often not, act plus interpretation, but interpretation plus act.

C. Similarities between position A and position B can be noted. This is particularly true when we consider certain negative aspects.

1. Both positions seem to be a tour de force against the old evangelical doctrine which made special revelation something broader than a mere confrontation (Bultmann, Barth) or than act plus commentary (Wright, Temple, Baillie), something both ephapax and dynamic. The old Lutheran view (and this view seems to be uniquely Lutheran) thus spoke of revelation as something objective, something there, something always available, but at the same time spoke of the continuity of revelation (Deus revelans), of God who discloses Himself and speaks to us now. This is tied to the uniquely Lutheran doctrine that Scripture is vere et proprie God's Word (in the sense that it is God's power and revelation). Only the Lutheran teaching that Scripture is efficacious can retain the Biblical doctrine of revelation in its entire breadth.

It is doubtful whether (with the exception of Barth) Neo-orthodoxy has ever really studied Luther's theology or that of the later orthodox Lutherans. At least Baillie in his discussion of the idea of revelation in the seventeenth century seems blissfully ignorant of this position when he describes the era as "defining revelation as a communicating of a body of knowledge, some part at least of which could be independently obtained, or at least verified, by 'the light of reason and nature', while the remainder was supplemental to what could be so obtained or verified' (op. cit. 5). Be all that as it may, Neo-orthodoxy could not have accepted the old Lutheran position, for modern theology is committed to the pre-suppositions of higher criticism, that the Bible was a mere human response to God's activity among His people and is therefore errant.

2. Both positions deny the possibility of a written or spoken revelation. Heineken (op. cit. 43) categorically rejects "'identifying written sentences and propositions with special divine revelation' and speaking of 'an inscripturated propositional revelation.'" Abba (The Nature and Authority of the Bible, London, 1958, 83, 247) who holds essentially to position B, has the following to say, "Revelation was therefore the resultant, as it were, of two factors: it was given through two things--the historic event and the prophetic mind! Neither was

sufficient of itself, but through the interplay of both God spoke." Such a statement might suggest a formulated revelation of some sort. But then Abba retreats behind position A when he says much later in his book, "Revelation does not consist of a series of statements about God: it is the self-disclosure of God." His reason for rejecting any idea of written or verbal revelation is the same as that of Baillie and Temple whom he follows: he has abandoned the belief that Scripture is inerrant; and God's revelation therefore cannot be contained within fallible, human language. That the Biblical writers think in terms of a written or spoken revelation has already been indicated in our discussion of revelation as information. Certainly when Scripture speaks of a revelation of a mystery (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 1:9; 3:3) or of the Gospel (Rev. 1:1 ff., Gal. 1:12; Tit. 1:3; Cf. also Luke 2:17), the reference is to a mystery or Gospel which is articulated.

3. Both positions deny that there can be a revelation of truth. One oft cited quotation from Temple will serve to illustrate this point. "What is offered to man's apprehension in any specific revelation is not truth concerning God but the living God Himself" (Nature, Man and God, London, 1934., 322). Note the alternative Temple leaves. This seems to be the position also of Barth, Brunner, Baillie and Abba. Either God reveals Himself, or He reveals a truth about Himself. That revelation could embrace both of these alternatives is a possibility not seriously entertained. Yet this is precisely what occurs and what the Lutheran Church has taught throughout its history. Temple goes on to say, "There is no such thing as revealed truth. There are truths of revelation; but they are not themselves directly revealed" (Ibid., 316). This means that there can be no possibility of revealed doctrine (truth), or of revealed theology.

It has been conjectured that the Bible does not operate with a correspondence theory of truth, and therefore it would be quite meaningless to claim that Scripture reveals truth in the sense of statements. This desperate position seems to lie behind the allegation (Abba) that "there is no biblical warrant for making inerrancy a corollary of inspiration." We should not waste much time answering such a conjecture. The purpose of declarative statements is to make words correspond to fact (except in the case of deliberate lies.) Without the correspondence theory of truth there can be no such thing as informative language or factual meaning. The eighth commandment entirely breaks down unless predicated upon the correspondence theory of truth. So much for the logical impossibility of the above theory. As a matter of fact Scripture is replete with evidence that it operates throughout with the correspondence idea of truth (Cf. Eph. 4:25; John 8:44-46; 1 Ki. 8:26; Gen. 42:16, 20; Zech. 8:16; Deut. 18:22; John 5:3ff; Ps. 119:163; 1 Ki. 22:16, 22ff; Dan. 2:9; Prov. 14:25; 1 Tim 1:15; Acts 23:6; 24:8, 11, 21.). It is utterly irrelevant when Brunner counters that Scripture teaches a Wahrheit als Begegnung (which is the title of one of his books). This is only to confuse truth (which pertains to statements) with certitude. So too is it irrelevant to point out that aletheia and emeth often refer to something deeper than mere correspondence to fact, that they refer to revealedness or to God and His faithfulness. God is true (faithful) because future events (fulfillment) correspond to His Word of promise, and His Word is true for the same reason.

At this juncture we can discern the importance of defining inerrancy formally. The nature of inerrancy is not that Scripture says what God wants it to say; this is rather the cause of inerrancy. Neither does the inerrancy of Scripture mean that Scripture unerringly speaks of Christ and leads me to Him who is the truth; this is the purpose (causa finalis) of inerrancy. But the nature of inerrancy is the correspondence of the words of Scripture to the facts which they describe. This has always been the meaning of the Church in speaking of inerrancy. It was the meaning of St. Jerome when he said, "The Lord's Words in Scripture are true; for Him to say it, means that it is" (In Mich. 4,1). It was the meaning of St. Augustine when he said, "I have learned to hold only those books of Scripture which are called canonical in such honor as to believe that their authors have not erred in any way in writing them" (Epis. ad Hier. 82.1). And of Luther when he said, "He who adheres to the Scriptures will find that they do not lie or deceive" W 11, 162). Only when inerrancy is defined formally in terms of correspondence to facts do we have a Bible which is truthful and reliable in any meaningful sense.

4. The fourth point of similarity between the two positions is the playing down of the informative (dianoetic) nature and purpose of revelation, and we have mentioned this above. We might merely add at this point that it would seem incredible for anyone seriously to think that the meaning of any act of God is less revelatory than the act itself, e.g. the death of Christ. On this fourth point modern theology seems to be less secure than on the first three. If revelation is not dianoetic, if God does not reveal information, there seems to be no escape from mysticism or from the equally sterile positivistic tenet that theology (language concerning God and revelation) is merely emotive; that is to say, theology is the use of symbolic ("mythical") tools or instruments which are employed in the practice of religion (Schleiermacher, Ritschl). In either case theology possesses no cognitive value. Again there can be no revealed theology (Cr. point 3 above), no theology which is either true or false, and this in the nature of the case.

But, as a matter of fact, the revelation of information is a Biblical teaching. Paul (Gal. 1:12) "received" (by revelation) the Gospel which is an informative message (cf. also 1 Cor. 15:3). The prophets in receiving a vision or word from the Lord receive usually an explanation for this word as well. Information was revealed to Paul in Acts 27:24 and 1 Cor. 11:23 and to Simeon in Luke 2:26-- and we could go on.

II. GENERAL ASSUMPTIONS AND PREDILECTIONS BEHIND THE MODERN VIEW OF REVELATION

A. Modern theology assumes that the human authors of Scripture, writing out of their cultural and religious milieu, were fallible human beings, subject to error and other human limitations. This is precisely the Socinian error which the Lutherans had to deal with in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Here we quote the well known statement of Barth,

To the bold postulate, that if their (the Biblical writers) word is to be the Word of God they must be inerrant in every word, we oppose the even bolder assertion, that according to the

scriptural witness about man (notice how Barth appeals to anthropological evidence rather than bibliological data at this point), which applies to them too (sic), they can be at fault in every word, and have been at fault in every word, and yet according to the same scriptural witness, being justified and sanctified by grace alone, they have still spoken the Word of God in their fallible and erring human word. (Church Dogmatics, I, 2, 529-30).

On such a postulate Scripture cannot be revelation. This is the conclusion of practically all the theologians we have considered. Bultmann makes the point very clear.

God the mysterious and hidden must at the same time be the God who is revealed. Not, of course, in a revelation that one can know, that could be grasped in words and propositions, that would be limited to formula and book and to space and time; but rather in a revelation that continually opens up new heights and depths and thus leads through darkness, from clarity to clarity. (Existence and Faith, p. 30)

There are obviously other presuppositions underlying this statement, but Bultmann makes it clear that God's revelation cannot be contained in anything limited to space and time such as human language. Both of the quotations above are based on the premise that the writers of Scripture wrote out of their own cultural setting and for their own day, a premise which as far as it goes is in substance correct. The premise is then employed to yield the conclusion that the holy writers were limited and fallible, and their writings could therefore not be considered a revelation. But both Barth and Bultmann ignore two facts in stating their premise; 1. The sacred writers wrote at the impulse of the revealing God. 2. They wrote for our day as well as their own (Rom. 15:4), in fact some of what they wrote is more understandable in our day than in theirs (1 Pet. 1:10). The New Testament recognizes these fundamental facts when it quotes the Old Testament as the Word of God and recognizes in the Old Testament prophecies which are better understood in terms of their fulfillment.

B. The basic methods of higher criticism as well as many of its tenets are assumed by modern theology when speaking of revelation. In general the dogmatic claims of Scripture concerning its origin, power and authority are ignored, and little heed is given to Jesus' attitude and use of the Old Testament. For instance, Barth and Dodd in all their writings on Scripture and its authority never seriously consider these matters. At the same time the Bible is considered only a human response to God's activity, the product of the Church's theology, which is precisely what the positive theologians of the nineteenth century taught. Theology is the product of the Church (Cf. form criticism: Bultmann, Schweitzer, Schlier et al.). God is not the principium essendi of theology as our old teachers said, but rather we have Paul's theology, John's theology, James' theology, etc. Abba (op. cit. 243) remarks, for instance, that at his conversion and his meeting with Peter three years later were the only opportunities Paul had for "receiving" the Christian tradition, thus ignoring the apostle's own claim that he did not "receive" his gospel from men but from God and that he spent three years in Arabia (Gal. 1:12, 17).

Such a procedure involves also fitting isagogical data into the naturalistic or evolutionary development of doctrine. Thus, the book of John is not authentic, but a Hellenized or Gnostic Tendenzschrift (Schweitzer, Bultmann). The pastoral epistles are unauthentic because of their emphasis upon doctrine which again is a late Hellenistic or "Catholic" development. The psalms of David are not authentic because they conflict with datings concerning the emergence of such themes as resurrection, immortality, etc. Ultimately this position leads often to distorted views concerning Christ Himself, since He committed Himself concerning certain books of the Old Testament: a kenosis doctrine is taught, or adoptionism, or Jesus is called a child of His time, and all because theologians are committed to the historico-critical method. Such conclusions as these mentioned, predicated as they are upon naturalistic presuppositions, often become in turn the predilections behind modern theology's view of revelation.

C. At times a strange, atomistic view of language may account for the attitude of modern theologians toward the orthodox doctrine of revelation. Reference will be made to the thousands of textual variants in the Bible, to the rather loose quotation in the New Testament from the LXX, to the impossibility of getting to the autographic texts of Scripture, to the fact that we do not have the ipsissima verba of Jesus, or to the fact that there can never be an infallible interpreter of Scripture (Temple) - and all to show that the Bible cannot be revelation. Let us take the absurd reasoning of Heineken as an example of this procedure. Speaking against the position that the Bible is an errant revelation, he says, "Admittedly, this leads, in every instance, to an assertion about the autographs for which we must continue to search and which we must try, from our present manuscripts, always to restore as accurately as possible, for it is precisely those sentences and propositions which constitute the revelation and without them (?) we would be at sea and we would have no knowledge (?) of God or of His will and His heart. (op. cit. p. 43). These words of Heineken's and the other arguments mentioned above are classic examples of irrelevant evidence.

D. Existentialism appears to lie behind much that modern theology says in regard to revelation, particularly in respect to position A. Karl Barth in his Epistle to the Romans, (p. 10) says that, if he has any presupposition, or "system", it is what Kierkegaard called "'the infinite qualitative difference' between time and eternity in both its negative and positive meaning. 'God is in heaven and you are on earth.'" Schubert Ogden in the introduction to Bultmann's essays in Existence and Faith is most insistent that this is precisely Bultmann's point of departure in all his theological endeavor. Such a principle might be pushed to such a transcendental extreme that even miracles and the incarnation are denied (Bultmann, but not Barth or Kierkegaard); but in regard to revelation we can see that the principle would hardly allow for a permanent given revelation such as Scripture. For then (the argument goes) the absolute freedom and sovereignty of God could not be maintained. Bultmann is more consistent with this position than even Barth. To him theological thoughts cannot represent God's thoughts (but cf. 1 Cor. 2:16); they are rather thoughts of faith, "thoughts in which faith's understanding of God, the world, and man is unfolding itself." (Theology of the NT, London, 1955, II, 237ff).

And theological propositions cannot be the object of faith, but only the explanation of the understanding of faith. Thus, there seems to be no factual knowledge of God at all, except perhaps that He breaks in upon us (revelation) with the kerygma making possible our authentic existence; but "the theological thoughts of the New Testament are the unfolding of faith itself growing out of that new understanding of God, the world, and man which is conferred in and by faith--or, as it can also be phrased: out of one's new self-understanding (Bultman's emphasis)." Hence, for Bultmann revelation, as he says elsewhere (Existence and Faith, p. 85.88) is that I am given a knowledge of my own existence, my immediate now. Hence, it is perfectly correct for John Macquarrie to describe Bultmann's concept of theology as merely "a kind of phenomenology of faith" (An Existentialist Theology, London, 1955, p.6). And Schubert Ogden, another Bultmann sympathizer, freely admits that Bultmann's conception of theology as man understanding himself "results in a complete destruction of the traditional Christian conception of 'the history of salvation' "(Christ Without Myth. New York, 1961. p. 36.). Ogden and his minion are simply asking us to abandon our Christian faith--that is, if we want to understand our human existence. We can only reply with Mundle (op. cit., 120), "The loss of the resurrection of Christ brings with it the loss of the Christian's 'understanding of existence.'"

It is clear at this point why Barth and others will not follow Bultmann all the way in his existentialism. The latter has chopped Christianity away from its roots in history, in spite of what he says about the Jesus of history and the kerygma. This tendency of position A is the reason why many who espouse it sometimes veer toward position B which sets God's revelation in history. Adherents of position B, however, since their position makes revelation neither dynamic nor contemporary, will sometimes lean toward position A.

Another example of existentialist (Kierkegaard) presuppositions is seen in Brunner's and Heineken's (op. cit. 49) argument that the traditional, orthodox doctrine of revelation springs from a desire for guaranteed certainty.

III. SOME OF THE PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE MODERN VIEW CONCERNING REVELATION

A. A playing down of the importance of doctrine in the Church.

B. An uneasy monergism in position B. When we refer to a revelation of God in the past, this is God's act exclusively (e.g. the Exodus or the resurrection). When we make revelation act plus appreciation we have a divine-human datum.

C. Scepticism. Position B, operating with the historico-critical method makes it difficult or impossible to get at the revelatory acts of God. Temple is frank to say concerning Jesus "that there is no single deed or saying of which we can be perfectly sure that He said or did precisely this or that." (Baillie and Martin, eds. Revelation, London, 1937, p. 114). W. J. Phythian-Adams (The Call of Israel, p. 64) is less radical: he says "However

much they may embellish the facts, or even obscure them in the interests of their particular purpose, at heart of their narrative these facts remain as a solid, resistant core, the indestructible nucleus of historical reality. But how does he know this? Employing the same methodology Bultmann has come to quite different conclusions.

Let us now examine what G. Ernest Wright and Reginald Fuller have to say in their book, The Book of the Acts of God, so that we might learn just how much one can say about the so-called relevatory acts of God when the historico-critical method is applied to the Biblical account. Let us consider the one act of the resurrection. According to the authors the resurrection cannot be an objective act of history in the same sense as the crucifixion of Christ. The latter event was open to all men as an historical happening (Cf. Tacitus and Josephus). But resurrection is "perceived only by the people of faith." (p. 14) The risen Christ was seen only by a few (Cf. 1 Cor. 15:5-8; and note the irrelevant thesis here). Thus, Easter is "not an arena where a historian can operate." Only facts available to all men are the data of objective history. We might ask at this point, what historical event in the ancient world is available to the historian, if we ask for more evidence than offered by reliable witnesses? There is in fact as much historical evidence for the resurrection of Christ as for the fact that Caesar crossed the Rhine. The reason for the authors' position can only be due to an a priori prejudice against the miraculous. The authors then proceed to call the resurrection a "faith-event", unlike other events, but "nevertheless real to the Christian community." But we ask, is the event real? Did it happen? This is Paul's issue in 1 Cor. 15; he was not speaking merely of what the event meant to the Christian community. There was no "historical problem" for Paul and the other apostles who had seen the risen Christ, as there seems to be for Wright and Fuller. The resurrection was chief issue for Paul (Acts 23:6; 24:21), the issue which caused him so much trouble. To a non-Christian He is pictured in Acts as a sort of narrow-minded fundamentalist who refused to demythologize. Contrary to Bultmann, this was just where the offense lay (Acts 26:8). Wright and Fuller say that the resurrection means Christ is alive, not dead; and finally they make their position quite clear when they conclude that language like "raised on the third day", "ascension", "going up", "sitting at the right Hand of God" are simply "products of the situation", "temporal language of the first century Christians. To us they are symbols of deep truth and nothing more". All this is Strauss redivivus. Hence, we can only conclude that the most significant event in Christ's life, that event by which He is declared to be God's Son, by which He spoiled principalities and powers, which renders our preaching and our faith something other than vain, that event upon which the truth of the entire Christian religion depends, perhaps never actually happened. We might remember that Bultmann too makes the resurrection a myth, Brunner denies the open tomb, Niebuhr makes the resurrection supra-historical. On one point we must be perfectly clear: it is not for historico-critical methodological reasons that modern theologians cannot accept the resurrection of Christ, but because of an historico-critical metaphysical predisposition. Surely this is building a theology on the sands of utter scepticism. If theology is based on revelation, and we cannot be sure of any act of God's revelation, what is there left for theology to talk about except eternal truths

(Strauss, Hegel) or my understanding of my own existence (Bultmann)?

D. A retreat into mysticism is often the result of both positions. When the acids of historical science have eaten away at the roots of God's revelation in history there is no other direction to go. Thus, we see modern theologians appealing to Kierkegaard with his emphasis upon subjective truth, employing the Kantian phenomenal-noumenal categories (e.g. Christ of faith--Jesus of history; history and super history) and his "ideas of reason" which are totally above all empirical verification (it is true), but are also outside the very realm of the empirical, i.e. the historical. We might recall that it was only one step from Kant to the Neo-Kantians with their rejection of the noumenal, thus resulting in a belief in a god who does not exist. Is all this really so far from A. Ritschl who spoke of Jesus as the Son of God (Werturteil) but denied His deity or said it didn't matter? Is it even so far removed from the pragmatism of John Dewey with his unbounded confidence in empiricism and his "faith" in a god who does not exist? We are not accusing all these modern theologians of Pragmatism or Kantianism, although many (even Barth) are patterning their theology according to Kant's transcendental aesthetic. We are merely attempting to show the various directions which modern theology with its doctrine of revelation is taking.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is not within the purview of this study to offer refutation of the ideas of modern theology on the subject of revelation, although in my previous analysis I have at times indicated the direction our answer must take. However, a concluding remark might be made lest our study seem to end hanging in air.

In replying to Neo-orthodoxy we must go back to the basic conviction of the Lutheran Church and of historic Christianity that the Sacred Scriptures are not merely metonymically or metaphorically or hyperbolically, but, as our old theologians have said, vere et proprie God's Word, the product of God's breath (theopneustos), the utterances of very God (ta logia tou theou).

What does this mean? It has the most profound meaning and significance for the Church, not only for her theology, but for her life and activity. Christ said we live by His Word. His words are spirit and life (John 6:63). The Scriptures as the words of God's mouth are able (dunamena) to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15). All the things we say about Scripture, its power, its authority, its perfection (opheleia), its inerrancy, are predicated by virtue of its divine origin, its inner nature (forma) as God's Word.

Now what does a word do? What is its usual function? It is to communicate, to evoke, to move, to reveal. My words are the revelation of my heart. Christ, the hypostatic Word, who is "with God" (John 1:1), who is "in the bosom of the Father", He reveals God (John 1:18). And the prophetic and apostolic Word which on its own testimony (Matt. 4:4; Rom 3:2;

2 Tim. 3:16) proceeds from the mouth of God reveals God. Scripture is revelation. How naive for theologians to speak of Scripture as God's Word and then to deny that it is a revelation!

THE HISTORICO-CRITICAL METHOD

PROBLEM II

It is not possible to offer any adequate discussion of the so-called "historico-critical method" in a study such as this. And it is difficult to proffer even a definition of the "method". We cannot define it merely as the critical use of all the helps available (historical, archeological, linguistic, etc.) in aiding Scripture study. For in such a case Luther, Flacius and Calov would have occupied the front ranks among proponents of the "method". It was rather an approach which could not have originated in Luther's day or even in Calov's which still possessed a pre-scientific world view and which had no insight into the canons of modern historical science. The "method" was born in the period of rationalism (when miracles and the inspiration of Scripture were rather generally questioned by scholars) and it was weaned on the milk of Wolffian and Kantian philosophy. There is no need to go into the contributions of the precursors of the "method", like Spinoza, Lessing, and Christian Wolff, or even of its earliest proponents, Eichhorn, De Wette, Kuenen, Graf, Strauss and Baur. It is enough to mention a couple of points which these scholars had in common and which influenced their study of the Scriptures: 1) all were influenced heavily by the emergent historical criticism and were convinced that it must be applied indiscriminantly to Scripture, 2) all shared in a new and freer view concerning the Bible and revelation. Without these two developments there would never have been an "historico-critical method" in the modern sense. One of the first theologians to break with the old view that Scripture was revelation was Sigmund Baumgarten. (1706-57). He failed to understand the orthodox view that Scripture was only one mode of revelation, and represented the older view as identifying revelation and inspiration. To him the Bible was merely the foundation or original source (Urkunde) of revelation. Baumgarten was followed by Johan Semler (1725-91), usually considered the father of modern Biblical criticism. Semler severed the Word of God and the Scriptures. Scripture was relevant, it became the Word of God, when and insofar as it spoke to the internal life of man; and only then could one speak of the inspiration of Scripture. Two points might be noted at this juncture. 1. We notice the close resemblance between this view and that of Neo-orthodoxy today. 2. Semler was a thorough going rationalist; he denied the supernatural, i.e. miracles and predictive prophecy; and he insisted that all theologies were merely attempts to apprehend the truth. Such rationalistic tenets were, according to Semler, a necessary pre-understanding for the correct approach to the Bible: the authority of Scripture as the authority of very God must be denied before Scripture can be studied critically like other books. This attitude was carried over by Vatke (a Hegelian), Kuenen, Bauer et al. all of whom denied at the outset of their studies the divine origin and unique character of Israel's theology. One thing Semler seemed to have in common with the more modern practitioners of the "method". He cared where the "method" was leading him. Kuenen and Wellhausen did not seem to care. But all found

themselves in the same cul-de-sac, theological scepticism. Like Lessing, Fichte and Kant, Semler retreated into moralism after he had applied his rationalism to the Scriptures. We still see his legacy in Harnack and modernism. Today such moralism is out of style, due to Existentialism and our present Zeitgeist. But this in no way signifies a return to orthodoxy. Theology today with its existentialist jargon and its emphasis upon paradox, subjective truth, man's existence, but without any firm basis in a revealed Word of God, is not the articulation and communication of a doctrina divina but is merely the facade of a latent subjectivism or mysticism or even scepticism (Bultmann, Tillich, Brunner). And man theologizes no longer to represent facts about God and His will and His mighty acts (and this means real acts), but to evoke, or to relate to, etc. (Bultmann).

From this brief introduction to the "method" I should like next to turn to an example of this "method" at work. I choose as my example "form criticism" as it has been applied to the synoptic gospels. What is form criticism? What is its background? its point of departure? its purpose? Conservative Lutherans are practicing it to some extent? Is this legitimate? Is it fruitful? Is it wise? Let me examine the method as applied by one of its most notable exponents, Rudolf Bultmann. I choose Bultmann deliberately because he is such a radical practitioner of the method, and a critical analysis of his system will not reflect on anyone in our circles. I also make Bultmann my foil because his system is consistent and clear and he spells out his underlying assumptions.

Form criticism, according to Bultmann is the attempt to isolate and analyze the various types of traditional materials dealing with Christ's life and message. These forms, or types, are the following: (Cf. for the following F. C. Grant, Form Criticism, Chicago, 1934, also "The New Approach to the Synoptic Problem" in JR III, (1926) p. 337 ff.).

- a. Miracle Stories. These are stock stories, taken over from Hellenistic miracle narratives and having the same basic structure throughout.
- b. Apothegms. These are hero sayings, or controversial utterances, often given in the form of a counter response to a question or in the form of a brief parable. These sayings are for the most part unauthentic. The context and setting is always fictitious. For instance, the disciples' not fasting (Mk.2:23-26; 7:1-8) was later explained and justified by words put into the mouth of Jesus. Such apothegms as the calling of the disciples, the widow's mite, the conversation with Mary and Martha are creations of the later Christian community.
- c. Parabolic Sayings. The parables are difficult to make out because of the impossible setting into which the evangelists place them. For instance, the original sense of the parable of the tower-builder, the new wine in old skins, the mustard seed, and the leaven cannot be known. The evangelists often misunderstood them (Juelicher). Most of the parables are not authentic, and are often given contrary interpretations by the different evangelists. They are "worked over under the faith of the community". Often the original meaning has been utterly changed.
- d. Proverbs. These are aphorisms which (we would agree) are obviously not characteristic of Jesus and which Bultmann concludes to be the least

authentic of all.

e. Apocalyptic Sayings. These are often authentic in substance, but usually later supplementation and Christianization has been made.

f. Legal Sayings. The results of this criticism in reference to Jesus' preaching and life are the following: 1) We gain a consistent representation of Jesus' historic message, but never in any case do we have positive evidence of authenticity. 2) Certain events in Christ's life, as recorded by the evangelists, are historical (e.g. the baptism by John, the crucifixion). However, the accompanying circumstances to these events and many other significant events which the evangelists record are merely the result of "pious fancy". This is the case with the weeping women who speak to Jesus when He carries His cross, the death of Judas, the washing of Pilate's hands. These are embellishments to enhance the death of Jesus as a world-transforming catastrophe (!). Again the resurrection is a fiction composed "under the influence of devout imagination" and it shows "how active the Christian imagination has been". The transfiguration is merely another resurrection narrative. Other pure legends are Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, Peter's draught of fishes, the miraculous birth of Jesus and the great commission.

What about these conclusions? They seem to be quite consistent and convincing, if we agree with the assumptions which lie behind form criticism. Predicating either a two source theory or a four (six) source theory (Streeter), the assumptions are four in number. 1) Mark, the earliest of the gospels, is dominated by a dogmatic conception of Jesus. Consequently we can know nothing from Mark (and therefore also from Matthew and Luke) concerning the course of Christ's activity or of His Messianic consciousness. 2) Q as well as the later documents grew out of the primitive Church (Wellhausen), which was steeped in prejudice and therefore unreliable concerning Christ's teaching. 3) Even the ethical teachings of the gospels, although they may be traced to Jesus, are basically the product of the early Church. 4) All that we have behind the gospels are brief single sayings with the context and background given them editorially. The settings are never historical. Correlative to these four points are the assumptions that 1) the three synoptic gospels grew out of Greek Christianity, and 2) that an "enormous distinction" obtained between the Palestinian-Jewish idea of Jesus as Messiah and the Hellenistic-Gentile idea of Jesus as Lord, a doctrinal difference which is discernible throughout the gospels.

But there are assumptions behind these professed assumptions. And when we clearly discern these underlying postulates we grasp the real basis of Bultmann's system. The postulates are clearly three in number. 1) A Naturalistic World-View. This postulate is clearly stated in Bultman's programmatic essay, entitled "New Testament and Mythology" (Kerygma und Mythos, Hamberg, 1948, I, 15ff) in which he says that modern man cannot accept the mythical cosmology, soteriology, eschatology or sacramentology of the New Testament, and this because of his knowledge and mastery of the world (Cf. also his later essay, Jesus Christ and Mythology. New York, 1958.) From such a presupposition we can see that it is a short step to interpreting some teaching or event in the New Testament as a borrowing from a Hellenistic myth. And this is hardly doing violence to the New Testament on

Bultmann's terms, for only the "kerygma" of the New Testament is to be accepted, not the mythology. 2) An Evolutionary Theory of the Development of Doctrine (Hegelian and Wellhausen fashion). It is simply taken for granted that the Bible contains contraries, discrepancies and contradictions (e.g. between the synoptists, and between John and the synoptists). Without this assumption we would be back in the pre-form-critical days. At the same time it is taken for granted that the theology of Paul and John, for instance, are their own insights into God, the world, and human existence, insights taken often from their thought world, their culture, but also from foreign cultures. The possibility of God directly revealing theology to the evangelists and apostles is perhaps granted by certain conservative practitioners of form criticism, but is never made a viable hypothesis for understanding and interpreting a text. Thus, we see the inerrancy and the verbal inspiration of Scripture rejected and therefore invalidated as principles to be observed in interpreting Scripture. 3) An Historico-Critical Approach to Scripture. It is assumed that the Bible must be read and assessed according to the same canons of historical science as all other writings. This simple postulate of Bultmann's is shared by most of Biblical theology today. Lip service may be paid at times to the "divine side" of Scripture, but the historian studies it as a human document arising out of its own cultural and religious climate, not as the Word of God. We must go into this presupposition a little more closely as it is advanced by Bultmann.

First, we notice that Bultmann absolutizes historical science as a principle of hermeneutics. He insists that no dogmatic presuppositions can be held as one approaches and interprets the Scriptures (Cf. "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?" in Existence and Faith, p. 289ff). For instance, we cannot operate with any dogmatic opinion regarding Jesus' Messianic self-consciousness. We cannot be guided by the prejudice that the evangelists Matthew and John were Jesus' disciples and therefore offer a basically accurate account of things. In arguing against such assumptions Bultmann betrays some assumptions of his own. But apart from this, he argues that any prejudice concerning Christ's Messianic self-consciousness would be exhibited by historical research, and that all knowledge "of a historical kind is subject to discussion", and therefore an open question. Here he is clearly operating with a philosophical pre-supposition of great magnitude, the principle of Leibnitz, Kant and Lessing that nothing in the realm of history can yield certain truth, conclusions which can be absolutely trusted. To this proton pseudos of modern theology I shall return later. Yet in spite of the inherent scepticism behind such a conceit, Bultmann in Promethean fashion says, "The one presupposition that cannot be dismissed is the historical method (his emphasis) of interrogating the text. Indeed, exegesis as the interpretation of historical texts is a part of the science of history."

Now what is this historical method which is necessary for the correct study of Scripture. Is it merely the use of rules of grammar and interpretation, the finding of the historical conditions behind the text, the studying of contemporary literature, etc. No doubt it is all this. But he then proceeds to make the significant statement, "The historical method includes the presupposition that history is a unity in the sense of a closed continuum of effects in which individual events are connected by the succession of cause and effect". In other words, there is again a mighty presupposition

behind the presupposition; namely the premise of a closed universe. All must be interpreted according to this postulate. Listen to more: "This closedness means that the continuum of historical happenings cannot be rent by the interference of the supernatural, transcendent powers and that therefore there is no 'miracle' in this sense of the word" (292). It is elementary in understanding Bultmann to recognize that every tissue of his exegesis and Biblical theology (e.g. his discussions of eschatology) emanates from this postulate, everything goes back to this premise. Bultmann has made historical science a norm for doctrine: for him there can be no dogmatical truth which runs against historical truth. No theological doctrine can run against the conclusions of the historian.

Second, in analyzing Bultmann's historical approach we must return to what must be considered a desperate aspect of his system, namely his position (like Leibnitz, Kant and Hume) that historical truth is only contingent, never more than probable---a view which when applied to Scripture can only lead to scepticism. Thus, a doctrine based on an historical event or connected with one (atonement, justification, baptism, Lord's Supper) can never be certain. Such a position disturbed Kierkegaard, and drove Barth to his novel (mystic) idea of revelation, and it drives Bultmann further, as we shall see. At any rate it is docetic. Bultmann refuses to "tie" his faith to "results of historical research" (Faith and Existence, p. 4), and this in effect means historical events. But we would insist that faith is tied to historical events, events which are secure before and apart from historical research. In this sense our faith is tied to something not scientifically verifiable. According to Bultmann dogmatic truth and historic truth are no longer linked and interdependent as in traditional theology. Summing up, we might say that Bultmann has done the following: 1. He has made the historical method the presupposition for interrogating the Scriptures. 2. He has assumed that history cannot offer one anything certain to which one can tie his faith. 3. From the dilemma into which he thus places himself he retreats to Existentialism. And Existential interpretation, which prescribes that religious documents must be read as answering the so-called existentiell question, becomes another presupposition to reading and understanding the Scriptures (though not of form criticism). But by this step he has not quite solved the problem raised by his three former presuppositions: even Existentialism makes one thing factual and therefore historical and contingent, namely the encounter with God.

Bultmann and his admirers are insistent that he has no relation to the older Bewusstseinstheologie of Schleiermacher and Ritschl and that his "self understanding" bears no resemblance to Lessing's timeless truths of reason. It is true that Bultmann's Existentialism is unlike the older Liberalism in that it is not rationalistic, moralistic and ontologically idealistic. But the anti-supernaturalistic world view (Cf. Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, 183), the approach toward Scripture as a human product, the historical scepticism (Kantian orientated) are quite the same. And what is therefore important is that for essentially the same reasons the principles of the Christian religion (formal and material) are destroyed. Actually Bultmann can offer no good reason (Myth and Christianity) for men like Jaspers, Kamlah and Buri not going the one short step beyond him to an existentialist self-commitment not dependent upon the Christ event, or for not demythologizing the kerygma itself. Why not?

The kerygma is merely the residue of myth which ought to be dealt with like all other myths (KuM II, 85ff.). Who is Bultmann to say that the kerygma is the kernel and nothing else? The same leap into authentic existence (Jaspers) may occur without the specific Christian kerygma.

But let us return now to Bultmann's form criticism and the three underlying postulates of the method. And may I make a few personal comments.

1. It is a question whether without a) a naturalistic world view, b) a developmental theory concerning doctrine, and c) the insistence that Scripture is in every way like other literature and must therefore be treated according to the canons of historical science--it is a question whether without these postulates the four assumptions underlying form criticism (outlined above) could possibly have been made. In other words, take away these basic postulates and you have a method with no basis, a superstructure without a foundation. Deny these postulates, and there seems to be little purpose in going behind the gospels, little purpose in form criticism. And deny these postulates we must.

2. It might be said that form criticism cannot be harmful since it is only a method. Since it stands for no conclusions it will not affect doctrine. Such a view I believe is both naive and contrary to the facts. On the basis of the method Bultmann and Dibelius conclude that we can know practically nothing about the person and life of Jesus. Bultmann says (Jesus and the Word, p. 8), "I do indeed think that we can know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist." Critical research shows us, he says, that what we have concerning Jesus is "fantastic and romantic". Such are the assured conclusions which the method renders. Surely there are fundamental dogmatic and Christological implications here. But significantly these conclusions are in part the very assumptions which underlie the method. The form critical method was originally outlined by W. Wrede and K. L. Schmidt who worked with the assumption that Jesus did not think of Himself as the Christ, and the writer of Mark (the first of our present gospels to be written) constructed a theme whereby Jesus gradually revealed His Messiahship. Is it any wonder that D. M. Baillie, whose Christology is none too strong, could be frightened and call the system "historical radicalism"? "We may be disposed to wonder", Baillie says, "whether this is a case of making a virtue of necessity and cutting the pattern of Christology according to the shrunken sloth of historical material which is all that an impartial Form Criticism leaves, or whether on the other hand it is merely another example of a professedly impartial criticism being controlled by certain theological prejudices; or whether perhaps both of these forces, being inseparable, are acting and reacting on each other" (God Was in Christ, 1948, p. 26).

3. But perhaps by making Bultmann my foil I have appeared to become irrelevant to the situation in our Church: no one in our circles follows such radicalism, and there are other practitioners of form criticism who come far short of Bultmann's conclusions. I would merely ask, however, whether these form critics have any reason for not going all the way with Bultmann, unless it be a matter of personal taste or unless dogmatic presuppositions (which are condemned by the method) act as some sort of control. For instance, could

there be any reason for holding to a two nature doctrine and to the resurrection of Christ, as Vincent Taylor does (The Person of Christ in the New Testament Teaching, London, 1958), and at the same time making the Virgin Birth historically improbable and other New Testament miracles probable only to varying degrees? Would not the method imply a more consistent application than this? It seems that Taylor is working on the principle of the intrinsic as well as the chronological priority of Mark. But in the end his questioning of the Virgin Birth is not due primarily to the fact that only the later evangelists speak of it, but (following Brunner) he feels there are no compelling dogmatic reasons for holding onto it. But in the case of the resurrection it is a different matter. In short, the reason for his apparent inconsistency is due to an adherence to the Church's creedal statements. But such statements can only be based upon Scripture. This brings us to a question which I believe is quite relevant: Can one legitimately subscribe to the Confessions of the Lutheran Church and at the same time work with an historico-critical method of interpreting Scripture which is markedly and admittedly dissimilar from the exegetical procedure employed by the writers of the Lutheran Confessions? If so, in what sense does he make a quia subscription to the Symbols?

4. There are naturally definite modifications of the method of form criticism. Some of the assumptions of Bultmann and Dibelius are not granted by more conservative exponents of the method, e.g. the Gnostic influence on the New Testament, the dogmatic bias of Mark. C. H. Dodd disagrees with Bultmann on one very important point: he holds (History and the Gospel, London, 1938) that the gospels must be read as historical documents as well as a preachment. And he believes in the miraculous. For instance, he grants a prima facie case for Matthew's story of the Nativity, the flight into Egypt, and Judas' betrayal for thirty pieces of silver being authentic. In such cases historical memory still controlled the stories concerning Christ. But the story of the coin in the fishes mouth (Matt. 17:24) is a later accretion. The blind man of Bethsaida, the dumb man of Decapolis and the story of the Gadarene swine are probably not historical (because they are similar to non-Christian popular tales), whereas the withered hand and the paralytic probably were. Now it might appear that Dodd is using the same method as Bultmann but does not share all his presuppositions, that is to say, believing in the miraculous he does not hold to a naturalistic world view, although he goes along with Bultmann's other two presuppositions. For this reason he naturally comes up with a different set of conclusions from Bultmann. However, if all three postulates were abandoned by Dodd he would come to still different conclusions, namely that form criticism is not a very fruitful business. But the gnawing question remains in reference to Dodd: is he not at least at times operating with all of Bultmann's presuppositions? It would seem that the same historical canons which prompt him to reject certain miracle stories would apply with equal force to the Virgin Birth which he accepts and the resurrection which he also accepts (but never adequately describes). And this leads us to the great weakness in form criticism: there are no controls. To deny the actuality of some miracles and not others recorded in Scripture is an arbitrary business, aside from the fact that one is making either an un-Christian world view or historical science a norm in such matters.

5. It is difficult to see how the form critical program can be made compatible with the sola scriptura principle. The prime purpose of the program is to get behind the gospels in order to know more certainly about the

activity and message of Jesus. Thus the presentation in the gospels is assumed to be somehow unreliable, or at best unauthentic. This is certainly a debasement of Scripture as the principium cognoscendi, as the only and absolute source of theology. It might be argued that the form critical method only enables us to understand Scripture better; and there is no doubt that such a claim is sincere and consistent when predicated upon the assumptions behind the method itself. However, if employed by one who consciously and consistently holds to the sola scriptura principle, it is difficult to see how the method can lead to anything: if Ur-Markus and Q and M and L are constructed purely on the basis of the gospels as we have them (and so far as I know there is no external evidence for them), and these hypothetical documents in turn serve to render more intelligible the gospels, we are faced with a procedure which, although interesting, is really quite sterile of truly theological issue, inasmuch as the procedure is strictly idem per idem. The reason why proponents of the method do in fact arrive at definite and important conclusions can only be due to the fact that they have here and there in their circuit stopped to introduce foreign historical or scientific hypotheses or data which become decisive and normative factors in their interpretation.

The form critics are the first to agree with what I have said above, that the historico-critical method as they understand it and practice it is not compatible with the old sola scriptura principle or with the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures. They can see that to speak of the contents of the gospels in terms of layers, strata, erosion, distillation, reconstruction, conflation, supplementation, accretion, etc., is hardly conducive of confirming one in the old orthodox view of the Bible. I let R. H. Lightfoot speak for them when he says, "So long as this view of inspiration prevailed, the four gospels could only be regarded as of equal value, historically and otherwise. It chanced, however, that just as this belief began to crumble, the discovery was made that among the four gospels one was quite definitely on a superior historical level . . . and the discovery that there were good grounds for finding in St. Mark a chief authority for the gospel of St. Matthew and St. Luke gave birth to the hope that in St. Mark's Gospel above all we might hope to discover the Jesus of History" (History and Interpretation in the Gospels, p. 10, 12. Cf. also Dodd, The Authority of the Bible, London, 1928. p. 127; Eberhard Mueller, Conversation on Faith, Philadelphia, 1960).

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

PROBLEM III

A. THE LUTHERAN IDEA OF ECUMENICITY

By way of preface to this third section of my study I should like to direct your attention to a significant essay of my colleague, Dr. Boumann, at the last Synodical Conference, on the Ecumenical Character of Lutheran Doctrine. He points out there that Lutheran teaching is ecumenical for a number of reasons: 1. because it expresses its oneness with the church of all ages, 2. because it is based on an ecumenical source, namely the Scriptures, 3. because it applies to all men in all conditions, 4. because it does not become involved in peripheral and adiaphoristic matters, 5. because it repudiates heretical teaching and 6. because it does not change whimsically. These points are true and

well taken, for they show that the Lutheran Church has been ecumenical in its outlook: it has been very conscious of its continuity with the church of former ages, and it has been most concerned about those denominations with whom for various reasons it has no outward fellowship. The spirit of the Reformation shows this. Roman Catholic historians have chosen of late to call this movement a revolt, but this is a misnomer. Luther was concerned to cleanse the Roman Church not to revolt against it. He did not wish to break with any true teaching or good tradition of the Church. He learned much of his theology from the ancient Fathers of the Church, he drew from the ancient hymnody, he used the old liturgy which had developed in the Church through the years. And this spirit we see in the Lutheran Confessions. The Augsburg Confession makes it clear that it teaches and confesses only what has been drawn from the sacred Scriptures and what has had been generally taught in the Church. It is significant to note that after Luther the three great Lutheran theologians in their respective generations were all the most serious and competent patristic scholars of their day, viz. Chemnitz, Gerhard and Calov. Such activity did not represent a morbid interest in the past but an ecumenical awareness of their oneness with the Church of former ages.

The Lutheran Church also has been concerned with the reunion of Christendom and the settlement of those differences which divide Christians. This was the concern behind Luther's desire for an ecumenical council, behind Melancthon's correspondence with the Greek Church and his fruitless interest in the Council of Trent. The interest in communicating with the Greek Church is shown in a rather touching manner by the appearance of Jacob Heerbrand's Compendium Theologiae in a bilingual edition (Latin and Greek) in 1582. To these faint overtures the Greek Church responded with indifference. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, even after confessional lines were drawn between Reformed and Roman Catholic, colloquies were held between the groups (e.g. Ratisbon 1601, Leipzig 1631; Thorn 1645). The meetings were for the most part sponsored and called by political leaders, but each denomination was well in attendance and even the most rigid Lutherans took part. What usually soured many of the friendly relationships between the parties was political encroachment and pressure, particularly by the Romanists and Reformed when they had opportunity. However, no matter how far formal discussions and negotiations broke down, there was always a great interest among Lutheran theologians in the teachings and activities of those who were not within their fellowship. A literary dialogue was always carried on between the great confessions. A dozen Roman Catholics answered Chemnitz, and a dozen Lutherans answered Bellarmine. True, these discussions were often polemical, and from the very Lutheran idea of ecumenicity they should have been. But the use of each other's output was not always polemical. Gerhard quotes Aquinas approvingly more than disapprovingly. Calov and Quenstedt cite Reformed theologians favorably very often. There was no hardening of the lines dividing the great confessions between Luther and the Formula of Concord, and between the Formula and the rise of pietism. Channels for reproachment were open throughout that era which, although never fully exploited, were as effective for achieving true ecumenicity as those methods employed generally today.

But today there is something quite different at hand, a new approach to the question of divided churches and ecumenicity. It is a movement so great

among the churches that it includes almost all of the Protestant denominations. As one writer has said, this movement, good or bad, may have effects as far reaching as the Reformation. But what is the nature of the movement? And where is it going? The first question we can answer only in part. The second question I do not believe we can answer at all. That the movement is so indefinite, so unclear in many respects, and yet so attractive, is what makes it all so bewildering and even frightening to many of us.

The movement today may be correctly epitomized in the WCC. True, we Synodical Conference Lutherans, the Roman Church and a small group which calls it the ICC have programs for theological discussion and even union, but who outside our own circles is listening to us? The WCC has now gathered under its wings a large number of smaller missionary movements, denominational conferences and ecumenical societies. Now at New Delhi it has just united with the International Missionary Council. At the same time it proposes to cooperate fully with the various national councils of churches. In other words this movement which is centered in the WCC is a dynamic and popular movement and must be reckoned with.

B. BACKGROUND----

One of the reasons for the surprising impact and appeal of the present movement is its different basic approach to the question of discussion, cooperation and reunion from the programs of the past. This leads us into a very brief review of the background of the present ecumenical movement. The programs of the past have always had as a definite goal unity of doctrine. Even the syncretists like Calixt, Lattermann et al. wanted reunion and cooperation on the basis of doctrine; it was just that they narrowed the basis of union to the doctrinal consensus of the first five centuries. The same was true of the program of John Dury (1596-1689) who made the fundamental dogmas (which unfortunately he never clearly defined) a necessary basis for the union of Reformed and Lutheran confessions which he envisioned. In other words the older movements for union and cooperation among the churches assumed that a doctrinal basis was necessary for such cooperation, although the basis might well have been some sort of compromise. The present ecumenical movement appears to spring from different concerns, concerns which are mostly practical.

What are the origins of the present ecumenical movement as centered in the WCC? And what can they tell us about the movement today and its basic approach? They are many and varied, and perhaps no one would venture to delineate them all. Sasse and others (CTM, 31 1960, 92) are convinced that Schmucker with his Definite Platform is a true father of the movement in the USA. For the most part, however, the roots of the movement lie in 1) youth agencies such as the YMCA, YWCA, The Student Christian Movement and the World's Student Christian Federation (Europe), 2) in the many foreign missionary organizations which for practical purposes were cooperative ventures of different denominations (London Missionary Society, The Layman's Missionary Movement 1906, Foreign Missions Conference of North America, the Conference for Foreign Mission Societies (British) and many other German, Scandinavian, American and British Mission Societies.) The most important of these became the International Missionary Council which has met periodically from 1910 and which included many of the

prior national councils. None of these societies or Conferences attempted to discuss doctrine or come to any doctrinal agreement. Their purpose was purely cooperation in the practical work of the Church. 3) A third source of our present movement might be found in evangelical movements, typified by the Ev. Alliance, founded by Thomas Chalmers (1846). This was an attempt not to achieve union but to bring about closer fellowship between Christians. Here a doctrinal platform was involved. Evangelical zeal was behind such a movement. But it was a zeal which was interdenominational and unionistic. 4) The Social Gospel, the concern for combating social evils of the day was a factor behind the present Ecumenical Movement. The argument was, if such ideas as envisioned by e.g. Walter Rauschenbusch and Josiah Strong were to be carried out, a new and united strategy was necessary. The influence of the Social Gospel was perhaps more indirect than direct. William Adams Brown says (Toward a United Church, 40): "While this association, in the work of the Social Gospel helped ultimately to prepare the way for the Ecumenical Movement, its contribution at first was only indirect."

Now admittedly the purposes behind these pre-WCC movements and societies are good. The Church must serve its young people and students. It must do mission work as effectively as possible without unnecessary overlap and with as little offense to the heathen as possible. Certainly to bring Christians to a greater appreciation of the Gospel is most desirable. And the Church is concerned with society and its betterment. But can these noble purposes be achieved effectively, can they be achieved in a manner pleasing to God, can they be achieved at all, by a group so heterogeneous that there is no unanimity as to what the Church is, the Gospel is, or the Sacraments are? My question may seem to prejudge the WCC which is the cloth woven from the various strands mentioned above. And perhaps it is now too early to make any *a posteriori* judgment of WC's success to date. To date I would say simply, does not the WCC as the agency for carrying out these purposes at the very outset condemn it to failure? My affirmative answer to the question will be brought out in the following resume and analysis of the expressed purposes of the present WCC. But first a little more data must be given by way of review of the immediate progenitors of the WCC.

The father of the WCC is the movement called Faith and Order, a series of conferences which began at Edinburgh in 1910. The first meeting was composed mainly of missionary societies, especially from the U.S.A. However, since these societies were generally in the control of denominations we find the respective denominations represented. "Faith and Order" describes what the purpose of these conferences was. The question of Faith asked about the doctrinal basis of the denominations and their differences from each other. The question of Order addressed itself to the ministry, the Sacraments, authority--all those matters which pertain to the ordering of the life of the Church. Not much was accomplished at this first meeting in settling these important matters. A great deal of emphasis was placed upon unity in the Church, even though little doctrinal unity was displayed. However, an optimistic note prevailed and most of those present looked forward to a "higher unity" in the future. And it was determined that some of the subjects tabooed at Edinburgh would be taken up in great seriousness at the next conference. Only two further meetings of Faith and Order were held prior to the Founding of the WCC, one in Lausanne in 1927 and one in Edinburgh in 1937. These meetings discussed doctrine at some length. Not much

was settled, but greater understanding between the denominations resulted. They learned to know each other better. This meant that the representatives present saw more clearly the great cleavages between their denominations and at the same time went away feeling that some sort of unity was behind it all (Norman Goodall, The Ecumenical Movement, 54).

The mother of the WCC was a movement known as the Life and Work Movement. The guiding spirit in this movement was Nathan Soderblom, a theological liberal, who was concerned primarily in having the Church exert a salutary influence on society and politics. He was particularly interested in the Church helping in negotiations for a just and lasting peace after the First World War. In 1925 the first meeting of this movement took place in Stockholm with Soderblom as chairman. The purpose of the conference was "to concentrate the mind of Christendom on the mind of Christ as revealed in the Gospels towards those great social, industrial and international questions which are so acutely urgent in our civilization." (*Ibid.*, 60). The movement was unionistic and dominated by the spirit of the "Social Gospel". (*Ibid.*, 59). In 1938 a second meeting was held at Oxford a few days before the Edinburgh Conference of Faith and Order. Thus, preparations were made for a union of the two movements into the WCC. Again Soderblom was a leading figure. "What I advocate", he said, "is an Ecumenical Council of Churches. This should not be given external authority but would make its influence felt in so far as it can act with spiritual authority. It would not speak ex-cathedra, but from the depth of the Christian conscience". (*Ibid.*, 64). What he advocated came about: in Amsterdam in 1948 the so-called WCC was established.

C. PURPOSES OF THE WCC

The basis and purposes of the WCC might best be shown by quoting from its constitution.

"I. Basis

The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of Churches which accepts our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior. It is constituted for the discharge of the functions set out below.

II. Membership

Those Churches shall be eligible for membership in the World Council of Churches which express their agreement with the basis upon which the Council is founded and satisfy such Criteria as the Assembly or the Central Committee may prescribe.

Election to membership shall be by a two-thirds vote of the member Churches represented at the Assembly, each member Church having one vote. Any application for membership between meetings of the Assembly may be considered by the Central Committee; if the application is supported by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Committee present and voting, this action shall be communicated

to the Churches that are members of the World Council of Churches, and unless objection is received from more than one-third of the member Churches within six months the applicant shall be declared elected.

III Functions

The functions of the World Council shall be:

- (i) To carry on the Work of the world movements for Faith and Order and for Life and Work.
- (ii) To facilitate common action by the Churches.
- (iii) To promote cooperation in study.
- (iv) To promote the growth of ecumenical consciousness in the members of all Churches.
- (v) To establish relations with denominational federations of world-wide scope and with other ecumenical movements.
- (vi) To call world conferences on specific subjects as occasion may require, such conferences being empowered to publish their own findings.
- (vii) To support the Churches in their task of Evangelism."

(Findings and Decisions--WCC 1st Assembly, p. 91-92).

A few comments concerning this program might be made at this point.

1. The WCC has as its function to carry out the work of its parent movements, Faith and Order; Life and Work. This means that it has primarily missionary and social interests. And it wishes to do something in these areas.
2. When stating as its function "to facilitate common action by the Churches" the WCC envisions joint Church work among the so-called member Churches.
3. When stating as its function the promotion of cooperation in study the WCC envisions more than mere discussion. At first in the parent movements public declarations were not proposed. But declarations did come out. The "Message" of Lousanne on the subject of the Gospel and the "Affirmation" of Edinburgh on the question of the Church were issued by these respective conferences. Following in this pattern the WCC will speak with authority on doctrinal and social questions, and minority opinions will only be buried in the official report. From the declarations which have been issued so far we may see how doctrinal differences are glossed over.
4. Following the spirit of the Edinburgh Conference the WCC starts with a given unity (op. cit. 14) and from there proceeds to attempt to achieve agreement. The present differences are

described as "variety of emphasis", "schools of thought", etc. Any concept of heresy or false doctrine is totally lacking in the WCC.

In the light of the above observations--and more could be made-- it is clear that from our Lutheran position the WCC is unionistic.

I now proceed to some questions which I believe confront us as we face this great movement and try to establish some position toward it. The questions are my own, and I hope that they will accomplish more than merely to raise problems. The questions center in the main in the purposes and functions of the WCC. There is great lack of clarity here, as I shall show. It would almost seem as though this great movement is groping around in the dark, not knowing what its purpose or functions are. And it seems very strange that confessional groups like the ALC and ELC in our country joined the WCC when so little can be really known about the movement.

Question 1. Is the WCC directed toward a future reunited Church or are its purposes more modest? At Lousanne a united Church was envisioned with open communion and full fellowship, but with each element holding its own doctrine, liturgy and tradition. This seems to be an impossible program. (Lousanne Report, 339). At Edinburgh Archbishop Temple stated that all division in the Church is sin, and implied that the body of Christ will exist only when all denominations are finally brought together. And following the platform of the Faith and Order Movement the Edinburgh Report (p. 250) urges "the organic union of all Christendom in one, undivided church". The Evanston Report is much more cautious. It recognizes that God has "in his mercy has used divisions to save souls" (p. 87) and that divisions are prompted by a sincere regard for the gospel. But it asks the question whether "we do not sin when we deny the sole lordship of Christ over the Church by claiming the vineyard for our own, by possessing our 'church' for ourselves, by regarding our theology, order, history, nationality, etc., as our 'valued treasures', thus involving ourselves more and more in the separation of sin". This gives an idea of how questions are sometimes loaded. But apart from this, at Evanston we are no longer sure whether the WCC wants a united Church which ignores doctrinal differences, or a united Church which includes differences and sees an advantage in them, or a united Church which has settled differences.

Certain crucial things we miss at Evanston: There is no mention of heresy, of the fact that the Church must exclude from her midst false teachers. Evanston, although many Lutherans were represented there, showed no awareness of the marks of the Church (AC, VII), which means there is no way of coping with false doctrine. It speaks of one Church as the body of Christ, but then confuses this Una Sancta Ecclesia with the total of visible Churches. (Henry Van Dusen, World Christianity, p. 235). That the Church, properly speaking "is nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints", and therefore an ecclesia abscondita, is simply not understood. The only conclusion to be drawn from all this is that the WCC either wants the wrong thing in a united Church or does not know what it wants.

Question 2. Does the WCC seek to achieve doctrinal unity or not?

From the Official Decisions of the First Assembly of the WCC (p. 16) it would appear that some unity of doctrine is a desirable and sought after goal. We are told: "We all believe that the Church is God's gift to men for the salvation of the world; that the saving acts of God in Jesus Christ brought the Church into being; that the Church persists in continuity throughout history through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Within this agreement, we should continue, in obedience to God, to try to come to a deeper understanding of our differences in order that they may be overcome." Here a goal seems to be the resolving of differences. But how they are to be resolved and the means of overcoming them is never set forth. Scripture as a unifying principle is not mentioned. This is as strong a statement as I have found on the desire for doctrinal unity. And yet we cannot be sure that the statement has doctrinal differences in mind.

There is, however, much evidence that the WCC, or at least a large element therein, does not believe doctrinal unity is desirable or even God-pleasing, even if it could be achieved. William Adams Brown (op. cit. 4) has this to say on the matter:

Those who have united in the Movement have recognized that when finite and imperfect men are dealing with matters as high and deep as those which concern the Christian faith, one cannot expect complete agreement as to their meaning and implications. In any unity worthy of the name there must be room for honest difference of conviction, not merely in unimportant matters of habit and preference, but even in matters of vital belief. The sin of the Ecumenical Movement, therefore, is to commit the Churches to a form of unity which is consistent with the recognition of honest difference, in the hope that when this has been done, the Spirit of God will lead those who make their start at this point into ever-expanding areas of common insight.

And modern Lutherans are of the same opinion. Anders Nygren says (Lutheran World Review, Jan. 1949),

At an earlier stage in the ecumenical movement, it was sometimes thought that the various churches must move out from their respective traditional positions and meet one another halfway, as it were. If they seem to hold varying convictions, each one must give up what is most unacceptable to the others. Each one must surrender something in order to reach a common result. It must be clear at once that for such a conception of ecumenicity a strong confessional consciousness is indeed a threat.

But, as a matter of fact, that is really a caricature of ecumenicity. We shall never reach unity among Christians by the route of mutual concessions. The most that could be attained that way

would be a syncretistic mass that would have neither unity nor truth nor power. As Christians we must pray to be delivered from that kind of ecumenicity. Just as we Lutherans cannot give up any of the truth which has been given to us and recognized by us, so we hope that other Christian churches will hold to their convictions.

In view of the above it is difficult to see why confessionalism remains any problem in the WCC; but apparently many do not go along with Nygren. At least Henry Van Dusen is sufficiently disturbed to say, "The relation of the 'world-wide confession-ialism'. . . to world interdenominationalism is one of the most baffling and urgent problems of current ecumenical discussion" (See Norman, Hope, One Christ, One World, One Church, p. 83). As of now the fact seems to be that the WCC desires unity but has not yet spelled out the nature of the unity it seeks (Cf. Ecumenical Review, Oct. 1960, p. 61ff.). From what I have been able to make out, the unity sought is one already existing in the Una Sancta, but the WCC by equating the Una Sancta with the sum of outward denominations and churches does not realize this.

Question 3. Is the basis of the WCC clear? Is it sufficient? Perhaps it is unnecessary to make comment on this matter which has been stressed so often. Suffice it to say that denominations belonging to the WCC (Quakers) and leading figures in the movement have denied the true deity of Christ, as well as other fundamental doctrines. Can a confessional Church on such a basis join a non-confessional organization like the WCC which engages in church work?

Question 4. Are the purposes of the WCC really clear? I am particularly concerned about the entry into economics, social ethics and even politics. The whole Life and Work movement as sponsored by Soderblom seems to be oriented to this world, to an activity which, strictly speaking, the Church has no business entering, an activity which belongs to Caesar. Much of the Findings and Decisions of the First Assembly of the WCC reads like a discussion on sociology (Cf. also the Report of the First Assembly of the WCC, p. 73) and reflect a spirit of social-gospelism. Our confessions have spoken clearly on the Church remaining in its own sphere of influence.

Our teachers assert that according to the Gospel the power of keys or the power of bishops is a power and command of God to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer and distribute the sacraments. . . Temporal authority is concerned with matters altogether different from the Gospel. Temporal power does not protect the soul, but with the sword and physical penalties it protects body and goods from the power of others.

Therefore, the two authorities, the spiritual and the temporal, are not to be mingled or confused, for the spiritual power has its commission to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. Hence it should not invade the function of the other, should not set up and depose kings, should not annul temporal laws or undermine obedience to government, should not make or prescribe to the temporal power laws concerning worldly matters. Christ

Himself said, "My kingship is not of this world," and again, "Who made me a judge or divider over you?" Paul also wrote in Phil 3:20, "Our commonwealth is in heaven", and in II Cor. 10:4, 5, "The weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God."

(AC. XXVII 5-6, 11-17).

Question 5. Can doctrinal discussions be carried out in the WCC. on a sort of de novo basis which tends to ignore past differences and confessions? Is not the present procedure of the WCC which never speaks of false doctrine incapable of arriving at doctrinal unity, even if such unity were desired? Are we being narrow and picayunish when we demand antitheses in doctrinal statements (Cf. Augsburg Confession, Formula of Concord, Holy Scriptures?) Doctrinal discussion cannot be carried on under the general assumption that there are no heresies. We Lutherans must insist that confessionalism and ecumenicity belong together, as was the case in the ancient Church which regarded its ecumenical synods as orthodox. There is a free and embracing side to ecumenicity, but there has always been an exclusive side as well. What I have just said is certainly the historic position of the Lutheran Church. And this leads me to a comment regarding the LWF. By and large, the LWF emerged from just such a Lutheran position, from a platform which said a) that Christians of like faith belong together in outward fellowship, b) that careful, thorough and patient discussions should determine whether such like faith exists, and c) Scripture will be the basis of discussion, and this discussion will be doctrinal discussion. But when the LWF states as one of its purposes, "To foster Lutheran participation in present ecumenical movements", it has denied this element of its birthright.

I would like to make one final remark in regard to our synod's joining the WCC. This matter has often been broached by asking the wrong question first. The first question we must ask ourselves is: Can we with a good conscience and in obedience to God's Word join the WCC? The second question is: Is it wise for us to join the organization? If we believe that the first question must be answered negatively we have no good reason to go on to the second question. And I do not believe we should let ourselves be drawn into a discussion of it. For the second question speaks primarily concerning our opportunity to witness in the WCC, and the very lack of opportunity to witness is one of the chief reasons why we must answer the first question negatively.

My conclusions are that the present Ecumenical Movement as typified by the WCC is unsound, unclear in its purpose, and as presently orientated incapable of achieving truly ecumenical results. Our negative reaction to the WCC is in no way to be construed as a rejecting of ecumenicity as such. We all want as much cooperation and coordination among Christians as is possible and right, especially in these difficult days when the Christian Church is fighting for its life in many areas. We all desire a restoration of the unity which has been lost. Our earnest desire in this matter has never changed since 1530. This is the reason we send observers to Oberlin and New Delhi. This is the reason we read with interest and concern the literature which in great quantity is emanating from the Genera.

And we do not condemn it all: we have in fact praised some of the doctrinal material coming from WCC study groups. But as much as we desire to witness to the truth and give a reason of the hope that is in us, we cannot as a confessional Church which has no intention of giving up its confessions do so under the auspices of the WCC.

Robert D. Preus