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THE YOUNG BULTMANN: CONTEXT FOR HIS
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THE YOUNG BULTMANN: CONTEXT FOR HIS
UNDERSTANDING OF GOD, 1884-1925

By

William David Dennison

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

THE YOUNG BULTMANN: CONTEXT FOR HIS
UNDERSTANDING OF GOD, 1884-1925

By

William David Dennison

During Rudolf Bultmann's early life (1884-1925), he attempted to unite scholar and laity through his understanding of the person of God. He passionately strove to present a consistent understanding of God to himself, fellow scholars, his students, and the laity in the protestant churches of Germany. His consistent understanding of God developed in the context of his home and its love for the common people of the church, the legacy of Schleiermacher, Marburg Lutheran Neo-Kantianism, the eschatological perspective of the History of Religions school, dialectic theology, and Heidegger's philosophy of existence. Throughout this development, Bultmann always insisted that God is the inner forces of life within the human; this belief was the common feature of his understanding of God during this period. However, in the process of these developmental stages, Bultmann came to hold that Lutheran Neo-Kantianism provided the basic structure by which to analyze, critique, and strengthen his understanding of God. In light of this Neo-Kantian structure, Bultmann insisted that God cannot be the formulation of any scientific, ethical, or artistic

construction. By this Bultmann meant that God cannot be the object or manifestation of human reason in any form; God transcends human reason. Hence, through the assistance of the dialectical theologians and Heidegger, in 1925 Bultmann presented his purest formulation of a Neo-Kantian understanding of God: God is the spontaneous moment of encountering the dialectical forces within our existential being. For Bultmann, herein lies the union of scholar and laity: whether one is a theological scholar or a peasant farmer, the presence of God is revealed in the same manner--God is the dialectic force within our existential being. For this reason, Bultmann proclaimed (the kerygma) in the churches and in the halls of academia that the union of laity and scholar as well as one's own personal life are dependent upon a passive reception of the revelation of God within us and an active embrace of that revelation by faith.

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To my beloved wife, Patricia,
and my beloved children, David, Atria, and Ami

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Introduction

Review of the Scholarly Literature

Most studies of Rudolf Bultmann's theology begin with four significant events in the 1920's which govern the first period of his thought: the appearance of his first major publication, The History of the Synoptic Tradition (1921); his appointment as full professor of New Testament at Marburg University (1921); his relationship with the early movement of dialectic theology (Barth, Gogarten); and his close friendship with Heidegger, who received an appointment in philosophy at Marburg University in 1923.¹ In addition, most scholars hold that Bultmann's hermeneutical method of demythologizing the Biblical text ushered in the second period of his thought (1941).² With

¹ This approach is evident among such scholars as John MacQuarrie, An Existentialist Theology: A Comparison of Heidegger and Bultmann (London: SCM Press LTD, 1955); Walter Schmithals, An Introduction to the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann (London: SCM Press LTD, 1968); and Norman Perrin, The Promise of Bultmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979).

² Most scholars agree that Bultmann's article, "New Testament and Mythology: The Problem of Demythologizing the New Testament Proclamation [1941]," was his first publication in the demythologizing project. The article originally appeared in Offenbarung und Heilgeschehen (München: Lempp, 1941). An English translation appears in two places: Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), 1-44; and New Testament and Mythology: And Other Basic Writings, ed. and trans. Schubert M. Ogden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 1-43.

these two periods clearly divided, it is often characteristic of scholars to examine the influence of the earlier period upon the later period. Accordingly, most Bultmann scholars trace historically only those themes or theological connections that appear in Bultmann's early and later periods of thought. Although the value of such an investigation is unquestionable, it overlooks a formative period in his life and thought--his years prior to the 1920's.

In 1974, however, Roger A. Johnson's volume entitled, The Origins of Demythologizing traced much of Bultmann's hermeneutical project to theological and philosophical schools of thought which, in most cases, influenced Bultmann educationally prior to 1920. Specifically, Johnson uncovered the roots of Bultmann's demythologizing project in Marburg Lutheran and philosophical Neo-Kantianism (Wilhelm Herrmann, Paul Natorp, and Hermann Cohen), the formulation of myth in the History of Religions school (Richard Reitzenstein and Wilhelm Bousset), the formulation of myth during the Enlightenment, and the existentialist formulation of myth (Heidegger--which was not prior to 1920). Although Johnson focused directly upon the origins of Bultmann's hermeneutical project, his document became a salient work in the spectrum of Bultmannian studies. Every reputable scholar who examined the roots and structure of Bultmann's theological thought

had to engage Johnson's work, especially his central thesis:

The telos of the historical development in Bultmann's use of myth is the full and systematic expression of that Lutheran Neo-Kantianism which is the philosophical-theological foundation of his thought: a total and unified epistemological-existential understanding of man's being in the world and before God.³

Although Johnson did not dismiss the fact that Bultmann was a "highly eclectic thinker," he contended that Bultmann's creative use of various sources were built upon a Marburg Lutheran Neo-Kantian foundation. The Marburg school of Neo-Kantianism had risen in the wake of a broad revival of Kant's transcendental and critical philosophy (1870-1920) which attempted to counter two very different worldviews, irrationalism and naturalism. In particular, the Marburg school wished to reestablish science upon pure reason. From this starting point, the school's adherents asserted that pure reason manifests itself in the creation of culture (science, morality, and aesthetics). Along with this manifestation of reason in culture, the Marburg school, especially Herrmann, also gave an autonomous and distinct place to religion in man's being. This distinction between culture and religion was referred to as

³ Roger A. Johnson, The Origins of Demythologizing: Philosophy and Historiography in the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 35. "Johnson's *italics*."

the "Neo-Kantian dualism." Johnson's work argued convincingly that Lutheran Neo-Kantianism was the fundamental key in understanding Bultmann's theological structure.

Over the next decade, Johnson's thesis virtually went unchallenged until 1987 when John Painter's work opposed Johnson's premise. Painter strongly rejected the centrality of the Neo-Kantian connection to Bultmann. In direct opposition to Johnson, Painter held that the existential strain in Bultmann's theology was not dependent upon "some synthesis of Lutheran anthropology and Marburg Neo-Kantian epistemology."⁴ Rather, in a seemingly contradictory manner, Painter maintained that Bultmann's theology was "distinctively his own"; yet, he argued that Bultmann's ontology, a fundamental key to his theology, was dependent upon Kierkegaard and Heidegger's formulation. The latter argument suggests, however, that Painter's work is merely a revival and a defense of MacQuarrie's position in the 1950's which tied Bultmann so intimately to Heidegger. Perhaps, Painter wanted to solidify and update MacQuarrie's thesis in view of the recent popularity of Johnson's thesis.

Upon close examination, Painter's thesis has a serious defect as an alternative to Johnson's argument. Painter

⁴ John Painter, Theology as Hermeneutics: Rudolf Bultmann's Interpretation of the History of Jesus (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1987), 42.

failed to investigate studiously Bultmann's life before the 1920's, except hastily to connect Bultmann with Kierkegaard's thought. Painter's position provides an example of selective scholarship. To reinforce his analysis about Bultmann's professional career, Painter selected only certain material which possibly influenced Bultmann at an earlier time. When he ignored Bultmann's educational training, he offered no adequate critique of the Neo-Kantian connection suggested by Johnson. It is interesting to observe that a similar problem arises in Johnson's thesis. Although Johnson provided evidence about a Neo-Kantian connection, he also overlooked Bultmann's theological training. In 1974, Johnson had argued that Bultmann adopted the Marburg school's formulation of "Neo-Kantian dualism" (religion versus culture) in reaction to the devastating effects of World War I upon Germany. According to Johnson, this dualism became apparent in Bultmann's 1920 article entitled, "Religion and Culture." This article defended the Neo-Kantian position that a person's religious belief occupies an autonomous position within one's being over against the forces of culture.

Although Johnson felt that the effects of World War I initiated a connection between Bultmann and Neo-Kantianism, my study will show that the influence of Marburg Lutheran Neo-Kantian thought upon Bultmann was solidly in place prior to World War I. Initially, Lutheran

Neo-Kantian thought took root in Bultmann when he attended Marburg University as an undergraduate theology student in 1905-06. In that institution he came under the direct influence of the Lutheran Neo-Kantian theologian, Wilhelm Herrmann. He also completed a course in philosophical logic from Paul Natorp, one of two major Neo-Kantian philosophers at Marburg (the other was Hermann Cohen). Under their inspiration, especially Herrmann's, Lutheran Neo-Kantian dualism became the fundamental structure underlining Bultmann's thought. From this point in his life, he strove critically to construct his theology within the boundaries of that dualism.

Moreover, Bultmann's studies at Marburg occurred at a significant moment in his life. While studying at Tübingen (1903-04) and Berlin (1904-05) prior to his arrival at Marburg (1905), Bultmann had become extremely disenchanted with theological scholarship. At Tübingen and Berlin, he felt that he had not met any scholar who presented an innovative approach to Christian dogmatics, biblical scholarship, or the unification of the field of scholarship and the ecclesiastical life of the church. As he studied at Marburg, however, a sudden change occurred in Bultmann's attitude toward theological scholarship: his spirit of pessimism was transformed into a spirit of enthusiasm and optimism. One of the main elements which caused this transformation of attitude was the Lutheran Neo-Kantian

theology of Herrmann and the general influence of Neo-Kantian philosophy. For Bultmann, Marburg Lutheran Neo-Kantianism offered a solid foundation on which to build an innovative theological platform as well as to construct the basis for unifying the scholar and laity. This foundation was viewed as the particular realm where God and religion resides, i.e. within the consciousness of the human. Herein lies the starting point of theology (Doctrine of God) as well as the union of scholar and laity. Meanwhile, another contributor to this positive transformation in Bultmann was the Marburg New Testament scholar, Johannes Weiss. In Weiss's eschatological interpretation of the kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus, Bultmann finally found a creative contribution to the History of Religions school of New Testament criticism. Both Johnson and Painter, especially the latter, ignore this transformation and the new hope it gave Bultmann for a career in Christian service and theology.

The theological and philosophical connection with Marburg Neo-Kantianism prior to 1920 is only one facet of Bultmann's life prior to that date. Recent literature is beginning to expose other important aspects in Bultmann's thought and life prior to 1920. Notable players include Bultmann's own daughter, Mrs. Antje Bultmann Lemke of Fayetteville, New York, and two German theologians from the University of Bonn, Martin Evang and Erich Grässer. Their

work focuses on technical theological projects of the young Bultmann, but they include as well insights into his relationships with family, friends, education, church--including sermons which he delivered. At the Bultmann Centenary Symposium at Wellesley College in September of 1984, Mrs. Lemke presented a small sample of early letters which her father wrote to friends. The content of this correspondence reveals a passion for the laity in the church and a love for his childhood home in the northwest German countryside, as well as early struggles in the fields of ecclesiastical service, scholarship, theology, and education. Lemke also noted that a few scholars are interested in her father's early life. Some projects are now completed. For example, Grässer has edited a volume which includes a number of formerly unpublished sermons, including some from Bultmann's student years when he preached in Oldenburg. Moreover, Bultmann's dissertation and Habilitationschrift were published in the 1980's. Martin Evang has written a comprehensive treatment of the young Bultmann (from 1903-1920). He researched and mastered a vast amount of material, mostly from the Bultmann archives at Tübingen University, in order to present a sequential chronology of Bultmann's early years.

Evang provides, however, little interpretation of dominant themes or interconnections in Bultmann's early thought.⁵

Using Evang's chronology, Bultmann's personal letters, and suggestions made by Johnson (about the Neo-Kantian foundations of Bultmann's theology), I have uncovered unifying themes which motivated and dominated Bultmann's younger years--even before the Marburg period. The main theme which emerges from this material was his deep passion for the common person in the church (laity), and how the common person might profit from the technical theological scholarship of the day.⁶ Throughout his life, Bultmann sought to popularize promising themes developed by theologians. Once Bultmann began his theological career, one could argue that his theological studies had little to do with the church and the laity. However, preaching (kerygma) occupied a central position in all theological projects throughout his life, suggesting that he never lost sight of a potential audience--the laity--for his theological writings. His interest in preaching assumes,

⁵ The Evang and Grässer volumes are: Martin Evang, Zusammenarbeit, Erich Grässer, hg., Das verkündigte Wort: Predigten--Andachten--Ansprachen 1906-1941 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1984); and Martin Evang, Rudolf Bultmann in seiner Frühzeit (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1988).

⁶ Bultmann's interest in the laity was rooted in the cultural, theological, and ecclesiastical atmosphere of his childhood in northwest Germany.

at the least, an implicit laity.⁷ This commitment to preaching was rooted in youthful experiences, especially seeing his father-pastor follow the path of Schleiermacher.

For Bultmann, the person of God is the central subject of the Christian kerygma. There is no Christian religion without the Christian God of that religion, or to put it another way, understanding the person of God means to understand the Christian message. For this reason, Bultmann's understanding of the person of God is the focus of my dissertation. If one can isolate Bultmann's early understanding of God, then we possess the key to his perception of the essence of the Christian religion. However, Bultmann's understanding of God has also been the subject of scholarly contention. Many scholars uncritically accepted Karl Barth's formulation of Bultmann's views, as set forth in a letter to Eduard Thurneysen: Bultmann's view of God is anthropological, i.e., to speak of God is to speak of man. But there is no consensus about the precise meaning of Barth's phrase, "Bultmann's anthropological view of God."⁸

Bultmann's understanding of God developed consistently and critically from 1905-1925 within the structure of his

⁷ See Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 36.

⁸ Barth to Thurneysen, 15 February 1925, in Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen, Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth-Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914-1925, trans. James D. Smart (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964), 206.

Lutheran Neo-Kantian dualism. In this structure, God must be pure from being the projection of human reason (an objectification); for example, in 1917 Bultmann understood God as the experience of the inner forces of life within us. With insights drawn from dialectic theology and the existential philosophy of Heidegger, Bultmann wrote in 1925 that God is the dialectic force within our existential being.⁹ In both formulations, God is identified with the inner forces within us; the change in language (from 1917 to 1925) reflects Bultmann's constant quest to free God from any trace of objectification. A scholarly conundrum resulted. Bultmann's identification of God with human forces suggested an anthropological view of God, but Bultmann explicitly rejected the notion that God is the result of human objectification. John A. T. Robinson traced the allegedly contradictory elements in Bultmann's theology to "heavy reliance on Heideggerian existentialism, and, at least in his more extreme left-wing followers, a tendency not merely to locate the meaning of God in

⁹ For Bultmann, dialectic means a tension or contrast within human consciousness or our existential being between God and the world. It is not a metaphysical dualism, but a duality in which God's transcendence is established in contrast to the world.

statements about man but to equate the two."¹⁰ But Robinson's formulation makes Bultmann's view of God into an object, exactly what Bultmann objected to.

A similar problem arises in Schubert Ogden's interpretation of Bultmann's God. On the basis of Bultmann's 1925 article, "What Does It Mean to Speak of God?", Ogden stated that Bultmann's view of God is contradictory: "He has even asserted self-contradictorily that to speak 'about' God is meaningless and has drawn the conclusion that 'if one wants to speak of God, it is clear he must speak of himself.'"¹¹

Recently, Houston Craighead has argued that while Bultmann's view of God is consistent with existentialism, it is essentially a "concept" or a "construct."¹² But Craighead also ignores the Neo-Kantian foundation of Bultmann's understanding of God. Bultmann never spoke of the reality of God as a "concept" or a "construct" since that would make God a product of the human mind--in other words, objectifying God. Moreover, one does not

¹⁰ John A. T. Robinson, Exploration Into God (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 17. See also his, Honest to God (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 35.

¹¹ Schubert Ogden, Christ Without Myth: A Study Based on the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann (Dallas: SMU Press, 1961), 149. "Ogden's italics."

¹² Houston Craighead, "Bultmann and the Impossibility of God-Talk," Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers 1 (April, 1984): 213.

necessarily have to acknowledge the presence of Neo-Kantianism to realize that Bultmann avoided objectifying phrases when referring to God as the inner forces within human consciousness.¹³ For example, John MacQuarrie wrote:

In the title of this chapter [Bultmann's Understanding of God], I have deliberately avoided talking of Bultmann's 'idea' of God, or his 'conception' of God, for he shies away from any attempt at conceptualization. I have talked of his 'understanding' of God, but by this I do not mean an intellectual theory but a very existential type of understanding which is there only in that moment of experience when God touches a human life.¹⁴

Although MacQuarrie's usage is persuasive, his explanation does not account for the evidence that as early as 1917--long before he met Heidegger--Bultmann defined God as the outcome of encounters with the hidden, mysterious, and contradictory forces of life within us.

Obviously, there is considerable scholarly inconsistency in how to interpret Bultmann's basic premise: to speak of God is to speak of man. A plausible resolution to this conundrum emerges if one interprets Bultmann's understanding of God as an elaboration of the Lutheran Neo-Kantian philosophy he learned in his early years--

¹³ In our day it is customary to speak of such a reference to God as an immanent understanding of the person of God. However, Bultmann's own view of God rejected such a definition. From his perspective, he strongly believed that he had uncovered the true transcendence of God within the human consciousness. Hence, in an attempt neither to confuse the reader nor to misrepresent Bultmann's own view, I use understanding rather than immanence.

¹⁴ John MacQuarrie, Thinking About God (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1975), 179.

implicitly from his pietistic family background, then explicitly while at Marburg, and eventually refined by adopting elements from Heidegger's philosophy of existence and language.

Thesis Statement

Throughout his early life, Bultmann strove to present a consistent understanding of God to the protestant people of Germany. His quest began as a son of a Lutheran pastor in northwest Germany, and it evolved in the context of personal experiences, university studies, and later contacts. In his childhood, Bultmann appreciated the deep religious passion which motivated his father's concern for the common people in his church (laity). He appreciated also the Romantic legacy of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) upon German protestantism and culture as it encompassed his own home and surroundings. In this context, God was understood as the feeling of absolute dependence within us. This notion did not view God as a being who was located and known outside or beyond human reason and experience. Rather, God is a personal, revealing, and dynamic being who is attached to the consciousness of humanity. Specifically, God is located and known within human consciousness as a feeling of utter dependence for the sustenances of life.

According to Schleiermacher, preaching was an

essential vehicle to communicate his notion of God. His method of preaching viewed the minister as being one with the people in the congregation. When the preacher proclaimed his understanding of God before the congregation, he was declaring a self-conscious religious experience of God stemming from within. His message aimed to nurture and strengthen the conscious experience of the person of God within the individual. For Schleiermacher, herein lies the bond of unity between preacher and laity: as the preacher (scholar) proclaims the Word of God (kerygma), he must understand himself as being one with the congregation (laity); that both are experiencing the revelation of God within themselves. Hence, at the moment they both experience God within consciousness, they transcend the world and lay hold of God through revelation. This view of unity between preacher and laity became a standard among most Protestant pastors throughout Germany, including Bultmann's father. From his father, therefore, the young Bultmann first sensed the importance of experiencing God in the context of the unity between preacher and laity.

In light of these impressions during his youth and the encouragement he received from his father, Bultmann pursued a formal theological education in order to join the pastoral ministry. Initially, his theological education was disappointing. While attending Tübingen University

(1903-04) and the University of Berlin (1904-1905), he was dissatisfied with the prestigious attitude of the scholar towards the laity, as well as the moral view of Christianity (liberal theology) presented by the faculty. These disappointments subsided, however, when he studied at Marburg University in 1905-06. At Marburg, he came under the positive influences of Herrmann's Lutheran Neo-Kantianism and Weiss's History of Religions school of biblical criticism. Both professors stimulated Bultmann's interest in theological scholarship without compromising his interest in the laity.¹⁵ Herrmann admitted freely that his thought was built upon the legacy of Schleiermacher who had placed the religious experience of God within the individual. He supplemented this particular element of Schleiermacher's legacy with the dualism of Marburg Neo-Kantian philosophy, especially as it could be applied to the person of God and religious experience. The Marburg Neo-Kantians held that the activity of reason or consciousness shaped and conceptualized the data of cultural phenomena (science, morality, and aesthetics); it is the experience (Erfahrung) of the outside world. In contrast to the experience of culture, the experience of

¹⁵ In fact, because of his positive theological experience at Marburg, Bultmann changed career goals; he pursued and attained a professional theological career in academic scholarship without losing his passion for the laity. He received his doctorate in New Testament from Marburg University--studying there from 1907-1912.

religion, God, and ourselves (individual) are found solely within our being; it is an inner experience (Erlebnis). For Neo-Kantian philosophy, both experiences must remain distinct and separate; they should not overlap. Hence, its structure was dualistic. Complementing Herrmann's Neo-Kantian concepts was Weiss's eschatological view of New Testament religion. According to Weiss, our inner experience of religion, God, and ourselves is eschatological; reliance upon the outside world is negated (comes to an end) in order to rely solely upon our inner life (to begin anew).

Such influences from Herrmann and Weiss caused Bultmann to strengthen his own view of God without surrendering the earlier impact made upon his thought by adherents of Schleiermacher. Bultmann's synthesis of these influences made him view God as the eschatological experience of the hidden, mysterious, and contradictory forces of life within human consciousness. But Bultmann did not understand God as an object projected by the human mind; nor is God a concept, intuition, or notion. Henceforth, Bultmann became committed to this Lutheran Neo-Kantian understanding of God as the underlying principle of his thought. Even as he settled into an academic career, he presented this understanding of God passionately to the laity. Possibly its earliest formulation as a kerygma

message came to his home congregation in Breslau on Pentecost Sunday, 1917.

Bultmann received an academic appointment in 1921 as a professor of New Testament at Marburg University.¹⁶ During the next four years (1921-25), he clarified his Lutheran Neo-Kantian understanding of God by incorporating elements from the dialectical theologians (Karl Barth and Friedrich Gogarten) and from Martin Heidegger's existential phenomenology. He admired the agenda set by dialectical theologians in 1919: to reclaim Christianity as the religion of revelation from the moral interpretation of Christianity proclaimed by liberal theologians. Bultmann found paradoxical, dialectical dualism congenial to the dualism of his own Neo-Kantian leanings. Both affirmed that the person of God resides within the human spirit and denied the liberal notion that God is a manifestation of science, ethics, or the arts. That is, both Neo-Kantians and dialectical theologians argued that God was not explainable as an object in the empirical world. As such, dialectic theology strengthened Bultmann's pre-existing Lutheran Neo-Kantian understanding of God as revealed through the mystery of human consciousness.

Bultmann was uncomfortable, however, with the

¹⁶ He remained at Marburg until his retirement in 1951; it was a city which Bultmann found extremely compatible with his personality. His previous appointments were at Breslau (1916-20) and Giessen (1920-21).

dialectical theologians who extended dualism to a psychological view of God that identified God with human consciousness. Given the contemporary vogue of psychological analysis, such an identification made God a subject of scientific investigation (which contradicted the Neo-Kantian model). His friendship with Martin Heidegger (beginning in 1923) eventually offered Bultmann a philosophical alternative to psychologizing God, thereby strengthening his Lutheran Neo-Kantian formulation as well. Heidegger's philosophy helped Bultmann answer the troubling epistemological question: is it possible to speak meaningfully at all of God if God is not an object? Heidegger provided an affirmative answer for Bultmann: we understand God as the moment of encountering the mysterious forces of dialectical tension within our existential being--moments of lived, inner experience that occur in the context of scholars preaching the Word of God (kerygma) to the laity, who open their inner being to the revelation of God and then embrace that revelation by acts of faith.

Synopsis

My study is divided into three parts. The first part (chapters 1-3) focuses on the biographical and educational years of Bultmann's youth. During those years (1884-1912), Bultmann's view of God, his sensitivity for the laity, his perceptions of human life, and his concerns for scholarship

were shaped by his environment in northwest Germany and his formal theological education, especially Lutheran Neo-Kantianism at Marburg University. The second part (chapters 5-7) interprets Bultmann's understanding of God in the period, 1920-1925. During those years, he clarified his Neo-Kantian understanding of God via contacts with adherents of the History of Religions school of biblical criticism, theological liberalism, dialectic theology, and Heideggerian existentialism. The intervening fourth chapter (an analysis of Bultmann's 1917 Pentecostal sermon on the person of God) bridges these parts.

Bultmann opened the 1917 Pentecostal sermon with a picture of the festival celebration of Pentecost in the days of his childhood, specifically the villages of Oldenburg in northwest Germany where his father served as a Lutheran pastor. This reference stimulated my own investigation of his childhood environment (1884-1903). Due to the paucity of primary sources, I read Bultmann's personal correspondences and secondary sources to reconstruct his probable childhood environment in a pastor's home, dominated by two historical movements in northwest Germany: the political and economic struggles of farmers and artisans; and the continuing impression made by Schleiermacher's Romantic ideas in late nineteenth century Germany. It is understandable, therefore, that the young Bultmann developed commitments to the common folk (the

common laity in the church) and to the theology of Schleiermacher.

In light of these circumstances, the first part of my work will show that Bultmann never felt comfortable in church with the politically and socially elite (wealthy) who believed attendance in church was a politically and socially feasible thing to do instead of adhering to the Word of God. Neither did he feel comfortable with the visionaries of the inner city churches and their social gospel who understood the mission of the church as instituting a social agenda of redeeming culture. In Lutheran language, all such individuals were attempting to be justified by work. Rather Bultmann wished to identify himself with any person who understood the struggles of life and came to church merely to respond in faith to the kerygma through the preaching of the Word of God. Herein, he preferred those who were laborers, worked the land, owned general stores, provided services, provided education, and preserved the family as they gathered each Sunday. Committed to this understanding of God and the common people of the church, Bultmann strove to continue the popularization of Schleiermacher's view of God in a more consistent manner for the life of the church. For this purpose, he began his formal theological education in the fall of 1903 with his mind set upon serving in the

pastoral ministry in northwest Germany, following in the steps of his father and in the thought of Schleiermacher.

His endearment to Schleiermacher and the laity of the church also provided a standard on which to judge German theological scholarship when he matriculated at Tübingen University in 1903. Although he enjoyed much of his coursework at Tübingen and (in 1904-05) Berlin University, he was disappointed that none of his professors in the liberal theological tradition and the History of Religions school matched the stature which he attributed to Schleiermacher. He thought they lacked creativity, stimulation, criticism, and leadership--characteristics which he had come to treasure in Schleiermacher during his childhood. He also sensed that these university scholars were disinterested in communicating with the laity.

After transferring to Marburg University in 1905-06, however, Bultmann's perception of theological scholarship changed to the degree that he altered his own career plans. In Herrmann, a Lutheran Neo-Kantian systematic theologian, Bultmann discovered a scholar who considered Schleiermacher a theological hero. Under Herrmann's direction, Bultmann became a convert to Lutheran, Neo-Kantian theology because it reflected a modern adaptation of Schleiermacher's thought. At Marburg, Bultmann also embraced ideas articulated by the New Testament scholar, Weiss; particularly Weiss's eschatological interpretation of the

kingdom of God. Weiss was affiliated with the History of Religions school of biblical criticism, which offered Bultmann a method for connecting the Christian message, God, and ourselves in the context of the New Testament era. With the encouragement of Herrmann and Weiss, Bultmann began to gravitate towards an academic career himself. In 1907, Bultmann accepted a graduate fellowship to study New Testament under Weiss at Marburg University, and, in ensuing years, decided to pursue a doctorate.

During this period (1903-1912), Bultmann's understanding of God never went through any major change of direction; he was never confused or frustrated concerning the course he was taking. Rather, he was driven by a passion to continue affirming, studying, and defending Schleiermacher's understanding of God without separating himself from the mainstream of protestant thinking concerning the person of God. As he matured in the world of academics, he achieved his goal by incorporating Herrmann's Neo-Kantian understanding of God into Schleiermacher's view of God. In fact, the Neo-Kantian dualism became the standard as well as the overriding presupposition by which Bultmann measured the purity of his own formulation and understanding of God. Religion was a free, passive experience of God within the inner consciousness of the individual, whereas the manifestations of culture (science, morality, and the arts) are created

and experienced by the human mind. In religious experience, God is absolutely free from any scientific, ethical, or aesthetic investigation; he not an object projected by the human mind which can be analyzed in any scientific manner. Bultmann believed that an understanding of God, free from any form of objectification, was the ingredient that Schleiermacher's view of God needed for an absolutely consistent formulation. If God is to be understood as the feeling of absolute dependence within consciousness, then God must be free from any analysis outside consciousness.

After completing New Testament doctorate studies at Marburg University in 1912 (under Wilhelm Heitmüller; Weiss had transferred to Heidelberg), Bultmann taught at Marburg University until 1916, when he transferred to Breslau University. During his academic appointments at Marburg and Breslau (1912-1920), he continued to preach in churches throughout Germany. One sermon was delivered on 27 May 1917--Pentecost Sunday--in the Breslau church (where he was also a member of the congregation). In his sermon, Bultmann gave a popularized version of his understanding of God. As such, this Pentecostal sermon summarizes his Neo-Kantian views in the context of his personal background in pietistic religion and contemporary upheavals caused by World War I.

Bultmann composed two significant articles in 1920 which solidified his connection to Lutheran Neo-Kantianism and the History of Religions school of biblical criticism. The purpose of the fifth and sixth chapters is to explain his continuing allegiance to both orientations during his first decade, or so, as a teacher. Then, in 1921 he met the dialectical theologians, Gogarten and Barth; in 1923, he became close friends with Martin Heidegger. He was influenced by all three, grafting some of their ideas to the solid trunk provided by Neo-Kantianism and the History of Religions school. The seventh chapter interprets Bultmann's relationships with these men and the ideas they represented.

Part One:
Biographical and Educational Years (1884-1912)

Chapter One

Bultmann's Boyhood Environment

The Situation in Northwest Germany

Rudolf Karl Bultmann was born on August 20, 1884, in Wiefelstede, a village in the grand duchy of Oldenburg. Most of his youth was spent in this agrarian countryside of northwestern Germany. This predominantly protestant area of Germany was not without hardship. It suffered through the strains of overpopulation in the 1850's, the rising economic thrust of industrialization, and the powerful manipulation of the large landowners. As a result, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, most of its large estate farms had become peasant farms. Depending upon the particular farm, some of peasant farmers struggled under the control of the large landowners (Junkers), whereas other peasant farmers struggled to survive as independent landowners themselves. Nevertheless, these protestant peasant farmers remained diligent: working hard to keep their farms, maintaining strong families, remaining faithful to the church, educating their youth, and preserving their cultural and national traditions. Moreover, much of what shaped their relentless spirit, whether they fully realized it or not, was the legacy of pietism and romanticism which had shaped Germany from the beginning of the nineteenth century, especially persistent

ideas articulated by the Protestant theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834): an emphasis upon enthusiasm, feeling for individuality, concern for the needs of the common person, and the quest to uncover the deep irrational forces of the human spirit.¹ Since Bultmann was raised in the home of an Evangelical-Lutheran pastor, this whole cultural milieu and its people made a lasting impression upon him; it molded within him a view of compassion towards the laity in the church as well as a view of respect towards Schleiermacher which he maintained throughout his younger years.

Agrarian Life and Bismarck's Policies

"Theology will come much further hand in hand with the laity than it will alone."²

During his childhood, Bultmann developed a dignified respect for the laity as he assessed their lives from the confines of his own home, the home of a protestant pastor.

¹ According to John E. Groh, "the title 'church father' is reserved for him [Schleiermacher], since he was the fountainhead of the theological development in Germany in the nineteenth century" (Nineteenth Century German Protestantism: The Church as Social Model [Washington: University Press of America, 1982], 81-82 [hereafter cited as NCGP]).

² Rudolf Bultmann [1904], in Antje Bultmann Lemke, "Bultmann's Papers," in Bultmann, Retrospect and Prospect: The Centenary Symposium at Wellesley, ed. Edward C. Hobbs (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 11 (hereafter cited as "BP").

Most of the laity that surrounded his youth were peasant farmers. Many circumstances contributed to this environment. During the 1850's the agrarian environment of northwestern Germany suffered from a problem of overpopulation. Thus, many farmers and their families seized the opportunity to pursue a new beginning in the United States, whereas others used the opportunity to migrate to the cities in hope of a more prosperous life in a slow, but growing industrial environment. It was also during this period that Germany experienced her first stage of rapid economic growth through corporate business. New banks, industrial plants, mining and railroad companies opened during this time; textile and iron companies in Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony, and Baden demonstrated a measurable increase in production.³ Thus, a transition occurred in the agrarian culture of northwest Germany: in light of the overpopulation problem, large scale emigration, and the growing sector of industry, this section of Germany moved from a culture dominated by large farm estates to a culture dominated by peasant farmers, either under the dominance of the Junkers or as independent farmers.⁴

³ Koppel S. Pinson, Modern Germany: Its History and Civilization, 2nd ed. (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1966), 196, 220.

⁴ Hajo Holborn, A History of Modern Germany: 1840-1945 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 3:123, 373. What happened in northwest Germany was not unlike the

The events of the 1850's placed these peasant farmers of northwestern Germany in an odd predicament during the rest of the century: the established big landowners, known as the Junkers, were wealthy enough to politically and socially control their own destiny irrespective the peasant farmers. Thus, during the 1850's and the 1860's the Junkers, mostly from east Elbe, reached the height of their economic power. They gained almost exclusive control over the exports of agrarian products to the international market as well as control over the agrarian products of the domestic market.⁵ Both of these factors made a vital contribution to the economic growth of Germany during this period. In light of their own economic power, the Junkers took advantage of the low wage levels of the countryside as well as those people who had been reduced to being paupers. They used these circumstances to monopolize their own political position, and thus, it became apparent that the hard working peasant farmers lost their political

transition that occurred throughout Germany. See also Klaus J. Bade: "The transition from an agrarian to an industrial state and from a land of emigration to a 'labor-importing country' was in part the result of interrelationships in the complex of labor market, population needs, and migration" ("German Emigration to the United States and Continental Immigration to Germany in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," Central European History 13 [December, 1980]: 349).

⁵ Hanna Schissler, "The Junkers: Notes on the Social and Historical Significance of the Agrarian Elite in Prussia," in Peasants and Lords in Modern Germany: Recent Studies in Agricultural History, ed. Robert G. Moeller (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 34.

influence.

Furthermore, in light of the rapid material growth of industry, which began its boom period in the 1870's, the agrarian culture fought for stability.⁶ Nevertheless, Otto von Bismarck, the head of ministry during the second Reich, was sensitive to the situation; he was committed to maintain a balance between the agricultural sector and the growing industrial sector throughout his empire. A balance

⁶ Ian Farr provides an excellent summary of the situation that began in the 1870's: "Quite suddenly the buoyant prices and increasing demand which had so favoured landowners in the preceding decades [prior to 1870] were replaced by a more competitive market which highlighted some underlying weakness in the structure of German agriculture. The mood of optimism generated by the mid-century boom gave way to a climate of anxiety and resentment which drew the peasantry increasingly into the political arena. The peasantry's capacity for durable political organization and influence was now enhanced by the wider range of experiences offered by specialized participation in the market, geographical mobility and communal political structures, but the changing economic and administrative priorities of the state, allied to the proliferation of powerful manufacturing and urban interests, threatened to shift the political balance irrevocably against the small farmer. Throughout Europe peasants were confronted with the need for economic and political readjustment. But perhaps in no other country was the coincidence of rapid industrialization and sustained agricultural crisis so acute, nor its implications for the character of peasant politics so significant, as in late nineteenth-century Germany" ("Peasant Protest in the Empire--The Bavarian Example," in Moeller, Peasants and Lords, 110-111). See also Theodore S. Hamerow: "While parliamentarians and businessmen fought the policies of princes and landowners, the lower classes were engaged in a life-and-death struggle against the consequences of industrialization" (Restoration Revolution Reaction: Economics and Politics in Germany 1815-1871 [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966], viii).

between these two sectors was a complex and difficult task since Bismarck had to keep an equilibrium between industrialists, Junkers, artisans and peasants without disrupting in any serious manner the economic structure of the empire.⁷ Although Bismarck's policies could not meet every need of each group, nevertheless, through the craftiness of his own political skills he was able to maintain a relative popularity with each group during most of his empire. Eventually however, his popularity could not sustain the complex political, social, and economic problems which each group faced in his growing industrial empire. By 1890, the inadequacies of his agrarian and commercial policies were finally exposed. After two years of speculative industrial economic growth (1888-90), the empire entered into a serious depression for four and one-half years. During those years of depression, the agricultural and artisan industries were damaged the most. Thus, as Bismarck's power became less effective, certain organizations were formed within agrarian culture to

⁷ "As long as Bismarck remained in power, he managed to hold together the political, social, and economic coalitions which supported the new Reich. He managed to retain the loyalty of the great industrialists and the market-oriented Junkers by proposing legislation in their interest. Meanwhile, by judicious half-measures he had integrated the peasants and the artisans into the structure of what was becoming, as a result, a curious-appearing social and economic hybrid" (Herman Lebovics, " 'Agrarians' Verses 'Industrializers:' Social Conservative Resistance to Industrialism and Capitalism in Late Nineteenth Century Germany," International Review of Social History 12 [1967]: 41-42 [hereafter cited as "AVI"]).

protect their own economic interests with the German government (e.g., in 1893, the Farmers' League).⁸ Here power politics was the norm; this became evident when the Junkers, the grain-growing estate owners of the eastern provinces of Prussia, used their power to control the Farmers' League for their own personal interests.⁹ They convinced the League to exercise tight economic and geographic control over the small and middle sized farmers throughout the rest of Germany. Although the League tried to convince the small and middle sized farmers that it was working for their interest (e.g., protective tariffs were in the interest of all German agriculture), it was nothing less than a myth. In reality, the Junkers were protecting their own interests: the opportunity to be in the position to have extensive political influence as well as to accumulate land from the middle and small farmer who could not survive.¹⁰ Although from 1882-1895 the peasants share of the land which was cultivated increased from 69.9% to

⁸ For a recent discussion of the influence of the Farmers' League, see Hans Jürgen Puhle, "Lords and Peasants in the Kaiserreich," in Moeller, Peasants and Lords, 89-98 (hereafter cited as "LPK").

⁹ In 1895 it is interesting to note that most of the Farmers' League 188,620 members possessed small and middle sized farms. On the other hand, 28 of the Board's 43 members belonged to the aristocracy. This led to policies that supported the interest of the Junkers (see Puhle, "LPK," 43).

¹⁰ See Michael Hughes, Nationalism and Society: Germany 1800-1945 (London: Edward Arnold, 1988), 138-139.

70.4%, the Junkers knew that the peasant farmer was vulnerable.¹¹ They were aware that since the early 1870's, Russian, American, Austro-Hungarian, and Argentinean grain producers undersold German production abroad and at home. Thus, since the early 1870's the peasant farmer suffered from burdensome taxes, shortage of credit, the adoption of the gold standard in 1873 which agitated an inflationary element into the monetary system, and the activities of the future traders at the commodity exchanges who were able to drive down farm prices.¹² In light of these difficult circumstances, the problem of survival facing the peasant farmer was compounded by the fact that he often had to borrow money to meet his financial obligations and to modernize.¹³ Nevertheless, in the midst of always complaining about his plight, the peasant farmer continually sought to free himself from the Junkers and to survive the industrial revolution of Germany.¹⁴

During the days of Bultmann's youth, the exploits of

¹¹ cf. Puhle, "LPK," 84 and Lebovics, "AVI," 35.

¹² Some tax relief came to the agrarians in the 1890's; see Lebovics, "AVI," 37.

¹³ By 1895 almost half of the peasant farmers used some sort of machinery on their farms; see Lebovics, "AVI," 37.

¹⁴ Robert G. Moeller, German Peasants and Agrarian Politics, 1914-1924: The Rhineland and Westphalia (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 3, 23.

the Junkers, the socio-economic as well as the political policies of the government, and the strength of the industrial sector, including immigration to urban communities, hung over the heads of the peasant farmers of northwestern Germany.¹⁵ Furthermore, emigration overseas continued to be an alternative for many living in this region since German agriculture was no longer sufficient to feed the growing population.¹⁶ These circumstances even had an effect upon the ecclesiastical life of the northwest. For example, throughout the province of Oldenburg, church attendance slowly decreased during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, especially among

¹⁵ During the first two decades of Bultmann's life (1880-1900), there occurred dramatic shifts in the rural and urban populations of Germany:

1880: rural	58.6	urban	41.4
1900: rural	45.6	urban	54.4

See Pinson, *Modern Germany*, 221. In 1875 nearly two-thirds of the German population lived in villages and towns which were less than 2,000 people, but by 1900 this proportion was reduced to less than half the population; see Lebovics, "AVI," 33. Moreover, in 1882, two years before Bultmann's birth, 41.6% of all Germans still earned their livelihood in the agricultural sector, whereas in the extreme northwest, including Oldenburg, 56%-60% of the total employment was in agriculture; cf. Moeller, *Agrarian Politics, 1914-1924*, 20-21, and Frank B. Tipton, Jr., Regional Variations in the Economic Development of Germany During the Nineteenth Century (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1976), 61.

¹⁶ From 1880 to 1895, the German population went from 45.2 millions to 52.3 millions; see Lebovics, "AVI," 33. Over 30,000 emigrated from northwest Germany about the time of Bultmann's birth in 1882, leveling to between 10,000-15,000 from 1886-1893; see Bade, "German Emigration," 356.

the male population.¹⁷ This entire agrarian environment could not be overlooked in Bultmann's home, since his father served as a pastor in this rigid Protestant community.¹⁸ Probably, the conversations in his home made the young Bultmann aware of the constant struggle to survive on the part of the peasant farmers (as well as the artisans in the village); he could not help but to witness his father's pastoral concerns and counsel for their particular needs. After all, the churches in the western provinces had a strong reputation of tolerance and cooperation between clergy and laity; the experience of life was essentially one between both groups.¹⁹ Moreover, their communities were closely knit with respect to addressing national political events and the problems of private life.²⁰ In the context of this spirit of community between clergy and laity, the young Bultmann observed all

¹⁷ Hugh McLeod, "Protestantism and the Working Class in Imperial Germany," European Studies Review 12 (1982): 325-326 (hereafter cited as "PWC").

¹⁸ Bultmann came from a family that was steeped in the Evangelical-Lutheran tradition. This tradition goes beyond his father; his grandfather, who had strongly emphasized personal piety, was a missionary born in Sierra Leone, West Africa; and his maternal grandfather was a pastor in Baden.

¹⁹ W. R. Ward, Theology, Sociology and Politics: The German Protestant Social Conscience 1890-1933 (Berne: Peter Lang, 1979), 23.

²⁰ Moeller, Agrarian Politics, 1914-1924, 6, 7; Suzanne Berger, Peasants Against Politics: Rural Organization in Brittany 1911-1967 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 7-8.

the difficult circumstances in the agrarian society of northwest Germany. Probably during these formative years, he acquired the passionate respect and devotion for the peasant families and for the common people in the church. It seems reasonable to conclude that his father, his home, and these environmental circumstances developed within the young Bultmann a sensitivity to the condition of common people: their experiences were his experiences, their burdens were his burdens, and their joy was his joy. Even in his childhood, his own feelings bore outwardly the image of a compassionate pastor to a people who persevered through intense hardship.

We should not assume, however, that life in northwestern Germany in the latter part of the nineteenth century was only depressing or promoted revolutionary behavior. Even in light of this strenuous atmosphere, scholars remark that the peasant farmer had a passive attitude to the events that surrounded his life, remaining relatively loyal to the government.²¹ Those who remained

²¹ Lebovics, "AVI," 41; observing the general scene of European peasants, Suzanne Berger states: "Indeed, the stability of the system depended on the passivity of the peasants and their ignorance of the stakes of national politics" (*Peasants*, 1). Furthermore, she comments: "the political situation of the peasantry thus reflected more or less deliberate decisions by the political elites, but the policies succeeded only because those organizations that the peasants built themselves did not challenge--in fact, supported--the exclusion of the peasants from full political participation. To understand why rural voluntary associations did not pull the peasantry into the state, two explanations are necessary. First, the social context and

in farming continued to work hard and savor the spirit of joy and celebration that characterized the village and agrarian tradition of the German countryside. This vitality made a powerful impression upon the young Bultmann; it was their festive life of celebration that Bultmann brought to the attention of his hearers in his 1917 sermon, "Concerning the Hidden and Revealed God." In that sermon, he recalled the positive and uplifting mode of life that characterized the people's relationship to the religious festival of Pentecost. These festivals, which occurred on religious as well as national holidays, have an interesting tradition in Germany which obviously left an extensive impression upon the young Bultmann.

Festivals, Liturgy, and Schleiermacher

"What the one presents is something that now lies many years in the past--the Pentecost that I once celebrated as a child in my home in the country. . . . Both household and village were clothed in bright festal garments and marched to the church when the bells exultantly sounded across the countryside. Over the whole day lay the brilliant

the human materials available to the rural associations limited their activities; second, the political milieu determined the kinds of voluntary associations that could emerge in peasant society. The traditional features of peasant life were obstacles to active participation in an organization: the constraints of an undifferentiated workday, loyalty to the Church, and a network of social relations which extended no further than the village. In addition, there were attitudes of apathy, jealous egalitarianism, and defensive individualism, all of which supported a weak participant role that rural organizations could have transformed only by attacking traditional society at its roots" (ibid., 7, 8).

light of the sun and happy sound of the bells; and Pentecost was a festival of joy."²²

Both the national and religious festivals which were being celebrated at the time of Bultmann's youth go back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. These festivals emerged in the context of the Wars of Liberation (1795-1815), and thus, brought together the pietistic, romantic, and nationalistic spirit of its day. Concerning the national festivals, throughout the nineteenth century the structure of their celebration was closely linked with the Christian tradition, using Christian liturgy, prayer, and usually closing each festival with a church service.²³ This union between nationalism and religion was an important ingredient which shaped German consciousness during the nineteenth century. The intensity of this union varied throughout Germany. For example, in some areas the German Protestants were committed to political conservatism and to the identification of Protestantism with the

²² Bultmann, "Concerning the Hidden and Revealed God [1917]," in Existence and Faith, ed. and trans. Schubert Ogden (New York: Living Age Books, 1960), 23. Ogden's translation of the sermon also appears in Roger A. Johnson's volume, Rudolf Bultmann: Interpreting Faith for the Modern Era (London: Collins, 1987), 44-54. Originally the sermon appeared in Die Christliche Welt 31 (1917): 572-579 under the title, "Vom geheimnisvollen und vom offenbaren Gott." Recently, the German edition of the sermon has reappeared in Grässer's edited volume of Bultmann's sermons, Das verkündigte Wort, 135-147.

²³ George L. Mosse, The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars Through the Third Reich (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975), 77.

state.²⁴ Thus, in this context "rulers saw to it that the church supported as far as possible the actions of the state, and that pastors spent much of their time inculcating in their flock obedience and loyalty to the monarch."²⁵ Although the integration of church and state was solidly in place among many Protestant districts throughout Germany, nevertheless, in the agrarian countryside of Oldenburg, a strong anti-Prussian state, most Protestants thought that the relationship of church and state had boundaries. These boundaries were articulated clearly in the home in the which Bultmann was raised. His father, Arthur Kennedy Bultmann (1854-1919), defended the principles of free Protestantism in relationship to the state. In his mind the boundary between the state and the church was as follows: the function of the state was to improve public life through the tool of education and to enforce legislation which protects the life of the church, without having any control

²⁴ Robert G. Moeller, "Dimensions of Social Conflict in the Great War: The View From the German Countryside," Central European History 14 (June, 1981): 143; and Richard J. Evans, "Religion and Society in Modern Germany," European Studies Review 12 (1982): 261.

²⁵ Evans, "Religion," 256; note also Groh's comment: "What have I discovered about German Protestants in this century? They were willing partners in an unwritten agreement with the states or state governments. The agreement provided that the Protestant churches would serve as the states' chief model for the larger society; the accepted paradigm, 'freedom within authority,' mutually benefitted them both" (NCGP, xi).

over her. On the other hand, the specific function of the church is to perform its pastoral duties; it is not a vehicle of political ideology.²⁶ Such a formulation did not mean that the elder Bultmann or the Lutheran Protestants of Oldenburg viewed themselves as unpatriotic. Their patriotism was expressed in their analysis of the specific role of the state as they maintained the distinct role of the church. It was this position on church and state, or on nationalism and religion which emerged in the thought of the young Rudolf Bultmann. It was a position among German Lutherans that can be traced to the free Protestant thought of Schleiermacher.

Although the national festivals incorporated religion, nevertheless, the Protestant churches began to set up distinct festivals to celebrate specific religious days on the liturgical calendar (e.g., Christmas, Easter, Pentecost).²⁷ These specific liturgical dates were not the only services which were to be festive. Each Sunday the

²⁶ Antje Bultmann Lemke, "Theology for Freedom and Responsibility: Rudolf Bultmann's Views on Church and State," Syracuse University: Library Associates Courier 21, no. 2 (Fall, 1986): 4.

²⁷ Catholicism also incorporated the festival tradition. Catholic liturgy "stressed the part played by art and architecture, the importance of symbols, and the role of the priest in creating the proper atmosphere, whereas the Protestants concentrated more upon song, sermon, and the primacy of the congregation, as well as upon common prayer" (Mosse, Nationalization, 79).

church service itself was to be festive, that is to say, it was to have a liturgy of celebration. It was Schleiermacher who was instrumental in creating festive liturgical services which were congenial to the pietistic and romantic mood of the protestants at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The integration of romanticism and religious pietism stressed religious experience in terms of one's feelings and enthusiasm; a sensitivity towards inwardness and individuality. Like the festivals of secular life, Schleiermacher believed that the church services should also be festive and enthusiastic, receiving their impetus from the people themselves. On this point, Schleiermacher was an innovator; he demanded liberty and freedom concerning the function of liturgy in the church over against the traditional model of pastoral and doctrinal authority. Schleiermacher felt that in his model, the priesthood of all believers would be truly experienced as the minister was integrated with the congregation. This integration was expressed by a singing dialogue between the minister and the congregation during the worship service, thereby uniting the religious consciousness of the people. Similarly, during the focal point of the service, i.e. the sermon, the minister spoke as one who was in union with the people, rather than speaking at the people. Specifically, the sermon was to enrich the religious consciousness of the minister and the

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laity more than the other elements in the service; it was the essential vehicle to unify the minister and the laity with the person of God. Since Schleiermacher understood God to be the self-conscious feeling of absolute dependence within us, then it was the task of the minister to declare his own self-conscious experience of God to the congregation. In such a service, preaching the Word of God is directed towards nurturing the religious self-conscious experience of the listener--unifying minister, laity, and the person of God as one in the feeling of absolute dependence.

Through the implementation of his liturgical agenda, Schleiermacher's hold upon the ecclesiastical life of nineteenth century Protestant Germany was impressive. He was one of those rare individuals in the history of the church who not only had an profound influence on the field of theological studies, but he also had a profound influence upon the ecclesiastical life of the church. The practical aspect of his theological program became very popular because he was able to intertwine the pietistic, romantic, and nationalistic mood of the German Protestants into the very fabric of the church service.²⁸ The people

²⁸ Schleiermacher "sought to hold faith and intellectual cultivation together in ways more appropriate to a romantic age than the old rationalism could contrive, and who envisaged a role for the church in an age of national revival as the living conscience of a nation taken into partnership" (Ward, Theology, 23).

loved this unique blend of religious enthusiasm and worship as it attempted to enhance the piety and union of each particular Christian congregation. Since Schleiermacher's liturgical contribution was able to capture these distinct characteristics of the German people, his popularity continued to shape and dominate ecclesiastical life well after his death in 1834.

Schleiermacher's continuing popularity during the nineteenth century was evident at the first Protestant General Synod of Prussia as well as his appeal to the "mediating school" of theologians. In 1846, the first Protestant General Synod was summoned at Whitsuntide in order to settle the organization of the Prussian territorial church. At this meeting those who held strict conservative views of theology received little adherence. On the other hand, the majority of the delegates represented positions of mediation on theological issues. What became particularly noteworthy during the debates of the Synod was that those who were in this majority, in spite of what theological position they took, appealed to Schleiermacher as their authority.²⁹ The Synod demonstrated that Schleiermacher had attained a place of authority among the majority of Prussian pastors and theologians. Furthermore, Schleiermacher's authority was

²⁹ Heinrich von Treitschke, Treitschke's History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1919), 7:114-115.

reinforced by what some have referred to as the "mediating school" of theologians.³⁰ This school of thought, which was in place during Schleiermacher's life, was concerned over the direction of Lutheran theology. Throughout the nineteenth century it opposed two groups: those who held to the strict confessionalism and orthodoxy of the Reformation, and the radical new Lutherans who wished to break with historic Christianity by questioning the supernatural elements of the religion as well as its traditional doctrines (e.g., David Friedrich Strauss). By opposing the extremes on the right and on the left, the "mediating school" appealed to the majority of Protestant ministers by taking an open and conciliatory position on most theological and ecclesiastical issues. In doing so, its members appealed strongly to the writings of Schleiermacher for support. Thus, respect for Schleiermacher gained momentum during the middle of the century, and it was still solidly in place when Bultmann was born in 1884.³¹

³⁰ See Ward, Theology, 28; Groh, NCGP, 78, 85-86; and F. Lichtenberger, History of German Theology in the Nineteenth Century, trans. W. Hastie (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889), 467.

³¹ Even Schleiermacher's sharp critic, David Friedrich Strauss acknowledged in January 1865 that "German theology still stands--or actually just now stands--at Schleiermacher. He was ahead of his time, as are all significant intellects; only now, a generation after his death, has theology more or less caught up with him" (The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History: A Critique of Schleiermacher's 'Life of Jesus', trans. and ed. Leander E.

Schleiermacher and Education

"To want to have experience means to be ready to take miracle and mystery into oneself--or, . . . it means to have reverence and humility in the presence of life. For only when we approach life reverently and humbly can we hear God's voice in all its roar."³²

The influence of Schleiermacher during the nineteenth century also extended to religious education. At the beginning of the century, the Romantic theologian was in the forefront of discussions on potential reforms in German education.³³ Schleiermacher had argued that the schools were to develop a "child for active participation in the community, state, and church."³⁴ Although there were many diverse opinions concerning how this goal of education was to be achieved, nevertheless, throughout the century it was the ideal which controlled the education of the German youth. The principle was ingrained in those who endured

Keck [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977], 4). Groh points out that the "mediating school" died with the rise of the Ritschlian school (NCGP, 85). This may be true, but it does not mean that Schleiermacher's influence died. After all, Ritschl was a great admirer of Schleiermacher.

³² Bultmann, "Revealed God," 28. "Hereafter, unless stated, all italics within Bultmann's quotations belong to him."

³³ Fritz K. Ringer mentions Kant, Schelling, Fichte, Humboldt in the same context as Schleiermacher. See The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890-1933 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 23.

³⁴ Ernst Christian Helmreich, Religious Education in German Schools: An Historical Approach (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 39.

elementary and higher education, and thus, it encompassed the educational milieu which confronted Bultmann in the days of his schooling.

When Bultmann wrote about his educational background, he began with his attendance of elementary school in Rastede during the years of 1892-1895. He attended elementary school in Rastede because his father had taken a new pastorate there. From 2 December 1895 through 23 February 1903, he attended the humanistic Gymnasium in Oldenburg. Meanwhile, his father served as pastor of the Lamberti Church after 1897. Although there is not much information about Bultmann's elementary and Gymnasium years, nevertheless, we do know that he excelled in the typical educational structure of those schools. For example, the humanistic Gymnasiums in Germany were devoted to the study and revival of the classical period: ancient languages (e.g., Latin, Greek, and even Hebrew) and ancient literature. The Gymnasium was also committed to the study of German literature and grammar, mathematics, history, geography, and the studies of nature. Thus, he was taught by what scholars have referred to as the "scholar-humanist" since the teacher in the Gymnasium had to be well versed in every discipline of the educational program.³⁵

³⁵ The term, "scholar-humanist," is borrowed from R. Lehmann; see William Setchel Learned's work entitled, The Oberlehrer: A Study of the Social and Professional Evolution of the German Schoolmaster (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), 75.

In this context, Bultmann excelled as a student, especially enjoying the study of Greek, the history of German literature, and mathematics. In fact, during his years in the Gymnasium Bultmann thought seriously about pursuing a career in mathematics. Such a pursuit was never launched; instead, he followed the desires of his father, with whom he had a very close relationship, and pursued a theological education when he graduated from the Gymnasium.³⁶

The study of religion was also an important subject in the curriculum of the Gymnasiums as well as the elementary schools in Germany.³⁷ Throughout the century, however, controversy surrounded the subject of religion in the institutions of education. For example, some believed that religion should have a free or autonomous place within the curriculum. Others thought that the state should control religious education. It was really the latter position that dominated German education. For example, in Prussia the state determined who was qualified to give religious instruction. Nevertheless, no matter what position one took on the religious education issue, the integration of

³⁶ The information in the last two sentences was received from Antje Bultmann Lemke in a personal telephone conversation on 9 August 1991.

³⁷ Although during the last quarter of the nineteenth century the Realgymnasium and the Oberrealschule attempted to establish themselves upon the same educational level as the elite tradition of the Gymnasium, in 1900 the Gymnasium still held exclusive rights to preparing candidates for advanced study of theology in the universities; Learned, Oberlehrer, 71.

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state and religion remained a strong educational bond within the schools.

Furthermore, there was also much debate concerning the content and method of religious instruction in the secondary schools and the Gymnasiums. Out of these debates emerged one principle of agreement and implementation: the centrality of the curriculum moved from the instruction of catechism to a focus on Bible history. This principle itself had its roots in the religious educational philosophy of Schleiermacher. In his day Schleiermacher reacted in a negative manner to those who taught the strict memorization of the catechism without relating it to the Biblical narrative and personal religious experience.³⁸ His position received growing appreciation throughout the century until finally most of the schools taught the catechism in the context of Bible history as they made every attempt to relate the content of their instruction to personal religious experience.³⁹ Bultmann seemed to learn

³⁸ Martin Redeker writes: "His own stepson, reporting later on Schleiermacher's confirmation classes, explained how a high regard for each child's individual development underlay his father's method of instruction. Consequently he himself never had to learn the catechism or a hymn. Schleiermacher never wanted the children to memorize concepts, but sought always to awaken the 'longing of young minds for the wondrous and supernatural' by presenting his own religious life" (Schleiermacher: Life and Thought, trans. John Wallhausser [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973], 47).

³⁹ At this time, religious education took the following format: Bible history, memorization of Bible verses, hymns, catechism, aspects of church history, and

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this instruction well. For example, the 1917 sermon, "Concerning the Hidden and Revealed God" focused intently upon an individual's experience of God, i.e. in the fashion of Schleiermacher, upon the absolute dependence of God within one's experience.

Schleiermacher and Bultmann

We do know that Bultmann held Schleiermacher in high esteem from the early days of his theological training. In 1905, while studying theology at the University of Berlin, he wrote a letter which stated that "unless someone like Schleiermacher pushes all of theology a major step ahead, it will fall apart."⁴⁰ Although Bultmann's comment related more specifically to the urgency he felt in the field of theology, nevertheless, the comment presupposed the all-embracing presence that Schleiermacher had upon the Protestant church during the nineteenth century. In Bultmann's estimation, no other great theologian of that

even matters connected with the church service such as the festivals of the church calendar (Helmreich, Education, 87, 94).

⁴⁰ Lemke, "BP," 8; this quote is overlooked by Martin Evang, "Rudolf Bultmanns Berufung auf Friedrich Schleiermacher vor und um 1920," in Rudolf Bultmanns Werk und Wirkung, hg. Bernd Jaspert (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984), 3-24. Although Evang's article provides an excellent analysis of the debate between Bultmann and Rudolf Otto over Schleiermacher, Evang does not mention Schleiermacher's influence upon the early Bultmann.

century could be mentioned in the same breath.⁴¹ Thus, it was Bultmann's concern that someone like Schleiermacher would emerge who could wake up the entire theological and ecclesiastical life of the church.

Recently, John Painter stated that "Bultmann's relation to Schleiermacher is yet to be clarified." Painter makes his observation in the context of Bultmann's existential themes; he thinks there are some "strong points of contact if Schleiermacher's 'feeling of absolute dependence' is understood as existential awareness."⁴² The connection between Schleiermacher and Bultmann concerning existential awareness is worthy of scholarly investigations, but Bultmann's appreciation of Schleiermacher is traceable to his family background and educational experiences. It seems implausible that Bultmann's heart felt acknowledgement of Schleiermacher, mentioned in his letter in 1905, was shaped by theological training at Tübingen (1903-04) and Berlin alone. After all, his grandfather and his father, both ministers, were known as moderates in the pietistic Evangelical-Lutheran tradition. As noted earlier, such ministers had a strong

⁴¹ "I myself put Schleiermacher in the sequence from Jeremiah to Kierkegaard. Yes, I do" (Bultmann to Barth, 31 December 1922, Karl Barth/Rudolf Bultmann: Letters, 1922-1966, ed. Bernd Jaspert, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981], 6).

⁴² Painter, Theology, 3.

sympathetic ear towards the theological and ecclesiastical programs of Schleiermacher, even to the point of appealing to him as an authority. It seems probable that Bultmann's paternal relationships had the same appreciation, and thus, passed it on to the younger Bultmann. Moreover, the influence of Schleiermacher is obvious from Bultmann's 1917 Pentecostal sermon. As he referred to the festive celebration of worship on the day of Pentecost in that sermon, it is clear that Bultmann's father incorporated Schleiermacher's liturgical structure of worship in the services of his church. Even more importantly, however, is the fact that each Sunday when the young Bultmann went to church, the festive manner of worship and the preaching of the person of God, which was created and expounded by Schleiermacher, was embedded into the structure of the service. Schleiermacher's liturgical influences were part of the religious consciousness of Bultmann's father, his home and the community in which his father served. If we also include the celebrations of national holidays as well as the education philosophies of the elementary schools and the Gymnasiums, it can be said that the young Bultmann could not escape Schleiermacher's dominance over the life of nineteenth century Protestant Germany.⁴³

⁴³ Bultmann's mother, Helene Bultmann, was also committed to protestant pietism. She was raised in a pietistic environment near Baden.

1870-1871

1872-1873

1874-1875

1876-1877

1878-1879

1880-1881

Chapter Two

Bultmann's Theological Education:

The Years at Tübingen and Berlin (1903-05)

The Condition of Scholarship

From 1903-1912, except for the academic year 1906-07, Bultmann studied theology at Tübingen University (1903-04), the University of Berlin (1904-05), and Marburg University (1905-06; 1907-12). During the early years of his education (1903-05), Bultmann's written correspondences reveal a personal struggle over the state of Biblical and theological studies as he contemplated a career in the pastoral ministry. As Bultmann addressed the condition of Biblical and theological studies, this young student appears highly critical and self-confident as he attacked the work of prominent scholars such as Wilhelm Bousset (New Testament) and Adolf Harnack (Dogmatics). In both cases, Bultmann leveled his criticism at two points: he thought that the content of their work lacked creativity to advance scholarship in their respective fields, and he felt that their work demonstrated little sensitivity to the laity in the church. Hence, as Bultmann studied at Tübingen and Berlin from 1903-05, he was not impressed with the innovative scholarship of the academic world, nor its concern for the laity. Nothing occurred, therefore, while studying in those institutions to dislodge the passionate

goal of his young heart: to return to the simple agrarian environment of his childhood in northwest Germany as a pastor.

The Gap Between Scholar and Laity

In the early years (1903-05) of his studies at Tübingen and Berlin, Bultmann was concerned with the application of liberal and critical theological scholarship to ecclesiastical life.¹ There was good reason for his concern since during this time ordinary academic and literary activity was bypassing the German Protestants in the pew.² It must be noted, however, that both laity and scholars contributed to this situation: the laity focused narrowly upon their problems and tasks within their particular churches, whereas scholars focused narrowly upon the world of academics. Thus, in the normal circumstances of life the laity were not concerned with remaining abreast

¹ There is no doubt that there is much ambiguity over the term "liberal." Throughout my discussion I will presuppose Walter Schmithals's discussion as he explained Bultmann's relationship to liberal theology. Schmithals views liberal theology from a wide and narrow perspective. The wide sense of term can be traced to the Enlightenment as an expression of freeing theology from traditional dogmas. The narrow sense of the term understands liberal theology as a reaction to the speculative theology of Ferdinand Christian Baur and David Friedrich Strauss and was finally superseded by the dialectical theologians of the early 1920's (Bultmann, 5-7).

² Ernst Troeltsch, "Half a Century of Theology: A Review (1908)," in Ernst Troeltsch: Writings on Theology and Religion, ed. Robert Morgan and Michael Pye, trans. Robert Morgan (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977), 54.

of current theological movements; they were more influenced by what was happening in their immediate community. For example, in light of the industrial work week, the male population of the working class was increasingly absent from church. By 1900, "three-quarters of the Sunday congregation and two-thirds of the communicants were women."³ After a hard week in the factories the men looked forward to Sunday as a day of relaxation: sleeping in the morning and spending the afternoon in the pub or inn.⁴ This situation did not help the religious structure of the family: the traditional practice of morning and evening devotions ceased, while on the other hand, wages for the youth working in the factories created an independent lifestyle among them in relationship to their parents and the church. Faithful women in the churches continually turned to their pastors for help, whereas the clergy continually turned to the state and the employers for aid. While the women received much sympathy from the clergy, the clergy did not receive much reprieve from the employers or the state. After all, the aristocracy did not have the

³ McLeod, "PWC," 328.

⁴ There were places throughout Germany where Sunday work was required. For example, in the Ruhrgebiet "Sunday labour was normal for railway and post office workers; that apprentices in many trades were required to attend classes on Sundays; that many steel and coke workers had to work on Sundays; and that Saturday evening shifts left many miners unfit for anything beyond a good lie-in on Sunday morning" (ibid., 330).

spiritual welfare of the working class upon its mind, and the middle class was primarily concerned with building an urban culture that had little contact with the church. Moreover, theologians had little relationship with the laity since they were members of large academic institutions or corporations which were under the jurisdiction of the state.⁵ Usually theologians were more concerned with their careers and pleasing the state than addressing the life of the laity. This fact had implications upon the relationship of theologians and laity, especially the rising working class. There was not only an intellectual gap between the working class laity and the theologians, but there was also a gap between them since the theologians were employees of the state. Thus, the working class did not trust the rhetoric of the theologians because the former thought that the latter would never endanger their own employment to help the needs of the workers. This atmosphere of distrust led to an attitude of indifference between scholars and the members of German Protestant churches at the turn of the twentieth century. In light of this atmosphere, there was not much hope for the two fields coming together.⁶

⁵ This Erastian principle is traceable to the Peace of Augsburg (1555) formulation, cuius regio, eius religio, meaning that the ruler of each (German) state could choose a state religion.

⁶ See Troeltsch, "Theology," 55; Evans, "Religion," 275; and McLeod, "PWC," 329-330.

Bultmann's Analysis of Contemporary Theological Education

In this historical setting, a spirited young Bultmann, driven by his childhood passion for the life of the church, wanted to see the gap between scholar and laity bridged. In his early correspondences (1903-05), however, he focused more upon the intellectual dimension than the social dimension of the problem. In fact, in letters addressed to his dear friend, Walther Fischer on 8 August 1904 (from Tübingen) and 31 December 1904, Bultmann seemed to indicate that he believed that the Protestant church was in her final moment of intellectual crisis. In his estimation, either the church took expedient action to educate the laity in the results of recent scholarship or the end of the Protestant church was upon Germany.⁷

It is true that Bultmann's analysis was an exaggeration, nevertheless, he felt the urgency that education alone would unite the theoretical and the practical life of the church. By making this point, Bultmann placed the responsibility of resolving the dilemma squarely upon the shoulders of liberal and critical scholars; they must break from a status of isolation and vigorously present their material to the church. Bultmann did not believe that such a project was an impossible task. After all, since the Enlightenment, aided by the movements of pietism and romanticism, most urban and rural German

⁷ See Lemke, "BP," 6.

Protestant churches began to accept the broad effects of liberal and critical theology which embraced the general position of freeing theology from the traditional dogmas of the church.⁸ Since this general principle of theological freedom was intact, Bultmann thought the academic world should seize the opportunity of educating the laity in the recent developments of liberal and critical thought. Such an education included the exegetical expertise of recent scholarship, especially the free use of the historical-critical approach to investigating Biblical narratives which were being advanced by the History of Religions school of thought. It also included the belief that the revelation of Jesus Christ is the center of all theological work in the Christian religion, incorporating the divine within human experience and world history.

Although Bultmann was sympathetic to these advances within liberal and critical scholarship, he was not optimistic about their implementation into the churches. Beyond the mere separation of scholar and laity, Bultmann indicated at least four other roadblocks while studying at Tübingen and Berlin as to why recent scholarship was not being implemented within Protestant Germany: 1) its failure

⁸ Ernst Christian Helmreich points out that on the whole, the Protestant churches embraced liberal and critical theology by 1900; see his The German Churches Under Hitler: Background, Struggle, and Epilogue (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 41.

to create a new theology; 2) the lack of leadership among scholars; 3) the substance of scholarship was not challenging, and 4) the failure to adequately critique the ethical mandate of religion by liberal theology.

In the first place, these scholars did not demonstrate the ability to create a new theology which would integrate the advances of modern scholarship with the various disciplines of theology, and then share this information with the Protestant churches. Bultmann found this problem especially true in the field of dogmatics; he wrote to Fischer that this field especially annoyed him, pleading for reform.⁹ In the field of dogmatics, he wished that someone would emerge who could embrace all the achievements of historical theology, organize these achievements systematically, and then create the basis for a new theology. Instead, what Bultmann found was that dogmaticians, in spite of their new achievements, continued to define such rubrics as revelation, trinity, miracles, and divine attributes according to traditional theological conceptions.

From the substance of his letter to Fischer, it is difficult to perceive what Bultmann meant by this criticism, i.e. in what ways were these scholars specifically devoted to the traditional concepts of theology. Possibly Ernst Troeltsch has provided some help

⁹ Bultmann to Fischer, June 1905, Lemke, "BP," 8.

at this point when he wrote that scientific theology (including dogmatics) in his day "is resolutely unconcerned about the practical and dogmatic implications of its results. It lacks special theological presuppositions and methods."¹⁰ In other words, the dogmaticians maintained a blind commitment to certain traditional formulations of the rubrics of theology without using the creative implications of their studies. On this point, Bultmann went so far as to attack his teacher at the University of Berlin, the famous dogmatician Adolf Harnack. In his estimation, Harnack was "too much of a scholar."¹¹ As the young Bultmann evaluated Harnack's work, he did not think that Harnack could bring together the practical and dogmatic implications of his work for scholars or for the church.¹² It was in this context that Bultmann called for someone like Schleiermacher to emerge; he stated to Fischer that

¹⁰ Troeltsch, "Theology," 56.

¹¹ Lemke, "BP," 8. Bultmann had moved to Berlin from Tübingen in order to study under famous figures such as Harnack and Hermann Gunkel. He had been drawn originally to Tübingen to study under famous figures such as Theodor Haering and Karl Müller. While at Berlin, Bultmann took two classes from Harnack: History of Dogmatics (Winter semester 1904/05) and the History of Protestantism in the 19th Century (Summer semester 1905); see Evang, Bultmann, 13-14.

¹² Keep in mind that this was Bultmann's personal assessment of Harnack's thought at this time. Some scholars have pointed out that Harnack's work should be viewed as a important contribution in the working out of theology in the life of the church; see Ward, Theology, 78-80.

"unless someone like Schleiermacher pushes all of theology a major step ahead, it will fall apart."¹³ In his estimation, no one since Schleiermacher (d. 1834) had integrated theological theory and practice so vitally into the field of theological studies as well as into the life of the church. Thus, for Bultmann the absence of a Schleiermacher had finally reached a desperate state.

The second reason Bultmann was not optimistic about the integration of scholarship into the church was because the academic world he encountered lacked leadership. The absence of someone like Schleiermacher was exactly the point. As scholars turned increasingly to a private and a self-serving career in academics during the last half of the nineteenth century, it became obvious to Bultmann that the churches were not receiving any significant guidance from them. This problem had not been the case with Schleiermacher at the beginning of the century. Schleiermacher had been an innovative scholar who integrated his thought into the life of the church and its community. When Bultmann observed the Protestant churches of his day, he felt that this integrated life was losing its freshness. They were stagnant; nothing was being built upon the foundation of the broad effects of liberal and

¹³ Lemke, "BP," 8.

critical theology that had begun at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He found no one building upon Schleiermacher; the field of academic scholarship was devoid of such an individual.

Moreover, Bultmann was frustrated over the lack of leadership by the academic world to finally extinguish the old orthodoxy. Historically, one of the main points that Bultmann appreciated about liberal theology was its historical and critical approach to uncover the "radical truth" of a theological doctrine or a Biblical text.¹⁴ Originally, the liberal theologians proposed that such an approach would free the church from the fragmentation of intellectual and spiritual life which they thought was inherent in the work of traditional orthodox theology. In their estimation traditional orthodoxy was an intellectual and metaphysical subscription to a set of dogmas which did not touch the practical life of the Christian. In response to their assessment of orthodoxy, the liberal scholar said that religion is located in the everyday experience or consciousness of human existence; for example, God could be understood as the self-conscious union of the finite and the Infinite, the temporal and the Eternal as one lives

¹⁴ Although Bultmann made this statement in 1924, it conveyed the underlining principle that he always appreciated about liberal theology; see "Liberal Theology and the Latest Theological Movement [1924]," in Faith and Understanding, ed. Robert W. Funk, trans. Louise Pettibone Smith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 29.

each day.¹⁵ Thus, the liberal theologian believed that theological and Biblical truth, attained by historical and critical investigation, would be lived. But Bultmann did not find such an integrated lifestyle being lived in the church. In his eyes, though the firm structure of the old orthodoxy was finally collapsing, recent scholarship and criticism was not capturing the minds and hearts of the people in the pew.

Thirdly, as Bultmann expressed his reservations about academic leadership, his frustration over the integration of scholarship into the church was compounded by his analysis of the state of theological scholarship. In two of his letters to Fischer (8 August 1904 and 31 December 1904), this point is accented as he attacked Wilhelm Bousset's work entitled, Jesus.¹⁶ This work typified for Bultmann the "current sad state of affairs" of theological scholarship, i. e. Bousset's presentation was directed towards a description and understanding of Jesus' ministry instead of adequately penetrating the depth of Jesus' deity for the modern believer. Thus, Bultmann found Bousset's

¹⁵ This conception of God is found in Friedrich Schleiermacher, On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers, Intro., trans. and notes Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 104-106.

¹⁶ Lemke, "BP," 6. At this time Bousset was an Associate Professor of New Testament at Göttingen University. Theologically he was considered as being a contributor to the History of Religions school.

work superficial, lacking substance to challenge scholars as well as the people in the church.¹⁷

In Bultmann's view, the failure of Bousset's work was especially disappointing in light of the popularity of a recent publication entitled, Popular History of Religion. This publication was directed towards the laity; it wished to present the findings of the History of Religions school of Biblical criticism in the common language of the people. By studying under the Old Testament scholar, Hermann Gunkel at the University of Berlin, Bultmann became sympathetic towards the History of Religions school of scholarship.¹⁸ Thus, he enthusiastically welcomed this new publication as a vital addition to ecclesiastical literature. In his estimation, such a publication would present to the laity in a readable fashion the current issues being discussed and discovered by those investigating the history of religion. Bultmann wondered, however, whether or not the laity were reading this new publication. At this point he did not know the answer. Nevertheless, Bultmann found that the content within this new volume provided more substance than the academic work from the pen of Bousset, who was

¹⁷ Again, Bultmann's criticism is vague; it does not reveal what specifically disturbed him about Bousset's Christology.

¹⁸ At Berlin, Bultmann took four classes from Hermann Gunkel: Old Testament Theology and the Origin of the Old Testament (Winter semester 1904-05); Introduction to the Old Testament and Old Testament Customs (Summer semester 1905); see Evang, Bultmann, 14.

considered a formative scholar. Thereby, Bultmann did not hesitate to pronounce serious judgement upon Bousset's Christology: "I'm afraid that if he [Bousset] cannot offer anything else about Jesus, the end of the Protestant Church is close."¹⁹

Finally, Bultmann was not optimistic about the integration of scholarship into the Protestant churches because many of its scholars felt that the justification of Protestantism lies within a code of ethics deduced from the Biblical narratives. For Bultmann, such a formulation was nothing less than the secularization of the historic Christian religion; it was religion based on premises of ethical idealism instead of premises of absolute dependence upon God.²⁰ In other words, the liberal scholars stated that the essence of Christianity was found in the lingering Kantian "categorical imperative" which prescribes a certain set of rules such as the ten commandments that one must or "ought" to do. Bultmann thought that the liberal position on the categorical imperative was nothing more than substituting the metaphysical dogmas of traditional orthodoxy with a new metaphysical dogma of human ethical

¹⁹ Bultmann to Fischer, 31 December 1904, Lemke, "BP," 6.

²⁰ In 1924 Bultmann made this criticism of liberal theology much clearer, but the basic principles of his later criticism was already in place in 1905; see Bultmann, "Liberal Theology," 29; and Bultmann to Fischer, 27 January 1905, Lemke, "BP," 7.

ideals. In other words, the ethical ideals of the liberals remained within the traditional metaphysical dimensions of religion. Bultmann rejected this traditional structure; against the liberals and Kant, he believed that moral decisions are performed solely in the concrete situations of life as the human responds to the question, "What shall I do?"²¹ For Bultmann, therefore, the issue of ethics is limited to the domain of practical life, not to the domain of metaphysics. On this particular point, Bultmann separated himself from the liberal tradition; he was not sympathetic to those who defined Protestantism as a specific code of ethics.²² He made his point clear in a letter to Fischer on 27 January 1905 when he stated that the Protestant church "must give her members more than codes of ethics. I [Bultmann] see the fulfillment of

21 Bultmann to Fischer, 27 January 1905, Lemke, "BP," 7.

22 Most likely Bultmann has in view here Albrecht Ritschl and his followers. Ritschl was the most prominent figure within liberal theology in the last half of the nineteenth century. It was his contention that Jesus' preaching on the kingdom of God would find its fulfillment through the establishment of moral law among humanity (see Helmut Koester, "Early Christianity from the Perspective of the History of Religions: Rudolf Bultmann's Contribution," in Hobbs, Bultmann, Retrospect and Prospect, 63-64). As Groh states: "... his [Ritschl] work took theology out of the sphere of ontology, and thrust it into the realm of morality" (NCGP, 422).

Christianity not in ethics, but in religion, in faith in God, in the concept of the kingdom of God."²³ For Bultmann, the liberal ethicists were stripping Protestant Christianity of anything that dealt with its religious basis (e.g., religion, faith, revelation). In his estimation, the issue was not to reduce Christianity to a code of ethics by which to live just like any religion, but to understand that the dignity and happiness of the confessing church is found in the fact that Christianity "is the religion." In the midst of the studies in the history of religion, Bultmann thought that since the New Testament understood Christianity as the religion, the modern church should think the same.²⁴ After all the "aspects" that constitute human religious experience never

²³ Lemke, "BP," 7. Here Bultmann showed a certain appreciation for the History of Religions School over against Ritschl. Some in the History of Religions School said that the kingdom of God had nothing to do with the moral perfection of humanity, rather Jesus preached the kingdom as a divine miracle of the future. In his early student years, Bultmann defended this religious conception of the kingdom (see Koester, "Early Christianity," 64).

²⁴ Again Bultmann echoed the thoughts of Schleiermacher who held that Christianity is the unique religion of God to man. It is true that Schleiermacher thought it was a mistake to say that Christianity was the only religion, but he did not feel it was a mistake to think of Christianity as the high point of religious experience. It was in this way that Christianity was unique (see Schleiermacher, Religion, 189-223).

change.²⁵ Thus, according to Bultmann, those liberals who adapted Christianity to a mere code of ethics were introducing the Protestant laity to a foreign and unhistorical form of Christianity. Instead, he held that the essential and historic character of Protestantism lies within its unique understanding and critical development of such concepts as revelation, trinity, faith, miracles, and the kingdom of God. For Bultmann it should be the task of contemporary scholars to critically enrich the laity by studying these rubrics.

Summary of Bultmann's Attitude

In his early student years (1903-1905), Bultmann did not convey a positive attitude towards the state of scholarship, its relationship to the laity, or the future of the Protestant church in Germany. He was extremely upset that the recent fruits of biblical and historical theological investigations were not getting into the hands of the laity. From the content of his correspondences, it is evident that he placed the blame for this failure upon the academic world. In his estimation, from his academic experiences at Tübingen (May 7, 1903-August 9, 1904) and at Berlin (November 28, 1904-September 15, 1905), no one possessed the ability or the genuine will to unite

²⁵ Bultmann to Fischer, 27 January 1905, Lemke, "BP," 7.

scholarship into the practical life of the church. Moreover, the problem of unification was compounded by the effects of industrialization upon the working class and their relationship to the church, especially witnessed by Bultmann while in Berlin. While living in Berlin, Bultmann mentioned that he enjoyed going to the theater, concerts, and museums, but he was not vocal about attending their churches. The Berlin churches were not in good shape at this time. For example, in 1900 the city average for communion among the Protestant working class was only 13.8 percent. As church attendance was scarce, disbelief in God was also on the rise among the urban working class, especially the male population. Thus, it was common to refer to the churches in the German cities as "spiritual cemeteries."²⁶ Bultmann readily perceived that this spiritual deadness differed greatly from the ecclesiastical environment of his boyhood in the northwestern countryside of Germany. Even at this time, in rural northwest Germany, the Evangelical-Lutherans continued to celebrate the joy of their religion; for the most part, ecclesiastical life still had a central position in the life of the community. On the other hand, it had become clear in the environment of urban life that the world of religious piety implemented by Schleiermacher was quickly eroding. By the spring of 1905, a spirit of pessimism characterized his attitude

²⁶ Evans, "Religion," 281; and McLeod, "PWC," 327.

towards both academic and ecclesiastical life.

Furthermore, he had witnessed in Berlin the full vigor of a complex new Germany: a culture intertwined with traditional values and the goals of industrial and world supremacy.

At this time, however, Bultmann's attitude signaled less than complete pessimism; he saw a glimmer of hope. He perceived that the theological formulations of the old orthodoxy were collapsing, both among scholars and parish pastors. In his estimation, the old metaphysical propositions of Christian dogma had almost been extinguished from the church. If this was true, then the church was in the position to receive a new interpretation of its traditional dogmas. It is not surprising, therefore, that in light of orthodoxy's collapse, the broad effects of liberal and critical theology which had its roots in the thought of men like Schleiermacher had found a home in most Protestant churches. This occurrence pleased Bultmann; it underlined in his mind that the churches were ripe for a new Schleiermacher, i.e. for innovative and fresh insights into the teachings of the Christian religion. And lastly, Bultmann was not completely pessimistic because there was a serious attempt to popularize the investigations of the history of religion for the benefit of the laity. He realized that someone thought that the benefits of critical scholarship could be made accessible to the laity. In his eyes, however, such

an adventure needed further stimulation; at this time, it had not filtered into the entire life of the church. Even so, as Bultmann viewed the whole picture of ecclesiastical and academic life in the spring of 1905, these elements of hope did little to alter his generally pessimistic attitude.

Thus, as he studied at Tübingen and Berlin, Bultmann could not forget the common people in the pew; it was as if he took personal responsibility for the failures of the academic world to educate the laity. In April of 1905, therefore, he wrote to Fischer that he had still clung to his long dream of serving a parish in the German countryside, especially in a village near the North Sea--in the locale of his childhood.²⁷ Sounding like a romantic, Bultmann still identified himself with the joys, concerns, and struggles of village and peasant life in northwest Germany; he loved those people and their environment. His desire to serve as a village pastor received a new

²⁷ Lemke, "BP," 7-8. Groh has an excellent summary of the situation: "In the pre-war [WWI] decades, the churches were fired upon from many quarters, while conflict and unrest erupted on all sides. Rapid industrialization brought social upheaval and divided social classes even more widely. In general, highly educated people and the working class showed little interest in religion and the churches. The greatest percentage of active Protestants were found in the middle classes--a highly volatile social and economic group--and among aristocratic and peasant people of the hinterlands" (NCGP, 531-532). Bultmann wanted to go home to the "hinterlands."

stimulus, and he placed upon his own shoulders the responsibility of providing the direction of integrating the fruits of recent scholarship into the life of the laity whom he might serve.

Chapter Three

Bultmann's Theological Education:

The Marburg Experience

The Atmosphere at Marburg

In November of 1905, Bultmann began his final journey towards receiving his first theological degree; he enrolled at Marburg University. Attending Marburg was the final step in obeying the wishes of his father who encouraged his son to attend various institutions of theological training in order to benefit from each faculty. As Bultmann emerged from Tübingen and Berlin with a critical attitude towards the academic world, he must have believed that Marburg would not reprove his judgment against academic theology. However, in a letter to Fischer on 30 January 1906, Bultmann remarked that Marburg provided the ideal academic atmosphere for theology.¹ Only two and one half months into the winter semester, Bultmann's attitude was quite different than the attitude he expressed while studying at Tübingen and Berlin. Something had happened; specifically, he had come to revere two formative scholars in the History of Religions school who were teaching New Testament at Marburg, Adolf Jülicher (who also taught church history) and Johannes Weiss. During the winter semester he had

¹ See Evang, Bultmann, 26.

enrolled in two courses from each of these professors.² Although he referred to Jülicher as his "dearest teacher," nevertheless, he was attracted more to the depth of Weiss's eschatological understanding of Jesus' preaching on the kingdom over against the ethical interpretation of the liberals.³ This attraction stimulated Bultmann to enroll in two other courses offered by Weiss in the summer semester of 1906.⁴

During the same summer semester of 1906, two other professors emerged as having a profound influence upon Bultmann's changing attitude towards the field of scholarship: the theologian, Wilhelm Herrmann and the philosopher, Paul Natorp. During the summer, Bultmann took two theology courses from Herrmann and a course in philosophical logic ("Critique of Knowledge") from Natorp.⁵

² See Verzeichniss der Vorlesungen welche im Winterhalbjahre 1905/06 vom 15. October bis 15 April an der Universität Marburg (Marburg: Buchdruckerei Heinrich Bauer, 1905), 3-5; and Evang, Bultmann, 20. From Jülicher, he took "The Letters of Galatians, Philipians, and Thessalonians" and a Church History Seminar on "Gnosticism." From Weiss, he took "Principal Problems of the Life of Jesus" and a New Testament Seminar (topic not known).

³ The reference to Jülicher appears in a letter from Bultmann to E. Teufel, 6 June 1906, Evang, Bultmann, 21.

⁴ He took "Interpretation of Christ's Passion according to the Four Gospels" and a New Testament Seminar (topic not known); *ibid.*

⁵ See Verzeichniss der Vorlesungen welche im Sommerhalbjahre 1906: Universität Marburg (Marburg: Buchdruckerei Heinrich Bauer, 1906), 3-4. Herrmann's

Both of these professors were dominant figures in the Marburg school of Neo-Kantianism. Furthermore, Bultmann also admitted that he benefitted from the presence of Hermann Cohen, the other Neo-Kantian philosopher on campus at this time.⁶ These philosophers as well as the theologian, Herrmann enjoyed an open discussion on the subject of religion's relationship to culture which helped Bultmann refine his own position on the issue. Prior to this time, the young Bultmann had been influenced by his father and the people of northwest Germany. In that locale the people held to the idea that religion is free (an autonomous status) over against state control. The Marburg Neo-Kantians reinforced this distinction; they provided a richer philosophical and theological basis for his previous position. Moreover, Bultmann was ecstatic to discover that Herrmann had a sincere appreciation for Schleiermacher's theological and ecclesiastical formulations. He was

courses were "Dogmatics I" and a Systematic Theology Seminar (topic not known); see Evang, Bultmann, 21.

⁶ Bultmann did not choose to take any specific course from Cohen. Nevertheless, he remarked that the work of Cohen and Natorp contributed to the "distinctive atmosphere" of Marburg. He pointed out that in the old Marburg tradition, there was always a strong link between theology and philosophy, in this case, between modern Lutheran thought and Neo-Kantianism (see Jaspert, ed. Barth/Bultmann: Letters, 161-162). I should mention that a Dr. Ach was part of the philosophical faculty at Marburg in 1905-06, and that he was not a Neo-Kantian. As he taught courses dealing with experimental psychology, he could not overcome, however, the strength of Neo-Kantianism in the department.

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intrigued by the historical and theological connections between Herrmann's Lutheran Neo-Kantianism and Schleiermacher. As a result of the Marburg educational experience in 1905-06, especially those connected with the History of Religions school and Neo-Kantianism, Bultmann became convinced that recent scholarship could provide a new theology, new leadership, stimulating content, a challenge to the liberal code of ethics, a unique way of blending scholarship and vitality into the church, and most important, personal religious freedom for the laity over against the culture which bound them.

As a fresh positive attitude towards the academic world was instilled in Bultmann, his friends began to raise the question about whether he would ever become a pastor in northwest Germany. This question was made clear in a letter to Bultmann from a friend who was a law student: "Are you pursuing this great path that leads to a village ministry, or is there any prospect of having a 'Bultmann case?'"⁷ In this statement, his friend raises the question as to whether Bultmann would relinquish the desire to serve in a village pastorate in order to pursue the desire to make his own imprint upon academic scholarship. At first it was not evident that such a possibility would arise. Since Bultmann needed a job, and he also wanted to be close

⁷ A letter to Bultmann at Marburg in 1906, Lemke, "BP," 8. Lemke does not provide the name of the law student.

to his family, during the academic year of 1906-07 he taught Latin at the Gymnasium in Oldenburg. Suddenly, however, the opportunity in the field of academics arose; Bultmann received and accepted an invitation to enter the doctorate program at Marburg University in the field of New Testament Studies. He began in the fall of 1907 and received his License of Theology (Lizentiaten der Theologie) in 1910 and his Qualification as a New Testament Lecturer (Habilitationsschrift) in 1912.

The Neo-Kantians

When Bultmann arrived at Marburg in the fall of 1905, the institution already had a cast of distinguished professors who were known as the Marburg school of Neo-Kantian philosophy. The principle characters in this cast were two philosophers, Paul Natorp and Herrman Cohen, and a Lutheran systematic theologian, Wilhelm Herrmann. As Bultmann appeared on the scene, however, there was a tense intramural debate between them; Herrmann was accusing Cohen and Natorp of deviating from an orthodox Neo-Kantian position on the distinction between culture and religion. Until 1904, the Marburg Neo-Kantians were in agreement about the distinct boundaries of culture and religion. They held that human culture (sciences, morality, arts) is created by human thought. As culture is produced by human reason, it is actively experienced (Erfahrung) by humanity;

culture is the domain of humanity in its state of unification. On the other hand, the sphere of religion has an entirely separate domain; it alone is the realm of the individual (Individuum). Religion is a passive response to a supreme being or an essential religious truth within one's consciousness; it is an experience (Erlebnis) of absolute dependence upon that being or truth. It is this dualistic structure which has been referred to as orthodox Neo-Kantianism. In 1904, however, Cohen's work, Ethik des reinen Willens attempted to alter this traditional dualistic structure (Natorp followed him). He attempted to place religion upon a cultural foundation--the foundation of ethics. In other words, Cohen argued that morality gave rise to religious consciousness. In Herrmann's estimation, Cohen's position was a serious deviation from orthodox Neo-Kantianism which had understood ethics to be a rubric of culture; the cultural manifestation of ethics was never a rubric of religion. As Bultmann came under the influence of the Neo-Kantians, his thought gives evidence that he was attracted to Herrmann's side on this discussion, attempting to maintain the more traditional dualism of Neo-Kantianism.

Bultmann's kinship to Herrmann's Lutheran Neo-Kantianism began in the summer semester of 1906. As he first sat in Herrmann's theology classes, he must have thought that he was listening to himself. Like the visionary young Bultmann, Herrmann was disappointed with

the recent developments in the Lutheran churches of Germany. Bultmann soon realized, however, that Herrmann did not place the blame for the rift between scholars and laity solely upon academics. Rather, Herrmann's analysis also included a social dimension: he asserted that the church at this time fell strongly under the influence of industrialization and rationalism. Here, Herrmann harkened back to Bultmann's hero, Schleiermacher. Herrmann declared to his students that he found in Schleiermacher's understanding of faith the formulation which rightly transcended the onslaught of technology. For both Herrmann and Schleiermacher, the chief point was that the Christian religion is a free expression of the experience of faith within the Christian community. In this experience, society and technology do not shape faith; rather, the expressions of religious piety and faith stem from the spiritual consciousness of the Christian life and from the unity of the Christian community.

Bultmann found Herrmann's attempt to free religion from its socio-cultural dimension challenging. It seemed possible that a free and independent stance for religion could address many of the problems he had previously outlined for scholars as well as the problems his father had addressed about church and society. Moreover, during the same summer semester in 1906, Bultmann took Natorp's course entitled, "Logic: A Critique of Knowledge." He

observed that the Marburg Neo-Kantian philosophers, Natorp as well as his colleague, Cohen, had reinforced Herrmann's distinction. The work of these philosophers was fundamental in defining the structure of Neo-Kantian thought for the theological faculty at Marburg whom Bultmann encountered.

The Marburg Neo-Kantians constructed a view of culture upon an epistemology which maintained that the rational activity of consciousness shapes and conceptualizes the data of phenomena. In terms of the subject-object structure of knowledge, both Natorp and Cohen agreed that all being exists by means of thought itself: the rational faculty of consciousness forms objects. In other words, thinking is objectifying; its goal is the construction of objects. Natorp and Cohen believed that such an epistemology preserved the credibility of critical philosophy in an age when intellectuals increasingly viewed the physical sciences as the final source of all knowledge. Although the Neo-Kantians praised the accomplishments of the physical sciences, nevertheless they held that these disciplines erred by treating physical objects as things in themselves, instead of as creations of the human mind. Thus, the Neo-Kantians revived the critical philosophy of Kant in order to direct science to its proper theoretical presuppositions. Interestingly, they found companions to accomplish their task in the field of mathematical physics,

especially Herrmann von Helmholtz, Heinrich Hertz, and Ludwig Boltzmann. For these scientists the task of science was not primarily to formulate and test hypotheses in an effort to organize and interpret empirical data. Rather, for them "science took the form of a logical or mathematical unfolding of thought in which the validity of a given concept was established strictly according to its logical and/or mathematical relationship with a larger body of concepts."⁸ Upon this foundation Natorp and Cohen formulated their epistemology, though each laid a different stress on their common mathematical-logical approach.⁹ For example, as Bultmann sat in Natorp's class, he noted that Natorp was primarily concerned with examining the

⁸ Johnson, Demythologizing, 42-3. Such a conception of thought in relationship to science demonstrates the kinship of these scientists to Kant. In fact, it is well known that Helmholtz held a profound appreciation for Kant who, in Helmholtz's estimation, laid down the philosophical foundations for the task of science. This appreciation was clearly set forth in his long essay, Die Tatsachen in der Wahrnehmung [1878] ("The Facts of Perception"). Furthermore, Natorp and Cohen's association with these scientists differentiated the Marburg school of Neo-Kantianism from the Baden school of Neo-Kantianism. The Marburg school took pure mathematics and mathematical physics as the foundation of their philosophy, whereas the Baden Neo-Kantians developed their approach out of a concern for the social and historical sciences.

⁹ It is not a coincidence that the Neo-Kantians tied their position on epistemology to the Greek philosopher, Parmenides: "You will not find thought apart from the objective content wherein it found its expression" (Fritz Kauffmann, "Cassirer, Neo-Kantianism, and Phenomenology," in The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp [Evanston: The Library of Living Philosophers, Inc., 1949], 806).

categories of pure reason which reflected the logical element of human thought. That is, he wanted to examine the laws which constituted the a priori conditions of knowledge. On the other hand, Cohen emphasized the view that human thought rested upon mathematical-logical foundations. He insisted that such a foundation established the absolute certainty of human knowledge as well as its unity.¹⁰ Nevertheless, in spite of the difference in accent, both Natorp and Cohen agreed that human knowledge results from objectifying or organizing experience in accordance with the laws of logic found solely within the mind.¹¹ This position concerning the origin of human knowledge demonstrates why the Marburg Neo-Kantians never considered themselves to be orthodox

¹⁰ As David J. Lipton writes: "Cohen's position became known as the logistic a priori school because it attempted to derive its ideal of truth and of philosophical science from mathematics and logic. In fact, Cohen tried to make the infinitesimal and ordinal numbers the intellectual basis of any comprehension of reality. He defended this mathematical perception of reality because he felt it was rooted in the nature of reason itself. By demonstrating that the possibility of consciousness was dependent on both 'the unity of consciousness' and 'the unity of the synthesis of the manifold of perception.' Cohen sought to provide a lasting foundation for the transcendental method" (Ernst Cassirer: The Dilemma of a Liberal Intellectual Germany, 1914-1933 [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978], 21).

¹¹ See Thomas E. Willey, Back to Kant: The Revival of Kantianism in German Social and Historical Thought, 1860-1914 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978), 109.

Kantians.¹² They rejected Kant's position that the objects of sensations (Empfindung) and the thing-in-itself (Ding-an-sich), i.e. the transcendental object which determines and unifies the materials of sensation, are given and necessary for thought. In other words, the Marburg Neo-Kantians eliminated any data given for thought independent of thought itself.¹³ Pure reason alone brings forth human knowledge.

The epistemology of the Marburg Neo-Kantians was fundamental to their conception of culture. In their epistemology reason manifests itself in the objectifications of the visible world determined by laws of mathematics and physics (e.g., law of causality).¹⁴ Thus,

¹² See Paul Natorp, "Kant und die Marburger Schule," Kant-Studien, 17 (1912): 193-221.

¹³ Both Natorp and Cohen emphasized this epistemological point. Natorp wrote: "An object, whether it be of knowledge or of the will, exists for our consciousness only through a positing or being formed by consciousness. Objects are not 'given'; consciousness forms them, out of given materials to be sure, but according to its own laws of form. In this respect is all objectifying the creative deed of consciousness" (Johnson, Demythologizing, 50; Johnson is quoting Natorp, Religion Innerhalb der Grenzen der Humanität [Leipzig: J.C.B. Mohr, 1894], 39). Moreover, Cohen wrote: "Here is the fundamental weakness of Kant: that thinking has its beginning in something outside of itself. We begin with thinking itself. Thought does not need to have its origins outside of itself" (Johnson, Demythologizing, 44; Johnson is quoting Cohen, Logik der reinen Erkenntnis [Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1902], 11).

¹⁴ William Werkmeister correctly summarizes Natorp's position: "Natorp maintains that all cognition, no matter how different its ways and modes may be, aims ultimately at an integration of experience in terms of causality, at the

culture is a mental product of thought itself. From their viewpoint the activity of thought manifests itself in building and creating the forms of culture (i.e., the sciences, morality, and the arts). In other words, thought creates each visible form of culture, and yet each form fits coherently into the manifest structures of culture. This integration formed a fundamental tenet of the Neo-Kantian philosophy of culture which prompted them to view the spheres of science, morality, and arts as the outward expression of human thought and the unification of human consciousness.

Thus far I have traced Natorp and Cohen's thought and the Neo-Kantian movement from writings prior to 1905. It is evident that their epistemological construction of culture was firmly in place when Bultmann arrived at Marburg in the fall of 1905. Moreover, as the Neo-Kantians focused upon the unification of humanity in the sphere of culture, Bultmann also learned at Marburg that they had constructed a distinct category for the individual (Individuum) over against their philosophy of culture. They understood the distinct realm of the individual to be found in the sphere of religion. Thus, they erected an

complete subsumption of all objects of experience under the law of causality. The particular is not to remain an isolated particular but is to be merged into a context determined and defined by causal interrelationships" ("Cassirer's Advance Beyond Neo-Kantianism," in Schilpp, Ernst Cassirer, 794).

independent position for religion which understood the individual through the concepts of immediacy, experience, the pure presence of the subject, feeling without objects, and the isolated moment.¹⁵ In their estimation true religion is revealed in the experience of these concepts.¹⁶ This does not mean, however, that every manifestation of religion is true religion; there is false religion. According to the Marburg Neo-Kantians, false religion is merely an extension of the spheres of morality, science, or aesthetics into the realm of religion. In this realm religion does not have an independent position over against culture; it is merely an expression of culture. On the other hand, if one is to discover true religion, it is experienced when an individual has an isolated response to God within him.

Bultmann's earliest work (1910 and 1912) indicates that he endorsed this Neo-Kantian dualism between culture and religion. In his studies of the New Testament era, he draws a strong contrast between the religion of Hellenistic

¹⁵ Johnson, Demythologizing, 66. For further insight into Natorp and Cohen's position on the independence and individuality of religion, see Kaufmann, "Cassirer," 845-850.

¹⁶ Natorp wrote: "The claims of individuality remain unsatisfied in relation to the abstract and impersonal laws of reason; after all, we are individuals, feeling men, not merely rational creatures who are subjects of knowledge and will. We are heirs of Goethe as well as Kant" (Johnson, Demythologizing, 66; Johnson is quoting Natorp, Religion, 59).

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culture (their objectification of religion) and the true religion of the New Testament. He states:

A little light has been thrown on only a very limited area of the large, complicated Hellenistic culture, and we believe we have seen a relationship and a sharp contrast between it and the New Testament. These factors: Stoicism tinged with religion on the one hand, and New Testament religiosity on the other, have come into contact because of the historical situation. We may be permitted perhaps to attach two conclusions in the form of questions:

1. Was it inevitable that the relationship which unquestionably exists between the moral ideas of Stoic instruction and the New Testament should provide the New Testament with positive points of contact for its proclamation?

2. The religion of the New Testament could give just what this Stoic instruction lacked: the power and enthusiasm of a living religion, the new estimate of the worth of the individual, and the power to awaken the human soul to its own [true] life. Does this not throw a ray of light on the historical situation? Does this not contribute in small part to an understanding of the struggle with the spiritual powers and help to explain the triumph of religion of the New Testament?¹⁷

¹⁷ Werner Georg Kümmel, The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems, trans. S. McLean Gilmour & Howard C. Kee (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 268. Unfortunately, Kümmel does not provide the source of this quotation. My special thanks to Professor Edward C. Hobbs of Wellesley College for discovering that the quotation is from Bultmann's article, "Das religiöse Moment in der ethischen Unterweisung des Epiktet und das Neue Testament" ["The Religious Impulse in the Ethical Instruction of Epictetus and the New Testament,"] Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 13 (1912): 191. I should also mention here that Bultmann's endorsement of Neo-Kantian epistemology is made clearer, of course, in his 1920 article on "Religion and Culture": "Culture is the methodical unfolding of human reason in its three realms--the theoretical, the practical, and the aesthetic. Thus the activity of the human spirit is essential for culture; it is this spirit which builds the three worlds of culture: science, law and morality, and art" (in The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology, ed. James M. Robinson [Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968], 1:209).

Here Bultmann distinguishes between "Stoicism tinged with religion" and New Testament religion. Concerning the Stoics, their religion was subsumed in the ethical ideals of their culture. Consistent with Neo-Kantian thought, Bultmann suggests that true religion cannot be found in these ethical ideals, since they are a product of thought and Hellenistic culture. On the other hand, Bultmann discovered in the New Testament exactly what the Stoics lacked: a powerful and living religion which confronted the individual. In Bultmann's estimation the religion of the New Testament triumphs because it awakens the soul of the individual to life. Therefore, we must note that as Bultmann draws our attention to true religion, he wished to show that the essential elements of New Testament religion are free from a cultural understanding of religion.

The Neo-Kantian distinction between culture and religion is also evident in its use of two German words which describe experience: Erfahrung and Erlebnis.¹⁸ Erfahrung is used to denote the experience of culture. More specifically, it signifies a rational experience of the unity of human culture: science, morality, and aesthetics. Such an experience is determined by

¹⁸ Because of their distinct and antithetical procedure, it was not possible for Neo-Kantian epistemology (culture) and anthropology (religion) to overlap; they were to remain separate.

mathematical-logical rules innate within the human mind.¹⁹ It is noteworthy, therefore, concerning the use of the term Erfahrung, that Bultmann once again was consistent with his Neo-Kantian teachers. For example, in the publication of Bultmann's famous 1917 Pentecostal sermon entitled, "Concerning the Hidden and Revealed God," the term Erfahrung fails to appear because the Neo-Kantians did not use this term to describe the essence of religious life. Rather, they used the term Erlebnis, which comes from the root, erleben (to experience), to describe the essence of religious experience. It is this term that appears throughout Bultmann's sermon, in thorough consistency with his Neo-Kantian instructors, and later connects him to existential phenomenology.

In order to understand the peculiar use of the term Erlebnis in the context of religion, it should be noted that the Marburg Neo-Kantians revived the particular denotation of the term as it was used in the age of Johann Goethe (1749-1832). In that period, intellectual writers

¹⁹ For Neo-Kantianism, logic is the queen of the sciences, "indispensable in the understanding of human culture as an integral whole" (Willey, Back to Kant, 109). See also Georg G. Iggers, The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought From Herder to the Present (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), 144-145; and Johnson, Demythologizing, 60-61.

used the term to mean "the immediacy with which something real is grasped."²⁰ This immediacy precedes all interpretation or preconceived ideas about that object. Thus, "what is experienced is always what one has experienced oneself."²¹ In the second place, within such a subjective encounter a person must open oneself to Erlebnis so that its content becomes a permanent residue of experience in the subject. Thus, if we apply this conception to a religious experience, an Erlebnis is an immediate, subjective encounter with God. This encounter is experienced freely within a person, that is, without any preconceived idea of who God is.

It is apparent, therefore, that the terms Erfahrung and Erlebnis indicates the Neo-Kantian dualism between culture and religion. Erfahrung (active, controlling life) is a rational experiencing of culture, the objectified construct of the mind. In this realm, true religion cannot be found. On the other hand, Erlebnis (passive, absolute dependence) is an immediate encounter with the essence of religious truth.²² As an occurrence purely within the

²⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, translation edited by Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), 55.

²¹ Ibid., 55.

²² In fact, on 23 June 1912, Bultmann delivered a sermon at Marburg which echoed these exact Neo-Kantian sentiments with the term Erlebnis and religious life (see Rudolf Bultmann, "23. 6. 1912 'Leben und Erleben,'" in Grässer, Das verkündigte Wort, 86-95).

individual, it transcends culture; it is not subject in any way to the objectifications of human thought.²³ Bultmann definitely accepted this dualism. In the 1917 Pentecostal sermon, he clearly set forth the significance of Erlebnis to the Christian:

God must be a hidden and mysterious God, full of contradictions and riddles. Otherwise our inner life would become static, and we would lose the power to obtain experience from life's fullness. For what does "experience" (Erleben) mean? It means constantly to enrich oneself anew, to allow oneself to be given something anew. It means to perceive that miraculous forces hold sway in the world, which we cannot reckon with, cannot enlist as mere factors in our work. It means to know that over and above our knowledge, our work, yes, and even our moral duty, there is something else--a fullness of life that streams in upon us completely as a gift, completely as grace. Experience means to receive a destiny into oneself.²⁴

In the fashion of true Neo-Kantianism, Bultmann's statement placed true religious experience on a free and autonomous foundation over against the objectification of religion within the culture. In such an experience, the depth and reality of God is truly encountered.

An important controversy existed, however, among the Neo-Kantians during the year of Bultmann's initial stay at Marburg (1905-06). Bultmann arrived at Marburg in the

²³ Bultmann wrote: "Religious instruction, which desires to educate one toward a religion or into a religion, is therefore as senseless and impossible as a philosophy of religion. For its legitimate subject could be only assertions, that is, objectifications of religious experiences, but religion itself is never such objectification" ("Religion and Culture," 211).

²⁴ Bultmann, "Revealed God," 27.

midst of a rising dispute between Cohen and Herrmann concerning the place of religion in Neo-Kantian thought. This dispute was so lively and educationally enriching that Bultmann makes particular mention of its occurrence in his brief autobiographical reflection.²⁵ It seems that one could not be a student at Marburg during those days without realizing this contention. As previously outlined, prior to 1904, the Marburg Neo-Kantians were in agreement concerning their dualistic construction. During that year, however, Cohen published a work entitled, Ethik des reinen Willens. In this work Cohen revealed that he reevaluated Kant's position on the relationship between morality and religion. Kant had stated that "morality leads necessarily to religion." Cohen followed this line of thought by holding the view that "the truth of the ethical idea is identical to the truth of the idea of God."²⁶ Herrmann observed that Cohen had now departed from a strict Neo-Kantian antithesis between religion and culture by attempting to place true religion within the discipline of formal ethics.²⁷ By doing so, Herrmann believed that Cohen

²⁵ Rudolf Bultmann, "Autobiographical Reflections of Rudolf Bultmann," in The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, ed. Charles W. Kegley (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1966), xxii.

²⁶ William Kluback, The Idea of Humanity: Hermann Cohen's Legacy to Philosophy and Theology (Lanham: University Press of America, 1987), 176.

²⁷ William Kluback, Hermann Cohen: The Challenge of a Religion of Reason (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984), 5.

had stationed true religion under scientific investigation. To put Cohen's position another way, true religion, along with the other aspects of culture, is an objectification of the human mind.²⁸ As far as Herrmann's Neo-Kantian perspective was concerned, nothing could be worse for the destiny of true religion. In view of the conflict with Cohen, Herrmann maintained that religion is not grounded in ethics. Rather, religion is the discovery of the individual who longs for God; it is centered in the self and its own truth.²⁹ Because the Marburg Neo-Kantians had placed formal ethics within their philosophy of culture and because religion, on the other hand, is found within their philosophy of anthropology, Herrmann did not think that Cohen's proposal made sense; it was a serious deviation from orthodox Neo-Kantianism. Thus, Herrmann declared that Cohen's position was inconsistent with their own epistemology, which stated that the ground of religious knowledge is never to be found in something alien to it, including morality. Previously the Neo-Kantian scheme was

²⁸ Theodor Mahlmann, "Das Axiom des Erlebnisses bei Wilhelm Herrmann," Neue Zeitschrift für Systemische Theologie 4 (1962): 55-57, 84-85. Mahlmann also points out that Natorp had become sympathetic to Cohen on this issue as well; see also Kaufmann "Cassirer," 848.

²⁹ Kluback, Cohen: Reason, 6. See also Wilhelm Herrmann, "Herrmann Cohens Ethik," Christliche Welt 21 (March 7, 1907): 223-224. Although the dispute between Cohen and Herrmann began after the publication of Cohen's work in 1904, Herrmann's concerns did not appear in print until 1907.

clear: man's experience must be understood as a whole, and thus man's moral experience is part of the essential unity of human culture--along with the sciences and aesthetics. Herrmann thought, therefore, that Cohen had now placed religion within the philosophy of culture, removing religion from its original independent position.³⁰

As he observed the debate between Herrmann and Cohen, and that Natorp sided with Cohen, Bultmann submitted to the direct influence of Herrmann. Under this influence, he remained faithful to the Neo-Kantian antithesis in order to uncover the roots of true religion. Bultmann wrote that true "religion is not available in objective formulations as is culture, but only in being realized; that is, in that which happens with the individual. The meaning of religion is the being, the life, of the individual."³¹ In religion,

³⁰ For a more detailed discussion of this dispute between Cohen and Herrmann, see Kluback's discussion in a chapter entitled, "Friendship Without Communication: Wilhelm Herrmann and Hermann Cohen" in Idea of Humanity, 163-186.

³¹ "Religion and Culture," 211. Although this quotation appears in 1920, I believe it is reasonable to conclude from the dispute between Herrmann and Cohen that Bultmann's position in 1920 has its roots in the thought of Herrmann's response to Cohen from 1904-09; see Herrmann's article, "Die Auffassung der Religion in Cohen and Natorps Ethik" [1909] in Schriften zur Grundlegung der Theologie, hg. Peter Fischer-Appelt (Nördlingen: Chr. Kaiser Verlag München, 1967) 2:207. In 1974 Roger A. Johnson asserted that Bultmann's 1920 formulation of the relationship between religion and culture followed from Cohen's Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums (Leipzig: Gustav Foch, 1919) as well as Natorp's Allgemeine Psychologie nach kristischer Methode (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1912); see Johnson, Demythologizing, 66-68. If it is true that

the individual finds fulfillment only through the feelings of passivity and dependence, rather than through actively creating the outside world with the intellect. Absolute dependence is possible only in the immediacy of the moment, "only where man encounters a power to which his inner being unfolds itself freely, into whose arms he throws himself in freedom and release, to whom he subjects himself in open self-surrender."³² Through Herrmann's influence, Bultmann came to believe that these characteristics describe true religion, which transcends culture.

Herrmann's perceptions on the Christian life seems to have also influenced Bultmann's relationship with "The Friends of the Christian World." This organization was a group of Protestant intellectuals who were involved in the implementation of Christian principles into the various political and social policies of German national life.³³ Bultmann readily admitted in his autobiography that during

Bultmann's 1920 article is dependent upon these later works by Cohen and Natorp, it should be noted that Bultmann used these works because Cohen and Natorp had returned to a more orthodox Neo-Kantian position. Possibly their return was motivated by the written comments of Herrmann.

³² Bultmann, "Religion and Culture," 210. This statement demonstrates that man is not purely passive in the experience of religion. As he passively receives the grace of God, he must actively open himself to self-surrender.

³³ See Johannes Rathje, Die Elt des Freien Protestantismus: Ein Beitrag zur deutsch-evangelischen Geistesgeschichte Dargestellt an Leben und Werk von Martin Rade (Stuttgart: Ehrenfried Klotz Verlag, 1952), 40-41.

his student years at Marburg he was often a guest in the home of Martin Rade, the editor of Die Christliche Welt (The Christian World).³⁴ Moreover, Bultmann stated that he was a zealous reader of the magazine, and that he attended the annual meetings of the organization along with his father. Although Bultmann was intrigued by their discussions on the relationship of theology, church, and culture, nevertheless, he was never viewed as a leader or an enthusiastic participant in the organization. His dormant participation in the organization was consistent with two factors in his life: the Neo-Kantian dualism between religion and culture as articulated by Herrmann and his endorsement of his father's position on church and state. This assessment is substantiated by Bultmann's involvement in the organization during his years in Marburg.

At the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, "The Friends of the Christian World" moved towards a political emphasis. A strenuous debate arose within the organization concerning this direction: some sought the priority of socio-political issues, whereas others sought the priority of theological

³⁴ Rade also taught at Marburg University. During the winter semester of 1905-06, Bultmann took two courses from him: "General Introduction in the History of Religions" and "Kant's Philosophy of Religion;" see Evang, Bultmann, 20; and Verzeichniss der Vorlesungen welche im Winterhalbjahre 1905/06: Universität Marburg (Marburg: Buchdruckerei Heinrich Bauer, 1905), 4.

subjects. In a dialogue between Hermann von Soden and Rade in 1910, Rathje mentions Bultmann as a mere ally to those who wished the journal and the organization to reestablish a theological emphasis.³⁵ In Rathje's eyes Bultmann merely played a supportive role for those who wished that Rade would return the organization to its founding principle, i.e. giving priority to theological principles, then applying them to political and social issues. Thus, Bultmann's involvement was consistent with Herrmann's Neo-Kantianism and with his father's position on the mission of the church. Specifically, the needs of the people of God were to be confronted by the revelation of God, not by socio-political theory.

Through the instruction of the Lutheran theologian Wilhelm Herrmann (a more consistent Neo-Kantian than the Marburg philosophers), Bultmann came to hold that true religion is not found in the realms of theoretical reason, moral philosophy, or culture. Rather, for Herrmann, and for Bultmann as well, true religion is found solely in the individual experience (Erlebnis) of the revelation of God.³⁶ More specifically, for the Christian, the

³⁵ Rathje, Protestantismus, 291-292.

³⁶ Wilhelm Herrmann, Die Religion im Verhältnis zum Welterkennen und zur Sittlichkeit (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1879), 364-365. Bultmann stated: "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

revelation of God is the inner reality of a faith-encounter with Jesus.³⁷ For Herrmann, however, such a conception of faith presupposed a confrontation of man with himself. In this confrontation, man, bound by culture, comes to realize that he is absent from the true religious self. This absence is the central dilemma of man. Herrmann believed that as man admits this dilemma, he should open himself to the revelation of God, seeking to resolve his inner conflict in Jesus. As Bultmann assessed Herrmann's position, possibly he thought that the best place to resolve this inner conflict was in the literature of the New Testament--a revelatory message to humanity about Jesus. After all, Bultmann had already come to respect the instruction of Jülicher and Weiss in New Testament studies.

New Testament Studies

In contrast to his earlier thoughts about New Testament scholarship while studying at Tübingen and Berlin, Bultmann was stimulated by the instruction of Jülicher and Weiss at Marburg. Both scholars, especially Weiss, used the method of the History of Religions school to stress a fresh understanding of the New Testament

rather in a revelation that continually opens up new heights and depths and thus leads through darkness, from clarity to clarity" ("Revealed God," 30).

³⁷ Wilhelm Herrmann, The Communion of the Christian with God, trans. J. Sandys Stanyon and R. W. Stewart. ed. Robert T. Voelkel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 76.

material in the context of the various religions of its era. For example, Weiss believed that Jesus' eschatological teaching about the kingdom of God had its roots in late Jewish apocalyptic literature. This method of scholarship had a profound effect upon Bultmann while finishing his first theology degree at Marburg (1905-06). He realized that the ability to identify the eschatological roots of Jesus' teaching as well as to identify the religious roots of other material in the New Testament was compatible with his endorsement of Lutheran Neo-Kantian thought. Specifically, as religion occupied a distinct place within the individual (Neo-Kantian element), and the revelation of the Christian faith occupied a unique manifestation to the individual (Lutheran element), Bultmann used the method of the History of Religions school to dissect the cultural religion of the New Testament in order to uncover the core revelational message of the biblical narrative which he thought was relevant for modern humanity. To put the situation another way, for Bultmann Lutheran Neo-Kantianism provided the fundamental structure, whereas the History of Religions school provided the fundamental method by which to uncover the essence of Christian revelation in the New Testament narrative. Even in the context of the interconnections of these various elements in Bultmann's thought, it is not a shock to

discover that Bultmann easily accepted a fellowship to pursue graduate work in New Testament studies at Marburg (1907-12), since it was his goal to see the union of scholar and laity. After all, unlike the theoretical dimensions of Marburg Neo-Kantianism, all the laity had access to the Holy Scriptures, and Bultmann believed that he had a way to uncover its true message. Hence, under the direction of Weiss and Wilhelm Heitmüller in graduate school, Bultmann employed the critical resources of the History of Religions school in order to extract the essential revelatory message of the New Testament for the Evangelical-Lutheran membership.

As Bultmann attended classes in New Testament at Marburg (1905-06), he found that Jülicher and Weiss used the methodology of the History of Religions school in a creative manner, each for his own purposes, to investigate the material of the New Testament. For example, although Jülicher employed the method, nevertheless, he wished to maintain the genuine character of the religion of Jesus and the theology of Paul. In contrast to other scholars in the History of Religions school, Jülicher stated that the church has never understood Paul's concept of faith as being dependent upon foreign religions. Rather, the church has always honored Paul as an "apostle of the assurance of

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salvation based on the blood of Christ."³⁸ Thus, Jülicher attempted to have the best of two worlds: he uncovered certain foreign elements upon the religious environment of the New Testament era while savoring the distinct content of New Testament revelation. For Bultmann, Jülicher's view of revelation and his work in Biblical studies was a creative complement to the work of Herrmann.

With respect to Weiss, Bultmann finally had made contact with a scholar who was a significant leader in the crusade against the liberal theologians on the teaching of the Kingdom of God, especially Ritschlian liberalism. Specifically, Ritschl and his followers (e.g., Julius Kaftan) had taught that it is in the believer's act of compliance to Jesus' code of ethics that the divine enters into human experience and world history. Thus, it was thought that humanity would progress into a perfect culture (kingdom) through the redeeming power of the practical enactment of Jesus' ethics. In contrast to Ritschl's view, Weiss made his reputation by attacking the Ritschlian notion that the Kingdom of God. Specifically, he disagreed with Ritschl's idea that the development, realization, and consummation of the kingdom of God would occur within the

³⁸ Kümmel, New Testament, 313. "Kümmel's italics." This quote in Kümmel is from Jülicher's work, Paulus und Jesus (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1907), 72. Although this work appears in 1907, it is fair to conclude that Jülicher views in this book were already in his mind when Bultmann studied under him during the winter semester of 1905-06.

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the author to the editor, dated 10/10/1910.

world as the believer complied to the ethical teachings of Jesus Christ.³⁹ Rather, Weiss stated that Jesus represents the kingdom of God as breaking into the world, or to put it another way, the kingship of God breaks into the world and puts an end to this world; it is an eschatological event. Weiss believed that Jesus' eschatological interpretation of the kingdom of God had its roots in late Jewish apocalypticism which maintained a sharp dualism between the world above and the world below, the rule of God and the rule of Satan.⁴⁰ In this light, Weiss claimed that the liberal construction of the kingdom of God as an ethical ideal in the immanent Christian community should be rejected by scholars, pastors, and laity, whereas the kingdom of God as a future event which presupposes the catastrophic disturbance of the present world should be embraced by the whole church community. Thus, the subject of Jesus' preaching was to prepare the world for the imminent coming of the kingdom of God which would occur solely by the agency of God.

³⁹ Weiss's first attack appeared in 1892 when he published a response to Albrecht Ritschl's conception of the Kingdom of God three years following Ritschl's death; see Weiss, Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892). An English translation of Weiss's work has appeared under the title, Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God, trans. and ed. Richard Hyde Hiers and David Larrimore Holland (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

⁴⁰ Weiss, Kingdom of God, 74-81.

Before coming to Marburg, Bultmann had judged the weakness of liberal theology to be its purely ethical understanding of the New Testament message. In light of this criticism, his letters imply that he had already come to respect Weiss's criticism of liberal theology.⁴¹ It seems that he savored the opportunity to study under Weiss's eschatological perspective more directly. As Bultmann came into direct contact with Weiss, he was convinced that his eschatological conception of the kingdom of God was a key in exposing and reforming the ethical focus of liberal theology. Bultmann perceived that Weiss's presentation had preserved implicitly the traditional achievements of historical theology, i.e. the centrality of preaching God's Word, the kingdom of God as a revelation from God, and the belief that the religion of Christianity has a unique reality since it is not to be analyzed coterminous with the ethics of natural man. Thus, by endorsing Weiss's conception of eschatology, Bultmann thought he was moving into the inner core of the Biblical understanding of revelation; he was going beyond the dimensions of revelation mapped out by Herrmann. In his estimation, Weiss's eschatological understanding of revelation was the key in which to preserve the essential elements of historical theology as a basis for a new

⁴¹ Bultmann (while in Berlin) to Fischer, 27 January 1905, Lemke, "BP," 7.

theology relevant for modern man. Intrigued by the implications of such an understanding of eschatology for scholarship and the life of the church, Bultmann would return to Marburg and begin his graduate program under Weiss and not Herrmann.

As Bultmann finished his first theological degree at Marburg, the spirit of pessimism that characterized his studies at Tübingen and Berlin had begun to give way to a spirit of optimism. At Marburg he became convinced that many of its scholars communicated ideas that would creatively contribute to the progress of scholarship and the life of the church. Moreover, he was hopeful that there would arise an implementation of their views which would bridge the gap between scholarship and the laity. For him it was truly the ideal academic setting for the study of theology in the modern era. Everything seemed to be in place. The Neo-Kantians, especially Herrmann, had constructed a special place for religion which transcended all culture. Such a conception of religion, as applied to Christianity, would easily correspond to the revelation of the eschatological message of the kingdom of God (Weiss), freeing both scholar and laity from their old world (cultural surroundings) while opening their lives to a new world of faith. Furthermore, by using the method of the History of Religions school to unfold the origins of New Testament religion, Bultmann became convinced while

studying at Marburg that the modern church was in a unique position to understand the structures of religious experience found within the New Testament era. In turn these structures could be used to enlighten our lives in the present era.

Although Bultmann made these positive observations about scholarship at Marburg and the possibility of uniting scholar and laity within the Protestant Lutheran community, nevertheless, he was faced with his own personal dilemma: he was not sure where he fit. We are reminded that during his studies in Berlin (April, 1905), he expressed to Fischer that he wanted to pursue a career in the pastorate in northwest Germany. After his studies in the summer of 1906 (at Marburg), however, this desire was no longer prevalent. Bultmann was now waiting for the opportunity to make his impression upon the academic world (the so-called "Bultmann case"), and from that position make his contribution to the church. That opportunity came after teaching Latin one year at the Gymnasium in Oldenburg. In the fall of 1907, he returned to his academic oasis in Marburg and began to study in the field of New Testament.

In his graduate studies, Bultmann was viewed as the prized student of Weiss. In light of their relationship Weiss pleaded with Bultmann to continue to explore the

eschatological themes of the New Testament.⁴² He was hopeful that his brilliant young student would continue to investigate his thesis that Jesus' eschatological notion of the kingdom of God was rooted in late Jewish apocalypticism.⁴³ For Weiss, however, such an investigation presupposed a familiarity with the religious structures of New Testament religion (e.g., the relationship of the concept of the kingdom of God with late Jewish apocalypticism). Hence, in order to open Bultmann's mind along these lines, Weiss pushed Bultmann to study the works of the classical philologist, Richard Reitzenstein, and the works of Biblical scholars like Wilhelm Bousset, Wilhelm Heitmüller, and others associated with the History of Religions school. In an act of fair scholarship Weiss was not concerned with whether these scholars agreed with his thesis. Rather, it was Weiss's concern that Bultmann struggle with his thesis by becoming familiar with other scholars who used a similar method to unfold the themes and origins of the New Testament religion. For example, Weiss was aware that Reitzenstein would cause Bultmann to

⁴² Bultmann's support of Weiss's conception of eschatology gives evidence to Roger A. Johnson's view that by 1920 the fundamental concept of Bultmann's theology was already in place: "to speak of God not as identified with some particular time of the past but as the power of the eternal to break into the present" (Johnson, Bultmann, 12).

⁴³ This eschatological notion is found somewhat in a later article by Bultmann: "Die Bedeutung der Eschatologie für die Religion des New Testament," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche 27 (1917): 76-87.

struggle with the origins of New Testament religion beyond the perimeters of Jewish apocalypticism. For Reitzenstein much of New Testament religion had its origin in Hellenism and its antecedent oriental religions. For example, in his work, Poimandres (1904), Reitzenstein drew a comparison between the myth of Primal Man in Iranian religion and the New Testament depiction of a redeemer. From his studies Reitzenstein deduced that the mythical story of Primal Man, who was a heavenly Redeemer coming to the earth in the form of a man, developed in the soteriological narrative of Iranian religion. From his research Reitzenstein concluded that the Iranian conception of Primal Man influenced a number of Hellenistic religions which in turn found a central place in the New Testament, especially in the salvatic message of Jesus Christ as it appears in the writings of Paul. Although Bultmann did not attribute as significant a place in the New Testament to the influence of Hellenism,⁴⁴ nevertheless he was sincerely grateful to Reitzenstein for his methodological procedure to uncover connections between the New Testament and other

⁴⁴ This is evident in his dissertation in 1910 when he stated that Paul's style of preaching has shown a clear relationship with the popular philosophical sermon, the diatribe. But the differences between Paul's sermons and the philosophical diatribe are much greater than their similarities. Thus, Bultmann judged that Paul was not influenced strongly by Hellenism; see Kümmel, New Testament, 266.

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2. The second part of the report is a literature review. It discusses the work of other researchers in the field and identifies the gaps in the existing knowledge.

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4. The fourth part of the report is a presentation of the results of the study. It discusses the findings of the research and compares them with the results of other studies.

5. The fifth part of the report is a discussion of the implications of the findings. It discusses the practical applications of the research and the limitations of the study.

6. The sixth part of the report is a conclusion. It summarizes the main findings of the study and provides recommendations for further research.

7. The seventh part of the report is a list of references. It lists the sources of information used in the study.

8. The eighth part of the report is an appendix. It contains supplementary material that is not included in the main text of the report.

9. The ninth part of the report is a glossary. It defines the terms used in the report.

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religions.⁴⁵ In fact, Weiss had convinced Bultmann to struggle so much with the method of the History of Religions school and the results of their scholarship that Bultmann even came to respect Bousset, a New Testament scholar whom he once strongly criticized. Hence, it was clearly evident that through the influence of Weiss, Bultmann had become increasingly positive about the work of the History of Religions school; he had become a receptive and submissive student to the content of their scholarship.

As Bultmann reassessed Bousset's work through the lens provided by Weiss, two of Bousset's publications written in 1903 were brought to his attention. In these works, Bousset went a step further than what Weiss had advocated; he not only believed that New Testament thought could be traced to Judaism (Weiss et al.), but he also believed that it could be traced to other religions of western culture, especially Hellenistic religions.⁴⁶ Furthermore, like Reitzenstein, he argued that Jewish apocalypticism as it is found in the New Testament had its origin in Iranian religion.⁴⁷ Thus, Weiss was aware,

⁴⁵ In 1923, Bultmann expresses his gratitude for Reitzenstein, especially his idea of myth; see Kümmel, New Testament, 350; and Johnson, Demythologizing, 91-96.

⁴⁶ Wilhelm Bousset, Die religion des Judentums im neutestamentlichen zeitalter (Berlin: Reuther and Reichard, 1903).

⁴⁷ Wilhelm Bousset, Die jüdische apokalyptik; ihre religionsgeschichtliche herkunft und ihre bedeutung für das Neue Testament (Berlin: Reuther and Reichard, 1903).

although he was not sure of the total implications of his work, that Bousset's had possibly pushed the religious structures of an eschatological kingdom of God back to its origin. Bultmann was suddenly intrigued with Bousset's work. Moreover, he could not overlook Bousset's 1907 publication entitled, Main Problems of Gnostic Research. In this work, Bousset attempted to prove that the various forms of gnostic religion which appeared during the era of the early church had its roots in ancient Jewish and Hellenistic syncretistic religion. On the basis of his study, Bousset presented a thesis that this syncretistic religion was in the process of decaying during the early years of the church, and thus, gnosticism provided the church with a new religious impetus for many dilapidated religious concepts. Bousset's thesis contributed to the growing opinion that much of the language of the New Testament must be understood primarily in the context of a gnostic religious environment. On the basis of these writings, contrary to his previous feelings, Bultmann came to believe that Bousset was a creative and stimulating scholar who, in a fresh way, traced the origin of many New Testament themes to foreign religions.

As Weiss convinced Bultmann to study the contributions of Reitzenstein and Bousset, there was yet another individual who came to have a significant position in his academic life--Wilhelm Heitmüller. In this case Bultmann

had immediate access to Heitmüller since he began teaching at Marburg in 1908. In fact, when Weiss departed from Marburg in 1908 to take a position at Heidelberg, he recommended that Bultmann continue his studies under the direction of Heitmüller. Bultmann complied with Weiss's wish. It was Heitmüller, therefore, who directed Bultmann's doctorate dissertation (Lic. Theo.; 1910). Hence, under the influence of the History of Religions school, especially the work of Reitzenstein, Bousset, Jülicher, Weiss, and Heitmüller, Bultmann studied the influence of Hellenistic environment upon the theology of the apostle Paul. As Bultmann pursued this relationship, he began to resolve in his own mind many of his previous theological concerns. He was now in the position to make his own contribution to the History of Religions school of thought. Interestingly, his technical scholarship maintained a certain affinity with the common people in the church. Particularly, it was not a coincidence that Bultmann's dissertation entitled, The Style of Pauline Preaching and the Cynic-Stoic Diatribe, centered upon the concept of preaching.⁴⁸ In the spirit of Schleiermacher, Bultmann believed that preaching was the vehicle to unite pastor and laity, scholar and the common people, God and humanity. If preaching possessed this mystique, especially

⁴⁸ His dissertation topic was suggested by Weiss but it was done under Heitmüller.

in the churches in the German countryside, why not examine the preaching style of the apostle Paul in order to receive possible insights to mend the gap between scholar and layperson in his own day. Thus, in a certain extent, the dissertation demonstrated his continuing concern for the unification of the church and its people. From his studies Bultmann concluded that a certain amount of Paul's preaching style expressed a similiarity to the sermon forms of the Cynic-Stoic popular philosophers, namely the form, diatribe. A diatribe was a form of sermon that included strong criticism, admonishment, and denunciation. Bultmann could not help but think that the ecclesiastical environment of his day needed a certain amount of this prescription. In Bultmann's estimation, however, the prescription of maintaining a unique Christian message was even more important for the modern era. Thus, his dissertation had a crucial element of dissimilarity with many of the studies in the History of Religions school. Many of their studies had concluded that most of the content in the New Testament had its origin in other religions. Bultmann's reaction was not as strong. In his study, he came to the conclusion that the differences between Paul's preaching and the Cynic-Stoic diatribe outweighed the similiarities of the two. Like Schleiermacher and Herrmann, Bultmann's study aimed at preserving critical scholarship and the uniqueness of the

Christian message to the church, something which the average layperson would not wish to surrender. After Bultmann finished the dissertation he realized that further insight into this balance was needed. Since the dissertation focused mainly upon the literary-stylistic relationship between Paul's preaching and the Cynic-Stoic diatribe, he thought that a concrete example could solidify his findings.

Thus, in 1912 Bultmann published an article entitled, "The Religious Impulse in the Ethical Instruction of Epictetus and the New Testament."⁴⁹ In this article he went beyond the subject of his dissertation and compared the religious element in the ethical thought of the Stoic, Epictetus (50-130 A.D.) with the New Testament. Bultmann's article presupposed that one cannot assess the stylistic similarities between Paul and the diatribe without investigating the content of their thought as well--the two go together. As Bultmann turned his attention to the content of ethics, his study revealed a certain friendly relationship between Stoic ethical instruction and New Testament ethical instruction. More important to his study, however, was the sharp contrast which he claimed existed between them. In his estimation, Paul's ethics was

⁴⁹ Bultmann's article appeared under the title, "Das religiöse Moment in der ethischen Unterweisung des Epiktet und das Neue Testament," Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 13 (1912): 97-110, 177-191.

grounded in a redemptive-historical faith in God, whereas the Stoic, Epictetus's ethics was grounded in an intellectual-tinged Stoic religion. Following Herrmann's Neo-Kantian construction, Bultmann concluded that the religious impulse of Epictetus's ethics was confined to a religion of cultural experience rather than a religion of revelational experience. In Bultmann's estimation, without an understanding of the revelation of the Christian God, Epictetus could only explain the ethical environment of humanity on the basis of what he observed man to have done. In other words, he could not explain the ethical environment of humanity on the basis of things occurring in accordance with God's will. Thus, Bultmann wrote that Epictetus "did not know the living God, i.e. the God who directs nature and history according to his purposes." After all, according to Bultmann the purposes of the Christian God are revealed to the individual as the consciousness of the person stands "at the end of the old, of detecting in oneself the powers of the new age, of possessing a God-given wealth that is not accessible to any reflection or comprehension, that must unfold ever more sublimely from glory to glory."⁵⁰ In other words, following in the line of Weiss, Bultmann held that God reveals himself eschatologically, i.e. God brings the

⁵⁰ Bultmann, "religiöse Moment," 180-181; 185-186; these quotes appear in Kümmel, New Testament, 267; 268.

outward world in which we live to an end, whereas he brings the freedom of a new age within us through the power of his grace. Bultmann observed that Epictetus had no conception of the eschatological dimension of ethical activity. Thus, in this article, Bultmann felt he had preserved the truth of the Christian message in the New Testament to the people within the church. Revelation maintained its unique position within the context of faith, and the revelation of the Word of God was to be proclaimed in the parishes.

During his doctorate years at Marburg, we have witnessed a budding scholar working diligently to overcome his previous concerns about the academic world. In the spirit of Schleiermacher, he attempted to initiate a path towards innovative scholarship which would mend the rift between scholars and laity. At the same time he was hopeful that his work would address the continuing gap which existed between the theological scholar and the socio-political and cultural life of Germany as an industrial and world power. Thus, underlying his dissertation and his 1912 article was Herrmann's Neo-Kantian position as well as the position of his father which defended freeing or distancing religion from culture. In Bultmann's estimation, preaching the Christian gospel was the vehicle to achieve the religious liberation of the modern person and the unification of the whole Protestant



Lutheran community, including scholars and laity from all walks of life. In other words, the impulse of true religious freedom is confronted in proclaiming the eschatological kingdom of God. Here the empirical world that is created in our mind is negated while the new world of absolute dependence upon God opens up within us.

Moreover, the History of Religions school taught Bultmann that there was an unquestionable relationship between the religions that surrounded the Christian world and the New Testament. Through this comparison study, Bultmann felt that the message of the New Testament became more understandable within its own setting, which in turn would have implications for the church in the twentieth century. For example, contrary to the implications of the liberal interpretation of the New Testament message, Bultmann argued that the documents of the New Testament were not a nineteenth century statement of rational or social ethics. Rather, the New Testament must be interpreted within its own historical and religious context. It is within this context that the key to understanding Christianity for the twentieth century person is found. This is achieved by uncovering the structures of religious experience in the New Testament era. For Bultmann these structures reveal the liberating elements of religion which transcend any particular time, and thus, tie

together the legitimate condition of religious experience throughout history.

Even as Bultmann was immersed in this throng of higher criticism, this young scholar from the German countryside would not relinquish his belief that the Christian message contains the unique revelation of the living God; it is the true religion. Its revelatory message was the consummation of all religious experience throughout history, and thus, it maintains its relevancy throughout history. This position was important in his mind. Although he appreciated the continuing attack upon traditional orthodoxy that was implicit within the History of Religions school, Bultmann would not desert the privileged position of Christian revelation as advocated by the modern theologians, Schleiermacher and Herrmann. This understanding of revelation kept him distinct from others in the History of Religions school, for example, Reitzenstein. Bultmann thought that Reitzenstein overlooked certain distinctive traits within Paul's thought, especially the inner historical character of redemption and revelation. This recognition led Bultmann to make two conclusions concerning Reitzenstein's studies. First, in light of the historical environment that exists between the moral ideas of Stoicism and the New Testament, the distinctive revelatory message of the New Testament has a positive point of contact for proclaiming the gospel to

the Hellenistic world. In the second place, New Testament religion could provide what Stoic instruction did not provide: "the power and enthusiasm of a living religion, the new estimate of the worth of the individual, and the power to awaken the human soul to its own life."⁵¹ These two points demonstrate that Bultmann was not ready to surrender the uniqueness of the Christian religion and its tradition found in Schleiermacher. Moreover, Bultmann's conception of revelation and its liberating effect upon man through the vehicle of preaching declared his passionate relationship with the church and its people. Receiving his Habilitationschrift in 1912 on the subject of The Exegesis of Theodore of Mopsuestia,⁵² proposed to him by Adolf Jülicher, did not overshadow the passion that remained within him for the institutional church and its members. From this point, however, his passion would be proclaimed from within the confines of academia as he received his first position as a lecturer in New Testament at Marburg.

Bultmann's first year at Marburg University (1905-06) was a pivotal year in his life. In light of the

⁵¹ Bultmann, "religiöse Moment," 191; this quote appears in Kümmel, New Testament, 268.

⁵² Rudolf Bultmann, Die Exegese des Theodor von Mopsuestia, hgs. Helmut Feld und Karl Hermann Schelkle (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1984).

stimulating instruction of Jülicher, Weiss, Herrmann, Natorp, and Rade, his whole attitude towards the critical field of scholarship changed. It changed in such a degree that he began to focus his life upon an academic career instead of a career in the pastorate since he was inspired by the creative scholarship and leadership which existed at Marburg. Weiss's eschatological understanding of Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God provided fresh insight into the gospel message. In the area of theology, Herrmann echoed Schleiermacher, demanding a fresh experience of Christian revelation and its God. Moreover, Bultmann's childhood endearment to Schleiermacher and his childhood endearment to the separation of church and state had conditioned him for Herrmann and Natorp's Neo-Kantian dualism which attempted to free religion from the influence of culture. Bultmann discovered, however, that Herrmann was more consistent in his endeavor to free religion from culture. Herrmann believed that a true understanding of God was purely a religious experience (Erlebnis); it was not an experience (Erfahrung) which solicited the confines of culture in any degree. Moreover, Bultmann was attracted to the Lutheran implications of Herrmann's thought. For Herrmann, the Lutheran understanding of justification expressed the Neo-Kantian dualism: justification by faith is an experience with the revelation of God, whereas justification by work is humanity's desire to form God into

their cultural image. Finally, at Marburg, Bultmann felt that he had confronted stimulating critical theological content which challenged the field of academics and the life of the church. As he entered his doctorate work at Marburg (1907-1912), his previous thoughts from his initial year at Marburg remained with him, and he began to refine these insights, especially as they applied to New Testament studies in order to contribute to the field of scholarship and the continuing life of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Germany.

Part Two:
The Bridge Between a Popular and
a Scholarly Understanding of God (1917)

Chapter Four

Bultmann's 1917 Pentecostal Sermon: His Understanding of the Christian God

Context and Thesis of the Sermon

God must be a hidden and mysterious God, full of contradiction and riddle.¹

As Bultmann lectured in New Testament studies at Marburg from 1912-1916, he continued to study the origin of the New Testament message. These studies laid the foundation for the work which would launch Bultmann into the forefront of New Testament scholarship: The History of the Synoptic Tradition.² When he received a promotion to Breslau in the fall of 1916, he began to work diligently on that book. When the book was published in 1921 (the year he returned to Marburg after spending the 1920-21 academic year at Giessen), it received the recognition he had hoped from biblical scholars. Eventually it became a standard among the studies of the synoptic gospels because in it Bultmann provided an examination of the entire content of the synoptic gospels in order to determine the historio-religious origin of each narrative. He presented,

¹ Bultmann, "Revealed God," 27.

² The German title was: Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921). An English translation by John Marsh appeared in 1963 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell).

therefore, the scholarly community with the first comprehensive study of each text in the synoptic gospels from the perspective of the History of the Religions school. This method of study challenged fellow scholars to examine the historical origin of more than a few specific narratives within the synoptic gospels. Although Bultmann had been recognized as a promising young scholar (he was immediately promoted from assistant professor to full professor when he took the appointment at Giessen in the fall of 1920), the publication of The History of the Synoptic Tradition assured him a place at the pinnacle of Germanic theological scholarship.

In spite of his early academic and scholarly accomplishments, Bultmann did not continue to direct his entire effort to the realm of academics; he wished, as well, to maintain contact with the laity of the church. In other words, Bultmann never reneged on a statement he wrote to a friend in 1904: "theology will come much further hand in hand with the laity than it will alone."³ In particular, as a professor, he continued to realize that the progress of Biblical scholarship and the various sentiments of the laity could not proceed in different directions without causing irretrievable damage to the unity of the church. The wedge between scholar and laity

³ From Bultmann to a friend, Lemke, "BP," 11. From the context in Lemke's article, I assume that the friend is Walther Fischer.

was already deep; the scholar was engaged heavily in the theoretical enterprise of his studies, whereas the laity continued to carry the burdens of a newly industrialized empire, out of touch with the prospects of the scholar. For this reason, the young Bultmann attempted to popularize the developments of Biblical scholarship for the laity. This task was not easy, since the laity did not possess the technical background needed to trace these developments. Nevertheless, Bultmann would not surrender his effort because of their ignorance. Instead, he believed that Schleiermacher's view of preaching, which he personally experienced in his father's parishes, remained a key in resolving the situation. Schleiermacher had held that the preacher, while delivering his sermon, was to speak as a person who was in union with the congregation, while at the same time, the preacher and the congregation experienced the oneness of God within themselves. Following this understanding of preaching, Bultmann brought the fruits of Biblical scholarship to the common people. Such a view of preaching appears clearly in Bultmann's 1917 sermon entitled "Concerning the Hidden and Revealed God." The tone of the sermon is passionate and pastorate; throughout the sermon Bultmann constantly identified himself with his listeners (e.g., the possessive pronoun "our" is predominant throughout the sermon). Moreover, the sermon reflects his own scholarly commitment to the History of

Religions school and to Neo-Kantianism without making any specific reference to them. Hence, the sermon popularized the results of his scholarship as it focused upon the person of God. In Bultmann's estimation, the person of God was the key, since God is the foundation and starting point of the Christian religion. For this reason, Bultmann believed that if scholar and laity agreed about the identity of God's person, then they had a basis on which to embrace each other and move forward in the life of the church. In particular, the devastating effects of World War I provided Bultmann with a unique opportunity to present the complex dimensions of his understanding of God, i.e. that God is revealed in all the forces of life, including the horror of war. He taught that the spirit of despair and agony witnessed in World War I was as much a revelation of God as the spirit of joy and celebration witnessed during the pre-war years. Specifically, Bultmann's sermon presented God as the eschatological experience (Erlebnis) of the hidden, mysterious, and

contradictory forces of life within human consciousness.⁴

Occasion, Text, and Format of the Sermon

In order for Bultmann to present his understanding of God to the Lutheran laity, the occasion, text, and format of the sermon was carefully chosen. The stage was set when his beloved friend and pastor in Breslau, Ernst Moering,⁵ asked Bultmann to preach to his congregation. In light of their sincere friendship as well as Moering's deep respect for Bultmann's understanding of God, Moering wanted Bultmann to preach when the church would be filled. The logical choice was a religious holiday; thus, Pentecost Sunday was chosen. On 27 May 1917, before a full

⁴ In 1933 Bultmann stated that God "is not immanent in the ordinances of the world, and nothing that encounters us as a phenomenon within the world is directly divine" ("The Task of Theology in the Present Situation" in Ogden, Existence and Faith, 160). Here Bultmann's statement is consistent with his Neo-Kantianism; ordinances are to be understood as the external phenomena of morality, science, and the arts. God transcends such ordinances; He resides in the hidden and mysterious dimensions of human consciousness. I have opted to use the word "consciousness" for the residence of God in the 1917 sermon even though the word does not appear in the sermon. On the basis of Bultmann's description of consciousness in his review of Karl Barth's Romans, I have come to the conclusion that this understanding is exactly what he is describing in the 1917 sermon (see Bultmann, "Karl Barth's Epistle to the Romans in Its Second Edition," in Robinson, Dialectic Theology, 1:110-112). In both articles, the religious inner experience (Erlebnis) of the forces of life equals consciousness (Bewusstsein).

⁵ In some letters of Bultmann, Ernst Moering is referred to as Ernst Möring (see Evang, Bultmann, 67).

congregation, Bultmann's sermon was delivered; it was based upon an appropriate text on the Spirit of God from Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians:

"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him," God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man that is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. But we have not received the spirit of the world but rather the Spirit that comes from God, that we might know what God has given us in grace" (2:9-12).

This text provided the foundation on which to analyze two previous contrasting pictures of Pentecost which had remained distinctly visible to Bultmann: the joy of celebration during the years of childhood and the pain of suffering while visiting a military hospital in 1916. By beginning with this contrast, Bultmann captured the immediate attention of his listeners since these two images were also part of the consciousness of almost every German person. Thereby, in the fashion of Schleiermacher, Bultmann was immediately at one with his audience, and thus, he proceeded to tie the two images not only to the spirit of the human consciousness but also to the Spirit of God. In other words, the contrasting forces of the outside world are really the contrasting forces within human consciousness. More importantly, however, the contrasting forces of human inner consciousness (human spirit) is nothing less than the person of God (Spirit of God). From the introduction of the sermon through its first section,

Bultmann brought together a person's inner consciousness and the Spirit of God, closing the first section with a preliminary definition of God as the "infinite fullness of all the powers of life" that are within us.⁶ In the second section of the sermon, Bultmann addressed the issue whether such a God can be known or experienced. He concluded that God can be known and experienced as a hidden and mysterious being who is infinitely filled with contradiction and terror, including the horror of war. Such a knowledge and understanding of God would seem to leave the people with no hope. In light of the war it would seem that the terror of God is victorious. According to Bultmann this is not the case. Thus, in the final section of the sermon, Bultmann stated that behind the mystery of God is the God who infinitely reveals himself, not only as a God of terror but also as a God of grace. Bultmann's final word of encouragement is that grace always triumphs for those who love God.

Bultmann's motivation for preaching on his understanding of God arose from the occasion and devastation of the first World War. By 1917 the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Germany found itself in the midst of great physical and spiritual suffering caused by the war. The allegiance to the war effort on the home front began to weaken as the citizens of Germany

⁶ Bultmann, "Revealed God," 26.

increasingly suffered the effects of the war. A number of these effects caused terrible hardship: the sharp decrease in consumer goods, the high inflation rate, the indirect taxes imposed by the government (especially on tobacco, beer, sugar, and spirits), the closing of small businesses, the sharp downward swing in real income (from 1913-17 the real income of a high-ranking civil servant decreased by 57%), the rationing of food (began in February of 1915), the sharp decline of grain production after the poor harvests of 1916 and 1917, the rivalry between the black market and the regular market, and the unusually hard winter of 1916-17, which caused the death of more than 700,000 Germans, who died from hunger and cold in the large cities. Possibly the greatest effect of the war, however, was the pain of death: hardly a family was not touched by death. During the war the German military experienced 2.4 million casualties, thousands of civilians died, and ten of thousands were severely mutilated.⁷ In February 1917, Bultmann himself lost his youngest brother (Arthur) who was fighting in France. By May of 1917, Bultmann had felt personally and had witnessed empirically human suffering which went beyond the dimensions he had experienced among the farmers and artisans of northwest Germany during his

⁷ This information concerning the effects of the war upon the German people is more extensively mapped out by V. R. Berghahn, Modern Germany: Society, Economy and Politics in the Twentieth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 44-51.

childhood. Even so, the pastoral spirit within him was kindled; he easily identified himself as one with the suffering of the German people. Hence, he realized that these devastating effects upon the German populace did not match their notions of nineteenth-century romanticism and enlightened reason, nor their feelings of national pride and self-dignity.

In short, the world which the German Lutherans helped to construct was crumbling around them. As a result they became spiritually confused; they were unable to identify the forces that presently controlled their lives. Perhaps the most perplexing element in all this confusion was that the laity in the Lutheran church received conflicting messages from the pulpits about the reality and identity of God. Some pastors presented God as a transcendent judge suggesting that the war was a divine punishment upon Germany for her national pride. On the other hand, the popular dream of a society created on the basis of Jesus' command of love (a society which many nineteenth-century pastors had hoped to create) seemed increasingly remote.⁸ Instead, humanity was perpetrating an international chaos of hatred and agony. For Bultmann, the war provided evidence that liberal theology was based upon a mythical

⁸ Kurt F. Reinhardt pointed out: "World War I and its aftermaths produced a strong reaction against theological liberalism" (Germany: 2000 Years: The Second Empire and the Weimar Republic, rev. ed. [New York: Continuum, 1990], 2:700).

ideal--lost in its own conception of a metaphysical ideal of love. As Bultmann viewed the war and the confused Lutheran response to it, the time seemed appropriate to place his understanding of God before the people. After all, in light of the dread of war, many began to wonder if the belief in God would survive the war. Thereby, Bultmann, in his pastoral spirit, felt that the people needed to be assured that God was still present and victorious in all the circumstances of life, even the circumstances of pain and agony.

The Two External Pictures of Pentecost

The structure of unfolding the understanding of God in this sermon was arranged uniquely for the goal which Bultmann wished to accomplish. Like Schleiermacher and Herrmann, he held that there was a connection between the external forces of human life, the internal forces of human consciousness, and the person of God. If he could lay out this connection, then he thought that his understanding of God could revive hope and belief among a confused body of Lutheran parishioners. Accordingly, the inner dynamics of his format demanded that he begin the project by directing the attention of his audience to the external forces of life. For Bultmann, this was the first step in a logical procedure to unite the circumstances of daily life with an understanding of God. The particular circumstance of life

which he and Moering chose was Pentecost Sunday. Thus, the sermon began with two contrasting personal pictures of previous Pentecost Sundays in the life of Bultmann:

If I am to celebrate Pentecost this year, then there are two pictures that hover before my eyes and refuse to be suppressed. What the one presents is something that now lies many years in the past--the Pentecost that I once celebrated as a child in my home in the country. . . . Pentecost was a festival of joy. The other picture is of Pentecost just a year ago. On that day I stood in a military hospital in the midst of the wounded . . . ; pain and misery stared at me.⁹

Consistent with Schleiermacher's method of preaching, these two contrasting pictures immediately incorporated Bultmann's audience into the design of his project by virtue of the fact that almost every adult German was aware personally of these experiences as well. Furthermore, almost every German was attempting to deal with these conflicting forces in their own life. No one could escape the reality of their presence. Hence, like Schleiermacher and his father, as Bultmann presented this imagery, his experience and the congregation's experience of these two contrasting pictures was to be one experience within their own consciousness. His sermon begins, therefore, by capturing the actual mood of the people so that he could easily direct his audience to his understanding of the identity of God.

The first picture captured a nostalgic glance at the festive celebration of Pentecost in the German countryside.

⁹ Bultmann, "Revealed God," 23.

As a personal product of this environment, Bultmann accented the excitement and joy of the religious holiday. The people in the countryside believed that these holidays were a visible expression of a world controlled by the power of "serenity and goodness." It expressed the feeling that life moved in "harmony and life-emitting rhythm" as its people devoted hours to the joy of work, human creativity, and spiritual enrichment. Thus, his brief presentation reads like a romantic author reminiscing about the past: it is a beautiful sunlit day in the country as flowers and their fragrance fill the inside and outside of the homes. The people dressed in "bright festal garments" march to church as the bells of the church rang through the countryside; "Pentecost was a festival of joy."¹⁰ This brief depiction captured the religious significance of the day: a festival of happiness which the whole community enjoyed. Thus, the liturgical festival meant community and unification, a religious piety actively expressing one's passions in worship, and life as a positive celebration of the goodness of God within their environment. In this terrain, true religion was found in the emotional and visible joy of the worship ceremony.

This previous picture of Pentecost, from the days of Bultmann's youth, captured what the people wished to remember about religious life prior to the war. Here he

¹⁰ Ibid.

employed a common feature of the human mind in order to captivate the attention of his audience. This feature is simply that humans idealize the past when confronted with the discomforts of the present. Perhaps Bultmann purposely presented an exaggerated picture of religious life in rural Germany, because he knew that his listeners exaggerated the past. In reality, however, Bultmann surely knew that his picture was not completely accurate. He fully realized, as a pastor's son in rural northwest Germany, the demographic as well as the political, social, and economic hardships of the peasant farmers. He had witnessed personally the struggles of the peasant farmer to survive. Nevertheless, Bultmann was also aware that in spite of their personal hardships, the peasant farmers were able to maintain a joyful view of religious life. Their festive view of religious life continued to have a priority among them in spite of trying situations. Thus, it was this picture that Bultmann visualized for his audience, because he knew that the people more readily recalled the joys of their past, while they existed in the dread of the present. Furthermore, this exaggerated picture of religious life in the countryside provided a clear contrast to his Pentecostal experience in a military hospital in 1916.

In that military hospital Bultmann was affected by a concentration of agony. He saw the pain and misery of the wounded; he was faced with questioning eyes. In distinct

contrast to his pleasant memories in the countryside, in the time of war he noted that the flowers of spring carry no fragrance, nor do the rays of the sun cast light. Throughout the year 1916 this contrast reappeared in his mind at various times, refusing to be suppressed; both pictures demanded their right to exist, filling his heart with anxiety. As far as Bultmann was concerned, the effects of the war could not be overlooked, nor were they overlooked. He, along with his audience, beheld the world of pain and fear; the world of cruelty and harshness; the world of "woefully oppressive and dreadfully humiliating powers."¹¹ Pentecost was, therefore, no longer merely a festival of joy; it was also a day full of pain and agony.

If the evangelical Lutherans could confront openly these two opposing pictures--the world of joy and the world of agony--then Bultmann thought it would be easier for them to realize that these two worlds reflect inner forces which have always existed in a state of tension within humans. Schleiermacher and Bultmann's father would have been proud of the young Bultmann's method of procedure; he was unifying pastor and congregation in the experiences of life in order to move his audience into the depths of human consciousness. In other words, once Bultmann had presented briefly these two contrasting pictures of Pentecost past, he quickly connected them to the inner forces of human

¹¹ Ibid., 25.

life--the consciousness of humanity. In the first main section of the sermon, Bultmann appealed to his audience to come to grips with this idea, i.e. that the contrasting forces of the outside world are really the contrasting forces of humanity's inner consciousness. He proclaimed:

However, what now fills us with pain is that we have received into our inner lives powers of life that now belong to our present existence, that have rights in us that we cannot deny but must affirm--but that we still have not found the way to bring them into harmony, to view them in unity with the newer powers of life which have entered our lives with brutal force and also demanded their rights, which we likewise must affirm.

This quotation exposes the issue and the problem which Bultmann thought needed to be addressed in the sermon. In the final analysis, the issue was not that the past powers of history opposed the present powers of history. Rather, the issue is to realize that these contrasting powers run through our lives in the immediate present moment. Such a construction did not mean that Bultmann thought that the past powers of life did not occupy a position in the present. In his estimation, the "old powers of life are present in us," not only as memory, but also as being "felt in our present thinking and working." In other words, the old powers of life have become part of our present consciousness. A person cannot avoid this. In some cases, however, the present powers of life can become so domineering that the past powers of life which continue to reside in our consciousness seem silent. For Bultmann, the

war was such a case. He stated that in light of the present situation--the war--the past has become "silent" in which presently "pain and sorrow demand their due." Here Bultmann does not mean that the past has become non-existent; rather, the past had now become dominated by the powers of life which have been manifested in the present. According to Bultmann, these dominating powers have awakened a shocking awareness within human consciousness; it has exposed that terror and horror are part of the consciousness of humanity. In comparison to the nostalgic life in the German countryside, these powers--terror and horror--are strange to the laity. As these powers expose the depth of our human consciousness, the laity no longer seem to understand themselves. For Bultmann, here lies the problem within human consciousness: how can the powers of joy and celebration be brought into harmony and unity with the powers of terror and horror, a state of pain and misery? As Bultmann noted: "for we gaze into the abyss of our nature, and our self appears as a play of strange powers. We gaze into the abyss of life, and its opposing powers are incomprehensible to us."¹²

Eventually in the sermon, Bultmann will lead his audience to the solution to this problem; it will be found in an understanding of the being of God (ontology).

¹² Ibid., 25.

Meanwhile, it was imperative for Bultmann to move slowly towards this solution. He drew, therefore, the attention of his audience to the Corinthian passage which he chose for the sermon. As far as Bultmann was concerned, Paul's words instruct us that there is a connection between the spirit of man and the Spirit of God. What the audience must realize is that the exposure of the depths of man is nothing less than the exposure of the depths of God. This is a crucial aspect of the sermon's thesis, that is to say, all the powers within human consciousness are really a revelation of God's own being. Thereby, Bultmann presented the force of this position in his preliminary definition of God, and he designated the locale of the person of God as he presented his definition:

Indeed, what is God, if not the infinite fullness of all the powers of life that rage around us and take our breath away, filling us with awe and wonder? What are these powers of life that sustain us and carry us away, that blend us together and separate us, that tear us apart and weld us together, if not the powers of the infinite God, who is full of creative might and joy, of endless forms and riddles?¹³

Here lies Bultmann's understanding of God; God is only uncovered completely in the powers of human consciousness. Or, to put it another way, for Bultmann, Christian theism is anthropological consciousness. God does not transcend time and space as a being who is beyond the temporal

¹³ Ibid., 26.

dimensions of time and space (as stated in traditional orthodoxy). Rather, God controls the creation as one who transcends time and space by infinitely revealing himself freely and spontaneously within the consciousness of humanity.

In the first section of the sermon, Bultmann made the vital connections he thought necessary in order to discuss the person of God. In the fashion of Schleiermacher, he preached as one with his audience, taking them on a journey. He directed them on a path which visualized all the opposing forces revealed in human history as being manifestations of all the opposing forces of human consciousness. Straightway, as the path continued, he attempted to enlighten his audience to comprehend that all the opposing forces of human consciousness are the manifestations of all the forces of God's being, as he resides within us, whether one is a scholar or a lay person. As Bultmann led his audience on this journey, perhaps the pastoral side of Bultmann was most concerned with the person who continued to cling to the nostalgic picture of religion in the countryside. Bultmann realized that such a person held on to this nostalgic picture as an antidote against the reality of the war which clearly surrounded them. Thus, he wanted such a person to realize that all the powers of present existence demand their

rights, even such powers as agony, pain, suffering, hate, and cruelty. More importantly, they must begin to understand that these opposing powers have their unity and harmony only in the being of God. At this point in the sermon, Bultmann's language is vague, possibly on purpose, as to what he really means.

Nevertheless, the tone of the first section of the sermon is clear; Bultmann believed that the nostalgic picture of religious life in the German countryside must be surrendered. It is a picture of religious life which had bound God to its culture. God's being had become identified with the festive ceremony of the religious holiday, not as he truly is within us, in all the opposing forces of human consciousness. At this point, Bultmann's criticism clearly demonstrated his allegiance to Herrmann's Neo-Kantian philosophy of religion as well as his abiding appreciation of the early Schleiermacher. In the spirit of the early Schleiermacher, yet more directly in the thought of Herrmann, true religion cannot be identified with objects of experience (Erfahrung) in the world such as science, morality, and the arts (culture). This was exactly the problem of the Lutherans in the German countryside; religion and the experience of ecclesiastical celebrations (culture) had become synonymous. Thus, without employing the term Neo-Kantianism, Bultmann began, in this first section of the sermon, to popularize his

scholarly perspective concerning the residence of true religion. For him, true religion is found in a personal response to God, who reveals himself in the experience (Erlebnis) of opposing forces within human consciousness.

Moreover, in this first section, Bultmann employed the same method he had adopted from the History of Religions school; he moved from the empirical structures of German Lutheranism into the religious consciousness of the self. In the final analysis, the goal is not that his audience recognize the former life of creativity and joy (countryside), nor the present life of pain and sorrow (wartime) as if they were two contrasting periods in history or objects of the study of true religion (both are Erfahrung experiences). Rather the issue for Bultmann was that these contrasting worlds constitute the revelation of the inner self here and now. For Bultmann, it is always within the inner structure of human existence that religion is revealed. It is this point, in accordance with his employment of the method of the History of Religions school as well as the Neo-Kantian philosophy of religion, that connects the past with the present in religious experience.

God Can Be Experienced

In the second section of the sermon it follows that Bultmann would explain to his audience that God can be experienced by them. His devotion to the methodology of

the History of Religions school and the Neo-Kantian position on the philosophy of religion directed him. Although differences lie in their respective procedures, nevertheless both schools of thought are interested in what constitutes the reality of religious experience in the present life of a person. An understanding of this experience was exactly Bultmann's pastoral goal in the sermon. In order to attain this goal, however, Bultmann believed that his audience had to forsake any misconception they had of God. Immediately as he opened the second section of the sermon, he claimed that "the first thing we should say to ourselves is that we may not see him [God] as we have conceived him." Implicitly, Bultmann has many groups in mind as he made this statement. For example, throughout the sermon subtle references are made of those who have retained their allegiance to the orthodox and liberal traditions. Those in the orthodox tradition still attempt to understand God through words and propositions, whereas those who still stand in the liberal tradition believe that God is understood in an exercise of moral goodness. Explicitly, however, Bultmann was concerned for those who wished to retain identification of God with the joy of life. In light of the war, such an identification seemed outside the realm of reality. As far as Bultmann was concerned this was a good result; he wanted the laity to be grateful that the war exposed such a false conception

of God. Thus, in the light of the present circumstances, he thought that the laity could now receive God as he actually is, "as wholly other than the picture we have made of him."¹⁴

Bultmann's procedure also has a certain affinity to Descartes's method of doubt. His audience is to doubt all their previous misconceptions of God in order to reconstruct an understanding of God upon the foundation of the Neo-Kantian idea of experience (Erlebnis), an experience of God's revelation that enters into a human's consciousness at a certain moment. Contrary to Descartes, however, the indubitable foundation of all reality (science) is not cogito, ergo sum. Rather in this post-Kantian era, religion has its own domain and its own indubitable foundation in experience (Erlebnis, not Erfahrung). For Bultmann, his pastoral concern is that his audience will receive his Neo-Kantian view of God as the foundation of religion. Then, they will hopefully experience and understand God as he actually is, as a hidden and mysterious being, infinitely filled with contradiction and terror, who must be approached with reverence and humility.

¹⁴ Ibid., 26; 27. Roger A. Johnson has pointed out that Bultmann borrowed the phrase "wholly other" from Rudolf Otto and redefined it for his own purposes (see his Bultmann, 18-21).

In particular, the crucial issue addressed by Bultmann in the second section of the sermon was to establish the foundation of religion in the experience (Erlebnis) of God. This foundation is consistent with Herrmann's Neo-Kantianism, and thus, all the rubrics of true religion discussed in this sermon are grounded in the Neo-Kantian view of experience.¹⁵ In this view, God is not a concept, intuition, or notion; specifically, God is not a projection or an object of the mind. The definition of God is not set by dogma which must be believed. Rather for Bultmann and his Neo-Kantian viewpoint, God is revealed in the very forces of life. God is the immediate experience of those forces in the subject, free from being an object of science, morality, and aesthetics. It was not a coincidence, therefore, that this foundation corresponded consistently with his preliminary definition of God at the close of the first section of the sermon. If God is equated with all the powers of life that are within us, then God is constantly unfolding himself before us in those powers. In other words, God is the fullness of life in which each individual force is a new revelation of his infinite nature. After all, according to Bultmann, if God is to be truly known, then his audience must experience the

¹⁵ For the primacy of experience in Herrmann's Neo-Kantian philosophy of religion, see Simon Fisher's Revelatory Positivism? Barth's Earliest Theology and the Marburg School (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 175-185.

God he has proclaimed. In doing so, they must come to believe that prior to the war they had a distorted view of God. In Bultmann's eyes their prior understanding of God was too small because they overemphasized God's attribute of joy. In the midst of the war, however, new sides of God's infinite nature constantly emerged: pain, agony, suffering, etc. Bultmann admitted that these attributes of God's nature were strange to our prior understanding; yet they must be incorporated into our understanding of God if he is to be truly experienced and known. Thus, God as an infinite being must never be understood as a being who is static or at rest. Rather, he is always dynamic, constantly revealing himself anew at each moment.

If God is to be understood as a dynamic being, then Bultmann thought that it was a necessary conclusion that God "must be a hidden and mysterious God, full of contradictions and riddles."¹⁶ Here, Bultmann's tightened definition of God is consistent with the content of the sermon. Since there is a continuity between God and human consciousness, then a simple inspection and understanding of our inner consciousness will also describe God. Within our inner consciousness, new things constantly emerge about ourselves which we did not previously know. These aspects included opposing forces: at times joy, goodness, and justice emerge, whereas on other occasions pain, evil, and

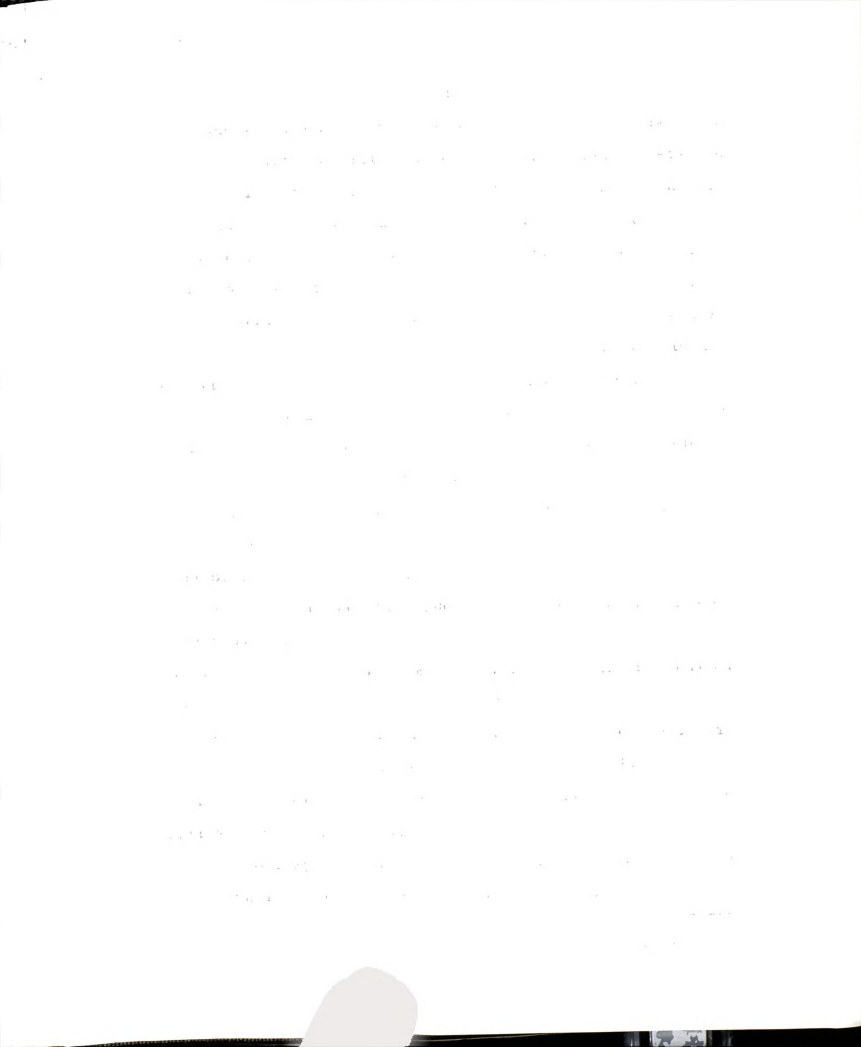
¹⁶ Bultmann, "Revealed God," 27.



oppression emerge. As we stand in the concrete situations of life, we never know what forces will emanate. Yet we are assured that new forces will emanate in the given situation; we are dynamic, not static. In other words, what is about to occur is always hidden and mysterious, full of riddle and contradiction. For Bultmann what was always about to occur was the unfolding of our inner consciousness and the person of God.

According to Bultmann, the experience of true religion is bound, therefore, to a hidden and mysterious God. Simply put, this means that he is a being who is free and spontaneous, always making himself known in a fresh and new way. God is an eschatological experience. Here Bultmann employed Weiss's view of eschatology to the person of God. At every moment God reveals himself anew (eschatologically) in relationship to what we thought of God in the previous moment (the previous moment has ended). More specifically, Bultmann contended that as soon as God makes himself known to us he disappears and "we once more stand in the presence of the unknown God," ready for him to make himself known once again.¹⁷ In this eschatological experience, God is experienced passively and actively as an infinite being. He is experienced passively when all the new forces of life (God/human consciousness) come upon us as a gift of his grace. For Bultmann it was crucial that his audience

¹⁷ Ibid., 28.



accept this aspect of God's self-disclosure. They had to realize that the contradictory forces of pain, agony, misery, suffering, and war were part of the infinite nature of God, part of his gift of grace to us. If his audience could understand that these contradictory forces are aspects of God's nature, then it was necessary for his audience to act responsively to God's work of grace. They must make the destiny of war--God's own disclosure of himself--truly their own destiny. To put it another way, Bultmann meant that one had to be ready to experience "miracle." Here, miracle is consistently defined within his understanding of God. His listeners are not to conceive of miracle in the traditional sense, i.e. to say, as an event opposed to the forces of nature or as an event opposed to our rational understanding. Rather, miracle is merely the acceptance of the forces of life as our own destiny.¹⁸ In other words, miracle is the personal acceptance of the mysterious and hidden operations of God. These operations are received when one approaches God (powers of life) with reverence and humility, ready to "hear God's voice in all its roar."¹⁹ Thus, the laity must

¹⁸ Once again Bultmann's position here parallel's the early Schleiermacher. Concerning a miracle, Schleiermacher wrote: " 'Miracle' is merely the religious name for event, every one of which, even the most natural and usual, is a miracle as soon as it adapts itself to the fact that the religious view of it can be the dominant one. To me everything is a miracle" (Religion, 133).

¹⁹ Bultmann, "Revealed God," 28.

give thanks that God has not resisted showing himself to us in the forces of war. Bultmann knew, however, that such a response of thanksgiving would not come easily. After all, he admitted that his understanding of God was strange and shocking to a people who lived behind the nostalgic curtain of the God of joy. Nevertheless, like a compassionate pastor, at the end of the second section, he pleaded with his audience to freely open themselves to experience the reality of God as a hidden and mysterious being, infinitely filled with contradictions and terror. Furthermore, by the end of the second section, the method of procedure to hopefully assure this understanding of God was in place. Bultmann had employed Schleiermacher's method of preaching for his own purpose. Bultmann's message of the kerygma had solidified the outward union of pastor and congregation (first section) as well as the inner union of pastor, congregation, and the person of God (second section).

Although the preaching method of Bultmann may have been familiar to the congregation, nevertheless, he must have realized that such an understanding of God had to be obscure and vague to the common person in the pew. Even if the people understood God as the inner feelings within us (Schleiermacher), they had never witnessed the depths of these contrasting feelings within human consciousness like they observed during the war. Their view of God had been obscured by their festive, romantic, and nationalistic view

of God and country. This obscurity had to be compounded by the fact that by the end of the second section of the sermon Bultmann had not conveyed any ray of optimism or hope to his listeners in their present situation. Thus, in the final section, Bultmann stated that behind the mystery of God is the God who infinitely reveals himself not only as a God of terror but also as a God of grace in which grace triumphs. In the spirit of Hegel's legacy on German intellectual thought, the sermon progresses from an abstract understanding of God to a concrete understanding of God in its final section. More importantly, in the spirit of Schleiermacher's legacy, once the listener accepts that God is mysterious and hidden, full of contradiction and riddle, then the listener must be ready to receive, search, and come into union with what stands behind the mystery. According to Bultmann, here the person will find the "infinite revelation" of God. Previously in the sermon Bultmann had presupposed his concept of revelation. For example, God is infinite because there are infinite ways in which God reveals himself through the opposing forces of life. Thus, for Bultmann revelation is not contained in words or in propositional statements. Rather, revelation is the continual unfolding of the forces of our inner consciousness, constantly making clear the riddles and the contradictions which exist within the

depths of God's own being.²⁰ In terms of the direction of the sermon--a concrete understanding of God--it became appropriate for Bultmann to discuss the certainty of revelation, what is revealed, and the goal of revelation.

The Revelation of God

As Bultmann discussed the certainty of knowing the revelation of God, he directed his audience to the Biblical text he chose for the sermon: "The Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God."²¹ It is the Spirit who directs the person through the riddle and mystery of God's person in order for one to attain the certainty of who God is. In other words, the Spirit of God reveals the depths of God; he reveals what lies behind the mere knowledge of God as a mysterious and hidden being. Specifically, the avenue by which one comprehends the Spirit of God is through an understanding of one's own spirit. For Bultmann there is an ontological union between the depths of the human spirit and the depths of the Spirit of God. Bultmann himself stated that this union is the

²⁰ Once again Bultmann's position parallels the early Schleiermacher. Concerning revelation, Schleiermacher wrote: "Every original and new intuition of the universe is one [revelation], and yet all individuals must know best what is original and new for them. And if something of what was original in them is still new for you, then their revelation is also one for you, and I advise you ponder it well" (Religion, 133).

²¹ Bultmann, "Revealed God," 30.

"bridge that leads from man to God."²² Thus, working on the foundation of Herrmann's Neo-Kantian philosophy of religion, the certainty of the experience and knowledge of God's revelation is ontological, i.e. an understanding of the reality of a human's being (his spirit) is an understanding of the reality of God's being (God's Spirit).

For Bultmann, therefore, in the ontological depths of our inner consciousness God is revealed. Here, he returned to the shock of the war. This time, however, Bultmann's pointed out that the listener must realize what the war revealed concerning God. If his listeners are beginning to understand God as he actually is, then they are beginning to understand the certainty of this revelational truth. This was Bultmann's pastoral concern. He pleaded with his audience that in light of the agony of the war they should not allow their hearts to become closed and embittered towards God. Rather they should approach the revelation of God in the forces of war with humility--trusting that the power of God's Spirit is working within us. Bultmann challenged the people to view the war as a test; they must judge whether they have come to realize if God's Spirit has begun to work in their hearts. Simply put, Bultmann wanted them to be awakened to the idea that the forces of war are the forces of the inner consciousness of the human, which in turn are the forces of God's revelation of himself. The

²² Ibid., 31.

war is the specific revelation of God that his audience must receive as their own destiny.

Bultmann was convinced that such a view of revelation was consistent with his view of destiny. Destiny is not controlled by a God who transcends the events of time and space, nor is destiny the fate of the forces of nature. Rather the questions which humans pose concerning destiny must go in a new direction. Destiny is the control and activity of God; it is the visible expression of the inner forces of human consciousness. Thus, Bultmann believed that humanity should accept destiny, no matter how contradictory the forces may be, as a revelation and gift of God's grace. Bultmann underlined that the acceptance of destiny does not mean passivity. Although the experience of God's revelation is initially received passively (without prior conceptions--it is an immediate occurrence), nevertheless the person is responsible to embrace this experience for himself. Bultmann reminded his audience that it is the duty and responsibility of a person to rise above what is occurring in the situation, even in a situation that involves tragedy in life. He admitted to his listeners that the poets of peacetime did not totally overlook tragedy; indeed, they found gripping words to express the pain and sorrow which encountered "men in their struggle with nature and fate." In reality, however, Bultmann claimed that during the era of peacetime the poets

as well as the German people had lost the ability to understand the intense power of tragedy. In this respect, Bultmann thought that the coming of the war must be praised since "the war has once again given us the crowning glory of the tragic." Furthermore, he stated to the people:

If we were to eliminate the tragic from human life, then we would eliminate the supreme test to which man's dignity can be put--namely, to make his destiny, even the most frightful destiny, entirely his own and to become lord of it.

Bultmann's point is summarized in the following words: "We have learned that he [a person], like God, can accept death and destruction into his work so that life may grow out of them."²³ As Bultmann viewed the situation, God always triumphs over the tragic, even death and destruction. Likewise, the human spirit must do the same, since he shares the same plain with an existing God.

Bultmann's proclamation took his audience on a journey into the depths of the ontological union between God's Spirit and the human spirit. Through his message, he wanted his audience to realize that the revelation of God's Spirit is the revelation of their own spirit. Following the method of Schleiermacher, the sermon had moved to this climax: the union of the Spirit of God with the inner spirit of the pastor and the inner spirit of the congregation. If such a journey was to be fully experienced, however, Bultmann wanted his audience to

²³ Ibid., 32.

understand that the war did not only reveal the "dark, demonic forces of the human heart," but it also revealed the depths of God. For Bultmann, if his audience grasped what he was saying, then there was no doubt that his understanding of God would initiate a powerful reflection into the self on the part of his listeners since all these opposing forces and passions which dwell within the human soul also dwell within God himself. After all, it seems evident that in this construction soul and God are synonymous. It would also seem that such a reflection would initiate a pessimistic view of life. According to Bultmann, this should not be the case. Rather the unmasking of the human soul (revelation) should bring optimism, since it is the human soul that unifies all the opposing forces and passions of life in the triumph of goodness. Bultmann is not clear concerning the mechanics of this operation, i.e. how and why opposing forces evolve into the triumph of goodness. He merely assumes a mysterious operation in which goodness triumphs.²⁴

Bultmann contended, therefore, that the goal of revelation

²⁴ Bultmann's construction here is not new. In reality he is employing the Platonic view of the soul and the Good which are the unitary source of all the diverse values of life. Plato admitted in his day that he could not entirely explain the mechanics of the harmonization of the soul and the Good (see Wallace I. Matson, A New History of Philosophy: Ancient and Medieval [San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987], 1:95). It should not be surprising, therefore, that Bultmann does not explain the mechanics of his construction either.

is always the unification and the harmonization of the forces of life in the goodness of God. In Bultmann's estimation, this final triumph can only be experienced by humanity if God unleashes the dark passions of evil in life. Then a person's dignity is put to the supreme test in order for him to attain "the highest nobility of his being."²⁵

For Bultmann the paradigm which concretely embodies the whole picture he is attempting to draw is the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It is in Christ that "God's hidden and revealed wisdom is embodied." The revelation of the crucifixion brought all the demonic powers of darkness into God's plan of salvation; it was "able to create a noble life out of the agony of death and forsakenness" and to swallow death in victory and transform "a crown of thorns into the crown of a king."²⁶ Notice that Bultmann's paradigm is not a moral example (e.g., the Christ of liberal theology); there is not a moral status that Christ attained which is laid before us to emulate. Rather, it is the experience of Christ--a Neo-Kantian understanding of Christ--which was laid before the listener. The experience of Christ was placed before his audience so that everyone can understand the importance of experiencing the mysteries of God in the struggles of their present existence. Christ

²⁵ Bultmann, "Revealed God," 33.

²⁶ Ibid., 35.

came forth attaining the highest nobility; in Bultmann's estimation, his audience must have the confidence that they will emerge from the present forces of war with the highest nobility. Bultmann was hopeful that the revelation of Christ would provide the comfort and the final impetus for his listeners to triumph in the revelation of God's grace to them.

Summary

Bultmann's sermon ends, therefore, on an uplifting and positive note. A young scholar, who once was driven by the passion of the pastoral ministry, had delivered one of his strongest pastoral messages to the laity of the evangelical Lutheran church. In this sermon, we notice that the pastoral seeds planted by his father had come to fruition. As a young boy he witnessed the hardships of human life endured by the peasant farmers and their families in northwest Germany. He witnessed the gracious and consoling spirit of his father constantly ministering to the needs of his flock. But as a young boy Bultmann never realized the intensity of human hardship in the terror of war. Its pain and misery as well as its spirit of alienation from God had reached a dimension that seemed beyond the human imagination. Yet it had become a reality. In the midst of this situation Bultmann's sermon demonstrated that the seeds which his father planted were strong and hardy seeds.

The pastoral spirit of Bultmann met the situation filled with confidence that the people of God would be victorious if they understand who God really is.

For Bultmann, the understanding of God as expressed in his sermon was built upon the foundation of the early Schleiermacher and upon his Lutheran Neo-Kantian teacher, Herrmann. Through the tutelage of his father and Herrmann, the sermon constantly provided the evidence of Schleiermacher's conception of God, i.e. "the feeling of absolute dependence is in and of itself God's co-presence in self-consciousness."²⁷ Schleiermacher's understanding of God was fundamental to Bultmann's understanding of God as the latter viewed God as all the internal forces of human consciousness. In other words, God is the revelation of the depths of human consciousness. Interestingly, this understanding of God was equipped to deal with the forces of war; it would not have to be altered or adjusted just to meet the situation. Rather, its fundamental structure and formulation would incorporate pain, misery, suffering, and evil into the person of God and his work. Even so, in the end the goodness and harmony of human consciousness and God are victorious. If one understood the person of God in this manner, then the war could not shatter or destroy one's fundamental belief in God since the war must be

²⁷ Friedrich Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, trans. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1948), 126; see also Redeker, Schleiermacher, 42.

viewed as being part of God's revelation of himself. For this reason Bultmann remarked later that the "war was not a shattering experience" to him; the war was not much different from peacetime or a shipwreck, or things that happen everyday.²⁸ Standing in the confidence of this understanding of God, Bultmann delivered his pastoral message, hoping and pleading that the Lutheran laity would embrace this same truth.

Furthermore, if the laity would embrace this understanding of God, then the realm of academics and the laity could come together. In this sermon, Bultmann made a strong attempt to popularize his convictions about Herrmann's Neo-Kantian philosophy of religion and his work in the History of Religions school. Without using the term Neo-Kantian, he clearly embraced before his audience the Neo-Kantian conception of experience as the foundation of his understanding of the reality of God. In doing so, he also embraced the Neo-Kantian dualism between true religion which is found in the consciousness of the individual and false religion which is found in the cultural manifestations of religion (in this case, religious ceremonies of the German countryside).²⁹ Moreover, without

²⁸ Bultmann to Erich Förster, a pastor and professor in Frankfurt, 1926, Schmithals, Bultmann, 9.

²⁹ It should not be overlooked that the sermon appeared in Die Christliche Welt. As noted earlier Bultmann disagreed with those in the organization who wished to immerse theological principles in the political

using the term History of Religions, Bultmann followed their method in order to uncover the roots of religious existence within the structure of human consciousness. Moving from the external structure of their religious environment into the internal structure of the religious consciousness, it is the eschatological word of God which encounters humanity in the forces of human consciousness-- in the here and now.³⁰ A person must either encounter the powers of God within himself and rise to the height of noble existence, or he fails and is swallowed by the powers of darkness.

Indeed, Bultmann sought to educate his audience in an understanding of God that was congenial with the critical work of modern scholarship. The "Bultmann case" was at work in this sermon; he saw himself on a mission to unify laity and scholars on the very first principle of Christian theology: the doctrine of God.

and social issues of the day. In other words, he was concerned with those who wanted to make Christianity into a political-social religion. Following his Neo-Kantian dualism, perhaps Bultmann's sermon also can be viewed as an attack upon the intellectuals in "The Friends of the Christian World" who wanted a religion that was engulfed by culture.

³⁰ During this time period, Bultmann wrote an article on eschatology (1917), summarizing the current discussion on eschatology in the History of Religions school. He also lets his reader know where he stands on the subject; see his "Eschatologie," 76-87.

Part Three:
Theological Writings (1920-1925)

CHAPTER FIVE

Consistency in Bultmann's Thought (1920)

Two Central Rubrics of Bultmann's Thought

As the war came to an end, Bultmann continued to advance the particular themes which characterized his early studies.¹ It is especially noteworthy that in the year 1920, Bultmann wrote two articles which embraced and articulated the two central rubrics of his academic thought at this time: his Lutheran Neo-Kantian philosophy of religion and his alliance to the History of Religions school as he studied and taught the New Testament. The first article, "Religion and Culture," had a unique status in relationship to anything he had previously written on the subject of Neo-Kantianism.² It was the first article in which he focused exclusively and explicitly upon the structure of his Lutheran Neo-Kantian philosophy of

¹ When the war came to an end Bultmann was teaching New Testament at Breslau. He remained at Breslau until the fall of 1920. At that time, Bultmann made a change in his academic career. In the fall of 1920, he accepted an appointment to teach New Testament at Giessen. He taught at Giessen for only one academic year before returning to Marburg. He remained at Marburg until his retirement (1921-1951).

² An English translation has appeared: Rudolf Bultmann, "Religion and Culture [1920]," in Robinson, Dialectic Theology, 1:205-220. The article originally appeared in Die Christliche Welt, 34 (1920): issue 27, columns 417-421; issue 28, columns 435-439; issue 29, columns 450-453. This article appeared while Bultmann was a member of the New Testament faculty at Breslau.

religion as he defined the distinct spheres of religion and culture in human life. In his second article entitled, "Ethical and Mystical Religion in Primitive Christianity,"³ Bultmann presented a summary of recent studies concerning New Testament theology and its significance for the modern era. Once again the church and its people were Bultmann's concern; as in previous years, he wished to see the laity receive the fruits of recent critical New Testament scholarship. In an age of technology and enlightened skepticism towards religion, Bultmann reasoned that if the fruits of recent critical scholarship were made accessible to the laity, then an understanding of the Christian religion and its God would make an impact upon modern humanity. He thought that such a procedure could occur because critical scholarship provides the direction to free the religious experience of the individual from the objectification of religion portrayed in the biblical text.

In the second article, Bultmann also articulated his

³ An English translation has appeared: Rudolf Bultmann, "Ethical and Mystical Religion in Primitive Christianity [1920]," in Robinson, Dialectic Theology, 1:221-235. The article originally appeared in Die Christliche Welt, 34 (1920): issue 46, columns 725-736; issue 47, columns 738-743. It should also be noted that this article was originally a lecture delivered at Wartburg on 29 September 1920. This article appeared and the lecture was delivered while Bultmann was a member of the New Testament faculty at Giessen.

longstanding animosity towards liberal theology.⁴ The time was ripe; German theological liberalism and its ethical ideal of Christian love had been dealt a severe blow by the effects of human activity during World War I. On the heel of this impact, Bultmann blamed the liberals for the failure to advance an adequate understanding of the New Testament as well as to advance an adequate understanding of the Christian religion and its God for the laity in the modern era. However, his attack upon liberal theology was not the only longstanding concern which emerged from this article. One can note also the continuation of the basic themes which characterized Bultmann's early years: the quest to advance creative critical scholarship, the desire to popularize the results of critical scholarship for the laity, and the hope to understand God as Bultmann believed God should be understood.

Both articles complement each other as they portray the two central rubrics of his thought at this time: his philosophy of religion and his studies in the New Testament. In order to assure that these two areas of

⁴ Roger A. Johnson claims that this article is "the first publication in which Bultmann criticized Liberal Theology, the dominant Protestant theological movement of the nineteenth century" (Bultmann, 10-11). In a sense Johnson's remark is not entirely accurate; as noted in the second chapter, Bultmann's criticism of liberal theology was somewhat in place during the years of his formal theological education (1903-1912). This criticism is implied in his doctorate dissertation as well as in his 1917 Pentecostal sermon.

study remained complementary, Bultmann's commitment to the dualistic structure of Lutheran Neo-Kantianism had a priority.⁵ This structure was the underlying factor which demanded and produced consistency throughout Bultmann's thought. In other words, whether he discussed the philosophy of religion or the religion of the New Testament, he believed that any true religious experience had to be absolutely free from any cultural manifestation of religion. Hence, what Bultmann placed before his readers in the area of the philosophy of religion did not contradict what he placed before his readers concerning New Testament studies. The two fit together consistently upon a Neo-Kantian foundation. Thereby, as these two articles are examined together, one witnesses the progressive maturity of a young scholar as he already had attained unity and consistency in his thought. Specifically, Bultmann presented a consistent and complementary formulation of his understanding of the real presence of God in religious experience. For him God is discovered in the human spirit as he freely reveals himself in the experience (Erlebnis) of a person's inner consciousness.

⁵ From this point onward, I will use merely the term, "Neo-Kantianism" to designate Bultmann's philosophy of religion. The reader should realize, however, that Marburg Lutheran Neo-Kantianism is meant. As it has been demonstrated, Bultmann's Neo-Kantian philosophy of religion follows more consistently in the tradition of his teacher at Marburg, Wilhelm Herrmann, who was a Lutheran systematic theologian.

Neo-Kantian Dualism: Religion and Culture

Bultmann's article, "Religion and Culture" is the most articulate formulation of his commitment to a Neo-Kantian philosophy of religion. The article set forth a clear outline of the Neo-Kantian dualism between culture and religion, especially as it was articulated by Wilhelm Herrmann. Concerning the realm of culture, Bultmann wrote that "culture is the methodical unfolding of human reason in its three realms--the theoretical, the practical, and the aesthetic. Thus the activity of the human spirit is essential for culture; it is this spirit which builds the three worlds of culture: science, law and morality, and art."⁶ This statement is vintage Marburg Neo-Kantianism. Like his Neo-Kantian teachers, Bultmann clearly held that human reason creates (activity of the human spirit) the objects of culture: science (theoretical), morality (practical), and art (aesthetics). As Bultmann set forth and defended his Neo-Kantian position on human culture, he noted that there was one realm of human life which was not the creation of human reason; it was the realm of religion. In contrast to the manifestations of culture, Bultmann, following his old hero, Schleiermacher, held that "religion is the feeling of absolute dependence."⁷ For Bultmann as

⁶ Bultmann, "Religion and Culture," 209.

⁷ Ibid., 210. Later, on the same page, Bultmann added that if we wish to avoid a psychological interpretation of religion, maybe it is better to say that

well as Schleiermacher, "absolute dependence is possible only where man encounters a power to which his inner being unfolds itself freely, into whose arms he throws himself in freedom and release, to whom he subjects himself in open self-surrender."⁸ In Bultmann's estimation surely such an understanding of absolute dependence is not an object of empirical investigation, nor a creation of the human mind. As far as he was concerned, how could anyone investigate an encounter with a power which reveals itself freely within one's inner being, or to put it in the language of Schleiermacher, within one's feelings? For Bultmann such an investigation is impossible, including an analogical and/or an analytical investigation. Thus, in this article, he espoused the dualism of Neo-Kantian orthodoxy, including the designation of religion to realm of the individual. He clearly stated his position when he wrote: "religion is not available in objective formulations as is culture, but only in being realized; that is, in what happens with the individual (Individuum). The meaning of religion is the being, the life, of the individual."⁹ The individual designates the inner consciousness or being of a subject (a

religion "is the consciousness (Bewusstsein) of absolute dependence."

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 211. See Johnson, Demythologizing, 66-70, for further insight into the category, Individuum, and how it relates to the dualistic structure of Neo-Kantianism.

person) who receives a totally spontaneous (no prior objective conception) religious experience within one's consciousness or being. It has absolutely no relationship with the outward expression of cultural life.

Although Bultmann defended the separation of culture and religion, this did not mean that he thought all deliberations about religion were manifestations of true religion. For example, when scholars write a history of religion, it was Bultmann's position that such a history is merely the historical evidence of religion, it is not to be considered a religious history per se. Once again Bultmann expressed his position clearly when he wrote:

One may think it is possible to write a history of religion since religious experience, like all experience, leads to representations, concepts, institutions, and works of art, the history of which may in fact be written. But these objectifications are not religion; they merely are its evidence, and they form a historical continuity only within the history of culture, not as religious history. Thus, the so-called history of religion in the field of primitive anthropology is actually nothing but the history of primitive science, art, and morality; in more developed cultures it becomes the history of developing science, morality, law politics, and art.

Bultmann was consistent here: he thought that if true religious experience cannot be discovered in objective constructs of culture, then there can be no history of religion in its true form. For him, a true understanding of religious history is always an event, a feeling of absolute dependence, an experience within human consciousness in which the person accepts and asserts his

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own destiny into himself, "identifying himself with his destiny." Here, Bultmann echoed the same thoughts he shared with the laity in his 1917 Pentecostal sermon. During the years 1917-1920, his understanding of God did not change. In fact, the last sentence in the article "Religion and Culture" articulated the whole agenda which exemplified Bultmann's Neo-Kantian case: "experiencing (erleben) something is superior to creating something."¹⁰ In other words, the experience of religion is superior to the human creation of culture. In this dualistic structure, true religion can only be experienced if it remains separate from culture--never transgressing its boundary. Thus, complementing the 1917 Pentecostal sermon, Bultmann believed that once this dualism is comprehended then humans are accessible to the free revelation of the Christian religion and its God.

Religion and the New Testament

Later in that year (1920), Bultmann's commitment to the place of religion remained intact as he addressed the origins of New Testament religion and its meaning for the modern era in an article entitled, "Ethical and Mystical Religion in Primitive Christianity." Even in the context of his New Testament studies, he continued to affirm his Neo-Kantian view of religion, i.e. a true understanding of

¹⁰ Ibid., 215; 217; 220.

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 1, 1861. It is a very important document, as it sets out the policy of the new administration.

2. The second part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury, dated January 1, 1861. It contains a detailed account of the financial state of the country at the beginning of the year.

3. The third part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Interior, dated January 1, 1861. It contains a detailed account of the state of the public lands and the progress of the various departments under his control.

4. The fourth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Navy, dated January 1, 1861. It contains a detailed account of the state of the navy and the progress of the various departments under his control.

5. The fifth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the War, dated January 1, 1861. It contains a detailed account of the state of the army and the progress of the various departments under his control.

6. The sixth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the State, dated January 1, 1861. It contains a detailed account of the state of the foreign relations of the country and the progress of the various departments under his control.

7. The seventh part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the War, dated January 1, 1861. It contains a detailed account of the state of the army and the progress of the various departments under his control.

religion and the person of God is a spiritual experience which is not an object of investigation or a creation of the human mind. Moreover, the article revealed the maturing of Bultmann's thought since the initial years of his formal theological education. During his years as a student at Tübingen, Berlin, and Marburg, Bultmann's personal letters and conversations verbalized his unhappiness with liberal theology, creative scholarship, and the failure of modern-critical scholars to present the results of their studies to the laity. Once again each of these concerns are addressed in this article. The article reveals, however, the fruits of Bultmann's studies as a doctorate student and as a maturing New Testament professor.¹¹ Through the influence of New Testament scholars such as Weiss, Jülicher, Heitmüller, and Bousset as well as the influence of classical philologists such as Reitzenstein, Paul Wendland, Christian Jensen, and

¹¹ This maturity is also revealed in two other works by Bultmann which appeared about this time. While teaching at Breslau Bultmann wrote the work which would bring him high respectability among scholars: The History of the Synoptic Tradition. This work was not published until 1921. When it appeared it was quite technical and innovative, introducing the form-historical method or what is popularly referred to as form-critical method upon the data of the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke). Another technical article appeared in 1919/1920 by Bultmann which discussed the problem of Jesus' messianic consciousness: "Die Frage nach dem messianischen Bewusstsein Jesu und das Petrus-Bekenntnis," Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, 19 (1919/1920): 165-174. Each of these works had a narrow focus, and they do not concern us here.

Friedrich Pfister, Bultmann had become aware of the current debates between the liberal interpretation of the New Testament and the new interpretations being advanced by those influenced by the studies of the History of Religions school. He opted to participate vigorously in this debate as well.¹² In this article ("Ethical and Mystical Religion in Primitive Christianity"), therefore, Bultmann finally organized and articulated a scholarly response to the ideas he had criticized since 1903. At the same time, he showed how he thought the New Testament can be used in a positive manner in order to lead one to a true understanding of religion and God.

In light of Bultmann's concerns about liberal theology, it is not surprising that he attacked their assessment of primitive Christianity in this article. As far as he was concerned, the liberal scholars had comprehended the "history of primitive Christianity as a unified, linear development in three stages, characterized respectively by Jesus, Paul, and John."¹³ Moreover, the liberals believed that primitive Christianity essentially presented a unified spiritual message in distinct contrast to the moral legalism and ceremonial institutions of

¹² Bultmann had personal contact with Weiss, Jülicher, Heitmüller, Jensen, and Pfister at Marburg. With respect to Bousset, Reitzenstein, and Wendland, he only studied their writings.

¹³ Bultmann, "Ethical and Mystical Religion," 221.

Judaism. The spiritual message was simply this: man is in need of a spiritual and pious transformation in order to accept the God who wills the good. For the liberals this transformation takes place when man's moral will freely pursues the good, i.e. loves God and neighbor.¹⁴ In this way, such an individual enters the kingdom of God, which the liberals interpreted as being essentially ethical. Thus, during the era of primitive Christianity, the liberals understood the conflict between Judaism and Christianity to be simply the following: Judaism conformed to written moral laws, whereas Christianity pursued free moral spirituality.

Bultmann pointed out that this classic liberal understanding of primitive Christianity began to falter when the work of Adolf Harnack and William Wrede began to discuss the influence of Hellenism upon primitive Christianity.¹⁵ For Bultmann these preliminary studies of Harnack and Wrede provided the background for a concentrated study of Hellenism and its relationship to the

¹⁴ Adolf von Harnack had stated: "Gentlemen, it is religion, the love of God and neighbour, which gives life a meaning; knowledge cannot do it" (What is Christianity?, trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders [Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1978], 300).

¹⁵ Adolf von Harnack, History of Dogma, 7 vols., trans. Neil Buchanan (London: Williams and Norgate, 1896-1899); and William Wrede, Paulus (Halle: Gebauer-Schwetschke, 1904).

New Testament.¹⁶ On the basis of further studies by scholars associated with the History of Religions school (e.g., the philologists, Reitzenstein, Wendland, and New Testament scholars, Bousset, Heitmüller, and Jülicher), the conclusion was reached that religious differences existed within the primitive Christian era, even before the writings attributed to Paul appeared. Moreover, these scholars in the History of Religions school believed that there was not a basic unified, linear development in the teachings of Jesus, Paul, and John as the liberals had originally taught. Rather, as Jülicher had put it, the differences were between congregations; specifically, the Palestinian congregation as opposed to the Hellenistic congregation as "Christian preaching moved from Palestinian to Hellenistic ground."¹⁷ These History of Religions scholars attempted to silence, therefore, any belief which maintained that these two congregations were initiated by distinct individuals in the era of primitive Christianity (e.g., Jesus, Paul, or John).

¹⁶ Later (1950), Bultmann expressed in the introduction to the recent release of Harnack's, Christianity (Peter Smith 1978 edition), that he believed that Harnack never carried through on his preliminary investigation of the influence of Hellenism upon primitive Christianity because he was never sympathetic to the work of the History of Religions school, nor did he ever comprehend the eschatological character of Jesus' preaching about the kingdom of God.

¹⁷ Bultmann, "Ethical and Mystical Religion," 223.

In agreement with these scholars in the History of Religions school, Bultmann noted that the Palestinian congregation possessed only individual fragments about the life of Jesus, they did not possess a unified picture of Jesus' life. On the basis of these fragments the Palestinian congregation viewed Jesus as the "eschatological preacher of repentance and the prophet of the coming rule of God, as a teacher of wisdom and a rabbi." In contrast to the Palestinian picture of Jesus, a unified picture of the life of Christ was created first by the "Christ myth" of the Hellenistic congregation, i.e. a picture that Christ is the heavenly Son of God. In fact, Bultmann concluded:

From the viewpoint of the historian the judgment must be made that 'Christianity' as a self-sufficient, historical entity, a religious community with its own forms of myth and cult and communal life, begins with primitive Hellenistic Christianity.¹⁸

Hence, according to Bultmann, the Hellenists were the first primitive congregation to present a unified picture of Christ, not the Palestinians.

On the other hand, in Bultmann's estimation, the first work to present a unified picture of the life of Christ, combining elements from Palestine and Hellenism, was the Gospel of Mark (Bultmann felt the same basic construction was found in the other synoptic gospels--Matthew and Luke).

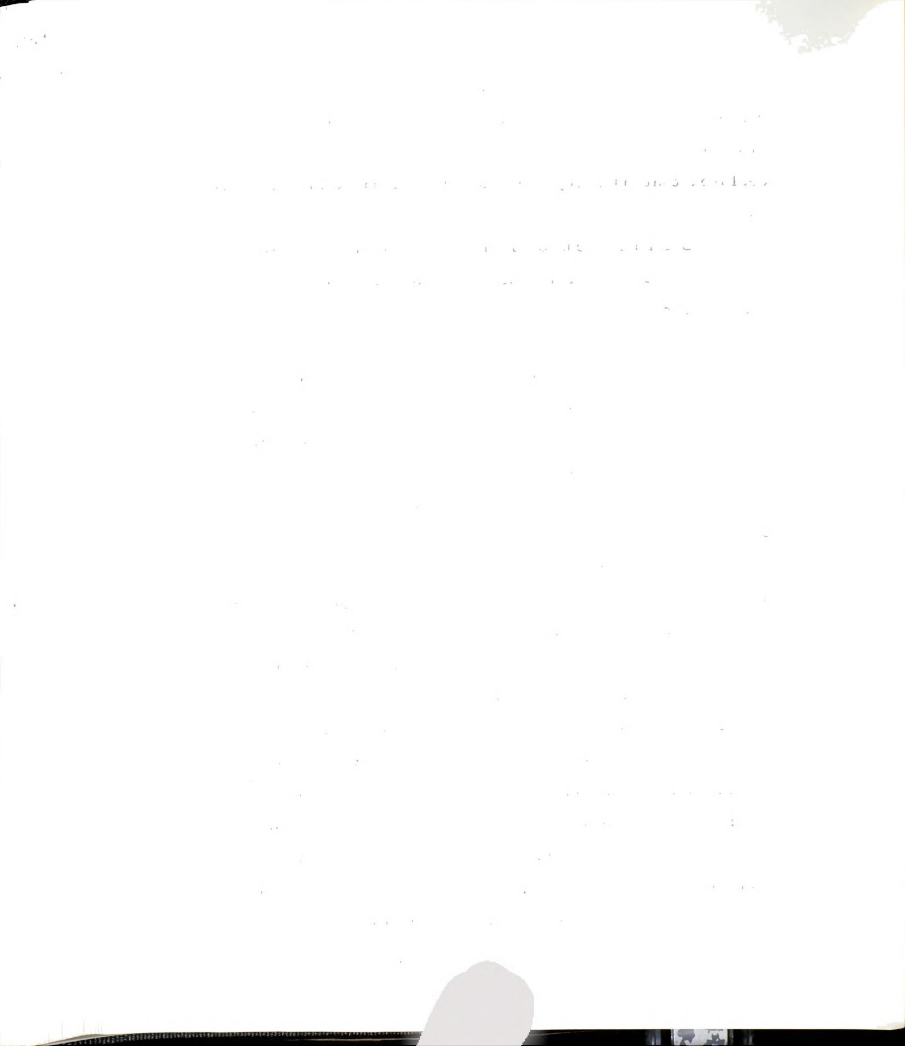
¹⁸ Ibid., 223; 227.

In the Gospel of John, however, Bultmann and his fellow History of Religions scholars concluded that the "Palestinian material is almost completely supplanted, Jesus appears as the God-man; his earthly life is the revelation of the heavenly Logos for those who are able to discern it."¹⁹ At this point, as Bultmann drew the attention of his readers to the particular distinctions of the Palestinian and Hellenistic congregations within the narratives of New Testament literature, it is particularly interesting that he makes a connection between the two primitive congregations and the contemporary views of Jesus Christ found in the circles of Christian liberalism and Christian orthodoxy. He felt that the view of Jesus in the Palestinian congregation had affinity to the view of Jesus advocated by the modern Christian liberal theologians. On the other hand, he felt that the view of Christ in the Hellenistic congregation had affinity to the view of Christ in the orthodox tradition of the Christian church. From Bultmann's perspective, until recent times, the history of the Christian church has defended the picture of Christ--the "Christ myth"--presented by the Hellenistic congregation as the orthodox view of Jesus Christ. In response to this dogma of orthodoxy, Bultmann pointed out that the liberal theologians, without realizing it, had reached back into the Palestinian tradition for their

¹⁹ Ibid., 224.

conception of the historical Jesus. After all, for the liberals, Jesus was merely a prophet and a teacher who declared that humanity finds God in the moral will of doing good.

As Bultmann focused his readers upon a connection between the two primitive congregations and the two contemporary theological movements, he proceeded to point out that the distinction between the Palestinian congregation and the Hellenistic congregation had ramifications for a new understanding of the conversion of Paul. In light of this distinction, the conversion of Paul was understood as a Hellenistic Jew coming under the sway of the "Kyrios cult" of Hellenistic Christianity. With this new understanding of Paul's conversion came a new understanding of Paul's contribution to primitive Christianity. Bultmann believed that the significance of Paul's contribution "lies primarily in the fact that his letters became the literature of hellenistic Christianity and that a particular combination of ethical and mystical religion is present in these letters." This statement contains the crucial element which characterized Bultmann's understanding of Paul. He thought that Paul's letters displayed a unique ability to incorporate elements of ethical and mystical religion within the domain of the Hellenistic myth-cult of Christ. Hence, Bultmann believed that Paul transformed the ethical dimension of the



Palestinian congregation into a unique full-orbed Hellenistic religion which incorporated the Christ-myth of salvation. In other words, Bultmann thought that Paul did not base his view of salvation upon the moral intent of God's goodness (Palestinian), but "on the act of salvation of which the Christ myth speaks."²⁰ For the scholars in the History of Religions school as well as for Bultmann, therefore, a contrast was apparent between the religious content of the synoptic gospels and the religious content of the letters of Paul. Particularly, the content within Paul's letters, not the Palestinian content of the synoptic gospels, provided the model and the direction for discovering the true religion of primitive Christianity.

As Bultmann examined Paul's thought as a paradigm for understanding true religion and its God, there was a note of caution. He did not think that an understanding of true religion and its God was to be identified with the ethical and mystical religion of primitive Christianity found in the letters of Paul. Rather, just as Paul documented his personal reflections concerning God's presence in his own religious experience; likewise, Bultmann wished that the laity in the modern church would use Paul as a model to reflect upon God's presence in their own religious experience. In other words, a critical study of the letters of Paul will provide the right direction in

²⁰ Ibid., 228; 228-229.

experiencing God, but the letters of Paul will not provide the experience itself. After all, Bultmann thought that a true experience of God is a spiritual event which always occurs anew within the inner history of an individual's consciousness. Thus, in this framework, Bultmann believed that Paul and he shared the same basic understanding about how God can be experienced.

When Bultmann arrived at his analysis of the religious content of Paul's letters, the purpose of his article comes into focus. In his estimation, there must be a renewed effort and appreciation of a critical examination of the literature of the New Testament so that the key directive for understanding true religion in the contemporary era can be uncovered. From Bultmann's perspective, his concern seemed justified. In his article, he indicated that he was fully aware of the disappointing and hostile complaints leveled towards those who critically investigated the New Testament. This criticism had become severe; those who made this criticism believed that a critical investigation of the New Testament had proven to be "religiously and ecclesiastically unfruitful."²¹ Bultmann would not give in to this criticism. From his early student years, he had claimed that a correct use of critical studies would prove to be fruitful for academics as well as for laity. In this article in 1920, Bultmann renewed his claim, attempting to

²¹ Ibid., 229.

indicate the benefits of critical academic study for the life of the church.

Bultmann's critical investigation of the literature of the New Testament had revealed that a knowledge of the teaching of Jesus, based upon the synoptic gospels, was ambiguous. He held this position because he thought that the authors of the gospels had woven together two distinct views about Jesus Christ: the ethical teachings of Jesus from the Palestinian fragments and the mythical work of Christ from the Hellenistic religious cults. On the basis of Bultmann's own form-critical investigation of the synoptic gospels, he concluded that we do not possess any clear information about the true historical Jesus. If this is true, then the essence of primitive Christianity cannot be traced to the actual teachings and work of Jesus recorded in those gospels. In the contemporary era, Bultmann realized that such a conclusion issued a severe challenge to liberal theology. The liberals had attempted to maintain that the true teachings of the historical Jesus are found in the Palestinian fragments. Bultmann indicated, however, that the liberals could not prove that there was actually a connection between the Palestinian fragments and the historical Jesus. Thus, in his estimation, the liberal theologians had no basis for proclaiming to the modern church an ethical message based upon their teachings of the historical Jesus.

Bultmann's critical investigation into the synoptic gospels as well as his criticism of liberal theology fit consistently into his longstanding concerns about religion. Thereby, the results of this investigation are consistent with his Neo-Kantian philosophy of religion. From his Neo-Kantian perspective, the Palestinian fragments represented the objectification of religion, i.e. the essence of religion is identified with the external ethical teachings of Jesus. Bultmann denounced any external or cultural identification of religion with the essence of true religion (which is internal). As far as he was concerned, here lay the failure of liberal theology; they had identified the essence of religion with the external ethical teachings of Jesus. In Bultmann's estimation, like the Palestinian congregation before them, the liberals had confused the distinction between religion and culture. Just as the Palestinian congregation had created the ethical teachings of a prophet, Jesus, into a cultural religion, likewise liberal theology had created the same ideal into a cultural religion in the modern era. In the Neo-Kantian scheme, both projects cannot be identified with true religion. Thus, for Bultmann, in light of his critical investigation into the literature of the New Testament, it is the teachings of Paul, and not the teachings of Jesus, that provides the directive into the realm of true religion. Bultmann pleaded that it is this

point that the laity must accept from the biblical critics if they are to pursue the course of true religion.

In the Christian tradition, therefore, it can be said that the religious teachings of Bultmann is best associated with the religious teachings of Paul.²² We now understand further the significance of the 1917 Pentecostal sermon. If Bultmann's project was to presuppose the scholarly results of his work as he presented his understanding of God to the laity, then it was best to preach from a passage in Paul, instead of preaching from a passage in the synoptic gospels. In this way he would not have to divert into the textual problems which a passage in the synoptic gospels may present, i.e. what belongs to the Palestinian fragments and what belongs to the Hellenistic Christ-cult. Thereby, it was logical that he chose a passage for Pentecost from the writings of Paul (I Corinthians 2:9-12) which would coincide easily with his agenda. This supposition is clarified in the 1920 article, "Ethical and Mystical Religion in Primitive Christianity." According to Bultmann's article, it is Paul who provides the answer to the decisive question of religion, i.e. the locale of God's

²² Until this time in his life (1920), Bultmann had written relatively little about the writings of John. Of 46 sermons delivered between 1906 and 1920, only 6 were on texts from John; see Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen: Handschriften - und Inkunabelsammlung Nachlass Rudolf Bultmann (September, 1985), 8-11. A focus upon John will become a central aspect of his studies later; it does not concern me here.

presence. Simply, for Paul, God's presence is an internal spiritual experience of the power of God's Spirit. Consistent with the 1917 sermon, the Spirit of God is central to the presence and activity of God in the life of the believer. Furthermore, consistent with his Neo-Kantian position, Bultmann maintained that the reality of God's presence is an inner experience which cannot be associated with the events of salvation which are said to occur in the external world (e.g., the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ). This point remains true even if one attempts to make one of those external events an "object of inner experience (Erfahrung)."²³ According to Bultmann, such a directive was exactly the failure of orthodox Christianity throughout the history of the church; they had made the external events of salvation the dogma of the church which God's Spirit communicates to the believer. As far as Bultmann was concerned, even Paul did not make such a mistake. Rather, Paul had uniquely brought together the peculiar elements of mystical and ethical religion, each corresponding to a divine form of God's Spirit, who works solely within the human spirit.²⁴ Specifically, the realm of mystical experience is related to the Kyrios-Spirit in which the Spirit in the Christian religion

²³ Bultmann, "Ethical and Mystical Religion," 229.

²⁴ Bultmann referred to this construction as a "duality of divine forms" (ibid.).

assures Paul that he is a child of God, redeemed and part of the community of Christ. On the other hand, the realm of ethical experience is directed by the Spirit's power who brings forth an inner history of moral change in the events of conflict and suffering, i.e. in the course of destiny. Thus, in Bultmann's understanding of Paul's construction of Hellenistic Christianity, the inner experience and presence of God's Spirit in the individual is central; only within this realm is religion manifested, experienced, and understood correctly. Furthermore, within this domain the Spirit brings the ethical and the mystical together; the ethical does not exist as an isolated manifestation of religion.

In Bultmann's estimation, Paul provided only the directive for understanding true religion and its God; it is the best directive found in primitive Christian literature as well as in any piece of literature throughout the history of the church. Nevertheless, in the final analysis, Bultmann reminded his readers that the mythical and cultic religion presented by Paul cannot be true religion for the laity in the modern era.²⁵ Bultmann's point was simply the following: Paul's experience of true religion and its God is not our experience of true religion and its God. After all God always reveals himself anew (eschatologically) within the inner history of our

²⁵ Ibid., 232.

experiences. Here Bultmann even separated himself from the critical work of the History of Religions school. He never agreed with their goal to find the essence of religion within the common denominator of all religious experiences. Hence, for his own purposes, the positive contribution of the History of Religions school was limited to revealing the religious origins and structures of New Testament literature and thought. Although it is true that he believed such studies were imperative for understanding New Testament literature, nevertheless, consistent with his Neo-Kantian presuppositions, Bultmann held that such inquiries, since they were scientific in method, could not disclose the essence of true religion for the scholar, and more importantly, for the laity. In fact, he thought that pursuing the goal of the History of Religions school was dangerous; it will only remove scholars and laity from experiencing the essence of religion and its God.

In Bultmann's estimation, such a mistake was evident in the first edition of Karl Barth's Epistle to the Romans (1919). Although Bultmann held that Barth's work presented an excellent critique of liberal theology, nevertheless, Bultmann denounced Barth's work for attempting to renew the old cultic and mythical religion of Paul for the laity in the modern era. In my estimation, the key in understanding Bultmann's criticism of Barth is the former's faithfulness to his Neo-Kantian presuppositions, that is to say, whether

we are reading Barth or the letters of Paul, true religion is never found in the cultural manifestation of cultic and mythical religion. Such an understanding of religion and God negates their respective reality. In fact, Bultmann stated that he was boggled by those who held "the opinion that one epoch [primitive Christian era] or one person ['historical Jesus' or even Paul] of the past, even the classical ones, can serve as a normative foundation for a religious community." Concerning the uncovering of the essence of religion, Bultmann thought it was Friedrich Gogarten, not Barth who was on the correct path when Gogarten remarked:

Religion is concerned with eternity, and its allows no temporal period to capture it, not even the most important period on earth . . . It is absolutely not the business of religion to find a revelation of eternity in some past period and to venerate it; religion desires to find eternity in its present.²⁶

Bultmann agreed; religion was always a present experience of the revelation of eternity. For Bultmann the letters of Paul pointed humanity to this truth, but they could not present the experience of this truth itself, only God can do that in a present situation of life.

According to Bultmann, therefore, the presence of God is encountered when a person reflects into the present experiences of inner history. He carefully noted that it is a spiritual reflection because the object of its content

²⁶ Ibid., 230.

resides in the human spirit which corresponds to God's Spirit. Once again it is clear; God is not found in propositional statements referring to his being, nor is God found in the pursuit of the ethical good, nor is God found in the psychic conditions which the pious claim to have experienced. Rather, God is found in the human spirit as he freely reveals himself and identifies himself with the experiences of man's inner history.²⁷ For this reason, Bultmann believed that the personal task of reflection was the primary and decisive issue for religion; only through this exercise could God be encountered, experienced, understood, and known. God's existence is within human consciousness; God is Spirit, who is man's spirit.

Summary

In view of this understanding of God and religion, both articles in 1920 develop positions set forth in the 1917 Pentecostal sermon. Bultmann's article, "Religion and Culture" defined the boundaries of religion and culture in his Neo-Kantian scheme. Religion is the feeling of absolute dependence solely within the human spirit; culture

²⁷ In this realm, the reality of God and religion are encountered as "wholly other." Bultmann summarized his position well when he noted that "the 'wholly other' of ethical religion is not the demand of the good, but God, who encounters man in his experiences to the good" (ibid., 234).

is the outward manifestations of the creative activity of human mind in the three realms of science, morality, and art. In their true form, religion and culture always remain separate and distinct; they are independent of each other. Thus, this Neo-Kantian scheme is consistent and complementary for Bultmann's project in his article, "Ethical and Mystical Religion in Primitive Christianity." There is not the slightest possibility that Bultmann was going to find true religion in primitive Christianity since the ethical religion of the Palestinian congregation as well as the mythical religion of the Hellenistic congregation were cultural manifestations of religion. For this reason, the results of critical scholarship from the History of Religions school was important; it exposed and identified the various cultural expressions of primitive Christianity. However, Bultmann realized that the History of Religions school did not advocate his own Neo-Kantian scheme of true religion. Bultmann's observation at this point may seem complex, but really it is not. Simply, he thought that a critical investigation of the literature of the New Testament exposed that primitive Christianity is a syncretistic cultural religion. As this data is creatively presented to the laity, he felt that they would be accessible to the reality of religion as found in the Neo-Kantian scheme. Specifically, they would come to realize that true religion and the presence of God are understood

only when one reflects into the human spirit, freely accepting the experiences of one's inner history. Or, to put it in the language of the 1917 sermon, one will understand religion and God as they truly are when one experiences a hidden and mysterious God, full of contradiction and riddle revealed within the self. For Bultmann, it is this message of religion and its God that is relevant for the modern laity in any situation or in any age. After all, God is always the individual human spirit, understood anew in every situation.

Chapter Six:

Bultmann Returns to Marburg:

His Understanding of God in the Context of Dialectic Theology, Liberal Theology, and Heidegger's Philosophy (1921-25)

Marburg: Bultmann Returns to His Academic Home

Following the war, Bultmann remained at Breslau as Assistant Professor of New Testament until 1920. In the fall of 1920 Bultmann received a call to go to Giessen in order to succeed Wilhelm Bousset as full Professor of New Testament. Bultmann enjoyed Giessen immensely; he spoke fondly of the lively and friendly exchanges he had with his colleagues, including those outside the field of theology. Soon thereafter, he was offered an appointment at Marburg for the following year. Although he found it difficult to leave Giessen, he felt compelled to return to his "academic home." In the fall of 1921 he succeeded his former teacher and colleague Wilhelm Heitmüller, as Professor of New Testament at the Marburg University. He remained at Marburg until his retirement in the fall of 1951.

When Bultmann arrived at Marburg in 1921, he felt that the university provided an academically rich environment. Herrmann, Jülicher, and Rade (key figures in his own student years at Marburg), were still alive and giving

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1918

lectures. He also discovered that the students were strongly motivated, and that their work was quite competent. This aspect was particularly pleasing to him. Furthermore, new colleagues were appointed over the next couple of years with whom he developed important academic relationships: Gustav Hölscher (Old Testament), Rudolf Otto (Systematics), Hans von Soden (New Testament), Paul Friedländer (Classical Philologist), and Martin Heidegger (Philosophy). Hence, as Bultmann continued his academic scholarship during the first half of the 1920's, the university and the city of Marburg provided a congenial environment for him to maintain his commitment to a consistent Neo-Kantian philosophy of the Christian religion and its understanding of God; his interest in the movement of dialectic theology and existential thought thereafter was new, but it did not disrupt his Neo-Kantian commitment. That is, Bultmann's Neo-Kantian dualism provided the fundamental structure into which he assimilated and accommodated all the theological and philosophical information which demanded his immediate attention from 1921-25. Thereby, in spite of his increasingly rigorous academic dialogue during this period, he continued to maintain that his Neo-Kantian understanding of God could only liberate and transform the scholar and the laity through the vehicle of preaching the Christian kerygma.



Bultmann felt that the university provided an academic atmosphere to strengthen his understanding of God, and he found that the city was compatible with his personality.¹ As a boy in the German countryside, Bultmann easily noticed that the vocation of his father--pastor of a church--was at the center of life in the villages he served in Oldenburg. The young Bultmann respected the responsibility of such a position in a particular community. When Bultmann changed the goal of his career from pastor to an academic professional, there were few cities in Germany where the academic profession stood at the center of community life.² Marburg was such a place; since the middle of the nineteenth century government officials reorganized the city around its university. Thus, in spite of his career change, Bultmann was still able to settle in a unique area of Germany where his particular vocation occupied the center of life--an unusual feat for an university professor. Moreover, Marburg replicated essential elements from Bultmann's boyhood, even though the setting was urban rather than rural.

Like rural Oldenburg, during the second half of the nineteenth century, the urban environment of Marburg faced

¹ Bultmann, "Autobiographical Reflections," xxi.

² From previous experience Bultmann could clearly perceive that within the vast political and socio-economic conditions of Berlin, its university, though important, did not occupy the centrality of life in that city.

difficult economic hardships. In the 1850's and 1860's, the Prussian government (1866-67) intervened and decided to attempt to revive Marburg's economy by expanding the university and solidifying the business sector of the city. Certain implementations of the government's policy are worth noting. With respect to the university, its expansion became increasingly visible. From 1870-1914 fifteen buildings, institutes, and clinics were built or renovated. The university budget doubled from 1890-1910, and its student enrollment grew from under three hundred in 1861 to one thousand in 1897 and two thousand by 1907. This had a profound effect upon the population of the city. From 1831 to 1914 the number of university students for every thousand persons in the city increased from 52 to 113.9. As this physical expansion took place, the university also gained academic respect throughout Germany. By 1904 Marburg University had achieved the reputation of providing a quality education. As a result, the university began to lose its traditional provincial character; students throughout Germany enrolled, and talented professors were attracted to come to the institution and teach.³

³ In 1866 only one-tenth of the student body came from outside the province; by 1900 two-thirds, and by 1926 nearly four-fifths were from outside the province. Information in this paragraph is dependent upon Rudy Koshar's, Social Life, Local Politics, and Nazism: Marburg, 1880-1935 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 25-26.

With respect to the business sector, Marburg was known as a service city (crafts, trade, printing, construction, clinics, government offices, etc.) with little industrial development. During the nineteenth century the city had been protected from industrialization by the policies of electoral Hessian officials who feared modernization and reform which usually accompanied industry. They had reason to fear; from the year, 1816, they had witnessed the steady collapse of their Hessian linen industry of northern Hesse. In light of the foreign machine-made textile products, the implementation of protective tariffs by various nations, and the rail networks throughout Europe, by the middle of the century the weaving industry of Marburg had collapsed. Furthermore, the policies of the Hessian officials against industrialization were aided by the location of the city. Marburg was located in the narrow Lahn valley; there was not enough land to develop industry.⁴ Its population was dominated, therefore, by students, professionals, civil servants, white-collar employees, teachers, storeowners, craftsmen, and pensioners. After the first World War, civil servants and white-collar employees were the largest occupational group in Marburg. Hence the city had become an administrative center; it possessed university clinics,

⁴ The shortage of available land also explained why agriculture provided little to Marburg's economy (1.7% in 1925 and 2.7% in 1933).

state and county government offices, elementary and secondary schools, and vocational training institutes. In addition, crafts and trade were also part of the service economy of Marburg; the city was well represented with artisans (e.g., bakers, butchers, tailors, seamstresses, tinsmiths, coppersmiths). In this environment, the Marburg elite or upper middle class were university professors, a small number of university students, wealthy professionals such as lawyers and medical doctors, a handful of small industrialists and building contractors, and powerful city officials.⁵ Thus, many of the professions in Marburg complemented the university.

As Bultmann arrived in this economic setting of Marburg in 1921, he found that the quaint character of the city was compatible with his personality. As a university and service city with little industry, the city promoted a "medieval and villagelike impression."⁶ Such an impression reminded Bultmann of village life in northwest Germany during the years of his childhood. This comparison was not, however, totally identical with his past. Marburg was located in the narrow Lahn valley; unlike village life in northwest Germany, land was scarce in the Lahn valley for farming. This difference did not seem to affect Bultmann;

⁵ See Koshar, Marburg, 13-27, for support of the information in this paragraph.

⁶ Ibid., 26.

he could still appreciate the characteristics of Marburg's version of village life: hard working people, who were predominantly protestant, providing various services for a close-knit community. It was this type of environment as well as this type of person which made life compatible with Bultmann's personality.

The religious orientation of the Marburg community was also compatible with Bultmann's personality. Since Marburg was about 86% protestant, Bultmann, as a protestant theologian, held a distinguished position in that community.⁷ Even so, as a distinguished academic professor, he did not exercise an arrogant attitude in relationship to the protestant laity. Instead, he continued to have a cordial and thoughtful relationship with them. This was evident by his active membership in the local congregation; on occasion he even preached in the church where he was a member, although he was never ordained because of a technical rule in the Evangelical-Lutheran church.⁸ Moreover, when opportunities arose, he

⁷ This statistic is based on the number of protestants in the city in 1932 which exceeded 86%. The percentage of protestants throughout the Reich in 1932 was 64.1% (see *ibid.*, 24).

⁸ A number of Bultmann's Marburg sermons have appeared in Rudolf Bultmann's, Marburger Predigten (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1956). An English translation has appeared under the title, This World and the Beyond: Marburg Sermons, trans. Harold Knight (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960). The chronology of the sermons that appear in this volume begin on 7 June 1936 and go through 25 July 1950. Recently, a select number of his sermons,

would address pastors and laity at various conferences. He never lost his endearment for the people in the local church, always continuing his crusade to keep the local church abreast of recent academic research.⁹

As Bultmann found himself compatible with the range of everyday life in Marburg, he maintained the passion to bridge scholar and laity. We have seen that nothing he did damaged this quest. In fact, Marburg was ideal for such a task. The city brought together the best of Bultmann's two worlds: its medieval and villagelike environment impressed upon his mind certain treasured elements of his boyhood concerning the common people as he pursued a rigorous life of academics. Even so, when Bultmann arrived at Marburg in 1921, his passion to bridge scholar and laity faced a non-theological obstacle: the city was in the midst of economic hardship.

When one evaluates the economic conditions of Marburg in the early to mid 1920's, one may feel that there is an extensive gap between its economic situation and Bultmann's favorable assessment of the city. The intensity of the economic situation would seem to suggest that Bultmann had

including a number from the Marburg congregation, have appeared in Grässer, hg., Das verkündigte Wort. Moreover, the Bultmann archives at Tübingen University list 16 sermons delivered in Marburg from 1921-1925, my period of interest here; see Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen, 11-12.

⁹ Bultmann to Karl Barth, 3 February 1925, Barth/Bultmann: Letters, ed. Jaspert, 19.

lost his sensitivity and compassion for the common person, or, he was oblivious to the serious economic conditions in Marburg. For example, following the first World War unemployment was a serious problem in the city. In light of its constituency of university students, pensioners, and small investors, by 1925 its unemployment rate exceeded the rate of the Reich by three times. In addition, from 1916-1930, households which had yearly incomes less than 1500 marks rose from 50% to 71% of the city's population. This situation is noteworthy since any household below 1500 marks were entitled to special assistance in acquiring food and raw materials.¹⁰ Furthermore, when Bultmann arrived in Marburg, the city was in the midst of its most serious stage of inflation (middle of 1921-1923). Even in light of these economic hardships, it is not fair to believe that Bultmann should be viewed as being insensitive to the common person or oblivious to the economic crisis. One must realize, though harsh by any standard, that since the days of the war, "low earnings and high living costs were ingrained patterns of life" for the majority of German people including those living in Marburg.¹¹ In other words, the economic suffering of the German people had become the norm of life in Marburg and, in lesser or

¹⁰ see Kosher, Marburg, 33, 36.

¹¹ Ibid., 37.

greater degree, throughout Germany.¹² It was the reality of life. Even so, as far as the people were concerned, life went on, and they kept adjusting to the circumstances which confronted them. Bultmann followed and adjusted to the same norm of life. For this reason, it is not out of character that he could recall a favorable environment when he returned to Marburg in 1921. He was used to tough times from the years in northwest Germany through the years of war, and yet, he continued to make every attempt to build up the faith of the common person through his participation and leadership in the local church (e.g., preaching).

Bultmann, Dialectic Theology and Liberal Theology

When Bultmann continued his academic career with the appointment to Marburg in 1921, he gave immediate attention to the state of New Testament studies within the broader field of theology. Dialectic theology had emerged as a distinct movement within theology after the publication of the first edition of Karl Barth's, Epistle to the Romans (1919) and Gogarten's article, "Between the Times (1920)."¹³ However, in June of 1916, the initial impetus

¹² See Berghahn, Modern Germany, 44-115; Pinson, Modern Germany, 350-421; Gordon A. Craig, Germany: 1866-1945 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 396-497; Fritz K. Ringer, ed., The German Inflation of 1923 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

¹³ Although the date of publication for Barth's volume was 1919, in reality it was printed in December of 1918 in order to take advantage of New Year gift-giving--a

for the movement came when Barth's close friend, Eduard Thurneysen whispered to him: "What we need for preaching, instruction and pastoral care is a 'wholly other' theological foundation."¹⁴ Both men felt compelled to bring the church and the academic world together. Both thought this union could only occur by returning to an academic theology. At that time Barth and Thurneysen considered doing an intense study of Kant and Hegel. They quickly decided, however, to abandon that project; they came to realize that such a study would not free them from the theological errors of the modern era. They decided, therefore, to learn their "theological ABC all over again, beginning by reading and interpreting the writing of the Old and New Testaments, more thoughtfully than before."¹⁵ They thought that a fresh reading of the biblical material would free them from the prejudices of their neo-Protestant predecessors. In particular, Barth began to focus upon the book of Romans; hence, with the publication of the fruits

common practice for publishers (see Eberhard Busch, Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts, trans. John Bowden [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976], 106). Gogarten's article originally appeared in Die Christliche Welt 34 (1920), 374-378. An English translation appears in Robinson, Dialectic Theology, 1: 277-282. The title of the article became the title of the theological journal advocating the positions of dialectic theology: Zwischen den Zeiten. The journal began publication in 1923.

¹⁴ Busch, Barth, 97.

¹⁵ Ibid.

of his labor emerged a "dialectic theology," or "the theology of crisis." This movement as well as its publications assisted many of the insights of Bultmann's own biblical and theological concerns because it presented a dialectical tension between God and the world; it attempted hermeneutically to get beyond the liberal ethical interpretation of the biblical text in order to discover the eternal Spirit revealed in the message of the text; and its principle players had similar experiences and positions which also highlighted Bultmann's young life (e.g., an appreciation and respectful criticism of Schleiermacher and Herrmann,¹⁶ a respect for Neo-Kantianism,¹⁷ a desire for

¹⁶ Specifically, as Barth began working through the book of Romans, Busch points out: "Secretly, he now also turned away from Schleiermacher--and from his Marburg teacher [Herrmann]: 'The last direct sign of life I [Barth] received from Wilhelm Herrmann was an inscription, written in the year 1918. It bore the laconic words: "None the less, with best wishes from W. Herrmann"' (Busch, Barth, 100-101). Although it is true that Barth began to distance himself from Schleiermacher and Herrmann, nevertheless, like Bultmann, he saw both men as pivotal figures in the history of modern theology. In spite of his criticisms, Barth always retained a critical interest in Schleiermacher; likewise, he was always grateful for the instruction he received at Marburg under Herrmann (see Karl Barth, The Theology of Schleiermacher: Lectures at Göttingen, Winter Semester of 1923/24, ed. Dietrich Ritschl, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982]).

¹⁷ Like Bultmann, Barth not only appreciated the Neo-Kantian theology of Herrmann, he also appreciated Neo-Kantian philosophy in general, especially the work of Hermann Cohen (see Fisher, Revelatory Positivism?, 170, 185-194).

innovative scholarship to unite laity and scholars,¹⁸ a focus upon the preaching of the Word of God, and an a-political understanding of church and state).

Although Bultmann found the features mentioned above compatible, he described his personal contact with the movement as an attempt "to enter into discussion with this theology;" he never wished to be its spokesman, nor did he wish to be identified with movement.¹⁹ The reason for Bultmann's cautious approach towards the movement of dialectic theology was his commitment to Neo-Kantianism. In his analysis and criticism of their material, he was constantly disturbed by their failure to totally purify the religious sphere from complete objectification which was the supreme goal of his own consistent Neo-Kantian dualism. For example, as a New Testament scholar, Bultmann appreciated Barth's criticism of liberal theology which appeared in Barth's Romans (1919), but he could not agree with Barth's appreciation of Paul's Hellenistic "Christ-cult" as a description of the reality of true religion. In his estimation, Barth had identified true religion with the realm of objectification, i.e. a cultic manifestation of religion. Such an understanding is anathema for a pure Neo-Kantian dualism. After all, for Bultmann true religion

¹⁸ Barth was initially a pastor, serving his first head pastorate in the village of Safenwil, Switzerland (9 July 1911-9 October 1921).

¹⁹ Bultmann, "Autobiographical Reflections," xxiv.

is the revelation of God anew within the immediate inner forces of life. Nevertheless, in spite of the alleged inconsistencies with the dialectical theologians, Bultmann utilized many of their insights into the person of God, biblical interpretation, and the concerns of academics and laity which fit the structure of his own presuppositions. In this context, Bultmann made adjustments in his thought through their assistance, but he did not make wholesale changes.

During the early 1920's, therefore, Bultmann's Neo-Kantian understanding of God remained solidly in place. His contact with dialectic theology, further studies in the New Testament, and his eventual relationship with Martin Heidegger assisted his quest to formulate an understanding of God free from objectification. In other words, these positive contributors strengthened his understanding that God is not a projection of the human mind subject to scientific analysis. Rather, God is the dialectic inner force of human existence who is revealed when one encounters the authority of the Word of God (through preaching) in the concrete situations of life. In maintaining a persistent goal to present a thoroughly consistent understanding of God in conjunction with his Neo-Kantian dualism, it must be said that his interaction with the academic world continued to provide ways to present his view of God to the modern person.

At the heart of the movement of dialectic theology was the first principle of theology, the person of God. For example, in his article, "Between the Times (1920)," Gogarten spoke freely about how the post-enlightenment world had lost any true understanding of God because people were obsessed with the human dimension of all things. For Gogarten, this focus was evident in the interpretation of history and the direction of science, and it had also become the main theme of liberal theology which centered upon the pursuit of human ethical goodness as the revelation of God's will. Thus, Gogarten did not think that the God of the liberal theologians was the God of Christianity. The God that they had constructed was merely a fabrication of the age in which they lived. After all, he wrote, "we are so deeply immersed in humanity that we have lost God. Lost him. Yes, really lost him; there is no longer any thought of ours that reaches him. None of our thoughts reach beyond the human sphere."²⁰

Bultmann had expressed the same concern in his 1917 Pentecostal sermon at Breslau. Hence, such statements by the dialectical theologians caught his attention. Like them, Bultmann was aware that he was witnessing the negative effects of the post-enlightenment era upon the Christian understanding of God. Even so, as Bultmann

²⁰ Gogarten, "Between the Times [1920]," 279.

assessed what the dialectical theologians stated about the era, he remained faithful to his own Neo-Kantian presuppositions, analyzing their use of the term "dialectic" with his own view of God. For example, Bultmann gave a positive evaluation of Barth's use of the term "dialectic" in the second edition of Romans. For Barth dialectic was a contrast between God and the world, of a "duality which is established only in being transcended, and the transcendence of which is its establishment!"²¹ At this point Barth's language echoed Bultmann's sentiments to Neo-Kantianism, i.e. God's transcendence is found only within the contradictory inner forces of life, not within the manifestations of culture. For this reason, Bultmann thought that Barth was correct when he (Barth) wrote, "moreover it is sentimental liberal self-deception to think that from nature and history, from

²¹ Robert W. Jenson, "Karl Barth," in The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century, ed. David F. Ford (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 1:31. On the same page Jenson provides a summary of Barth's project: "The theology of The Epistle to the Romans was rightly labelled 'dialectical,' by foe and friend. The work is a sustained conscious repristination of the Socratic dialectic, of Socrates' assault on Athenian certainties, learned from passionate study of Plato and Socrates' Danish disciple, Soren Kierkegaard. As Socrates invented ever new contradictions, to break down Athens' claim to possession of righteousness, of any direct line from what justice meant in Athens to what justice means in itself, so Barth generated contradictions to break down Christendom's claim to possession of righteousness, of any direct line from what virtue or faith could mean religiously to what they mean in the gospel."

art, morality, science, or even religion, direct roads lead to the impossible possibility of God."²² Barth's comment echoed the Neo-Kantian agenda which was advocated in Bultmann's article, "Religion and Culture" in 1920. Moreover, in Neo-Kantian fashion, Barth also expressed that God cannot be found in any objectification, or attempt at objectification, of empirical data. God is independent of any cultural religious manifestation in the world or any rational projection of the human; he is not under the domain of any empirical or rational law. He is free; in this manner, God is transcendent of the world.

Bultmann also expanded his own terminology through the assistance of the dialectical theologians; he used words or phrases from their movement which fit his Neo-Kantian scheme, specifically the dialectical tension of the Yes/No of God. Barth had stated that God's No is simply a "negation of all this-worldly positions and negations." Barth carefully pointed out that a human encounter with God's No did not mean a "flight" from the world, meaning asceticism or self-chosen martyrdom. Rather, the human experience of God's negation of the world is "the experiencing of divine judgment" upon our whole existence conditioned by sin. Such an experience occurs when one realizes the limits of the world (e.g., nature, human

²² Bultmann, "Barth's Romans," 103.

knowledge, ethical theory); in this state, the person is placed in crisis. As the person awakens to the consciousness of this crisis, he recognizes the situation as a divine crisis, and thus, he chooses to fear the Lord, who he hears and understands as the No of God in faith. For Barth, in this No of God is contained the Yes of God; God's No and Yes is the contradictory state of human consciousness. Hence, faith embraces also the Yes of God in the crisis of negation. Specifically, for Barth faith is captured in the terminology of Kierkegaard; it is a "venture, as a leap into the void. This venture is no 'work,' but it is taking on one's self the divine No, which in itself is already a miracle."²³

In one sense, Bultmann felt that Barth's dialectical scheme of the Yes/No of God was compatible with his dualistic understanding of God. Thereby, in the Neo-Kantian scheme the No of God is encountered in the crisis limitations of the world conditioned by sin (philosophy of culture). In this crisis, faith embraces the Yes of God as the person who awakens the individual to the dialectical revelation of God within human consciousness (philosophy of religion). After all, Bultmann was clear in the 1917 sermon: "God must be a hidden and mysterious God, full of contradiction and riddles."

²³ Ibid., 104; 105; 108.

On the other hand, Bultmann was not convinced that Barth's dialectical scheme concerning the relationship of faith and consciousness within the person of God was consistent with his own Neo-Kantian structure. According to Bultmann, Barth held that faith has its origin "beyond consciousness," i.e. it is not constitutive of consciousness itself. In this construction, Bultmann thought that faith invades the human as a "psychic historical occurrence" which becomes perceptible in the process of human life.²⁴ Consistent with his Neo-Kantian presuppositions, Bultmann felt that the terms science, morality, and aesthetics could be easily interchanged with the term faith in Barth's formulation. In the Neo-Kantian scheme, science, morality, and aesthetics have their origin outside the "religious" consciousness; also, it is possible to conceive of these disciplines as psychic occurrences which manifest themselves empirically in the world. In other words, according to Bultmann, Barth's conception of faith has its origin outside the unique domain of religious consciousness or religious experience. In fact, in Barth's formulation, faith has an origin which can be analyzed by science (psychic occurrence).

In Bultmann's Neo-Kantian structure true religious faith must have its origin within the domain of individual religious consciousness instead of any domain which is

²⁴ See *ibid.*, 110-112.

subject to science. Bultmann's response to Barth was emphatic: "faith is throughout a peculiar definite quality of the contents of our consciousness."²⁵ For Bultmann, religious faith--whatever its peculiar definite quality is--resides solely in consciousness; it is part of the very constitution of consciousness. Specifically, since human consciousness is the presence of God, then faith is within that presence even if one is not aware of it. In this construction, Bultmann anticipated that he would be asked: "How do I come to faith?" He responded by stating that "inner veracity (innere Wahrhaftigkeit) is the only 'way' to faith." In other words, an encounter with the hidden revelation of God (within religious consciousness) is the inner reality of faith. For Bultmann such an understanding of veracity "can never be made 'perceptible'"; it is a faith-decision by each individual person to bow before the absolute reality of God within one's own religious consciousness.²⁶ Hence Bultmann held that the ultimate reality and truth of human existence is within the veracity of the person's religious consciousness--within the Being of God.

In summary, Bultmann's criticism and appreciation of Barth's theology stems from the former's commitment to a consistent Neo-Kantian dualism. In light of Bultmann's

²⁵ Ibid., 111.

²⁶ Ibid., 115.

position, Barth's view of the relationship of faith and consciousness is ultimately a problem of the relationship of faith and God. On the basis of his Neo-Kantianism, Bultmann thought that if Barth maintained that faith is beyond consciousness, then faith must also reside outside of God's Being. If this is truly Barth's position, then Bultmann believed that it necessarily follows that faith in God must be a psychic occurrence made visible in human life. In other words, if Bultmann's assessment of Barth's position was accurate, then Bultmann thought that Barth's commentary on Romans should be understood as a "psychic historical" perception of the Christian life, dwelling in the "land of psychoanalysis."²⁷ Bultmann realized, however, that his own analysis had a problem; Barth claimed specifically that faith in God is not a psychic historical occurrence. Rather, it is an encounter with the Christian symbols of revelational truth (e.g., miracle, crucifixion, resurrection). At this point, Bultmann admitted that he was confused about Barth's formulation; the latter's position on the relationship of faith, consciousness, and God did not seem to follow consistently from his dogmatic claim that God is not a psychic historical occurrence. In fact, in 1926 Bultmann continued his psychological criticism of Barth's position. He accused Barth of falling under the spell of Cohen and Natorp, who had deviated from

²⁷ Ibid., 119, 120.

Herrmann's consistent Neo-Kantian structure, i.e. they had analyzed the manifestation of religion in terms moral psychology--a scientific discipline.²⁸ Bultmann thought that Barth was following the same line of thought. Even so, in spite of this serious difference, Bultmann admitted freely throughout his review of Barth's Romans his appreciation for many of Barth's theological formulations, especially his dialectic understanding of the No/Yes of God which fit well into the boundaries of his own Neo-Kantian view of God. Through the assistance of dialectic theology, Bultmann strengthened his Neo-Kantian understanding of God, i.e. God is the hidden, mysterious, and dialectic tension within human consciousness or the human spirit.

Besides a dialectic understanding of God, there was another area in which Bultmann felt comfortable with the dialectical theologians: their criticism of liberal theology and its conception of God. Agreeing with Gogarten and Barth, Bultmann claimed that the subject matter of theology is God. Along with his dialectical comrades he accused the liberals of projecting man as theology's subject matter. According to Bultmann, the liberals had never comprehended that God is the negation of the human creature, or more specifically, that God is the total

²⁸ Bultmann to Erich Foerster, Walter Schmithals, "Ein Brief Rudolf Bultmanns an Erich Foerster [1926]," Rudolf Bultmanns Werk und Wirkung, hg. Bernd Jaspert (Darnstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984), 72.

denial of a person's relationship to the world. Moreover, he believed that the only way a person (laity and scholar) negates the world is through the content of theology, i.e. the "word of the cross" which is presented best to humanity through the vehicle of preaching. By proclaiming the suffering servant at the hands of the world, the "word of the cross" denies a person's exaltation of oneself; preaching its message convicts the person of one's sin and one's finiteness in relationship to his Judge--God. In Bultmann's estimation, once this conviction before the Judge takes place, man is free to encounter God in the negation of the world and self--affirming the Yes of God's deliverance. Bultmann was disturbed that he did not find such an understanding of God among the liberals. He believed that the liberals had formed God into their own image of human existence; they had even deified humanity. For Bultmann, such an understanding of God can be traced to their distinct interest in the primacy of historical criticism. He thought that since historical criticism led to a relative view of reality, it could not uncover the true God. In other words, from his Neo-Kantian perspective, the liberals never comprehended that God is revealed always anew within the inner forces of the person, the unique residence of true religion. Hence, as liberals subjected religion to a general historical investigation and to particular entities of historical inquiry, Bultmann

believed that their view of God and true religion was fallacious.

Specifically, in view of their inquiry into the historical Jesus, Bultmann felt that his criticism of the liberals was justified. The liberals had claimed that through their historical inquiry, they could uncover the historical Jesus on which faith is based. Bultmann thought such confidence "proved to be a delusion," since various theologians who used their method presented multiple pictures of Jesus which differed greatly with one another. In light of this outcome, he felt that the liberals could not present an authoritative picture of the historical Jesus to scholars or to the laity, i.e. a picture of Jesus which could lead the Christian community to encounter the revelation of God within the inner forces of life.²⁹ Here, Bultmann's Neo-Kantian dualism disclosed his problem with the liberals; he believed that it was not possible to discover the real Jesus Christ as Messiah through historical scientific investigation. For him, the true Christ as Messiah is only encountered and experienced within the religious consciousness which is outside the domain of any scientific investigation. Oddly, Bultmann contended that in the final analysis the

²⁹ Bultmann suggested: "historical research can never lead to any result which could serve as a basis for faith, for all of its results have only relative validity" ("Liberal Theology [1924]," 30).

historical-critical method of the liberals could be used positively to reinforce his own position. Since he believed that their scientific method presented multiple pictures of Jesus which are of relative validity, he concluded that their investigation underlined the fact that "we cannot any longer know Christ after the flesh."³⁰

After all, under the direction of the History of Religions school (Weiss and Heitmüller in his doctorate studies), Bultmann had already concluded that a knowledge of the Jesus Christ as Messiah could not be found in the empirical historical life of Jesus. Thus, the method of the liberals had exposed the validity of his own Neo-Kantian position.

Besides their overall interpretation of history, Bultmann also attacked the liberal interpretation of the entities of historical phenomena. In the latter case, the liberals viewed all historical phenomena as a collection of individual entities which are related to other individual entities. As Bultmann reviewed their position, he concluded that none of these entities within this interrelated structure could claim absolute value for the church, including the period of time when the historical Jesus appeared on earth. Bultmann arrived at this conclusion through a close examination of their method. He noted that the liberals had placed the historical Jesus in the center of a cultic religious organization--the early

³⁰ Ibid., 31.



Christian church community. In Bultmann's estimation, within such a construction of historiography, a cultic interpretation of the church and Jesus was determined by "a law of social psychology" which was indispensable to cultic life. Such a law, as applied by the liberals, held that the centrality of Christ within the cult was not derived primarily from the idea of salvation, but from the cult's social and psychological desire to rally itself for action and proselytizing. In such a construction, the authority of the Christian religion is found within the manifestation of culture (science), and thus, Bultmann could not conceive how any authoritative value for the church could be attributed to the historical Jesus or to Jesus Christ as the Messiah. According to him, their Jesus as well as their Christ was a social and psychological manifestation of a particular community to centralize around a religious ideal--the moral code to love God and one's fellow human being.

Bultmann was sympathetic, however, to the manner in which the History of Religions school disclosed the origins of cultic religion, especially as it related to primitive Christianity. In this case as well, Bultmann realized that the History of Religions school was dominated by the psychological exegesis of the biblical narrative. The focus of their biblical interpretation was not upon the casual events of the historical movement; rather, they

focused upon the religious experiences and moods of a particular people. For this reason, a psychological understanding of cult and myth received the particular attention of the interpreter in the History of Religions school, and the rise of institutions are explained psychologically within the primitive conditions of the culture. As he noted among the liberal interpreters, Bultmann felt that the History of Religions school was locked into a psychological interpretation of the text which understood "all statements as expressions of a particular, regular unfolding, psychic life."³¹ In light of this comparison, Bultmann felt that the liberals and the History of Religions school shared the same problem: the liberals also grounded the essence of primitive Christianity in the social and psychological manifestations of the cult--in the case of the liberal, however, it was the moral ideals of the religious cult. Hence, Bultmann concluded that the liberals had understood Christianity "as a phenomenon of this world, subject to the laws of social psychology;"³² for him, they were paralyzed by a worldly interpretation of the historical Jesus as well as Christ as the Messiah. Such a position was the cardinal sin in Bultmann's construction of a Neo-Kantian philosophy of

³¹ Rudolf Bultmann, "The Problem of a Theological Exegesis of the New Testament [1925]," in Robinson Dialectic Theology, 1:240.

³² Bultmann, "Liberal Theology," 32.

religion since the essence or ground of true religion is not subject to any historical scientific empirical investigation.

Bultmann believed that pantheistic ideas existed within the liberal understanding of the interrelationships of historical entities. For Bultmann, any pantheistic construction was inadequate since it unified religion with empirical objects of investigation (history and nature are objects of science). In his estimation, pantheism began when primitive peoples assigned deities to natural objects (such as trees, rivers, the sky). Eventually, this understanding of deity gave way to the interrelationships of natural phenomenon (e.g., cosmic powers and the laws of nature became divine for humans). Following this step, a further development occurred; the interrelationship of the laws of nature developed into viewing the whole cosmos as a unity, transforming the powers of nature into a pantheism of nature.

Bultmann had found a similar pattern in the liberal view of the history of religion. In the initial stage, primitive humans saw the activity of a deity in particular historical events or in individual historical persons (e.g., prosperity, war, Moses, prophets). This initial stage eventually gave way to viewing history in terms of the interrelationships of forces and laws which unified its progress. Specifically, these forces were viewed as

spiritual forces which enabled humanity to progress from a state of nature (bondage) to a state of culture and civilization (freedom). Bultmann noted that this historical process was designated by the liberals as a "struggle in which the powers of the true, the good and the beautiful are victorious."³³ In their estimation, these virtues will triumph in the progress of humanity.

Bultmann also argued that these victorious powers were viewed as divine characteristics immersed in history. For example, some cultures developed one step further--the final step in a pantheism of history. From Bultmann's perspective, this final step was crucial for the liberal's view of historiography as it affected their own belief in Christianity. The position was this: some societies came to believe that God reveals himself in human personalities who manifest the true, the good and the beautiful in history (e.g., Jesus). In this case, the human personality becomes the incarnation of the divine characteristics of the true, good and beautiful through the interrelationships of historical progress. For the liberals, therefore, the historical Jesus of Nazareth emerged from the primitive Christian community as Christ, the Messiah. In this evolutionary process, Bultmann judged that the liberals had arranged their presentation of the New Testament message

³³ Ibid., 34.

under the rubric of a free and unified moral spirituality in which the ideals of the true, the good, and the beautiful were embodied in the teachings of the Christian community.

In contrast to the liberal position, Bultmann pointed out that the History of Religions school had shown that the one epoch--primitive Christianity--presented contrasting views of the Christian message, depending upon which congregation one was a member. The Palestinian congregation viewed Jesus as a teacher of wisdom, a preacher of repentance, and a prophet of the coming rule of God. In contrast to the Palestinian picture, the Hellenistic congregation presented the "Christ myth," i.e. belief in a mythical picture of the heavenly Son of God descending to the earth to save and deliver humanity. Hence, according to Bultmann, the History of Religions school had shown that within the single epoch of primitive Christianity, there was no single, unified understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ. For this reason, Bultmann concluded that the liberal's scientific investigation of entities within historical phenomena was not capable of establishing an authoritative picture of Jesus Christ for the modern church member. After all, following his Neo-Kantian convictions, Bultmann felt that the liberal's pantheism of history was a social, cultural, and psychological manifestation of religion, subject to

scientific investigation; in this case, religion does not arise anew from an immediate encounter with God within the human consciousness. Rather, in Bultmann's words, the liberal view of God and the emergence of the Christian religion was the eventual construct of human reason through history in which "man thinks he has attained to the comprehension of divine powers" in Jesus, the Christ.³⁴

As far as Bultmann was concerned the entire movement of liberal theology lacked the "insight that God is other than the world, he is beyond the world, and that this means the complete abrogation of the whole man, of his whole history." On this point, Bultmann agreed with Barth and Gogarten's dialectical view of God. He stated that "God represents the total annulment of man, his negation, calling him in question, indeed judging him." In this construction, the Yes of God is affirmed through the No of God, that is to say, a person can only affirm God's deliverance and salvation if one has been brought under the judgment of God to forsake and deny self (one's inner identity) and the world (one's outer identity with the empirical world). According to Bultmann, the liberals had not comprehended this dialectical formulation. Moreover, Bultmann's problem with the liberals was compounded by their idea that God could be directly known as a given object (entity), like other objects, in history.

³⁴ Ibid.

Consistent with the message of the 1917 Pentecostal sermon and his Neo-Kantian dualism, Bultmann declared:

God . . . is known only when he reveals himself. His revelation comes only contingently; it is act, act directed towards men. God's revelation does not make him something known in the sense of intellectual knowledge.³⁵

Here, Bultmann underlined his belief that God can only be known and experienced through a contingent encounter with his revelation. This encounter is beyond the subject-object domain of human reason, natural forces, and historical forces; for Bultmann it is the inner domain of the experience of faith.

Once again, however, Bultmann drew a contrast between the liberals and himself on the issue of faith, since he thought that the liberals sought a basis for faith in this world. For Bultmann, faith enters a person by an act of God; faith is the gift of God which comes from beyond the world and self as God judges the world and self. In this situation, Bultmann held that faith "can only arise as man's answer to the Word of God in which God's judgment and God's grace are preached to him." Here, the centrality of preaching--Bultmann's continual pastoral concern from his childhood--is once again the key aspect in the human's liberation from the world. Real faith to Bultmann is one's active obedience to the preaching of the Word of God, "the word of the cross." If the pastor has preached God's Word,

³⁵ Ibid., 40; 46; 45.

faith granted from hearing the word of God preached is not contaminated by the world; it is a miraculous transformation of the human from the world shaped by reason and scientific inquiry. Bultmann agreed with Barth's quotation of Luther that the essence of faith was defined best by Luther's paradoxical statement: "We only believe that we believe."³⁶

As Bultmann continually assessed his pastoral concerns for the life of the church, we have seen that he was attracted to the presentation of the person of God in the movement of dialectic theology. Like the dialectical theologians, he was quite aware of the post-enlightenment interest in deifying humanity, whether in the secular or religious world. He thought there was an avenue by which to escape this deification: as he had proclaimed to the congregation at Breslau in his 1917 Pentecostal sermon, the Christian church must understand God as hidden and mysterious, full of contradiction and riddle. The dialectical theologians provided assistance to this understanding. Their dialectic understanding of God, i.e. God as mysterious and contradiction, denied the world and the human self (God's judgment--the No of God) and affirmed the deliverance of the individual through faith (God's salvation--the Yes of God). At this point, concerning the understanding of faith in God, a disagreement between

³⁶ Ibid., 47; 51.

Bultmann and Barth was evident. In Bultmann's opinion, Barth hinted that he believed in a psychological understanding of faith in God, a faith shaped by culture. Once again, from his Neo-Kantian perspective, Bultmann did not hold that a legitimate faith could be shaped by culture or subject to scientific investigation (psychology). Rather, for him faith was the free activity of obedience to the preaching of the Word, stemming from the inner forces of life. In light of this difference, Bultmann wrote to Barth that it had become increasingly plain to him that Barth had "no inner relationship to history," including a relationship with the person of God.³⁷

Bultmann and Heidegger

In 1923 Martin Heidegger accepted an appointment in philosophy at Marburg University to succeed Paul Natorp. Heidegger and Bultmann became close friends, a friendship that remained intact years after Heidegger departed Marburg five years later. At Marburg, they met on a regular basis to discuss theological and philosophical issues. Moreover, they held joint seminars in order to express their ideas before doctoral candidates and students. Specifically, in the field of theology, Bultmann challenged the students to progress beyond the continual grip of liberal theology upon

³⁷ Bultmann to Barth, 31 December 1922, Barth/Bultmann: Letters, ed. Jaspert, 4.

the various theological disciplines. In light of his relationship with Heidegger, Bultmann also began to express reservations with dialectic theology, especially its understanding of human existence. In the field of philosophy Heidegger's lectures and seminars challenged the longstanding presuppositions of the Marburg school of Neo-Kantianism. According to him, the Neo-Kantians assumed "that what can be known is really grasped by the sciences alone, and that the objectification of experience by science completely fulfills the meaning of knowledge."³⁸ But Heidegger argued that the Neo-Kantians had not investigated a philosophy of language in association with their view of epistemology. Heidegger believed that a serious problem arises when these two aspects are discussed together. Since he thought that linguistic formulations are not definite configurations of any particular subject being described, he could not conceive of certain epistemological foundations for the exact sciences. Hence, on the basis of Heidegger's challenge, those who stood in the tradition of the Marburg Neo-Kantians felt compelled to

³⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Martin Heidegger and Marburg Theology (1964)," in Philosophical Hermeneutics, trans. & ed. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 199.

adjust their philosophy of culture which would take into account the phenomenon of language.³⁹

Bultmann's attack upon liberal theology and his growing reservations with dialectic theology as well as Heidegger's attack upon the traditional model of Neo-Kantian epistemology captured the attention of faculty and students at Marburg University. Bultmann described this brief epoch (1923-28) as "an extraordinary surge of intellectual life."⁴⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, a student at Marburg at the time, provided a more descriptive picture than Bultmann; he noted that the brief epoch on campus was a period of intellectual tension, turbulence, and controversy which he attributed to the "radical" ideas of Bultmann and Heidegger.⁴¹ Probably both Bultmann and Gadamer's perceptions should be read together. For example the systematic theologian at Marburg, Rudolf Otto, once a close friend of Bultmann, became increasingly critical of Bultmann's work, especially as the latter grew closer to Heidegger. Otto wished to keep closer ties with the movement of dialectic theology, while Bultmann maintained a more consistent Neo-Kantian picture of religion as he sought to apply it to Heidegger's thought. Their

³⁹ See Ernst Cassirer's, Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, trans. Ralph Manheim, 3 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953-1957).

⁴⁰ Jaspert, ed., Barth/Bultmann: Letters, 162.

⁴¹ Gadamer, "Heidegger," 199.

relationship grew so far apart that the students realized the rift between them; even their respective students entered into lively debates representing the positions of their teacher. Meanwhile, the philosopher, Nicolai Hartmann, who stood in the philosophical tradition of the Marburg school, was concerned about the new and challenging ideas he heard from Heidegger. Hartmann was not convinced that Heidegger's ideas represented a positive atmosphere; possibly this contributed to his move to Cologne in 1925. The response of both Otto and Hartmann provide examples which testify to the intellectual tension caused by Bultmann and Heidegger from 1923-1928 on the Marburg campus.

Bultmann and Heidegger's relationship progressed in this controversial atmosphere; they were both intrigued by the other's work in overlapping disciplines. The earliest form of Heidegger's Being and Time was an address before the theological community in Marburg in 1924. He thought it was necessary that both philosophy and theology respond to his ontological analysis of Dasein (Being-there). His ontology was crucial to the field of philosophy, because he defined the discipline:

[an] universal phenomenological ontology, and takes its departure from the hermeneutic of Dasein, which, as an analytic of existence, has made fast the

guiding-line for all philosophical inquiry at the point where it arises and to which it returns.⁴²

In other words, philosophy is the investigation of being, i.e. an investigation into all phenomena as they show themselves to be (Dasein--being there). He thought that such an investigation would help theology uncover "a more primordial interpretation of man's Being towards God."⁴³ Heidegger's agenda was noticed by Bultmann, especially Heidegger's philosophical conception of human existence as Dasein. In light of his Neo-Kantian philosophy of religion, Bultmann was obsessed with a pure understanding of the person of God, that is to say, that God could not be an objectification of the human mind or a product of a scientific analysis of human consciousness (via history or historical psychology). Since Bultmann identified the person of God with the inner forces of human life, he thought that an investigation into pure being--the being of the human person (Dasein)--would greatly serve his understanding of God. Hence, in this context, Bultmann found Heidegger's discussion about the meaning of language crucial, especially speaking meaningfully of the person of God. After all, if all elements of objectification are absent from Bultmann's understanding of God, he wondered

⁴² Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962), 62. "Heidegger's italics."

⁴³ Ibid., 30.

whether any speech of God could be meaningful for the theologian and the laity.

Meanwhile, Bultmann's lecture at Göttingen in February 1925, "The Problem of a Theological Exegesis of the New Testament," showed definite ties with Heidegger's thought. Bultmann mapped out his problem with the contemporary theological interpretations of the New Testament; in his estimation, they all attempted to control the meaning of the text. He argued that orthodox Lutheranism, Idealism, Romanticism, historical naturalism, the History of Religions school, and the new "Gestalt" school could be viewed under the same rubric: they all assume that the "exegete is basically in control of what is said or what is meant." In other words, all of these theological positions come to the biblical text with their own scientific presuppositions by which they control the language and the meaning of text for the church. Herein, Bultmann believed that they all worked from a common assumption: the "idea of human existence as controllable and certain." Bultmann claimed that his view of exegesis rested upon a different conception of human existence:

Here human existence is not viewed in general terms and man is approached not as a member of a species, but in his individual life, operating within time with its moments which are unique and do not recur, with its events and decisions. That means that we are not in control of our existence and not certain of it; it is uncertain and problematic, and so we are ready to hear words as words, to hear questions which require

us to decide, and to hear the authoritative claim of the text as it demands a decision.⁴⁴

Bultmann's statement reveals a continual commitment to his Neo-Kantian dualism. He felt that all the contemporary theological interpretations of Scripture viewed human existence as an empirical member of the human species--subject to scientific analysis. He maintained that all such controllable and certain conceptions of human existence cannot lead to his understanding of true religion or God. On the other hand, as he proclaimed in his 1917 Pentecostal sermon, an individual understanding of human existence is freely open to the unique events and decisions revealed by God. In such an understanding of human existence the moments of the inner forces of life do not recur, God is always revealing himself anew in situation. For this reason, it must be affirmed that we are not in control of our own existence. Rather, following the voices of Schleiermacher and Herrmann, Bultmann stated once again that humans are totally dependent upon God; in the state of dependence they hear God's word and respond to it. Even so, from the quote above, one senses that Bultmann wanted to enrich his Neo-Kantian understanding of human existence with the terminology of Heidegger's ontology. Hence, terminology such as "human existence" and "existence"

⁴⁴ Bultmann, "Theological Exegesis," 243.

became more pervasive in Bultmann's work where at one time he used the term "experience" (Erlebnis).

Bultmann's lecture on "The Problem of a Theological Exegesis of the New Testament" provided insight into how the believer, interpreting the New Testament, can have a self-understanding of faith in God. The lecture reveals that Heidegger's view of ontology assisted Bultmann's formulation. Previously, Bultmann had appreciated the ability of the History of Religions school to uncover the religious background and setting of the New Testament narratives (e.g., Hellenism, Judaism, Oriental). Bultmann used this information to unfold what he thought to be the underlying structures of religious experience in the New Testament narratives. He thought that if he could comprehend the nature of religious experience in those narratives, he had a directive for religious faith in the modern era. According to Bultmann, the biblical narrative supplied such a directive; it presented the experience of faith as always being a fresh, spontaneous response to the Word of God in each particular situation of life. For him, such an understanding of faith was always relevant, since it arises in particular situations of an individual's life. As Bultmann approached the New Testament, therefore, he held that real faith, true religion, and real history only belong to the sphere of the philosophy of religion which is outside any religious objectification of the empirical

1. *Chlorophyll a* (Chl *a*)

2. *Chlorophyll b* (Chl *b*)

3. *Chlorophyll c* (Chl *c*)

4. *Chlorophyll d* (Chl *d*)

5. *Chlorophyll e* (Chl *e*)

6. *Chlorophyll f* (Chl *f*)

7. *Chlorophyll g* (Chl *g*)

8. *Chlorophyll h* (Chl *h*)

9. *Chlorophyll i* (Chl *i*)

10. *Chlorophyll j* (Chl *j*)

11. *Chlorophyll k* (Chl *k*)

12. *Chlorophyll l* (Chl *l*)

13. *Chlorophyll m* (Chl *m*)

14. *Chlorophyll n* (Chl *n*)

15. *Chlorophyll o* (Chl *o*)

16. *Chlorophyll p* (Chl *p*)

17. *Chlorophyll q* (Chl *q*)

18. *Chlorophyll r* (Chl *r*)

19. *Chlorophyll s* (Chl *s*)

20. *Chlorophyll t* (Chl *t*)

21. *Chlorophyll u* (Chl *u*)

22. *Chlorophyll v* (Chl *v*)

23. *Chlorophyll w* (Chl *w*)

24. *Chlorophyll x* (Chl *x*)

25. *Chlorophyll y* (Chl *y*)

26. *Chlorophyll z* (Chl *z*)

27. *Chlorophyll aa* (Chl *aa*)

28. *Chlorophyll ab* (Chl *ab*)

29. *Chlorophyll ac* (Chl *ac*)

30. *Chlorophyll ad* (Chl *ad*)

biblical text by the human subject. Hence, if true faith in God is to arise spontaneously from reading the biblical narrative, Bultmann held that the reader must come to the biblical text without any prior presupposition concerning what the text says or what the text means. In other words, using Heideggerian language, Bultmann held that the interpreter must approach the text by recognizing the uncertainty of his existence in human history as well as recognizing no preconceived understanding or definition of one's existence. Specifically, one must suspend, even eliminate, his life in culture and everyday history to encounter the reality of God. Moreover, it followed for Bultmann that the meaning of the biblical text was not reflected in the sequential events which are stated in the text (causal view of history) nor in a stationary picture of the event being read (a photograph of history). Rather, the authority of the Word of God comes as a temporal event in which the person is to act and respond freely in his situation; it occurs only in decision. To put it another way, using Heidegger's language, Bultmann said that the text "is existentially alive."⁴⁵ Consistent with his Neo-Kantian dualism, Bultmann meant that faith is expressed only when the reader or interpreter allows the text to speak freely to the inner forces of the individual's existence without any prior presuppositions. In this

⁴⁵ Ibid., 245.

moment, a self-understanding of faith in God is encountered by the interpreter.

According to Bultmann, only when one has an existential encounter with the mysterious and contradictory forces of the inner life (real history) can one experience faith in God. Bultmann argued, however, that the New Testament presented a dilemma for the interpreter since it possessed a dualistic structure of history, in that it presents a causal view of history as well as a record of spontaneous acts of faith (inner history). In his lecture at Göttingen, Bultmann informed his audience that it must be remembered that the New Testament appears in the context of objective scientific history. For example, the History of Religions school labored to unfold the philological origins and connotations of the language which appears in the New Testament. Also, the New Testament records historical events in a sequential relationship to other events. In order to make sense of these sequential events, Bultmann held that one must presuppose a scientific method of historical investigation in order to interpret what is occurring in the biblical narrative. Once again, retaining his affiliation with Neo-Kantianism, Bultmann maintained that these scientific investigations of the New Testament narrative cannot yield the experience of faith in God. Nevertheless, for Bultmann, these sequential events recorded in the biblical narrative have value for the

reader; they tell him about the empirical situations in which faith arose in the individual. In light of this view of the written biblical text, Bultmann stated that like any scientific discipline of theology, the New Testament can only be the Word of God indirectly since its material can be investigated in a scientific manner. He thought that we are confronted in Scripture "by a kind of speech which is primarily a speaking about God and about man, for it is uttered in the human sphere."⁴⁶ In other words, the written biblical text, which is subject to scientific analysis, is the product of human reason; hence, the text speaks only about what reason projects as a knowledge of God and man. By applying Heidegger's philosophy of language to his Neo-Kantianism, Bultmann wondered how the New Testament narrative can be viewed as speaking meaningfully about God since language is cultural and subject to scientific investigation.

In contrast to the sequential and scientific view of interpreting the biblical narrative, Bultmann made clear that the distinctive characteristic of New Testament interpretation is that the authority of the Word of God is a hidden word, and the revelation of God, which is present in Scripture, is a hidden revelation. Faith in God arises, therefore, only when one responds in action (decision) to the authority of the Word of God in a concrete situation in

⁴⁶ Ibid., 254.

life. It is an encounter with the hidden revelation of God in the inner existence (history) of the believer that gives rise to faith. It comes freely--it is "existentially alive"--without any prior conception of faith, God, or revelation. In this case, faith is not a timeless truth which one can affirm forever. Rather, faith "is real only in the act in which revelation becomes an event;"⁴⁷ it is fresh, spontaneous, and always new. According to Bultmann, only in the moment of faith does one have an authentic relationship with God because faith speaks from God in the existence of one's inner history.

Summary

Essentially, Bultmann presented the same understanding of inner history to his audience in Göttingen which he had to his audience in the 1917 Pentecostal sermon in Breslau. The relationship between the interpreter and the biblical text followed the same line of thought; one must allow the authority of the Word of God to speak freely in every spontaneous situation which arises in one's life. Only in that moment may faith embrace the revelation of God within the person. Hence, whether before the scholars of

⁴⁷ Ibid., 254. On the same page, Bultmann put it another way: "man does not have his own existence at his disposal in such a way that he can pose the question of existence for himself and possess the possibility of free action--all this is found only in the experience of faith."

Göttingen and his own colleagues in Marburg, or before pastors and laity in protestant congregations and conferences, Bultmann maintained his allegiance to the centrality of preaching the Word of God as the vehicle to encounter God's revelation, a position held from his childhood.

Although Bultmann worked to unite scholar and laity, nevertheless, he also engaged in esoteric academic scholarship, discussion, and debate in order to refine and improve his understanding of God. Marburg provided the right environment for Bultmann to perform his task: for example, the university had a solid academic reputation, a professor was highly respected among city patrons, and the city was quaint and protestant. As Bultmann returned to Marburg in 1921, he gave much of his attention to the rising movement of dialectic theology, the continuing affects of liberal theology, and the new contributions of Heidegger's existential phenomenology. In this period of academic interaction, Bultmann did not surrender his commitment to his Neo-Kantian philosophy of religion; the boundaries of his dualism were maintained in a rigorous and critical manner. For this reason, he incorporated only those insights which enhanced his own understanding of God. He found Gogarten and Barth's dialectic understanding of God particularly congenial, in that he agreed that God is not an empirical object for scientific investigation. Even

so, Bultmann and the dialectical theologians held that in the spontaneous situations of life, an empirical conception of God arises initially within one's inner experience. According to a dialectic understanding of God, however, this God must be negated (the No of God) in order to affirm God who transcends the empirical world (the Yes of God) within the unique sphere of religious consciousness. Hence, through this dialectical tension, God is victorious over any empirical conception of God. God is free; he is transcendent. Furthermore, Bultmann joined the dialectical theologians in the final attempt to purge the field of theology from the liberal theologian's human ethical religion. Instead of a religion which deified humanity, Bultmann and the dialectical theologians wished to retain the transcendent revelation of God to humanity.

Although Bultmann was supportive of the dialectical theologians, he was not convinced that Barth had grasped consistently the reality of an understanding of God within the inner forces of life. He believed that Barth constantly flirted with making the person of God an object of the human psyche. In Bultmann's estimation, if God is an object of the human psyche, then God is a projection of the rational consciousness of the person, and thus, subject to scientific investigation. Or, to put it another way, religion would be a cultural psychological projection of God. For Bultmann and his Neo-Kantian dualism, such a

conception of religion must be rejected; it is idolatry since it is fashioned after the rudiments of this world.

In contrast to his reservations about Barth's theology, Bultmann found Heidegger's philosophical discussion about human existence supportive for his Neo-Kantian scheme. Bultmann felt that Heidegger's concept of Dasein was a tremendous aid in uncovering a person's inner existence, the root of religion which is free of the objective and the subjective world of culture, science, morality, and aesthetics. In this realm the Word of God, through preaching, encounters human existence in the situations of life, free from any predetermined condition of human existence. Herein, God is freely revealed. In the final analysis, therefore, Bultmann came to realize that Heidegger's ontology assisted in uncovering the person of God who is our inner existence free from the world. A dilemma remained, however. In light of Heidegger's philosophy of language, Bultmann wondered how theology or even the New Testament narrative speaks meaningfully of God since language is cultural and subject to scientific investigation.

Chapter Seven

Can We Meaningfully Speak of God? (1925)

Neo-Kantianism and Heidegger: Speaking of God

It is therefore clear that if a man will speak of God, he must evidently speak of himself.¹

In his 1917 Pentecostal sermon at Breslau, Rudolf Bultmann identified God as the spontaneous experience (Erlebnis) of the hidden, mysterious, and contradictory forces within human consciousness. As Bultmann proclaimed the intrinsic identity between God and human consciousness, his thoughts were not directed towards the epistemological implications of speaking meaningfully about the person of God. Around 1923, however, Bultmann's thinking on this point began to change for two reasons: 1) he was becoming increasingly aware of the implications of his own Neo-Kantianism, and 2) he had come into personal contact with Martin Heidegger's philosophy of language and existence. Concerning Neo-Kantianism, Bultmann had come to realize that if God is the inner force within us, and God cannot

¹ Rudolf Bultmann, "What Does It Mean to Speak of God? [1925]," in Funk, Faith and Understanding, 55. Bultmann's volume, Faith and Understanding was dedicated to Martin Heidegger. To my knowledge, the article appears in German in two places. Originally, it appeared under the title, "Welchen Sinn hat es, von Gott zu reden?," Theologische Blätter 4 (1925): 129-135. Also it appears under the same German title in the volume, Glauben und Verstehen (Tübingen: Verlag J.C.B. Mohr, 1954), 1:26-37.

be known as an object of the human mind, then it is very difficult to speak meaningfully at all about the person of God. Bultmann's concern was underscored by Heidegger's attack upon human language. Heidegger had argued that all linguistic propositions--whether in the sciences, morality, aesthetics, or religion--are not definite configurations of what is being described. In this case, even language about God is not immutable; thus, there cannot be any constant characteristic attributed to the person of God. As far as Bultmann was concerned, Heidegger's position did not shatter his own understanding of God as articulated in his 1917 sermon. After all, Bultmann had stated that God always reveals himself anew in each situation. Moreover, Bultmann found assistance in Heidegger's philosophy of existence to strengthen his own Neo-Kantian understanding of God. This assistance was evident when Bultmann conveyed that speaking of God is meaningful when we speak of ourselves.² Or, to put it another way, speech of God is meaningful in the spontaneous moment of a faith-encounter with the inner forces of God's hidden revelation within our existential being.

As Bultmann received help from Heidegger's philosophy of existence, he strengthened the strict boundaries of his Neo-Kantian dualism concerning the person of God. In 1925, Bultmann's dualism was apparent as he made an important

² Ibid., 55, 56.

distinction between speaking about God and speaking of God. For Bultmann, if one speaks about God, one has conceptualized God as an object of thought within one's environment. In this case, speech about God refers to speech conditioned by the culture surrounding a person, subject to scientific, ethical, and aesthetic analysis. According to Bultmann, a true understanding of God can never be found in speech about God. On the other hand, using Heidegger's assistance, if one speaks of God, one is speaking of God as the spontaneous inner forces of life revealed within human existence. Herein, God is encountered as the free and spontaneous person of our existential being. In other words, the phrase--to speak of God--is to be understood as being totally devoid of any objectification of the person of God. For this reason, even Bultmann's prior use of the Neo-Kantian categories of experience (Erlebnis) and the individual (Individuum) as well as the Neo-Kantian notion of consciousness are almost absent from his writings in 1925. Bultmann feared that such categories and notions were in danger of making the inner life of the human into an object, specifically an object of psychological science. Instead, under the influence of Heidegger, Bultmann began to use such language as faith, our existential being, and existence as terms which he understood as being free from any



objectification.³ Herein lies meaningful speech of God: a faith-encounter with the reality of existence is a faith-encounter with God.

Bultmann's distinction between speaking about God and speaking of God also has an anthropological dimension. When Schleiermacher identified God with the inner feelings of the human, there was a theistic-anthropological identification between God and humanity. In Bultmann's case, through the services of Neo-Kantianism, the History of Religions school, and dialectic theology, this identification has gone through constant critical refinement. This refinement reached its peak when Bultmann critically assessed Heidegger's philosophy of language and existence for his own use. By applying Heidegger's philosophy to his own Neo-Kantianism, Bultmann came to the conclusion that the phrase--talking about ourselves is talking about God--is an objectification of ourselves and God, that is to say, it makes the anthropological-theistic identification into an object which is subject to scientific analysis. On the other hand, through the same synthesis of Heidegger's philosophy and his own Neo-Kantianism, Bultmann felt that the phrase--talking of ourselves is talking of God--is a legitimate

³ This observation was made also by Johnson, Demythologizing, 179. In my estimation, when Bultmann uses the phrase, "our existential being," he means the ontological union of our inner being with God's being. We become aware of this union in the free act of faith.

anthropological-theistic identification, since he claimed that the reality of ourselves and God arises freely in the moment of our inner existence. By grace, God appears as a being who is there (ontologically conceived), embraced by faith and free from any objectification.

Accordingly, Bultmann's Neo-Kantian dualism permeated his entire 1925 article, "What Does It Mean to Speak of God?". In fact, he assumed in the article that the dualism is a self-evident presupposition; hence, he did not believe that it required critical examination, proof, or rational justification since all such processes objectified the realm of religion, a point contrary to his philosophy. From his perspective, therefore, the entire realm of life should be comprehended dualistically. In order to solidify his point, Bultmann used existential terminology to designate his dualistic distinctions between external and existential. The external referred to the objectified world--traditional metaphysical and epistemological experiences comprehended in subject-object relationships (culture). On the other hand, our existential being is the free act of religious existence, including the spontaneous acts of faith not subject to metaphysical or epistemological investigations (religion). In this situation, a free act of faith in God cannot be objectively proven; it can only be believed.⁴

⁴ Bultmann, "Speak of God?", 63.

Bultmann's assumption that religion was distinct from culture made his dualistic philosophy immune to Heidegger's epistemological criticism; but most other Neo-Kantians were not so fortunate. The majority of Neo-Kantians, including Natorp and Cohen, understood religion as essentially ethical, and therefore, they viewed religion as being in the domain of culture. But as noted earlier, Heidegger argued that all linguistic propositions--whether in the sciences, ethics, aesthetics, or religion--are not definite configurations of what is being described. Heidegger's philosophy of language constituted an epistemological challenge to the entire construction of such Neo-Kantian thought and undermined the espoused certainty of ethical religion. Since Bultmann deviated from his fellow Neo-Kantians on this matter, his philosophy of religion was exempt from Heidegger's critique. Instead, Bultmann felt compelled to show that meaningful speech of God was possible, even by using Heidegger's terminology to strengthen his Neo-Kantian understanding of God.

Philosophical and Theistic Worldviews

Reality, as we commonly use the term, reflects a view of the world which has dominated our thinking since the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, both of which were under the influence of the world-view of Greek philosophy.⁵

⁵ Ibid., 58.

In the lecture Bultmann delivered at Göttingen University on 6 February 1925, he told his audience that theoretical theology as well as the biblical narrative can "only speak about God and about man;" they can "never speak from God."⁶ In this statement, Bultmann's dualism is fundamental. Any scientific discipline (e.g., theology) or communication which depends upon propositional statements for its message (e.g., biblical narrative), can only tell a person about God and about human existence. In this case, he affirmed that to speak about God and human existence is to describe them as an object of the human mind. In that same year (1925), Bultmann underlined this analysis when he wrote: "If 'speaking of God' is understood as 'speaking about God,' then such speaking has no meaning whatever, for its subject, God, is lost in the very moment it takes place."⁷ For Bultmann, God is lost because in that moment when one speaks about God, the human mind has created an idea of God's reality as being "Almighty," determining all things. In other words, any speech about God is a human projection of who God is, created as an image of the human mind.

According to Bultmann, the projection of God's reality as an object of the mind has dominated western

⁶ Bultmann, "Theological Exegesis," 252; see also, 254.

⁷ Bultmann, "Speak of God?", 53.

philosophical and religious thought in various ways. He believed that the western view of God's reality is interwoven with a concept of reality which can be traced to Greek philosophy, and more recently expressed in Renaissance and Enlightenment thought. In this tradition, the concept of reality is related to a unified complexion of this world, a worldview, usually based upon two teleological or causal perspectives: materialism (matter) or idealism (spiritual/soul). Both perspectives seemed to him to be conceived without a special reference to human existence. That is, the Greeks observed humanity as solely an object among other objects, not occupying an elevated position in the world. In this case, humanity is merely part of the causal chain of matter or of the soul. For example, the material perspective has evolved to the modern position that humanity is an "accidental result of a combination of atoms, as the highest vertebrate, related to the apes."⁸ Meanwhile, the idealist perspective has evolved to the modern position that humanity is an "interesting phenomenon of psychological complexes."⁹ Bultmann believed that both perspectives downplayed the importance of humanity since neither one seriously investigated what constitutes human existence. Or, to put

⁸ Ibid., 58. Here it seems that Bultmann had in mind modern studies in the natural sciences, especially the work of Charles Darwin and Thomas Henry Huxley.

⁹ Ibid.

it in the language of Heidegger, neither materialism nor idealism came to grips with what constitutes Being (Dasein--being there). For this reason, Bultmann thought that both the material and idealist traditions viewed human existence as a product of the laws of causality, i.e. part of a unified complexion of a rational and empirical culture. On the other hand, in view of Bultmann's Neo-Kantianism, the primary constitutive element of human existence is religion; a proper view of human existence and religion are synonymous. Hence, Bultmann felt that the materialist and idealist traditions could never understand human existence as spontaneous, hidden, and mysterious--intrinsic of the person of God and our existential being.

Like the Greek philosophical tradition, Bultmann believed that the same problem of objectification was evident in a theistic or Christian worldview. He held that in the tradition of theism, God is a fabrication of the human mind, specifically, God is an idea of an independent Being on whom our existence is dependent. Eventually, according to Bultmann, this conception of theism was adapted to a modern view of the world governed by rational and empirical laws. In the process of this development, the rational and empirical laws of the world were viewed as a divine activity. Bultmann thought that this activity led to pantheism in modern western thought. Moreover, Bultmann held that many theists in the past, including traditional

orthodox Lutherans, followed this same conception of God. They had attempted to construct persuasive arguments and proofs to demonstrate the reality of God on the basis of rational and empirical laws in the world. In Bultmann's estimation, these arguments are fallacious because God is not subject to laws of objectification, nor can the activity of God be observed outside our own existential being. After all, Bultmann held that God and our existential being are one. Thereby, God and his activity can never be identified with the laws that govern the world. Otherwise, God and our existential being would be determined by those laws, and as such, humanity would never encounter the free spontaneous revelation of God within our existence. Rather, humanity would bind God to the rational and empirical laws of their own mind.

Since Bultmann's philosophy of religion understood God as being intrinsic of human existence, it should not be surprising that he believed that traditional western conceptions of reality were, fundamentally, godless, atheistic, and sinful. In his estimation, the modern view of the world had mistakenly equated a world governed by law with divine activity. In doing so, Bultmann felt that the modern person had "put himself outside the actual reality of his own existence, and therefore at the same time outside God." Consequently, anytime a person viewed God as being outside his own inner existence he denied God's claim

upon him. Bultmann referred to such a person as an atheist who speaks only of what is not God, because he has equated God with the objects of the world. For this reason, Bultmann has referred to such speech about God as sinful and godless; it is language that is external to God since it is determined by objective linguistic propositions. The result is nonsense--essentially, it is meaningless attempts to speak meaningfully about God. Thereby, Bultmann thought that traditional western worldviews have never "known" God because of linguistic and epistemological impediments. Simply stated, "the work of God cannot be seen as a universal process, as an activity which we can observe (as we observe the workings of the laws of nature), apart from our own existence."¹⁰ After all, for Bultmann, God is the reality determining our spontaneous inner existence. Only within our inner existence is God discovered or known.

If We Must Speak of God

Bultmann believed that his understanding of God provided the directive to lead western intellectual thought as well as German ecclesiastical life out of godlessness. For him the directive was clear that "if a man will speak of God, he must evidently speak of himself." Even so, he

¹⁰ Ibid., 54; 59. Bultmann stated: "Consequently, every setting of ourselves outside God would be a denial of God's claim on us; it would therefore be atheism and would be sin" (ibid., 55).

realized the great dilemma that faced his understanding: "if I speak of myself am I not speaking of man?"¹¹ In other words, as a human, am I not limited to the domain of the objectification of humanity? In Bultmann's philosophy of culture, speech about humanity is expressed typically in the domain of science, morality, and aesthetics. On the other hand, Bultmann's intrinsic understanding of human existence and the person of God does not belong to his philosophy of culture. Rather, it belongs to his philosophy of religion. In the structure of Bultmann's dualism, therefore, speaking of human existence and speaking of God could only be meaningful in the context of his philosophy of religion. The problem remains, however, whether it is possible within Bultmann's philosophy of religion to speak meaningfully about the reality of human existence and of God without such linguistic descriptions falling into the realm of objectification. In the final analysis, Bultmann held that it is possible to speak meaningfully of human existence and God "if we must" (wenn wir müssen).¹² By this he meant that if it is absolutely necessary to communicate the moment of God's revelation of himself within our existential being, then we must do so.

Bultmann stated that there are two ways to understand

¹¹ Ibid., 55.

¹² Ibid., 61.

the word, "must": from the outside or from the free act of obedience. From the outside, the "must" describes a person's relationship as an object "under the causal compulsion of a subject."¹³ For example, God commands that I love my brother. In this case, God stated an immutable ethical command which humanity must follow throughout the process of history. In turn, a person or a particular group of people can be analyzed to see if they have conformed to God's immutable ("must") standard. According to Bultmann, if we must speak of God in this situation, then there is no freedom or spontaneity in his being or in the human. Rather, God is a being who demands that a person conform to an eternal and immutable ethic which is outside one's existential being. In Bultmann's Neo-Kantian scheme, such a God can never be known existentially.

On the other hand, if we are going to speak of God meaningfully in the moment of our encounter with the revelation of God, our speech must arise spontaneously from this encounter within our existential being. Bultmann understood this act of speech as a free act of obedience, i.e., to freely "put one's self under a 'must'." Bultmann's use of the terms, freedom and "must," is not contradictory. In his construction of the philosophy of religion, these terms are intrinsic. For example, his understanding of obedience is not a deed in submission to

¹³ Ibid., 61.

the prescribed will of God, nor is it a response to an emotion or compulsion. Rather, it is an absolutely free act which spontaneously confronts us. In this existential condition, there can be no prior knowledge of this free act; it "must" arise freely. However, as the revelation of God arises freely and existentially, the person "must" respond freely in obedience to God's revelation. The existential "must" incorporates both of these dimensions. Bultmann stated, therefore, that the person's act of obedience can only be free "if it is simultaneous with the must."¹⁴ Here lies the intrinsic union of freedom, obedience, and the "must" within the reality of God and our existence.

By 1925, through the use of Heidegger's philosophy, Bultmann made it clear that the inner forces of God within us are not emotional and psychological compulsions. In this way, he clarified the use of such language found in his 1917 Pentecostal sermon. Being understood existentially, the revelation of God's word comes freely--without any compulsion--to the inner existence of the human. At the moment of God's revelation, a person "must" respond to the reality of God within his existence, since the revelation of God is the sole event present within one's existence at that moment. The revelation and the response is a simultaneous event in which the person "must"

¹⁴ Ibid., 61; 62.



act. Nothing else is there; nothing of what is being revealed was known before the revelatory-moment. Although the language sounds like a creative application of Heidegger's philosophy to theology, Bultmann minimized this connection. Rather, he confessed that his thoughts followed his old master and teacher, Wilhelm Herrmann. Herrmann had stated that we can speak of God "only in so far as we are speaking of his Word spoken to us, of his act done to us."¹⁵ In the moment of this encounter, i.e. the simultaneous free act of obedience and God's Word speaking to us, a person is free to speak meaningfully and to act meaningfully from God. At this point, Bultmann specified that the "word spoken by God" or "his Word spoken to us" (the kerygma) comes through the preaching of the Word--the vehicle of revelation. In other words, "we must" speak meaningfully from and of God only in the moment we simultaneously respond in free obedience to the kerygma spoken to us.

Since God reveals himself anew in each moment, Bultmann held that the simultaneous response in free obedience to the Word of God can only be received in faith. Here, Bultmann felt that he had unwrapped a Lutheran understanding of faith in its purest form; faith is the free act of obedience within our existential being. Faith has no prior content; it makes no prior judgments; and it

¹⁵ Ibid., 63.

has no prior foundation in any object. Faith is not rationally, psychologically, dogmatically, or pietistically conditioned. Faith merely believes what is revealed anew by God in the existential moment of our inner existence. In this way, God and faith correspond, i.e. as God reveals himself anew, faith is received anew. For this reason, Bultmann held that faith does not have a constant definition; it is not an entity which can be objectively investigated or proven. In Bultmann's construction, therefore, it follows that it is impossible to demonstrate the rightness of faith or to speak about faith before fellow human beings. Rather, for Bultmann, "faith can be only the affirmation of God's action upon us, the answer to his Word directed to us."¹⁶ Faith is, therefore, always a fresh act; it is always a new act of obedience to the moment of God's revelation within us.

In light of the interrelationship of Bultmann's understanding of the revelation of God, faith, and obedience, he reminded his readers that the Word of God enters our world "wholly fortuitously, wholly contingently, wholly as specific event." Consistent with his Neo-Kantian structure, Bultmann used the term, world, as a reference to our everyday life--the world created by our mind. In order for humans to be transformed out of the

¹⁶ Ibid.

world of everyday life--the world of sin--they must receive the spoken Word of God which encounters them wholly spontaneously as a specific event within their inner existence. For Bultmann, the Word of God performs a dialectical act upon the person: the Word confronts the person as a sinner who is under the dominance of the empirical world. The person is free only when he obeys the spontaneous revelation of the Word of God in faith. In Bultmann's estimation, faith is, therefore, the "Archimedean point from which the world is moved off its axis and is transformed from the world of sin to the world of God."¹⁷ In this situation, faith is the claim to be believed in the moment of transformation. Bultmann's view of faith is purely fideistic; it has no set definition, no guarantee for the future, no firm authority, nor a foundation on which we establish ourselves. In the daily process of life, therefore, faith "always becomes uncertain again as soon as we observe ourselves from outside as men and begin to question ourselves. It is always uncertain as soon as we reason about it, as soon as we talk about it. Only in act is it sure." In other words, for Bultmann, only in the moment of the act of faith is speech of God and of our existence meaningful. Existential faith is never under our control; our act of faith always receives the Word of God spontaneously. Even so, Bultmann had to admit

¹⁷ Ibid., 63.

that his discussion in the 1925 article was speech "about God and as such, if God is, it is sin."¹⁸ By discussing the person of God and our existence in propositional language, God and our existence was being viewed from the "outside." Hence, our speech of God and existence can only be meaningful at the moment of an encounter with the spontaneous revelation of God.

God as "Wholly Other"

Bultmann viewed any meaningful and spontaneous encounter with the revelation of God within our existence as an encounter with God as "Wholly Other." In his 1917 Pentecostal sermon, Bultmann referred to God as "wholly other" in the sense that God should be viewed as being really different than the traditional pictures of God presented by orthodox and liberal theologians. In contrast to their metaphysical and ethical pictures, Bultmann understood God as the inner mysterious and contradictory forces within us. Although he maintained this belief, by 1925, Bultmann strengthened his own understanding of God as "Wholly Other" through the assistance of dialectic theology and Heidegger. In 1925, Bultmann declared that God, as the "Wholly Other," can only be understood "in relation to the primary statement that God is the reality that determines our existence." He believed that if one tried to separate

¹⁸ Ibid., 65.

these two statements, the true reality of God and our existence would be lost because God and our inner existence are constitutive of one another. For example, if one isolates the second statement, then there is the tendency to understand God as a metaphysical being who teleologically determines the existence of nature and humanity. If this were true, then Bultmann realized that for such a person "God is something wholly different from man," a position contrary to his own.¹⁹ Specifically, this person would view God as a metaphysical concept of the mind, perhaps just a "Creative" or "Irrational" force to whom humans give their devotion.²⁰ Or, to put it in Neo-Kantian language, God is simply an objectified notion of the mind. Bultmann's criticism was an attempt to purify the reality of God and human existence from traditional metaphysics. In contrast to this metaphysical scheme of God, Bultmann held that God as "Wholly Other" determines our existence. Again, the issue for Bultmann is that God must be free of any objectification, free of any

¹⁹ Ibid., 56-57; 57.

²⁰ Scholars should be aware that Bultmann's positive understanding of God is not to be viewed as a "concept" of God. Here Bultmann follows Kant who said that concepts are the product of the mind. Since all concepts of the mind are viewed by Bultmann as objectifications of the mind, and since Bultmann constantly proclaimed that God cannot be objectified, then it follows that God cannot be a concept. This mistake is made by Craighead, "Bultmann," 204. In that article, Craighead refers to Bultmann's understanding of God as the "concept of God."

preconceived definition; in other words, God is revealed within our existence in the absence of any prior thought. In this way, God is the one who solely determines our existence, being known solely as "Wholly Other."

Bultmann's position is built upon the foundation of Schleiermacher and Herrmann as it incorporated insights from the dialectical theologians and Heidegger within a Neo-Kantian structure. For Bultmann, Schleiermacher's understanding that God is "immediate self-consciousness," or to put it another way, the "feeling of absolute dependence," always provided the foundation, the starting point on which to build.²¹ Schleiermacher had located God within the human; from within the person, God is the feeling of dependence upon himself. Although Schleiermacher had unified God and the inner consciousness of the person, Bultmann realized that his position was not free of objectifying the person of God. From Bultmann's perspective, Schleiermacher's view of God was dependent upon a prior notion of feeling or consciousness, best understood psychologically. By using certain aspects of Herrmann's Neo-Kantian structure, Bultmann came to believe that any preconceived notion of God belongs to the world of sin, a world in which the human strives to be justified by work, making every attempt to redeem himself by using the "external" qualities of the world (e.g., reason,

²¹ Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, 13, 17.

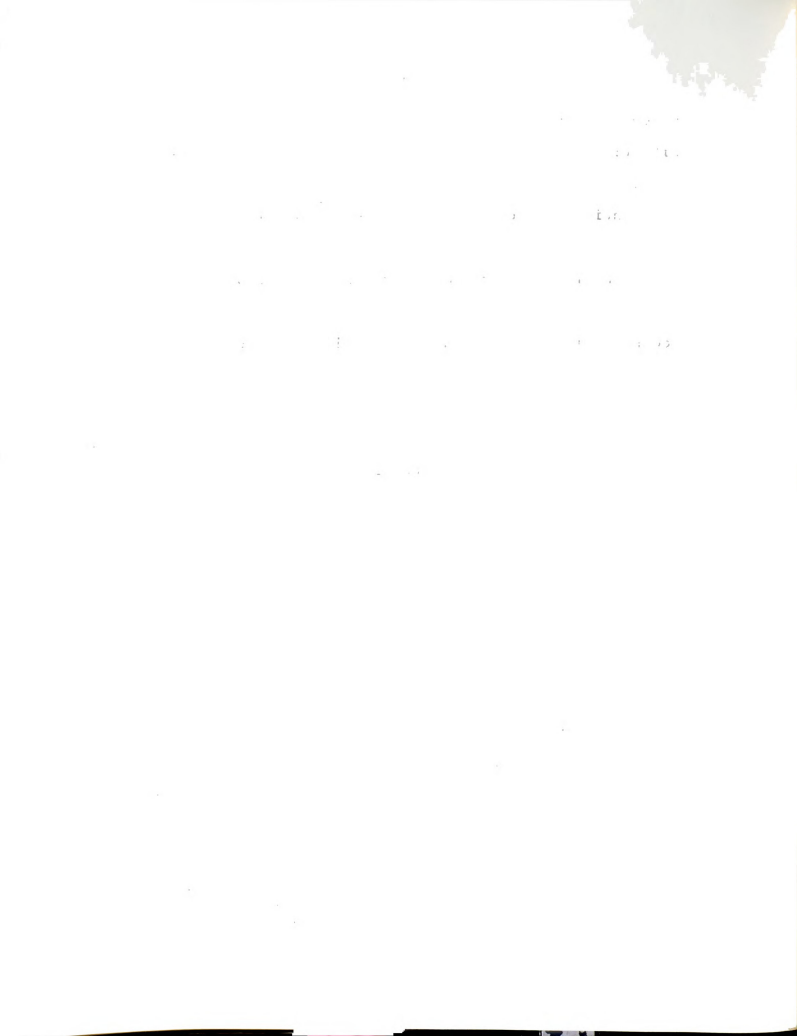


psychology, nature, economics, the state). In this situation, when God is revealed within our existence, he confronts the world of sin. Dialectically and existentially, the free, spontaneous, and always anew revelation of God within our existence determines the end of the world of sin as God is known, understood, and spoken of as "Wholly Other."²² Thereby, in the encounter with God's revelation, the world of sin is confronted and negated as God and our inner existence must be affirmed in an act of faith.

Summary

When Heidegger arrived at Marburg in 1923, he launched an attack against Neo-Kantians on the faculty. Nonetheless, Bultmann and Heidegger became intellectual friends even though the former remained solidly committed to a Neo-Kantian understanding of life. By 1925, Bultmann had actually incorporated elements of Heidegger's philosophy of language and existence. In Heidegger's philosophy of language, Bultmann found two compatible

²² Bultmann stated: "To speak of God as the 'Wholly Other' has meaning, then, only if I understood that the actual situation of man is the situation of the sinner who wants to speak of God and cannot; who wants to speak of his own existence and cannot do that either. He must speak of it as an existence determined by God; but he can only speak of it as sinful, as an existence such that he cannot see God in it, an existence in which God confronts him as the 'Wholly Other'" ("Speak of God?", 57-58).



elements. First, he was sympathetic towards Heidegger's view of language, i.e., human language cannot provide definite descriptions of traditional metaphysical and epistemological constructions of reality, God, and human existence. Bultmann believed that this position was consistent with his own Neo-Kantian philosophy of culture which stated that in the realm of science, morality, and aesthetics, one cannot discover the true meaning of reality, God, and human existence. In the second place, Bultmann was sympathetic to the atmosphere which Heidegger's philosophy of language had created. In Bultmann's estimation, Heidegger had shown that traditional metaphysical and epistemological speech about God was meaningless. Bultmann deduced, therefore, that the only positive realm in which to speak meaningfully of God was within a Neo-Kantian philosophy of religion. In other words, Bultmann believed that Heidegger left room only for his version of a Neo-Kantian view of God. It was in this context that Bultmann employed the assistance of Heidegger's philosophy of existence in order to strengthen his own understanding of God. Accordingly, Bultmann felt that the reality and meaning of religious existence should be the primary issue of modern life.

Using Heidegger's existential language, Bultmann believed that the reality and meaning of religious

existence is encountered in the intrinsic union of God and our existential being. It is a pure, non-objectified encounter. The reality of God occurs in the moment that God reveals himself anew (eschatologically) through the preaching of the Word of God. As the Word encounters the person, God's reality is embraced in the free act of faith which transforms the sinner from the world of godlessness into the believer of godly obedience. The moment of encounter is a dialectic tension; it negates the objectified world of everyday life--the world of sin in which one attempts to define God and himself according to the standards of the world. Simultaneously, as the world of sin is negated and stripped of all preconceived notions and ideas, God is disclosed freely and spontaneously anew--he is "Wholly Other" than what our human thoughts projected him to be. Only in that moment, embraced by the free act of faith, does a person speak meaningfully of God and of our inner existence which are one.

Epilogue

Bultmann's argument that one can only understand oneself through an understanding of God was based on a combination of Schleiermacher's pietistic protestantism and Neo-Kantian philosophy. Bultmann then refined this view in the mid-1920's by incorporating the language for Heidegger's philosophy of existence, specifically that God is the moment of encountering the dialectic force revealed anew within our existential being. Bultmann believed that such an understanding of God was relevant for lay persons and theological scholars alike because God is encountered in the same manner by both groups within a common historical context. Bultmann's understanding of God evolved in relation to specific circumstances, beginning with the hardships faced by peasant farmers and artisans he met in his childhood, continuing with the human agony and suffering experienced by Germans during the first World War, and the post-war hardships he shared with the people of Marburg. Bultmann believed that the understanding of God about which he wrote, taught, and preached reflected another reality as well--the presence of our inner beings, wherein the union of God and ourselves may be revealed and accepted through faith.

My study has uncovered Bultmann's understanding of God in the context of his life-situation. This study was not



an exhaustive examination; it is a foundation on which to build. Let me suggest a few areas that need the attention of scholars. Further investigations of his childhood environment and its influence upon his theology is needed. Moreover, the legacy and challenge of Bultmann's own understanding of God in the critical theological tradition needs to be examined. Bultmann's relationship to the laity remains also a compelling issue in light of the complexity of his view of God. Finally, theologians who call our attention to the "post-modern era" of theology may wonder if Bultmann's understanding of God can be made relevant for post-modern humanity. Here are some observations concerning the last three areas.

Perhaps Bultmann was--and has been--the most honest and consistent of the critical scholars who stood on the shoulders of Schleiermacher. He did not wish to stand with one foot in each world: to straddle the Neo-Kantian boundary between the pure world of religion and the world of objectified religion, as he believed Barth and Otto did in his own time. It seems likely that Bultmann would have been equally disheartened by recent critical scholarship on the person of God. Wolfhart Pannenberg and Eberhard Jüngel (Germany), Gordon Kaufman (United States), and John MacQuarrie (Scotland/England) include objectification as



they strive for a modern definition of God.¹ While these scholars are dissatisfied with the ontological and existential understanding of God presented by Bultmann, I suggest that they avoided the legacy and challenge of Bultmann's own understanding of God in the tradition of Schleiermacher. Nor have they thoroughly addressed Bultmann's Neo-Kantian understanding of God as an extension of Schleiermacher's view of God. As such, one may reasonably subject their work to Bultmann's Neo-Kantian criticism: their views of God are objectifications--ideas, conceptions, notions, and propositions.

Perhaps Bultmann's declining impact on contemporary scholarship reflects his inability to popularize an understanding of God for scholars and laity alike. Bultmann's legacy is sadly ironic. As a theology student, he was critical of scholars who could not relate their material to the laity. Yet Bultmann eventually constructed an understanding of God that could only be understood by an

¹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, The Idea of God and Human Freedom, trans. R. A. Wilson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973); Wolfhart Pannenberg, Metaphysics and the Idea of God, trans. Philip Clayton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990); Eberhard Jüngel, God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute Between Theism and Atheism, trans. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983); Gordon Kaufman, God the Problem (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972); and John Macquarrie, In Search of Deity: An Essay in Dialectical Theism (New York: Crossroad, 1985).



educated elite familiar with Neo-Kantian philosophy, dialectic theology, and Heideggerian existentialism. Yet it is unclear if Bultmann recognized that he shared the same problem he had worked so hard to overcome. Perhaps his efforts even widened the gap between the laity and critical scholarship, both in his own time and for the post-modernist interpreters whose language and worldviews differs so dramatically from Bultmann's. Or is the difference more apparent than fundamental?

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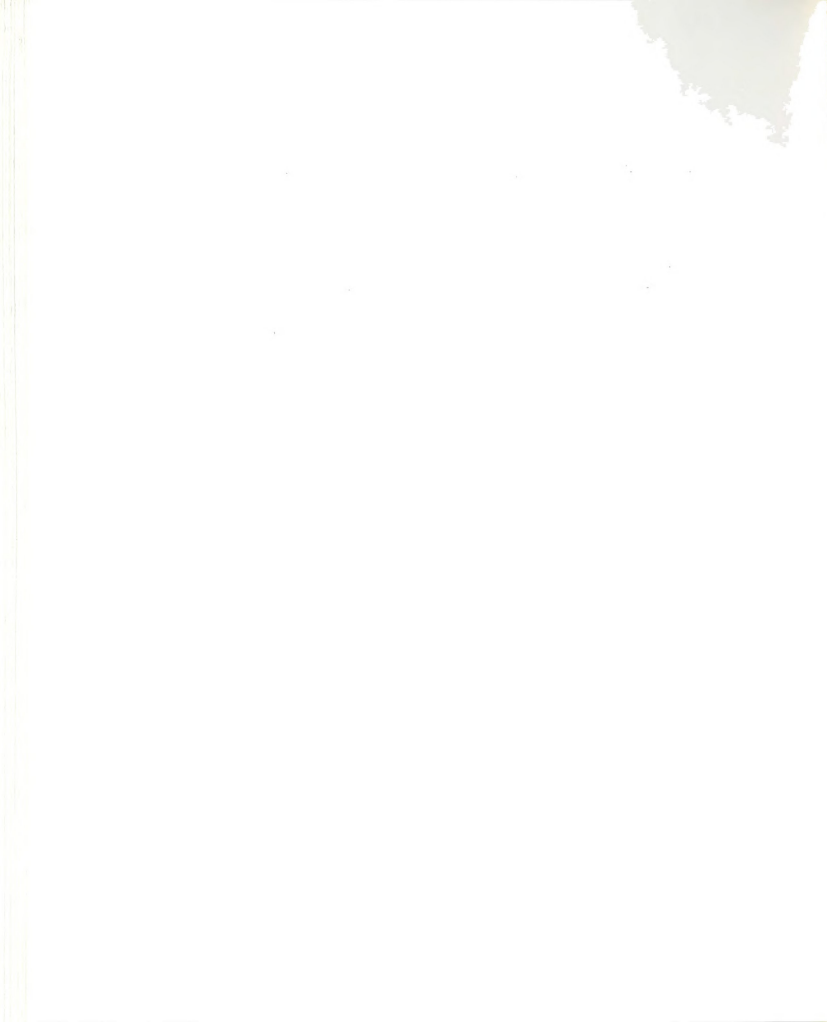
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