

CHURCH DOGMATICS

BY

KARL BARTH

VOLUME I

THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD

PART ONE

EDITORS

REV. PROF. G. W. BROMILEY, D.LITT., D.D.

REV. PROF. T. F. TORRANCE, D.LITT., D.D., D.THEOL.

Heythrop Library
114 Mount Street
London
W1K 3AH
UK

EDINBURGH: T. & T. CLARK, 38 GEORGE STREET

As Schleiermacher very rightly saw and stated, it is distinguished from all other Christian doctrines by the fact that it cannot be made comprehensible as the immediate utterance of Christian self-consciousness. "Or who would assert that the impression made by the divine element in Christ obliges us to think of such an eternal distinction (in the supreme being) as the basis of it (namely, the impression)?" (*Der chr. Glaube*, § 170, 2). The fact that this theology declares it has no access to the matter from the standpoint of what it understands by revelation we take to be a sign that this matter must be noted and discussed first when it is a question of real revelation.

2. THE ROOT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

Thus far we have merely established the fact that in enquiring into what Holy Scripture attests as revelation we come up against the doctrine of the Trinity and thus have good reason to turn our attention to this first. We need to examine it at this stage in order to make it clear that the Christian concept of revelation already includes within it the problem of the doctrine of the Trinity, that we cannot analyse the concept without attempting as our first step to bring the doctrine of the Trinity to expression.

According to Scripture God's revelation is God's own direct speech which is not to be distinguished from the act of speaking and therefore is not to be distinguished from God Himself, from the divine I which confronts man in this act in which it says Thou to him. Revelation is *Dei loquentis persona*.

From the standpoint of the comprehensive concept of God's Word it must be said that here in God's revelation God's Word is identical with God Himself. Among the three forms of the Word of God this can be said unconditionally and with strictest propriety only of revelation. It can be said of Holy Scripture and Church proclamation as well, but not so unconditionally and directly. For if the same can and must be said of them too, we must certainly add that their identity with God is an indirect one. Without wanting to deny or even limit their character as God's Word we must bear in mind that the Word of God is mediated here, first through the human persons of the prophets and apostles who receive it and pass it on, and then through the human persons of its expositors and preachers, so that Holy Scripture and proclamation must always become God's Word in order to be it. If the Word of God is God Himself even in Holy Scripture and Church proclamation, it is because this is so in the revelation to which they bear witness. In understanding God's Word as the Word preached and written, we certainly do not understand it as God's Word to a lesser degree. But we understand the same Word of God in its relation to revelation. On the other hand, when we understand it as revealed, we understand it apart from such relations, or rather as the basis of the

relations in which it is also the Word of God. We thus understand it as indistinguishable from the event in virtue of which it is the one Word of God in those relations, and therefore as indistinguishable from God's direct speech and hence from God Himself. It is this that—we do not say distinguishes, since there is no question of higher rank or value—but rather characterises revelation in comparison with Holy Scripture and Church proclamation (cf. on this § 4, 3 and 4).

According to Holy Scripture God's revelation is a ground which has no higher or deeper ground above or below it but is an absolute ground in itself, and therefore for man a court from which there can be no possible appeal to a higher court. Its reality and its truth do not rest on a superior reality and truth. They do not have to be actualised or validated as reality from this or any other point. They are not measured by the reality and truth found at this other point. They are not to be compared with any such nor judged and understood as reality and truth by reference to such. On the contrary, God's revelation has its reality and truth wholly and in every respect—both ontically and noetically—within itself. Only if one denies it can one ascribe to it another higher or deeper ground or try to understand and accept or reject it from the standpoint of this higher or deeper ground. Obviously even the acceptance of revelation from the standpoint of this different and supposedly higher ground, e.g., an acceptance of revelation in which man first sets his own conscience over it as judge, can only entail the denial of revelation. Revelation is not made real and true by anything else, whether in itself or for us. Both in itself and for us it is real and true through itself. This differentiates it even from the witness which the prophets and apostles and the witness which the expositors and preachers of Scripture bear to it, at any rate to the extent that this witness is considered *per se*. If we can also say that the witness both in itself and for us is grounded through itself, this is in virtue of the fact that this witness does not merely seek to relate itself to revelation but does actually relate itself to it, because revelation has become an event in it. This can happen. And it must happen if Scripture and proclamation are to be God's Word. They must become it. Revelation does not have to become it. The fulness of the original self-existent being of God's Word reposes and lives in it.

For this whole context cf. Eduard Thurneysen, "Offenbarung in Religionsgeschichte und Bibel," *Z.d.Z.*, 1928, p. 453 f. The Old and New Testaments are fully at one in the view that the divine oracles as they went forth to men according to their witness constitute a self-contained *novum* over against everything men can say to themselves or to one another. One can either obey or disobey, either believe or not believe, what is called revelation in the Bible—both are possible—but from no other standpoint can one get into a position to see whether it has really happened and its content is true. One cannot produce it oneself, as the priests of Baal wanted to do on Carmel in 1 K. 18. Nor can one control

revelation, as was vainly attempted when Jesus was asked for signs. One can only stand within its self-closed circle, or rather one can only move within it or stay and move outside it—the enigmatic yet always uncannily close possibility of the *mysterium iniquitatis*, "concluded under unbelief" (Rom. 11³²). Jesus speaks *ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων*, Mt. 7²⁹. What does this mean? The verse goes on, Not as their scribes, i.e., obviously not like those who at best must refer to the higher court of a witness to revelation already present. This is why it is so important for the apostle Paul to have seen and heard the Lord Jesus Himself and not just to be acquainted with Him through the tradition. His apostolate stands or falls with this immediacy to revelation, i.e., with this immediacy of revelation itself. Equally self-grounded and ultimate in authority is what the New Testament especially introduces as the Spirit with His decisions in matters both great and small (down to the route of the apostles' journeys). The man who according to the Bible came to share God's revelation and became obedient to it had no motives or grounds for this, he was not instructed or persuaded, he followed neither his own reason or conscience nor the reason or conscience of other men—all this might also happen, but the Bible has little to say about it and it is not the important thing in this matter. He was simply confronted with this *ἐξουσία* and he bowed to it and not to anyone or anything else. He obeyed a command.

We may sum all this up in the statement that God reveals Himself as the Lord. This statement is to be regarded as an analytical judgment. The distinction between form and content cannot be applied to the biblical concept of revelation. When revelation is an event according to the Bible, there is no second question as to what its content might be. Nor could its content be equally well manifested in another event than this. Although, in keeping with God's riches, revelation is never the same but always new, nevertheless as such it is always in all circumstances the promulgation of the *βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ*, of the lordship of God. And how can the promulgation of this *βασιλεία* be made except through what we call revelation here? To be Lord means being what God is in His revelation to man. To act as Lord means to act as God in His revelation acts on man. To acquire a Lord is to acquire what man does in God when he receives His revelation—revelation always understood here in the unconditional sense in which it encounters us in the witness of Scripture. All else we know as lordship can only be a copy, and is in reality a sad caricature of this lordship. Without revelation man does not know that there is a Lord, that he, man, has a Lord, and that God is this Lord. Through revelation he does know it. Revelation is the revelation of lordship and therewith it is the revelation of God. For the Godhead of God, what man does not know and God must reveal to him, and according to the witness of Scripture does reveal to him, is lordship. Lordship is present in revelation because its reality and truth are so fully self-grounded, because it does not need any other actualisation or validation than that of its actual occurrence, because it is revelation through itself and not in relation to something else, because it is that self-contained *novum*. Lordship means freedom.

The biblical concept of *ἐξουσία* which we have emphasised above obviously includes both.

Godhead in the Bible means freedom, ontic and noetic autonomy. In the decisions taken in this freedom of God the divinely good becomes event, and truth, righteousness, holiness, and mercy deserve to be called what their names declare because they are real in the freedom of God. It is thus, as One who is free, as the only One who is free, that God has lordship in the Bible. It is thus that He also reveals it. The self-sufficiency or immediacy so characteristic of the biblical revelation is the very thing that characterises it as God's revelation on the one side and as the revelation of lordship on the other. But all this becomes fully characteristic only when we note that what we have here is not an abstract revelation of lordship but a concrete revelation of the Lord, not Godhead (even Godhead understood as freedom) but God Himself, who in this freedom speaks as an I and addresses by a Thou. That this happens is revelation in the Bible and it is thus the revelation of His lordship. By the fact that He speaks as an I and addresses by a Thou God announces His kingdom and differentiates this intimation from all speculations about freedom, lordship, or Godhead such as man might perhaps engage in even without revelation. As freedom, lordship and Godhead are real and true in God Himself and only in God Himself, being inaccessible and unknown if God Himself, this I, does not speak and address by a Thou, so, in God Himself, they are the meaning of the event that the Bible calls revelation. That God reveals Himself as the Lord means that He reveals what only He can reveal, Himself. And so, as Himself, He has and exercises His freedom and lordship, He is God, He is the ground without grounds, with whose word and will man can only begin without asking Why, so that in and with this he may receive everything that deserves to be called true and good. It becomes and is true and good through the fact that we receive it from Him, that God, as Himself, is with us, with us as a man who says I and addresses us as Thou is with others, but with us as the One He is, as the Lord, as He who is free. According to the Bible God's being with us is the event of revelation.

The statement, understood thus, that God reveals Himself as the Lord, or what this statement is meant to describe, and therefore revelation itself as attested by Scripture, we call the root of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Generally and provisionally we mean by the doctrine of the Trinity the proposition that He whom the Christian Church calls God and proclaims as God, the God who has revealed Himself according to the witness of Scripture, is the same in unimpaired unity and yet also the same thrice in different ways in unimpaired distinction. Or, in the

phraseology of the Church's dogma of the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the biblical witness to revelation are the one God in the unity of their essence, and the one God in the biblical witness to revelation is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the distinction of His persons.

When we call the statement that God reveals Himself as the Lord, or the revelation denoted by this statement and attested by Scripture, the root of the doctrine of the Trinity, this implies two things.

First, and negatively, the statement or statements about God's Trinity cannot claim to be directly identical with the statement about revelation or with revelation itself. The doctrine of the Trinity is an analysis of this statement, i.e., of what it denotes. The doctrine of the Trinity is a work of the Church, a record of its understanding of the statement or of its object, a record of its knowledge of God or of its battle against error and on behalf of the objectivity of its proclamation, a record of its theology and to that degree of its faith, and only to that extent, only indirectly, a record of revelation. The text of the doctrine of the Trinity, whether we have in view one of its dogmatic formulations by the Church, or our own or some other theologico-dogmatic explication of the Church dogma, is not, then, identical with one part of the text of the biblical witness to revelation. The text of the doctrine of the Trinity is at every point related to texts in the biblical witness to revelation. It also contains certain concepts taken from this text. But it does this in the way an interpretation does. That is to say, it translates and exegetes the text. And this means, e.g., that it makes use of other concepts besides those in the original. The result is that it does not just repeat what is there. To explain what is there it sets something new over against what is there. We have in view this difference from revelation and Scripture, which the Church and theology must be aware of in their own work, when we call our statement about revelation—and already it, too, can be regarded only as an interpretation—merely the root of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Already in the early Church the doctrine of the Trinity was attacked on the ground that it is not biblical, that in the form in which it was formulated by the Church's theology it cannot be read anywhere in the Bible. This is especially true of the crucial terms "essence" and "person" which theology used. But it is also true of the word "Trinity" itself. Now this objection can be raised against every dogma and against theology in general and as such. It would also have to be raised against proclamation, which does not stop at the mere reading of Scripture but goes on to explain it too. Now explanation means repeating in different words what has been said already. The Fathers of the Church and the councils, and much later the Reformers in their battle against the new anti-Trinitarians, were naturally well aware that the doctrine of the Trinity is not in the Bible. But they rightly rejected the view that in relation to the legitimacy,

i.e., the biblical character of a Church dogma or theology what counts is *ipsa etiam verba* (i.e., the words of Holy Scripture) *totidem syllabis et literis exprimere* (M. Chemnitz, *Loci*, edn. 1591, I, p. 34). This would be an *iniqua lex* for the Church, an arresting of all biblical exposition, whose very essence is *explicare quod Scripturis testatum consignatumque est* (Calvin, *Instit.*, I, 13, 3). *Si oporteret de Deo dici solum illa secundum vocem quae sacra scriptura de Deo tradit, sequeretur quod nunquam in alia lingua posset aliquis loqui de Deo, nisi in illa in qua prima tradita est scriptura veteris vel novi testamenti. Ad inveniendum autem nova nomina antiquam fidem de Deo significantia coegit necessitas disputandi cum haereticis* (Thomas Aquinas, *S. th.*, I, qu. 29, art. 3). Inaccurate explanations of the Bible, made in the speech of a later period, had to be countered in the speech of the same period. There thus arose in every age the task of dogma and dogmatics. This is what gives dogma and dogmatics their own special character as distinct from the Bible. But they are not necessarily on this account unbiblical or contrary to the Bible. As we must admit at once, they find themselves in the same dangerous sphere as the errors which they must repel. But this is no other sphere than that of the *ecclesia militans* which seeks to listen to the prophets and apostles but seeks to understand their word in the language of later periods, to understand it aright even at the risk of misunderstanding. *Nec enim Deus frustra donum prophetiae dedit ecclesiae ad interpretandas scripturas, quod inutile sane foret, si rem scripturis traditam nefas esset aliis vocabulis exprimere* (F. Turretini, *Instit. Theol. elenct.*, 1679, I, L. 3, qu. 23, 23). But even if this objection is to be resisted, we should take from it not merely this reminder of the risk of all theology but also with Calvin the insight that in doctrine as such we are always dealing with *impropria loquutio* as regards the object, that the explanation as such, in so far as it is different from the text, in so far as it must work with concepts alien to the text, might be gladly "buried" if a right understanding of the text could be assured in some other way. (*Utinam quidem sepulta essent, constaret modo haec inter omnes fides, Patrem et Filium et Spiritum esse unum Deum: nec tamen aut Filium esse Patrem, aut Spiritum Filium . . . ib.*, 5.) In contrast it is a confusion of categories as well as a wresting of the facts to think one can achieve this assurance: *Trinitatis dogma non est ecclesiae traditio tantum, sed doctrina in sacris literis expressa* (J. Wollebius, *Christ. Theol. Comp.*, 1626, L. I, cap. 2, can. 2, 1).

Secondly, and positively, to call revelation the root of the doctrine of the Trinity is also to say that the statement or statements about the Trinity of God purport to be indirectly, though not directly, identical with the statement about revelation. The newness or otherness with which they stand alongside the first statement (or its content) cannot mean that a first age, which we may call biblical, had faith without revelation or knowledge of the Triune God, that what it meant by the contrast and unity between Yahweh and the angel of Yahweh, between the Father, the Son and the Spirit, was in reality an imperfectly clarified monotheism, a greatly disrupted polytheism or the like, and then there came a second age, let us say that of the early Church, which for various reasons thought it should give to the same faith a trinitarian formulation in the sense of the dogma, and that we now stand in a third age, the modern period, for which the Bible and the dogma are both records of the faith of past ages in face of

which we are free to express our own faith either in the same way or not. No, we regard the dogma—with what right and in what sense has still to be shown of course—as a necessary and relevant analysis of revelation, and we thus think that revelation itself is correctly interpreted by the dogma. The Bible can no more contain the dogma of the Trinity explicitly than it can contain other dogmas explicitly. For its witness, which was given in a specific historical situation or in many such, does indeed confront erring humanity generally as the witness to revelation, but it does not confront the specific errors of Church history as such. Its witness as the witness to revelation is not just the record of the faith of a given time. Even as it is this, it is also the authority by which faith must always let itself be measured, and can be measured, irrespective of the difference of times.

There is thus no meaningful way in which one could or can refute Arius or Pelagius, Tridentine Roman Catholicism or Servetus, Schleiermacher or Tillich, directly out of the Bible, as though their errors were already answered there *totidem syllabis et literis*, chapter and verse, as though the Word of God had there pronounced on all the specific concerns of different ages and had only to be looked up to produce the proper decision. For dogmatic decision in the specific concerns of different ages one can and must argue from a basis of Scripture that has to be discovered each time afresh if one is not to argue as arbitrarily and untheologically as the adversary would seem to do.

It thus follows that we cannot prove the truth of the dogma that is not as such in the Bible merely from the fact that it is a dogma, but rather from the fact that we can and must regard it as a good interpretation of the Bible. Later we shall have to show why it is that dogmas must be approached with some prejudgment in favour of their truth, with some very real respect for their relative, though not absolute, authority. But this includes rather than excludes the fact that dogmatics has to prove dogma, i.e., to indicate its basis, its root in revelation or in the biblical witness to revelation. If dogma had no such root, if it could be shown that its rise was mostly due to eisegesis rather than exegesis, if, then, it could not be understood as an analysis of revelation, it could not be recognised as dogma.

In this sense we cannot recognise as dogma a whole series of Roman Catholic dogmas, e.g., that of justification coincident with sanctification, or that of Mary, or that of purgatory, or that of the seven sacraments, or that of papal infallibility. As little, naturally, can we recognise as dogma the specific dogmas of Protestant Modernism such as that of the historical development of revelation or that of the continuity between God and man in religious experience. We fail to detect the "root" that these teachings would have to have in revelation or its biblical attestation to be able to be dogmas.

In calling revelation the root of the doctrine of the Trinity we are thus indicating that we do not confuse or equate the biblical witness to God in His revelation with the doctrine of the Trinity, but we do

see an authentic and well-established connexion between the two. This obviously means that the doctrine of the Trinity has a wholly actual and not just a historical significance for us and for the dogmatics of our age, even though this is a very different age from that of Arius and Athanasius. In other words, it means that the criticism and correction of Church proclamation must be done to-day, as it was then, in the form of developing the doctrine of the Trinity. It means that the text of the doctrine of the Trinity—naturally in our own exposition, for to abandon exposition would be to abandon the text too—must become for us a commentary that we have to make use of in expounding the Bible and therefore in employing the dogmatic criterion.

But let us come to the point: The basis or root of the doctrine of the Trinity, if it has one and is thus legitimate dogma—and it does have one and is thus legitimate dogma—lies in revelation.

Qu. 25 of the Heidelberg Catechism runs as follows: "Since there is but one divine Being, why namest thou three, Father, Son and Holy Ghost?" The question is taken almost word for word from the *Geneva Catechism* of 1545, where Calvin himself answers it as follows: *Quoniam in una Dei essentia Patrem intueri nos convenit . . . deinde Filium . . . postremo Spiritum sanctum* (K. Müller, *Bekenntnisschr. d. ref. Kirche*, 1903, p. 118, 25). What is meant by *Quoniam nos convenit*? Calvin gives a clearer answer in the *Institutio* (I, 13, 2): *nam ita se praedicat unicum esse, ut distincte in tribus personis considerandum proponat*. And the *Heidelberg* formulates its answer accordingly: "Because that God hath thus revealed Himself in His Word, that these three distinct persons are the one true eternal God." Therefore for this reason and to this extent *convenit*. We might object at this point that in appealing to revelation Calvin and his followers meant only that like much else the triunity of God is attested in Scripture. But the fact that the introduction of this particular doctrine is established in this singular way would still be very striking. And we may recall at this point the words already quoted from Calvin and others to the effect that for the older Protestants the doctrine of the Trinity was not just one article of faith among others but was the basic answer to the question: Who is God? to which all the other articles are related. In answering this question with the doctrine of revelation as such, we are technically doing something that was not done in this way four hundred years ago. But materially we are not diverging from the intention of that age when we point out that revelation as such, namely, the revelation attested in the Bible, is the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity, or that the doctrine of the Trinity is the appropriate interpretation of this revelation as such.

We are not saying that the doctrine of the Trinity is merely the interpretation of revelation and not also an interpretation of the God who reveals Himself in revelation. This would be nonsensical, for revelation is the self-interpretation of this God. If we are dealing with His revelation, we are dealing with God Himself and not, as Modalists in all ages have thought, with an entity distinct from Him. And it is as an answer to the question of the God who reveals Himself

in revelation that the doctrine of the Trinity interests us. This means that it is a constituent part, the decisive part, of the doctrine of God, which is not yet under discussion at this stage. We now anticipate the discussion of this part of the doctrine of God and will later construct whatever else must be developed in this connexion on this presupposition of God's triunity. In a dogmatics of the Christian Church we cannot speak correctly of God's nature and attributes unless it is presupposed that our reference is to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity is the basic presupposition of the doctrine of God too is no obstacle to regarding it already as also and precisely the interpretation of revelation as such. Not as an exhaustive interpretation; to give that we should have to speak not only of the God who reveals Himself but also of the way He does it and the man to whom He does it, and we should thus stand in need of further anticipations from the area of specific doctrines; there are certain parts of christology and pneumatology that we should have to consider. What we do in fact gather from the doctrine of the Trinity is who the God is who reveals Himself, and this is why we present the doctrine here as an interpretation of revelation. We are not saying, then, that revelation is the basis of the Trinity, as though God were the triune God only in His revelation and only for the sake of His revelation. What we are saying is that revelation is the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity; the doctrine of the Trinity has no other basis apart from this. We arrive at the doctrine of the Trinity by no other way than that of an analysis of the concept of revelation. Conversely, if revelation is to be interpreted aright, it must be interpreted as the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity. The crucial question for the concept of revelation, that of the God who reveals Himself, cannot be answered apart from the answer to this question given in the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is itself the answer that must be given here. When we say, then, that the doctrine of the Trinity is the interpretation of revelation or that revelation is the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity, we find revelation itself attested in Holy Scripture in such a way that in relation to this witness our understanding of revelation, or of the God who reveals Himself, must be the doctrine of the Trinity.

We do not have in view only those passages which in view of their wording one can or should with a high degree of probability regard as explicit references to the doctrine of the Trinity as this rightly arises and is already presented in revelation or in the biblical witness to it. We do not have in view, then, only the passages in which there is plain reference to a unity in trinity or trinity in unity of the self-revealing God.

In the Old Testament Is. 61¹¹ might be adduced as one such explicit reference. This speaks in one breath both of the Lord Yahweh and also of a bearer of the message of salvation who is anointed by this Lord and on whom the Spirit of this Lord rests. In the New Testament we are naturally thinking in the first instance of the baptismal command in Mt. 28¹⁹. Here, no matter to what stratum of the tradition it may belong, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are not just mentioned expressly and in distinction and even in what became later the classical order, but they are also comprehended in the concept of the divine "name" into which (or into the divine reality denoted by this name) the "nations" are to be baptised. Alongside this verse one might also place Rom. 1¹⁻⁴, where according to the author the Gospel is *εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ* and according to content it treats of the *υἱὸς θεοῦ*, while the *πνεῦμα ἁγιοσύνης* is mentioned as the factor by which this Son of God was marked off as such in His resurrection and to that extent was instituted (*ὀρισθείς*) as such (for those to whom He is manifested and who believe in Him). At the climax of the same epistle we then find (11³⁶) the well-known saying: *ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα*, on which one should not put the many and serious exegetical and systematic stresses that Wobbermin does (esp. *Systemat. Theol.*, III, 1925, p. 392) since it is definitely not so much a statement about God as rather about the world and its relation to God. But for this reason the saying is the more illuminating for the connexions in which the divine *αὐτός* may be seen as three times the same and three times the same in different ways. Nor can the way in which the terms *θεός*, *κύριος*, *πνεῦμα* occur and are used in 2 Thess. 2¹³ be purely fortuitous. (On the other hand the passage 1 Jn. 5⁷, which was still highly valued in the age of orthodoxy, is in the original form of Spirit, water and blood an interesting testimony to the unity and distinction between Christ and the Spirit, but in the later form of Father, Son and Spirit, in which it enjoyed some publicity and renown, it cannot be used to ascertain New Testament teaching as such.) Alongside these four references we may then set a series of others in which the three appear more or less clearly in the same specific functions but in much varied sequence. Thus according to 1 Pet. 1² the election of the saints is grounded in the *πρόγνωσις θεοῦ πατρὸς*, worked out in the *ἁγιασμός πνεύματος* and directed *εἰς ὑπακοήν καὶ βαντισμὸν αἵματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*. Rev. 1⁴ tells us that the grace and peace wished for the seven churches come *ἀπὸ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος* (note how the first and basic concept is here again paradoxically broken into a significant trinity) *καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπτά πνευμάτων ἃ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ* (the one Spirit is here obviously meant to be called too the specific Spirit of each of the seven churches) *καὶ ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* the faithful witness, etc. If in two instances Christ, though certainly important, stands in the third place, in two others He is first. This is so in 2 Cor. 13¹³, where the so-called apostolic blessing ascribes grace to Jesus Christ, love to the Father and *κοινωνία* to the Holy Ghost, and then in Mk. 1⁹, where it is on Jesus as the main subject of the baptism story that the Holy Spirit descends, whereupon a voice from heaven confirms His divine sonship. (Cf. on this F. Turretini, *Instit. Theol. elenct.*, 1679, I, Loc. 3, Qu. 25, 7: *Alius auditur, sed nec videtur, nec descendit. Alius non auditur, sed visibili specie descendit. Alius descendit et ascendit e flumine baptizatus in conspectu omnium.*) Again there are passages in which the Holy Spirit is named as the first and in the context the most notable member of the Trinity. Thus in Jud. 20-21 the Father and the *κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός* follow the Holy Spirit and in 1 Cor. 12⁴ and Eph. 4⁴ the classical order of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is reversed, and another special feature in these two passages is the stress on unity in the *αὐτός* or *εἰς* with which the three terms are introduced.

We have agreed that we need not expect to find the doctrine of the Trinity expressly in the Old Testament or the New. But in view of the presence of these explicit references we cannot deny that the problems that developed later in the doctrine of the Trinity are not alien to the Bible but are at least prefigured in it. And the explicit indication of the doctrine is given added weight by the fact that it is enveloped in a whole net of implicit references and especially by the fact that the whole theme of God's revelation as it is treated in the Old and New Testaments, with its focus on the New, cannot be discussed, let alone grasped, without encountering the prefiguration of these problems. This is what we have now to show.

God reveals Himself as the Lord; in this statement we have summed up our understanding of the form and content of the biblical revelation. The question now is whether we must take this statement in a threefold sense without infringing the unity of its content or whether we must take it in its unified content without infringing its threefold sense. If this statement demands this understanding, not in any general signification but in relation to what the Bible calls revelation, then we see something that can only be conjectured as highly probable on the basis of the passages adduced, namely, that this statement is in fact the "root" of the doctrine of the Trinity, that the problems of the doctrine of the Trinity are in fact prefigured in revelation as it is attested in the Bible. And now we are no longer following the schema of subject, predicate, object (revealer, revelation, revealing), which was only designed to show to what extent we are in fact led by revelation itself to the problem of triunity. Or rather, we now dissolve this scheme—which still has and retains its significance—in the manner suited to the concrete form of revelation on the one side and the doctrine of the Trinity on the other. The question of revealer, revelation and being revealed corresponds to the logical and material order both of biblical revelation and also of the doctrine of the Trinity. We shall thus return to this order when the latter is developed. But we must now follow another order if we are to see how biblical revelation and the doctrine of the Trinity are interconnected, how the second could and did proceed out of the first. This is a historical question which has as such its own special form. But it is governed by the fact that biblical revelation has on the one side a specific historical centre and the doctrine of the Trinity has on the other side a specific historical occasion in biblical revelation. Historically considered and stated the three questions answered in the Bible, that of revealer, revelation and being revealed, do not have the same importance. The true theme of the biblical witness is the second of the concepts, God's action in His revelation, revelation in answer to the question what God does, and therefore the predicate

in our statement. Within this theme the two other questions, materially no less important, are answered. Similarly the doctrine of the Trinity, when considered historically in its origin and development, is not equally interested in the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Here too the theme is primarily the second person of the Trinity, God the Son, the deity of Christ.

In dogmatic history this is the insight which Harnack (*Lehrb. d. Dogmengesch.*, 4th edn., 1909, Vol. I, p. 90) formulated in the sentence: "Confession of the Father, the Son and the Spirit . . . is a development of the belief that Jesus is the Christ." O. Scheel (RGG² Art. "Dreieinigkeit," III) is in material agreement: "The history of the doctrine of the Trinity is primarily a history of the Logos concept in Christianity." This is the same insight as that which Irenaeus already developed in relation to the name of Christ and with appeal to Is. 61¹: *In Christi enim nomine subauditur qui unxit et ipse qui unctus est et ipsa unctio in qua unctus est. Et unxit quidem Pater, unctus vero est Filius in Spiritu qui est unctio* (C. o. h., III, 18, 3).

Within this framework of the question of Christ's deity, but claiming equal weight both logically and materially, the other two questions then arose in the first instance as a necessary counterpart to the question of the Son, namely, the question of the Father on the one side and that of the Spirit of the Father and the Son on the other.

If this was so necessary and right, we should have to say that in the order in 2 Cor. 13¹³, that of Christ, God, and Spirit, we have the most authentic form of the biblical witness in this matter. At any rate, the historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity out of the witness to revelation followed this route, and this is the route we must now take.

1. Revelation in the Bible means the self-unveiling, imparted to men, of the God who by nature cannot be unveiled to men. The element of self-unveiling in this definition may be described as the historical if not the logical or material centre of the biblical revelation. When the Bible speaks of revelation, it does so in the form of the record of a history or a series of histories. The content of this history or of each of these histories, however, is that self-unveiling of God. But as the record is given, our experience also is, of course, that the One who thus unveils Himself is the God who by nature cannot be unveiled to men, and that this self-unveiling is to specific men. Logically and materially this is just as important as the recorded self-unveiling. Historically the latter constitutes the centre. But what does self-unveiling mean here? Since the One who unveils Himself is the God who by nature cannot be unveiled to men, self-unveiling means that God does what men themselves cannot do in any sense or in any way: He makes Himself present, known and significant to them as God. In the historical life of men He takes up a place, and a very specific place at that, and makes Himself the object of human contemplation, human experience, human thought and human speech. He makes Himself an authority and factor, a

concrete authority and historical factor, a significant and effective element of human life in time and in historical relations. He Himself, as God, exists for men exactly as other things or persons exist for them, as Esau did for Jacob, Mount Horeb or the ark of the covenant for Israel, John for Peter or Paul for his churches. He naturally does so in His own special form which cannot be mistaken for any other. But He does so truly and concretely, so that the men concerned can say without any speculation or metaphor: Immanuel, God with us! so that without any fiction or self-deception they can say Thou to Him and pray to Him. This is what self-revelation is. This is what man cannot provide for himself, what only God can give him, what He does give him in His revelation. The concept of form is the concept we must single out from what has been said as the decisive one. No matter who or what else the self-revealing God may be, it is beyond dispute that in His revelation according to the biblical witness He takes form, and this taking form is His self-unveiling. It is not impossible nor is it too petty a thing for Him to be His own *alter ego* in His revelation, His *alter ego* to the extent that His self-unveiling, His taking form, obviously cannot be taken for granted but is an event, and an event that cannot be explained by or derived from either the will or act of man or the course of the world at large; to the extent that He Himself must take a step towards this event; to the extent that this step obviously means something new in God, a self-distinction of God from Himself, a being of God in a mode of being that is different from though not subordinate to His first and hidden mode of being as God, in a mode of being, of course, in which He can also exist for us. The God who reveals Himself here can reveal Himself. The very fact of revelation tells us that it is proper to Him to distinguish Himself from Himself, i.e., to be God in Himself and in concealment, and yet at the same time to be God a second time in a very different way, namely, in manifestation, i.e., in the form of something He Himself is not.

To be God a second time in a very different way—this may be seen in the Old Testament primarily in the fact that almost all the attributes that characterise the Yahweh of Israel, His righteousness with which He watches over His covenant with Israel, His goodness and faithfulness to His own, His glory and also His Word and Spirit, the wisdom of the later Old Testament, and the countenance which is anthropomorphically—or should we say not at all anthropomorphically—ascribed to Him, His arm, His hand, His right hand, all these are sometimes referred to as though they were not just in or of Yahweh but were Yahweh Himself a second time in another way. Revelation means that all these human, all too human concepts are not just that, are not just descriptions and representations of the reality of Yahweh; they are themselves the reality of Yahweh. In these concepts, and therefore in the sphere, physical as well as intellectual, of men who are truly different from Himself, Yahweh has what we have called form. In them all Yahweh Himself is there; He subsists; He has

objectivity for those to whom He is manifest. Religious science usually defines concepts used in this way as hypostases, i.e., realities of the one God which are both distinguishable and yet also indistinguishable from Him. And why should we not accept this definition? Religious science for its part has obviously borrowed it from the history of Christian dogma. Now the fact is that in this series of hypostases there is one that stands out in a significant and, if appearances do not deceive, a comprehensive way as the epitome of what God is a second time in another way in His self-unveiling. This is the concept of the name of God. Knowledge, love, fear, trust, hope, praise, preaching, invocation are all related continually to this apparent sub-centre alongside Yahweh and yet even so they are unmistakably connected to Yahweh Himself. The righteous man thinks, speaks and acts in this name when he stands before Yahweh, under His protection and blessing. To this name of Yahweh, not to the One who dwells in Sinai or according to the later view in heaven, a house or temple is built in Jerusalem. Conversely this name is the court for whose sake Yahweh forgives and is gracious and guides and does not forsake Israel; His name dwells indeed, as Yahweh chose, in Jerusalem. But the angel of Yahweh, who is frequently mentioned, also stands in the closest connexion to the name of Yahweh. What makes Him the angel of Yahweh according to Ex. 23²¹, and what gives Him authority as such, is that "my name is in him." In His name is concentrated everything He is in His relation to His people, to the righteous, and from His name proceeds in some way everything that the people or the righteous can expect from Him as they stand in this relation. What does all this mean? Not for the old Testament alone but for ancient thought generally, and perhaps for what is called primitive thought (though it is not really primitive), a man's name is not something that comes to him from without, something accidental and non-essential, a mere *nomen* in the sense of the mediaeval debates. At this point, and perhaps only at this point in distinction from the attributes mentioned earlier, the name is a being, belonging of course to another being, identical with it in a way one cannot explain, yet still a separate being, so that statements about the name and him who bears it can be differentiated from and yet can also replace one another "Where the name is, there is the bearer of the name; where the name works, the bearer of it works" (Hans Schmidt, RGG², Art. "Namensglaube," I). When the Old Testament applies this realistic view of the name to Yahweh, this means on the one side that it distinguishes between Yahweh who dwells on Sinai or in heaven and Yahweh who dwells in Canaan, Shiloh, and later Jerusalem, between Yahweh in His hiddenness and Yahweh in His historical form in which, as the fact that His name is given shows, He is known in Israel and has dealings with Israel. "God's name is an expression for His personal essence as present in the sanctuary and people" (O. Procksch in G. Kittel, TWNT, Vol. I, Art. *ἄγιος*, p. 90 (TDNT, p. 91)). But it also means on the other side that the Old Testament does not pretend to knowledge of two or many gods. It knows only one God. The hidden Yahweh Himself is present in His name and all the predicates of the name are those of the hidden Yahweh Himself. Nevertheless, it knows the one God a first time and then a second time in a very different way. And for Israel or the righteous everything depends on knowing Him thus, this second time in a very different way. For the Yahweh who exists this second time in a very different way, the name of Yahweh, is the form in which Yahweh comes to Israel, has dealings with it, is manifest to it. Therefore the decisive act of revelation by which Israel is chosen as Israel and becomes the people of this God is the revelation of the name of God. It is significant enough that this revelation of the name (Ex. 3^{13f.}) is in fact, in content, the refusal to give a name, for "I am that I am" can hardly mean more than that "I am He whose true name no one can utter." By its very wording the revealed

name is intended to recall the hiddenness even of the revealed God. But under this name, which in itself and as such pronounces His mystery, God does reveal Himself to His people, i.e., He begins, as Ex. 3 instructively shows, to have dealings with Israel through the announcing by Moses of its deliverance out of Egypt. From this standpoint one must add to the concept of the name of God that of the covenant, which belongs to a very different plane, if one is to see fully what the form of God, and to that degree His being in concealment, signifies in the Old Testament. In covenant with this people—"I will be their God and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31³³)—the name of God is actualised, i.e., in the covenant with its divine promise and claim, with its record deposited in the Law, everything takes place that does take place through the name of Yahweh. In the language of our historians, "the thought of the covenant is the form in which is clothed Israel's consciousness of the relation with this God made in history and also of that which is divinely willed in this relation" (J. Hempel, RGG², Art. "Bund," II, A). To have knowledge of the name of Yahweh, and to that degree knowledge of Yahweh Himself, and to participate in His revelation, is to be a partner in the covenant made by Him. Yahweh is thus God a second time in a very different way in the fact that He elects a people, makes it His people and rules it as His people.

It is now relatively simple to see the fundamental concern in the New Testament. God a second time in a different way is obviously the point here too, but in a manner incomparably more direct, unequivocal and palpable. It is so much more direct that even the hypostases of the Old Testament are weak in comparison; to use the well-known metaphor of Hebrews, they appear only as shadows. It is so much the more direct that especially the notable position and significance of the name of Yahweh may be regarded quite simply and yet at the same time quite meaningfully, as the Church has always maintained against Judaism even if only from this standpoint, as a prophecy of the fulfilment present here. Into the place, not of Yahweh on Sinai or in heaven, but of the name of the Lord which finally dwells very really in a house of stone in Jerusalem, there now comes the existence of the man Jesus of Nazareth. At one of the high points of the New Testament message He is called "my Lord and my God" (Jn. 20²⁸). The remote but ever near and actual background is here again the God who has no historical form, the "Father in heaven." But the Jesus of the New Testament calls precisely this God not merely the Father who has sent Him but very emphatically my Father alongside whom He may place Himself, or knows that He is placed, as He lives as man among men, as He does the Father's will, i.e., as He reveals Him, the Father, from whom He is separated not by anything essential but simply by this form of His as man, i.e., by the possibility of being God in this form. Inalienably important as this background is, little as it can be thought away even for a single moment, the picture which the New Testament itself sets before us is that of the self-disclosure of this Father in which He is not the Father but the Son, the historical figure of this Man on His way from Bethlehem to Golgotha, the "name" of Jesus. Again, the concreteness and actuality of the self-unveiling of God for man, and the enigma of the self-distinction in God Himself which makes this self-unveiling possible, has not just increased quantitatively here in comparison with the Old Testament. Is not perhaps every purely speculative or figurative or fictitious understanding of the real objectification of God in His revelation ruled out for the first time here? Is not the question of faith in revelation, of acceptance of the God with us, put for the first time here in such a way that it demands decision—here where in place of the invisible form of the name of the revealed God, which is real only in the sphere of human conception, there has now entered the unique, contingent, somatic, human existence of Jesus? Has not the rejection of Jesus by the Jews

made it shatteringly clear that it was possible to accept the God of the Old Testament in what seemed to be the most profound reverence and the most zealous faith and yet in fact to deny Him to the extent that His form, now become quite concrete, became an offence to the righteous? Or what other objection could Israel bring against Jesus apart from the divine self-unveiling which now, not for the first time, but for the first time quite unequivocally, encountered it, making, as it were, bodily contact with it? In thinking that it has to defend against Jesus as against a blasphemer the name of God dwelling in the house of stone in Jerusalem, it denies this very name, and thus separates itself from it and from its own Holy Scripture, which is one long witness to this name as God's real presence and action in the human sphere. This presence and action of God Israel declines. Why is it that the Lord's Prayer in the New Testament begins in the style of the Old Testament: "Hallowed by thy name!"? How else could it begin? one might almost reply. This is the whole point with Jesus. His concern is not with something new but with that which is first and primal, with the God who wills to be God and to be known as God a second time in a different way, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who wills to be revealed in His name and hallowed in His name. This is why, in explanation of the first petition, the Lord's Prayer continues at once: "Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done, as in heaven, so (N.B.) on earth!" This *καὶ ἐν γῆς* was the self-unveiling, the form of God which Israel found attested in its Holy Scripture on every page and which now, when it stood fulfilled before it, it denied again just as the fathers in the desert had murmured against Moses and later the prophets had been stoned, not out of irreligion, but in the protest of the most refined and most ponderable religion against revelation, which will not leave even or especially the righteous man alone but literally confronts him with God. Thus the revelation in Jesus ends with His crucifixion by the most pious men of their time, who even though they had Immanuel daily on their lips and in their hearts did not want this Immanuel in its unconditionally enacted fulfilment. But just because Immanuel had been unconditionally fulfilled in Jesus the crucifixion of Jesus was bound to mean something different from the stoning of even the greatest prophets, namely, the end of the history of Israel as the special people of revelation, the destruction of the house of stone as the dwelling of the name of the Lord, the free proclamation, not of a new Gospel but of the one ancient Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. As the Word became Flesh: *λόγος σαρκεῶν*, bringing fully to light what revelation in the Old Testament had always brought to light only in the form of a pointer, it had also to become *λόγος συντέμνων*, the dissolution of this revelation and its written testimony, not their contradiction, abolition, or destruction, but their dissolution into itself, just as the early light of dawn disappears in the brightness of the rising sun itself (Rom. 9²⁸): Christ the *τέλος* of the Law (Rom. 10⁴). We see here the theme of the great battle which Paul above all others fought at the rise of the Church. It was not a battle against the Old Testament, but like the battle of Jesus Christ Himself, to whom he simply wished to testify, it was a battle for the Old Testament, i.e., for the one eternal covenant of God with men sealed in time, for acknowledgment of the perfect self-unveiling of God.

That God is capable of what the Bible ascribes to Him in its accounts of what happened from the patriarchs by way of Moses and the prophets to Golgotha and on to Easter and Pentecost; that God can be made manifest to men in the strictly real sense, as one may finally see in the revelation in Jesus, i.e., that God can become unlike Himself

in such a way that He is not tied to His secret eternity and eternal secrecy but can and will and does in fact take temporal form as well; the fact that God can and will and actually does do this we now understand as a confirmation of our first statement that God reveals Himself as the Lord. To all talk of other revelations apart from that attested in the Bible our primary question must be whether the reference there too is to an authentic assumption of form by the Godhead over against man, and not perhaps to mere appearances for which identity with the Godhead cannot be seriously claimed but only a certain participation in it. A second question must then be whether the lordship which is perhaps ascribed to the Godhead there too is also seen there in this intrinsic freedom of God, i.e., the freedom to be unlike Himself. When these questions cannot be answered in the affirmative, or to the extent that they cannot be answered thus with certainty, one should at least exercise great caution in inserting the biblical revelation into the series of other revelations. But be that as it may, the lordship discernible in the biblical revelation consists in the freedom of God to differentiate Himself from Himself, to become unlike Himself and yet to remain the same, to be indeed the one God like Himself and to exist as the one sole God in the fact that in this way that is so inconceivably profound He differentiates Himself from Himself, being not only God the Father but also—in this direction this is the comprehensive meaning of the whole of the biblical witness—God the Son. That He reveals Himself as the Son is what is primarily meant when we say that He reveals Himself as the Lord. This Sonship is God's lordship in His revelation.

2. Revelation in the Bible means the self-unveiling, imparted to men, of the God who by nature cannot be unveiled to men. We now emphasise the second part of the saying and in so doing we return to the subject of revelation. The revelation attested in the Bible is the revelation of the God who by nature cannot be unveiled to men. There are other things and even other gods that are inscrutable to man. That is, man does not in fact have any experience or concept of them. Yet he might very well have some experience or concept of them, so that their inscrutability is only factual. Some day it might be set aside by another fact, since it is not grounded in the nature of the matter or the god in question. But inscrutability, hiddenness, is of the very essence of Him who is called God in the Bible. As Creator, this God is different from the world, i.e., as the One He is, He does not belong to the sphere of what man as a creature can know directly. Nor can He be unveilable for man indirectly in the created world, for He is the Holy One to see whom, even indirectly, other eyes are needed than these eyes of ours which are corrupted by sin. And finally this God by His grace, i.e., by His self-unveiling, says to everyone to whom it is imparted that of himself he could not do what is there done to him and

for him. It is thus of the very nature of this God to be inscrutable to man. In saying this we naturally mean that in His revealed nature He is thus inscrutable. It is the *Deus revelatus* who is the *Deus absconditus*, the God to whom there is no path nor bridge, concerning whom we could not say nor have to say a single word if He did not of His own initiative meet us as the *Deus revelatus*. Only when we have grasped this as the meaning of the Bible do we see the full range of its statement that God reveals Himself, i.e., that He has assumed form for our sake. We cannot withdraw one iota from our previous interpretation of revelation, namely, that it consists in God having assumed form. To deny that is to deny revelation itself. But the fact that it is the God who by nature cannot be unveiled to man that reveals Himself there has distinct significance for our understanding of His self-unveiling. It necessarily means that even in the form He assumes when He reveals Himself God is free to reveal Himself or not to reveal Himself. In other words, we can regard His self-unveiling in every instance only as His act in which He reveals Himself to a man who is unable to unveil Him, showing Himself indeed in a specific form, but still unveiling Himself. Revelation always means revealing even in the form or means of revelation. The form as such, the means, does not take God's place. It is not the form, but God in the form, that reveals, speaks, comforts, works and aids. The fact that God takes form does not give rise to a medium, a third thing between God and man, a reality distinct from God that is as such the subject of revelation. This would imply that God would be unveilable for men, that God Himself would no longer need His revelation, or rather that God would be given up into the hands of man, who, God's form being given him, could more or less control God as he does other realities. The fact that God takes form means that God Himself controls not only man but also the form in which He encounters man. God's presence is always God's decision to be present. The divine Word is the divine speaking. The divine gift is the divine giving. God's self-unveiling remains an act of sovereign divine freedom. To one man it can be what the Word says and to another true divine concealment. To the same man it may be the former to-day and the latter to-morrow. In it God cannot be grasped by man or confiscated or put to work. To count on it is to count on God's free loving-kindness, not on a credit granted once and for all, not on an axiom to which one may have recourse once and for all, not on an experience one has had once and for all. If this were so, the revelation in question would not be that of the God who by nature cannot be unveiled to man. We should simply have one of those mysteries that one day unveil themselves to us and are mysteries no more. The mysteries of the world are of such a kind that some day they can cease to be mysteries. God is always a mystery. Revelation is

always revelation in the full sense of the word or it is not revelation, or at any rate not what is called revelation in the Bible.

We have already noted the remarkable circumstance that the great revelation of the name in Ex. 3 according to the most likely interpretation of the text consists precisely in the refusal to give a name. "Wherefore askest thou after my name, seeing it is wonderful?" is also the answer of the angel of the Lord to Manoah in Jud. 13¹⁸ cf. Gen. 32³⁰. In revelation there is no delivering up of God to man such as a knowledge of His true name would imply. Revelation itself is to be understood, and to continue to be understood, as the revelation of the free loving-kindness of God. This reserve of Yahweh, His concealment even in His revelation, is also indicated by the urgent warning in Ex. 3: "Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Similarly and more generally the concept of God's holiness in the Old Testament bears no relation to speculation about the transcendent God but belongs strictly to His immanence, i.e., to His revelation, His name. In the Old Testament everything is holy that is connected with what we call the form of God in His revelation, with what in this connexion and because of it demands another attitude from man than the profane world in whose sphere and environment it may be seen and heard as the form of God, a discerning, reserved and utterly reverent attitude, an attitude in which man has to set aside all self-assertion or clumsy interference—one has only to think of the unfortunate experiences that could be had by meddling with the ark of the covenant. Everything the Old Testament says about God's self-unveiling stands *eo ipso* under what seems to be the very opposite sign as well: "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not (also) a God afar off?" (Jer. 23²³). In Mal. 3¹ the angel of the covenant is Himself expressly called the Lord, though this does not prevent Him from also being sent by the Lord. In Is. 6 the manifest God whose mere train fills the temple is holy, while He Himself sits on a high and lofty throne, incomprehensible to the prophet and the people, even as He turns to them with His revelation. God is holy, and what is connected with Him is holy, because and in so far as God, even in disclosing and imparting Himself, also draws and establishes the boundary which separates man from Him and which man, therefore, may not cross. Holiness is the separation in which God is God and in which, as God, He goes His own way even and precisely as He is "God with us." It is the reserving of His gracious or non-gracious decision with which one must always reckon in relation to Him and in virtue of which He must always be sought afresh and always with the same humility. Holiness also has unquestionably the meaning of strange; God comes to men, but not to be at home with them. This God is not only a God of action, as the founding of the Sabbath tells us with special beauty. He can not only work; He can also rest from all His works. Even as He enters the sphere of our existence, He still inhabits and asserts the sphere which is proper to Him and to Him alone. In relation to this God, as one may gather from the attitude of the prophets and especially the psalmists, we are always dealing with the totality, and the history of His acts is a history of ever renewed beginnings. Of course there is and ought to be a tradition of revelation, an institutional cultus, but over against it in the sharpest dialectic stands prophetism, always ready and armed thoroughly to unsettle afresh everything that wants to settle down, and to set afresh before the mystery of Yahweh everything that wants to clarify itself in human, in only too human fashion. From this standpoint the sharpness of the prohibition of images is to be seen as a ban not so much on the enjoyment of the senses as on the pious obtrusiveness and cocksureness of the religion of Canaan. One cannot stress enough that this concealment of God in the Old Testament is never a

matter of esoteric metaphysics, that it rather is and always continues to be supremely practical, because it is the concealment of the revealed and active God. But the very fact that this God can be seen and heard only as the active God, and never (or only *per nefas*) as comprised and enveloped in a medium, is guaranteed by His concealment, by His incomprehensibility.

This relation is not altered in the New Testament either. On the contrary, it is now supremely true that God conceals Himself in revealing Himself, that even and precisely in assuming form He remains free to become manifest or not to become manifest in this form. The form here is that of the *humanitas Christi*. And this brings us up against one of the hardest problems of Christology that will claim our attention more than once: Can the incarnation of the Word according to the biblical witnesses mean that the existence of the man Jesus of Nazareth was as it were in itself, in its own power and continuity, the revealing Word of God? Is the *humanitas Christi* as such the revelation? Does the divine sonship of Jesus Christ mean that God's revealing has now been transmitted as it were to the existence of the man Jesus of Nazareth, that this has thus become identical with it? At this stage we can only reply that when this view has really been held, there has always been more of less clearly discernible the very thing which, as we have seen, the Old Testament tried to avoid with its concept of the holiness of the revealed God, namely, the possibility of having God disclose Himself through man, of allowing man to set himself on the same platform as God, to grasp Him there and thus to become His master. The "fairest Lord Jesus" of mysticism, the "Saviour" of Pietism, Jesus the teacher of wisdom and friend of man in the Enlightenment, Jesus the quintessence of enhanced humanity in Schleiermacher, Jesus the embodiment of the idea of religion in Hegel and his school, Jesus a religious personality according to Carlyle's picture in the theology of the end of the 19th century—all this looks at least very dubiously like a profane and sacrilegious intrusion in the Old Testament sense in which it is thought possible to come to terms, as it were, with the presence of God in Christ and to take control of it with the help of certain conceptions deriving from the humanity. From the fact that such attempts at secularisation were not made in the New Testament we may see that here even Christ's humanity stands under the caveat of God's holiness, i.e., that the power and continuity in which the man Jesus of Nazareth was in fact the revealed Word according to the witness of the Evangelists and apostles consisted here too in the power and continuity of the divine action in this form and not in the continuity of this form as such. As a matter of fact even Jesus did not become revelation to all who met Him but only to a few. Even these few could also deny and leave Him and one of them could be His betrayer. Revealing could obviously not be ascribed to His existence as such. His existence as such is indeed given up to death, and it is in this way, from death, from this frontier, since the Crucified was raised again, that He is manifested as the Son of God. Nor is His resurrection described as an operation proper to the *humanitas Christi* but rather as something done to it, as a being raised from the dead by God (frequently, cf. Gal. 1¹; Rom. 6⁴; Eph. 1²⁰ expressly by God the Father). To use the language of a later age, the Godhead is not so immanent in Christ's humanity that it does not also remain transcendent to it, that its immanence ceases to be an event in the Old Testament sense, always a new thing, something that God actually brings into being in specific circumstances. In the comprehensive formula of Paul in 2 Cor. 5¹⁹: θεός ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσειν ἑαυτῷ, one should not lay such stress on ἦν that its connexion with the verb καταλλάττειν is overlooked. This reconciling action of God is the *being* of God in Christ, but it is this reconciling *action* that is the being. The Son "glorifies" the Father, yet not without the Father glorifying Him, the Son (Jn. 17¹). It is not any son that speaks here, but the Son of this

Father, who even as the Father of this Son remains the Father in heaven, the Father who sends the Son, to conclude with this Johannine description of the divine action.

And now we repeat that the God of the biblical revelation can also do what is ascribed to Him in this respect by the biblical witnesses. His revelation does not mean in the slightest a loss of His mystery. He assumes a form, yet not in such a way that any form will compass Him. Even as He gives Himself He remains free to give Himself afresh or to refuse Himself. This His new self-giving remains man's only hope. His "second time in a different way" does not really prevent Him from remaining the same. In all this we hear confirmation a second time, though obviously in a very different way from the first, that God reveals Himself as the Lord. And again we have also to ask whether in other instances in which men think they can speak of revelation the abiding mystery of the self-revealing God really belongs also to the concept of revelation, whether the lordship there ascribed to "God" can really exist in this freedom of God with regard to His own utterances, or whether in these cases revelation does not always consist in a secularisation of God and therefore in an empowering of man, so that "God" does not remain free at all but at best must become a partner and at worst a tool of the religious man. Even there one may also speak of "revelation," but it would be as well, we repeat, not to be in too big a hurry at least to link biblical revelation with the other variety. But that is merely by the way. What is beyond dispute is that the lordship of God discernible in the biblical revelation consists in this freedom of His, in His permanent freedom to unveil Himself or to veil Himself. God reveals Himself as the Father, that is to say, as the Father of the Son in whom He takes form for our sake. God the Father is God who always, even in taking form in the Son, does not take form, God as the free ground and the free power of His being God in the Son. It would not be revelation within the bounds of the biblical witness if God did not also reveal Himself thus, as the Father. That He does this is the other thing—really other, the same, yet not to be brought under a single denominator as the first—that is meant when we say that He reveals Himself as the Lord. God's fatherhood, too, is God's lordship in His revelation.

3. Revelation in the Bible means the self-unveiling, imparted to men, of the God who by nature cannot be unveiled. Our stress is now on the words "imparted to men." We have asked: Where does revelation come from? We now ask: Where does it go to? The revelation attested in the Bible does not just take place in the sphere of man, as might also be said of the theogonies and cosmogonies which are the theme of the witness in the records of, e.g., Babylonian religion. It is also aimed at man, not just mythical man, man in general, but always

a specific man occupying a very specific place, a specific historical place. Part of the concept of the biblically attested revelation is that it is a historical event. Historical does not mean historically demonstrable or historically demonstrated. Hence it does not mean what is usually called "historical" (*historisch*). We should be discarding again all that we have said earlier about the mystery in revelation if we were now to describe any of the events of revelation attested in the Bible as "historical" (*historisch*); i.e., apprehensible by a neutral observer or apprehended by such an observer. What a neutral observer could apprehend or may have apprehended of these events was the form of revelation which he did not and could not understand as such. It was an event that took place in the human sphere with all the possibilities of interpretation corresponding to this sphere. In no case was it revelation as such.

Millions in the ancient Orient may have heard the name of Yahweh or seen His temple on some occasion. But this "historical" element was not revelation. Thousands may have seen and heard the Rabbi of Nazareth. But this "historical" element was not revelation. The "historical" element in the resurrection of Christ, the empty tomb as an aspect of the event that might be established, was not revelation. This "historical" element, like all else that is "historical" on this level, is admittedly open to very trivial interpretations too.

As regards the question of the "historical" certainty of the revelation attested in the Bible we can only say that it is ignored in the Bible itself in a way that one can understand only on the premiss that this question is completely alien to it, i.e., obviously and utterly inappropriate to the object of its witness. The neutral observer who understood the events recorded in it as revelation would cease thereby to be a neutral observer. And for the non-neutral, for the man who hears and sees, for the believer, there is and always will be in the form of revelation its mystery too. That is, he has to realise that what can be established here "historically" (*historisch*) is very little or nothing at all or something quite different which is of no importance for the event of revelation. This cannot be what we have in view, then, when we say that the biblical revelation is by definition a historical event. What we mean by this is rather that the Bible always understands what it calls revelation as a concrete relation to concrete men. God in His incomprehensibility and God in the act of His revelation is not the formula of an abstract metaphysics of God, the world, or religion which is supposed to obtain at all times and in all places. It is rather the record of an event that has taken place once and for all, i.e., in a more or less exact and specific time and place. If the time and place are largely obscure for us "historically," if the individual data the Bible offers concerning them are subject to "historical" criticism, this is not surprising in the documents of a time and culture that had no knowledge

at all of a "historical" question in our sense, quite apart from the fact that "historical" interest even in the sense that was possible in that age and culture could play no serious role in the composition of these documents, which were meant to be records of revelation. Nevertheless this does not alter the fact that the Bible by what it calls revelation always means a specific event at a specific time and place. Thus, even if according to the standards of modern historiography it does in certain instances, having no interest in this regard, commit "errors" in what it says about the time and place, the important thing is not the more or less "correct" content but the very fact of these statements. This fact that the Bible in both the Old Testament and the New does continually and with notable emphasis make chronological and topographical statements, that it thus wishes in each instance to ascribe a set place in time and space to the divine revelation which it records, that the recorded processes in which revelation comes to men are put in the setting of other events at the same time and in the same place, that ancient Egypt, Assyria and Babylon come into view on the horizon of the experiences of the people of Israel, that Cyrenius the governor of Syria cannot be left out of the Christmas story and Pontius Pilate has an authentic place in the Creed—all this signifies that when the Bible gives an account of revelation it means to narrate history, i.e., not to tell of a relation between God and man that exists generally in every time and place and that is always in process, but to tell of an event that takes place there and only there, then and only then, between God and certain very specific men. The divine self-unveiling which it records, with the holiness which it ascribes to God in this act, is not imparted to man but to such and such men in very definite situations. It is a very specific event and as such it is incomparable and cannot be repeated. To hear the Bible as the witness to God's revelation is in all cases to hear about this history through the Bible.

Hearing history such as that which is an event in the revelation attested in the Bible obviously cannot mean regarding such an event as possible, probable, or even actual on the basis of a general concept of historical (*geschichtlich*) truth. Even histories enacted between God and man do, of course, come under this general concept of history on their human side and therefore in relation to the statements on its temporal form which are so assiduously emphasised in the Bible. But they do not fall under this general concept on their divine side. Hence the "historical" (*historisch*) judgment which presupposes this general concept can in principle relate only to the temporal side. It can neither claim nor deny that at this point or that God has acted on men. To be able to claim or deny this it would have to abandon its presupposition, that general concept, and become a confession of faith or unbelief *vis-à-vis* the biblical witness. No genuinely "historical" verdict can be passed on the singular historicity of the history recorded in the biblical witness. But again—and this is less obvious—hearing a history such as that enacted in the revelation attested in the Bible cannot be dependent on the "historical" assessment of its temporal form. The judgment in virtue of which a biblical story may be regarded with some probability as history in the sense

of the general concept of historical truth is not necessarily the judgment of faith *vis-à-vis* the biblical witness. For the judgment may be passed without any understanding of the story in its particularity, i.e., as history between God and man. Again, the opposite judgment need not be that of unbelief, for it may involve an understanding of the story in its particularity, i.e., as history between God and man. The question which decides hearing or non-hearing of the biblical history cannot be the question of its general historicity; it can only be that of its special historicity.

Thus the judgment that a biblical story is to be regarded either as a whole or in part as saga or legend does not have to be an attack on the substance of the biblical witness. All that might be said is that according to the standards by which "historical" truth is usually measured elsewhere or generally, this story is one that to some degree eludes any sure declaration that it happened as the narrative says. Saga or legend can only denote the more or less intrusive part of the story-teller or story-tellers in the story told. There is no story in which we do not have to reckon with this aspect, and therefore with elements of saga or legend according to the general concept of "historical" truth. This applies also to the stories told in the Bible. Otherwise they would have to be without temporal form. Yet this fundamental uncertainty in general historicity, and therefore the positive judgment that here and there saga or legend is actually present, does not have to be an attack on the substance of the biblical testimony. For (1) this judgment can in any case concern and contest only the general historicity of a biblical record, (2) even in the clearest instance it is by nature only a judgment of probability, and (3) even saga or legend is in any case meant to be history and can thus be heard as a communication of history irrespective of the "historical" judgment. So long as this is so, the question of the particular historicity of the story at issue is at least not answered negatively.

The situation changes when the category of myth is introduced. The verdict that a biblical story is to be understood as a myth is necessarily an attack on the substance of the biblical witness. This is because "myth" does not intend to be history but only pretends to be such. Myth uses narrative form to expound what purports to be always and everywhere true. It is an exposition of certain basic relationships of human existence, found in every time and place, in their connexions to their own origins and conditions in the natural and historical cosmos, or in the deity. These are given narrative form on the assumption that man knows all these things and can present them thus or thus, that he controls them, that in the last resort they are his things. Myth (cf. for what follows Eduard Thurneysen, "Christus und die Kirche," *Z.d.Z.*, 1930, esp. p. 189 f.) does not impute any exclusive character to the event narrated by it—in other words: "What myth narrates as a fact may happen in any time or place. It is not a unique event but one that can be repeated. . . . But what can be repeated and can happen over and over again, even though it may be surprising, is a general possibility akin to natural occurrence. What happens in this way rests on nothing other than the assumption that the man to whom the revelation narrated in myth is imparted stands ultimately in an original and natural relation and connexion, hidden, of course, but present potentially at least everywhere, to the final ground of his existence, to his God. In the events narrated in myth this latent possibility becomes, so to speak, active. In ever new theophanies man experiences the ground of the world as present and himself as connected to it. But this means that there is here an ultimate identity between God and man. There is no thought of a profound and final distinction. What myth, then, recounts as a unique happening is not unique at all; it is the unchanging, final, basic relation which, evoked by all kinds of wizardry and magic, is again lived through and experienced and will be continually lived through and experienced."

Joyous was it years ago—
 So eagerly the spirit strives
 To seek and come to know
 How nature, in creating, lives.
 And 'tis the eternally One
 That is manifold revealed.
 Small the great and great the small,
 Each according to its kind;
 Ever changing, standing fast,
 Near and far and far and near,
 Forming thus and then transforming—
 To marvel am I here.

(Goethe, *Parabase*, Jub. Edn., Vol. II, p. 246).

This is the birth of myth. (The only distinction between myth and speculation proper is that in speculation the narrative is stripped off again like a garment that has become too tight, so that what is presented as fact in myth is now elevated to the sphere of pure idea or concept, and the present and acknowledged wealth of the origins and relations of human existence is thus expressed in its "in and for itself." Myth is the preparatory form of speculation and speculation is the revealed essence of myth.) To be sure, one cannot prevent a historian from applying the category of myth to some of the events recorded in the Bible. One might ask, of course, whether the supposed myths have really been found in the text of the Bible and not somewhere behind the text, whether the context in which the passage concerned finds its point has not been dissolved, whether what it says in the context has not been ignored on the assumption that so-called "sources" of a special character and independent content underlie the biblical text, and whether certain parts of the biblical text have not been combined with parts of non-biblical texts which might perhaps be claimed as mythical. In a word, one might ask whether the verdict "myth" as applied to the biblical texts is not even from the purely "historical" standpoint a mistaken verdict because it can perhaps be made only when there is a failure to hear what the real biblical texts are trying to say and do say if we read them as we actually have them, in their narrower and broader context, as biblical texts. But even if this objection does not seem to make sense, the historian who resolves on this verdict must realise at least that if this verdict is possible for him he has as it were read the Bible outside the Christian Church, that he is not asking about revelation but about something else, perhaps myth or speculation, that perhaps he himself is quite unaware or forgetful of the fact that there is such a thing as revelation, that perhaps he himself is aware, or at this moment aware, of no more than man's general ability to control the origins and relations of his existence by fable or thought or some other means, because these are in fact his own things. It is really quite natural that an age whose thought, feeling and action are so highly mythical as the so-called modern period that culminates in the Enlightenment (including Idealism and Romanticism) should seek myth in the Bible too—and find it. Historicism is "the self-understanding of the spirit in so far as its own achievements in history are concerned" (E. Troeltsch, *Ges. Schriften*, Vol. III, 1922, p. 104). Good! For the person who does not ask about revelation there is nothing left, of course, but to ask about myth, and the man who asks about myth because he must, because myth is his own last word, will not be restrained by the objection that even a historian might feel from seeking myth in the Bible too, and really finding it there, and perhaps, strictly speaking, finding a little of it in every part of the Bible. We can only declare that the interpretation of the Bible as the witness to revelation and the interpretation of the Bible as

the witness to myth are mutually exclusive. The category of saga, the questioning of the general historicity of the biblical narratives, is not an attack on the substance of the Bible as witness, but the category of myth is, for myth does not just question but fundamentally denies the history as such, and therefore the special historicity of the biblical records, and revelation regarded as myth would not be a historical event but a supposed non-spatial and timeless truth, i.e., a creation of man.

The Bible lays such extraordinary stress on the historicity of the revelation recorded by it because by revelation it does not mean a creation of man. It says so emphatically that revelation was imparted to these men in these situations because it is describing it thereby as an impartation to men. This is what the use of the concept of myth rather than saga in relation to the Bible overlooks or denies. The revelations attested in the Bible do not purport to be manifestations of a universal or an idea which are special by nature but which can then be comfortably compared with the idea and understood and evaluated in their particularity.

Because this is not the case, the philosophy of religion of the Enlightenment from Lessing by way of Kant and Herder to Fichte and Hegel, with its intolerable distinction between the eternal content and the historical "vehicle," can only be described as the nadir of the modern misunderstanding of the Bible.

The revelation attested in the Bible purports to be a historical event. In this regard, if we bring in the concept of history in explanation, our only possible *tertium comparationis* can be the fact that in revelation as in history the reference is to a definite event which is different from every other event and which is thus incomparable and cannot be repeated. If with the Enlightenment we were to regard the event as again the mere exponent of some general occurrence, a special case under a rule, or the realisation of a general possibility; if history were to be understood as a framework within which there might also be something like revelation, then at this point we should have to reject the concept of historicity no less emphatically than that of myth. In relation to revelation the term historical can only denote event as a fact over which there is no court by reference to which it may be regarded as a fact, as this particular fact. It is thus that revelation is imparted to man according to the Bible, and this is why the Bible lays such stress on chronology, topography and contemporary world history, i.e., on the contingency and uniqueness of the revelations recorded by it. In doing this it is simply saying that revelation comes vertically from heaven. It befalls man with the same contingency with which, living in this specific place at this specific time and in these specific circumstances he is this specific man at this specific stage of his inner and outer life, the only difference being that this historical contingency of his can still be surveyed and explained in all possible

dimensions. The statement: *Individuum est ineffabile*, can indeed be made but characteristically it cannot be proved, whereas revelation is the *ineffabile* which encounters and reaches man and proves itself to be such. From this standpoint, then, we finally achieve full clarity regarding what was said in 1. and 2. about the unveiling and veiling of God in His revelation. These two relationships in which the Bible regards God as existing cannot be interpreted as the elements of a present and known truth and reality that must be established by a general necessity of thought. Otherwise, even if we were not ready to admit it, we should still be regarding the biblical revelation as a myth. The fact that the *Deus revelatus* is also the *Deus absconditus* and the *Deus absconditus* the *Deus revelatus*, that the Father glorifies the Son and the Son the Father, is not self-evident, i.e., intelligible *per se*, as the immanent dialectic of this or that sphere of human life, or perhaps a dialectic like the Hegelian In itself and For itself, is intelligible *per se*, i.e., resolvable into a third. If the goodness and holiness of God are neither experiences we can manufacture nor concepts we can form for ourselves but divine modes of being to which human experiences and concepts can at least respond, then their conjunction, their dialectic, in which both are only what they are, is certainly not a dialectic which we can know, i.e., achieve for ourselves, but one which we can only ascertain and acknowledge as actually taking place. And this actual occurrence, this being ascertained and acknowledged, is the historicity of revelation. By this concept we mean that in the Bible revelation is a matter of impartation, of God's being revealed, by which the existence of specific men in specific situations has been singled out in the sense that their experiences and concepts, even though they cannot grasp God in His unveiling and God in His veiling and God in the dialectic of unveiling and veiling, can at least follow Him and respond to Him.

The thing to note at this third point is the element of vocation in the biblical concept of revelation. We again find agreement between the Old Testament and the New in their view that man can in no wise produce revelation for himself. We have referred already to the priests of Baal on Carmel who in their attempts to invoke God show precisely how man has no access to Yahweh. The so-called false prophets of the Old Testament are obviously viewed in the same way as proclaimers of a self-snatched revelation which for that very reason is no revelation at all. Similarly in the New Testament (e.g., Mk. 10²⁷; Lk. 9⁵⁷.) those who want to win life or follow Jesus in their own strength are shown to be the very people who are unable to do it. On the other hand the promise given to Abraham is in the first instance for Abraham himself as well as Sarah (Gen. 17¹⁷) a matter of mirth, while Jacob-Israel (quite apart from other traits that are found objectionable to-day) is in Gen. 32²² a fighter, and indeed a victorious fighter, against God, and the resistance to calling seen in a Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah or Jonah seems to be of the very essence of the genuine prophet. The great New Testament example of this is naturally the calling of Saul to be Paul. And even in relation to Peter the view of the tradition is perhaps that his true calling is by the Risen Lord, i.e., after his denial of Jesus. To him in particu-

lar it is most emphatically said that flesh and blood have not revealed it (the divine sonship of Christ) to him. It would naturally be foolish to see in all this a kind of negative disposition of the men concerned towards revelation. In many callings this resistance is not especially stressed, though neither is there in any instance a preparation for the call. What the Bible is trying to say here is obviously that there is no disposition in man at all. Calling is a non-derivative fact, or derivative only from election. The prophets and apostles are not portrayed as heroes. They stand there in their utter humanity. Yet for all that they have as it were come from heaven as prophets and apostles. They are no less astonishing to themselves than to those around them. They are set in an office which cannot be explained by their existence and they bear a "burden" which they have not taken up themselves but which has been laid on their shoulders. In the New Testament the puzzle or the solution of the puzzle of this inconceivably factual presence of real men at God's revelation is expressed by the concept of *πνεῦμα*. As by unveiling we ultimately say no other than Easter, and as by veiling, with an unavoidable backward glance at the source of revelation, we say no other than Good Friday, so now, looking forward to the man to whom and for whom the revelation becomes event, to the threshold over which revelation crosses into history, we say no other than Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. The *πνεῦμα* is the miracle of the presence of real men at God's revelation. At Pentecost we are not dealing with anything other than the event of Good Friday and Easter. But here it is for real men, for such human men as the apostles according to the way they are depicted in the New Testament. The event of Good Friday and Easter can and does concern them, come home to them, call them. Not just Jesus Christ is there, but Jesus Christ in the Church of Jesus Christ, in faith in Jesus Christ. This is the specific feature of Pentecost and the Spirit in the New Testament. We had Pentecost in view when we called revelation an event that from man's standpoint has dropped down vertically from heaven. How else can we put it if we are to keep close to this text and perhaps to all the New Testament texts bearing on the "Spirit of God" or the "Spirit of Christ." The miracle that we cannot stress too strongly corresponds simply on the one side to the mystery of God from which revelation comes forth and by which it is always invested and then on the other side to the paradox that in revelation God really does come forth out of His mystery. This is how it is with God's being revealed.

Without God's being historically revealed in this way, revelation would not be revelation. God's being revealed makes it a link between God and man, an effective encounter between God and man. But it is God's own being revealed that makes it this. In this respect too, with reference to the goal, our statement that God reveals Himself as the Lord is confirmed. The fact that God can do what the biblical witnesses ascribe to him, namely, not just take form and not just remain free in this form, but also in this form and freedom of His become God to specific men, eternity in a moment, this is the third meaning of His lordship in His revelation. There is talk of revelation outside the Bible too, and we have no reason to say that this is absolutely impossible. But there is every reason to put the third question whether the concept of revelation presupposed in such talk takes into account this element of God's being revealed as an act of God Himself, this understanding of the appropriation of revelation as an absolute

assignment irrespective of any disposition, or whether in these other places where people think they should accept the attestation of revelation the decisively important role is not played rather by perhaps the positive or perhaps (as in Buddhism) the negative disposition of man, whether what is called revelation here would not better be described as myth because the decisive point is really man's debate with himself. But we are not stressing these side-issues. Our positive concern is that in the biblical witness the lordship of God in this third sense is one of the decisive marks of revelation. God reveals Himself as the Spirit, not as any spirit, not as the basis of man's spiritual life which we can discover and awaken, but as the Spirit of the Father and the Son, and therefore the same one God, but the same one God in this way too, namely, in this unity, indeed, this self-disclosing unity, disclosing itself to men, of the Father and the Son. The fact that He does this; this third thing which does not follow self-evidently from the first and the second, just as there is nothing at all self-evident in their being and being together either; the fact that there is this being revealed of the Father and the Son, this is what we have in mind when we say that He reveals Himself as the Lord. The fact that according to Jn. 4²⁴ God is Spirit is also God's lordship in His revelation.

We look back and draw to a close. We have been asking about the root of the doctrine of the Trinity, its root in revelation, not in any revelation, not in a general concept of revelation, but in the concept of revelation taken from the Bible. We have been asking whether revelation must be understood as the ground of the doctrine of the Trinity, whether the doctrine of the Trinity must be understood as having grown out of this soil. And after a side-glance at the passages in the biblical witness which directly reflect the doctrine of the Trinity, we have enquired what revelation means in the Bible, asking, but asking concretely with reference to the biblical texts, whether the statement that God reveals Himself as the Lord really has a threefold meaning and yet a simple content in these texts. If we have been right to emphasise in the biblical witness to revelation the three elements of unveiling, veiling and impartation, or form, freedom and historicity, or Easter, Good Friday and Pentecost, or Son, Father and Spirit; if we have rightly characterised these elements in detail; if we have set them in a right relation to one another; if our threefold conclusion that God reveals Himself as the Lord is not, then, an illicit move but a genuine finding; if in this statement we have really said the same thing three times in three indissolubly different ways, then we may now conclude that revelation must indeed be understood as the root or ground of the doctrine of the Trinity. As its root or ground, we say. The doctrine of the Trinity

has not yet encountered us directly. Even in the verses which sound trinitarian the characteristic elements of the doctrine itself are missing. Our concepts of unimpaired unity and unimpaired distinction, the concept of the one essence of God and of the three persons or modes of being (*Seinsweisen*) to be distinguished in this essence, and finally the polemical assertion, which we touched on only briefly, that God's triunity is to be found not merely in His revelation but, because in His revelation, in God Himself and in Himself too, so that the Trinity is to be understood as "immanent" and not just "economic"—none of this is directly biblical, i.e., explicitly stated in the Bible; it is Church doctrine. We have established no more than that the biblical doctrine of revelation is implicitly, and in some passages explicitly, a pointer to the doctrine of the Trinity. In its basic outline it must be interpreted as also an outline of the doctrine of the Trinity. If the doctrine of the Trinity can be established and developed as such, we have to say that in respect of revelation there is a genuine and necessary connexion with the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity with its implications, distinctions and synopses is concerned with a problem that is really and very centrally posed by the biblical witness to revelation. It is in fact exegesis of this text. It is not, as we may now say already, an arbitrarily contrived speculation whose object lies elsewhere than in the Bible. Any child knows that it uses some of the philosophoumena of declining pagan antiquity. But according to our findings this cannot mean that it is a non-Church construct, i.e., one which was not necessary as such in the Church, one which did not arise in its day on the basis of Scripture, of the faith in God's revelation to which Scripture gave rise, a doctrine dealing merely with a theme of pagan antiquity. On the contrary, its statements may be regarded as indirectly, though not directly, identical with those of the biblical witness to revelation. It is Church exegesis, i.e., it exegetes this text, the witness to revelation which is accepted as such in the Church. When we come to expound it in detail as Church exegesis of this text, we must never cease to refer back to this biblical text itself with the question whether and how far we are on the right track in our treatment. The fact that it is Church exegesis, that the theses of the doctrine of the Trinity stand in relation to biblical revelation as directly as only an answer can stand in relation to a question, should be provisionally guaranteed by the proof which we have already offered.

3. *VESTIGIUM TRINITATIS*

Before we turn to the actual development of the doctrine of the Trinity in the final section, a critical discussion is required in respect

Copyright Notice

This extract is copied under CLA licence.

This extract is made available by the Heythrop Library for students enrolled on courses with the London Jesuit Centre.

You must not further copy or make this this extract available, either electronically or in hard copy, to anyone else.

Heythrop Library
2021