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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>CA</u>	Richardson, A.	<u>Christian Apologetics.</u>
<u>CD</u>	Barth, K.	<u>Church Dogmatics.</u> Various vols.
<u>CFNS</u>	Heim, K.	<u>Christian Faith and Natural Science</u>
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<u>WG</u>	Farmer, H.H.	<u>The World and God.</u>

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SUMMARY.

What is meant by the concept of miracle? What is a miracle? The purpose of this thesis is to try to clarify these questions and, to some extent at least, to come to satisfactory answers.

When one reads the works of contemporary theologians on the subject of the concept of miracle, differences immediately become apparent. I have divided these differences into nine arguments: and a chapter is devoted to each. In each chapter the argument is presented in a straightforward manner, largely drawn from the representatives of it. The view is also criticized and evaluated: this criticism and evaluation is largely my own.

The three traditional interpretations of the concept (as mirrored in their contemporary representatives) are presented and criticized in Part One of the thesis, which consists of three chapters. The contranaturalist believes that a miracle is unlawful and inexplicable: and this not only at the time of its occurrence, but forever so. The preternaturalist believes that a miracle is inexplicable at the time of its occurrence, but it need not remain so, and (in contradistinction to contranaturalism) it is categorically denied that a miracle is unlawful. The supernaturalist believes that there can be no adequate under-

standing of miracle without due consideration being given to the person of Jesus Christ: and that the divinity of Christ makes miracle natural and necessary. In order to criticize these and other views I use Tillich's definition of theology: a sound theology is one which is 1) faithful to the eternal truth of the message and which is 2) meaningfully applied to the questions and claims of the temporal situation. The three traditional views fail on both counts. All three are unbiblical and all three are scientifically unsatisfactory.

In Part Two I consider three important present-day theological movements which, while not dealing exclusively with the concept of miracle, are nevertheless of considerable importance for this concept. Karl Barth attempts to give a purely scriptural view of miracle without consideration for modern views of science and philosophy. Form criticism ^{be} may/roughly defined as the attempt to apply the results reached by students of folklore literature to the early Christian tradition as it is preserved in the synoptic gospels. The demythologist believes that the message of redemption which is contained in the New Testament is embedded in mythological language which can neither be fitted into the world view of modern man nor do justice to the message of redemption itself. The various move-

ments in Part Two are unsatisfactory for strictly different reasons. Barth's theology, because it is so strongly oriented to the truth of the eternal message, is oblivious of the claims of the temporal situation. Form criticism errs on the other side: in attempting to speak to one particular area of the temporal situation, it seems to almost completely lose the truth of the eternal message. Critics of the demythological movement are wont to say that demythologists miss the truth of the eternal message in attempting to present the gospel in terms understandable to modern man. In essence, I do not think that this is true, though the demythologist's attack on many forms of expression of traditional theology does lay him open to the charge of being merely negative.

In Part Three I present and evaluate three views of the concept of miracle which take cognizance of the fact that the growth of the scientific attitude has forced alterations in the realms of philosophy and theology. The rationalist is anxious to construct a comprehensive world-picture to replace the outworn supranaturalism of traditional theology. The linguist is convinced that the contemporary philosophical interest in language can be so developed as to provide a novel inroad into the problems and controversies

of theology, illuminating its claims and reforming its apologetic. The existentialist is likewise interested in making the gospel intelligible to contemporary man, and the synthesis between eternal message and temporal situation is effected by employing many forms of expression drawn from the philosophy of existence. These three contemporary views in Part Three are truly theological and truly apologetic: that is, all three earnestly attempt to do justice both to the truth of the eternal message and the claims and questions of the temporal situation. I am personally convinced that the view of the existentialist is more successful in this attempt than the other two.

In the conclusion I state my personal and positive views of the concept of miracle, using as a framework Hume's famous final paragraph in his "essay on miracles". Were I to sum up my own view of the concept of miracle in one sentence I should say this: a miracle is any event in which the faithful participant becomes aware of God's activity in Christ.

THE CONCEPT OF MIRACLE IN MODERN THEOLOGY

A THESIS IN

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY
submitted to the faculty of Divinity
of the University of Glasgow in
fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

Eldon R. Hay
Glasgow, Scotland, 1960.

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PREFACE

My aim and purpose in this thesis is to come to a more or less independent understanding of the concept of miracle. In order to do so, I propose to summarize and criticize various interpretations of that concept as these interpretations appear in the works of modern theologians. I do not intend to write a history of the subject, but to limit the discussion to views which are held amongst contemporary theologians. Nor do I intend to discuss the historical veracity of any miracle or group of miracles, though the New Testament events traditionally called miracles will always be in the background and sometimes in the foreground of the discussion.

The classification of different approaches to the concept of miracle has arisen out of the reading of various works of miracle apologetic. In each of the nine chapters representatives have been chosen for their particularly clear presentation of the view under consideration. At the same time, no one representative fits perfectly into any one argument: Bultmann represents three views, Richardson two, and many authors are cited in more than one chapter. In selecting^a/representative, I have attempted to seize upon this most fundamental convictions. In so doing, I am not unaware of other

aspects of his approach, but have found it necessary to elicit and expound his salient position.

The plan of each of the nine chapters is basically the same. First of all, there is a straightforward presentation of the argument drawn largely from the representatives themselves; secondly, there is a criticism, more or less my own, of that same view. The choice of chapter titles is meant to give a slight indication of the contents, but in each case the title word is defined and used throughout the argument in its restricted sense.

As to references, the main works of the representatives - the primary sources - have been assigned abbreviations.¹ Reference to the work of a representative in his own argument is designated by this abbreviation only, and is embodied in the text. In other chapters, the abbreviation is maintained, but the author is given as well, and the reference takes the form of a foot-note. References to the works of non-representatives, or to subordinate works of the representatives - secondary sources - are given in full in foot-notes. Where available, I have used translations of non-English works. Otherwise, the translations are my own, with the original

¹For a list of abbreviations and the works to which they refer, see below, vi.

in foot-notes. Unless otherwise indicated, scriptural quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.

I take this opportunity to thank my professors in Carleton, Queen's and Glasgow Universities. The members of the staff at Mitchell Library, Glasgow, have been most helpful and courteous in the course of this study. And I am most thankful for the love and understanding my wife has afforded me in the preparation of this work. Finally, it is a pleasant duty to acknowledge my great indebtedness to Professor Ronald Gregor Smith, whose advice on many points has been quite invaluable, and who has been so generous with his time, patience, and understanding in the guidance of this thesis.

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¹For a full bibliography of these books, cf. below, 473-75.

Introduction.

"The haunting problem of miracles invites a repeated and sustained attempt at its solution. Even a small advance is yet advance. . . . For this is the one crucial question which brings to a head and includes all the rest."

William Sanday.

What is meant by the concept of miracle? What is a miracle? These are the questions I seek to clarify, and to some extent at least, to answer. If one carefully reads the works of contemporary theologians on this subject, differences immediately become apparent. But are these differences apparent only in modern times? This is only partially the case. Even traditional theology seems to have inherent inconsistencies in its formulation of the concept of miracle. It is reasonably evident that there are at least three positions in traditional miracle apologetic. There is the view of the contranaturalist, who is convinced that a miracle is an event inexplicable in terms of natural law: inexplicable, not only at the time of its occurrence, but forever so. The preternaturalist softens this rather crude view by saying that a miracle is only inexplicable at the time of its occurrence, but that it need not remain so. Furthermore, it is explicitly denied that the event must always evade natural explanation. The supernaturalist retreats a step further: he demands that any consideration of the concept of miracle must give due place to the person of Jesus Christ. The supernaturalist believes that the divinity of Christ makes miracle natural and necessary. These traditional positions are mirrored in their contemporary representatives, and in Part One

of this thesis (the first three chapters) I present and criticize these traditional positions. On the whole, the positions are found wanting: consequently, I reject them; I reject supranaturalism.¹ Yet supranaturalism - that is, a combination of these three views - despite internal inconsistencies, held/complete sway over the theological field for fifteen hundred years; whereas at present this is no longer the case. What brought about this significant change?

The greatest single factor was undoubtedly the growth of the scientific attitude whose efflorescence may be said to have begun in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and which has continued to our own day. "The scientific revolution . . . outshines everything since the rise of Christianity and reduces the Renaissance and Reformation to the rank of mere episodes, mere internal dis-

¹In this thesis, the word supranaturalism is used as a term to designate any theology which is based on the nature-supranature schema. Therefore, the contra-, the preter-, and the supernatural views are all part of supranaturalism. And the word supranatural is used as a term to designate, in a general way, that which is related to, or deals with, or is characterized by what is above nature. Cf. in this regard Onions (ed.), The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, II, 2083 and 2088. I reserve the liberty to render the word 'supernatural' by the word 'supranatural', for in this thesis the word supernatural is used as a term to describe a certain specific theological position, particularly in regard to the concept of miracle.

placements, within the system of medieval Christendom."¹ Such a revolution has had far-reaching effects. "Science has changed the conditions of man's life. . . . The ideas of science have changed the way men think of themselves and of the world."² One of the immediate effects of this revolution in the field of miracle apologetic was to sharpen the traditional miracle concept, but at the same time made it increasingly difficult to hold.

But the growth of science wrought results in other directions: and one of the results was a change in the treatment of the Bible. The scientist demanded the right to investigate everything, no sphere was outside his interest and scope. The Holy Scripture itself was given over to the keenest scrutiny: subjected slowly but surely to the tests which all books of antiquity must meet. Source criticism is in many ways the forerunner of form criticism, which is the attempt to apply the results reached by students of folklore literature to the early Christian tradition as it is preserved in the synoptic gospels. I give a critical evaluation of form criticism in chapter five. And the chief aim of demythologizing (chapter six) is to make the

¹ Butterfield, The Origins of Modern Science, viii.

² Oppenheimer, Science and the Common Understanding, 1.

essential kerygma of the New Testament intelligible to man whose thinking is so largely determined by the scientific attitude. But this view also maintains that the kerygma itself demands interpretation, that science has been of service in fostering an attitude which in many ways is demanded by faith itself.

These two chapters (on form criticism and demythologizing) form two of the three sections of Part Two: the other section (chapter four) is devoted to a study of the theology of Karl Barth. Barth is placed at the beginning of Part Two, partly because of certain superficial resemblances to supranaturalism, partly because he fits conveniently into no other place. Barth's views on miracle are in no way apologetic: he considers miracle neither in relation to nature (as do all the traditional views in Part One) nor with consideration to the views of modern science (as do all the contemporary views in Part Three). But Barth's theology, in common with form criticism and demythologizing - and this indeed is the raison d'être of Part Two - is an important contemporary theological movement which, while not dealing exclusively with the concept of miracle, is nevertheless of considerable importance for that concept.

The growth of the scientific attitude has forced alterations in the realms of science and philosophy: and

in Part Three I examine truly contemporary views of miracle which, while trying to remain faithful to the fundamental insights of the Bible, yet attempt to render the concept of miracle intelligible and meaningful to modern man. In chapter seven we see that the rationalist attempts to construct a comprehensive world-picture to replace the traditional obsolete supranaturalism and at the same time to include and embrace the results of recent scientific research. Logical empiricism has been greatly influenced in its origins by the clarity of expression and economy of statement of science. In chapter eight, we examine the attempt of the linguist to make theological language meaningful: to locate terms like 'God' and 'miracle' on an overall language framework. In spite of their profundity, I reject the views of both the rationalist and the linguist because each tends to enmesh God and his activity in a this-worldly setting; because each tends to construct an inclusive Weltanschauung which actually throttles and thwarts adequate theological expression. And the existentialist's view (in chapter nine) has been affected by the scientific attitude as well. Here, in this view, we see that an 'objective' miracle is denied, God's transcendence maintained: and this without any attempt to stay or to circumscribe the scientific attitude.

What is meant by the concept of miracle? What is

amiracle? These are the questions I seek to clarify, and to some extent at least, to answer. The clarification is attempted in the nine chapters: and although these nine divisions do not purport to exhibit all possible views of the concept of miracle, taken together I believe that they represent the majority of present-day attempts to grapple seriously with the subject. The answer is attempted in the conclusion: where I give my personal and positive views of the concept of miracle.

PART ONE - Traditional Views.

Chapter I. The Contranatural View.

"A miracle is above nature, against nature, besides nature."
Thomas Aquinas.

"Revelation is miraculous and miracles are the proof of it."
Bishop Butler.

ELM = Mozley, J.B. Eight Lectures on Miracles.

M = Lewis, C.S. Miracles.

'MSA' = Lunn, A. "Miracles - A Scientific Approach".

To the contranaturalist, the essence of a miracle is that it is unlawful and inexplicable. Being contrary to or against nature, a miracle cannot be subsumed under a law of nature at the time at which it happens or at any other time.

The chapter is divided into two parts: the first part being devoted to a presentation of the contranatural position without comment; the second part being concerned with a criticism of the contranatural viewpoint.

A miracle to be so must be contranatural in the strictest sense of the term, incapable of being scientifically explained now or at any time. If the miracle is to have the evidential value contranaturalists ascribe to it, it must not be merely extraordinary, but inexplicable: and eternally inexplicable, in terms of natural law or natural causation. "Miracles are contradictions of known laws: contradictions which no amount of further knowledge will or can explain."¹ A problem immediately arises: some events, once thought contranatural, are now deemed quite natural. The healing miracles of Jesus, once thought completely inexplicable, seem now at least partially capable of being subsumed under scientific categories. "The dis-

¹Cf. Farmer, "Physical Science and Miracle", 74.

covery of natural means of producing effects which once passed for miracles does not logically imply that bygone marvels were not wrought by supranatural means; but it removes all ground for logical certainty that they were so produced."¹ The contranaturalist replies to such an objection by saying that there has been a mistake in classification. So Lunn: "If phenomena be divided into those which are due to natural agents, and those which are due to supranatural agents, it is inevitable that mistakes in classification will be more common in an age of primitive than in an age of advanced science. If there be genuine miracles, we should expect to find that some phenomena once regarded as miraculous will later be explained within the framework of natural law. . . . The point at issue is whether there remains a residuum of phenomena which the advance of science does nothing to explain" ('MSA', 242). There are still a number of phenomena for which no natural explanation can be given, these alone are contranatural, these alone strictly miracles. Probably no one saw this more clearly than Mozley, who has given the modern classical statement of the contranatural position. He saw that a miracle to be of evidential value must be

¹Tennant, Miracle and its Philosophical Presuppositions, 38

utterly without precedent, in this sense contranatural. Mozley rejected two natural explanations which, by the use of analogy, sought to make miracle less offensive to scientific minds. Babbage employed the analogy of the calculating machine, which completely naturally but very rarely produced formations radically different from its usual results.¹ This supposed aid to miracle apologetic earned this remark from Mozley: "The recurrence, with whatever intervals, of miracles with the same invariable antecedents would constitute a new order of nature" (ELM, xv). Such an event would have no evidential value, since it is not strictly contranatural. Mozley also rejects the analogy of the activity of a man who in lifting a book seems to suspend a law of nature.

It is quite true that we see laws of nature any day and any hour neutralized and counteracted in particular cases, and yet do not look upon such counteractions as other than the most natural events: but it must be remembered that where this is the case, the counteracting agency is as ordinary and constant an antecedent in nature as the agency which it counteracts. . . . But where the counteracting power to a law of nature is an unknown power, a power not in nature, then the counteraction or neutralization of a law of nature is not a natural fact, being deprived of its ordinary and constant antecedent, and coupled with another and new antecedent. . . . In all these cases the question is not whether a law of nature has been counteracted, for that does not constitute a fact contrary to the laws of nature; but whether

¹Babbage, The Ninth Bridgewater Treatise, 33f.

it has been counteracted by another natural law. If it has been, the conditions of science are fulfilled. But if a law of nature has been counteracted by a law out of nature . . . a new conjunction of antecedent and consequent, wholly unlike the conjunctions in nature, has taken place. The laws of nature have in that instance not worked, and an effect contrary to what would have issued from those laws has been produced. This is ordinarily called a violation or suspension of the laws of nature (ELM, xiii).

So the terms violation, suspension, intervention, interruption are rightly key-notes of the contranatural position. "By definition, miracles must of course interrupt the usual course of Nature" (M, 74). The contranaturalist can concur with John Stuart Mill's definition of miracle. "To constitute a miracle a phenomenon must take place without having been preceded by any antecedent phenomenal conditions sufficient again to reproduce it. . . . The test of a miracle is: Were there present in the case such external conditions, such second causes we may call them, that whenever these conditions or causes reappear the event will be reproduced? If there were, it is not a miracle; if there were not, it is a miracle, but it is not according to law: it is an event produced, without, or in spite of law."¹

A miracle such as this proves the existence

¹Mill, Three Essays on Religion, 224-25.

of a radically separated other world and it is the sole means of any knowledge of it. "If miracles can be proved to occur, the supranatural is not as the materialists vainly declare, a figment of man's mind. . . . Miracles, so Christians believe, are evidence provided by God to demonstrate the existence of a divine order" ('MSA', 242). Miracles bridge the gap between the natural and the supranatural, more than that, they provide the only means of converse and communication between the two. "There being two worlds, a visible and an invisible, and a communication between them being wanted, a miracle is the instrument of that communication" (ELM, 18). Miracle is the single rivet allowing the intellect to bind these two worlds together. "A miracle has a foot, so to speak, in each world; one part of it resting upon the earth, while the other goes beyond our intellectual reach into the depths of the invisible world" (ELM, 101). The argument from miracle is the clinching hypothesis which allows us to be convinced of the supranatural. "A miracle is in perfect order and place as the medium between two worlds" (ELM, 19). But what is meant by this divine order, this other world, this supranatural? Very briefly, the non-natural. "We mean by the supranatural that which is out of the order of nature. God, angels, departed spirits, heaven

and hell, are out of the order of nature because they are not in nature at all; a miracle is in nature in the sense of visibility, but is not in the order of nature; the invisible world therefore, and miracles are supranatural. But life, the human soul, conscience, reason, will are natural because they are in the order of nature or part of our constant experience" (ELM, 68). Small wonder that "miracles and the supranatural contents of Christianity stand or fall together" (ELM, 13).

A miracle proves the existence of God, it is indeed a revelation of him. "God has willed that to the internal aids of the Holy Spirit there should be joined external proofs of His revelation, namely: divine facts, especially miracles and prophecies which, because they clearly show forth the omnipotence and infinite knowledge of God, are most certain signs of a divine revelation, and are suited to the intelligence of all."¹ "Miracles are messages addressed from God to men to draw attention to his Almighty Power" ('MSA', 245). Whereas the activity of God is not openly displayed in the ordinary course of events, that activity is revealed in miracle. "God is hidden in the laws of nature. He is revealed to all men

¹Denzinger, (ed.), The Sources of Catholic Dogma, mdeccc, 445.

in the miracles."¹ "A miracle shows design and intention, i.e. is the act of Personal Being. Some one, therefore, there is who is moving behind it, with whom it brings us in relation, a spiritual agent of whose presence it speaks. A miracle is thus, if true, an indication of another world, and an unseen state of being, containing personality and will; of another world of moral being besides this visible one; and this is the overawing and impressing consideration in it" (ELM, 58). Miracles alone truly and irresistibly reveal God. "It is of the nature of a miracle to give proof, as distinguished from mere surmise, of a Divine design" (ELM, 7). Mozley expands this doctrine. "There is one great necessary purpose, then, which divines assign to miracle, viz., the proof of a revelation. And certainly, if it was the will of God to give a revelation, there are plain and obvious reasons for asserting that miracles are necessary as the guarantee and voucher for that revelation. A revelation, is, properly speaking, such only by virtue of telling us something which we should not know without it. But how do we know that that communication of what is undiscoverable by human reason is true? Our reason cannot prove the truth of it,

¹Everts, "Jesus Christ: No Exorcist", 360.

for it is by the very supposition beyond our reason. There must be, then, some note or sign to certify to it and distinguish it as a true communication from God, which note can be nothing else than a miracle" (ELM, 5). Miracles prove the existence of God, are communications or revelations from him. Lewis remarks: "If we admit God, must we admit miracle? Indeed, indeed, you have no security against it" (M, 128).

A miracle proves the existence of God. It sets a seal on any document of revelation, it verifies and demonstrates the truth of any doctrine. A supranatural doctrine cannot stand on its own feet, it must be attested to by a supranatural miracle. "Miracles are the direct credentials of a revelation; the visible supranatural is the appropriate witness to the invisible supranatural - that proof which goes straight to the point, and, a token being wanted of a Divine communication, is that token. We cannot, therefore, dispense with this evidence. . . . A supranatural fact is the proper proof of a supranatural doctrine; while a supranatural doctrine, on the other hand, is certainly not the proper proof of a supranatural fact" (ELM, 15).

A miracle proves the existence of God, it is indeed a revelation of him. It is interesting to note

how the contranaturalists differentiate between miracle and providence, or between miracle and prayer. To Mozley, "the one [a providence] is an interference of the Deity with natural causes at a point removed from our observation; the other [a miracle] being the same brought directly home to the senses" (ELM, 167). Lewis holds that while it is possible to prove that a miraculous event is caused by the activity of God, "it is never possible to prove empirically that a given, non-miraculous event was or was not an answer to prayer. Since it is non-miraculous the sceptic can always point to its natural causes, and say, 'Because of these it would have happened anyway'" (M, 215).

A miracle proves the causation by God or other supramundane being. Whatever may be criticized in the contranatural position, it is unfair to say that it presents the miraculous as that which is uncaused. "A miracle is emphatically not an event without cause or without results. Its cause is the activity of God" (M, 73). Other contranaturalists - Iunn, for example - extend the causation to supranatural agents. If a phenomenon be inexplicable as the effect of natural agents, it "must therefore be ascribed to supranatural agents" ('MSA', 242). Implicit in this position is the traditional distinction between primary and secondary causation. "God normally works through

secondary causes. The seed is sown, the wheat shoots up and matures, and the baker converts the wheat into bread. But in rare and exceptional cases God suspends for a moment the operation of those laws of nature which owe their existence and validity to him alone, and expresses his will more directly, and performs without the aid of secondary causes what he is continually doing by means of secondary causes. 'Just in the millionth instance he multiplies bread instead of multiplying the wheat,' and feeds the five thousand without the intervention of secondary causes."¹ This direct unmediated activity of God or other supramundane being is an example of primary causation. Lewis, without using the distinction between primary and secondary causation, substitutes the more refined but essentially similar idea of appropriateness. "In all these miracles alike the incarnate God does suddenly and locally something that God has done or will do in general. Each miracle writes for us in small letters something that God has already written, or will write, in letters almost too large to be noticed, across the whole canvass of Nature. They focus at a particular point either God's actual, or His future, operations on the

¹Lunn, The Third Day, 13.

universe. . . . Their authenticity is attested by their 'style" (M, 162).

A miracle proves the causation by God or other supramundane being. The contranatural position is based upon a cleavage: and hence there is a well-defined boundary between the separate domains of nature and supranature. And so for its strength and evidential character, contranaturalism depends upon the integrity and fixity of natural law.¹ A miracle can only be a miracle when it is contranatural, and to be certain that it is contranatural, the natural must be firmly fixed. "Belief in miracles, far from depending on an ignorance of the laws of nature, is only possible in so far as those laws are known" (M, 58). And Lunn remarks that "the greatest service which a scientific student of the natural order can render to mankind is to demonstrate the existence of phenomena which cannot be explained within the framework of the law of nature" ('MSA', 241).

Since a miracle is caused by God or other supramundane being, and is thereby contranatural, one should

¹This statement is not true of Mozley, who partially bases his argument on the Humian contention that natural law is but custom and so not trustworthy. For adverse criticism of this aspect of Mozley's position cf. Huxley, Hume, 130ff.; and Bruce, The Miraculous Element in the Gospels, 44ff.

not expect an abundance of miracles. "For nineteen centuries those who called themselves Christians have maintained that a miracle was a most unusual and uncommon event" ('MSA', 245). Lewis admonishes his readers not to be concerned if they themselves have never witnessed a real miracle, because "God does not shake miracles into Nature at random as if from a pepper-caster" (M, 201). Their rarity is apparently one indication of their sanctity. "If the miracles were offered us as events that normally occurred, then the progress of science, whose business it is to tell us what normally occurs, would render belief in them gradually harder and finally impossible" (M, 58).

A miracle tends to demonstrate the divinity of the human performer. Here note must be taken of a difference among contranaturalists: a difference between Roman Catholic and Protestant contranaturalists. Four points may be made in this regard. First, all contranaturalists hold that the miracles prove the divine origin of Christianity. Secondly, all contranaturalists hold that no person can properly be called divine who does not perform miracles to attest to his divinity. But, thirdly, Protestant contranaturalists restrict miracles to the one person and the one time. And, fourthly, Roman Catholic contranaturalists allow that miracles have happened down through the ages.

All contranaturalists hold that miracles prove the divine origin of Christianity. "If anyone shall have said that . . . the divine origin of the Christian religion cannot be correctly proved by them [miracles]: let him be anathema."¹ Again, "the claims of Christ were too great to be believed unless they were supported by miracles. The question is not, are the miracles historically credible, but is the gospel without the miracles historically credible. . . . The internal evidence, the evidence of the moral character of Christians, is used to make the miracles credible, but it is the miracles that make the moral character of Christians possible."²

All contranaturalists hold that no person can properly be called divine who does not perform miracles to attest to his divinity. At the very least, miracles are as the clanging of bells pronouncing the entry on the stage of history of a divine herald. Newman remarks that "the respective claims of the Kings and Priests were readily ascertained, . . . whereas extraordinary messengers, as Moses, Samuel and Elijah, needed some supernatural display of power to authenticate their pretensions."³ At most,

¹Denzinger (ed.), op. cit., mdcccxiii, 450.

²Everts, op. cit., 360-61.

³Newman, Two Essays on Biblical and Ecclesiastical Miracles
24.

miracles absolutely demonstrate the divinity of the miracle maker. "The men whose lives were transformed by Christ were Christians who believed that God for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and that Jesus proved his astounding claims by the miracles which he wrought and above all by the supreme miracle of the Resurrection" ('MSA', 244). Thus the one indisputable attestation to Christ's divinity is his ability to perform miracles: this supplies the one indispensable element in the foundation of the faith. And the ability to work miracles places Christ above the pseudo-divinity of other religious founders. "The belief of the Christian is . . . a rational belief, which the Mohammedan's is not, because the Christian believes in a supranatural dispensation, upon the proper evidence of such a dispensation, viz., the miraculous. Antecedently, indeed, to all examination into the particulars of the Christian evidence, Christianity is the only religion in the world which professes to possess a body of direct external evidence to its having come from God. Mohammedanism avows the want of this; and the pretensions of other religions to it are mockery" (ELM, 24).

Protestant contranaturalists restrict miracles to the one person and the one period. Once a group of miracles proves the divinity of the human performer,

establishes the truth of any complex of doctrines, further miracles are unnecessary and even offensive. So miracles are clustered "on great occasions: they are found at the great ganglions of history" (M, 201). "Though the original miracles are necessary for the proof of doctrine, subsequent miracles cannot plead the same necessity; because when that doctrine has been once attested, those original credentials, transmitted by the natural channels of evidence, are the permanent and perpetual proof of that doctrine, not wanting reinforcements from additional and posterior miracles; which are therefore without the particular recommendation to our belief, of being necessary for the great result before us. . . . First credentials cannot be dispensed with, but second ones can" (ELM, 156). This position, as Mozley frankly acknowledges, "amounts to saying that permanent miraculous evidence to any religion is an impossible contrivance" (ELM, 184).

Roman Catholic contranaturalists allow that miracles have happened down through the ages.¹ Later ecclesiastical miracles, among other things, "demonstrate the reality of the supranatural."²

¹Lunn, The Third Day, 13ff.

²Lunn and Joad, Is Christianity True?, 332.

By a miracle, the spectator is cowed, constrained and coerced into belief: the event is as a stone hurled from heaven without which man could not believe in heaven at all. Lewis says that "Christianity is not a series of disconnected raids on Nature but the various steps of a strategically coherent invasion - an invasion which intends complete conquest and 'occupation'" (M, 131). Another contranaturalist states that "the miracles of the New Testament were at once exhibitions of divine power as well as divine love. As such they were, in many who actually beheld them, direct begetters of faith. Furthermore, they were intended, among other things, to have just that effect."¹ A miracle is "a supernatural fact, a communication from the other world, it is a potent influence; it rouses, it solemnizes, it is a strong motive to serious action" (EIM, 133). To the contranaturalist it is not of course necessary that every man see a miracle in order to know all that a miracle purports to prove. It is necessary, however, that we believe that such and such miracles did actually occur at one time. If we so believe, we know, even as the original spectators, all that a miracle demonstrates. The Bible is thus of greatest importance in this:

¹Young, "The Matter of Miracles", 70.

that it enshrines and attests to the supernatural. "It contains a distinctively supernatural element. Among its supernatural elements are those of prophecy and miracles. Furthermore, it is on such things that our knowledge and salvation thereof depend."¹ Thus, belief that a miracle occurred = belief in the power and activity of God = salvation. As Mozley says: "If a miracle is incorporated as an article in a creed, that article of the creed, the miracle, and the proof of it by a miracle, are all the one thing" (ELM, 17).

The contranatural convictions must be criticized from several points of view. From the scientific standpoint, it is not justifiable to say that because an event is inexplicable now it must always remain so. Lunn, the only scientist of the representative contranaturalists, has, in spite of the title of his essay, produced a quite unscientific approach to the miraculous. It is true, as Lunn says, that "the determination to regard the natural world as a closed system is a dogma which is entirely sterilizing in its influence on research." Then he adds, very significantly, "miracles might be defined as 'perturbations' inexplicable in terms of known natural forces"

¹Young, op. cit., 87-8.

('MSA', 243, *italics mine*). But is it not possible that these forces may some day be known? At any rate, it is clearly unscientific to claim that because certain phenomena cannot now be explained scientifically, they must always remain unexplained. There is always the possibility that science may be able in the future to offer an explanation which, though couched in terms as yet unknown to us, remains strictly scientific. One hundred years ago, the miracles of healing were deemed completely inexplicable. Nor can we, in our own day, explain these events in the scientific terminology of a hundred years ago. But the scientific method has acquired new knowledge, new scientific dimensions and new terminology. These new aspects enable the scientist to penetrate at least some aspects of this particular group of miracles. And Lunn's escape-device of mistakes in classification hardly averts the difficulty. From the contranatural position the number of classification errors is likely to increase, and the residuum due to supranatural agents to continually decrease. The contranaturalist may rightly say, on the authority of science, that a particular phenomenon is at present inexplicable. But it does not follow that the phenomenon will for ever escape the categories of the scientific method.

Nor is it justifiable to say that because an

event is inexplicable as the effect of natural agents, it must therefore be due to supranatural agents. Even were it granted (which is not possible) that an event will never be amenable to the scientific method, it is not scientifically justifiable to attribute the causation of that event to a supranatural agent. Lunn declares that it is on the scientist's authority "that we declare that a particular phenomenon is inexplicable as the effect of natural agents and must therefore be ascribed to supranatural agents" ('MSA', 242). That is a most unscientific statement. It is, in fact, not a scientific statement at all, but a philosophical one. It may well be that no known scientific method or hypothesis will explain a particular phenomenon. To say that it is inexplicable as a result of natural agents is bad enough, but to say (supposedly on scientific grounds) that it must be ascribed to supranatural agents is to say something that no one could possibly have the right to affirm on the basis of the evidence alone. Again, "when science records facts without being able to account for them, the reason is that the laws at work transcend the human understanding; they are extraordinary laws, or better still, supranatural."¹

¹Grandmaison, Twenty Cures at Lourdes, 241.

It would be difficult to find a more unscientific utterance. Science does not conclude that facts at present without explanation must therefore be supranatural. If any man reports an event as a miracle, he is going beyond the immediate evidence: he is reporting a fact and giving a particular interpretation of that fact. The truth of this contention was clearly seen before Mozley gave his Bampton Lectures. Powell had written: "No testimony can reach to the supranatural; testimony can apply only to apparent sensible facts; testimony can only prove an extraordinary and inexplicable occurrence or phenomenon: that it is due to supranatural causes is entirely dependent on the previous beliefs and assumptions of the parties."¹ But Mozley fell into the trap from which Powell had attempted to rescue contemporary theology, and the contranaturalists have perpetuated the mistake to our own day. In the testimony to any alleged miracle, there is always fact plus interpretation. That is to say, there is always the standpoint of the witness to be considered: his situation, his previous assumptions, will almost certainly determine whether for him a particular event can be called a miracle.

From the philosophical point of view, the evidential

¹Powell, "On the Study of the Evidences of Christianity", Essays and Reviews, 107.

value of miracles is undermined by the fact that every religion has its stock of miracles, every religious leader has had miracles attributed to him. Hume gave powerful voice to this objection, and we may follow Broad's clarification of the Humian argument. Let R_1 and R_2 be two incompatible religions. And let it be supposed that miracles only occur in connection with true religion. (This is the suppressed premise of this argument). Then the assertion 'Miracles occur in connection with R_1 ' implies that R_1 is true; this implies that R_2 is false and this implies that miracles do not occur in connection with R_2 . Similarly, the assertion 'Miracles occur in connection with R_2 ' implies that miracles do not occur in connection with R_1 . Now both these assertions are made (though of course by different sets of people). The compound proposition implies its own contradictory and therefore must be false, and therefore one of the separate assertions may be false, and both may be. This argument needs, however, the premise that miracles only occur in connection with true religion.¹ Mozley bases his belief in the superiority of Christ and Christianity over Mohammed and Mohammedanism on the fact that Christ worked miracles.

¹Broad, "Hume's Theory of the Credibility of Miracles", 93.

Mohammed did not effect miracles, Mohammedanism cannot boast a miraculous origin; and the pretensions of other religions to such a miraculous origin are, according to Mozley, nothing but a mockery. That is, the contranaturalist must condemn non-Christian miracles from some arbitrary standpoint which he himself denies when it is used as a basis for attacks on Christian miracles. The same arbitrariness is evident in those contranaturalists who deny any miracles in the later history of the church. The apologist who rejects the validity of the a priori negation of Christian miracles must not himself fall into the same error by rejecting miracles in all other religions on similar grounds. And if the alleged non-Christian miracles be once admitted, the absolute proof of miracles falls to the ground. If men are taught to believe in Christ upon no other grounds than because he attested his claims by works of wonder, and that they are therefore bound to do so, how shall they consistently refuse to believe in any other, who may come along attesting his claims by miracles? We can only conclude that a miracle does not prove the truth of a doctrine, or the divinity of the person who brings it to pass.

There is no philosophical justification for the Protestant contranatural contention that although miracles were once necessary for the faith, they are no longer

necessary. This Protestant contranatural view implies that Christianity is an isolated phenomenon: if connected to anything, then only to the Old Testament faith and history which preceded it; that Christianity is completely unrelated to all other religions. As against this, we must insist that though we believe that only in Christ does God truly reveal himself, this does not mean that there is no relation of man to God outside Christianity. If there is not some relation between the gospel and 'natural man', then the gospel is meaningless to that man.¹ The Protestant contranatural view assumes that God acted at certain specific periods in past history, and that he cannot act at any other time: that intervention was justified only at a particularly momentous period in the past. As against this, we must insist that God's activity in Christ cannot be restricted to a certain specific period in the past, however momentous. Have not some succeeding ages been equally momentous? Protestant contranaturalism assumes a strange superciliousness: it has the presumption to speak about a situation in which God's activity is not necessary. As against this, it must be declared that man's sinfulness always demands an outside power to aid him in his plight, and that in this sense, miraculous happenings are necessary and essential.

¹For an elaboration of this notion, cf. below, 266; 441ff.

As against the Protestant contranatural contention, the strictures of both Niebuhr and Kierkegaard seem justified. "A faith, not quite sure of itself, always hopes to suppress its scepticism by establishing the revelatory depth of a fact through its miraculous character. This type of miracle is in opposition to true faith."¹ And, "a dead faith dares not have anything to do with contemporary miracles."²

The contranatural position must be criticized from a theological point of view: it presents a primitive picture of the activity of God. "Whatever has loomed upon the world of [man's] ordinary concerns as something terrifying and baffling to the intellect; whatever among natural occurrences or events in the human, animal, or vegetable kingdoms has set him astare in wonder and astonishment - such things have ever aroused in man, and become endued with, the 'demonic dread' and 'numinous' feeling, so as to become 'portents', 'prodigies', and 'marvels'."³ Bett tells of the African explorer, who, when he got into trouble with the natives, took out his glass eye, flung it into the air, caught it and replaced it, whereupon the astonished natives

¹Niebuhr, Faith and History, 167.

²Kierkegaard, The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard, moxlvi, 412.

³Otto, The Idea of the Holy, 66.

grovelled at his feet and worshipped him.¹ Brown tells of the Peruvian king who is reported to have said of the sun that it could not be a god, because if it were, it would not repeat the same course day after day.² The stories are characteristic. To primitive man arbitrary power appears inherently excellent, and the stranger and more unusual an event is - the more it contradicts convention and defies public opinion - the more divine it appears to be. Consistency is a noble attribute for the subject, but inconsistency is the mark of the sovereign. To do as you please without giving a reason is the supreme prerogative of the deity, at least to primitive man.³ The same attitude appears in Homer. Circe with her wand turned the mariners into swine and might have done the same to Odysseus, had it not been for the protection afforded to him by Hermes' magic potion. This potion, Homer naively observes, was prepared from a herb which was awkward to dig up, "at any rate for a mere man. But the gods, after all, can do anything."⁴ Karl Barth seems to concur with this Homeric opinion. To Barth, fallen man still remains human - 'he is still

¹Bett, "The Theory of Miracle", 93.

²Brown, "The Permanent Significance of Miracle for Religion", 318.

³Though cf. below, 84. ⁴Homer, The Odyssey, x, 167.

man and not cat',¹ as he quaintly expresses it, but his humanity has been so totally corrupted by sin that no more than a cat is he able to hear God's voice, unless God in a miracle of sheer omnipotence hurls Christ into the human situation. "Willing as we are to allow the possibility of God's revealing His will, and imparting His grace to beings (such as stones or animal beings) hitherto devoid of all capacity to receive them, we are unable to feel that in His approach to us in Christ we have actually to do with such an act of omnipotence. There is miracle enough in what God does for us in Christ, but it is not a miracle of this kind. It is, in fact, not a miracle of sheer omnipotence, but a miracle of grace."² A somewhat amusing incident illustrating this contranatural attitude may be cited from a debate on the question 'Do Miracles Happen?' held in London in 1914.³ Mr. Joseph McCabe was replying to Mr. G.K. Chesterton's plea for miracles and he said: "If Mr. Chesterton should rise in the air, I should not go searching for natural causes and agencies that would bring about such a phenomenon; I should fall down and worship Mr. Chesterton

¹Cf. Brunner and Barth, Natural Theology, 88.

²Baillie, Our Knowledge of God, 24, 25.

³Chesterton (and others), Do Miracles Happen?

at once." No doubt this was said with a smile, none the less it is illustrative: it manifests the mentality of much ~~contra~~ natural apologetic, in that it construes divinity in terms of abnormality of power. The contranaturalis stresses the arbitrariness, the unusualness, the inconsistency of God's activity. 7

The contranatural position must be criticized from a theological point of view: it presents an unbiblical view of the activity of God. In the first place, the Bible never denies that others than Jesus could work miracles: for such are even the sign of Antichrist. "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (Mt. 24.24). "The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders" (II Thess. 2.9). "It [the beast] works great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of men" (Rev. 13.13). Instances are also given in the stories of Simon (Acts 8.9ff.) and of Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13.6ff.). It is therefore clear that miracles do not prove the divinity of the human performer, from the biblical point of view. "For many of the contemporaries of Jesus the miracles may have had . . . significance as a sign of the mystery of His person, and may have drawn

attention to Him and to His secret. But many who were witnesses of these miracles, in spite of this, did not believe in Him."¹ "From the moment they took place they were interpreted otherwise than as proofs of the Word of God."² Tillich correctly remarks that popular piety is "wrong in wanting a God, walking on earth, participating in history, but not involved in the conflicts of existence and the ambiguities of life. Popular piety does not want a paradox but a 'miracle'"³, not a person but a prodigy, not a man but a monstrosity. Secondly, the contranatural position assumes that arbitrariness and power are the key-notes of the activity of God. Richardson, who has strong affinities with the contranaturalists, says that the "problem of miracles must always be conducted from the standpoint of the power of God."⁴ Since the object of the miracle is to prove or demonstrate, the greater the display of mere power or arbitrariness, the greater the effectiveness of the miracle itself. Those miracles would be best which were of the nature of naked signs, stripped of every attribute except conspicuousness, staring, undeniable stupefaction:

¹Brunner, Revelation and Reason, 304-05.

²Barth, CD I/1, 188. ³Tillich, ST II, 166.

⁴Richardson, "Miracle", A Theological Word Book of the Bible, 155.

the miracle the Jews wanted when, unsatisfied and unconvinced by the works of the healing ministry, they demanded a sign from heaven (Mt. 16.1). Matthew Arnold made this arbitrary theory look ridiculous when he postulated the supposed miracle of the pen changed into a pen wiper.¹ Though the case supposed is certainly trivial, it is not irrelevant. The supposed miracle very clearly lacks utility, dignity or ethical character; yet essentially the pure contranatural miracle lacks just these qualities. Thirdly, the contranatural position assumes a distinction between nature and supranature: a division unknown and alien to the Bible itself. In biblical times the strict conception which the contranaturalist attaches to the word miracle was as yet unknown; such a conception arose only with a knowledge of the laws of nature and their general validity. No one can feel anything to be an interruption of the order of nature who does not yet know what the order of nature is. To biblical man there was no hard and fast line drawn between nature and supranature. A conceptual law of nature was, of course, developed in Greek philosophy (particularly perhaps in Stoicism and Neo-Platonism) and the Aristotelian-Thomism of the Middle Ages: in each of these cases the

¹Arnold, Literature and Dogma, 128.

natural law was an a priori notion, in contradistinction to the supposed a posteriori natural law of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With the advent of natural law (whether of an a priori or a posteriori kind) the contranatural position stiffened: a miracle, in order to possess evidential value as to divine intervention, now needed to be conceived as unaccountable and inexplicable in terms of natural law. The conception belongs pre-eminently to the eighteenth century, when science threatened to control the whole of life, though it was clearly stated as early as Aquinas. The eighteenth century apologists assumed that miracles were the best method of proving a revelation, and their opponents assumed that it was necessary to disprove the miracles in order to disprove the revelation. But this is far removed from biblical times. All this is not to say that biblical personalities and biblical writers did not recognize an unusual or extraordinary event. "Joseph knew just as well as any modern gynaecologist that in the ordinary course of nature women do not have babies unless they have lain with men" (M, 57). The point is that the notions of supranature and miracle, as these terms are viewed by the contranaturalist, are unknown and alien to the Bible. The contranaturalist tends to emphasize the teras, the miraculum aspect of miracle. Yet such a view

completely eradicates the ethical content of miracle and replaces it by bleak astonishment or mere amazement. As Headlam remarks: "It is unfortunate that the word habitually used in English 'miracle', as in German 'Wunder', should be one that emphasizes the abnormal character of the events without any accompanying spiritual and ethical associations such as are always present in the Gospels."¹ Fourthly, the contranaturalist assumes a distinction between primary and secondary causation: there is again no biblical foundation for this contention. God's sway extends over everything: "the very hairs of your head are numbered" (Lk. 12.7). Speaking of the works of nature, the psalmist remarks: "He established them for ever and ever; he fixed their bounds which cannot be passed" (Ps. 148.6). God, 'in whom there is no variableness, neither shadow which is cast by turning', is a God of order. "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" (Gen. 8.22). It is no indication of a developed religious consciousness to declare that God is only, or especially, manifest in primary causation; or in the breaches of nature's orderly processes.

The contranatural position must be criticized

¹Headlam, The Miracles of the New Testament, 6.

from the theological point of view: it presents a demonic view of the activity of God. Contranaturalism splits reality into two mutually exclusive realms, but tenuously joined together through the media of miracles. God is split from his creation, acts arbitrarily through so-called primary causes to negate and abrogate so-called secondary causes. The only logical outcome is a dualism philosophically untenable and religiously meaningless, if not positively harmful. Barth rejects the idea that God is split within himself. "That God could break through or even suspend a real, an ontic law of the created happening, is naturally out of the question: that would signify that in His will and work He is disunited with Himself."¹ And Tillich says: "Miracles cannot be interpreted in terms of a supernatural interference in natural processes. If such an interpretation were true, the manifestation of the ground of being would destroy the structure of being; God would be split within himself, as religious dualism has asserted. It would be more adequate to call such a miracle 'demonic', not because

¹ Barth, Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III/3, 146. "Daß er dabei ein wirkliches, ein ontisches Gesetz des geschöpflichen Geschehens durchbreche oder gar aufhebe, ist natürlich ausgeschlossen: das würde ja bedeuten, daß er in seinen Willen und Wirken mit sich selbst uneinig wäre."

it is produced by 'demons', but because it discloses a 'structure of destruction'." ¹

We may conclude that a contranatural miracle, one that evidentially proves the existence and causality of God, and the divinity of the human performer, must be abandoned. The fact is that a miracle, if there be such a thing, must be relative and not absolute. "The visibility of miracle in no way 'coerces' one into faith." ² Marvellous phenomena may cause faith, ^{but} they cannot absolutely demonstrate the truth of the doctrine they accompany, the divinity of the miracle maker, or that divine activity was concerned in their production. At most, miracle is an event which suggests divine activity, it certainly does not prove it. The contranatural position must be rejected as being philosophically unsound, as well as being destructive of some of the best insights of both science and theology. As Schleiermacher puts it: "It is commonly supposed that an event which lies outside the fixed order of nature and which cannot, therefore, be accounted for by natural causality, has a special religious value because the Divine causality is demanded

¹Tillich, ST I, 116.

²Thielicke, "Das Wunder", Theologie der Anfechtung, 113.
"Die Sichtbarkeit des Wunders 'zwingt' keineswegs zum Glauben."

for its explanation. But this is to suppose that the religious sphere lies outside the universal order of relations, making the religious synonymous with the arbitrary and exalting the quality of arbitrariness to the rank of a Divine attribute. Nay, it does more; it separates God from the world and makes a religious view of the world impossible. It is destructive of science and of religion too."¹

¹Cf. Cross, The Theology of Schleiermacher, 159-60.

Chapter II. The Preternatural View.

"A miracle is not contrary to nature, but only to what is known of nature." Augustine.

"A miracle then I take to be a sensible operation, which, being above the comprehension of the spectator, and in his opinion contrary to the established course of nature, is taken by him to be divine." John Locke.

CA = Richardson, A. Christian Apologetics.

SHF = _____. Science, History and Faith.

RRL = Bett, H. The Reality of the Religious Life.

To the preternaturalist, the essence of a miracle is that it is inexplicable at the time at which it occurs. Being beyond what is known of nature, it is at the time of its happening inexplicable, but it need not remain so. In contradistinction to contranaturalism, it is categorically denied that such a miracle is unlawful.

This chapter is divided into five parts. Attention is drawn to the fact that contranaturalists tend, at some point of their analyses, to take up a preternatural position: this position, herein called contra-preternaturalism, is first of all presented. Secondly, the pure preternatural position is advanced. Before either of these standpoints can be properly evaluated, consideration must be given to the scientific terms 'natural law', and various related matters, and this is the third division. Fourthly, the contra-preternatural position is evaluated; and this is followed, fifthly and finally, by a criticism of pure preternaturalism.

All of the contranaturalists, at some point or other, deny that a miracle is contrary to nature. This portion of their views is here called contra-preternaturalism. Customarily the Augustinian dictum - that a miracle is not contrary to natural laws, but only to what is known of them - is followed. Pure contranaturalism, when forced

to its own logical conclusions, presents an unscientific, unphilosophical and untheological concept of miracle. Even the contranaturalists tried to avoid the harsher aspects of their own thinking. Side by side with their contranatural statements, they tried to soften the blow, they tried to order the chaos into which their more fundamental views had plunged them. So Lunn says: "A miracle is just as 'lawful' . . . as an ordinary event. Everything which happens, happens in accordance with natural law. The supranatural also has its laws. A cricket ball is hit into the air, and falls toward the ground under the law of gravity. A fieldsman catches the ball and the further fall is averted. The law of gravity is not violated but its consequences have been modified by human will. When God works a miracle he does not violate the laws of nature but modifies some of the normal effects of those laws by a process analogous to that by which the human will influences nature."¹ Lewis remarks that "when Christ stills the storm He does what God has often done before. . . . I myself can still a storm in a room by shutting a window."² As careful a thinker as Mozley who, as we have seen, was the strongest supporter of pure contra-

¹Lunn, 'MSA', 241.

²Lewis, M, 169.

naturalism, fell into the same apologetic trap.

The constitution of nature disproves the incredibility of the Divine suspension of physical law; but more than this, it creates a presumption for it. For the laws of which we have experience are themselves in an ascending scale. First come the laws which regulate unorganized matter; next the laws of vegetation; then by an enormous leap, the laws of human life, with its voluntary motion, desire, expectation, fear; and above these again the laws of moral being which regulate a totally different order of creatures. . . . All this progressive succession of laws is perfectly conceivable backward and an absolute mystery forward; and therefore when in the ascending series we arrive at man, we ask, Is there no higher sphere of law as much above him as he is above the lower natures in the scale? The analogy would lead us to expect that there was, and supplies a presumption in favour of such a belief. . . . If so, every miracle in Scripture is as natural an event in the universe as any chemical experiment in the physical world.¹

And if man can violate the laws of nature, can not God?

"It is incredible that God is imprisoned in His own system."²

Trench puts the matter more strikingly still: "Were there no other purpose in the miracles than this, namely to testify the liberty of God . . . were it only to break a link in that chain of cause and effect, which else we should come to regard as itself God, as the iron chain of an inexorable necessity, binding heaven no less than earth, they would serve a great purpose, they would not have been wrought in vain."³

¹Mozley, ELM, 130-31.

²Weatherhead, PRH, 44.

³Trench, Notes on the Miracles of our Lord, 22-3.

The so-called miracles of synchronization or sympathy or coincidence illustrate the same contra-preternatural motif. "The two events [the crossing of the Jordan and the fall of the walls of Jericho], though perfectly explicable by natural laws, may none the less be regarded as miracles, in that both occurred at the precise moment when they were needed, and according to the Biblical record, at the precise moment when God had previously declared that they would occur. The miracle is thus one of synchronization."¹

The chief merit of the pure preternaturalists is that they recognize the impossibility of contranaturalism and try to formulate a concept of miracle which, while retaining some of the contranatural elements, is a genuine attempt to establish a new and more acceptable view.

First of all, the preternaturalists emphasize the imperfect state of man's knowledge of nature. So Richardson: "The concept of miracle, as theologians have understood and defined it, involves a healthy admission that our knowledge of the world and its processes is far from complete, just as the denial of miracle (as the Christian tradition defines it) involves a dogmatic claim that we

¹Cf. Wright, "The Place of Miracle in Modern Thought and Knowledge", 30.

already know all the processes of nature" (SHT, 104).

Jesus' healing miracles, if they be admitted to be natural in our own time, were not so nineteen hundred years ago.

"If modern psychotherapists have been able upon occasion to effect certain remarkable cures, is it not all the more remarkable that Jesus exercised an even greater mastery over psycho-physical diseases many hundreds of years before Freud was born?" (SHT, 100). The miracle must be supernatural at the time it happens: that is the important element, though this is not to deny that it may someday be completely natural, for "no one will be foolish enough to think that we know everything about the universe yet, there must be many more forces and laws that are still unknown, but that will one day be discovered" (RRL, 37). Again, "while miracles are not to be understood as contrary to nature, they may transcend our knowledge of nature, so as to be quite inexplicable by any known laws. . . . In saying that miracles transcend our knowledge of nature, we do not and need not, affirm that they must for ever remain inexplicable."¹

The theologian, when confronted with a miracle in which he believes, no more attempts to suppose an inconceivable account of it than the scientist would,

¹Morrison, "Natural Law and Miracle", 159.

when confronted with some inexplicable fact. Like the scientist he says: Here is a hitherto unaccountable fact which must fit in somewhere into the universal order: it must have some cause and it must obey some law. But he does not forget, as the scientist sometimes does, that we do not yet understand all the causes and laws that are at work in the universe, and he does not conclude, as the scientist sometimes does, that the miracle must be explicable entirely in the terms of normal physics, or else be denied as an impossibility. He refers the miracle to the operation of a higher cause and a higher law, which are not yet understood by our limited human intellect. He is quite willing to believe that some day we may be able to understand the cause and the law which govern the miracle: whether in some future age by the progress of scientific discovery, or in a higher world, when we know even as we are known. Here or hereafter we shall learn to see a miracle as a consistent, and, so to speak, regular detail in the whole of the ordered regularity of the universe (RRL, 35-6).

Secondly, preternaturalism stresses the relativity of miracle: what is miracle to one man is not necessarily so to another, particularly if that other lives in a later and more sophisticated age. According to this view, then, there are no miracles in the sight of God. "From God's point of view there are no miracles, since he obviously knows how all things work and nothing can be contrary to his knowledge of natural processes" (SHE, 104). But from the human standpoint, "there is much in nature which in view of our limited knowledge in the field of empirical science must be deemed miraculous; from the standpoint of science certain things are miraculous to-day which may not appear miraculous to the scientists of to-morrow" (CA, 54-5).

It is therefore the state of a man's knowledge which largely determines what he calls a miracle. "If someone in the Elizabethan age had been told that a family in Glasgow could watch on a screen attached to a certain instrument a play of Shakespeare's being enacted in London, and could switch it on and off by turning a knob, he would assuredly have called it a miracle. . . . The idea of a miracle is always relative to a person's knowledge and experience."¹ "One would have thought that it was perfectly obvious that nothing could be a miracle if only we knew all the laws and forces governing it."² No preternaturalist stresses the relativity of miracle more than Bett. "The supranatural in the only sense in which the word can have any warrantable meaning, is relative to human experience. The wireless would be supranatural, in the strictest sense of the word, to a savage. It would be something entirely beyond his experience, and entirely beyond his understanding - a fact that he had never encountered before, and that he could not explain when he did encounter it. I do not say that it would seem to be a miracle to him; I say that it would be a miracle to him, in the most rigid meaning of the term"

¹Barclay, And He Had Compassion on Them, 9-10.

²Bett, "The Theory of Miracle", 99.

(RRL, 38). So, in view of our limited knowledge, and even making "the fullest allowance for all the achievements of man's scientific discoveries, it is probable that the concept of miracle will be necessary for a long time to come" (CA, 155).

Thirdly, this preternatural position ties the term miracle so strongly to one's knowledge or understanding, that a specifically religious connotation of the term miracle is excluded. "A miracle is relative to some limited power, or some restricted experience, or some partial knowledge."¹ Of course, such a statement need not apply to a religious situation at all. Nor does the definition that a "miracle is something which no man can perform and which no man can explain or understand. The simplest definition of a miracle is something which defies human skill to perform and which baffles human wisdom to explain."² Such a definition could apply even to the phenomenon of homing pigeons. "How does a pigeon make its way home after having been carried for a hundred or more miles in a basket on a train? When scientists can answer this question, the homing feats of pigeons will no longer be a miracle from

¹Bett, "The Theory of Miracle", 100.

²Barclay, op. cit., 11.

the point of view of our definition" (SHF, 103). It is true that such an understanding of the miraculous can apply to the religious situation, but it need not. It is also true that such a connotation of the term is often encountered in every day speech: when one reads, for instance, of the 'miraculous' recovery of West Germany in the post-war period, or of the 'miraculous' rise in the Gallup Poll of the fortunes of the Conservative party.

Fourthly, preternaturalists seize upon the dictum 'familiarity breeds contempt' as an aid to miracle apologetic. "What is repeated and regular and habitual we call natural; what is isolated and irregular and unfamiliar we call supra-natural."¹ And no matter how wonderful and awesome and unusual an event is at first sight, repetitions mar its marvelousness; familiarity breeds contempt. "Our minds are so constituted that when anything happens repeatedly and regularly, and we become used to it, we forget the wonder of it" (RRL, 112). Thus, if even the most ordinary event happened but once in history, the event would certainly be a miracle. "If this were a world in which men rose from the dead every day, but in which it was alleged only once or twice in history that a child had been born (and

¹Bett, "The Theory of Miracle", 94.

many people were doubtful as to whether that event had ever happened at all) we should regard the birth of a child as miracle and the resurrection of a dead man as a most ordinary event" (RRL, 113). "Anything, absolutely anything, that can happen in this universe would be a miracle if it only happened once. . . . And anything, absolutely anything, that can happen in this universe would cease to be a miracle if it happened repeatedly and regularly" (RRL, 114-15).

Finally, preternaturalism attaches importance to the idea that there is mystery in all things, mystery even in nature itself. "The miraculous is that which arouses in us the feeling of wonder, of awe, and even of humility in its presence" (CA, 155). The sight of the starry heavens aroused such emotions in the Hebrew psalmist and in Immanuel Kant. It is the response men feel when they have made a new discovery; scientific knowledge increases, rather than decreases, the sense of wonder and the appreciation of the mystery of things. "So "a gramophone or radio set is no less miraculous to a man of science than to a savage, if we use the word miraculous in this sense" (CA, 155). The whole universe is mysterious and . . . miraculous, and even man is so. If we can appreciate the mystery in all things, we cannot logically refuse to believe in the truth

of a historical miracle because it seems mysterious to us. All miracles are a part of a grand miracle. Within Richardson's sphere of special revelation, the great miracle is Jesus Christ, from which other lesser miracles flow.¹

Bett maintains that there is the same inherent mystery in all things, except that, blinded by repetition, most men have no appreciation of this mystery. "When we have in some measure the naive mind of the child, or the sensitive mind of the poet, the detached outlook of the philosopher, or the faith of a disciple, the strangeness of the world is always with us, and when we know that we live in a universe of miracle, we are not so ready to deny a wonder merely because it is a wonder" (RRL, 115).

Before the contra-preternatural and pure preternatural positions can be evaluated, there must be a clarification of terms: natural laws, causation, necessity, possibility. Following a discussion of these terms, the scientific method, the scientific attitude, and the limits of science are analysed. The further question must be asked - does scientific terminology exclude the term miracle?

First of all, what is meant by the terms nature and natural law, when these terms are used in a scientific

¹Cf. below, 90ff.

context? The two are closely linked together, for when one is mentioned, the other is almost certain to occur. To understand the one is to understand the other: if not synonymous terms, they are closely parallel to one another. The chief meaning that is attached to the concept of nature in modern times is that it is the realm of natural law - the region where things happen in accordance with what we call laws of nature. What then are the laws of nature?

The word 'laws' in the phrase 'laws of nature' can be at least misleading in three ways. The concept of law more rightfully belongs to the sphere of human conduct than to the realm of scientific knowledge. First then, as Bett points out, the word law means first of all a personal command, which, as a second element, has a moral quality about it. There is the further idea that there is an effective authority behind the command, in consequence of which, as it is generally obeyed, becomes a standard of behaviour. When, however, the word law is applied to the physical world, the term has scarcely any of these connotations. It is not a personal command, nor a command at all, it has no moral quality, and it has no effective authority behind it, unless one brings in the belief in God, and this is passing from the sphere of science to the sphere of theology. All that remains is the last element in the analysis - a standard of behaviour, which

when applied to the physical world must be altered to express regular behaviour (RRL, 60). That is all that a law of nature can possibly mean - that is, a pattern of regular behaviour. Secondly, as Farmer indicates, the phrase 'the laws of nature' suggests a law-giver who has decreed beforehand that whatever will happen shall happen in a certain way in accordance with specific, never-to-be-broken laws.¹ The laws of nature thus receive a pseudo-ontological status, and it is thought blasphemous to presume that anything could happen other than in accord with such iron-clad laws. But when it is remembered that a law of nature is but an observed pattern of regular events, this pseudo-ontological status falls to the ground. Thirdly, as Farmer again points out, the phrase 'the laws of nature' suggests that an observed regularity in events is also an observed immutable necessity.² Because any book that I have pushed off any table top has dropped, I say it must drop - all books pushed off table tops must drop - and this for all time. This notion is harmless enough in everyday life, but it is certainly not a philosophical or scientific principle: no one saw this more clearly than Hume. Thus, scientists can never predict with logical certainty what

¹Farmer, WG, 147ff.

²Ibid.

will or what must happen. Even such wide and seemingly axiomatic generalizations as the law of the conservation of energy do not so much describe or explain nature as that they regain from nature what mind at first postulated to be the case. But science is willing to grant that its generalizations are relative only, but it also believes that, in principle, generalizations are always possible and that it is the duty of science to search them out and to establish them more securely.

From this analysis, it can be seen that the phrase 'laws of nature' does not mean that there is a closed sphere in which events are bound by a necessary causal sequence. "We must get rid of the idea that nature is a sort of cast-iron system dominated by a single set of invariable laws, instead of a system admitting of the constant interplay of extremely diverse forces, by which new and hitherto undreamed-of results may from time to time be produced,"¹ A law of nature attempts to express a pattern of regular behaviour. A law of nature is but a generalization, it is but a well-established hypothesis. Such a law is not irrefragable, a new fact alters a hypothesis, it breaks it only in a figurative sense. "Scientific laws are always being broken,

¹Best, The Miracles of Christ in the Light of our Present Day Knowledge, 32.

and they are as easily mended."¹ A new law accom^mmodates the apparent exception. 'Water boils at 100 degrees Centigrade'. Yet it is found that when water is boiled in deep shelters or on tall mountains, the original law is found to be inadequate, 'broken', and it is then altered and expanded to read: 'Water boils at 100 degrees Centigrade at normal pressure'. Therefore no event, however exceptional, breaks a law of nature in a literal sense. "The only things broken are erroneous conceptions of law and causality."²

From this understanding of natural law, it is evident that no ontological status can be given to the conception. Nor is there any necessity involved in it. Both such notions are hang-overs of the now-outmoded mechanistic view. From the proposition that all bodies are heavy, it follows that every body heavier than air must fall. This is a necessity we deduce from our idea. But in nature all we have is the fact that things actually are so. Events themselves do not manifest a trace of the constraint characteristic of the reasonings which preside over observation. Phenomena are what they are, and of 'necessity' in itself, they know nothing whatsoever.

¹Ramsey, RL, 144.

²Wendland, Miracles and Christianity, 12.

Causation is another term over which much misunderstanding often arises. The notion of causation is derived from man's own experience and from there projected onto the world of nature. To speak of cause and effect is simply to recognize that all things in the universe are interconnected and interdependent. Like the phrase the laws of nature, causation is still often associated with an out-moded, mechanistic view of nature. With this latter view there was often associated the image of the billiard ball universe, where the action of one round particle had fore-ordained and necessary consequences throughout the whole. No such simple naive image is satisfactory in our own day, when the complexity of nature is better understood than formerly. "An event is not brought to pass by a single cause: it is brought about by a multiplicity of causes acting together in a very complex way. The picture needed in our minds is not something like a string of beads, but something like a game of chess. The pattern of causation is not linear, but reticular: it is not a straight line in which one effect follows from one cause in a single series which is fixed, but an involved network in which an effect follows from a multiplicity of causes, in a multiplex series which is continually changing" (RRL, 45). Once again, the concept of causation expresses man's confidence in the

inter-relatedness of events; but, as Hume saw so clearly, one must not go on to say that there is an inherent necessity in the interconnection of any complex of events.

Granted such a free, non-mechanistic interpretation of natural law, it is plainly dangerous to speak about any particular event being impossible or inconceivable, at least on scientific grounds. "We think and talk easily enough about the possible and the impossible, but as a matter of fact no one can set limits to what is possible and what is impossible, except in the logical sense that nothing can both exist and not exist at the same time" (RRL, 18). The older mechanistic view of natural law could with a reasonable degree of confidence assign limits as to what was possible and what was not. But this was a philosophical position, not a scientific one, and both the science and the philosophy of to-day recognize that it was not a particularly outstanding example of either: it was indeed pseudo-science. It is now admitted that 'impossible' and 'inconceivable' are dangerous words to employ in this context: there are a large number of things which have been said to be impossible or inconceivable which have afterwards proved to be quite possible. Wallace lists a number of such cases. The discoveries of Galileo, Copernicus and Harvey were violently opposed by their scientific contemporaries. But

there are other more modern illustrations. When Benjamin Franklin brought the subject of lightning conductors before the Royal Society, he was laughed at as a dreamer, and his paper not admitted to the Philosophical Transactions. When Stephenson proposed to use locomotives on the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, learned men gave evidence that it was impossible that they could go even twelve miles an hour. The French Academy of Sciences ridiculed the great astronomer Arago when he wanted to discuss the subject of the electric telegraph.¹ Thomson reminds us that even Comte, who so dogmatically maintained that the age of dogmatism was past, declared that men could never know anything as to the chemical composition of the heavenly bodies.² Nowell-Smith informs us that he has "known a very distinguished physicist to explain that Dr. Rhine's experimental results in 'para-psychology' must be false because such things just cannot happen."³

The terms 'impossible' and 'inconceivable' must therefore be used with the utmost care. Many who employ them seem still to be under the questionable influence of

¹Wallace, Miracles and Modern Spiritualism, 17-8.

²Thomson, The System of Animate Nature, 15.

³Nowell-Smith, "Miracles", New Essays in Philosophical Theology, 243.

a mechanistic philosophy, a philosophy which we have already called pseudo-science. And, "so far as natural science is concerned, more possibilities lie open than pseudo-science is wont to recognize."¹ Lewis admonishes his readers to develop a nose like a blood-hound for those steps in any argument which depend not on a knowledge of history and language, but rather on the concealed assumption that unusual events are either impossible or inconceivable.² Yet it would appear that just these assumptions do manifest themselves in theological writing. Rashdall, for instance, writes: "The disappearance or absolute annihilation, the reanimation, or the sudden transformation into something not quite material and yet not quite spiritual, of a really dead body, would involve the violation of the best ascertained laws of physics, chemistry and physiology. Were the testimony fifty times stronger than it is, any hypothesis would be more possible than that."³ Here, law carries the old pseudo-scientific connotation. As we have seen, laws cannot be 'broken', they cannot be 'violated' in this sense, they can be altered

¹Tennant, Miracle and its Philosophical Presuppositions, 59

²Lewis, M, 198.

³Cf. Headlam, The Miracles of the New Testament, 258-59.

or expanded to include the apparent anomaly. Thus, no testimony can convince Rashdall of the veracity of the alleged event, for such a phenomenon is 'impossible'. "It is, I am persuaded, impossible to regard the story of the raising of Lazarus as a narrative of historical events."¹ "That the earth in its course stood still; that a she-ass spoke; that a storm was quieted by a word, we do not believe, and we shall never again believe."² To the modern mind, says Harnack in effect, such things are 'impossible'. Or from Bultmann: "It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles [Geister- und Wunderwelt]."³ "An historical event which involves a resurrection from the dead is utterly inconceivable! [Denn was für ein historisches Faktum könne es sein, dessen Wirklichkeit mit der Totenauferstehung zusammenhängt]."⁴ Such statements seem to imply that certain events are impossible or inconceivable. It is to be noted

¹Burkitt, The Gospel Story and its Transmission, 223.

²Harnack, What is Christianity?, 28.

³Bartsch (ed.), KM, 5. I have slightly altered Fuller's translation of this sentence.

⁴Ibid., 39.

that we are not here pleading for the historical veracity of one or all of these alleged events: the point is that they seem to be ruled out by the above authors in an arbitrary, non-scientific and a priori manner. Christian apologetes who approach their work with a presupposition against so-called 'impossible' events seem to be still living and labouring under the influence of opinions which belong to an out-moded mechanistic philosophy, and such influence should have lost much of its force with the decline of that pseudo-scientific philosophy.

Science depends for its success and progress upon a method and an attitude. Its method is to find and categorize patterns of regular behaviour. Its aim is to determine natural laws, or, more correctly, to specify well-established hypotheses: and these are based upon evidence, the media beings testings in experience. The scientist, as Huxley reminds us, 'sits down before the facts like a little child'. This is one-half of the scientific method: to remove all a prioris, all prejudices. "Be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abysses nature leads, or you shall learn nothing."¹ But there is another element, of equal,

¹Huxley, Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley, I, 316.

if not greater importance. That is the intellectual intuitional leap employed by the good scientist to grasp a connection or theory for which, as yet, there is no concrete proof. "Science, as well as religious faith, is at bottom the substantiation of things hoped for, the pragmatic evidencing of things not seen."¹ Facts are meaningless until interpreted by and into theories. "Scientists - that is, creative scientists - spend their lives trying to guess right. They are guided and sustained therein by their heuristic passion."² According to K.R. Popper, typical scientific procedure is to invent hypotheses, test them as severely as possible, accept them until they are rejected, and reject them if and only if they are falsified.³ And any scientific law must be based on evidence; it must be of the general type 'under such and such conditions, so and so will happen'; and it must be capable of testing in experience. But in order to establish any such law, what is the attitude of the scientist?

To be brief, the scientist begins his task with the conviction of the inter-relatedness of phenomena,

¹Tennant, op. cit., 21.

²Polanyi, Personal Knowledge, 143.

³Cf. Wollheim, "A View of Science", 20.

with the belief that order prevails: and that it is his particular task to trace out that inter-relatedness and to lay bare that order. Science, then, involves a faith - a faith that the facts and events in nature have a relationship. The scientist refuses to believe that any phenomenon cannot be explained according to the scientific method. Lunn thus fails to understand the scientific attitude when he writes that the greatest service that any student of science can do is to demonstrate the existence of phenomena which cannot be explained within the framework of natural law.¹ A scientist, who starts with the assumption that any event cannot be naturally explained, is a failure at the commencement of his career. The scientist will not demand that all phenomena be explained in terms of current scientific categories (though, as we have seen, some scientists have been guilty of this offence), but he will demand that every phenomenon be explained in terms of some scientific category. This fierce determination to discover and describe is not constrained or stayed by an apparently inexplicable fact. Bett seems to think that an inexplicable event would stop the heuristic passion of the scientist. "If a scientist were confronted with an undeniable miracle, all that he

¹Lunn, 'MSA', 241.

could say would be: 'Here is a unique event in the presence of which my methods are useless. Doubtless it is governed by some law, though the law entirely escapes my knowledge. Doubtless it falls into place, somehow and somewhere, in the regular scheme of universal existence, but I cannot see how and where, for I cannot fit it in into any recurrent series known to me, and that is all I have to say'" (RRL, 93). Such a quiescent attitude is not the mark of the creative scientist. Huxley strikes the more typical note. "If a piece of lead were to remain suspended of itself, in the air, the occurrence would be a 'miracle', in the sense of a wonderful event, indeed; but no one trained in the methods of science would imagine that any law of nature was really violated thereby. He would simply set to work to investigate the conditions under which so highly unexpected an occurrence took place, and thereby enlarge his experience and modify his hitherto unduly narrow conceptions of the laws of nature."¹ The task of the scientist is to explain all phenomena, no matter how unusual, extraordinary or seemingly inexplicable they may be. The vocation of the scientist is to frame categories or natural laws broad enough to include all the members of any constituent field of science.

¹Huxley, Hume, 132.

Natural laws have been usefully likened to natural species. "We do precisely the same thing when we speak of natural laws as when we speak of natural species. The only difference is that when we speak of things in their static relations we speak of species, and when we speak of things in their dynamic relations we speak of laws. In other words we generalize what things are by the concept of species, or resemblances in kind, and we generalize what things do by the concept of laws, or resemblances in action. In each case we select some likeness between things and disregard all the differences, and then say 'these things are ...' alike in this respect: they belong to the same species', or 'these things are alike in this respect: they follow the same law'" (RRL, 78-9). It must be remembered again that the concept of law does not make things act alike, it simply states that in one respect they do act alike: just as the term species does not make things alike, it simply states that in one respect they are alike. But does the determination to subsume every phenomenon under a natural law mean that there are no limits to the scientific method? It does not: and for three reasons.

First of all, it must be remembered that in forming its laws, science is highly selective and highly abstract. The more individual phenomena are placed under one category,

the more those individuals lose those elements which do make them individuals. Science deliberately ignores many features of the situation it is concerned to describe. The scientist abstracts from the richness and variety of individual instances in the interests of a general or universal law. Scientists can predict with almost complete certainty how many individuals will die in the city of Glasgow in any particular year, but they cannot tell whether my friend will be one of those individuals. "Every natural law is a short, compressed, useful and abstract statement of one aspect of fact. It reduces the actual variety of things to a level line of resemblance in one respect: it treats them for one purpose, as if they were all alike and equal members of a regular series. It does not give us a complete account of the events concerned. It does not make the thing happen so. It does not explain why the thing happens so. It states that normally, and as regards this one particular aspect of a thing, it does happen so. Every natural law is thus an abstract statement of some resemblance and recurrence in nature, some regularity which we have deduced from nature which looks mechanical because it is regular" (RRL, 81). Secondly, in forming its laws, science says nothing about the ultimate interpretation of facts or events. "The scientific description of an event does not

say everything about it. For example, if I explain that an octave in music sounds pleasant because the frequencies of the two notes are exactly in the ratio of 2:1, I may be giving a scientific description of what is meant by harmony, but I am certainly not saying all that a musician can say about it. If I claim that when two people lose their temper with each other there is an accelerated release of adrenalin into the blood I am making a perfectly correct observation; but it is hopelessly inadequate as an explanation of anger. If I watch the loving care with which a mother looks after her baby I may describe it scientifically as one of the devices by which the race is preserved. I shall be quite right, but it would be quite preposterous to say that that was a complete understanding of mother-love."¹ To attempt an ultimate interpretation of facts would be for science to go beyond its province and enter the domain of ultimate considerations. Philosophy and theology may properly enter this domain, but science as such is excluded. Science describes, but it does not explain: science per se asks only how, not why. Thirdly, in forming its laws, science is always incomplete. No matter how many phenomena are correlated as a category is expanded, no matter how uni-

¹Coulson, "The Gospel Miracles", 90.

versal scientific concepts become, any particular law -- no matter how far advanced -- is always incomplete. Farmer expresses this idea by saying that science has to accept any group of phenomena as a going concern.¹ Into every situation there enters a complex of contributory causes, many of which science ignores, and some of which would always escape its scrutiny even should science decide to investigate. The psychologist can unravel to a certain degree the various factors and causes which go to make up the personality John Smith. But the scientist cannot completely unravel these factors, and even if he could, he could not trace all of them to their ultimate roots.

With this understanding of the scientific method, the scientific attitude, and the limits of science, consideration must now be given to the attitude of the scientist to the concept of miracle. There are two reasons why science has nothing to say about miracle, and even excludes the term from its vocabulary altogether.

First of all, science approaches its task with the conviction that every phenomena -- without exception -- admits of a natural explanation. For if miracle means causation by something or someone outside the natural order,

¹Farmer, WG, 153.

then science repudiates at the very outset any such claim. The movements of the planets were studied by the famous French astronomer, La Place. It is said that once, when trying to explain the subject to the first Napoleon, the latter interrupted him with the question: 'But where does God come in?' to which La Place replied: 'Sire, I have no need of that hypothesis.' "The word 'God' does not work as a high-grade scientific word at all. It is not a 'hypothesis'. God-sentences do not belong to the logic of science."¹ And what is true for the scientist is also true for the historian. Historical science, as a science, works on the necessary assumption that events are explicable, and for historical science to accept the contranatural idea of miracle - as an event with no relation to the past which preceded it - is for that science to stultify itself. Even the most unusual and extraordinary event the historian must investigate in the faith that it can be explained, and he must resolutely maintain this faith in the face of those apologetes for miracle who say that any particular event is not to be so explained. "The scientific historian is bound to leave a blank in his construction rather than bring in what for him is an illegitimate transcendent

¹Ramsey, Mir, 9.

factor."¹ When he rightly rejects and excludes from his vocabulary the term miracle, the scientist must be careful that he does not reject as false or untrue so-called miracles or so-called miraculous events, simply for the reason that they have been termed miracles. His business is to find out if the alleged miracle has any factual basis, and he must not deny any reported event simply because there is no scientific explanation readily available. And the same ideal holds for the historian as well. As Barth says: "'Historical' knowledge . . . must be really impartial. It must be a consideration of what the texts say (and do not say) in their attestation . . . without prejudice as to what is possible or impossible."² Or, as Tillich says: "The historical method approaches the miracle stories neither with the assumption that they happened because they are attributed to him who is called the Christ nor with the assumption that they have not happened because such events would contradict the laws of nature. The historical method asks how trustworthy the records are in every particular case, how dependent

¹Mackintosh, "The Ten Best Books on Miracle", 419.

²Barth, CD IV/2, 150.

they are on older sources, how much they might be influenced by the credulity of the period, how well confirmed they are by other independent sources, in what style they were written, and for what purpose they are used in the whole context. All these questions can be answered in an 'objective' way without necessary interference of negative or positive prejudices."¹ The scientist must therefore remember that nothing is impossible, and he must always demand that any event, however unconventional or unusual, is capable of being scientifically explained: if not in current categories, then in categories yet to be discovered. As Huxley says: "In truth, if a dead man did come to life, the fact would be evidence, not that any law of nature had been violated, but that those laws, even when they express the results of a very long and uniform experience, are necessarily based on incomplete knowledge, and are to be held only as grounds of more or less justifiable expectation."² It is common in our own day to accept as true Jesus' healing miracles, but to reject the so-called nature or cosmic miracles, in spite of the fact that "miracles of the one class are not inferior in attestation to those of another."³

¹Tillich, ST II, 119-20.

²Huxley, op. cit., 133.

³Sanday, The Life of Christ in Recent Research, 223.

One of the reasons seems to be that authentic modern parallels can be produced for these healing miracles: but can the same be said for the nature miracles? Crookes takes three specific examples - Jesus' prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem, the stilling of the storm, and the walking on the water - and produces roughly analogous modern parallels. She writes: "The conclusion that may be drawn from the records quoted above is that we do live in the kind of a universe where the type of miracle recorded in the gospels is at least conceivable."¹ Another writer claims modern parallels for such a phenomenon as a virginal conception. "There is no evidence that in the normal course of nature one conception in 10,000 or more is not a virgin conception."² Even the phenomenon of healing at a distance is not without modern parallels, according to one author.

Father Ivan Kronstadt was well known throughout Russia because of his power to heal at a distance. One well-attested instance of his effectiveness dates from October 1889, when two children contracted diphtheria in a certain household. The disease rapidly took a serious turn, and the decision had to be taken whether the operation which is done on the wind-pipe in desperate cases ought to be performed. The worried parents telephoned first to Father Ivan who was in Kronstadt several hundred miles away. He received the message before the morning service, and at once concentrated

¹Crookes, "Miracles and the Supernormal", 236.

²Taylor, The Fourfold Vision, 48.

his powers of faith upon the healing of the two children. At the very time, nine in the morning, when he did this, the doctor who was at the children's bedside in Moscow noticed a quite unexpected improvement in both patients. At two in the afternoon when the operation was due to be performed, he declared that it was not necessary. And in three or four days both children had recovered.¹

It might still be insisted that there is no modern parallel to the speed with which Jesus accomplished his cures. But a medical essayist writes that most of the ailments of blindness, lameness, paralysis, fever, possession and madness, and apparent death "can be cured or alleviated very suddenly in some cases without a 'miracle' in the supranatural sense."² As we have noted, in the reporting of any alleged miracle, there is always fact plus interpretation, there is an event which is interpreted by the participant as coming from God.³ It is the scientist's task to determine whether the phenomenon described did actually occur as reported to him.

Secondly, science excludes the concept of miracle from its vocabulary because, as we have already seen, science attempts to give no ultimate explanation to the system of facts which science describes. The task of the scientist is to observe, classify, and relate various patterns of behaviour. It is true that certain philosophies (i.e.

¹Cf. Heim, TSWV, 185.

²Frayne, "Miracles of Healing", 323. ³Cf. above, 28.

vitalism and mechanism) may claim a scientific basis, and a scientist may believe in one or other of these philosophies. But they are philosophies, and in adhering to them, scientists cease to be scientists per se. Science does not, in itself, attempt to give an over-all Weltbild: Jaspers has correctly pointed this out in his debate with Bultmann.¹ Science cannot and does not attempt to give any final meaning to the nature which science faces. That is why the interpretative aspect of any event is outside the realm of science and science has nothing to say about it. A man might admit as true all the so-called miracles of the Bible without in any way admitting that they are of religious significance, much less that they are acts of God. Three instances may be cited. "The evidence for works of healing [in the New Testament] is good evidence, but it is not evidence for miracle."² Again, "before he left Lourdes Zola recited his credo to the President of the Medical Bureau. 'Were I to see all the sick at Lourdes cured, I would not believe in a miracle'."³ But most striking of all: "I would reject the evidence of my senses rather

¹Bartsch (Hrsg.), Kerygma und Mythos, III, 12ff.

²Thompson, Miracles in the New Testament, 41.

³Lunn, The Third Day, 7.

than accept literally a physical miracle. . . . I may some day conceivably be forced to believe, if the evidence is strong enough, that a man has walked through a stone wall, or been wafted up into the clouds, or that he has been changed into a fox, or even that he had belatedly risen from the dead after he had begun to rot, like Lazarus. But admitting the factual occurrence I will still deny that a miracle has occurred."¹ Admitting the most unusual events, a man may refuse to place any religious significance upon them: and in this attitude he remains strictly scientific. For although science attempts to categorize all phenomena, it does not attempt to explain the ultimate significance of a single phenomenon, or of the totality of phenomena. To sum up, science demands the right to say something about everything, but it cannot say everything about anything.

In the light of the above analysis, the contra-preternatural position can now be criticized. The various attempts of the pure contranaturalists to rationalize the supernatural (thus becoming contra-preternaturalists) rest upon the assumption that man suspends or violates the order of nature in the same way as God. This shifting of ground is most interesting. In the pure contranatural position, the term nature excludes God, but includes man and the

¹Seabrook, Jungle Ways, 117-18.

physical order beneath man. But in the contra-preternatural view, the term nature excludes man and God, and includes only the physical order beneath man. The contra-preternatural argument runs thus: if man has initiative^{ti} and freedom, surely we can ascribe no less to God himself. Now this argument has a certain validity provided that too much is not claimed for it. Freedom in man is one of the essential elements of his being. At the same time, man enjoys no unlimited freedom. He can subdue nature, but only by obeying her. He cannot be said to violate laws or even to interfere with them; though he can utilize them. Man's activities do not suspend or interrupt laws. It is clear that "the human will can never go beyond or produce any event which transcends her [nature's] power. This view, therefore, can never explain how God acts in working an event which transcends nature. It can never go beyond simply pointing to an analogy between man's action on nature and God's providential control of nature, and even this analogy is most imperfect."¹

The contra-preternatural attempt to naturalize the supernatural rests on the assumption that the supernatural is itself lawful. "Laws are indicated which dis-

¹Lodge, "What is a Miracle?", 236.

pose of the notion that the forces of the spiritual world are arbitrary or capricious."¹ But then, what is meant by the term laws? There are many different kinds of scientific laws - physical, chemical, biological, psychological and so on. If supernatural law is another group along side of these, it is not necessarily unscientific. And do the exponents of the contra-preternatural position - even in their naturalizing - offer evidence of such a law? If there be such a law, it must be capable of application to new phenomena. To say that God's interventions in the natural realm are lawful, but that we cannot utilize these laws for prediction is to retreat into ignorance and to use the word law in a most ambiguous manner. The contra-preternatural explanation involves saying "'known laws and factors will not explain this phenomenon; there must be something outside; but I cannot tell you what this is or how it operates'. An explanation must explain how an event comes about; otherwise it is simply a learned (or a tendentious) name for the phenomenon to be explained."² Claiming that the supernatural is lawful is an apologetic attempt to win the support of the scientist. But the claim, when

¹Selwyn, "Belief in Miracles", 271.

²Nowell-Smith, op. cit., 251.

investigated, turns out to be meaningless. In point of fact the supranatural is not a scientific category at all: like miracle, it lies on the interpretative side of any event.

The contra-preternatural attempt to naturalize the supranatural rests on the assumption that the chief characteristic of that realm is power or omnipotence. When anyone speaks of God being tied to his own system, that individual seems to have in mind the out-moded mechanism long since discarded by both science and philosophy. It cannot indeed be denied on any grounds that the supranatural does have effects on the natural, but it is scientifically unknowable, and theologically questionable, since it is taken to mean that power is the chief note of supranature. God is conceived as ^{being} first and foremost omnipotent: this ^{of God} attribute is the major premise in all areas of theological discourse; ethical considerations are cast aside or subordinated to this notion.

How can the pure preternatural position be criticized? Clearly, one can only concur with the preternatural emphasis on the imperfect state of man's knowledge. This does lead, however, to a marked relativity of the concept, only bolstered by Richardson's quaint remark that ^{the concept of} miracle will still be necessary for a long time to come. Yet if

we take the supranatural to be that which lies beyond the order of the natural, it is obvious that the growth of knowledge will transform the situation, and the supranatural will gradually slip away and disappear. That which once was supranatural or miraculous, becomes by degrees natural, and that which is miraculous to one person is no longer such to another. As a result the natural will come to mean the explicable, while the incomprehensible will be called the supranatural, ready to fill the gaps that knowledge has not yet discovered, but being forced to vacate more and more of these temporary positions. The scientist will clearly not ascribe any religious significance to the merely incomprehensible. And from the theological viewpoint, this preternatural position is open to the same criticism that was levelled against the pure contranaturalists¹: namely, the rather supercilious view of assuming that sinful man does not need or will not need a power outside himself to save him in his helplessness.

The pure preternatural definition of miracle excludes any specifically religious connotation. Yet surely the term miracle should be particularly a religious word. The meaning of the word miracle, as Farmer insists, is only clear in the context of a complete religious understanding. Miracle

¹Cf. above, 31.

cannot be approached from a scientific or philosophical standpoint. "Miracle being fundamentally a religious category and not a scientific or philosophic one, the proper place to begin is within the sphere of living religion itself."¹ We must first ask what is the significance of miracle for a living religion, not attempt to fit the concept into a scientific or philosophical world-view. If considered from the religious standpoint of a vital faith, then "whatever else it may be, miracle is an event or complex of events through which a man becomes aware of God as active towards himself in and through his personal situation."² We must retain the concept of miracle to describe an experience within the context of a living faith: if miracle does not do this, the term can be discarded as meaningless. That is another reason why a miracle must not simply be equated with an inexplicable event. Modern man does not attach religious significance to the inexplicable occurrence. "Indeed, as Dr. Orchard once rather frivolously remarked, 'If I saw someone walking on the sea I should not say, 'This man is divine'; I should say, 'Excuse me, do you mind doing that again? I didn't see how you did it'."³

¹ Farmer, WG, 108.

² Ibid., 110.

³ Weatherhead, His Life and Ours, 26.

Nor is the primitive always religiously impressed when confronted with an inexplicable occurrence,¹ as the following incident would seem to indicate. "During the First World War the writer lived with Arabs who could not believe that a message could be sent from Basra to Baghdad faster than an Arab horse could run. The electric telegraph was a 'miracle', but I do not remember anyone imputing divinity to the telegraphist."²

In insisting as it does upon the rarity of miracles, preternaturalism stresses the well-worn dictum that familiarity breeds contempt. There is a certain truth in this conviction, but it does leave out of consideration entirely the personal element in miracle. That is to say, a very ordinary, oft-repeated event may become of deep religious significance to me because that event confronts me personally in a new and dynamic situation. There were seventy babies born in Glasgow on March 5, 1958. As a newspaper statistic, this means practically nothing; the birth of a baby is one of the most oft-repeated events of nature. But the situation, the concern, the possibility of deep religious significance is altered if on that particular day I became the father of a little daughter, born in the same city of Glasgow.

¹Though, cf. above, 33. ²Weatherhead, PRH, 96.

God can and does speak to man in and through an ordinary event: ordinary, except that it is personally oriented. And not truly religious person loses the sense of amazement at the forgiveness of sin offered by a loving Heavenly Father, no matter how often it is repeated. The genuinely religious mind could not lose the sense of God's providential direction of events in relation to his own person, no matter what scientific researches later revealed of the various series of natural causes involved. In short, the most ordinary, oft-repeated phenomenon can be the bearer of revelation - and in that sense a miracle - if in and through it God speaks to me personally. "The more intensely personal and individual the succour of God is felt to be, the more appropriate and inevitable the word miracle becomes on the religious man's lips."¹

There is also a great deal of truth in the preternatural contention that mystery surrounds all things, and hence that the miraculous surrounds all things. There is undoubtedly a mysterious element about every single phenomenon. We have already had occasion to note that the scientific method is uninterested and unable to trace out every single root and cause of even the most uncomplicated

¹Farmer, WG, 118.

event. But it is fallacious to argue that because ordinary events have an element of miracle about them, therefore the historical veracity of miracles is substantiated. Writers as opposed to the idea of miracles as Voltaire have emphasized the mystery in the most ordinary. "The stupendous order of nature, the revolution of a hundred millions of worlds round a million of suns, the activity of light, the life of animals, all are grand and perpetual miracles."¹ The fact of such emphasis by writers of Voltaire's stamp shows clearly that there is no necessary connection between recognizing the mysteriousness of ordinary events and arguing for the historical truth of specific miracles. From the theological point of view, the mystery in all things would seem to make all things miraculous: all events would then be occasions for God speaking personally to man. This undoubtedly ought to be the case, but even (and especially) the most saintly would deny that such is the case. In principle, every event may be the occasion of God's speaking to me, but in practice this is simply not so. The only person who could say such a thing in earnest would be the pantheist, but here it is a case of philosophical theorizing amounting to self-conscious attitudinizing:

¹Voltaire, A Philosophical Dictionary, II, 219.

which is entirely different from, if not in complete opposition to, the religious attitude to miracle. "If there is one thing quite certain in this connection it is that the word miracle on the religious man's lips indicates something distinctive which is not applicable, even after reflection, to all events indiscriminately."¹

The preternatural position makes a specific advance over the crudities of contranaturalism and contra-preternaturalism, although that does not save it from certain grave difficulties of its own. From criticism of preternaturalism, certain points are established. The notion of absolute miracle has been dealt a death-blow, the miraculous and the supranatural are discarded as scientific categories, the concept of miracle is found to be meaningful only within the context of a living faith, and the activity of God and personal participation must be emphasized in any satisfactory statement of the concept of miracle.

¹Farmer, WG, 119.

Chapter III. The Supernatural View.

"It ought not to be a matter of wonder that a miracle was wrought by God; the wonder would be if man had wrought it. . . . The Word of God, which is also the Son of God, took to himself, in a manner entirely different from that in which He is present to other creatures, the soul and body of a man."
Augustine.

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|-------------|---|-----------------|--|
| <u>D II</u> | = | Brunner, E. | <u>Dogmatics.</u> Vol. II. |
| <u>FR</u> | = | Cairns, D.S. | <u>The Faith that Rebels.</u> |
| <u>MSG</u> | = | Richardson, A. | <u>The Miracle-Stories of the Gospels.</u> |
| <u>PRH</u> | = | Weatherhead, L. | <u>Psychology, Religion and Healing.</u> |

The supernaturalist believes that there can be no adequate understanding of the concept^{of} miracle without due consideration being given to the person of Jesus Christ. The essence of supernaturalism is that the divinity of Christ makes miracle natural and necessary. And the supernaturalist further believes that, in principle, the same sources are open to the present-day Christian as were open to Christ himself.

This chapter is divided into three sections. First of all, the connection between the supernatural view and the two preceding is noted. Secondly, the convictions of the supernaturalists are advanced; and this is followed, thirdly, by a critical evaluation of the supernatural argument. It is to be noted that this chapter includes widely differing theologians: ^{moreover,} /the four taken as representatives do not wholly adhere to the complete supernatural position as it is here presented. Other authors are deployed to represent other parts of this view.

In this supernatural view, earlier arguments are both continued and reversed. Whereas both the contranaturalist and the preternaturalist tended to use the miracles to prove the divinity of Christ, the supernaturalist tends to use the divinity of Christ to prove the historical veracity of

the miracles. This fundament of supernaturalism is clearly seen in the contranaturalist Lewis. "It is unphilosophical, if you have once accepted the Grand Miracle [the Incarnation], to reject the stilling of the storm."¹ And the preternaturalist Bett shows the same supernatural tendency.

"We do not believe in Christ because of the miraculous deeds He is said to have done. We believe in His miracles because we believe in Him, and know Him to be the supreme miracle."² And we could still believe in every miracle worked by Jesus, though all of these miracles were to be naturally explained and easily repeatable (at a much later date): the point is that Christ wrought them. "One of our Lord's miracles would still be a miracle as wrought by Him two thousand years ago, even if two thousand years hence men could achieve the same results by what to them were natural means."³

But it is Richardson - whom I have chosen to be both a preternaturalist and a supernaturalist - who points out the difference between the supernatural position and the two preceding. When he is defending with much persuasion the contranatural-preternatural position, he writes: "To-day we frequently hear it said that we do not believe

¹Lewis, M, 169.

²Bett, RRL, 124.

³Ibid., 35.

in the Christian revelation because it was attested by miracles in the giving of it, but that we believe in miracles (in so far as we believe in them at all) because we are convinced 'on other grounds' of the fact that a revelation took place. . . . This modern view is, of course, the precise opposite of the traditional view. . . . Aquinas, Luther, Hooker and Mozley were right in their fundamental contention: supranatural revelation must be attested by miracle."¹ In this statement, Richardson is supporting the miracles-prove-the-divinity-of-Christ argument. But there is another and contradictory strain in his thought on this matter. "It is Christ himself, rather than any of the things which he did, who is the chief attestation of the truth of the biblical revelation."² And, "the historian's answer to the question about the miracles of Jesus will depend upon his answer to the prior question, what he thinks of Christ."³ In these two latter statements, he is supporting the divinity-of-Christ-proves-the-historicity-of-the-miracles argument. And in one of his latest books, Richardson admits that the contranatural-preternatural position is unbiblical. "It has been traditional in Christian theology down the

¹Richardson, CA, 162, 167.

²Ibid., 156.

³Richardson, SHE, 105.

centuries to regard the miracles of Christ as proofs of his divine nature. It is anachronistic to read back such an attitude into the New Testament records."¹ But much earlier, in the book which best mirrors Richardson as a supernaturalist, he had written in a similar vein. "For a long time it was widely believed amongst Christian people that the Gospel miracles were best understood as the ratification of the claims of Jesus to possess divine authority. . . . But it ought perhaps to have been obvious that. . . . in New Testament times the ability to work miracles was not in itself regarded as a proof of divinity" (MSG, 20-1).

The point that is here being made - the difference between the contranatural and preternatural positions on the one hand and the supernatural position on the other - is neatly summarized in the following statements. "It is a fundamental mistake to desire to support our belief in the Divinity of Christ by an appeal to His miracles. . . . We believe in the miracles of Jesus when we already believe in Him, but not before" (D II, 169, 192). "The power to work miracles could never prove its possessor to be a person so extraordinary as we conceive Christ to be; but Christ once conceived to be the extraordinary Person we believe Him to be,

¹Richardson, An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament, 95.

miracles become to Him both natural and necessary."¹

If Christ be divine, supranatural acts are to him entirely natural. And "mankind has always felt that here [in Jesus' life], if anywhere in history, they are face to face with a supreme manifestation of a life which is utterly and wholly supranatural."² "It is clear that the New Testament writers regard Christ's power as none other than the power of God; Christ is the power of God in action" (MSG, 16). "From the standpoint of faith it would be remarkable if the God-Man did not do unusual things; if He who is wholly New, in all He is, in all He says, were not accompanied by an action which points to his uniqueness" (D II, 169). "I . . . assume the divinity of Christ. . . . His unique relationship to God made Him at home in the spiritual world, and when He broke into a situation of human pain and distress, of body or mind, He brought with Him the energies of the plane on which He himself lived" (PRH, 39, 41). Gore states this point most succinctly. "The argument runs thus: If Christ truly was, what his disciples came to believe Him to be, the eternal Word or Son of God, Himself very God, made man or 'flesh', there

¹Fairbairn, Studies in the Life of Christ, 151.

²Taylor, "The Miraculous and the Supernatural", 247.
As terms are used in this thesis, Taylor's article actually refers to 'The Miraculous and the Supranatural'. In this regard, cf. above, 3.

was thereby constituted a new thing in nature, a new revelation of the Creator Spirit, the Spirit of Life, to matter, a new level in the evolution of life, such as would naturally exhibit new phenomena. From this point of view 'the works' of Christ are natural in his case - the natural outflowings of the new power which He alone, or at first, possessed. It was 'natural' that He, being what He was, should so heal the sick, should so control nature, should be so raised from the dead, as is related in the Gospels."¹ The corollary of this supernatural contention is that the acts of Jesus do not admit of a natural explanation: explanation from a merely human or from a merely scientific point of view. "It is true that all seven of St. John's miracles are stupendous feats of supranatural power, admitting of no naturalistic or rationalistic explanation" (MSG, 115-16). Illingworth likewise demurs to the idea that the miracles "are capable of naturalistic explanation."² Others are more careful in utterance, but the underlying approach is the same. "It may be true that we cannot state precisely what happened when Jesus encountered a hungry multitude by the lakeside or a demented outcast among the tombs, yet there is still

¹Gore, Belief in God, 241.

²Illingworth, Divine Immanence, 97.

a residuum which faith can and must affirm" (MSG, 129). "After studying the matter for many years I cannot completely fit the healing miracles of Christ into the categories of modern psychotherapeutic practice. The latter is illumined by the former, but the former are not explained by the latter" (PRH, 40). According to another writer, the psychotherapeutic 'explanation' of the healing miracles is possible only if they are greatly reduced in magnitude.¹ To attempt to explain Jesus' miracles on a purely scientific basis is regarded by another as an attempt to "eliminate the miraculous."² Or again, some writers acknowledge that events broadly analogous to those reported of Jesus nowadays occur, but cling to the notion that Jesus' miracles were much greater. "We have had in recent years many indications of parallels and analogies to the miraculous power of Jesus in the newly-discovered methods of suggestion and hypnotism, in telepathy, 'action at a distance', and (in my opinion) animal magnetism. All these suppositions may be accepted without misgiving, only with this addition, that what Jesus did passed gradually far beyond anything known to us in these fields."³

¹Ryle, "The Neurotic Theory of the Miracles of Healing", 572ff.

²Davies, The Miracles of Jesus, 18.

³Otto, The Idea of the Holy, 214.

The supernaturalist tends to ascribe to Jesus the attribute of omniscience.¹ "An honest profession of the Divinity of Christ necessitates the admission of omniscience in His divine intellect."² To this writer, the attribute of omniscience held only of the divine nature of Jesus: it was not true of his human nature. "Jesus Christ possessing two natures, and therefore two intellects, the human and the Divine, the question as to the knowledge found in His Divine intellect is identical with the question concerning God's knowledge."³ The human intellect of Jesus, though not omniscient, was clearly superior to that of other men. "God infused into Christ's human intellect a knowledge similar in kind to that of the angels. This is knowledge which is not acquired by experience, but is poured into the soul in one flood."⁴ As to Jesus' knowledge acquired by experience, "it must have been at least equal to the knowledge of the most gifted of men; it appears to us wholly unworthy of the dignity of Christ that his

¹This attribute, though properly a corollary of the supernatural position, is but rarely found. Brunner asks, "Was the knowledge of Jesus limited by human conditions? In the light of the evidence given us in the Bible we must answer decidedly: 'Yes'" (D II, 324).

²Maas, "Knowledge of Jesus Christ", 675.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 676.

powers of observation and natural insight should have been less than those of other naturally perfect men."¹ And finally, "although the knowledge in the human soul of Christ was not infinite, it was most perfect and embraced the widest range."²

The supernaturalist tends to ascribe to Jesus the attribute of omnipotence.³ To those who believe that "Christ is the power of God . . . the mere size of the miracle involved . . . could be no stumbling block" (MSG, 121). To some, Jesus is "the direct channel of omnipotence."⁴ Or, "Jesus' power is portrayed as sovereign, personal . . . due neither to medical skill nor prayer."⁵ The same author writes that "in every healing instance, it is a sovereign power of which Jesus is calmly sure, and which knows no limits except those he voluntarily sets to it."⁶ Whereas the men of the Old Covenant had difficulty in bringing the wonder-work to pass, "the miracles of Christ are always

¹Maas, op. cit., 676. ²Ibid.

³Though not as rare as the attribute of omniscience, this attribute of omnipotence is not found expressed in all supernaturalists. Brunner, for instance, says: "In Jesus we find neither divine omnipotence nor omniscience" (D II, 360).

⁴Cf. Wright, Miracle in History and in Modern Thought, 110.

⁵McGinley, Form-Criticism of the Synoptic Healing Narratives, 152.

⁶Ibid., 84.

accomplished with the highest ease; He speaks and it is done."¹ What Jesus' humanity was unable of itself to achieve was possible for him by what one writer has called "the ever-ready concurrence of His divinity."² Hence, "He was able of His free will to work miracles as often as He judged it expedient."³ Most of the above writers ascribe to Jesus pure omnipotence, unqualified power. "If anyone says that the Lord Jesus Christ was glorified by the Spirit, as it were using through Him a power belonging to another, and that He received from Him the power to work against unclean spirits, and to perform miracles for men, and does not say rather that the Spirit through which He worked the miracles was His own; let him be anathema."⁴ Nor was Jesus' power limited by a lack of faith on the part of those he healed. "The gospels nowhere suggest that Jesus could not have worked a miracle if the belief that a cure would be effected had been lacking" (MSG, 63). Many other supernaturalists feel that Jesus' power was dependent upon faith in other men's hearts. This is dealt with later in a separate paragraph.

¹Trench, Notes on the Miracles of our Lord, 37.

²Devine, "Gift of Miracles", 351. ³Ibid.

⁴Denzinger (ed.), The Sources of Catholic Dogma, cxxi, 51.

The supernaturalist ascribes to Jesus the attribute of sinlessness. This characteristic of Jesus finds all supernaturalists in agreement. "We know of no situation which could shake the truth of these words: 'Yet without sin'" (D II, 324). "Jesus seems to have had no sense of sin."¹ "No miracle of Christ equals the miracle of his sinless life. To be holy in all thought and feeling; never to fail in duty to others, never to transgress the law of perfect love to God or man, never to exceed or to come short - this is a condition outstripping the power of imagination and almost of belief."² Again, "it is here indeed that we come on what for many must be the one really convincing proof of the miracles. It is the belief that Jesus was like us in all things, except in sin. Now if a person is sinless two things are surely certain. First, he would acquire and achieve power which a sinful man could never reach. . . . Now in all men there is some essential weakness, more or less; but not in Jesus Christ. He was without sin and therefore the way was open for Him to acquire and to achieve what sinning man can never rise to. Second, He could be entrusted with powers with which the ordinary sinning man could never

¹Weatherhead, His Life and Ours, 30.

²Mackintosh, The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ, 397.

be entrusted. . . . Jesus was sinless and therefore there could reside in Jesus power which other men could never have. In the last analysis Jesus did the things He did because He was the person He was."¹ "The sinlessness of Christ meant complete self-determination, completely free operation of the will; unmoved alike, as we see in history, by bodily appetite or fear, by spiritual ambition, by the flattery of friends, or by the hostility of foes."² By most supernaturalists, sinlessness is equated with moral and spiritual perfection. "If Christ was the Son of God Incarnate, He must have lived a life spiritually perfect in all its human features and relations."³ Donald Baillie, ^{attributes which} who drops all the other/supernaturalists ascribe to Jesus as being unnecessary and even inimical to the statement of a sound Christology, yet clings to this attribute.⁴ Sinlessness is that attribute without which Jesus would not be the Messiah.

To the faith of the Church Jesus Christ is sinless in spirit, unerring in spiritual insight, original as a religious teacher; in the strictest sense a moral miracle. His character is the one miracle vitally important to faith. Believers could part with the

¹ Barclay, And He Had Compassion on Them, 31-2.

² Illingworth, The Gospel Miracles, 128.

³ Thomson, The System of Animate Nature, 157.

⁴ Baillie, God Was In Christ, 17.

physical miracles of the Gospels if science or exegesis demanded the sacrifice; but if a sinless Christ were taken from us on the plea that the moral order of the world knows only of imperfect men, all would be lost. Nothing less than a sinless, infallible, incomparably original man is demanded by the titles and functions ascribed to Christ. The Son of God must be holy, as God is holy. The Redeemer of sinners cannot Himself be a sinner. The Light of the world can have no share in the world's darkness. The Inaugurator of the new era of grace cannot be a commonplace man, the creature of His time, in all His thoughts a mere echo of current opinion. We could not believe such a man to be¹ the Messiah - officially great, personally insignificant.

In the light of the previous attributes, many supernaturalists ascribe to Jesus the attribute of suprahuman existence: elevating Jesus to an organic level beyond man. "The miracle of revelation [God in Christ] . . . is a 'miracle' in the proper sense of the word, the miracle of the freedom of God. The 'miracle' of the organic life is the incomprehensible phenomenon of the organic spontaneous element contrasted with the mechanical and causal. The 'miracle' of human intellectual life is the incomprehensible phenomenon of the freedom of man, contrasted with the limited powers of nature. The miracle of revelation, however, is the miracle of the freedom of God contrasted with the limited powers of the creation as a whole. It is the miracle of the personal presence of God in the world of man and nature. It breaks through,

¹Bruce, The Miraculous Element in the Gospels, 320.

therefore, the sphere of human intellectual freedom, just as the organic breaks through the mechanical, as the human mind breaks through the sphere of nature. . . . Revelation . . . is the series of acts in which God makes Himself present in the unique Event."¹ The same suprahuman quality of Jesus' existence is encountered in other writings of Brunner. He makes a distinction between the 'personality' of Jesus, as an observable historical phenomenon, and His 'Person', which is a hidden suprahistorical mystery. The former is purely human, the latter is divine. The former is simply the 'human nature' assumed by the Second Person of the Trinity, taking the place of the human 'person' in Jesus. "We may therefore assume that personality, in our human, historical sense of the word, belongs to the humanity of the Son of God, not to His deity. Personality - as the element which is accessible to everyone - is the human aspect of His Person which can be known by every good historian; it is the incognito of His deity, which, on the contrary, cannot be known by the good historian, but can only be known by those to whom it is 'given'. His personality, probably even His ethical and religious personality, has been more or less known by all; even our classical

¹Brunner, Revelation and Reason, 302.

writers, who rightly recognized that they did not hold the Christian faith, knew this. They did not perceive the mystery of His Person, the 'only begotten Son,' His Divine Nature and authority, the revelation."¹

But other writers, with supernatural tendencies, show the same characteristic of ascribing to Jesus the attribute of suprahuman existence. It is expressed in the phrase 'the impersonal humanity of Christ' and was interpreted fearlessly by Newman: "though Man, He is not, strictly speaking, a Man."² Thornton, too, elevates Jesus to an organic level beyond man. "In each new level which appears all the previous levels are representatively taken up and included; so that at the summit of the series man is in some sense a microcosm of the whole, including within himself all levels of the series. The series is thus taken up in man on to the level of spirit. But it does not reach its end in man, because he shares the unfinished character of the series. Now if the Incarnation brings creation to its true end in God, this must mean that the cosmic series is gathered up into the human organism of Jesus Christ. . . . As the series is taken up into the human organism, so in

¹Brunner, The Mediator, 266. Cf. 265ff., 318ff., 345ff.

²Cf. Baillie, op. cit., 15. I am indebted to Baillie throughout this paragraph.

Christ the human organism is taken up on the 'level' of Deity."¹ Hodgson, who refuses to employ the terms 'im-personal humanity' or 'not a man but Man' concerning Jesus, nevertheless declares that the doctrine underlying these phrases is essential to any adequate Christology.² "We should think of the Incarnation as the entry by One who is divine upon an experience of life under certain conditions, namely, those which are involved in being the subject of experiences mediated through a body in this world of space and time; for to be subject of such an experience is to be human."³ "What we mean by manhood in its most spiritual essence, its nous (to use Apollinarius' term), is to be the self-conscious subject of experiences mediated through a human body", and "the Incarnation is to be thought of as the entry upon experience of such a life by the divine Logos."⁴ Hodgson seems to imply that Jesus was not a man at all, but simply the divine Son of God having experience through a human body: the only 'subject' of the experience was God the Son.

Many supernaturalists emphasize the element of

¹Thornton, The Incarnate Lord, 225.

²Hodgson, "The Incarnation", Essays on the Trinity and Incarnation, 383.

³Ibid., 379.

⁴Ibid., 387.

faith present in every miracle in the New Testament. By this two different (though not necessarily exclusive) things are meant. First of all, faith was necessary in the people with whom Jesus dealt, if any miracle was to take place. "In the methods of Jesus faith played a vital part in cure" (PRIT, 36). "The first point to notice is the extraordinary emphasis put by Christ everywhere in the synoptic narratives of the necessity of faith" (FR, 67). Again, "the power in the Son was correspondent with something [faith] in those about Him."¹ Supernaturalists readily admit that faith is not always specifically mentioned, but go on to say that it may always be assumed. "Believers alone are eyewitnesses of the Resurrection. . . . The miracle of revelation can only be seen by faith" (D II, 168). "It is generally supposed that faith was present as a prerequisite in the miracles of healing which the gospels record. Mention of faith is, as a matter of fact, absent from many of our Lord's miracles. It is, however, often noted and almost as frequently implied. The supposition is therefore not unreasonable."² As to the nature of this faith, some supernaturalists would simply equate it with trust or confidence. "The faith required

¹Vaughan, "How we may 'think of the Trinity'", 135-36.

²Shaw, "Faith in the Healing Miracles of the Synoptic Gospels", 291.

for healing is not, and never has been, theological in its character. . . . It has been expectant trust in a person" (PMH, 36). But other supernaturalists - by far the majority - think the faith required for healing by Jesus was theological in character. "I wish to contend that it is a recognition of the Messiah, or at least of his attributes, which releases Christ's healing power; and that this recognition only, according to the Gospel narrative, is the content of the faith of those who are healed."¹ Richardson concurs with this theological view of faith, while strongly attacking the theory of psychological faith or mere confidence.

It should be abundantly clear that the stress upon faith in healing miracles bears small relation to modern psychological examples of faith-healing. The modern use of the word "faith" in the psychological sense has little in common with the faith of which the gospel-writers are speaking; that is, a saving, personal believing relationship with Christ. The gospel miracles of healing are not examples of "faith-cures", and attempts to explain them along these lines are far removed from the spirit of the gospels. The modern mind which professes to find belief in the healing work of Jesus easier on account of the successes of modern psychotherapy is still a long way removed from the New Testament faith in Christ the Saviour. The Epileptic Boy and Jairus' Daughter are not restored by their own "faith", but because of the potentialities of true Christian faith exhibited by their respective fathers, which gives significance to the acts which Jesus performs. . . . Jesus is obviously not referring to faith in the sense of auto-suggestion. His reference is rather to that kind of faith of which He said that it "removes mountains" (MSG, 63-4).

¹Shaw, op. cit., 292.

Secondly, as the other faith-element necessary in any New Testament miracle, many supernaturalists emphasize that faith was an essential and never-absent ingredient in the make-up of Jesus himself: faith here meaning theological faith. "The assumption is that the miracles of Jesus were acts of faith, and that by our Lord Himself His own miracle-working was regarded not as the exercise of a personally inherent Divine attribute or prerogative, but as a feature of His human Messianic vocation."¹ "The acts of Jesus on earth, especially His miracles, are the works which God has done through Him" (MSG, 16). Again, "as far as it is revealed to us, His greatest works during His earthly life are wrought by the help of the Father through the energy of a humanity enabled to do all things in fellowship with God."² Hodgson writes, finally; "The miracles of Christ are worked through faith."³

Many supernaturalists emphasize the saving or redemptive aspect implied in every New Testament miracle. "The Biblical miracles . . . are all seen in the light of 'Saving History' (Heilsgeschichte); they are miracles of

¹Hogg, Redemption from this World, 65.

²Westcott, Epistle to the Hebrews, 66.

³Hodgson, And Was Made Man, 140.

revelation and salvation" (D II, 167). Sickness and guilt were closely associated in the outlook of the first century Jews: "healing and forgiveness of sins are inseparable in the teaching both of the Synagogue and of the early Church."¹ For that reason, the power to heal meant the power to break sin. "In the story of the Paralytic, Jesus deliberately implies that His healing work authenticates His power to forgive sins" (MSG, 66). The church, in the name of its Lord, claimed to be able to forgive sins and heal the sick. Thus, according to the supernaturalists, all of Jesus' miracles have this redemptive-healing element, though this is most evident in the healing miracles. "The outstanding purpose of the healing miracles was redemptive. They were meant to bring forgiveness to the sinful disordered spirit."² "Since all disease was regarded as due to sin, the miracles of healing would have double significance in the eyes of Christ's contemporaries. They would not only be regarded as a healing of the body, but also as the forgiveness of sin. They would be symbolic demonstrations of God's forgiveness" (PRH, 48). To the apologists of the first century, the miracles of Jesus "were the supreme sign that the tragic

¹Bacon, Studies in Matthew, 391.

²Crowlesmith, "Modern New Testament Scholarship and Psychology in regard to the Miracles of Healing", 56.

powers of both sin and death were broken" (FR, 126).

Arising out of their previous conviction - that theological faith was an essential and ever-present factor in the personality of Jesus - there is an extension: the same sources are open to the present-day Christian as were open to Christ himself. If we could develop the same faith as Jesus, miracles would again abound: our lack of faith keeps us on lower levels of Christian action and witness.

"The New Testament teaches that God's power is delegated through Christ to those who believe on Him" (MSG, 17).

Supernaturalists stress that at the point where faith was highest - that is, in Jesus himself - miracles were most plentiful. Until the end of the Apostolic age they "are regarded as the glories of the faith, and, in so far, the uniform view of the New Testament and the early age is maintained. . . . They are the normal accompaniment of the lives of the saints, and are miracles of judgement and of mercy designed to awaken and increase faith" (FR, 21).

But adverse conditions changed this situation. "No longer has the church all things in common. No longer is it of one heart and mind. No longer is there the same degree of power in prayer" (PRH, 87). Theological controversies, often on barren topics, increased in the church: worldliness and the grasping of political power developed at the expense of things

spiritual. The conversion of Constantine in A.D. 325 was a piece of statesmanship rather than of religion. From that moment the church became more and more a movement allied with the state rather than a living movement of the human spirit towards God. Inevitably but slowly, the gift of healing died out. Augustine, in the closing years of the fourth century, complains that though miracles did happen, they were sporadic and unusual. By Cuthbert's time (A.D. 635-87), though holy water and oil were used to cure sickness, the procedure was tinged with magic, having come a long way from the gospels and the Apostolic church.¹ According to the supernaturalists, faith and miracles, which were at full tide in Jesus, finally ebbed away. "We can conceive the order of retrocession to have been in this way: that divine power which dwelt in all its fullness and intensity in Christ, was first divided among his Apostles, who, therefore, individually wrought fewer and smaller works than their Lord. It was again from them further subdivided among the ever-multiplying members of the Church, who, consequently, possessed not these gifts in the same plenitude as the twelve."² But were we to revert to the attitude of the Apostolic age, then "the primitive energy of faith [would be ours] able to move

¹Cf. Crowlesmith, op. cit., 56.

²Trench, op. cit., 59.

mountains in the world of circumstances as well as in the world of Spirit" (FR, 32). "What is needed is that the Church, casting aside the theological prepossessions which hinder her from sharing the primitive Christian attitude toward miracle-working, should restore to the New Testament miracles their demonstrative experimental value by exhibiting broadly analogous modern triumphs of faith."¹ There is a natural law in the spiritual world but our lack of faith prevents us from using its energies. "We shall not be able to release the energies referred to by Christ, and which we might call the energies of the Kingdom, by purely scientific research. Rather are we likely to find them when the quality of spiritual apprehension releases them as normally as energies of a physical and psychological nature are released on a lower plane. . . . On such a spiritual plane law undoubtedly reigns, but it may be a law of a different order, to be discovered less by intellectual effort than by spiritual discipline and insight" (PRH, 41-2). And, "Christ was as much at home on the plane in which these immense spiritual energies were at work, as we are at home in a world where gravity and relativity operate. We know of their operation, and use the energies involved, even though we do not tech-

¹Hogg, op. cit., 170.

nically understand their action" (PRH, 45).

To the supernaturalist, the person of Jesus Christ makes miracle natural and necessary. And, theoretically at least, the same sources are open to the present-day Christian as were open to Christ himself. The supernatural position is neatly summarized in Cairns' paragraph. "Do we, indeed, expect to return to the age of miracles? . . . As the word is usually employed, it would mean, Do we expect that the time is at hand when men will do the things which Jesus did? I would say, 'Assuredly, no.' The whole argument implies that these extraordinary achievements of prayer were due to His extraordinary spiritual personality which was so entirely at one with the will of the Father that the Father was able to do extraordinary deeds of blessing, through Him. The difference between His achievements and the greatest of other men's achievements is a measure of the spiritual difference between Him and them. . . . But if by 'miracle' we mean something inexplicable in terms of physical Nature, I would say, 'Assuredly, yes.'" (FR, 154).

It is now possible to pass to a critical evaluation of this supernatural argument. It will be seen that there is considerable biblical evidence for each of the various claims of the supernaturalists. At the same time it will also be shown that the evidence is by no means unambiguous,

and texts can be quoted against the convictions of the supernaturalists as well as for them. The point then is that it is obvious that one's presuppositions will colour the way one reads the New Testament; one's Fragestellung will determine the answers found; one's Christology will tend to emphasize one group of New Testament statements and tend to suppress the other.

First of all, let us consider the attribute of omniscience ascribed by some supernaturalists to Jesus. In their favour, we are told that Jesus knew what was in man (Jn. 2.25): he knew, for instance, the past history of the woman of Samaria (Jn. 4.17f.). According to John, Jesus' "testimony is true" (Jn. 8.14). Near the end of Jesus' earthly life, his disciples are constrained to say to their Lord: "Now we know that you know all things" (Jn. 16.30). Many of these statements would lead one to believe that Jesus had at least unusual knowledge, and the last statement is the clearest evidence of omniscience. Yet side by side with these, there are other statements which ^{would seem to} show that Jesus was not omniscient. Luke ascribes to Jesus growth in wisdom, as well as in other aspects of development (Lk. 2.52). Jesus from time to time asked questions to elicit information: regarding the size of Lazarus' tomb (Jn. 11.34), the number of loaves (Mt. 15.34), and the name of the demented Gerasene (Mk. 5.9). There were

things in man, too, that surprised him (Mk. 6.6; Mt. 8.10); so also things in nature (Mk. 11.13). Even were these instances attributed to his human intellect, Jesus lays no claim to knowing a fact which might properly be called divine: namely, the time of the Parousia. "But of that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mk. 13.32). The issue as to the omniscience of Jesus cannot be decided on the biblical evidence alone, for this is manifestly contradictory. The supernatural claim that Jesus was omniscient is here rejected because of the moral difficulty involved, if for no other reason. As Fairbairn remarks: "If He had such knowledge, how could He remain silent as He faced human ignorance and saw reason wearied with the burden of all its unintelligible mysteries? If men could believe that once there lived upon this earth One who had all the knowledge of God, yet declined to turn any part of it into science for man, would they not feel their faith in His goodness taxed beyond endurance?"¹

What as to the attribute of omnipotence ascribed by the supernaturalists to Jesus? To the supernaturalist, the many unusual deeds recorded of Jesus and the many good effects emanating from his power, constrains him to say that Jesus

¹Fairbairn, The Place of Christ in Modern Theology, 353.

was omnipotent. The Temptation narrative seems to indicate that Jesus was truly omnipotent, able to do whatever he willed (Mt. 4.1-11). "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" (Mt. 8.27). "With authority and power" Jesus commanded the unclean spirits and they came out (Lk. 4.36). "The crowds sought to touch him, for power came forth from his hand and healed them all" (Lk. 6.19). When the apparently unnoticed woman with an issue of blood touched him, Jesus insisted that someone had really touched his garments, "for I perceive that power has gone forth from me" (Lk. 8.46). Jesus had power to lay down his life and to take it again (Jn. 10.18); God has given Jesus power over all flesh (Jn. 17.1). It is not easy to find statements which would show that Jesus was limited in power. The most illustrious example is the narrative concerning Jesus' return to Nazareth. "And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them. And he marvelled at their unbelief" (Mk. 6.5f.). It would seem from this quotation that Jesus' power was not unlimited, but that it was qualified by the necessity of faith. The quotation is open, however, to another and opposite explanation. According to this opposite explanation, the statement is intended as a severe reprimand, addressed to the incredulity of the people of Nazareth. The greatness of the incredu-

lity shows not that Jesus could not do there but a few healings, it signifies only that no one sought his help. He was certainly able to heal, had the occasion been given to him: that is the explanation of the phrase 'he could not'.¹ Yet even this exegesis limits Jesus' power to a degree: the occasion had to present itself, one had to ask in order that Jesus might heal. However, there is little doubt that supernaturalism can claim much biblical evidence for, and very little evidence against, this particular attribute. "It appears that the whole synoptic tradition presupposes that in Jesus there dwelt an unlimited supranatural power."² Though there is no claim of the supernaturalists for which there is so much strong biblical evidence, the idea of omnipotence has been rejected by many of the supernaturalists themselves, and rightly so. The apologetic which refuses to construe Christ's knowledge through the notion of omniscience must also refuse to construe his works through the notion of omnipotence.

All supernaturalists ascribe to Jesus the attribute of sinlessness. Sinlessness may mean, first of all, unity

¹Fridrichsen, Le Problème du Miracle, 52.

²Ibid. "Il va de soi que toute la tradition synoptique suppose chez Jésus comme une puissance surnaturelle illimitée."

with God. So Jesus is reported to have said: "I and the Father are one" (Jn. 10.30). But against this, there is the cry of dereliction from the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mk. 15.34). Sinlessness may mean, secondly moral purity. There are at least three statements pointing in this direction. Jesus asks the Jews the categorical question "Which of you convicts me of sin?" (Jn. 8.46). The answer clearly expected is 'No one'. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews declares that Jesus "has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning" (Heb. 4.15). In the first letter of John, there is the open claim that "in him there is no sin" (I Jn. 3.5). But against the supernatural conviction of the sinlessness of Jesus, there is the latter's own remark: "No one is good but God alone" (Mk. 10.18). And if sinlessness means moral purity or moral perfection, this characteristic has not always been self-evident in the personality of Jesus to readers of the New Testament. Speaking of the 'woe' passages (Mt. 23.13-26), Havet remarks: "The truth is that the Gospels, of which men commonly speak as if one found in them nothing but love and charity, are sometimes full of hatred. . . . Where are the suavities of the Sermon on the Mount? Where are the beatitudes? Where the order to bless those who curse you?"¹

¹Cf. Montefiore, The Synoptic Gospels, II, 731.

More specifically,

I do not think that Jesus was always consistent. He urged his disciples to love their enemies, but so far as we can judge he showed little love to those who opposed him. He urged that the lost sheep should be actively sought out; but except in the way of sheer abuse and vituperation, he did nothing to win over to his own conception of religion the Pharisees and Rabbis who ventured to criticize and dislike him. To the hardest excellence of all even Jesus could not attain. For it was far easier for him to care for the outcast than to care for his opponent, especially when the outcast was ready to acknowledge that he was sent and inspired by God, and the opponent took the liberty of denying it. . . . We are bound to note that of those whom he denounced many, in all probability, did not deserve his censure. So far, however, as others were guilty of sin, it was the self-righteous formalist, the proud and sanctimonious observers of the ceremonial enactments of the Law, who either neglected, or but formally and negatively obeyed its moral commandments, that found no mercy at his hands. To them, except in the way of stern rebuke and vigorous vituperation, he was no physician. For these special failures of legalism he had no pity, he forgot that they too, however sinful, were created, like himself, in the image of God; that they too, like himself, were sons of the same divine Father, and that the same sun shone upon them as upon himself.¹

One conservative supernaturalist has his difficulties with one of the activities of Jesus: this difficulty is all the more remarkable when the size of a miracle is no stumbling block to Richardson. Speaking of the miracle at the wedding of Cana, he says, "We must frankly face the difficulty that to create such a quantity of good wine 'when men have drunk

¹Montefiore, The Religious Teaching of Jesus, 53-4.

freely' is hardly an act of common sense, and makes a poor 'beginning of miracles' for the Good Teacher of the Christian tradition" (MSG, 121). Again, it would seem that Jesus did not possess moral perfection, when judged against the standard of the Sermon on the Mount. The 'men of old' had warned against certain overt acts, but Jesus declares unto his hearers that whoever entertains even the thought of these overt acts, is condemned. Now if the Temptation narrative be given any weight at all - and if in any sense the temptation was a real temptation, with all the elements of enticement and allurements - then Jesus himself must have at least the thought of turning stones into bread, of casting himself from the temple, of ruling the whole world. But apart from all this, the conviction that Jesus is sinless is not one to be read off the evidence, however good, for only God sees the heart. Again, in the Bible itself, "there is no enumeration of special sins which he did not commit, nor is there a day-by-day description of the ambiguities of life in which he proved to be unambiguously good."¹

Is there a more positive approach to this question of the sinlessness of Jesus? Karl Barth has written that it was "fallen human nature" that Christ assumed at the

¹Tillich, ST II, 145.

Incarnation, and maintains this is what is meant by the Word becoming not only man but flesh.¹ This is not an altogether new, but it is still an unorthodox position.² I myself maintain that the concept of the sinlessness of Jesus is designed to express a real characteristic of our Lord and to meet a real need of the faith, but that 'sinlessness' is an inadequate and unfortunate expression of that characteristic and that need. Tillich substitutes for sinlessness his own complex terminology and calls it "the conquest of estrangement of the New Being in Jesus."³ Faith is assured on its own grounds (neither wholly substantiated nor completely refuted on the basis of historical evidence) that the New Being has conquered the old being.⁴ Tillich is clearly right when he declares that "Protestantism demands a Christology of the participation of the Christ in sinful existence, including, at the same time, its conquest."⁵ It seems to me that the philosophy of existence is better equipped than the traditional philosophy of substance in its attempt to express the essential truth in the inadequate

¹ Barth, CD I/2, 167ff.

² Cf. Baillie, op. cit., 16f.; Bruce, The Humiliation of Christ, 264f.

³ Tillich, ST II, 145.

⁴ For elaboration, cf. below, 294f. ⁵ Tillich, ST II, 172.

phrase 'the sinlessness of Jesus'. It would go something like this: at every moment of his earthly life, Jesus, like every other man, was faced with the decision: to live authentically (by faith, in the light of things invisible, from God) or to live inauthentically (in unbelief, in the light of things visible, for himself). The temptation experience was not confined to a single episode in the life of Jesus, but actually faced him throughout his earthly existence. Therefore at every moment, Jesus, empowered by the grace of God, himself decided to live by faith. Baillie states the paradox very powerfully.¹ On the one hand, all Jesus' words and all his choices depend upon the Father: "I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear, I judge; and my judgement is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me" (Jn. 5.30). "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. . . . He who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but he who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood" (Jn. 7.16,18). "I have not come of my own accord; he who sent me is true, and him you do not know. I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me" (Jn. 7.28f.). But on the other hand, there is Jesus making his own human choice

¹Baillie, op. cit., 126-27.

from moment to moment, a choice on which, in a sense, everything depends. "He who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him" (Jn. 8.29). "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father" (Jn. 10.17f.). That is to say, on the one hand Jesus was empowered by God to live authentically; on the other Jesus himself decided so to live.

Arising out of the attributes of omniscience, omnipotence and sinlessness, many supernaturalists ascribe to Jesus the attribute of suprahuman existence. There is no direct scriptural evidence for this claim, although a combination of statements supporting the other^{attributes which} supernaturalists ascribe to Jesus might easily lead to this last one - the attribute of the suprahumanity of Jesus. Against this claim, the famous kenotic passage may be quoted. "Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2.5-8). And

clearly, if the Incarnation is to be what the term implies, theology must hold fast to the conviction that Jesus' humanity is essentially the same as ours. As to the supernatural dictum of the 'impersonal nature of Jesus', it is obvious that "human nature which is not personal is not human nature."¹ "In the domain of reality, there is no such thing existing independently as humanitas, or 'man in general'. . . . No one can represent a man who also is the nature common to all members of the class 'man'."² In opposition to all attempts to elevate Jesus to a level above man, Baillie writes: "Surely whatever else Jesus was, He was a member of the human race, the human species, a man among men, or one man among others."³

As we have seen, the ^{attributes which} supernaturalists ascribe to Jesus are neither entirely supported by, nor completely opposed by, the New Testament scriptures themselves. Supernatural claims have been partially built upon scriptural foundations and partially upon the supposed needs of a sound Christology. And it appears to me that popular piety, rather than sound theology, has been determinative at this point. Popular piety wants a God, walking on earth, participating in history, but not involved in the conflicts of existence

¹Moberly, Atonement and Personality, 93.

²Mackintosh, op. cit., 87.

³Baillie, op. cit., 87.

and the ambiguities of life. Popular piety does not want a paradox, but a miracle, not a person but a prodigy. As against the dictum of the suprahumanity of Jesus, it must be affirmed that it was Jesus' relationship with God, renewed from moment to moment, which constituted his full humanity.

Many supernaturalists emphasize the element of faith present in every New Testament miracle. A host of texts supports this conjecture (for instance, Mt. 9.22; Mk. 5.34; Lk. 8.48). In some of the New Testament healings the faith resides in the person to be healed (for example, the woman with an issue of blood, Lk. 8.38-48), in other instances the faith resides in the family or group about the sick person (for example, the centurion who asked that Jesus heal his servant, Mt. 8.5-13). But at the same time, not all the reports of miracles mention faith, and, in the face of the lack of positive evidence, the supernaturalist must assume it. I feel myself that the assumption is warranted.

More interesting, perhaps, is the question as to what type of faith was meant: theological faith or psychological faith. Theological faith means a positive relationship to God through Jesus: psychological faith means simply trust or confidence in the person of the healer, Jesus of Nazareth. Theological faith is grace from God enabling man to believe: psychological faith is a determination by oneself to trust

in the power of a certain personality. In theological faith, the initiative lies with God: in psychological faith the initiative lies wholly in and by man. As to which is most prevalent in the New Testament, the evidence does not point conclusively one way or the other. It seems to me that within the New Testament itself, there is evidence of both. Shaw argues persuasively that theological faith is definitely implied by the narratives of blind Bartimaeus and the Syro-Phoenician woman: but he is on less solid ground when he tries to extend his thesis to all the recorded healings.¹ There is at least one healing narrative which would seem to suggest that both types of faith were present. Jesus, when he met the ten lepers, and in answer to their pleas for mercy, commanded that they should go and show themselves to the priest. On the way, the ten were healed: but only one returned (Lk. 17.11ff.). It might be supposed that the nine had merely psychological faith, whereas the one had theological faith or, psychological faith had been transformed into theological faith. Though it cannot manifestly be based upon direct evidence, it is necessary for the person of faith (as I see it) to believe that Jesus desired that those to be healed should have theological faith, or that psychological

¹Shaw, op. cit., 291-97.

faith should give rise to theological faith: though this desire may actually have been fulfilled in but a few instances.

Many supernaturalists emphasize the redemptive aspect or salvation-element present in every New Testament miracle. Yet the story of the paralytic (Mk. 2.1-12) is the only miracle recorded where a physical miracle is brought into direct connection with the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins. And some critics conclude that in this instance the connection between the two elements was the work of the editor-evangelist.¹ But Fuller urges further indirect support for this connection between healing and salvation.² In Mk. 5.34 and Mk. 10.52 (and parallels) Jesus says to one whom he ^{physically} has/healed: "Your faith has made you well." The Greek verb 'to make well' could of course refer merely to the physical healing. But this verb is also used in a pericope which does not involve a physical healing at all: the pericope referred to is found in Lk. 7.36ff. (the woman who was a sinner). And the use of the verb 'to make well' in Lk. 7.50 after verse 48 ("your sins are forgiven") shows that in this instance, at any rate, it (the verb 'to make well') is synonymous with the forgiveness

¹So Taylor, The Gospel According to Mark, 191.

²Fuller, The Mission and Achievement of Jesus, 41.

of sins.¹ It is thus possible that we are meant to take the verb 'to make well', when used in connection with the healings, in this wider sense. It seems to me likely that Jesus desired the healings to have this redemptive aspect. "While it is true that healing played a large part in Christ's earthly ministry, it would also seem plain that His main and primary concern is to bring men and women to reconciliation with God; a reconciliation which means eternal life as a present possession irrespective of any physical condition whatsoever."² At the same time this desired reconciliation may have actually occurred in but a few of Jesus' healing miracles.

Something might be said at this point about the phenomena of faith-healing and Roman Catholic centres of healing, the most notable of which is Lourdes.³ Several points should be noted.

First of all, the number of physical healings is usually exaggerated.⁴ This can be due to one of, or any

¹In Lk. 7.50, the Greek verb 'to make well' is rendered (in the Revised Standard Version) by 'to save': "Your faith has saved you."

²Spiritual Healing, 8.

³I am here partially indebted to Perry's "On the Reporting of Miracles", 104-09.

⁴In official sources, the number of cures at Lourdes is not exaggerated: if anything, the opposite is the case. But many less cures do take place than the mass of people believe.

combination of, the four following factors. First, there is a tendency to assign an irrelevant cause for the recovery of the sufferer, quite overlooking the obvious and ordinary explanation. Man is prone to "the superstitious habit of attributing to a special act of divine volition any event which is not easily explained by reference to some human will, or by the scientific knowledge available at the time."¹ Secondly, there is almost boundless capacity for self-deception. Thirdly, in the ready soil of credulity, rumours grow rank and miracles tend to multiply. Fourthly, faith-healers themselves are sometimes guilty of deliberate fraud, as Perry points out.² There is again no evidence of deliberate fraud at Lourdes.

Secondly, physical cures nevertheless do occur under the aegis of both faith-healing and Roman Catholic centres of healing. Perry, who was a member of an investigating committee which considered fifty test cases, found one actual cure due to faith-healing; though other cures were reported, and Perry obviously thought that three or four of them were genuine.³ As to Lourdes, "I repeat my own firm conviction that there cannot be any doubt that real cures of organic diseases have taken place" (PRH, 149).

¹ Temple, Christus Veritas, 192.

² Perry, op. cit., 106.

³ Ibid., 108.

Thirdly, physical healings brought about by such methods can occur without being accompanied by spiritual healing: that is, there is no change in the religious outlook of the person or persons involved, the redemptive aspect is entirely lacking. In his report Perry writes: "The majority of those who received or sought healing were folk of superficial experience in religion."¹ The healings "rested not on strong and intelligent religious experience, but upon a washed-out, second-hand faith which was little more than superstition."² "The history of various methods of healing compels us to admit that healing has occurred in an apparently miraculous way apart from faith in God. Hypnotism and powerful suggestion have brought about healing. Such methods may cure psychogenic or possibly even organic diseases, but do not enrich the personality."³

Fourthly, physical cures are nevertheless sometimes accompanied by a change in the religious outlook of the person or persons involved: psychological faith has^{been} transformed into theological faith. Here the redemptive element accompanies the physical recovery. As an instance of this, one could cite an episode from the Memories and Experiences

¹Perry, op. cit., 108. ²Ibid.

³Cf. Crowlesmith, op. cit., 74.

of the Schwabian man of God, Seitz, which brings out clearly the connection between external physical healing and an alteration in the inner life of the person involved.

A young man, who had himself experienced an act of God in our house, brought to us a man who had been crippled in both feet for the last six years. When he was working on the railway, a rail had fallen on his back, and had damaged the spinal nerves in such a way that both his legs were paralysed. He told how the doctor had sent him round to various hospitals and spas, but in the end had said that he was incurable, but that if he lived in a place where the air suited him, he could prolong his life for a couple of years. So he came to us. I discovered at once that he was a man of integrity. A few meditations which he attended roused him so much that he undertook a complete purification of conscience and mind, and put right all that troubled his conscience. Wherever he had caused offence, he sought pardon, and where necessary he made restitution. The basis of this honourable integrity was undoubtedly his ability to believe the Gospel and the promises with childlike simplicity and joy. This gave me the pleasure, after a few days of his being in our company, of laying hands on him and praying for him. When we had prayed, he stood up on both feet and said: In the name of Jesus I am healed. And he began to walk about in his room, and in the dining-room which was next to it. Then he sat down and wept for joy, and said: Ach God, what have you done to me! I am really cured! The other guests were coming in for supper. Because the man had previously been carried to and from the table, they were astonished to see that he could now come to the table himself. He was so moved with joy that he asked them to permit him to tell them what the Lord had done to him, for they had seen how he had had to be carried about and now was able to walk for himself. After supper the guests gathered round him and asked him more about what had happened. He said that while praying he had felt the power of God, and had heard the command: Stand up and be healed! On his return home, he was for ten years a living witness to the Lord. He did much work for the Lord in his neighbourhood. He was often away for hours at a time, leading meetings. He founded a temperance union,

and built community houses, until, serene and at peace, he was called from his labours.¹

Fifthly, there may be redemptive cures without any accompanying physical healing whatsoever. In an interesting article, a woman recounts how she took her dying husband to Lourdes. The wife had been told that her husband was incurably ill with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, causing a degeneration of the central nervous system. Confined to a wheel chair, he was given a year to live. The husband was an agnostic, having concluded many years before that no organized religion measured up to his concept of the gospel, and the wife did not tell him of the nature or seriousness of his illness. It was at Lourdes that a change came over the man: no physical change, but a transformation of a different kind. Under the influence of the events at the shrine, the man who was formerly a deeply depressed agnostic became a man who was at peace with his Heavenly Father and with his fellows about him. He left Lourdes as he had come, a dying man, but redeemed and reconciled with God and man.²

The last supernatural contention is that the same sources that were open to Jesus are open to the

¹Cf. Heim, TSWV, 198-99.

²Vrahnos, "Our Own Miracle of Lourdes", 75-9.

present-day Christian: were we to adopt the attitude of primitive faith, miracles would again abound. Indeed, the main thesis of Cairns' book is that nature miracles are within the range of faith's powers. There is undoubtedly scriptural evidence to support this claim. "For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move hence to yonder place,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you" (Mt. 17.20). But we may properly ask of the supernaturalist: What is to be gained by this proposed proliferation of prodigies? As we have already seen, such events will not automatically convert the agnostic,¹ such events will certainly not be termed inexplicable by any self-respecting scientist.² It cannot be gainsaid that faith could produce marvellous acts any more than it can be denied that if Jesus be unique, unique events follow. But even granted that both propositions be proved (which neither are), of what profit is it?

Supernaturalism is closely associated with both contranaturalism and preternaturalism in this: its faith is fed and nourished with displays of power and demonstrations of force. Supernatural faith demands that it have something to throw in the face of the agnostic, it desires that it have a monstrosity with which to confound

¹Cf. above, 77f. ²Cf. above, 66ff.; 71ff.

the scientist. The attitude is not unlike that among Jesus' own contemporaries - believing as they did in the coming of a Messiah with stupendous power. Yet it appears that Jesus was quite unlike the Messiah from God they expected and wanted. No God of theirs here! "Give us a sign" was their cry (Mt. 12.38). And himself in all his divine beauty and love they did not, or could not, see. "If you are the Christ tell us plainly," they demanded (Jn. 10.24). And the plain utterance of his life which indeed was 'shouting at them' they did not hear. Their preconceived notions of how God ought to visit them blinded them to the reality when it lived before their eyes, and deafened them to the divine voice when it spoke in their ears. And so they crucified Jesus. "He saved others; he cannot save himself," was their condemnation of such an impotent Incarnation! (Mt. 27.42). The Messiahship, the divinity of Jesus cannot simply be read off the biblical record: the miracle of Jesus himself, like all other miracles, must be apprehended by faith. No supernaturalist sees this with the same clarity as Brunner: the others tend to try to 'prove' Christianity by an appeal to the 'supranatural' character of our Lord.

Other elements of the supernatural argument are well worthy of emphasis. In the apprehension of a miracle

faith, that is to say theological faith, is clearly essential. And the supernaturalist's stressing of the redemptive aspect of miracle is an element which will demand more consideration later in this work.

Despite some internal inconsistencies and differences, the three traditional views presented here in Part One have much in common. Though something may be gained from each of these three, on the whole they are found wanting: consequently I reject them.

We must now try to state more clearly why the three traditional views/^{in Part One}are found wanting: I must attempt to say explicitly why I reject these three traditional positions. In order to do so, I propose to employ Tillich's fruitful and profound 'point of view', namely, his correlation between message and situation.¹

Tillich points out that "theology moves back and forth between two poles, the eternal truth of its foundation and the temporal situation in which the eternal truth must be received."² A sound theology must be as accurate as possible in recounting the biblical message on the one hand,

¹Tillich, ST I, 3-8.

²Ibid., 3.

in responding (with that message) and as accurate as possible/to the claims and questions of the contemporary situation on the other. It is not often that a theology is both biblically and situationally sound. Most theologies err in regard to one of the factors. Sometimes a theology has shortcomings on both counts: that, indeed, is the double fault of traditional theology.

We have already seen how the three positions of traditional theology have been biblically unsatisfactory. Various aspects of the biblical message have indeed been seized upon, but this is to the exclusion of other and equally important aspects of that same message. On the whole, traditional theology fails to see the paradox of the eternal message: it fails to understand that only faith can grasp that an ancient book is the Word of God: it fails to appreciate that only faith can perceive that the man Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God: it fails to comprehend that only faith can determine that a natural event is a miracle, i.e. an act of God. Because of this failure traditional theology attempts to 'prove' the validity of the eternal message by an appeal to so-called supernatural facts. But the proof turns out to be illusory.

The appeal to supernatural facts (whether they be contra-, preter-, or supernatural) brings traditional theology into sharp and painful opposition to the thinking

of contemporary man, whose outlook is so largely determined by scientific methods and attitudes. Christianity must not and cannot remove the scandalon of its faith, but it must not locate the scandalon in the wrong place: and this mistake is perpetrated by traditional theologians. Contemporary man cannot agree that a particular period of history or a particular group of events is totally outside the realm of investigation of the scientist: and he quite rightly distrusts a so-called proven supernatural when it is not proven to him at all.

Traditional theology thus fails on the two vital points: it is neither faithful to the truth of the eternal message nor can it speak meaningfully to the temporal situation.

In Part Two I consider significant modern theological movements which, while not dealing solely with the concept of miracle, are nevertheless of considerable import for the concept. The titles of the three chapters in Part Two are "The Barthian Theology", "The Form Critical Movement", and "The Demythological Movement". At the conclusion of Part Two we will evaluate these three ^{movements} / in the light of Tillich's 'point of view'.

PART TWO - Contemporary Movements.

Chapter IV. The Barthian Theology.

"What has Jerusalem to do with Athens, the Church with the Academy, the Christian with the heretic? . . . I have no use for a Stoic or a Platonic or a dialectic Christianity."
Tertullian.

"If I have a 'system', it consists in this, that I always keep in mind with the utmost vigour what Kierkegaard has called the 'infinite qualitative difference' between time and eternity, and that in both its positive and negative implications. 'God is in heaven and thou upon earth'."
Karl Barth.

<u>CD</u> I/1	= Barth, K.	<u>Church Dogmatics.</u>	Vols.	I/1
I/2				I/2
II/1				II/1
II/2				II/2
III/1				III/1
IV/1				IV/1
IV/2				IV/2

It might have been supposed that the views of Karl Barth on the concept of miracle could well have found a place in one or other of the views presented in this thesis. It is true, as we shall see, that he has affinities with more than one of these positions. Yet he fits none neatly. How are we to place Karl Barth? His views on miracle, like his theology as a whole, cannot be simply categorized and bracketed with any of the views presented in this work. How are we to place Karl Barth? "To fit Barth into any known scheme of theology, orthodox or liberal, is impossible. Probably the answer that would satisfy him best would be to say: 'Barth is a scandalon, a stumbling-block, a question-mark, to stir men out of their easy solutions, to disturb them, it may even be to make them angry, that they may begin to think again, to think more deeply, and to think in God, and by the light of God's Word'."¹

Barth uses the word miracle in at least three distinguishable senses. First, there is the use of the word miracle as equivalent to, or parallel with, the word revelation. Secondly, there is the use of the word miracle as an attribute of revelation: as form is to content, so is miracle to revelation. Thirdly, there is the use of the

¹McConnachie, The Significance of Karl Barth, 242.

word miracle as referring distinctly to the New Testament events traditionally called miracles. The chapter is therefore divided into two main sections. First, Barth's views on miracle (in the three distinguishable senses) are presented in a straightforward manner; secondly, there is a critical evaluation of Barth's position.

First of all, Barth often uses the word miracle as being equivalent to the word revelation: in many cases the words are interchangeable. The concept of revelation is central in Barth's thought, and some attempt must be made to explain it. In order to do so, a definition given by Barth himself will be expanded and illustrated. The definition is as follows. "Revelation [is] the self-revelation of God, that is, His revelation in Jesus Christ, as the Word that is spoken to us, that is given to us in the witness of Holy Scripture. Wherever revelation in the Christian sense is known and acknowledged, there the Christian Church is. The Church is the reality which arises and continues wherever the revelation of God in Jesus Christ has made itself known, wherever it allows itself to be known of men and succeeds in winning their acknowledgement."¹

'Revelation is the self-revelation of God.'

¹Barth, Against The Stream, 225.

"Revelation in the Christian sense is the revelation of God. For the Christian there is no need of a special enquiry and a special proof to know and to declare who and what God is. For the Christian the revelation is itself the proof, the proof furnished by God Himself. The Christian answer to the question as to who and what God is, is a simple one: He is the subject who acts in His revelation. This act of revelation is a token of His Being and the expression of His nature."¹ In this sense, then, "he who says 'God', says 'miracle'."² Revelation is not aided, conditioned or caused by any capacity, ability or knowledge of man. Revelation is all of God: "a reality to be grounded only in itself" (CD I/2, 244). Because it is God alone who is the agent and actor in revelation it is possible to speak of "the miracle of revelation" (CD I/2, 268).

'Revelation is the self-revelation of God.'

Such revelation is not an idea, ideal, philosophy or speculation of man. It is of God, from God, by God and, like miracle, "is an event" (CD I/2, 530). Yet although miracle owes its origin and cause to God and to him alone, it is for man. Revelation, like miracle, "is an act of God's

¹Barth, Against The Stream, 208-09.

²Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, 120.

compassion."¹ "To know God in His dealings, viz. in His decision in favour of man, means necessarily to know God's free mercy, the most incomprehensible of all miracles."² "The nature of His revelation . . . is that it is grace" (CD II/1, 197). And why is God's grace so incomprehensible? Because without it man could not know God at all. "We begin with the need of man for the miracle of grace. He cannot dispense with this miracle. And God will not become knowable to him otherwise than in miracle" (CD II/1, 129). Again, why is God's grace so incomprehensible? Because God loves that which is unloveable. "What He sees when He loves is that which is altogether distinct from Himself, and as such is lost in itself, and without Him abandoned to death. That He throws a bridge out from Himself to this abandoned one, that He is light in the darkness, is the miracle of the almighty love of God" (CD II/1, 278). No self-revelatory act of God is without the essential incomprehensible ingredient of mercy: even creation, which might be thought to be primarily a work of power, is rather primarily a work of compassion. "Creation, too, is already the work of the free, fatherly grace and mercy of God" (CD III/1,

¹Barth, The Knowledge of God and the Service of God, 48.

²Ibid., 71.

30). Revelation is the self-revelation of God - of his mercy, love, compassion - of his grace. "Grace is the divine movement and condescension on the basis of which men belong to God and God to men. Whether offered or received, whether self-revealing and reconciling or apprehended and active in faith, it is God's dealing, God's will and God's work, God's lordship, God Himself in all His sovereignty. Grace cannot be called forth or constrained by any claim or merit, by any existing or future condition, on the part of the creature. Nor can it be held up or rendered nugatory and ineffective by any contradiction or opposition on the part of the creature. Both in its being and in its operation its necessity is within itself. In face of it there is no place for self-glorying or the self-praise of the creature. It comes upon the creature as absolute miracle, and with absolute power and certainty" (CD II/2, 19).

'Revelation is God's revelation in Jesus Christ.'
"Jesus Christ is the elect One, the man who is not only man but God. He is the miracle of Grace, in whom what is impossible for any man, is possible for man, i.e. in Him it is possible for man to have not merely a part in God but to include the fulness of Godhead in himself and be the son of God. But it is He and none other who is the miracle

of grace."¹ It is only in Jesus Christ that there is any revelation at all. "What in fact makes revelation revelation and miracle miracle is that the Word of God did actually become a real man and that therefore the life of this real man was the object and theatre of the acts of God, the light of revelation entering the world" (CD I/2, 147). Berkouwer rightly remarks: "Barth's main concern is to speak of the all-conquering grace of God in Christ Jesus."² "That the true God became true man in Jesus Christ . . . is the miracle of all miracles of His divinity. Nowhere could God's love or His freedom be greater than in this work" (CD II/1, 662). Finally, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ "is no special work. It is far more. It is the work of all works. It is no special miracle. It is the miracle of all miracles. And as such it is the simplest necessity of nature: even more necessary than breath to our bodies. But it takes place irrespective of any work or wonders of which we are capable" (CD I/2, 392).

that is

'Revelation is the Word/spoken to us.' "The work of the Son or Word is the presence or manifestation of God which, in view of the fact that it is a miraculous

¹Barth, The Knowledge of God and the Service of God, 75.

²Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, 392.

event amid human darkness and despite this darkness, we can only designate revelation" (CD I/1, 148). This Word creates in man a new beginning. The Word or Son creates in us an absolute new beginning. For the believer in Jesus Christ there is "an absolute new beginning brought about by God; an absolute new beginning of his existence; . . . an authority which is posited basically and decisively before all others; a power which has not only illumined and altered and improved his whole reality but completely transformed it" (CD III/1, 32). Therefore, "let it be said at once that God's action, when we consider it in the light of its result in man upon whom God acts, appears as free mercy, as a miracle wrought by God."¹

'Revelation is the Word that is spoken to us.' This is the first time that man - expressed in the phrase 'to us' - is specifically mentioned in Barth's definition of revelation which we are currently discussing. Revelation and miracle are all of God and by God and from God. Man is simply the unworthy recipient of the Word that is spoken: the Word that is spoken in grace, the Word that is spoken in Jesus Christ. For this reason, Barth insists - as against Bultmann and the existentialists - that man

¹Barth, The Knowledge of God and the Service of God, 74.

cannot speak of man without first and very concretely having spoken of God.¹ Again, as against Bultmann and the existentialists, Barth insists that God's sovereignty is absolute: absolute in the sense that it is not to be measured against the norm of mere human comprehension.² Man - weak, sinful, insignificant man - receives the unmerited gift of the grace of God: and only in this sense is he a participant. There is a relationship between God and man, but an extremely unequal relationship. "Human nature cannot be the work-mate of God. If it actually becomes so, it is not because of any attributes it possessed already and in itself, but because of what is done to it by the divine Word, and so not because of what it has to do or give, but because of what it has to suffer and receive - and at the hand of God" (CD I/2, 188). Again "the miracle of Christmas has as one of its elements the not at all miraculous reality of man. If Emmanuel is true the miracle is done upon him."

¹Barth, Die Menschlichkeit Gottes, 19-20. "Gewiß: der Existentialismus mag uns, indem er uns noch einmal geschärft hat, daß man von Gott nicht reden kann, ohne Menschen zu reden, noch einmal an die particula veri der Älteren Schule erinnert haben. In den alten Irrtum, als ob man von Menschen reden könne, ohne zuerst, und das sehr konkret, vom lebendigen Gott geredet zu haben, wird er uns hoffentlich nicht zurückführen." For Bultmann's views on this matter, cf. below, 266; 402f.

²Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, Ein Versuch ihn zu verstehen, 51ff. Bultmann believes that 'natural man' has a 'life-relation' to the things about which the gospel speaks. Cf. below, 266ff.

It is man who is the object of sovereign divine action in this event. God Himself and God alone is Master and Lord" (CD, I/2, 186). Yet though revelation is all of God, though revelation brings about an absolutely new beginning in man, man is not crushed or destroyed in this miracle. "It [the Christmas event] is not an event in the loneliness of God, but an event between God and man. Man is not there only in a supplementary capacity. In his own place, his own sharply defined manner, he participates in the event as one of the principals; not as a cipher or a phantom, but as the real man that he is" (CD I/2, 186). God does not contradict his own creation, even in miracle. "God Himself, and especially God Himself, will act in such a way in the continuation of His creation, in each new miracle of His freedom, that he remains faithful to this first work of His [the creation]: He will transform the reality of the creature, in a transformation which includes death, dissolution and new creation, but He will not destroy it; He will not take it away again. He will never be alone again as He was before creation. Nor will the creature be again as it was prior to creation. In all that He will do, God will not cease to be the One who has done this first thing" (CD III/1, 43).

'Revelation is the Word that is spoken to us.'

"The Word of God is also God's miracle in reaching its goal among men" (CD I/1, 208). Revelation is all of God: unconditioned, though received, by man. Then what about faith? Is this not the special prerogative and possession of man? Certainly not! Faith, too, is revelation. "Faith is miracle."¹ "The Word creates the fact that we hear the Word. Jesus Christ creates the fact that we believe in Jesus Christ" (CD I/2, 247). Again, "the possibility of knowing the Word of God lies in the Word of God and nowhere else. Its reality can literally only take place, and as a visible miracle at that, visible to every man, secular or religious, Greek or Jew. . . . This miracle is faith" (CD I/1, 255). "We have to recognize that faith as an irruption into this reality and possibility [of man's capacities] means the removing of a barrier in which we can only see and again and again see a miracle" (CD I/2, 506). Once again, faith can only be received by man who is himself faithless: faith, like all other miracles, arises out of the free grace of God alone. "If we have heard and heard again . . . then we can only regard this possibility of our hearing as a possibility gifted to us, subjectively and objectively, in an utterly miraculous way, as the 'notwithstanding' of grace,

¹Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, 115.

which has nothing to correspond to it or precondition it" (CD I/1, 467-68). The impartation of faith is another element of the free grace of God. "Faith is the freedom granted to man by the grace of God. . . . Faith is contiguous with the free grace of God" (CD IV/2, 242-43). Faith is granted by God: this is so even in those miracle stories of the New Testament which at first sight seem to imply that man moves by virtue of his own belief towards Jesus the healer.

There are men who move towards the action of Jesus as those who are absolutely needy and poor and suffering and in misery. The only thing is that they believe in Him, and that in this faith in Him they have the freedom to move towards Him, towards His action, as though the action had already been fulfilled. They have the freedom in a sense to anticipate its happening. This is what they do. And whence does their freedom derive except in the freedom of the grace of God, the grace which will work mightily in the occurrence of the miracle, but which is already mighty towards and in those who only move towards it, so that in their anticipatory faith they are themselves the anticipated, who have no option but to look forward with illimitable confidence to its occurrence? The real truth is not that they themselves anticipate the miracle, but that they are anticipated by Jesus who performs the miracle, by the God active and revealed in Him. And He anticipates them by making them free for the faith in which they can move forward with irresistible steps to the miracle, or rather to the One who performs the miracle. He does it by causing it to shine as a light within them that He, Jesus, and God in Him, has remembered these poor sufferers, and is good and gracious to them in all their need and oppression, in all the darkness and corruption of their existence, without even asking who or what they are. The act of their faith is only their reaction to the shining of this light. . . . All this is not in their own name, but in the name of the One who has elected and called them (CD IV/2, 243).

'Revelation is given to us in the witness of the

Holy Scripture.' "The news of the revelation of God stands in Holy Writ, and therefore any reference to it, and announcement of the event of revelation, must follow the biblical text. To put it quite plainly: what we have come to know as revelation in the Christian sense is to be found in a book, in the book of the Old and New Testaments. God and His existence are to be found in this book."¹ "We are speaking of a miracle when we say that the Bible is the Word of God" (CD I/2, 528). This does not mean that the texts of the Bible are themselves revelations: nor that the writers and apostles were themselves particularly gifted or peculiarly religious people. "Their relationship to their object is the very unequal one of a heavenly treasure to the earthly vessels to which it has been entrusted for preservation and impartation. But this relationship is their mystery and miracle. It is in this relationship, and only in this relationship, that they are inspired and speak the Word of God" (CD III/1, 93). Again, "that sinful and erring men as such speak the Word of God: that is the miracle of which we speak when we say that the Bible is the Word of God" (CD I/2, 529).

'Revelation is given to us in the witness of the

¹Barth, Against The Stream, 216.

Holy Scripture.' We can hear or apprehend the witness of the Holy Scripture despite the fact that all of the Bible is not history in the strict sense of the term. First, some of the Scripture is not history in the sense that the distinctively Christian interpretation of biblical events is inaccessible to the historian as such. "Stories of events which have taken place between God and men, of course, fall, on their human side and therefore particularly in view of the data industriously stressed in the Bible, as regards their temporal form under the general concept of history. But they do not fall under it on their divine side" (CD I/1, 375). Secondly, some of the Scripture is not history in an even narrower sense: there seems to be a lack of details on even the temporal side of the events which have taken place between God and men. In short, Barth believes that saga can witness to the reality of the Word of God. "The view that a Bible story is to be regarded partly or wholly as saga or legend need not necessarily attack the substance of the Biblical witness. It might merely declare that according to the canons by which otherwise and in general historical truth is judged, this story is one which more or less eludes certain demonstration that it ran the course corresponding to the narrative. 'Saga' or 'legend' can only describe the more or less pervasive share of the narrator or narrators in

the story narrated" (CD I/1, 375-76). Specifically, Barth considers the question "Whether the serpent in Paradise 'really' spoke? - I would decidedly oppose characterizing this incident as 'myth'. No more can I, on the other hand, characterize it, in the sense of historical science, as 'historical', for a speaking serpent - now, indeed, I am as little able to imagine that (apart from anything else!) as anyone. But I should like to ask the dear friends of the speaking serpent whether it would not be better to hold fast to the fact that this 'is written' and to go on and interest themselves in what the serpent spoke? To me they appear to be very important and momentous words that I should not like under any circumstances to miss from the Bible."¹ Saga and legend, as part of the witness of the Holy Scripture, may mediate to man the Word of God. But myth cannot witness to the revelation of the Word of God: pure myth is, as a matter of fact, entirely absent from the Bible. Myth is man-made, about man, for man. As such, it is godless. "What is fundamental to myth [is] the contemplation of man and his cosmos as self-moving and self-resting, the contemplation of his emergence as one of his own functions" (CD III/1, 86). Myth pur-ports/ ^{to point} to timeless truth. "The customary definition that

¹Barth, Credo, 190.

myth is the story of the gods is only superficial. In myth both the gods and the story are not the real point at issue, but only point to it. The real object and content of myth are the essential principles of the general realities and relationships of the natural and spiritual cosmos which, in distinction from concrete history, are not confined to definite times and places. The clothing of their dialectic and cyclical movement in stories of the gods is the form of myth. The fairy tale, which is more interested in details than in the whole (as are legend and anecdote in relation to saga), and which inclines not to concrete history but to all kinds of general phenomena, truths or even riddles of existence, is a degenerate form of myth as are legend and anecdote of saga" (CD III/1, 84). Pure myth is absent from the Bible: even in the creation story. "The creation stories of the Bible are neither myths nor fairy tales. This is not to deny that there are myths, and perhaps in part fairy tales, in the materials of which they are constructed" (CD III/1, 84). But both history and saga witness to the revelation of the Word of God. "In the Bible we usually have to reckon with both history and saga" (CD III/1, 82).

'Revelation is given to us in the witness of the Holy Scripture.' Revelation is given to us in the witness of the Holy Scripture because - and only because - it witnesses

to the Word of God, to Jesus Christ. As such, the Holy Scripture is a miracle: a miracle of grace.

We reckon that the event of the Word of God is not a continuation, but the end of all other events that we know. We reckon that a new series of events has begun. Again, the in itself non-miraculous givenness of the Bible as the Word of God, its existence amongst all the other facts of our cosmos, will not induce us to take any other view but rather to take this view. Yet in speaking of the act of God in Jesus Christ, it does itself speak of the grace of God as a reality which cannot be deduced or conceived in the context of the human existence which we know, a reality which posits the end of all other events and opens up a new series of events. That the Word of God is not under our control or foresight is proved by the fact that its content - and not only its content, but its reality as such - is the grace of God, which we have not deserved, the occurrence of which we cannot claim or bring about, which we can only accept because God is pleased to be gracious to us. If we allow the Bible to say this to us, and in so doing to speak the Word of God, how else can we think of the Word of God in the Bible except as a miracle? (CD I/2, 528).

'Wherever revelation in the Christian sense is known and acknowledged, there the Christian Church is.' Revelation is the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Therefore, "the revelation on which the Church is founded is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and it alone."¹ Since this is the case, the Church is, ideally at least, all of God and all from God. And so it is proper to speak of "the miracle of the Church" (CD II/2, 228). "The elected

¹Barth, Against The Stream, 226.

community of God, as the environment of the elected man Jesus of Nazareth, is the place where God's honour dwells, i.e. where this Jesus is revealed as God's promise in person, where this Jesus is heard, where He is believed, where in Him and by Him it comes about, therefore, that God's self-witness, the declaration of His good-will and work for man, finds a hearing and faith. The community is elected in relation to the whole world (as representatives of Jesus Christ and the deed of divine judgement and mercy accomplished in Him) in order to serve the divine promise that awaits the hearing and faith of man. . . . Wherever it lives, it always lives in the service of the divine self-witness which man is permitted to hear and is called to believe" (CD II/2, 233).

'The Church is the reality which arises and continues wherever the revelation of God in Jesus Christ has made itself known.' And "the Church of faith in God's promise [is] founded on the resurrection of Jesus" (CD II/2, 240). "The content of Easter Day and the Easter season consisted in this, . . . in the appearance of the body of Jesus Christ, which embraced their [the disciples'] death in its death, their life in its life, their past and their future in itself, thus including them all in itself. As He encountered them in this corporeity, the disciples heard addressed to themselves as such, to the ecclesia which arose in virtue

of it, the call which is the disclosure of the secret of His earthly-historical existence: 'Ye are the body of Christ'" (CD IV/1, 664). The resurrection is the turning point of history: the end of the old, the beginning of the new. "God acts in this way - as He alone can act - as He has reconciled the world to Himself in Jesus Christ: i.e., as the One who in His death reveals the end of all creatures, and at the same time their new beginning in His resurrection" (CD III/1, 28). No wonder the resurrection is termed, by Barth, "the miracle of all miracles" (CD III/1, 77). In this event, a man is reconciled to God: reconciliation, too, is a genuine miracle (CD I/1, 473-74). The resurrection is effected from above: happening in history, but not conditioned by previous history. Speaking of the resurrection of the Christian, Barth writes: "The resurrection cuts clean through the life and death of man, it is salvation-history which cleaves its way through all other histories."¹ The resurrection is a divine proof to those within the faith, though the event of the resurrection has no demonstrable value to those without the faith. "There can be no demonstration of the event [of the resurrection] which has apologetic value" (CD IV/2, 143). But to the man of faith, the

¹Barth, The Resurrection of the Dead, 218.

resurrection is "an act of divine proof which we can now interpret only as a divine miracle. This act of divine proof is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection alone is decisive for the truth that, as sinners before God, we are pronounced righteous" (CD II/2, 758).

'The Church is the reality which arises and continues wherever the revelation of God in Jesus Christ has made itself known.' And the Christian church arose by virtue of the resurrection of Jesus. Because this is so central and so vital in Barth's theology, consideration must be given to it as a fact of history. Does not a deep veil hang over the event of the resurrection? Is it not seriously open to doubt from a historical point of view? But what, according to Barth, is the historical point of view? And what, according to Barth, is history? An historical event is one which "is accessible to man because it is visible and perceptible to him and can be comprehended as history, [which] is from the objective standpoint creaturely history in the context of other creaturely history, as an event prior to which and side by side with which there are other events of the same basic type with which it can be compared and integrated" (CD III/1, 78). Of course history - ^{an} meaningful history - is more than just what is visible and perceptible: there is a 'non-historical element', an interpretative side,

to history as well. "We cannot overlook the fact that all historical writings become soulless and intolerable to the extent that they try to be just historical and nothing more" (CD III/1, 78). But revelation, and miracle, seem to be excluded from history even in this broad, interpretative sense: revelation, like miracle, is all of God. Revelation, like miracle, "is an event in this world of ours, yet such that it is not grounded upon the continuity of events in this world nor is it to be understood in terms of it. It is a sign set up immediately by God, and can only be understood as such" (CD I/2, 187). Any relationship which revelation or miracle has to history (even in this broad, interpretative sense) is an apparent relationship only. "History subsequent to creation has a creaturely element, i.e., a similarity and relationship with other creaturely occurrences. This relationship may be anything but obvious. It may be easily and almost completely obscured. This is particularly the case where history assumes the character of miracle. It is most apparent at the centre of the history of the covenant of grace - in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What does it really mean to see and grasp a real miracle? What does it mean to perceive and establish a resurrection from the dead? In this case the historical element in the event seems almost to have disappeared and the 'non-historical' to have

taken the upper hand. Even the human account of it, the description of the event, seems necessarily to have burst through the framework of historical relation. And this is what actually takes place" (CD III/1, 78-9). Concerning the resurrection, Barth concedes that the resurrection of Jesus is not an historical fact which can be established by the means at the disposal of the historical scientist. But from this Barth thinks that it does not follow that it did not happen.¹ "Can such history, too, not really have taken place, and can there not also be a legitimate recognition of such history, which certainly for reasons of good taste we shall abstain from calling an 'historical fact', and which the 'historian' in the modern sense may by all means call 'saga' or 'legend', because it, in fact, escapes the means and methods together with the tacit presuppositions of this historian?"²

¹Barth, Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III/2, 535.

²Ibid. "Kann sich nicht auch solche Geschichte wirklich ereignet haben, und kann es nicht eine legitime Anerkennung auch solcher Geschichte geben, die 'historisches Faktum' zu nennen man schon aus Gründen des guten Geschmacks unterlassen wird, die der 'Historiker' im modernen Sinn des Begriffs gut und gerne 'Sage' oder 'Legende' nennen mag, weil sie sich den Mitteln und Methoden samt den stillschweigenden Voraussetzungen dieses Historikers in der Tat entzieht?"

Even though the resurrection has but "a slender 'historical' margin"¹ it is yet one of those events which "have really taken place as history in time far more certainly than everything which the 'historian' as such can establish."²

'The Church is wherever the revelation of God in Jesus Christ allows itself to be known of men and succeeds in winning their acknowledgement.' The Church is sustained by God, sustained by the work of the Holy Spirit: and so it is possible to speak of "the miracle and mystery of the Holy Spirit" (CD IV/2, 340). "To receive the Holy Spirit means an exposure of our spiritual helplessness, a recognition that we do not possess the Holy Spirit. For that reason the subjective reality of revelation has the distinctive character of a miracle, i.e., it is a reality to be grounded only in itself. In the actual subjective reality of revelation it is finally decided that apart from it there is no other possibility of being free for God" (CD I/2, 244). The gift of God in Jesus Christ is received as a revelation, as a miracle in the community founded and sustained by God.

¹Barth, Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III/2, 535. "mit einem schmalen 'historischen' Rand."

²Ibid. "Es könnte Ereignisse geben, die viel sicherer wirklich in der Zeit geschehen sind als alles, was die 'Historiker' als solche feststellen können."

Man can only be amazed at the gift of freedom for God.

"When revelation takes place, it never does so by means of our insight and skill, but in the freedom of God to be free for us and to free us from ourselves, that is to say, to let His light shine in our darkness, which as such does not comprehend His light. In this miracle, which we can only acknowledge as having occurred, which we can only receive from the hand of God as it takes place by His hand, His kingdom comes for us, and this world passes for us. It is in this coming and this passing that there takes place for us the movement which Holy Scripture calls revelation" (CD I/2, 65).

Revelation, like miracle, is the self-revelation of God in Christ. Revelation is the Word of God spoken to us, given to us in the witness of the Bible, mediated to us by the Christian church. We have seen that Barth uses the word miracle as meaning practically the same as the word revelation: this is made clear in the following quotation, which sums up this first usage of the word miracle, and in which the words 'sign', 'miracle' and 'revelation' are quite interchangeable.

In His revelation, in Jesus Christ, the hidden God has indeed made Himself apprehensible. Not directly, but indirectly. Not to sight, but to faith. Not in His being, but in sign. Not, then by the dissolution of His hiddenness - but apprehensibly. The revelation of

God is that God has given to the creature whom He has chosen and determined for this end the commission and the power to take his place and represent Him, to bear witness to Him. The Word was made flesh: this is the first, original and controlling sign of all signs. In relation to this sign, as the sign of this sign, there is also creaturely testimony to His eternal Word, not everywhere, but where His eternal Word has chosen, called and created for Himself witnesses: a testimony by the word of the prophets and apostles of this Word; by the visible existence of His people, His Church; by the Gospel which is delivered and to be heard in it; by the sacraments in which this Gospel has also a physically visible and apprehensible form; and finally, by the existence of us who believe this testimony. Jesus Christ and His visible kingdom on earth: this is the great possibility, created by God Himself, of viewing and conceiving Him, and therefore of speaking about Him. For as we men view and conceive Him, so we can speak of Him. We cannot do so without this veil, and therefore without the reservation of His hiddenness, or apart from the miracle of His grace (CD II/1, 199).

In spite of the fact that miracle and revelation are often interchangeable in Barth's theology, there are other places where there is a distinct difference: a difference which we must now try to point out and explain.

To state the difference briefly, revelation is a broader term than miracle. Miracle always accompanies revelation but it is not itself revelation: rather it points to revelation. "Miracle is an attribute of revelation. As it were, it marks off the limits of revelation time from all other times. . . . For that reason all attempts at weakening or conjuring away the miraculous character of revelation are to be rejected on principle" (CD I/2, 64). One of the marks

of revelation is that it is "a mystery" (CD I/2, 178), and miracle points to the mystery, signifies the revelation. Miracles are "signs of revelation" (CD I/2, 184). "The miracle of God . . . is itself only a sign of God's mystery" (CD III/1, 146). Or again, "miracle is the form of the reported mystery, the figure of the attested divine act and revelation."¹ Miracle is properly a sign. The events narrated in the creed 'conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary' are signs pointing to the mystery and the revelation of the Incarnation. "A miracle points to the mystery of the true divinity and true humanity, the miracle of this procreation and of this birth."² The miracle of the empty tomb points to the mystery and the revelation of the resurrection. A miracle as "a sign must, of course, signify. To do so it must have in itself something of the kind of thing it signifies; it must be in analogy with it noetically and ontically" (CD I/2, 182). Yet miracle is distinct from revelation, even if miracle always accompanies revelation. "Sign is still not the thing signified" (CD I/2, 183). But still, it is in the sign that revelation

¹Barth, Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III/4, 363. "Das Wunder ist die Form des berichteten Geheimnisses, die Gestalt der bezeugten göttlichen Tat und Offenbarung."

²Barth, Dogmatics in Outline, 98.

becomes real for man. "Everything in the end depends on the one thing, on the mystery of the revelation [the person of Jesus Christ] speaking and being apprehended through this sign [the miracle of the Virgin birth]" (CD I/2, 184). "It is the description of this mystery [the vere Deus vere homo of Christ] that is the purpose of the dogma [of the Virgin birth]" (CD I/2, 178).

Is it possible that revelation or mystery can be apprehended apart from recognizing the validity of the sign? Theoretically, yes: but practically, no. Theoretically "there is certainly nothing to prevent anyone, without affirming the doctrine of the Virgin birth, from recognizing the mystery of the person of Jesus Christ or from believing in a perfectly Christian way. It is within God's counsel and will to make this possible" (CD I/2, 181). But practically, "when two theologians with apparently the same conviction confess the mystery of Christmas, do they mean the same thing by that mystery, if one acknowledges and confesses the Virgin birth to be the sign of the mystery while the other denies it as a mere externality or is ready to leave it an open question? Does the second man really acknowledge and confess that in His revelation to us and in our reconciliation to Him, in our measureless astonishment and in measureless hiddenness the initiation^{ti} is wholly with

God? Or does he not by his denial or declared indifference towards the sign of the Virgin birth at the same time betray the fact that with regard to the thing signified by this sign he means something quite different? May it not be the case that the only one who hears the witness of the thing is the one who keeps to the sign by which the witness has actually signified it?" (CD I/2, 179-80). Again, "Jesus Christ was God Himself. And our knowledge that this is no dream but the truth, and the fact that we have received that knowledge, rest entirely on the Easter message literally understood."¹

Is it possible that any particular revelation might have been signified in a way different from the traditional way? Theoretically, yes: but practically, no. Theoretically, "it might have pleased God to let His Son become man in some quite different way than in the event of the miracle attested as the Virgin birth" (CD IV/1, 207). Practically, "it did in fact please Him to let Him become man in this way. . . . The question is pertinent whether His divine Sonship and the mystery of His incarnation are known in any real seriousness and depth when these attestations of it are unrecognized or denied or explained away" (CD IV/1, 207).

Sign (miracle) and that signified (revelation or

¹Barth, The Knowledge of God and the Service of God, 87-8.

the mystery of revelation) must be distinguished but they cannot be divided. "Sign and thing signified, the outward and the inward, are, as a rule, strictly distinguished in the Bible, and certainly in other connexions we cannot lay sufficient stress upon the distinction. But they are never separated in such a ('liberal') way that according to preference the one may be easily retained without the other" (CD I/2, 179). As an illustration of this distinction, Barth never tires of quoting the example in Mk. 2,1-12 (the healing of the paralytic). "The forgiveness of sins is manifestly the thing signified, while the healing is the sign, quite inseparable from, but very significantly related to, this thing signified, yet neither identical with it nor a condition of it: 'That ye may know. . . .'" (CD I/2, 189). In short, "the mystery does not rest upon the miracle. The miracle rests upon the mystery. The miracle bears witness to the mystery, and the mystery is attested by the miracle" (CD I/2, 202).

Because the miracles as signs are not the same as that signified, are not the same as revelation, they are always open to different and non-Christian interpretations. The interpretation of the sign of the Virgin birth will take the form of a hypothesis of parthogenesis (CD I/2, 198). The interpretation of the sign of the empty tomb "will take the

form of a hypothesis of vision or deception or apparent death" (CD I/2, 184). Other elements of Christianity are open to secular interpretations as well. "Thousands may have seen and heard the Rabbi of Nazareth. But this historical element was not revelation. Even the historical element at the resurrection of Christ, the empty grave regarded as an element in this event, that might possibly be fixed, was certainly not revelation. This historical element, like everything historical, is admittedly susceptible of an even highly trivial interpretation" (CD I/1, 373). Christian signs are open to non-Christian interpretations.

But what is the Christian interpretation of the signs or miracles? Briefly, they are to be interpreted as being the direct immediate acts of God, and of God alone. A miracle is "an event in this world of ours, yet such that it is not grounded upon the continuity of events in this world nor is it to be understood in terms of it. It is a sign set up immediately by God, and can only be understood as such" (CD I/2, 187). "In the Bible a miracle is not some event that is hard to conceive, nor yet one that is simply inconceivable, but one that is highly conceivable, but conceivable only as the special new direct act of God in time and in history" (CD I/2, 63). A miracle is an occurrence with "God as its subject, unperturbed by the

course which it had to take according to the laws which we know regulate everything that happens."¹ Miracle, like revelation, is "an event that from man's standpoint drops down vertically from heaven" (CD I/1, 380). Because miracle is God's act alone, it is impossible for man to accomplish. "'God cannot' means that He cannot do it on the basis of a human possibility. 'God can' means, of course, that He can on the basis of His own possibility" (CD I/2, 246). Because miracle is God's act alone, it is impossible from man's point of view. "That One who was dead should rise from the dead is something impossible, incomprehensible and unprovable",² on the basis of any human or natural explanation. But the Christian knows that God has effected this, with whom all things are possible. A similar view is taken of the Virgin birth.

When we regard the Holy Spirit by whom Jesus Christ is conceived as in the strictest sense God Himself, God the Lord, we forestall and eliminate any attempt to come to the assistance of the saying about the Virgin birth of Christ with any speculation from physics or with any more or less genuine scientific information of a biological sort. In other words, if we are clear that with the Holy Spirit God Himself is declared to be the author of the sign of the Virgin birth, then we know that in acknowledging the reality of this sign we have a priori renounced all understanding of it as a natural possibility, even when we are tempted to do

¹Barth, Credo, 101.

²Barth and Thurneysen, Come Holy Spirit, 162.

so by a consideration so inviting as that of natural parthogenesis, for example. We are already committed, then, to an acknowledgement of a pure, divine beginning, of a limiting of all natural possibilities, and this forbids us at the very outset to indulge in any reflection as to whether and how this reality can be anything else but a pure divine beginning (CD I/2, 197-98).

Since a miracle is a 'pure divine beginning', there can be no talk of a miracle being 'impossible' or 'inconceivable', from the human point of view. As Barth says: "The many miracles of the Bible are only illustrations of this, the miracle [of the resurrection]; the more they tell the more we are aware of the range of the possibility of the one miraculous new order. And they illustrate what the resurrection illustrates supremely, that it is beside the point even to ask whether they are historical and possible. They make no claim to be either. They signalize the unhistorical, the impossible, the new time that is coming. . . . Some day people will smile at the pictures of Jesus which we have made acceptable to the cultured by purging them of miracle, even more than our eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have smiled at the miracle stories."¹ Barth therefore emphasizes - in contrast to several theologians cited above² - that we cannot say of any event, particularly a

¹Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, 91.

²Cf. above, 62f.

biblical miracle, that it is 'impossible' or 'inconceivable'. That which is impossible for man, is effected by God in a miracle. "When revelation takes place, it never does so by means of our insight and skill, but in the freedom of God to be free for us" (CD I/2, 65). "What will meet us contrary to all our own capacity will be a miracle" (CD I/2, 159).

Miracles are signs of revelation. Miracles are effected by God alone. Does this mean that we can and must literally accept all the biblical miracles? The answer is: no. "The fact that the statement 'God reveals Himself' is the confession of a miracle that has happened certainly does not imply a blind credence in all the miracle stories related in the Bible. If we confess the miracle, we may very well, at least partially and by degrees, accept additional light from the miracles as necessary signs of the miracle. But even if we confess the miracle, why should we not constantly find this or that one of the miracles obscure, why should we not constantly be taken aback by them? It is not really laid upon us to take everything in the Bible as true in globo, but it is laid upon us to listen to its testimony when we actually hear it. A man might even credit all miracles and for that reason not confess the miracle [that 'God reveals Himself']" (CD I/2, 65). Though he does not expressly say

so, Barth would seem to imply that the genuine Christian can and must accept the signs of the Incarnation and the resurrection: that is, the miracles of the Virgin birth and the empty tomb. These two revelations, and these two miracles, are of fundamental importance in Barth's theology. If priority be given, then he would say that the resurrection is the more important: but there is an intimate connection between the two, as he so impressively points out. "The mystery at the beginning is the basis of the mystery at the end; and by the mystery of the end the mystery of the beginning becomes active and knowable. And since this is so, the same objective content is signified in the one case by the miracle of the Virgin birth, in the other by the miracle of the empty tomb" (CD I/2, 183).

Miracle is conceivable only as the exponent of the special direct act of God in time and in history. The preposition 'in' is of considerable importance. For although a miracle comes from above: although it comes directly from the hand of God without being pre-conditioned by worldly events, yet a miracle happens in history. Miracle happens "amid the continuity of the creaturely world, yet independently of it" (CD I/2, 182). "The location of this miracle [of the Virgin birth] within human reality is stressed by the ex Maria" (CD I/2, 185). Even creation, which might

be thought to have been pre-temporal, is yet in time. "The fact that creation encloses in itself the commencement of all time does not alter in the very slightest the fact that it is itself real history and that as such takes its place in time" (CD III/1, 76). The character of miracle as being in time, and yet as being from God - i.e., as something entirely new, a pure divine beginning - is described at greater length by Barth.

When God speaks and acts and is heard and obeyed by men, it is always in the sphere of creation, at some point in the context of the life established and preserved by creation. Yet in this very sphere and context it is something completely new. Although it follows some other event and many other events, it does not follow from this other event or the sequence of all others. On the contrary, at the heart of these other events it has the character of a termination of all the rest and at the same time of the beginning of something quite different. God's words and acts, and the faith and obedience with which man meets these (and the unbelief and disobedience with which he withstands them) do take place within the course and development of created things, and have the character of these things. At the same time, however, they have decisively the character of an interruption and annulment of all that precedes in favour of a new order. We do not know of the Spirit whence He comes or whither He goes. Signs, reversals and alterations take place on the same old earth and under the same old heaven as everything else, and in continuity with everything that precedes, and yet at the same time they proclaim a new heaven, a new earth and a new continuity (CD II/1, 509).

Again, miracle is conceivable only as the exponent of the special direct act of God in man himself. The freedom given in revelation by the Word of God creates a miracle in man himself: a possibility explicable only on the basis of

the direct act of God, i.e. a miracle. "We have to understand it [the Word itself in Jesus Christ] as a miracle, and not in any sense as a natural freedom and capacity" (CD I/2, 265). Yet the miracle of the reception of the Word of God "takes place in man who is himself and with himself. It is not to a transcendent alter ego (if there are such things) that the divine possibility in revelation is given to apprehend. It is given to me myself. I am the old man and I am also the new man on the basis of this possibility" (CD I/2, 266). Since this revelation is given apart from, and in spite of, our own capacities and understanding, "we can only understand it as a miracle. . . . We are a riddle to ourselves. We know that we are set before God, but we do not know how it happened. We do not know how we as such can stand and be before God. We do not know how we are worthy of it" (CD I/2, 267-68). And it is only the action of God upon us that allows us to be in any sense witnesses to the revelation which he has given to us. "The reality, the worth and the effectiveness of our witness can never be in our power and disposal, but . . . if there is to be a real praise of God and love of our neighbour in our activity, there has to take place an activity of God which we with our activity can only serve, and which from the standpoint of our activity can only have the character of miracle" (CD I/2, 450).

Miracle is all of God, and "miracle ceases to be miracle" when the recipient falls into arrogance or surrenders himself to any kind of self-assurance (CD I/2, 756).

Now that we have considered two of Barth's uses of the word miracle - first, as equivalent to revelation; secondly, as an attribute of revelation - we can now discuss his third usage of the word: to refer particularly to those New Testament events traditionally called miracles.

The miracles of Jesus are the accounts of the concrete activity of Jesus, distinguishable but inseparable from the words of Jesus, which are ^{the} accounts of his concrete speech. Word and deed, speech and act: these are the components of the life-act of Jesus. "It is not merely in fact, but an inner and basic necessity, that the accounts of His concrete activity are added to those of His concrete speech. It is quite impossible that they should not be there. His activity was as it were the kindling light of His speech - the light of the truth of His speech kindling into actuality" (CD IV/2, 209). The miraculous activity of Jesus "is still His preaching of the Gospel and teaching and proclamation - but now in its total, cosmic form" (CD IV/2, 210). But what can be said as to the nature of the miracles themselves?

First of all, as to "the miraculous nature of the overwhelming majority of the distinctive acts of Jesus [we

must admit] their extraordinary, alien and, let us not hesitate to say it, supranatural character" (OD I/2, 187). The extraordinary characteristic of the miracles is indeed "indispensable" (OD I/2, 187). "They indicate the presence of an extraordinary reality. . . . They were, in a general sense, miracles" (OD IV/2, 211).

But, as Barth hastens to point out, "miraculous and marvellous are two different things" (OD I/2, 187). Marvellous things no doubt happened in New Testament times, and marvellous things no doubt happen in our own day. If we say that the miracles are marvels only, we are far from the biblical view of them. If we look upon them merely as marvels, "there appears to be the possibility of explaining some of them, many of them, and perhaps even all of them, in a way that is at least approximately comprehensible, seeing and understanding them as one novelty in a series of others" (OD IV/2, 212). Merely as marvels they are, of course, miracles: but only relative miracles, in line with other relative miracles, ancient and modern. "What was done by the disciples of the Pharisees and the healings of Epidauros and the marvels reported of Apollonius were not in any sense everyday occurrences. . . . Nor is it when a modern doctor of souls really meets with success and someone who suffers from genuine hysteria is brought back to reason, or even

partly back. These things are all completely strange. And the acts of Jesus would still have to be called 'marvels' in this sense even if they belonged to the same order of phenomena and could to that extent be made approximately comprehensible. But in that case they would have become only relatively extraordinary actions" (CD IV/2, 213). There is no necessary connection between such marvels and Christian belief, as Kierkegaard had already pointed out. "He [Christ] makes it evident that in relation to Him there can be no question of any proofs, that a man does not come to Him by the help of proofs, that there is no direct transition to this thing of becoming a Christian, that at the most the proofs might serve to make a man attentive, so that once he has become attentive he may arrive at the point of deciding whether he will believe or be offended."¹ If each of Jesus' miracles is merely a marvel, then "the new thing which it brings is only a revelation of the depth of the old - a depth which was always there and could even be discerned. Its repudiation of the old means only that the frontiers of the latter are pushed back a little at this or that point" (CD IV/2, 216). With the marvel or miracle we still remain in a this-worldly framework.

¹Kierkegaard, Training in Christianity, 98.

If we say that the miracles are marvels only, we fall short of the biblical view of them. By way of parenthesis, Barth points out that there are symptoms in the Bible itself that Jesus' miracles are not merely marvels. He mentions six of these symptoms, but insists that they are symptoms only: which symptoms do not prove that Jesus' miracles are real miracles. First, the New Testament accounts of miracle show that Jesus was not an ordinary wonder-worker or miracle-maker. "The majority of the miracle-stories do not give any indication that Jesus Himself took the initiative in their performance: that He willed to do them of Himself; that He acted according to a definite plan. . . . Jesus did not 'make' miracles. He does them. They take place by Him" (CD IV/2, 216). Secondly, the New Testament accounts of miracle show that Jesus made very sparing use of any therapeutic practice. "There is no such thing as a technique of healing in any serious sense. He did not control any art or craft which he applied to His acts. . . . [They are not] characterized by the application of any physical, magical or psychical technique" (CD IV/2, 216). Thirdly, the New Testament accounts of miracle show that Jesus did not effect miracles to forward His own personality or interests. "Jesus did not perform any miracles in His own interests, for the preservation or deliverance of His own per-

son. . . . He certainly does not expect or receive any reward on the part of men. . . . What is expected of those who are helped by Him is simply that they should 'give glory to God' (Lk. 17.18) - and nothing more" (CD IV/2, 216-17). Fourthly, the New Testament accounts of miracle show that Jesus did not effect miracles for social, political or economic reasons. "The miracles of Jesus do not take place in the sphere or as the content of even a partial attempt at the amelioration of world-conditions or an organized improvement of the human lot. Jesus was not in any sense an activist. . . . His well-doing never became an institution. . . . The acts of Jesus are beginnings with no corresponding continuations" (CD IV/2, 217). Fifthly, the New Testament accounts of miracle show that Jesus saw the miracles as integral to the kerygma: there was a vital connection between faith and miracle. "The miracles of Jesus are the cosmic actualizations of His kerygma, and are performed in this context to summon men to faith. They are not independent, but render this twofold service to faith and the call to faith. . . . Their significance is only as actualizations of His Word, as calls to repentance and faith" (CD IV/2, 217). Sixthly, the New Testament accounts of miracle show that the evangelists (and the early community) saw the miracles as symbolic actions. "The Evangelists are not merely wanting to say that this or

that happened in this or that concrete actualization of the kingdom of God. They also say that as this or that happened in actualization of the kingdom of God Jesus gave us a model or original of certain situations in the history of the development and being and formation and work of the community which in His discipleship is charged with the continued proclamation of the Gospel, the kingdom and His own name. In this respect, too, the miracles are not accidental but meaningful historical acts. . . . While Jesus does actually make history in the actions reported they are also parables" (CD IV/2, 218).

If we say that Jesus' miracles are marvels only, we fall short of the biblical view of them. There are, indeed, symptoms that they are more than marvels, but these are symptoms only. The evangelists were well aware that certain other men in the ancient world did activities which bore strong resemblances to the works of our Lord. "Attention should be paid to the complete lack of concern with which the Christian tradition sets its accounts of the unusual acts of Jesus alongside current records of similar unusual circumstances. It is obviously well aware of these - but it is confident all the same. We cannot ignore or contest the fact that it coincides with these records both in the general topic of its account and in some of its concrete details. . . .

But it has no interest at all in them - either positive or negative" (CD IV/2, 214). What then makes Jesus' acts more than marvels or relative miracles? What makes Jesus' miracles real miracles?

What differentiates Jesus' acts from mere marvels is that they are absolute miracles: "the incursion and appearance of something completely new" (CD IV/2, 212). Jesus' miracles "do not accord any more than His words with the normal course of human and earthly things. They represent a new thing in the face of the usual order and form and development" (CD IV/2, 210). As the miracles "are recounted and attested in the Gospels, they are absolutely new and different, in their unity with the good news, the teaching, the proclamation and therefore the existence of the man Jesus, from all other human or cosmic occurrence, usual or unusual, ordinary or relatively extraordinary. In relation to all other normal or abnormal events, they are absolute miracles (for which even the word . . . supernatural is not really adequate). It is only as such that they can be credible in the New Testament sense" (CD IV/2, 215).

What makes Jesus' acts really miracles is that they are absolute miracles. And what makes them absolute? They are absolute because they are of God: because they are manifestations of his kingdom. Miracles are all of God: and

that fact at once levels all distinctions in this world. "It is the fact that they are miracles of the kingdom which alone characterizes them as true and absolute miracles as opposed to those which took place and still take place in our human antitheses" (CD IV/2, 219). "According to the proclamation in the Word of Jesus the alien and miraculous and inconceivable thing that takes place in His actions in this world, and in defiance of all human being and perception and understanding, is nothing other than the kingdom of God. But this means that in them there is disclosed an antithesis which makes quite insignificant all the antitheses in human thinking . . . between the ordinary and the extraordinary, the conceivable and the inconceivable, the natural and the supranatural, the earthly and the heavenly, the this-worldly and the other-worldly (in the ancient as well as the modern sense of these concepts). All these contrasts are ironed out and lose their ultimately improper seriousness in favour of the genuinely serious distinction necessarily made by the revelation of this very different antithesis" (CD IV/2, 215).

But what is the kingdom of God? What do we mean when we say that Jesus' acts are miracles of the kingdom? Barth answers this question by considering the general nature of Jesus' own miracles.

First, we see that "they are all acts of power

(dunameis), and are often described as such. They are done, in fact, with a divine and unconditional freedom, and in this respect they are absolutely sovereign, alien, incomprehensible, and transcendent in relation to all the orders, forms and developments known to men. . . . It is the power of God alone which is the power operative and revealed in the miracles of Jesus" (CD IV/2, 219). But we must remember that it is the power of God: it is not power alone, nor mere omnipotence. It is the power of God that can be seen in the miracles of Jesus. It is the power and compassion, the mercy and might, the grace and glory of God. "What always takes place in them is that in and with them a completely new and astonishing light - and in all its different manifestations the same light - was cast upon the human situation. And in the strict sense it was simply this light, and its shining, and the radiance which it shed, that encountered men as the unconditional power of God in the miracles of Jesus. The light was the genuinely incomprehensible, the genuinely miraculous, factor in these miracles. It was this that differentiated them from all other curious phenomena as absolute miracles, as signs of the kingdom of God drawn near and entering the human situation in the works of Jesus as the actualization of His Word" (CD IV/2, 220-21). We see this might mediated by mercy, this glory mingled with

grace, as we further study the accounts of Jesus' miracles.

Secondly, we see the grace of God, the light of the kingdom, in the miracles of Jesus when we understand the nature of the man who is in some sense illuminated by the grace and light of the kingdom of God. What kind of man is so illuminated? "The answer is obvious. It is the man with whom things are going badly; who is needy and frightened and harassed. He is one who is in every sense 'unfortunate'. . . . Apart from this aspect the miracles of Jesus cannot be brought into proper focus and genuinely seen or understood" (CD IV/2, 221).

Thirdly, we see the grace of God, the light of the kingdom, in the miracles of Jesus when we understand that "it is with their [men's] evil existence in itself and as such that He is concerned in His acts" (CD IV/2, 222).

Jesus dealt, it is true, with the whole man. "But we must say, rather more exactly, that it is with the whole man in what is almost exclusively his 'natural' existence in the narrower sense, his physical existence, his existence as it is determined by the external form and force of the cosmos to which he belongs. . . . Jesus finds and sees man in the shadow of death. His miraculous action to man is to bring him out of this shadow, to free him from this prison, to remove the need and pain of his cosmic determination. . . .

He can be man again - a whole man in this elemental sense. His existence as a creature in the natural cosmos is normalized" (CD IV/2, 222). And Jesus is interested in the sufferer as such. "The important thing about them in these stories is not that they are sinners but that they are sufferers. Jesus does not first look at their past, and then at their tragic present in the light of it. But from their present He creates for them a new future. He does not ask, therefore, concerning their sin. He does not hold it against them. He does not denounce them because of it. The help and blessing that He brings are quite irrespective of their sin" (CD IV/2, 223).

And from these specific considerations of the miracles of Jesus, and what is involved in them, Barth goes on to note three things which these miracles illustrate or symbolize. These three things may be termed 1) God's interest in man, 2) God's place beside man, 3) God's grace to man.

The miracles of Jesus symbolize the fact that God is interested in man: and this despite the fact that this interest is not warranted or deserved by man. Despite man's disobedience and sinfulness, God yet remains interested in him. God "is interested in him as this specific cosmic being. He has not forgotten him or left him to himself. In spite of his sin He has not given him up. He maintains

His covenant with him. He is always faithful to him. He takes his sin seriously. But He takes even more seriously, with a primary seriousness, the fact that he is His man even as a sinner, and above all that He Himself is the God of even this sinful man. . . . Where miracle is needed is to reveal the living God who has elected and ordained to be the God and Creator and Lord and Partner of man" (CD IV/2, 224-25).

The miracles of Jesus symbolize the fact that God is with man: that he places himself alongside of man. "The God who is operative and revealed in the acts of Jesus self-evidently places Himself at the side of man in this respect - that that which causes suffering to man as His creature is also and above all painful and alien and anti-thetical to Himself. As Jesus acts in His commission and power, it is clear that God does not will that which troubles and torments and disturbs and destroys man. . . . He does not will his death, but life. . . . The sorrow which openly or secretly fills the heart of man is primarily in the heart of God" (CD IV/2, 225). But what causes this sorrow and death in man? Sin, sinfulness, disobedience. But God, beside man, fights God's own enemy, and man's. "He [God] is wrathful against His own true enemy, which is also the true enemy of man, when He is wrathful against sin. . . . He takes the side of man and enters the field against this

power of destruction in all its forms" (CD IV/2, 225). Barth is able to illustrate this very persuasively in his exegesis of the demon-exorcisms, and he concludes: "The activity of Jesus, and revealed in it God Himself and His kingdom, are a defiance of the power of destruction which enslaves man, of phthora in all its forms. They are not a neutral force or omnipotence, but the omnipotence of mercy - not quiet and passive mercy, but a mercy which is active, and therefore hostile to that power on behalf of poor man. It is with this that we have to do in the miracles of Jesus. And it is because we have to do with this that they are miracles" (CD IV/2, 232).

The miracles of Jesus symbolize the fact that God's grace is operative in these acts: grace, again, which is so unmerited. "It is gloriously free grace in which the man Jesus acts and which is active and revealed in His action as the truth and reality of God Himself. . . . The fact that man is a sinner and therefore the enemy of God is not taken into account or imputed to man in these merciful and war-like actions of Jesus" (CD IV/2, 232). It is this grace which plants faith in man's heart: by virtue of which faith, man comes to God. Faith, even faith, is all of God. Faith is "man's turning to Jesus and His power upon the basis of the fact that Jesus has turned to man in His power" (CD IV/2, 238).

From this analysis it is clear that the occurrence of miracle in itself and as such could not lead to faith: since faith, too, comes from the hand of God. And faith in Barth's sense means theological faith in its strongest terms. "The distinctive feature of the New Testament faith in miracles is that it was faith in Jesus and therefore in God as the faithful and merciful God of the covenant with Israel; and that in this way and as such it was this confidence in His power" (CD IV/2, 236). "Faith is the freedom granted to man by the grace of God. . . . Faith is contiguous with the free grace of God, and may be called its anthropological counterpart" (CD IV/2, 242-43).

And now we pass to the second main part of the chapter: that is, to a critical examination of Barth's position.

How are we to place Karl Barth? Certainly he has affinities with other positions. When he speaks of miracle as 'an absolute miracle', which he often does, there is a similarity to contranaturalism. When he speaks, very rarely, of the 'one miraculous new order', there is a similarity to preternaturalism. When he says "the significance of all His [Jesus'] acts is finally and decisively to be sought in the fact that they are His acts" (CD IV/2, 211) - and he very often states similar convictions - there is a resemblance to

supernaturalism. When he remarks: "In this miracle [of God in Jesus Christ], which we can only acknowledge as having occurred, which we can only receive from the hand of God as it takes place by His hand, His kingdom comes for us, and this world passes for us. It is in this coming and this passing that there takes place for us the movement which the Holy Scripture calls revelation" (CD I/2, 65), there is a similarity to the view of the existentialists. How are we to place Karl Barth? In spite of similarities with some of them, he fits conveniently into none of the arguments presented in this thesis. He probably comes closest to being a contra-naturalist: but even here there are fundamental differences.

First of all, Barth does not agree with the contra-naturalist in his conception of an absolute miracle. For the contranaturalist, an absolute miracle tended to be an event which fell outside of both the regular order of this world and the wish and will of God. For Barth, an absolute miracle does not mean this at all: he certainly disagrees that any event can happen outside the wish and will of God.¹ For Barth, an absolute miracle is an event which occurs in this world, but which owes its all to the hand of God. Miracles are not primarily characterized by the fact that they

¹Cf. above, 40.

are contranatural: "The fact that they break into the regular course of events, and therefore break through . . . our picture of the law of the divine exercise of omnipotence, is of course true, but it is the least important and not the decisive element in the essence of biblical miracles" (CD II/1, 540). What makes a miracle a miracle is that it comes directly from the hand of God. And this characteristic - that a miracle comes from the hand of God - sets aside as worthless all our distinctions about a nature-supranature schema: in this sense Barth is not a supranaturalist of any sort; he is not a contranaturalist, nor a preternaturalist, nor a supernaturalist.

Secondly, Barth does not agree with the contranaturalist in his conception of primary and secondary causation. In contranaturalism, secondary causation refers to the orderly everyday rule of God, primary causation refers to the arbitrary occasional intervention of God which can set aside, annul or destroy secondary causation. Now Barth differs from this view. As Barth sees it, the ordinary everyday affairs are ruled by God, but only partially, only indirectly. Certainly, "there are no rules or laws distinct from the ordinances of God's own good and free will which are established by Him and bound to Him" (CD II/1, 540). Yet in ordinary everyday affairs we get a picture of "the

lordship of powers which are not even subservient to God and may even wish to rule as gods" (CD II/1, 540). Again, speaking of ordinary history, ordinary everyday affairs, Barth says: "The history which follows the beginning of creation is characterized by the fact that it is . . . mediate to God, i.e., that it takes place simultaneously with a pre-history, in connection and in relationship with another than God" (CD III/1, 77, italics mine). The implication is that there is little or no ordinary everyday rule of God: and in this sense Barth seems to dispose of secondary causation altogether. Now where does a miracle differ from this state of ordinary everyday affairs? A miracle is "a sign set up immediately by God, and can only be understood as such" (CD I/2, italics mine). A miracle is "an event in this world of ours, yet such that it is not grounded upon the continuity of events in this world nor is it to be understood in terms of it" (CD I/2, 187). That is to say, a miracle happens in ordinary everyday affairs but it is not conditioned or caused by any of these affairs: it is conditioned and caused by God who is outside this realm. A miracle happens in everyday affairs, without breaking or annulling these affairs. A miracle is inserted into everyday affairs, but does not set them aside. To the contranaturalist, a miracle is inserted into everyday affairs, destroying them,

setting them aside. To Barth, a miracle "is certainly something fundamentally new in the realm of creation. But it is not for that reason either different or alien. . . . The irruption of miracle does not take place outside this order, setting it aside and destroying it, but it belongs to the order as a legitimate element and member in the right functioning of the order" (CD II/1, 540-41). It is legitimate in the sense that God reaffirms by it that this is his world, against the powers in it which defy him. By miracle "it is made clear to us that all the kingdoms of this world will be those of God and His Christ, and in fact are this already" (CD II/1, 540). To Barth, a miracle is inserted into ordinary everyday affairs, has similarities with them, but is not one of them at all.

Miracle takes place in history, it is a member of a series, but it is understandable only as the exponent of God's pure act. It is in history, but not conditioned by history. It is absolutely new, yet it does not destroy the old. It is in this last statement that Barth does not seem to be really clear. He can speak of a miracle as an insertion, an irruption, an interruption, even an annulment: yet he also says that a miracle does not destroy or set aside creation. Can these alternatives both be meaningfully held? On the one hand, he says that man is the same man both be-

fore and after a miracle has been received: yet on the other hand, a miracle is a pure divine beginning. In Barth's theology there seems to be a hint, from time to time, that the world is utterly outside God's control: alien and antithetical to him. If God does control, he does so only as one of many powers, albeit the most powerful. God does, it is true, assert his sovereignty from time to time through the media of miracles: but outside of these random events, the world is godless. Man and his world are entirely without God, before a miracle takes place. Thus, a miracle "frees man from this prison" (CD IV/2, 222). Man and his world are entirely corrupt before a miracle: fallen man is 'still man and not cat', as Barth expresses it, but his humanity and his world has been so corrupted by sin that no more than a cat is he able to hear God's voice, unless God in a miracle of sheer omnipotence hurls Christ into the human situation. Man and his world are entirely ^{godless} before a miracle: and natural man does not have any legitimate pre-understanding (Vorver-ständnis) of God's Word at all.² Man and his world are completely lost before the coming of a miracle, which is so against man and his world that it can only be expressed as

¹Brunner and Barth, Natural Theology, 88.

²For an opposite opinion, cf. below, 264ff.

"God's coup d'état on earth" (OD IV/2, 224).

Miracle takes place in history, but it is not of history in regard to its ground or condition. Miracle has similarities to other events which precede and follow it. It is objective in the sense that as a sign it looks like other events. True, the New Testament miracles have symptoms that they are other than ordinary miracles, but these are symptoms only. There are stories in ancient antiquity of virgin births, and there have been empty tombs before and after the time of the empty tomb of our Lord. But although the New Testament miracles appear in history, they are not of it. In a field of wild dandelions a gardener lovingly plants yet another. To the observer's eye, it is similar to all the rest. If one examined this particular dandelion very minutely, one would probably find symptoms that it was different: but there would be insufficient evidence to conclude that this particular plant originated anywhere else than in the very field in which it is found. Only the gardener and those with him know that it originated elsewhere. So it is with a miracle. It sits upon earth, but its roots are in heaven. And this is the only legitimate way to understand it. The scientist may say what he will, but the Christian explanation will be completely and utterly different, and never the twain shall meet: indeed, they have no point of

contact, no common ground at all. I do not think that this is so. The Christian says more than the scientist about an event which the Christian calls a miracle, his explanation goes deeper, his interpretation transcends and transforms that of the scientist: but it is not completely and utterly different, if this means that the scientific explanation is utterly alien and worthless. Again, according to Barth, the historian's explanation may be interesting but it is also absolutely valueless: it is to be ruthlessly discarded and an absolutely different interpretation adopted. I do not think that this is so. To Barth, though God works in history, he in no wise works through history. This interpretation supports the criticism made above: Barth tends to say that history cannot be transcended, deepened or fulfilled, but rather it must be destroyed, shattered, annulled. The Christian view has nothing to do at all with a non-Christian view of history. This in part explains Barth's ambiguous use of the term 'history'. The event of the resurrection is not open to the historian, says Barth. But it does not follow from this that it did not happen. Bultmann asks: "My question is, what does Barth understand by 'have taken place as history' and 'history'? What kind of events are those about which it can be said that they 'have really taken place as history in time far more certainly than every-

thing which the 'historian' can establish as such'? . . .
What kind of 'endowing with faith' is it, if faith is to be brought over against the assertion of events which are said to have taken place as history in time and history, yet cannot be established by the means and methods of historical science? And how is such a faith distinguished from a blind acceptance involving a sacrificium intellectus?"¹

According to Barth, the Christian answer does not transcend or transform or go beyond or fulfil that of the historian or scientist: it is utterly and completely different. There seems, in short, to be no point of contact at all. This means that Christianity must fence off a corpus of events and tell the scientist and historian that they have utterly nothing of value to say. The scientist and historian, as we have already noted, will not agree that a certain number of 'sacred events' lie outside their scrutiny or investigation.² But is this a healthy state of affairs even from a theological point of view? It assumes - and here we come back to the same fundamental criticism - that the field of the historian and the scientist is outside of, and antithetical to, God's interest: the realm of the historian and the scientist is

¹Bultmann, GV II, 234-35; ET 260-61.

²Cf. above, 66ff.; 71ff.

ruled by other powers. God works in history, but not through it. His work is inserted from above: and when it enmeshes with them, it crushes man and his world beneath it. Against this interpretation, we must insist on the truth of Christ's contention, which is applicable as well to this situation: "Think not that I have come to abolish . . . I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them" (Mt. 5.17). To Barth, the paradox of miracle is that in this event, which has similarities to other events, God alone is at work, to the exclusion of all other causes and conditions. God drops his handiwork into history, but this handiwork is not part of history.

Miracle takes place in history, but it is not a part of history. Revelation is inserted into history from above. It is not therefore surprising that Barth's media of revelation are severely restricted to the few traditional ones: Bible, church, worship and the sacraments. These alone are God's handiwork in the midst of an alien world. God in Jesus Christ works only in them. God in Jesus Christ drops into history from above in well-defined areas, but it is impossible to meet God in Christ outside of these agencies of salvation. I do not think that this is the case. Can we not meet God in and through the persons, responsibilities and things of this life? Barth says an

emphatic No! Revelation seems to demand an end, an annulment and a destruction of all this-worldly things: revelation effects a radical and complete apocalypse which, though occurring in history, has nothing to do with history at all.

How are we to place Karl Barth? Is his theology not primarily an example of what Paul Tillich calls 'heteronomous' thinking? A heteronomous theology is one which elaborates an intricate and massive system of dogmatic propositions which hang together in a beautiful and orderly fashion, but when applied to any concrete human situation, the theology is found wanting. It is a theology which pays scant attention to the situation: indeed, the situation is written off as worthless at the very outset. This is my fundamental criticism of Barth's theology, more particularly of his treatment of miracle as revelation, and his treatment of miracle as an attribute of revelation. Miracle is dropped down from above, looking like its predecessors and followers in a series, but really radically different. And this miracle seems to break, destroy and annul man, man's history and man's world.

How are we to place Karl Barth? Merely as a heteronomist? Merely as a theologian whose beautiful system in its attempt to be all of God threatens to mean little or

nothing to man? Barth is not merely a heteronomist: at least, he frequently transcends his own theology, he frequently escapes the charge of being a heteronomist. As Tillich says: "Barth's greatness is that he corrects himself again and again in the light of the 'situation' and that he strenuously tries not to become his own follower."¹ Barth is not merely a heteronomist: this is perhaps most obvious in the discussion as to Barth's third usage of the word miracle, in his powerful, profound and persuasive exposition of the miracles of our Lord. In this and many other regards his theology is, as Gregor Smith says, "a theology which is truly human, and filled with compassion, because it flows from a coherent faith in the One Triune Lord."²

In the next chapter we give consideration to an important contemporary school of biblical criticism which has something to contribute to the discussion and clarification of the concept of miracle. The chapter is entitled "The Form Critical View".

¹Tillich, ST I, 5.

²Of. Barth, Against The Stream, 11.

Chapter V. The Form Critical Movement.

"The sacred history is subject to the same laws as all other narratives of antiquity." Christoph von Ammon.

GST = Bultmann, R. Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition.

TG = Dibelius, M. From Tradition to Gospel.

This chapter is devoted to the study of the school of biblical criticism known as Formgeschichte or form criticism, especially as that movement affects the concept of miracle. Form criticism may be roughly defined as the attempt to apply the conclusions reached by the students of folklore literature to the tradition of early Christianity preserved in the gospels.

The chapter is divided as follows. First of all, the seven basic assumptions of form criticism are given in general terms. Secondly, the three basic tasks, largely with reference to the concept of miracle, are presented in a straightforward manner. Thirdly, these assumptions and tasks (the latter in regard to miracle only) are critically evaluated. Fourthly, there is an analysis of the contributions of form criticism. Fifthly, because the analysis leads naturally into it, there is a discussion of how Jesus himself, and of how the early church, viewed his miracles.

Firstly, the seven basic assumptions of form criticism are given in general terms.

The form critic assumes, first of all, that before the gospels were written there was a period of oral tradition. "By reconstruction and analysis, form criticism seeks to explain the origin of the tradition about Jesus, and thus to penetrate into a period previous to that in which our

gospels and their written sources were recorded" (TG, v). The history of source criticism had tended to point to the existence of a period of oral tradition. A century of vigorous study had left certain results more or less firmly entrenched. These were as follows.¹ Firstly, Mark was the first of the four gospels. Some short time after its composition and publication, copies fell into the hands of Matthew and Luke, and they used Mark's narrative as the framework for their accounts. This fact explains the striking resemblance amongst the first three gospels. Secondly, in addition to Mark, the authors of Matthew and Luke had another Greek document as well, from which they drew extensively for the words of Jesus. This document is frequently referred to by the symbol Q, which stands for the German word Quelle - 'source'. Thus we have what is known as the 'two-document hypothesis'. Thirdly, in addition to this source, which can be reasonably well identified by the agreements of Matthew and Luke, there remains a good deal of material in each of these gospels which has no parallel, which must have come from some good source. And it is quite possible that some even of the parallel materials may have come from different overlapping sources. Streeter puts forward one

¹Cf. Perry, "The Growth of the Gospels", 62.

such theory.¹ The two-document hypothesis is, however, the only one which is firmly established. But, scholars asked, is it not possible to go further? "In a sense the new movement is the child of disappointment."²

The form critic assumes, in the second place, that the material of the synoptic gospels can be profitably compared with somewhat similar writings, brought to light by the students of comparative religion. The materials contained in the gospels have been read in the light of contemporary movements outside Christianity and have been subjected to the tests by which all historical writings must be judged. This inquiry has been pursued by many scholars: much material for the study of the miracle story or tale has been uncovered by Weinreich,³ Reitzenstein,⁴ and Fiebig.⁵ In like manner, sayings analogous to those in the gospels have been examined in the rabbinic literature, the Hermetic writings, and the sacred books of the Mandaeen sect. Narratives bearing any resemblance to those in the gospels have

¹Streeter, The Four Gospels. ²Taylor, The Gospels, 13.

³Weinreich, Antike Heilungswunder.

⁴Reitzenstein, Hellenistische Wundererzählungen.

⁵Fiebig, Jüdische Wundergeschichten des neutestamentlichen Zeitalters, Antike Wundergeschichten and Rabbinische Wundergeschichten des neutestamentlichen Zeitalters.

been examined in the literatures of Greece, Egypt, India, and China. Folk-tales, Faust stories, and legends of the saints have been probed in order to discover laws of popular poetry and tradition. Source criticism pointed to a period of oral tradition, and historical criticism pointed to some of the methodological apparatus to be used in form criticism.

The form critic assumes, in the third place, that the original tradition was made up almost entirely of brief single units. Schmidt, one of the earliest of the form critics, was convinced that the outline of events and the connective links were not so old or reliable as the scenes connected. Mark's material consisted of detached scenes or, at most, brief complexes of scenes - of which the Passion story was the oldest and most certain. In these convictions, Schmidt was foreshadowed by both Wrede¹ and Wellhausen.² Mark puts his scenes together like beads on a string, and the phrases with which he seems to bind them really indicate the limits of separate sections. "Our previous study has shown that, strictly speaking, no framework, no design was laid out by Mark. Single reports are loosely strung together, in which they appear sometimes with and sometimes

¹Wrede, Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien.

²Wellhausen, Das Evangelium Matthaei, Das Evangelium Marci, and Das Evangelium Lucae.

without, place and time settings."¹

The form critic assumes, fourthly, that the tradition creates and preserves only the faith and concepts of the primitive community. Grobel characterizes the gospels as "books of faith collected . . . out of faith concerning faith for faith [Glaubensbücher . . . aus dem Glauben über den Glauben für den Glauben gesammelt]." ² In the faith of that primitive community, Dibelius names the needs of missionary preaching as the foremost formative factor. "Missionary purpose was the cause and preaching was the means of spreading abroad that which the disciples of Jesus possessed as recollections" (TG, 13). The nearer a narrative stands to the sermon, the less is it likely to have been altered by legendary and literary influences. Bultmann finds the origin of the forms more in the churches' controversies and in the need to give instruction in the Christian way of life to new converts. Particularly formative in this process were the debates within the Palestinian communities like those which took place within rabbinic

¹Schmidt, Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu, 90. "Unsere bisherige Untersuchung hat gezeigt, daß streng genommen bei Mk kein Rahmen, kein Aufriß vorliegt. Einzelerzählungen sind lose aneinander gereiht, indem sie bald mit, bald ohne Orts- und Zeit-angaben dastehen." Cf. also GST, 1, 4; TG, 3.

²Grobel, Formgeschichte und synoptische Quellenanalyse, 9. Cf. also Grant, The Gospels, 13.

circles. In these debates the tradition was shaped under the influence of apologetic, polemical and dogmatic needs. Words of Jesus were thus given a narrative framework which is ideal in character. (GST, 140).

The form critic assumes, fifthly, that the primitive community had no biographical or historical or geographical interest. In brief, "primitive Christianity did not know the interest in history which inspires us to-day."¹ "It appears that the outline of the life of Jesus, as it is given by Mark and taken over by Matthew and Luke, is an editorial creation, and that as a consequence our actual knowledge of the course of Jesus' life is restricted to what little can be discovered in the individual scenes constituting the older tradition."² Speaking of one of his paradigms, Dibelius says: "Where it happened, when, and in what circumstances is inessential. . . . We can see clearly what did not interest the narrator, viz. biographical material" (TG, 48-9).

The form critic assumes, in the sixth place, that the traditional materials can be classified according to

¹Fridrichsen, Le Problème du Miracle, 16. "Le christianisme primitif ignorait l'intérêt que nous inspire aujourd'hui l'histoire."

²Bultmann, "The New Approach to the Synoptic Problem", 343.

form. "It is possible to distinguish in the material of the synoptic tradition certain specific literary types which have their own laws of style."¹ These laws of style have been discovered in the comparison of the synoptics with other literatures of folklore, and in Hellenistic and rabbinic analogies. Technically, these literatures of folklore are termed 'unliterary': "unliterary men created a definite style" (TG, 37). That is to say, primitive literary expression makes use of more or less fixed literary forms. This form or style consists not merely in the choice of words and construction of sentences, but in the whole manner of presentation which constitutes a literary category. The form is produced by the essential needs of the community, and steadily evolves, subject to definite internal laws that transcend the individual. Form criticism endeavours by a study of these forms and their laws of development to establish the typical or primitive form of each category, e.g., the typical tale or miracle story. These primitive forms are then used as norms, to shed light on the growth of the gospel tradition in general.

The form critic assumes, in the seventh place, that the history of the tradition itself (to be distinguished

¹Bultmann, "The New Approach to the Synoptic Problem", 343.

from the history it claims to convey) can be discovered from the form. This assumption follows closely on the preceding one. For "if we can succeed in identifying a particular literary type and its laws of style, we can then frequently distinguish an original tradition from secondary traditions. We thus obtain a test for determining the age of a literary utterance by noting whether it appears in the original pure form belonging to this type of literature or whether it shows marks of further stylistic development."¹ The emphasis on the history of the tradition accounts for the question of the form critic 'What did the primitive community mean by this story?' rather than the question 'Did the event really happen as it is recorded?' "The less miracle stories as such are historical accounts, the more urgent it is to inquire how they have come into the evangelical tradition" (GST, 244).²

We deal, in this second part of the chapter, with the three tasks of the form critic, largely with reference to the concept of miracle.

¹Bultmann, "The New Approach to the Synoptic Problem", 344.

²"Je weniger die Wundergeschichten als solche historische Berichte sind, desto mehr ist zu fragen, wie sie in die evangelische Tradition hineingekommen sind." Cf. also Fridrichsen, op. cit., 11.

Operating on the strength of his assumptions, the work of the form critic divides itself into three parts. The first task is to classify the synoptic material according to form. All the forms are here mentioned, but detailed consideration is given only to the miracle story or tale. Following classification, the second task of the form critic is to try to recover the original form of the material during the oral period, and to trace, if possible, the subsequent changes which it has undergone. The third task is to seek for the Sitz im Leben, the life situation out of which the material originated. In these second and third tasks, consideration is given only to the miracle story or tale.

The first major classification of forms is named paradigm by Dibelius (TG, 37-69) and apothegm (Apophthegmata) by Bultmann (GST, 8-72). In these pericopae a conversation (usually a dialogue), often controversial, sometimes associated with a miracle, leads up to a striking statement of Jesus which is capable of general application. Bultmann distinguishes three types of apothegms: according as the dialogue is introduced by enemies (Streitgespräche), or by friendly inquirers (Schulgespräche), or by an incident (biographischen Apophthegmata). A second form critical classification contains the sayings of Jesus. Dibelius

uses the word exhortation as a descriptive term, in the belief that the sayings were collected for paranetic or hortatory purposes. (TG, 233-65). The equivalent group is named by Bultmann as sayings of the Lord (Herrenworte), of which he distinguishes five sub-divisions (GST, 73-222). A third classification is termed legend by Dibelius (TG, 104-32). Bultmann has no exact equivalent for this, but the biographical apothegms (biographischen Apophthegmata) closely parallel it (GST, 26-38, 58-72). Here the interest largely centres around secondary personalities of the synoptics, such as the apostle Peter. A fourth category of the form critics is termed historical narrative and legend (Geschichtserzählung und Legende) by Bultmann: "I term legends those narrative parts of the tradition, which are not really miracle stories, but neither do they have a historical, but rather a religiously edifying character" (GST, 260-347).¹ Bultmann includes many narratives in this category. The same classification is named myth by Dibelius, containing but three narratives: the Baptism, the Temptation, and the Transfiguration (TG, 266-86). A fifth classification of form is the Passion story, so named by Dibelius (TG,

¹"Als Legenden bezeichne ich die erzählenden Stücke der Tradition, die nicht eigentlich Wundergeschichten sind, aber doch auch keinen geschichtlichen, sondern religiös-erbaulichen Charakter haben."

178-218). But Bultmann includes it as a special section (Geschichtserzählung und Legende), of his category termed historical narrative and legend / and believes that it is made up primarily of brief units (GST, 282-307). The sixth category is designated tale by Dibelius (TG, 70-103), and miracle story (Wundergeschichte) by Bultmann (GST, 223-56). This particular category will be studied in detail under the topics 1) general considerations, and 2) phenomenology of the miracle story or tale.

According to Bultmann, miracles are an essential part of the synoptic tradition (GST, 233-36). They are not told as noteworthy events, but as the deeds of Jesus. Their aim is not biographical, rather they demonstrate Jesus' power and might. As a rule Jesus' motives are not mentioned or explained, merely his pity, or his desire to arouse faith. The miracle-making ability is, as it were, something detached from his personal will, functioning automatically: this is particularly clear in the story of the woman with an issue of blood (Mk. 5.25-34). Further, the inner disposition of the person healed is practically never discussed. It goes without saying that in the healing miracles the faith of those who request the cure is a necessary prerequisite. But this faith is not belief in Jesus' message or his person in the modern sense; it is merely the trust due the wonder-worker. "This faith is the

tribute due to the great prophet."¹ Nor is faith mentioned out of psychological interest or as a necessary psychic circumstance for the success of the cure, as is shown by the fact that it need not be the faith of the sick person himself; that of his intermediaries suffices. Since this faith signifies acknowledgement of Jesus' position, all light falls upon him, rather than upon the sick person. When the miracle has taken place, interest in the person cured ceases; the paralytic's gratitude is not recorded (Mt. 2.9ff.) nor that of the father of the possessed boy (Mk. 9.17ff.). Nor is the synoptic tradition concerned with the effects of any miracle on the general outline of Jesus' personal history.

Dibelius believes that the tales owe their origin and development to a special group within primitive Christianity known as story-tellers (TG, 70-2). The sources are indeed silent about this supposed group: but that there were men capable of telling stories from the life of Jesus may be concluded from the very existence of such stories. That these stories were not intended for preaching is evident from their form: their broadness renders a pragmatic use impossible, their technique betrays

¹Fridrichsen, op. cit., 51. "La foi, c'est tribut dû au grand prophète."

a certain delight in telling tales, and their phenomenology closely approaches the literary species cultivated beyond the pale of Christianity. Dibelius agrees with the faith-conception of Bultmann. "The content of faith is not the conviction that through Christ God's call has gone out to all mankind, but the confidence that Jesus, the great miracle-worker, excelled all other thaumaturges" (TG, 72).

Both Dibelius and Bultmann give much attention to the phenomenology of the biblical miracle story or tale, and to non-biblical parallels of the same. Since the treatment of the miracle story by Bultmann (GST, 236-41) is much more detailed than the tale by Dibelius (TG, 72-97), Bultmann's analysis is here followed. In general, the miracle story contains three elements: the setting or situation, the story of the healing itself, and the reporting of the effect of the miracle.

First of all, the setting or the situation of the miracle story is given. The condition of the patient is described: the duration of the illness may be narrated, as in Mk. 5.25 (12 years); Mk. 9.21 (from childhood); or the age of the sufferer himself may be given, as in Mk. 5.42 (12 years of age). The dangerous character of the illness and the difficulties of the sufferer are often reported, for example, the man who brought his son to Jesus describes his

condition as follows. "He has a dumb spirit; and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid" (Mk. 9.18). Vain attempts of doctors may be inserted, as in the story of the woman with an issue of blood (Mk. 5.26ff.). "From the ancient stories of healing up to modern reports of similar miracles, as in Lourdes, it is one of the favourite practices in such narratives to depict the dangerous character of the suffering and the failure of all attempts to cure" (TG, 82). Again, some of the pericopae occasionally contain doubt as to the efficacy of the healer, and scornful remarks or actions are directed against him - as in Mk. 5.40 - "and they laughed at him". In at least one instance, the ability of the Master is contrasted with the inability of the disciples (Mk. 9.14ff.). When Jesus awakens the young man of Nain (Lk. 7.11ff.), he is reported to have met the funeral procession: this particular aspect is paralleled in many non-biblical sources.

Secondly, the story of the healing is itself narrated. Quite often manipulations of the healer are recorded, in biblical as in non-biblical sources. "And taking him aside from the multitude privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him. . . ."

(Mk. 7.33ff.). But as to this manipulative activity of the healer, the biblical pericopae seem much more restrained and reserved than non-biblical parallels. "But it is characteristic, how seldom this happens ^[in the New Testament] while in the Hellenistic miracle stories it is very often the case" (GST, 237).¹ "In the gospel tales we must recognize a certain shyness towards such practices" (TG, 86). But to continue, it is characteristic that the healer approach the patient: "and he stood over her. . ." (Lk. 4.39). Contact with the hand or a hand clasp is often reported, as in Mk. 1.31: "and he came up and took her by the hand and lifted her up. . . ." Sometimes the patient merely touches the garment or clothing of the healer: "if I touch even his garments, I shall be made well" (Mk. 5.28). A miracle making word is often uttered, such as "child arise" (Lk. 8.54). Frequently this miracle working word is clothed in foreign, unintelligible garb: "Talitha cumi" (Mk. 5.41) or "Ephphatha" (Mk. 7.34). Bultmann pays particular attention to demon-exorcisms. Though the expulsion of a demon by means of a name is not directly reported of Jesus, the method is recognized in the synoptics, as

¹"Es ist aber charakterisch, wie selten das geschieht, während das in hellenistischen Wunderberichten sehr oft der Fall ist."

Mk. 9.38 clearly shows. The original idea is that by means of the miracle-making word the demon, which had given rise to the sickness, is threatened, reprov'd, commanded to come out (cf. Mk. 1.25,27; Mk. 9.25; Lk. 4.41). This demon-rebuking may well be capable of broader application, as in Mk. 4.39 (rebuking of the wind); Lk. 4.39 (rebuking the fever). Demon-exorcisms have the further characteristic that the demon often recognizes his lord, he knows the might of the exorcist (Mk. 1.24; Mk. 5.7); and the demon pleads for mercy (Mk. 5.7). In Mk. 5.9 a conversation of the exorcist with the demon is recorded. Often in such cases there is the command of the exorcist to the demon to be silent (Mk. 1.25). Finally, a noteworthy mark of the miracle story is that the public is sent away while the miracle is being effected: as in Mk. 5.40; Mk. 7.33; Mk. 8.23. Both Bultmann and Dibelius agree that this phenomenon has nothing whatsoever to do with the theory of the Messianic secret. Dibelius believes that "the miracle worker avoids the public because He is not a magician with a propaganda, but an envoy, a revealer of God, who does not allow his action, i.e. God's action to be seen by profane eyes" (TG, 94). Bultmann partially disagrees. "The original meaning is much more this, that man ought not to see the miracle, that man ought not to see God at work. So one

receives God's message in secret (Jg. 3.19ff.); so the divinity works by night; Lot and those with him were not able to look upon God's judgement, and Lot's wife, who did look around, was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19.26)" (GST, 239).¹

In the third part of the typical miracle story, emphasis is placed upon the reporting of the effects. Very rarely, the effects of the miracle are recorded as happening but gradually (Mk. 8.24ff.). Usually, however, the suddenness of the effect of the miracle is stressed (Mk. 5.29,42; Mk. 10.52). Particularly marvellous is the phenomenon of healing at a distance: Mk. 7.29; Mt. 8.13; Jn. 4.50. In all these cases, it is quite characteristic that the cure commences at the very hour at which the miraculous word was spoken. Not infrequently is it related of the person healed that he gave some clear demonstration of the fact: the lame man takes up his bed and walks (Mk. 2.11ff.), the restored daughter of Jairus is given something to eat (Mk. 5.43). Following upon the exorcisms of demons, the

¹"Der ursprüngliche Sinn ist vielmehr der, daß man das Wunder nicht schauen, die Gottheit nicht beim Werke sehen darf. So empfängt man einen Gottespruch in geheimen, Jdc. 3.19ff.; so wirkt die Gottheit bei Nacht; Lot und die Seinen dürfen dem Gottesgericht nicht zuschauen, und Lots Weib, die sich umschaut, wird zum Salsäule (Gen. 19.26)."

demonstration often consists in some spiteful and destructive act of the departing demon: in Mk. 13 the departing demon accounts for the sudden frenzy of the swine who dash over a cliff and fall into the sea. Sometimes the demonstration takes the form of a command to the healed to the effect that he "go home" (Mk. 5.19). Finally, it very frequently happens that the witnesses of the marvellous results of the miracle break out in exclamations of wonder and approval: "and they were all amazed" (Mk. 1.27). Along side of these biblical examples, Bultmann adduces a multitude of analogies to illustrate in detail the style of the miracle story: the situation, the miraculous deed, its results (GST, 236-41). For these parallels, he draws upon many sources: the Old and New Testaments, the Apocrypha, rabbinic stories, ancient Greek and Latin authors and inscriptions, and fairy tales of many lands.

Having considered the first task of the form critic - classification (with special reference to the miracle story) - it is now possible to consider the second task.

The second task of the form critic is to try to discover the original form of the material during the period of oral tradition, and to trace, if possible, subsequent alterations. Here again, particular attention is

paid to the miracle story or tale. Because Bultmann believes that there was little or no interest in the motives and feelings of Jesus and other characters, he views certain additions as showing the need for plastic presentation, for example, Mk. 10.50 (the blind man) "and throwing off his mantle, he sprang up and came to Jesus"; Lk. 7.14 (the widow's son at Nain) "the bearers stood still." Such features are indeed rare. The miraculous interest stirring in such pericopae becomes much more active in the further development of the tradition as seen in the Apocrypha, but it is manifest in the synoptics to a degree. Thus the youth at Nain is the only son of his mother and she is a widow (Lk. 7.12). This is a typical legendary accretion, and a similar process is evident in Lk. 9.38, where the possessed boy is made the only son of his father, a fact not known in Mk. 9.17. Similarly in Lk. 8.42, the daughter of Jairus has become his only daughter, in contrast to Mk. 5.23. The ear struck off in Gethsemene is the right ear in Lk. 22.50, which was not yet remarked upon in Mk. 14.47. Likewise the withered hand of Mk. 3.1 has become the right hand in Lk. 6.6 (GST, 338ff.).

A certain accentuation of the miraculous is also to be noted in many passages. Besides the fact that Matthew

and Luke narrate some miracles not to be found in Mark and Q, this accentuation is illustrated in the editorial passages which summarily report Jesus' miracles: Mk. 1.32-4; 3.7-12; 6.53-6; also Mt. 4.23-5; 9.35ff; 15.29-31. In Mt. 14.14; 19.2; 21.14, Jesus' healing activity is inserted into the text. And Matthew and Luke also expand the text of Mark with certain accentuating features: thus in Mk. 1.31 (cf. 3.10), all the sick are brought and many healed; in Mt. 8.16 (cf. 12.15) many are brought and all healed; while in Lk. 4.40ff. all are brought and all are healed (GST, 243).

As time goes on there is a growing interest in the characters of a particular story. This is abundantly clear in the name additions to the miracle stories in the Apocrypha and in the writings of the Fathers. Yet this tendency, too, is already manifest in the synoptics. For example, the name of the ruler of the synagogue (whose daughter Jesus raised from the dead) is given as Jairus in Lk. 8.41, a name which has crept into Mk. 5.22 in many manuscripts: and, according to Bultmann, it is not unlikely that it was added to 'complete' the text. For this reason, we should be sceptical about the names appearing in other places in Mark's gospel, in Mk. 10.28, 46; 11.21 (GST, 256ff.).

Particularly informative in determining the original

form of any pericope is the use of direct or indirect discourse. Generally speaking, the use of direct discourse serves to report motives and feelings in an indirect way. There is also a tendency to create new sayings for the characters involved; partly by filling out their conversation, partly by recasting the earlier account in direct discourse. The request of the Syrophoenician woman is in direct discourse in Mt. 15.22,25 in contrast to Mk. 7.26; the touch of the woman with an issue of blood is merely described in Mk. 5.30, while it is spoken of by Jesus in Lk. 8.46. Thus of two related passages the one with the direct discourse is usually to be judged as secondary.

In popular narratives numbers play a special role, especially the number two. This is not due to any mythical motif, but to the desire for symmetry. The tendency is manifest in the synoptic tradition where two supernumeraries are presented, though originally there was only one or an indefinite number. Thus in Mt. 8.28ff. the one Gadarene demoniac of Mk. 5.1 has become two; the single blind man of Mk. 10.46ff. has become two in Mt. 20.29ff.; under the same influence the healing of two blind men is recorded in Mt. 9.27ff. (GST, 343-46).

Because Bultmann believes that exorcisms were of primary importance to the primitive community, the

exorcist-motif probably accounts for many variants of stories which, from a literary standpoint, do not go back to the same account. In many healings, the emphasis is laid more on the miracle of the cure than upon the sickness. Thus the healing of the deaf and dumb man (Mk. 7.31ff.) and of the blind man of Bethsaida (Mk. 8.22ff) are obviously variants. Mt. 9.27ff. (the two blind men) and 9.32ff. (the dumb possessed man) are only variants of motifs drawn from Mark. Mk. 3.1ff. (the man with the withered hand), Lk. 13.10ff. (the man with dropsy) are but variants on the theme of Sabbath-healing. The story of the ten lepers (Lk. 17.11) is an enhanced variant of Mk. 1.40ff. (the leper); and the two cures of people at a distance, Mk. 7.24ff. (the daughter of the Syrophoenician woman), and Mt. 8.5ff. (the servant of the centurion at Capernaum) are also variants (GST, 241ff.). Finally, Bultmann is convinced that geographical and chronological details are foreign to the miracle story, and are definitely supplied by the editors (GST, 257ff.).

Regarding the original form of the tales, Dibelius suggests three possibilities. The first is based on the existence of intermediate forms: paradigms restyled after the manner of tales. The best example of this is the story of the infirm woman (Lk. 13.10-17). This story

ultimately depends on more or less the same material as its paradigmatic parallels: Mk. 3.1ff. (the man with the withered hand), and Lk. 14.1ff. (the man with the dropsy). As in Mark, the synagogue furnishes the scene. As in the paradigm from Luke, a discourse follows the healing. But this particular tale in Luke is more literary than the two paradigms and it is more lengthy, though it has the paradigmatic edifying conclusion or ending and the healing itself has been unmistakeably fashioned into a tale (TG, 97ff.). Here then is one possible original form of the tale: the development of short paradigms into longer narratives by the insertion of a richer miracle topic and other elements of the narrative style, e.g. dialogue (TG, 99). This development was not always a literary process. It could occur automatically as soon as the stories were separated from preaching and were told as independent tales by men accustomed to narrate in the fashion of the familiar miracle story or anecdote. Often, though not always, this process meant a further separation of tradition from historical reality, inasmuch as it presented the unique as the usual. But the details with which the paradigms were enriched have a certain degree of probability, for the schematic form of the healing account would never have arisen had not the relation of miracle worker and patient

followed a recurrent pattern (TG, 100). Thus a second possible original form of the tale may be proposed. Once the need was felt to fill out and expand the concise paradigmatic account, not only Christian but also extraneous motifs could be employed for this expansion. Finally, as a third possibility, the original form of the tale could have been in a completely non-Christian setting, taken over and remoulded by the Christian editors and story-tellers of the primitive community.

The third task of the form critic is to define the Sitz im Leben, the life situation, out of which the material springs. What life situation of the primitive community accounted for the rise of the miracle story or tale? Bultmann's view is that the miracle stories were narrated as proofs of the Messianic power and divine might of Jesus (GST, 234). In this respect the exorcisms were especially important to the community as proofs of the Messiahship of Jesus. They are particularly prominent in the summaries of Jesus' activities (cf. Mk. 1.32-4; 1.39; 3.11; 6.7; Mt. 4.24; 10.8; Lk. 7.21). As we have seen, this exorcist interest accounts for many of the variants strewn through the synoptic materials (GST, 241ff.). From his profuse use of secular parallels, Bultmann is convinced that these non-biblical miracle stories illustrate the

atmosphere, show the motifs and forms, and thus help us to understand the entrance of miracle stories into the synoptic tradition (GST, 255). Bultmann believes that miracles were told of Jesus even in the Palestinian community. This is to be deduced from Mt. 12.27ff., where Jesus compares his expulsion of demons with that of Jewish exorcists. It is proved also by the presence of miracles in the apothegms, which were probably fashioned in Palestine. Of course, the variants on the theme of Sabbath-healing - the infirm woman (Lk. 13.10ff.), the man with the dropsy (Lk. 14.1ff.) and other passages - may well have been formulated on Hellenistic soil, once the type was there (GST, 254). In regard to miracle stories which are not apothegms, it is more difficult to decide. The richness of the Hellenistic analogies, however, favours an origin in the Hellenistic stage of the tradition. Semitic turns of style prove little; they may have penetrated the Koine, and the Septuagint had much influence on the Hellenistic-Christian use of words, especially in the literary period. Foreign words, such as 'Talitha cumi' and 'Ephphatha' prove nothing; but from its content, the account of the leper (Mk. 1.40ff.) quite likely springs from the Palestinian community, since its "show yourself to the priest" etc. could hardly have been formulated on Hellenistic soil. In general, however, the origin

of the miracle stories may be considered predominantly Hellenistic (GST, 253-56).

Even if historical occurrences are at the basis of some of the healing narratives, their formation was the work of tradition (GST, 243). Although in some small degree the motifs arose spontaneously in the primitive community, on the whole both the central and peripheral motifs were taken over from popular, perhaps even literary, miracle accounts. The precedent of existing miracle stories and other anecdotes being applied to a hero (a saviour, even a god) is often to be observed in classical literature, fairy tales and monastic histories (GST, 244-46). The stylistic peculiarities of the synoptic narratives show that they arose in the same atmosphere as the Jewish and Hellenistic miracle stories: this may be observed by a study of the exorcisms, healings and resuscitations found in these literatures (GST, 246-49, where analogies cited).

Dibelius believes that the tales, though shedding no new light on the message of salvation, did help to demonstrate the superiority of the 'Lord Jesus' and so helped to eliminate the competition of other cult-gods. The importance of the tale in this respect is clear if one remembers two facts of Hellenistic religious history: the occasional substitution of miracle stories for myths,

as in the case of Asclepius and Serapis; and the disappearance of the boundaries between god and god-sent man, as in the case of Appollonius of Tyana and others. One could tell no real myths about Jesus, but there were his deeds to furnish propagandistic tales. Their telling served to show that this human life was really divine (TG, 96ff.).

We have already seen that Dibelius believes that some of the tales were taken over from non-Christian sources and subsequently remoulded. Two tendencies could account for this phenomenon. First of all, Christians would narrate many great deeds of their Saviour which would proclaim his divinity; and secondly, there was the inclination of popular tradition to link any current unattached story with the hero of the day. At times such a process may have been unconscious: Jewish-Christian narrators made Jesus the hero of legends about the prophets or the rabbis; converted pagans told of the Christian Saviour the remoulded stories of gods and miracle-workers. At least two gospel narratives show that this actually occurred: one of these is the story of the Gadarene demoniac (Mk. 5.1-17). This story not only lacks the gospel ethos, but its conclusion (omitting 18-20) is contrary to Jesus' mission. The tale's nonchalance regarding the damage done, and its indifferent account of

the people's desire that Jesus should depart from them, show that the narrator is concerned only with the grandeur of the miracle. We can suppose that the story was originally told of a Jewish exorcist. The owner of the swine might then be disregarded, for he would be a Gentile; and the destruction of the despised animals would form a satisfactory conclusion for the Jewish narrator. In a similar fashion, the story of the miracle at Cana (Jn. 2.1-11) was undoubtedly told by a converted pagan. The story was transferred from Dionysius or a kindred divinity and applied to Jesus (EG, 100ff.). Bultmann agrees with Dibelius as to the origin of the Cana story. "The story is without doubt taken over from a pagan legend and applied to Jesus."¹

The historical value of any tale depends upon the previous question - in which of the three suggested ways did the tale originate? In general, this cannot be decided. All that can be said is that even under the most favourable circumstances, the tale is further removed from historical occurrence than the paradigm. However, if a tale is developed from a paradigm, we may conjecture an historical basis as a starting point, and even the foreign

¹Bultmann, Das Evangelium des Johannes, 83. "Zweifelloos ist die Geschichte aus heidnischer Legende übernommen und auf Jesus übertragen worden."

material adopted by the narrators has been Christianized (TG, 102ff.).

So far in this chapter we have discussed the assumptions of form criticism (in general terms) and the tasks of that movement (with special reference to the miracle story or tale). It is now possible to pass, in the third part of this chapter, ~~into the~~ to a critical evaluation of this school of biblical criticism.

There is no reasonable doubt that there was a period of oral tradition before the gospels were written. But the question is - how long was that period? Both men, both Dibelius and Bultmann tend to place the composition of Mark about 70 A.D., though Dibelius/^(TG, 10) is much more explicit on this point than Bultmann.¹ Matthew and Luke are, of course, later and "may be placed in the period from 70 to 100 A.D., probably nearer 100 than 70."² Thus in all probability the first gospel, Mark, was composed less than forty years after Jesus' death, and all were certainly written less than seventy years after the crucifixion. According to form critics, however, the formation of the

¹Bultmann, "The Study of the Synoptic Gospels",
Form Criticism, 15.

²Ibid.

synoptic tradition had been completed prior to this: Mark is merely a collection of units already existing in definite form. Moreover, the now lost source Q was presumably in existence sometime before the gospels of Matthew and Luke were composed.¹ Thus it seems highly probable that there were eye witnesses both within and without the faith when the earliest gospel (Mark) was written, and quite possible that such was the case when the source Q was composed. The point is that it is questionable if the creative period was long enough to justify some of the conclusions the form critics draw when comparing the synoptics with secular parallels: the synoptic tradition crystallized quite rapidly in comparison with the slow formation of the rabbinic and Hellenistic traditions, in which Bultmann and Dibelius so constantly seek analogies. It seems much too short a time to distinguish sharply and rigidly (as Bultmann does) between the contribution of the Palestinian community on the one hand, and the Hellenistic communities on the other. Therefore, valuable as the researches of students in the field of comparative religion are - in the uncovering of certain forms and laws of their transmission - this must not hide the fact that the period for the transmission of

¹Cf. Redlich, Form Criticism, 25.

the synoptic material is a relatively short one.

Once again, the contention of form criticism that the original material was made up almost entirely of brief single units is now widely accepted. Yet at least one category - the Passion story - is partially excluded from this general rule by Dibelius, and, to a much lesser degree, by Bultmann. And critics of the movement have urged that there may well be more of such categories. Lightfoot, himself a British form critic, writes that "it is possible that certain groups of stories were already in existence, perhaps in a written form, before St. Mark embodied them in his fuller work. A notable example of such a group may be the five stories in Mk. 2.1-3.6."¹ Burney, contending that considerable portions of our Lord's sayings are cast in the form of Hebrew poetry, attributes many connected groups of such sayings directly to Jesus himself.² The contention that the material was made up of brief units is complementary to another assumption of form criticism: that the context has no value, because the primitive community had no geographical, biographical or historical interest. It seems clear that the primitive community did

¹Lightfoot, History and Interpretation in the Gospels, 37.

²Burney, The Poetry of our Lord.

not entertain the same interest in geography, biography, or history as modern man. Yet the assumption that those who shaped and transmitted and wrote down the tradition had no biographical or historical interest but a purely homiletical and Christological interest is "surely an exaggerated antithesis."¹

Again, form critics assume that the tradition creates and preserves only the faith and concepts of the primitive community. This, it seems to me, is one of the most questionable assumptions of the whole movement. It seems evident that the community did exercise a certain amount of selection in the narratives handed down to us. There was undoubtedly some schematization of some of the pericopae - the opponents of Jesus became the hated 'scribes and Pharisees'. The various apologetic needs of the community may well have accounted for additions and alterations in other ways. No doubt a few pericopae were taken over from secular sources and applied to Jesus. But it is doubtful if all these have been done in the wholesale manner Bultmann seems to imply. On the whole, it is more likely that the community has preserved rather than created the majority of the sayings and deeds of Jesus. "Communities in general

¹Baillie, God Was In Christ, 56.

do not create; they shape and conserve."¹ "It seems seldom to occur to the form critics that a story may have been handed on simply or primarily because it was true, because the incident had actually taken place in the ministry of Jesus, and was therefore of great interest to his followers, even if they sometimes fail to understand it."² Form critics give no place in their reconstruction of the tradition to the dominant personal influence of Jesus himself. Bultmann in particular credits the primitive community with an extraordinary fertile imagination and at the same time an astonishingly slight recollection of Jesus' life.

The form critic emphasizes that the history of the tradition itself (to be distinguished from the history it claims to convey) can be discovered from the form. The claim does not mean, however, that form criticism supplies an automatic method whereby the truth or falsity (the actual factualness) of any event may be judged. Form criticism is a valuable aid in this process, but it does not in itself provide the sole criterion for defining any particular narrative as legendary or mythical, if this means that the narrative has no factual basis in an actual event. Nor does the discovery of analogies and parallels in secular

¹Perry, op. cit., 71. ²Baillie, op. cit., 57.

literature invalidate the events as narrated in the synoptics - prima facie it would seem to do just the opposite: point to the substantial truth of those paralleled events. As to the myths of Dibelius and the historical narratives and legends of Bultmann, I would say that in many of their specific instances there are mythical or legendary accretions; that is to say, apologetic additions not warranted by the original event in itself. I would be prepared to say that the narratives of the Virgin birth are almost completely legendary - that is, entirely the creation of the community with no factual basis whatsoever other than the obvious one that Jesus was born of Mary. But I recognize that these decisions - the designation, for example, of the Transfiguration as largely legendary, the Baptism as partly legendary, the empty tomb narratives as entirely legendary - are made but partially on the basis of the findings of form criticism. Other considerations - philosophical and theological - are very largely responsible for these decisions. In short, the form in itself permits no historical value-judgements.

The form critic is convinced that the traditional materials can be classified according to form. The analogy of the synoptics to folklore literature is at least partially justified. This is not to say that there were no educated

people in the primitive community from the outset. But it is extremely probable that these were definitely in the minority; so that unliterary men did create a style. It seems to me that in two of the categories - apothegm (or paradigm) and the miracle story (or tale), the form critic has made good his case. Yet even in this pair, there is a difficulty inherent in the method of classification - the presence of Mischformen or intermediate forms, which exhibit traits common to two or more categories. Bultmann can speak of "apothegmatic miracle stories" [apophthegmatischen Wundergeschichten] (GST, 254), and allows that the forms are only "more or less fixed."¹ And of eighteen paradigms employed in missionary preaching, Dibelius lists ten as being of a "less pure type" (TG, 43). And in other categories, the movement seems to be much less successful: one symptom of this is that there is much less agreement between Bultmann and Dibelius. It would seem that there are considerable parts of the gospels which do not admit of being rigidly subsumed under air-tight forms. And when Bultmann finds five separate sub-divisions under his 'sayings' form, a method has been pushed to ridiculous limits.² There is

¹Bultmann, "The Study of the Synoptic Problem", Form Criticism, 28.

²Cf. Easton, The Gospel before the Gospels, 74.

a very small measure of agreement in the form Dibelius terms myth and Bultmann historical narrative and legend: here the form is threatened with complete breakdown.

Working under his several assumptions, the first task of the form critic is to classify the material according to form. In the straightforward presentation, special attention was given to the miracle story of Bultmann and the tale of Dibelius: and in this critical evaluation consideration is given only to that category.

First of all, one must protest against Bultmann's claim that Jesus' miraculous healings were involuntary. It is true that the story of the woman with an issue of blood does point in that direction. But another pericope seems to point in the opposite direction. The leper "came to Jesus beseeching him, and kneeling said to him, 'If you will, you can make me clean.' Jesus said to him, 'I will; be clean'" (Mk. 1.40ff., italics mine). It would seem from this story that Jesus' ability did not function automatically, but that it was deliberately employed. We have already discussed whether the 'faith' mentioned in the synoptics is psychological or theological. The conclusion there reached was that in the majority of cases it was probably only psychological faith, but that on some occasions, the faith mentioned could well have been theo-

logical in character.¹ And although the element of pity was not a dominant factor in the tradition, it seems rash to say that there were absolutely no attempts to portray compassion or pity on the part of Jesus. The word 'pity' is used about Jesus in connection with miracle stories twice (Mk. 1.41; Mt. 20.34), and the word 'compassion' five times (Mk. 6.34; 8.2; Lk. 7.13; 10.33; Mt. 14.14; 15.32).

The greatest weakness of Dibelius' position is his premise that there were a group of story-tellers in the primitive community. But the sources themselves are completely silent as to the existence of such a group: so the premise remains a very doubtful hypothesis. And there seems little more evidence that the tales were preserved simply and solely for the guidance of primitive miracle workers.

The phenomenology of the miracle story is given in minute detail by Bultmann, drawing as he does on a multitude of biblical and non-biblical sources. The only point to note here is that both Bultmann and Dibelius are aware of the conservative approach of the evangelists to novellistic and miraculous manipulations and activities

¹Cf. above, 124ff.

reported of Jesus as compared to the same characteristics of miracle-workers recorded in non-biblical sources.

The second task of the form critic is to attempt to recover the original form of the material during the oral period; and to trace, if possible, subsequent alterations in the form. It may be admitted (with qualification) that Matthew and Luke include certain specific details not found in Mark, and that the two later gospels relate new miracles. But a more detailed style is not necessarily later or more legendary. A British form critic has come to almost the opposite conclusion.¹ Moreover, the gospel of Mark does contain concrete details: for example, the detail that the blind beggar near Jericho was "Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus," and that "throwing off his mantle he sprang up and came to Jesus" (Mk. 10.46,50). Significantly, Bultmann feels that the names in this pericope are spurious. And in at least two cases the account of Mark is longer and more detailed than that in the later gospels: ^{for instance,} the Gadarene demoniac (Mk. 5.1-20; Mt. 8.28-34; Lk. 8.26-39); ^{while} the story of the deaf and dumb man told so concretely in Mk. 7.31-7 receives in the parallel passage in Matthew only a summary (Mt. 15. 29-31). And one pericope listed by Bultmann as

¹Cf. below, 238.

among the miracle stories is found only in Mark: the blind man of Bethsaida (Mk. 8.22ff.).

The addition of names as oral tradition proceeds may well be granted. But because one name (Jairus, in Mk. 5.22) is deemed spurious, there is little justification for casting doubt on other names in Mark's gospel. Nor does direct discourse provide an infallible guide for judging a pericope less authentic than its parallel which contains no direct discourse: Bultmann himself recognizes this. Bultmann also speaks of the inclination of later editors to use the number two in the desire for symmetry. Thus Mark contains but one Gadarene demoniac and one blind beggar, while in each case Matthew mentions two. Yet when we turn to Luke, we find in each case that he speaks of only one.

Bultmann also holds that the exorcist interest of the primitive community accounts for many of the variants within the synoptic tradition. In this connection, McGinley remarks: "In the study of any literature, the discernment of variants is a delicate task, and the burden of proof always rests on the investigator who claims that two stories, with differing details, were originally one. Unless the incident can only have occurred once, e.g., the healing of the servant's ear during the arrest in the garden of

Gethsemene, the balance of probability favours the tradition as it stands. Statements that two or even three stories are 'obviously' variants prove nothing."¹

Dibelius' test for the authenticity and originality of the typical tale is the same as that for any other form: proximity to the sermon. Dibelius agrees that any kind of secular accretion, pragmatic detail, breadth or colour, points to a later pericope. Yet Vincent Taylor, on the basis of experiment and observation, comes to an opposite conclusion. This writer has conducted experiments which he believes to be helpful in determining which of the miracle stories are closest to eye witness accounts. The experiments show that longer miracle stories, which are not the products of literary art, stand nearer the records of eye witnesses; and that the shorter and more conventional stories have passed through many hands before they were committed to writing.² The decision as to which of these approaches (that of Bultmann and Dibelius on the one hand, and of Taylor on the other) is the correct one depends on another decision: whether or not the primitive community created,

¹McGinley, Form Criticism of the Synoptic Healing Narratives, 69. I am much indebted to McGinley throughout this chapter.

²Taylor, The Formation of the Gospel Tradition, 124ff.; 202-09.

or merely conserved, the primitive tradition.

The third task of the form critic is to determine the Sitz im Leben, the life situation, out of which the material arose. Both Bultmann and Dibelius agree that the miracle stories were told to illustrate the divine might and Messianic power of Jesus, or to show the superiority of the Lord Jesus over other thaumaturges. In this regard, Bultmann holds that the exorcisms were particularly important to the community as proofs of the Messiahship, and that this phenomenon is particularly clear in the summaries of Jesus' activities. These summaries bear closer examination.¹

Mark contains five such summaries: twice Jesus is mentioned as healing and exorcising, twice as merely healing, once as merely exorcising.² In Matthew (the tendency should increase with time according to the form critic), there are ten such summaries: twice Jesus is pictured as healing and exorcising, eight times as merely healing, never as merely exorcising.³

In the gospel of Luke there are seven such summaries in all: four times our Lord is portrayed as healing and exorcising, three times as merely healing, never as merely

¹Cf. McGinley, op. cit., 69.

²Mk. 1.32-4; 1.39; 3.7b-12; 6.1-6a; 6.53-6.

³Mt. 4.23-5; 8.16-7; 9.35-8; 11.2-6; 12.15b-21;
14.13-4; 14.34-6; 15.29-31; 19.1-2; 21.14-7.

exorcising.¹ Thus, out of twenty-three such summaries preserved in the synoptic tradition, Jesus is described fourteen times as merely healing, and only once, in Mark, as merely exorcising. And of the total times exorcism is mentioned, whereas Luke contains more mention of this than Mark (four to three), Matthew contains less reference than Mark (two to the three in Mark).

Both Bultmann and Dibelius believe that the study of analogies show that those who told miracle stories were anxious to prove that their particular hero was omnipotent, and that the evangelists themselves illustrate this motif in their selection of pericopae. Yet these same evangelists report Jesus as saying to his generation/^{that} "no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah" (Lk. 11.29 = Mt. 12.39). Again, these evangelists have recorded Jesus as saying that "false Christs and false prophets" can do miracles (Mt. 24.24): if miracles prove Jesus' Messiahship how are these and similar passages to be explained? It is not enough to say that these passages are not truly the words of Jesus - let us for the moment admit that they are not - but why has the primitive community preserved or created these

¹Lk. 4.40-1; 5.15-6; 6.17-9; 7.21: 7.18-23; 8.2-3; 9.11.

particular sayings at all? Again, according to the evangelists, Jesus himself ^{recognized} the power and ability of other exorcists (Mk. 9.38ff.). And, if the community wished to demonstrate Jesus' divine might, why did they not insert novellistic and miraculous manipulations and activities which, as Bultmann and Dibelius readily admit, are absent from the synoptic tradition? "We must ask why such stories as these do not appear in the Gospels, if Bultmann is right."¹ Therefore, if the evangelists preserved the miracle stories to ~~to~~ prove the Messiahship of Jesus, or to show the superiority of the Lord Jesus, they have also preserved other pericopae illustrating contradictory motifs.

Both Bultmann and Dibelius stress the value of non-biblical parallels and analogies. Three things may be said about this use of parallels. First of all, though the literature of folklore may be valuable in exhibiting different forms or classifications of material, this literature must be cautiously employed when discussing the Sitz im Leben. It is surely dangerous to discuss analogies drawn from sources distant in time and place from primitive Christianity: Indian stories, modern fairy

¹Cf. Taylor, op. cit., 130.

tales, Franciscan chronicles or the legend of Doctor Faust. In only two literatures, rabbinic and Hellenistic, can we seek for an atmosphere comparable to that of the synoptic tradition, valuable though other literatures may be in other regards. Secondly, although there are numerous analogies for the various individual forms and pericopae found in the gospels, there is no parallel to the transmission of the tradition as a whole. The best comparison Dibelius can find is a collection of sayings and anecdotes concerning the Fathers of the desert known as the Apophthegmata Patrum: yet even here, Dibelius warns us, we must "take notice of essential differences" (TG, 173). After considering various traditions from Aesop's fables to Franciscan legends and from Jewish apocalyptic literature to ^{the legend of} Doctor Faust, Bultmann makes the following significant remark. "It appears to me, that helpful as the analogies are for the individual parts of the synoptic tradition, so much less are they for the gospel as a whole. The analogies to hand only bring to the fore more clearly the peculiarity of the gospels" (GST, 399).¹ Thirdly, admitting the reality

¹"Mir scheint, so sehr wir zum Verständnis der Einzelstücke der synoptischen Tradition der Analogien bedürfen, so wenig für das Evangelium als Ganzes. Die etwa vorhandenen Analogien lassen nur die Eigenart des Evangeliums um so deutlicher hervortreten."

of parallels, the question is 'What do they signify?' Bultmann's answer is that they illustrate the atmosphere, show the motifs and help us to understand the entrance of miracle stories into the synoptic tradition. But is it not possible that the parallels have a different significance? Köhler, for instance, suggests: "Do they not primarily prove merely this, which is not at all new, that healing stories are everywhere narrated in the same manner, because they everywhere take pretty much the same course. A healing is not unhistorical because it has parallels."¹ The conclusion, then, is not that Jesus did not perform marvellous deeds, but that Jesus was by no means the sole worker of these marvellous deeds. There were other miracle workers in the ancient world, and, as we have seen, Jesus himself was quite aware of that.

The great weakness of the form critic's analysis of the Sitz im Leben is the refusal to see any of the pericopae as due to the dominant influence of Jesus himself. Let it be granted that the community created vast numbers of paradigms, miracle stories, sayings, myths, and so on. Yet the question remains: Why were all these foisted upon Jesus of Nazareth? What was there about

¹Cf. Taylor, op. cit., 128.

this man that called forth the creative powers of the primitive community? Even if the primitive community was not primarily interested in a biography of Jesus, his personal influence must have been the dominant factor in the growth of the tradition.

One matter remains for clarification and criticism. In a previous chapter Bultmann, along with a number of others, was criticized for what was termed his pseudo-scientific attitude: his claim that certain events are 'impossible' or 'inconceivable'.¹ In regard to his work as a form critic, the same attitude appears from time to time. Regarding the cure of the ten lepers and the withering of the fig tree "nothing need be said [bedarf es keines Wortes]" (GST, 60). Concerning the healing of the servant of the centurion at Capernaum, "scarcely anyone will plead for the historicity of healings at a distance [Auch wird sich kaum Jemand für die Geschichtlichkeit der Fernheilungen einsetzen]" (GST, 39). Whenever Bultmann denies the historic worth of a passage because he considers it 'impossible', he has ceased to be a form critic, or even a historian evaluating sources. He is in the realm of philosophy, and his criteria can have no

¹ Cf. above, 62f.

value in the study of the gospel text.

What is the net result of this presentation and criticism of the assumptions and tasks of form criticism? Here, in the fourth part of this chapter, there is an analysis of the contribution of form criticism as far as it affects the concept of miracle.

First of all, the form critics are wrong in their refusal to place any biographical interest in the life of Jesus in the primitive community. Interest in Jesus was the major factor and the dominating influence affecting the situation of the primitive community. Secondly, form critics admit that Jesus did some so-called miraculous deeds, but as to how many or which ones, we no longer know. We conclude that the study of form in itself does not permit any historical value-judgements. Thirdly, building on the results of studies in the field of comparative religion, form criticism brings to light the fact that Jesus was not the only miracle worker in the ancient world. Though the form critics do not explicitly say so, it seems obvious that both Jesus and the evangelists recognized this fact.

It would not be unprofitable to ask at this juncture 'How did Jesus himself regard the miracles which he performed?' To attempt an answer may be to embark on

the high sea of conjecture, but a few hypotheses may be advanced: and this attempt is the fifth and concluding part of this chapter.

To begin with, Jesus preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God: that is how Mark characterizes the message of Jesus (Mk. 1.15). How did Jesus see his healings, exorcisms, and other unusual deeds in relation to this, his fundamental message? Some authors, notably Dodd, interpret the miracles as signs of a realized eschatology, as signs that with the appearance of Jesus the kingdom of God has already come, that in his miracles Jesus is consciously acting as Messiah.¹ By these miracles, the "arm of the Lord is laid bare."² But others (and we take as representatives Fuller) interpret the miracles of Jesus as the forerunners of a yet-to-be realized eschatology, and that to Jesus himself they are signs that demand the insight of faith that they are indeed signs of that coming kingdom.³ Thus, on the one hand, the miracles are interpreted as proofs that the kingdom had already arrived, on the other they are interpreted as signs of the drawing nigh of that

¹Dodd, "Miracles in the Gospels", 504-09.

²Dodd, History and the Gospel, 98.

³Fuller, The Mission and Achievement of Jesus, 38ff.

kingdom. It seems to me that the second of these interpretations is the most sound.

To establish his contention, Fuller selects two passages as being crucial for Jesus' understanding of his own miracles: the reply to John in prison and the Beelzebub controversy.

As to the reply to John (Mt. 11.2-6 = Lk. 7.18-22), Fuller believes that this passage and two separate passages from Isaiah (Is. 35.5-6 and Is. 61.1) are definitely related: and when the parallel passages (in Greek) are placed one beside the other, the resemblance seems unmistakable, in spite of the fact that there is no direct quotation. It is pointed out that Isaiah 35 presents the Messianic salvation as a process. First, there is the journey through the wilderness, (which is ^{paralleled} by the miraculous healings of Mt. 11. 5 and 6). Following that - as the decisive culminating event, as the fulfillment of the Messianic salvation - comes the return to Zion in verse 10. That is, the return from exile has not yet taken place, but things are moving in that direction. Cyrus is already winning his preliminary victories: God is thus at work and the decisive event is just around the corner. ^{In like manner,} "the miraculous healings . . . are not so much signs that the Messianic age 'has dawned', as signs that it 'is dawning'. The distinction may seem

subtle, and somewhat overdrawn, but nevertheless it is of greatest importance when applied to the miracles of Jesus. For, in applying Isaiah 35 to his own works of healing, and claiming, not that the age of salvation has already come, but rather that it 'is dawning', Jesus places the decisive event, the fulfillment of the Messianic salvation, in the future."¹

Similar treatment is afforded the Beelzebub controversy (Lk. 11.17-22 and parallels). The crucial saying of the pericope is: "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Lk. 11.20). Fuller believes, with many others, that the phrase 'the finger of God' is an allusion to Ex. 8.19. He goes on to say that the plagues of Egypt, wrought by the finger of God, were preliminary demonstrations of power pointing forward to the decisive act of God, the exodus itself, which in Ex. 15.6 is attributed to the right hand of God. The plagues were not themselves the great event, but signs (for the eye of faith) pointing to that future event."²

Fuller concludes that, in the mind of Jesus himself, the miracles were signs of the coming of the

¹Fuller, op. cit., 36. ²Ibid., 37-8.

Kingdom of God, signs that it was dawning. But a major difficulty remains: Jesus himself never applies the word 'sign' to his miraculous activity in the synoptic gospels. On the contrary, he uses the word in a depreciating sense. In Mark, Jesus absolutely refuses to give any sign to the Pharisees who demanded it: "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation" (Mk. 8.12). In asking their question, the Pharisees are said to be 'testing' or 'tempting' Jesus. The same verb is used to describe the activity of the devil in the Temptation narrative (Mt. 4.3ff. and parallels), where Jesus is 'tempted' to use his miraculous powers to point to himself. "Therefore, while Jesus' absolute refusal to give a sign in Mk. 8.11 is no proof that Jesus did not regard his miracles as signs pointing forward to the coming eschatological Kingdom it does appear to prove conclusively that he refused to interpret them as signs of an already existing Messiahship."¹

The miracles are signs of the coming of the kingdom: and so John so seems to interpret them. We may take as an example the first sign, the changing of the water into wine (Jn. 2.1-11). The clue to the interpreta-

¹Fuller, op. cit., 39.

tion of this sign lies in verse 4b: "my hour has not yet come" and in verse 6: "for the Jewish rites of purification". The episode points forward to the 'hour' (Jn. 12.13; 13.1; 17.1) of the glorification of Jesus on the cross, when the eschatological purification from sin will be accomplished. Until that time his actions are signs of what is to be. Although Jesus is said to have "manifested his glory" (Jn. 2.11), John does not mean us to understand that the miracle is an independent manifestation of the Messianic glory. For the eye of faith, it is a glimpse in advance of that glory, which will be finally and decisively manifested in the death and exaltation of Jesus.¹

The miracles are signs of the coming of the kingdom. And as such they are an integral part of all that Jesus did and said and was. This is ^{probably most} clearly implied in the reply to John, where the preaching of the gospel to the poor is maintained alongside the healings: both are signs of the coming of the Kingdom. "What are the signs of the time? He himself! His presence, his deeds, his message! . . . All that does not mean that God's Reign is already here; but it does mean that it is dawning."²

¹Fuller, op. cit., 42-3.

²Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 7.

But another important question remains: How could Jesus see his miracles as signs of the coming of the Kingdom when other men did comparable miracles? This same question could be asked in two other forms: How could Jesus see his words as signs of the coming of the Kingdom when what he said was not unique? How could Jesus see himself as a sign of the coming of the Kingdom when he was only one man amongst many? His marvels, his words, his being may have been unusual, but to the eye of the spectator he was not unique in any of these respects. Not his marvels, nor his words, nor his being, were manifestly or obviously from above or from God. It was only by faith: that is, in and through his marvels, his words, his being - by the conviction of things not seen - that anyone could believe that all these were signs of the coming Kingdom. In themselves, his words and works and person were ambiguous, demanding the insight of faith in order to be able to say that they came from God.

Even as Jesus himself was aware of the ability of other miracle-workers, so also was the early church. Simon (Acts 8.9ff.) and Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13.6ff.) performed acts analogous to the healing and exorcist work of the primitive preachers and missionaries. Therefore the miracles wrought by the early Christians likewise demanded the

insight of faith.

But what about the resurrection - is not the arm of the Lord laid bare in this event? Is not this an unambiguous happening - one in which the spectator is constrained to see the activity of God? Certainly this is the claim of traditional theology - whether of a contra-, preter-, or supernatural variety. As Headlam says: "The disciples believed in Him because they believed in a miracle, namely, the Resurrection, and they had good grounds for their belief. . . . The fact remains that only by a miracle, and because of a miracle, had they courage to believe."¹ And Richardson: "In the last resort it was the sign of the resurrection which authenticated all Jesus' other signs and the claims which they involved."² Yet how certain is that ground? Even in the biblical accounts there appear to be conflicting elements: on the one hand, Jesus was able to pass through closed doors (Jn. 20.26); on the other, men could 'handle' and 'see' him, and he could eat physical food (Lk. 24.39,49). Then again, he appeared only to the disciples. As early as the second century Celsus had seized upon this point. Arguing against the resurrection

¹Headlam, The Miracles of the New Testament, 347.

²Richardson, MSG, 132.

of Jesus, he maintained: "He ought to have appeared to those who had ill-treated him, and to him who had condemned him, and to all men universally."¹ Likewise Spinoza: "I shall only ask you to observe," he wrote to Oldenburg, "that Christ did not appear personally either to the Council, or to Pilate, or to any incredulous or indifferent person, but to believers only."²

But does not the open grave prove the reality of the resurrection? Does not the empty tomb point irresistibly to the laying bare of the arm of the Lord? The gospel narratives, in spite of their divergencies, yield, it has been said, "a uniform and very impressive tradition that the grave was empty on Easter Day."³ Yet even were the narratives of the empty tomb extremely trustworthy - which is open to doubt - one factor is missing: that is, no one is reported to have seen Jesus leave the tomb.⁴ Once again, only the faithful experienced the presence of the living Lord. To the eye of the spectator, to the eye

¹Cf. Origen, The Writings of Origen, II, 65.

²Cf. Willis, Benedict de Spinoza, 265.

³Simpson, The Resurrection and Modern Thought, 26.

⁴Interestingly enough, the apocryphal Gospel of Peter does contain a report of this event. But this gospel lies outside the canon, much of it is manifestly legendary.

of unbelief, it was quite possible that someone had taken the body of Jesus away. Men could be told that someone "came by night and stole him away while we were asleep" (Mt. 28.13). As such, the whole episode could be dismissed as "an idle tale" (Lk. 24.10). The miracles of Jesus, the resurrection, the empty tomb (if all be admitted as literally true) are yet ambiguous events: all can be explained in earth-bound terms; only the insight of faith can interpret them as the acts of God.

This ambiguity of biblical events is one of the topics discussed in the next chapter, which is entitled "The Demythological View".

Chapter VI. The Demythological Movement.

"In the person and acts of Jesus no supernaturalism shall
be suffered to remain." Strauss.

JCM = Bultmann, R. Jesus Christ and Mythology.

KM = Bartsch, H (ed.). Kerygma and Myth. (KM always refers
to essays in this book by Bultmann).

This chapter is devoted to an examination of the movement known as Entmythologisierung or demythologizing, especially as that movement affects the concept of miracle. The demythologist is convinced that the message of redemption in Jesus Christ, as it is contained in the New Testament writings, is embodied in a mythological language and in a framework of conceptions of a mythological character which can neither be fitted into the world view of modern man, nor do justice to the message of redemption itself. Thus, the demythologist sees it as his task to interpret the Christian message in order to make it understandable to modern man, and to present the gospel in terms which are in agreement with the basic insights of the message itself.

The chapter is divided as follows. First of all, the assumptions or convictions of the demythologist (seven in number) are presented in a straightforward manner. Secondly, the reasons why Bultmann wishes to demythologize miracle are critically considered. Thirdly, the method of interpreting the miracles is evaluated within the larger question of the relationship between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.

First, the demythologist is convinced that the message of the New Testament is couched in mythological terminology which makes no meaningful impact upon modern

man. Indeed, the redemptive message of the New Testament itself is set on the stage of a mythical cosmology. Presented there is a three-tiered universe: the upper tier being the habitation of God and his angels, the lower tier the place of hell. The earth, midway between, is the battleground between God and his angels on the one hand, and Satan and demonic powers on the other. These forces are at constant warfare with one another, and both man and nature may be possessed and controlled by alternative and alien elements. But because God is the sole Absolute, this state of affairs cannot long continue. The Adjuticator will come at the last day to destroy the stage and props, judge the actors and assign them to heaven or to hell.

The Christian apostles proclaimed that the last time had now come: the new age had been instituted by God's very son, Jesus Christ. This Christ walked the shores of Galilee - he was a man, yet God Incarnate. He was crucified as a sinner; yet in this act he atoned for the sin of his fellowmen. His resurrection announced the new age. The powers - death, sin and Satan - were defeated: the decisive battle had been won by God in Christ. The resurrected Christ had been exalted as Lord and King to God's right hand. He would come soon to exterminate finally the demonic powers. By their baptism into the Christian church, men were assured

of resurrection to life: indeed they enjoyed a guarantee of that already, in that the Spirit was even then at work within them.

The event of redemption is itself clothed in mythical language: language shared by Gnosticism and Jewish apocalypse. To modern man, such a mythical way of speaking is outworn. When we preach, do we demand that our listeners believe in a mythical setting as well as the kerygma itself? Or do we think that the New Testament has a kerygma apart from myth?

Obviously it is impossible to ask a man to believe in the mythical world of the New Testament. He cannot change his world outlook at will. True, his world outlook may change: but only when a new set of facts compels it. Nor is there anything particularly Christian about the New Testament cosmology: it is neither Christian nor non-Christian, but pre-scientific. Of course, myth may embody truths which any particular cosmological view will disregard. This may be true of certain New Testament myths. But it is still true that modern man cannot change his world outlook willy-nilly. Modern man's views are largely moulded by scientific attitudes: and to accept the New Testament cosmology would be insincere and irrational for him.

In point of fact, no one to-day accepts the New

Testament view of the world. So it is useless to say 'descended into hell' when to think of hell as a specifically located place underneath the earth is absurd. Nor do we believe in a locally restricted God, nor in spirits good or bad. Since modern man is aware of the principle of causation, it is impossible to ask him to attribute sickness to demonic powers. The miracles of the New Testament are no longer miracles and, when we attempt to explain them on scientific grounds, we admit as much. The mythical eschatology is untenable, for the world did not come to an end as Jesus and the disciples proclaimed. If we do expect the end of the world, we expect it as a natural catastrophe, not as a mythical event. Modern man understands himself as essentially a unit: that is, responsible for his own thinking, feeling, and willing. He is not a pawn in the hands of powers. If he achieves a personality which is integrated internally and externally, he alone is the artificer. If there is a separation or breakdown he does not attribute it to demonic powers, but calls it schizophrenia. Biology and psychology rightly claim that man is a highly dependent being: but this does not mean that his self-mastery has been handed over to anything outside himself. And any dependence he feels is inseparable from nature itself. Once a man sees this, he can recover his self-mastery and plan his life on a rational

basis. If a man recognizes himself as a spirit, he knows that however much he is conditioned by his physical makeup he himself is distinguished from it, with responsible mastery over it. In short, modern science has made it impossible for contemporary man to accept as true the cosmology of the New Testament.

That is why many biblical statements fall on unresponsive ears. The Spirit, the sacraments, death as the punishment of sin, the doctrine of the atonement, the resurrection, heaven and hell - all these and other phrases are meaningless to contemporary man, whether he be a naturalist or an idealist. In short, the redemptive message must be demythologized (KM, 1-8). And in this demythologizing, we must not pick and choose: "in Bultmann's case it is not a question of a mechanical selection of equal terms, i.e., reject some, accept something else. There is a consistent unity in his method of interpretation. He rejects a peripheral element in order to be able to throw light on that which is central. The miracles have to step aside for the gospel."¹

Secondly, the demythologist is convinced that the redemptive message must be interpreted. If all the above-

¹Wingren, Theology in Conflict, xx-xxi.

mentioned conceptions are mythological, what can be done about it? Can these conceptions be cast aside in the interests of modernizing the gospel? If this were the case Bultmann could simply be bracketed with Harnack and the idealists, or with Troeltsch and the religio-historical school, as one who is accomodating the gospel to a passing phase of scepticism. But this is clearly not Bultmann's intention. He intends to interpret, rather than to eliminate, mythological statements. "We must ask whether the mythological statements as a whole contain a still deeper meaning which is concealed under the cover of mythology. If that is so, let us abandon the mythological conceptions precisely because we want to retain this deeper meaning. . . . This method of interpretation of the New Testament which tries to recover the deeper meaning behind the mythological conceptions I call de-mythologizing. . . . Its aim is not to eliminate the mythological statements but to interpret them" (JCM, 18). That is to say, there is a deeper truth in all of these mythological statements which cannot be dismissed. We to-day must try to describe and express our faith in Jesus Christ by means of our own language, our own images and our own pictures. We should do this, however, without changing the reality of Jesus Christ, without limiting his significance, without even moderating the nature of the Christ-event. Bultmann is not

trying to eliminate the scandal or stumbling-block of Christianity, but he is trying to locate that scandal and that stumbling-block in the proper place. Christ, his significance as our Lord, his crucifixion and resurrection as the redemptive action of God, must remain the intrinsic stumbling-block (I Cor. 1.23; Gal. 5.11). But the danger has arisen that to-day not Christ himself, but the diction of the Bible, the language of the church, the formulae of the creeds, the text of the hymns represent the stumbling-block. In order to recover and reveal the stumbling-block, the mythology must be interpreted. For example, in mythological thinking, heaven is looked upon as God's abode or dwelling place. The truth intended to be expressed by this is that God does not belong to this earthly world: he is superior to it, beyond it, he is transcendent. But mythological thinking assumes that it is possible to express God's transcendence by using spatial thought forms of infinite distance, of a place high above us. The question now arises whether it is not necessary to express the truth contained in the thought of God's transcendence in other thought forms, for modern man has ceased to think mythologically. If this is done, such a man may then understand what is meant when the Bible speaks about God in heaven, and about Christ's ascension and sitting at the right hand of God. In the

same way, the mythological concept of hell aims at expressing the transcendent power of evil and the transcendence of man's lost state when he is without God. But mythological thinking does this with the aid of an inadequate spatial image, in which the transcendence of God is localized in the depths.¹ By the use of the expression 'heaven' we see that the soul or intention of the myth is to express the transcendence of God, but the body or actualization of that intention is clothed in a 'this-worldly' presentation.

Thirdly, the demythologist is convinced that demythologizing is an hermeneutic method, that is, a method of interpretation. "'Hermeneutics' means the art of exegesis" (JCM, 45). Bultmann insists that "every interpreter brings with him certain conceptions . . . as presuppositions of his exegesis" (JCM, 48). It is impossible to interpret without any presuppositions. Nor does the text itself provide the conceptions of exegesis. But then, which conceptions and which presuppositions are right and adequate? It is true that our exegesis must be without presuppositions with regard to the results of our exegesis. But there is a fundamental difference between presuppositions with regard to results, and presuppositions with regard to method. And

¹Cf. Bultmann, "What is Demythologizing?", 217.

the method is nothing other than a kind of questioning, a way of putting questions: I cannot understand a given text without asking certain questions of it. And if I ask certain questions of a text, I already have a certain understanding of it, I have already formed (perhaps unconsciously) conceptions and presuppositions about which the text will speak to me. So the corresponding presupposition of exegesis is that I have a relation to the subject-matter (Sache) about which I interrogate a given text. Bultmann calls this the 'life-relation'. In this life-relation I have a certain understanding of the matter in question, and from this understanding grow the conceptions of exegesis. From reading the texts I will learn, and my understanding will be enriched and corrected. Without such a relation and such previous understanding (Vorverständnis) it is impossible to understand any text (JCM, 49ff.). "Interpretation, therefore, always presupposes a living relationship to the subjects which are directly or indirectly expressed in the text. I only understand a text dealing with music if and in so far as I have a relationship to music . . . - and I only understand a mathematical text if I have a relationship to mathematics, and an historical representation in so far as historical life is familiar to me - in so far as I know [in] my own life what a state is, and what life in a state and its potentialities

are - or a novel, because I know from my own life what, for example, family and vocation, are - and so on."¹ That is to say, my own relation to the subject matter prompts the questions I bring to the text and elicits the type of answers I obtain from the text. With regard to historical interpretation, there are two distinct relations a person can bring to a text. First of all, my interest may be simply to give a picture of a past era, to reconstruct a decade or a century of a by-gone age; and secondly, my interest may be to learn from historical documents what I need for my practical every-day life. For example, "you can interpret Plato as an interesting figure of the culture of fifth-century Athenian Greece, but you can also interpret Plato to learn through him the truth about human life. In the latter case your interpretation is not motivated by interest in a past epoch of history, but by your search for truth" (JCM, 51). And in each of these two ways the Bible may be read. In the first instance, it can be used as a source to reconstruct a past epoch, or to determine the character of David or Peter or John. Again in the first instance, the Bible may be read as an example of ^{folklore} literature, and various strata be uncovered in the material at hand (as in

¹Bultmann, GV II, 218-19; ET 242-43.

form criticism); or the Bible can be read to furnish evidence of a divine man (as in supernaturalism). But over against all these ways, and as a second way, the Bible can be read to hear what the text has to say about my own life and existence now.

In the fourth place, the demythologist is convinced that man ('natural man') has a 'life-relation' to the subject matter about which the biblical text speaks. Some theologians - Barth, for example¹ - seem to clearly say that since the theme of the Bible is the revelation of God, we can gain a relation to God only by his revelation and not in advance of it. Bultmann believes, on the other hand, that man does have in advance a relation to God, and that this contention is borne out by Augustine's dictum: 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee.' Man does have a knowledge of God in advance, though not of the revelation of God, that is, of his revelation in Christ. Man has a relation to God in his search for God, whether that search be conscious or unconscious. "Man's life is moved by the search for God because it is always moved, consciously or unconsciously, by the question of his own personal existence. The question of God and the question of myself are identical" (JCM, 53).

¹Cf. above, 145; 191f.

We have thus found the correct hermeneutical question by means of which the secrets of the Bible may be unlocked. And this question is; How is man's existence understood in the Bible? And with this question, a similar one can be formulated as the key to the kerygma of any biblical myth. 'What does the myth say about man's relation to God in the midst of the world?' The tradition and preaching of the church tells us that we are to hear in the Bible authoritative words about our existence: more than that, that the Bible becomes for the individual man a word addressed personally to him, giving him real existence. The Bible does not teach a man a particular cosmology or tell of new aspects of the world's structure, but it does reveal what the Christ-event means for a man's own personal relation to God and for his own existence in the midst of history. Therefore the question must be 'Does the biblical mythology contain a new conception of my situation before God?' or 'What possibility of understanding my own existence is shown and offered in each document of the Bible?' If it is true that the right questions are concerned with the possibilities of understanding human existence, then it is necessary to discover the adequate conceptions by which such understanding is to be expressed. To discover these conceptions is the task of philosophy. And the philosophy which is best suited

for this task is existentialism, more strictly, the existential philosophy of Martin Heidegger.¹

¹A note as to the meaning of the words 'existentialism', 'existential', 'existentiell' and 'existentialist' as they are used throughout this thesis.

The word existentialism (a noun) is used as a term which designates a philosophy: a philosophy which purports to give an analysis of the human predicament; a philosophy which has human existence as its direct object.

The word existential (an adjective, and a translation of the German word existential) is used as a general term applicable to the principles of the philosophy of existentialism. The word existential is a term used to express that which belongs to the particular philosophical system called existentialism: therefore, existential philosophy = existentialism.

The word existentiell (an adjective, and a translation of the German word existentiell) is used as a term which has reference to a particular concrete situation which is handled in a way compatible with or in agreement with the philosophy of existentialism. The word existentiell is a term used to express that which belongs to existence as such.

The word existentialist (a noun) is used as a term which applies to one who is a proponent or disciple of existential philosophy. For instance, Heidegger and Sartre are existentialists, in the broad meaning of that term. More specifically, within this thesis, it applies to a smaller group of theologians, of whom Tillich and Bultmann are representatives.

If any apology be necessary for this interpretation (with which Greig partially agrees in his translation of Bultmann's GV II, see ET 236), it can be said that it has the advantage that the word existentialist is retained for sole use as a substantive: it correctly designates one who is a follower of existential philosophy. Therefore, with the exception of book and article titles, I reserve the right to alter the translation of other authors (e.g. Macquarrie) into the above schema.

Thus, in the fifth place, the demythologist is convinced that demythologizing is existential interpretation. Here Bultmann employs the philosophy of existence of Martin Heidegger. In his philosophy, Heidegger distinguishes between the being of persons, Dasein, and the being of things, Vorhandenheit. In his analysis of the being of persons, or of human existence, Heidegger sees three things as fundamental. The first of these elements is possibility. One's life is never complete, the future is open, one's being is becoming: there are possibilities ahead of a person from amongst which he must choose. Secondly, there is the element of facticity. Certain factors in life are imposed upon me without regard for my desires, and these factors limit my possibilities. The word Heidegger uses is Geworfenheit - thrownness - the metaphor coming from the throw of dice. This thrownness-factor is present to each one of us. I cannot help the fact that I am a Canadian, living in the twentieth century, having two particular people as my parents. This combination of possibility and facticity, of freedom and finitude, gives rise to the state of Angst or dread or despair. Out of this state of dread there arises the third element in human existence, fallenness. Unable to bear the situation brought about by the combination of facticity and possibility, the self runs away from itself into the

world. It bases its life upon the visible, finds security in that which is in its control: material possessions or its own achievements.¹

Bultmann is aware of the fact that there is no right philosophy in the sense of an absolutely perfect system, answering all questions and solving all problems. But since we approach the Bible with the question of human existence, that philosophy which has human existence as its direct object would presumably be of considerable help. That philosophy to-day is existentialism (JCM, 55f.). At the same time, this existential philosophy does not offer an ideal pattern of human existence, that is, it does not say 'you must exist in such and such a way'; it says only 'you must exist', it shows one what it means to exist. Existentialism attempts to show what existence means by distinguishing between the person's being as 'existence' and the being of all worldly beings which are not 'existing' but only 'extant' (vorhanden). As an existing being, possibilities are open to man: his being is becoming, he truly exists. "Only men can have an existence, because they are historical beings. That is to say, every man has his own history. Always his present comes

¹For this exposition of these elements of Heidegger's philosophy, I am indebted to some unpublished material by Professor Ian Henderson.

out of his past and leads into his future. He realizes his existence if he is aware that each 'now' is the moment of free decision" (JCM, 56). Existential philosophy throws the burden or the responsibility of existing upon the individual person: it does not secure for that person a self-understanding of his own existence in the sense of providing a system whereby all problems are solved. But just this existential emphasis on personal responsibility helps to make the word of the Bible clear and open to a person. Existential analysis emphasizes the necessity of personal decision, the decision 'you must exist'. "Without this decision, without the readiness to be a human being, a person who in responsibility takes it upon himself to be, no one can understand a single word of the Bible as speaking to his own personal existence. . . . Thus does it become clear that the hearing of the word of the Bible can take place only in personal decision" (JCM, 57). By demythologizing -- by the existential interpretation of the New Testament -- Bultmann hopes to challenge man to a genuine existentiell decision (KM, 16).

In the sixth place, the demythologist employs the terms myth and mythology in a number of different ways. "It seems fair to say that Bultmann groups together a number of not particularly homogeneous elements under the heading

of the mythological."¹ There are at least three meanings which Bultmann attaches to the concept 'myth' or 'mythological'. First of all, the mythological is characterized as primitive science -- the belief that the world is governed by supranatural powers, by gods and demons who rule the history of men and nature.² Secondly, a myth confuses the categories of Vorhandenheit and Dasein, treating spiritual factors as if they were natural entities. Or, to put the same definition in slightly different terms, myth speaks about transcendence in terms of this world, in figures that picture immanent phenomena: transcendent action is assimilated to 'this-worldly' action. "Mythology is the use of imagery to express the other worldly in terms of world and the divine in terms of human life, the other side in terms of this side" (KM, 10). Though this definition expresses the narrow and strict sense of the term myth, Bultmann uses myth in a third way: myth seems to indicate, vaguely, every kind of divine intervention in the human sphere.

In the seventh place, the demythologist is convinced that miracle is one element of the biblical message which must be demythologized. It is important to note here

¹Henderson, Myth in the New Testament, 46.

²Cf. Dinkler, "Existentialist Interpretation of the New Testament", 89.

how Bultmann sees miracle in its un-demythologized meaning. In traditional theology (as Bultmann sees it), a miracle is a sensible operation of a supranatural power in conflict with the powers of the lower region. Such miracles are "Durchbrüche".¹ Though Bultmann does not^{of course} say so, such a definition of miracle would fit into one of the traditional ways of understanding the term as these ways are presented in this thesis: that is, in a contra-, preter-, or supernatural manner. Such a miracle is an unambiguous event, by means of which the spectator is cowed and constrained into belief. We, in our own day, need only believe that such an event actually happened: belief tends to be an intellectual assent to events long since past. It is to be noted that the tenor of this present thesis has been to reject just this conception of the term miracle. We now critically ask the demythologist two things: first, why he considers this traditional concept of miracle to be mythological; and secondly, how he interprets the miracles.

Why is a miracle mythological? To answer this question, we must consider the different definitions of the term myth in relation to the concept of miracle.

First of all, the mythological is characterized

¹So Bultmann quotes Wellhausen in GST, 234.

as primitive science - the belief that the world is governed by supranatural powers, by gods and demons. It is this conception of myth which inspires the already-quoted remark of Bultmann's to the effect that it is impossible to make use of electric lights and radio and in case of illness to lay claim to modern medical and clinical methods and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles (KM, 5). There are three things to be said about this statement.

First, Bultmann is right when he says that modern man, influenced as he is by scientific methods, refuses to believe that any event, however unusual, is thereby automatically designated as due to the activity of God. The scientist and the historian, as we have already seen, refuse to bring in an illegitimate supranatural factor when faced with an apparently inexplicable fact.¹ The modern man faces phenomena with the confidence that such events are explicable in terms of natural law. Bultmann has rightly understood the outlook of modern man in this regard. Man no longer sees himself as confronted by supranatural powers which can intervene directly in his affairs: he does not see demons at work in an epileptic, nor an act of God in a

¹Cf. above, 66ff.; 71ff.

war or an economic depression. But rather he sees his world as an intricate web of forces which can be handled and dealt with by means of certain semi-autonomous scientific techniques. The techniques are relative, of course, and none of them is final. But the method itself does not change. Bultmann is right in rejecting a God of the scientific gaps. As Gregor Smith says: "The real God does not reside in the interstices left by science. He is not to be found on the sandbank of a diminishing mystery. He does not lurk in that kind of mystery at all. . . . Though the mythological thought-world does contain an element of rational thought, it seems to me a mere illusion if you think that the whole field of religious thought and experience can simply be fenced off . . . and closed to trespassers."¹

Secondly, Bultmann is wrong when he seems to imply that because men no longer see supranatural powers intervening directly, then the events called miracles did not happen. We have already seen that Bultmann is loath to admit the veracity of some events because he thinks that such things are impossible or inconceivable.² We may readily grant that unusual events need not be attributed to the

¹Smith, "Some Implications of Demythologizing", 260.

²Cf. above, 63; 244.

direct activity of God, but that is not to say that unusual events did not happen. Bultmann correctly understands the basic principles and methods of the natural scientist, but he is out of date with his conception of what is possible or conceivable. One has the feeling that Bultmann thinks that if certain events were admitted as actually true, one would be compelled to admit that these events were caused by God.¹ This seems to me to be one element in his refusal to admit a literal resurrection: it is termed "an absolutely mythical event" (KM, 39). But we need only recall Huxley's words to see the falsity of this contention. "In truth, if a dead man did come to life, the fact would be evidence, not that any law of nature had been violated, but that those laws, even when they express the results of a very long and uniform experience, are necessarily based on incomplete knowledge, and are to be held only as grounds of more or less justifiable expectation."²

I object to Bultmann's narrow conception of what he considers to be possible or conceivable. I object to Bultmann's bowing to what he imagines to be the reality criteria of modern man. He tends to stamp out any alleged event which he falsely believes modern man cannot accept.

¹Cf. below, 408.

²Huxley, Hume, 133.

But there is another side to this argument: and this brings me to the third point. As we have seen, there were plenty of miracle-workers in antiquity, and the unusual deeds ascribed to Jesus were no stumbling-block to the large majority of men of the first few centuries of the Christian era. In short, in regard to working miracles, Jesus acted like any other religious leader: in this respect one could say that he did what men demand of any religious leader. "It is therefore quite possible that theology is 'bowing to the reality criteria of natural man' just as much in accepting the miracles as in rejecting them."¹

Myth confuses the categories of Vorhandenheit and Dasein, treating spiritual factors as if they were natural entities. In an unusual event, mythological thought attributes the causation to God. God is thereby placed on a level with all other worldly causes, even though he occupies an exalted place on that level. God is thus understood as a sort of supra-entity, an abnormal block of being: but in just this way the old ontology falsely objectifies God. In no particular act, however unusual, can the casual observer state that God is the necessary cause. No man can ever isolate God's activity and present it as an object for

¹Gogarten, Demythologizing and History, 87.

observation. "God's handiwork cannot be labelled and docketed like the works of an artist or an engineer" (KM, 121). God's act is perceptible by faith and by faith alone. "To every other eye than the eye of faith the action of God is hidden. Only the natural happening is generally visible and ascertainable. In it is accomplished the hidden act of God" (KM, 197). Miracle, as the activity of God, is never ascertainable on a mere spectator basis. If that were so, all the believer in miracle does is to consult evidence and draw a conclusion; he need not make an act of personal faith, belief in a miracle would be thus no more than intellectual assent. A miracle cannot prove to a sceptic the fact of the existence of God and his sovereignty. For in that case "the assertion of God's sovereignty would be seen as a universal truth which can by logical reasoning be made intelligible to everyone; the miracle would then be regarded as a universally accredited, extraordinary event, from which the conclusion may be drawn that it depends upon a divine cause. On the contrary, miracle as such means the activity of God; therefore the understanding of an event as a miracle is not a conclusion from what is perceived, but the perception itself apprehends the miracle. Hence only the faith which arises simultaneously with the sight of

miracle is true faith."¹ In a mythological miracle, God is relegated to a position (albeit an elevated one) amongst objects, "the transcendence of God is reduced to immanence" (KM, 44). In the interpretation of miracles, Bultmann feels that they must be removed from the world of objects to the world of subjects, from the sphere of Vorhandenheit to the sphere of Dasein. That is, we go to the Bible not asking the question of its cosmology, but the question of the possibilities it opens up for our own existence. Non-existential statements - like the undemythologized miracles, which give not a possibility of existence but a certain obsolete world view - are mythological: that is, in need of existential interpretation.

Again, myth speaks about transcendence in terms of this world, in figures that picture immanent phenomena; transcendent action is assimilated with this-worldly action. "Bultmann is at one with Kierkegaard and Barth in his desire to stress God's transcendence. He shares their horror of any system of ideas that tends towards the identification of God with the world. . . . God must be conceived as the 'Other', the Creator, the One of whom the prophet said: 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither

¹Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, 177.

are 'your ways my ways' (Is. 55.8)."¹ When the spectator or observer weighs the evidence and comes to the conclusion that in the series ABC, C can only be caused by God, his conclusion is one of intellectual insight. In such a process, the element of faith is entirely lacking. Faith by its very nature is belief in "things not seen" (Heb. 11.1). Once again, mythology (and in particular mythological miracle) vulgarizes God, secularizes him, relegates him to the world of things. Undemythologized miracle suggests that God operates in this world in the same way as forces of this world. Miracle presents the action of God as a process which both interrupts and prolongs [unterbricht und doch gleichzeitig verkettet]² the natural course of history: it introduces a supranatural cause into the natural causality of this world. Certainly God does act and certainly God is involved in history, and certainly God transforms history (for the eye of faith) into meaningful history (Geschichte), but God does not transform this history in a miraculous manner - if this means that the spectator could demonstratively see God's activity. "In a word, God and his saving actions

¹Owen, Revelation and Existence, 20-1.

²Bartsch, (Hrsg.), Kerygma und Mythos, II, 184.

are not evident to the objective gaze."¹ And it is faith, not the exigencies of the modern scientific point of view, which necessitates this conviction. "If the challenge of demythologizing was first raised by the conflict between the mythological cosmology of the Bible and the modern scientific world-view, it at once becomes evident that the restatement of mythology is a requirement of faith itself. For faith needs to be emancipated from its associations with a world-view expressed in objective terms, whether it be a mythical or scientific one" (KM, 210). This is an important and significant statement. Starting with an avowed apologetic interest - to render the gospel intelligible to modern man - Bultmann is led to say that the gospel itself demands interpretation or demythologizing.

A third way in which Bultmann uses the word myth is to indicate, in a rather vague way, every kind of divine intervention in the human sphere. The key word in this definition is 'intervention'. For if God's activity be understood as something which shoulders in, cuts a path, and departs, leaving a swathe which any casual observer can see - then such a concept is mythological. Of course, Bultmann does not deny that God acts, but he is firmly con-

¹Malevez, The Christian Message and Myth, 102.

vinced that this activity is seen only by the inward eye of faith. This also means that we do not know who God is in himself, but only how he acts towards us. And this means not that God and his activity have no reality, but that this reality is only vouchsafed by God, it is revealed only in faith. There is a divine act, a real act, but it is for faith and in faith: the encounter with God exists only within the sphere of faith. The foundation and the object of faith are the one and same thing. The transcendence, the "invisibility of God excludes every myth which tries to make him and his acts visible" (KM, 210). That is why miracles, in their present mythological form must be interpreted. They must be utterly removed from the sphere of Vorhandenheit, and transferred to the sphere of Dasein. The body of miracle-myth can only be looked upon as unfortunate: it must be spiritualized. But before this is done we must ask, What is the intention of the gospel writers in telling miracle stories? What is the kerygmatic intention of the stories?

Bultmann, as a form critic, was convinced that the miracles were regarded as proofs of the divinity of Jesus.¹ But as a demythologist, this conviction is slightly altered: in brief, the miracles "point to the fact that the Revelation is no worldly occurrence, but an other-

¹Cf. above, 209; 222; 239f.

worldly one. They are pictures, symbols."¹ They are signs that Jesus is not of this world, that his power is other-worldly: though this other-worldly power is visible only to the eye of faith. The accounts of miracles are like the statements concerning the deity or divinity of Christ. "I think that we can say that in the New Testament at least a parte potiori, the pronouncements about Jesus' divinity or deity are not, in fact, pronouncements of his nature but seek to give expression to his significance; pronouncements which confess that what he says and what he is do not have their origin within the world, and are not human ideas or events in the world, but that God speaks to us in them and acts towards us and for us. Christ is the power and wisdom of God; he became the wisdom of God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption for us (I Cor. 1.30)."²

But how can the miracles, which in mythological thinking belong to Historie and Vorhandenheit be interpreted into terms of Geschichte and Dasein? "We can see meaning in them only when we ask what God is trying to say to each one of us" (KM, 35). The unusual events reported of Jesus have no ultimate meaning unless there is an existentiell

¹Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, II, 44.

²Bultmann, GV II, 252-53; ET 280-81.

decision in the person of the reader. "We must show that a miracle is a phenomenon of the spiritual [geschichtlich] life, not one of nature" (KM, 121). But what is God trying to say to each one of us in the miracles? How can a miracle be a phenomenon of the spiritual (geschichtlich) life? The same question can be asked in somewhat broader terms: How can the Jesus of history become the Christ of faith?

To what extent is Christianity dependent upon historical research? There is a definite cleavage of opinion amongst scholars on this point. "The Christian religion is not merely open to historical investigation, but demands it, and its piety depends upon it. Inadequate or false reconstruction of Jesus of Nazareth cuts at the heart of Christianity."¹ But Bultmann strongly rejects the effort "to tie our faith in the Word of God to the results of historical research" (KM, 41). Can these two views be reconciled? What is the relationship between faith and history? Is the nature of Christianity exhausted by the certain establishment of a history of Jesus of Nazareth? Is Jesus of Nazareth an essential part of the Christian message? To what extent, if any, is faith dependent upon historical research? It is here that the distinction

¹Hoskyns and Davey, The Riddle of the New Testament, 10.

between fact and interpretation may be of considerable assistance.¹ It should first of all be noted that this distinction between fact and interpretation is merely a critical one. We do not start with fact and add interpretation, any more than we start with body and add soul, in order to make a concrete whole: rather the two occur always and everywhere in strict conjunction. Admitting that, however, the distinction may still be of great service.

In every event of religious significance there is fact plus interpretation. The person Jesus of Nazareth is the factual side of the event under consideration. But only when ~~Jesus~~ is interpreted as the Christ in an ^{existentiell} decision is the event religiously significant. Tillich writes: "Jesus as the Christ is both an historical fact and a subject of believing reception. One cannot speak the truth about the event on which Christianity is based without asserting both sides. Many theological mistakes could have been avoided if these two sides of the 'Christian event' had been emphasized with equal strength."² But suppose, as Tillich conjectures, it could be almost certainly proved that a Jesus of Nazareth never really existed. We cannot be absolutely certain that historical research could not

¹cf. above, 28; 76. . ²Tillich, ST II, 113.

prove such a thing. Suppose a primitive but reliable voters' list was unearthed along with the Dead Sea scrolls. Suppose that it could be almost certainly shown that there was no Jesus born in Bethlehem, that no Jesus lived in Nazareth, that no Pontius Pilate ever ruled as Roman governor. Would faith then be destroyed? Certainly not. "No historical criticism can question the immediate awareness of those who find themselves transformed into the state of faith."¹ One recalls the Cartesian dictum 'I think, therefore I am'; and likewise, to the Christian, 'I believe, therefore I participate in the New Being'. But this conviction, in turn, necessitates a life in which the New Being has conquered the old, though it does not necessarily demand that this be the life of Jesus of Nazareth. But 'I participate in the New Being, therefore the New Being must have existed'. "One must say that participation, not historical argument, guarantees the reality of the event upon which Christianity is based. It guarantees a personal life in which the New Being has conquered the old being. But it does not guarantee his name to be Jesus of Nazareth. Historical doubt concerning the existence and life of someone with this name cannot be overruled. He might have had

¹Tillich, ST II, 131.

another name. (This is an historically absurd, but logically necessary, consequence of the historical method.) Whatever his name the New Being was and is actual in this man."¹

Such a hypothetical state of affairs recalls Kierkegaard's statement: "If the contemporary generation had left behind them nothing but the words 'we have believed that in such and such a year God appeared among us in the humble figure of a servant, that He lived and taught in our community, and finally died', it would be more than enough."² Such a faith does not demand that the person be Jesus of Nazareth, appearing in the years 1 to 30, but it does demand a personal life living somewhere at some particular juncture of history. Even this radical historical criticism does not negate the value for faith of a particular 'personal life' or 'servant' who lived in 'such and such a year'. Faith is therefore irrevocably and irresistibly tied to an historical figure: and this is the substratum without which faith could not exist; this is the irreducible factum without which Christianity would be a mockery. But is it enough just to know that a personal life once existed which conquered the old being? Is this really 'more than enough':

¹Tillich, ST II, 113.

²Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 87.

is it, in fact, at all sufficient? It is not, and for at least three reasons. It is insufficient for the historian, the theologian and the man in the situation of faith.

The historian is constrained to give some account of the rise of the religious movement emanating from Jesus of Nazareth. At the very least, it would seem that the historian is bound to admit that there dwelt in this particular figure attributes and abilities of an unusual nature. And if the historian admits the historical reality of the person Jesus of Nazareth, he must also admit that he must have been sufficiently notable to found the Christian religion. There must have been some distinctive features about this Jesus of Nazareth to account for the church which bears his name. "There must have been something about the historical Jesus at the time at which He was on earth, to make the New Testament witnesses summon men to decide for or against him."¹ So Bultmann's reconstruction of the history of Jesus of Nazareth is not sufficient for the pure historical scientist. "It is very doubtful whether the Christian faith could have been built upon the foundation of a historic Jesus who, as Bultmann presents him, was little more than a teacher of practical philosophy with certain resemblances to existen-

¹Henderson, op. cit., 49.

tialism and who is stripped of all the numinous characteristics which the Gospels ascribe to him."¹ While admitting that Jesus was an unusual individual, the historian will treat such a founder on the same basis as any other religious leader. The historian may well say that this particular founder - Jesus of Nazareth - was an unusual figure. He will not say that he was unique. He may conclude, with Karl Barth, that Jesus Christ is "one whose activity is so easily commonplace alongside more than one other founder of a religion and even alongside many later representatives of His own 'religion'."² And were the growth of Christianity the only propelling factor forcing the historian to conclusions, he could not even say that this particular religious leader was necessarily either a morally good or an intellectually brilliant person. After all, the phenomenal growth of Christian Science seems quite disproportionate to the methods, meditations and muddled metaphysics of its founder, Mrs. Eddy.

And if the historian treats Jesus as one among many religious founders, he will treat Jesus' miracles on the same basis: as events accruing to him, as to all religious

¹Macquarrie, An Existentialist Theology, 23.

²Barth CD I/1, 188.

leaders. To the historian, "criticism of one class of 'miracles' must be applicable to all, from the Incarnation, Joshua's prolonged daylight, and the Resurrection, to the 'calm' of Dunkirk."¹ If the historian admits the validity of the five principles outlined in chapter three for investigating the phenomena of faith-healing and Roman Catholic centres of healing,² he will apply these principles to the biblical miracles as well, and no one should be surprised if the results are similar.

The theologian is bound to give some account of the rise of dogma surrounding the person Jesus of Nazareth. It is clearly insufficient to say that the early church fabricated the doctrines which were associated with Jesus. Were there no elements in this life, in this Historie, which through faith could be changed into belief, into Geschichte? If there was nothing there, then we have re-introduced the old contranatural position: faith becomes an arbitrary, unmediated, vertical miracle, which could as well have been accomplished (had it pleased God) by a cat. Does the fact Jesus of Nazareth in any way warrant the interpretation that he is the Christ? Fuller remarks: "To believe that Jesus of Nazareth and his fate are the saving act of God

¹Myers, "Miracles", 276. ²Cf. above, 127ff.

in history involves a particular interpretation of a particular track of history, and it is therefore of primary importance for the decision of faith to know whether that history can bear that interpretation. Was that interpretation imposed arbitrarily upon those events by the first Christians, or was that history such as to demand that interpretation?

. . . Why should the church have selected this particular track of history and proclaimed it to be the redemptive act of God? Why not - a very pertinent question, in view of the nature of Bultmann's reconstruction of the history of Jesus - the history of John the Baptist, who was also an eschatological prophet and died a martyr's death?"¹ Or, "if we cannot validly find any revelation of God in the portrait of Jesus as an historical person, how are we ever to reach and accept those dogmas about him?"² On the other hand, the acceptance of the picture of Jesus of Nazareth in no way necessitates the particular interpretation that Jesus is the Christ. Admitting the fact (the Jesus of history) as true, the particular interpretation (that Jesus is the Christ) by no means follows. The ability to make that interpretation is, traditionally speaking, the work

¹Fuller, The Mission and Achievement of Jesus, 15.

²Baillie, God Was In Christ, 50.

of the Holy Spirit. But without the fact the particular Christian interpretation cannot follow. At the same time, the fact without the existentiell Christian interpretation is religiously barren, personally meaningless. "Christianity was born, not with the birth of the man who is called 'Jesus', but in the moment in which one of his followers was driven to say to him, 'Thou art the Christ'. And Christianity will live as long as there are people who repeat this assertion."¹

'Without the fact the particular Christian interpretation cannot follow'. This points to a danger in Bultmann's treatment of the resurrection. At times he seems to imply of the resurrection that nothing happened in the realm of events or Vorhandenheit (whether it be a literal resurrection, a reanimation of a corpse, or a psychological experience). So Malevez, expounding Bultmann's thought on this point, interprets Bultmann as meaning that God simply created the belief in the resurrection in the minds of the disciples.² Such a belief is apparently unrelated to any worldly happening, unmediated by any event. If this is a correct interpretation of Bultmann's thought, the experience known as the resurrection was unmediated,

¹Tillich, ST II, 112. ²Cf. Malevez, op. cit., 85.

arbitrary, a bolt from the blue, contranatural in the strictest sense of the term. As against this, we must insist that something happened in the world of Vorhandenheit, some event which shared the ambiguity of the sphere of Vorhandenheit, some happening which demanded from the participant the insight of faith in order to apprehend the activity of God. The logic of faith demands that something happened, though it by no means informs us as to exactly what did happen. Of course, some expositors of Bultmann's thought in regard to the resurrection think that he does admit something like a psychological experience. Fuller so seems to interpret him: "Bultmann is prepared to concede the historicity of the Resurrection appearances as subjective experiences of the first disciples."¹ If this is what Bultmann means by the resurrection (a psychological experience), then the objection here mentioned is overcome. But he is by no means clear on this point.

The person in the situation of faith is bound to give some account of the way in which Jesus is the Christ; some account of the way in which the reconciler is also the model. The person in the situation of faith is bound to give some account of the manner in which he, as a partici-

¹Fuller, op. cit., 17.

pator, is (in some measure) a transformed person. We may frankly admit that no purely historical account of the Jesus of history can be given. Yet it was men who encountered Jesus who were transformed, who were enabled (by faith) to call him the Christ, who have conserved for us the picture of Jesus, the Christ. No particular trait of that picture can be verified with complete certainty. But it is the picture as a whole which has mediated and which does mediate the transforming power of Christ. "The concrete biblical material is not guaranteed by faith in respect to empirical factuality, but it is guaranteed as an adequate expression of the transforming power in the New Being as the Christ. Only in this sense does faith guarantee the biblical picture of Jesus. . . . The picture has creative power, because the power of the New Being is expressed in and through it."¹ Because the person in the situation of faith experiences moments of transforming power through the New Being, he is aware that Christ is one with the Father. In this sense, and in that moment, he is aware of the sinlessness of Christ. Such a person is assured of the unity of the Father and the Son through faith: and this assurance is his in the face of historical statements which seem to contradict it. Such

¹Tillich, ST II, 132-33.

a person realizes that moral purity and unity with God cannot be 'read off' any historical document, nor could these characteristics even be determined by the contemporaries of Jesus himself.¹

So for the historian, the theologian, and the man in the situation of faith, Kierkegaard's statement of belief is not sufficient. And Kierkegaard himself seems to have recognized this. In a section entitled 'Christ as Model - and as Reconciler', Kierkegaard places priority upon the aspect of reconciliation, but recognizes the necessity of Christ as model as well.

If there should be talk about a difference between the gospels and the epistles, then it must consist in that Christ is specially emphasized in the epistles as the Reconciler, with his reconciling death, and grace: in the gospels Christ is more a Model.

Now one can also say, that if Christ was merely a Reconciler, then his death was the chief thing, then he did not need to live so long on the earth, did not need to be born a child, to grow up and so on.

However it must be noted that in order that he should be a sacrifice there was always need for some time, for his death must also at the same time be man's guilt, so that some time was necessary in order to bring about the situation that the race of man put him to death.

In so far as one can say that in the gospels the Model is more emphasized, this is counterbalanced by the fact that concerning the whole of the rest of his life there is nothing really related which would have been more important if he had been emphasized specially as a Model. And on the other hand, the three years he lived in public, in which he is a Model or endures being a Model, these three years are

¹Cf. above, 116ff.

indeed about the shortest time necessary, in historic proportion, to bring about the catastrophe which was his death or reconciliation. He therefore does not exist in any of these years solely as a Model, but his existing is related to the catastrophe in which he was placed, which he was eternally destined for, as Reconciler.

Kierkegaard, Papirer X/5, xlv, 49.

"Skulde der vaere Tale om en Forskjel mellem 'Evangelierne' og 'Brevene', maatte det vaere den, at i 'Brevene' er Christus isaer fremhaevet som Forsoneren, hans forsonende Død, Naaden; i Evangeliet er Christus mere som Forbilledet.

Man kan nu ogsaa sige, at dersom Christus blot var Forsoneren, saa hans Død var Hovedsagen, saa havde han ikke behøvet at leve saa laenge paa Jorden, ikke behøvet at lade sig føde som Barn, at voxe o: s: v:

Imidlertid maa dog bemaerkes, at for at han kunde blive Offret, vilde der dog altid behøves nogen Tid, thi hans Død maatte jo dog tillige vaere Menneskenes Skyld, saa der altid behøves nogen Tid for at tilveiebringe Situationen, at Slægten slog ham ihjel.

Forsaavidt man da kan sige, at i Evangelierne er "Forbilledet" mere fremtraedende, da contrabalanceres dette dog derved, at der om hele hans øvrige Liv egentlig Intet fortaelles, hvilket vilde have vaeret af Vigtighed, hvis han saerligen skulde fremhaeves som Forbilledet. Og paa den anden Side: de tre Aar han lever for Alles Øine, disse tre Aar, hvori han er Forbilledet eller udholder det at vaere Forbilledet, disse 3 Aar ere vel omtrent den korteste Tid der behøvedes for, i historik Proportion, at tilveiebringe den Katastrophe, der blev hans Forsonings Død. Han eksisterer altsaa ikke i noget af disse tre Aars Øieblikke ene og alene som Forbilledet, men hans Eksisteren er forholdende sig til Katastrophen, i hvilken han saa er, hvad han evig var bestemt til og frit havde bestemt sig til, Forsonen."

This section was drawn to my attention, and translated, by Professor R. Gregor Smith.

Thus Kierkegaard does emphasize that the true Christian witness is the imitator of Christ.¹

It is logically conceivable, though historically improbable, that Christianity could be maintained if the Christian knew only that there was once a person who was called the Christ by his followers. But for the historian, the theologian, and the man in the situation of faith, more than this is clearly necessary. No biography of the historical Jesus can indeed be written, no single event of the New Testament can certainly be proved as true, but the broad picture of Jesus who was called the Christ, conserved by those who did so call him, is essential for the faith: in that this picture mediates the power of the New Being. The veracity of that picture does not guarantee faith, but without the picture there is no faith.

The analysis yields no clear results: the Jesus of history is essential to Christianity, but Christianity is clearly not exhausted by the establishing of a real historical figure, Jesus of Nazareth. No more, therefore, has the analysis of this problem pin-pointed the procedure by which the miracles are to be transferred from Vorhandenheit to Dasein, from Historie to Geschichte. We return to this

¹Cf. Jolivet, Introduction to Kierkegaard, 186.

problem in chapter nine.¹

But one thing does seem reasonably clear at this point: that the key to biblical understanding lies in the questions we ask of the Bible. Even if one disagrees with Bultmann's particular question (of personal existence), or if one refuses to regard this question as the only one, it is clear that questions must be asked if the Bible is to answer meaningfully. We can read the Bible with the question of the attributes of a divine man (as in supernaturalism), or we can read the Bible with the question of ancient folklore literature (as in form criticism). Both of these approaches are interesting and informative, but it can hardly be said that either is of particular religious significance. And further, it seems clear that if in reading the Bible we are simply interested in reconstructing a biography of a past historical figure - Jesus of Nazareth, determining what he said and did (or whether and in what way the miracles happened) - the results may be intriguing and stimulating, but such a study in itself will not lead one to the Christ of faith. A much better question would therefore seem to be 'Lord, what hast Thou to say to me in this text?' If such a question is asked of a recorded miracle, it only becomes religiously

¹Cf. below, 446f.

significant if in and through the biblical report God speaks to me. Only then has that recorded event become religiously meaningful, and an act of God to me and for me, i.e., a miracle.

Yet such an interpretation would seem to exclude the possibility of an 'objective' miracle, one which any reasonable person would have to admit as due to the direct activity of God. In the next two chapters (the first two of Part Three) we examine two different attempts - both of which are modern and profound - to explain to the satisfaction of the scientist, the philosopher and the Christian how God acts in a miracle. The chapters are entitled "The Rational View" and "The Lingual View". But before passing to a presentation of these arguments, we stop to criticize the three movements of Part Two in the light of Tillich's 'point of view'.

At the end of Part One we drew attention to Tillich's 'point of view' and suggested that his correlation of message and situation was a satisfactory way of judging whether or not a particular theological position was sound. On the one hand, it is possible for a theology to be scripturally accurate and yet be biblically unsound if the claims and questions of the situation go unnoticed. It is

possible for a theologian to be literally faithful to Holy Scripture and yet be spiritually faithless to the Bible if the claims and questions of the situation go unnoticed. A man may be a great and profound biblicist and yet be no theologian if he is oblivious of the claims and questions of the situation. On the other hand, a theology which is only aware of the claims and questions of the situation cannot answer these questions, cannot fulfil these claims; such is a meaningless and barren theology; such, in fact, is no theology at all. The three traditional views failed both with regard to fidelity to the eternal message and with regard to ability to speak meaningfully to the contemporary situation. Using this same critical apparatus, what is to be said about the three arguments presented in Part Two?

What are we to say of the theology of Karl Barth? I think we can say that Barth earnestly tries to give a view of miracle with consideration only to the eternal truth of the message itself. Barth's views on miracle are in no way apologetic: he considers miracle neither in relation to nature (as do all the traditional views in Part One) nor with consideration to the views of contemporary philosophy and science (as do all the contemporary views in Part Three). Barth clearly does justice to the truth of the eternal message: in other words, he is scripturally accurate. Despite

superficial similarities with traditional theology, Barth sees and emphasizes (as traditional theology does not) the paradox of faith: he does not try to 'prove' Christianity apart from the essential catalyst of faith. But at the same time, Barth turns his back on the temporal situation. Before he commences his theology, Barth devalues the situation of any claim and of any question. The situation is pronounced worthless and useless at the very outset. Barth attempts to be solely a biblicist. But as we have already pointed out, this is an over-simplification of the genius of Barth. We must go on to say that time and time again he does alter his theology in the light of the situation. His devotion to the letter is never quite complete, so that he often casts light on the spirit as well. In spite of his disclaimers, he does in fact often take account of the situation: and thus he fulfils what I have described as one of the necessary prerequisites of any genuine theology. But all this he does, ^{as it were,} against his own better intention, as he sees it. We have therefore the right to demand, with Tillich, that the theology of Barth "give up its exclusive transcendence and take seriously the attempt of apologetic theology to answer the questions put before it by the contemporary situation."¹

¹Tillich, ST I, 7.

When it comes to a discussion of form criticism, our criticism is somewhat similar, but from an entirely different direction. If Barth's theology is spoiled by an excessive attention to the message, form criticism is spoiled by an excessive attention to the situation. Despite the scholarly, profuse, and detailed work of its disciples, form criticism in itself seems to give no answers to the questions of the situation at all. It is helpful in clarifying the situation: it is helpful in pointing out that the Bible is a human book, written by certain specific men at certain specific historical junctures. Form criticism marks an advance in biblical research, and it must certainly be taken up and considered by any modern theologian. Yet while helpful in clarifying the situation, form criticism in itself does little or nothing in promulgating the truth of the eternal message.

Is the demythological movement not somewhat similar, i.e. so interested in and tied to the temporal situation that the eternal truth of the message is negated, if not entirely lost? Certainly this is an oft-repeated and popular criticism of the movement. I do not believe that a careful consideration of demythologizing will sustain this somewhat superficial judgement. Two factors seem to be at work in rendering the popular and superficial judgement possible.

One factor is that Bultmann repeatedly attacks many traditional forms of expression of the faith: many of these attacks are, in my opinion, quite justifiable. The other factor is that Bultmann often fails to understand properly the scientific attitude, particularly with regard to what he considers to be 'possible' or 'conceivable': here his position is quite weak and indefensible. Yet essentially the demythologist attempts to be faithful to the eternal message and to speak meaningfully to the temporal situation. Bultmann himself significantly says: "If the challenge of demythologizing was first raised by the conflict between the mythological cosmology of the Bible and the modern scientific world view, it at once became evident that the restatement of mythology is a requirement of faith itself."¹

The demythological movement, as it is presented in chapter six, seems essentially negative in character. It needs, as Bultmann recognizes, the more positive construction of the existential view (given in chapter nine). If demythologizing be merely an attack on obsolete forms of expression it can clear away unnecessary edifices, but cannot replace them with any structures of its own. If demythologizing be merely an onslaught on obsolete traditionalism, it may be a necessary

¹Bartsch (ed.), KM, 210.

theological purgative, but it can hardly be maintained as a steady diet. One of the great merits of demythologizing is that it points out clearly that the key to biblical understanding lies in the questions we ask of the Bible. In this way it is emphasized afresh that in a sound theology the answers of the eternal message are meaningfully related to the claims and questions of the temporal situation.

In Part Three I examine truly contemporary views of the concept of miracle which, while trying to remain faithful to the fundamental insights of the Bible, yet also attempt to render the concept of miracle intelligible and meaningful to modern man. The titles of the three chapters in Part Three are "The Rational View", "The Lingual View", and "The Existential View". And at the end of Part Three we will again evaluate these three positions in the light of Tillich's 'point of view'.

PART THREE - Contemporary Views.

Chapter VII. The Rational View.

"God works the sensible and visible things which He wills, in order to signify and manifest Himself in them, as He Himself knows it to be fitting, without any appearing of His very substance itself. . . ." Augustine.

<u>CFNS</u>	=	Heim, K.	<u>Christian Faith and Natural Science.</u>
<u>TSWV</u>	=	_____.	<u>The Transformation of the Scientific World View.</u>
<u>WG</u>	=	Farmer, H. H.	<u>The World and God.</u>

The rationalist is convinced that the concept of miracle can only be meaningfully discussed if one keeps two things in mind. First of all, one should see that a comprehensive religious world-picture must be constructed. Secondly, one should understand that, seen from within, nature is a war of living wills.

The chapter is divided as follows. First, the two basic assumptions, with their corollaries, are presented in a straightforward manner. Secondly, the rationalist's specific treatment of miracle is discussed. Thirdly, the basic assumptions and the specific treatment of miracle are critically considered.

The rationalist commences by saying that the word miracle is clear only in the context of a complete religious understanding, or a comprehensive Christian world-picture. The concept of miracle cannot be approached from a merely scientific or philosophical standpoint. Thus Farmer says: "Miracle being fundamentally a religious category and not a scientific or philosophic one, the proper place to begin is within the sphere of living religion itself" (WG, 108). We can understand miracle only if we approach the "whole question from the angle of religious life itself" (WG, 109). Likewise Heim, who sees miracle as a genuine problem for the scientist, says: "If we wish to investigate the relation

between faith in God and the theses of modern natural science, we require an origin from which to plot the enquiry, just as a circle must have its origin immovably fixed in order that its circumference may be plotted in a given plane. The fixed point from which we must begin can be none other than God" (TSWV, 11). Yet in saying this - that the concept of miracle is understandable only in the context of a complete religious understanding - the rationalist does not postulate the religious situation or the existence of God and, with this as an irrefragable premise, go on to discuss and expound the meaning of miracle.¹ The question is, How is one to understand the religious situation? How can one intelligently postulate the existence of God? It is just this problem to which Farmer and Heim attempt to give an answer.

The rationalist is an avowed apologete, and he is particularly concerned about the cleavage between the findings of science and the assertions of Christianity. Christian dogmatists must wake up to the fact that both the New Testament writers and the Protestant Reformers

¹Cf. Coulson, Science and Christian Belief, 17, where just this charge is laid against Heim. But to do so would be to entirely ignore Heim's earlier works.

lived in an anthropocentric universe, where the earth (and consequently man) was thought of as being right in the centre of things. For such a world and such a man, history could easily be imagined as having begun in 4004 B.C. But to-day we know that our solar system is only a segment of the lens-shaped island which is our galaxy and which has a diameter of about 100,000 light years (the velocity of light being calculated at 186,282 miles per second). As for time, if we accept the scientifically held view that the earth is 2880 million years old and if we think of this period as a day of 24 hours, then man appeared only at 22 seconds to midnight: further, world history occurred only in the last three-tenths of a second before midnight. For that reason it is obvious that the various propositions about Christianity - that God, the author of the universe, is revealed in a man, Jesus Christ - appear differently against this new scientific background. Theology and the theologians should take notice of this difference. But in the main, theology and the theologians have done nothing of the kind, with the result that while a minority of thinking people hold on to the affirmations of the Christian faith as disclosing the meaning of the universe, the vast majority of mankind take these assertions as mere relics of an obsolete era (CFNS, 11ff.). "When we utter the word God, we are in the presence

of a reality which, for the minority, for those who are said to be 'religiously anchored', is reality tout court, the most real reality of all. . . . While the others cannot understand what this is all about, and what it is that is regarded by a certain group of people as the ens realissimum, the most real reality of all" (CFNS, 152-53). But how can this pitiful cleavage be overcome? In brief, by the erection of a world-picture which satisfies both the scientist and the man of faith.

Thus Heim believes that it is necessary to formulate a philosophy, a Weltanschauung, in which various levels and perspectives - scientific, philosophical and theological - have a place. "We are concerned with forming a comprehensive picture of reality" (CFNS, 82). Such a philosophy needs and demands formulation for two reasons. First of all, it is only too true that the old anthropocentrism of the Bible and the Reformers has collapsed about our ears. Heim tells about the church that was almost completely destroyed in a bombing raid during the war. In fact, all that was left standing of the once-magnificent structure was a fragment of a doorway on which were ascribed the words: 'Repent ye; for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand!' But this ruin from the past could not be left standing like that permanently. Either it could be built up again into a complete church of

a design which suited the doorway, or the fragment could be pulled down and the ground cleared away. What Heim suggests is that we need to build anew, creating a philosophic fabric into which all threads may be woven. If this is not done, the Christian message will be cleared away from the modern world. The old system is beyond repair, which makes it all the more urgent that we construct a new system (CFNS, 27). But there is a second reason why it is necessary to formulate such a philosophy: secularism itself is now providing world-pictures to replace the obsolete anthropocentrism. These so-called philosophies altogether leave out God, who for the Christian is the most real reality of all. In the place of these pagan philosophies, apologetics must provide a world-picture which is catholic and comprehensive, doing justice to all levels of reality. "We are confronted with an overall picture of reality which is imposingly comprehensive and coherent. We can counter this overall conception only by proposing a different overall conception, which, just like the world-picture of secularism, comprises the entire reality of the universe as we see it to-day, from the spiral nebulae down to the electrons" (CFNS, 26). The world-pictures that secularism has postulated receive detailed and critical treatment in one of Heim's works (cf. TSWV). The faiths in terms of which world-pictures have been constructed

are 1) faith in the absolute object, 2) faith in absolute time and space, and 3) faith in absolute determinism in natural events. "Wherever, in the description of nature, an absolute is posited which needs no other magnitude through which it exists, but which exists only through itself, or whenever a form of existence is presupposed which needs no other form of existence to which it is relative, but which has validity solely through itself, there faith breaks into scientific description, though the word 'faith' or the word 'God' does not occur" (TSWV, 21-2). Heim criticizes all three faiths and shows that they are really pseudo-faiths. "One after another of the absolutes . . . have collapsed together, and not by reason of any theoretical reflections of the kind which were advanced in the earlier period of scepticism and relativism, but rather through facts of experience verified experimentally, and not to be denied, although they were in clear contradiction to dogmatic principles with which men had hitherto approached the study of nature, and although the experiments by which they were established were of an unlooked-for kind" (TSWV, 24). But what is the result of the disestablishing of these faiths? Briefly, "the collapse of a causal-mechanical world-picture has again made room for God. . . . The line approach from nature to God . . . which was blocked in the age of causal

mechanism, is now open again following upon the breakdown of the causal-mechanical world-view" (TSWV, 17). "Science [is] on the road to religion" (CFNS, 32).

Heim believes that a comprehensive world-picture can be developed by employing the concept of space or dimension. But what is a space? "A space is every interminable continuum with which a manifold of different contents may be distinguished according to the special law of its structure."¹ "Each space possesses a structure which is fundamentally different from the structure of all other spaces" (CFNS, 169). Since each space has its own laws or principles, there are different spaces: and moreover, the same thing may be in more than one space. The result of this is that what is paradoxical and indeed impossible in one space becomes quite possible when another space is brought in to transform the situation. Thus, in two-dimensional space only one line can be drawn at right angles to a given line at a given point. But if three-dimensional space be introduced, an infinite number of such lines can be drawn. Such a conception of space does not mean that the spaces or dimensions are exclusive, but rather that they interpenetrate. How many spaces or dimensions are there? What are the con-

¹Heim, God Transcendent, 60.

tents of each space? What are the laws or principles holding in each space?

The first dimension is called the I-It space and refers to the objective world. The objective world is that "with which in the natural sciences we are exclusively concerned, the world which we can illuminate and investigate with the microscope and the telescope" (CFNS, 108). This is the sphere of objects, things, Vorhandenheit. We commonly think of such phenomena as objects standing outside of us and over against us, but not threatening our existence: inactive, inanimate, their form already determined, and in this sense, past. They are what they are, with no inherent possibility in the future open to them. "If we consider Time in the concrete sense of lived Time, dominated as that is by the contrast between Becoming and Already-become, then we find nothing surprising in our being able to set down the equation: The objective world is in the state of having already become. We ourselves, the Subjects, who must speak of ourselves in the first person, stand in the first condition, in which there is a Real Present and decisions are to be made. The relation 'I-It' is therefore the relation in which the world of the Already-accomplished stands over against the Real Present in retrospect. The 'It'-world is the picture got from the standpoint of the

Real Present, showing the Already-become, the Unalterable."¹

"Science deals, in fact, only with phenomena in the strict usage of the term, with reality as it appears or presents itself to a certain point of view" (WG, 154). And the principle governing the I-It space is usually expressed in the term natural law.

The second space is the I-Thou dimension. This space is like the I-It world in that it deals with the whole of reality, but from a different point of view.

"There exists simultaneously [with the I-It space] a second space, which, together with the whole of reality, we traverse at every instant and which surrounds us from all sides just as the space of objectivity does. This is the non-objective space in which the I and the Thou encounter one another"

(CFNS, 108). "There is then, we affirm, in certain circumstances a direct awareness of personal entities other than ourselves, with whom we stand in an order, or dimension, of personal relationships" (WG, 15). Science is not at all concerned with this I-Thou dimension. Heim brings this out by pointing to two of the Heideggerean existentiell² elements, Jemeinigkeit and Geworfenheit.³ Jemeinigkeit refers to the

¹Heim, God Transcendent, 123-24.

²For the meaning of this and similar terms used throughout this chapter, cf. above, 268.

³For the distinction between these two terms, I am again indebted to unpublished material by Professor Henderson.

reality of my own ego: the active subject in all knowing, scientific and otherwise. The experience of the ego must be presupposed if natural science is to be at all possible. And, "I stand with respect to a certain quite definite, concrete and clearly distinguishable and circumscribable content of the objective world of experience in the relation which we express with the word 'my'. . . . I myself am neither in my body nor above it nor beside it. I am on this side of all objectivity, and consequently outside all three-dimensional space. The relation here comes into force, which Heidegger has called 'each-mine-ness' (Jemeinigkeit), which is absolutely opposed to all objective relations and presents no analogy whatever with any of them" (CFNS, 38). As we have seen from a previous chapter, Geworfenheit is the way in which the dice has turned up for us in this life: the facts, for instance, that we are born in the twentieth century, with certain IQ's and certain physiques.¹ "I did not choose this position myself. . . . I simply find myself in this position; my attachment to this body, this genetic nexus, this nation and homeland, all is imposed upon me either as an unmerited good fortune or as an inescapable burden, as the case may be. My being cast into this posi-

¹Cf. above, 269.

tion is quite independent of all my own decisions. My lot has been decided here without any intervention on my part" (CFNS, 42). In these two Heideggerean existentiell elements, science is not the least interested: yet they are of crucial significance in the I-Thou dimension. Therefore, I myself am non-objective, yet bound to the objective world: situated in a definite place at a definite time in the history of mankind and of the world.

Moreover, in the I-Thou space, I am in relationship with other persons, who, like myself, are non-objective and yet bound to the world. What are the characteristics of this relationship? First, "there is always some awareness of purpose or will or self-activity, however it may be called, coming forth from the other man and meeting ours, within a common situation, in a certain peculiar and irreducible tension or resistance" (WG, 21). This conflict or tension follows "from the mutually exclusive claims of the I and the Thou. Either I, subject A, am the central pivot of the world, or else you, subject B, are that centre" (CFNS, 124). This tension can be resolved in one of two ways. One of the subjects may dominate, suppress or manipulate the other, thus reducing the subjected one to the level of an object and using him as an object. "Most sensitive people feel that the attempt to manipulate the activity of an individual

apart from his own genuine insight into, and acceptance of, the ends in view is what they call 'an abuse of personality'. . . . A man who is unduly submissive to another's purposes is said to have no personality, to be a non-entity, a 'rubber stamp'" (WG, 22). The other way of resolving this tension is that each of the subjects treats the other as a Thou, a true person, so that a relationship of trust and confidence is established. "Trust in the fullest sense is only possible between two beings who are implicitly, if not explicitly, aware of one another as personalities, or moral subjects, that is to say, as conscious beings who are enabled to stand above the flux of process because both are inwardly under the rule of the same world of final value" (WG, 20-1). In the analyses of the I-It and the I-Thou dimensions, it is at once obvious how greatly indebted both Farmer and Heim are to Martin Buber.¹

Heim has now established the reality of the I-It objective dimension and the reality of the non-objective I-Thou personal dimension. Yet in spite of their differences, both these dimensions belong to polar space: that is, each component in each space is at once limited and conditioned by other components in that space. In the I-It space the

¹In particular, cf. Buber, I and Thou.

objects stand over against each other, excluding and limiting one another. In the I-Thou dimension the other ego threatens the very existence of my own ego. "The fundamental law of polarity governs the relationships of the spatial-temporal world of objects. . . . The non-objective relations too, which are present within the polar space, are subject to the same fundamental law" (CFNS, 156-57). But does the explication of these two spaces exhaust the whole of reality? Clearly, for the Christian, such is not the case. So the question arises: "Is there some other form of existence in addition to polarity?" (CFNS, 160). The rationalist attempts to meet this need by the construction of a suprapolar space.

Heim is convinced that God's existence, transcendence and omnipresence can best be explained by postulating a suprapolar space. This suprapolar space does not "stand behind us as a paradise lost nor lie before us as a wishful dream. [Neither does this suprapolar space] hover high above us in spatial transcendence merely as a distant beyond, 'up there in heaven'" (CFNS, 161). Again, "the presence of God is not an upper story of the one cosmic space, but a separate all-embracing space by itself, so that the polar and the suprapolar worlds do not stand with respect to one another in the same relation as two floors of the same house but in the relation of two spaces" (CFNS,

172). Therefore God, like the ego, is non-objective and excluded from scientific investigation. God is a "reality which is beyond the reach of scientific investigation" (CFNS, 33). Thus the suprapolar space is "just as all-present and all-embracing and just as inclusive of the whole of reality as is the case with the polar form of being within which we are confined" (CFNS, 162). By employing the concept of space, the rationalist has given expression to the most important level of reality in a meaningful manner: and more than that the concept of space is intelligible and acceptable to the scientist. "A concept has been found which bridges the gulf that gapes between the polar and the suprapolar zones. This is the concept of space, which is here applied to the suprapolar realm but is at the same time one of the fundamental concepts with which modern physics works" (CFNS, 162). Nor is the notion of a suprapolar space an attempt on the part of the rationalist to enmesh God, to reduce him to the dimensions and concepts of this world. God remains the wholly other, totally incomprehensible. But in the suprapolar space, in the relation in that dimension, God is accessible to me as a subject. "When we refer to the suprapolar space, we cannot be referring to the eternal reality of God itself, but only to one aspect, a side which is turned towards us, the only side from which

God can be accessible to us, to you and me, if He is willing to disclose Himself at all" (CFNS, 164). The rationalist also believes that the concept of suprapolar space does full justice to the omnipresence of God. "We can escape from any reality, any person or any thing, which is contained within a space, simply by removing ourselves to another part of the space, where this person or thing is not present. It is only the space itself that we cannot escape. Go where we may, we shall still run into it. That is why there is no other form of expression for the presence of the inescapable God than space" (CFNS, 167). Again, "God's omnipresence is the space filling everything, into which the spaces of this world are fitted" (TSWV, 160). Moreover, the insight into the positive existence of this dimension is a gift: no merely intellectual endeavour will allow us to grasp the reality of the suprapolar space - such insight is the revelation of God alone. Access to the suprapolar space "can only be granted to us through grace, and the response to this gift of grace can only consist in this, that we surrender ourselves to it with our whole heart, that we love it with our whole heart, with our whole soul, with our whole strength, and with all our powers" (TSWV, 15).

The second fundamental rational assumption is that, seen from within, nature is a war of living wills. But like

the first assumption -- that miracle can be explained only within the context of a complete religious world-picture -- this second assumption is not thrown down in a take-it-or-leave-it fashion. Rather the rationalist, and particularly Heim, attempts to point to the truth of this assumption. And he begins by looking at himself.

The rationalist is convinced of the non-objective reality of his own person, of his ego, of his will. There is "a reality which presents itself to each one of us, including the natural scientist, even before we begin to observe, experiment and calculate. This reality is my personal ego, the I of which I am always aware before any objective knowledge enters my mind" (CFNS, 47). This non-objective ego is not open to scientific investigation: "the anatomist and even the psychologist see nothing of our essential selves" (CFNS, 56). But the rationalist goes on to say that the will belongs to the ego, and like the ego, is essentially non-objective. "I do not, and cannot, think of my will as something which in reality is other than what it immediately declares itself to be (namely, my will), and which I merely treat 'as if' it were my own. Indeed it is in a sense wrong to talk of it as my will, as though it were an object which I attach to myself; it is myself, an ultimate, irreducible self-activity,

which produces phenomena, but is not itself a mere phenomenon of some unknown reality which is other than I, and which is accessible to my control" (WG, 160). If this is so, "the will belongs to the non-objective space to which the ego belongs, the space in which the encounter takes place between the I and the Thou" (CFNS, 66). Or, "'will' means 'person'" (WG, 24). And since we recognize the Thou as a non-objective ego, we recognize the Thou also as will. Moreover, we experience this ego-will of the Thou when a state of polarity or tension grows up between myself and the Thou. The will is the underlying characteristic of the I-Thou relationship. "Nothing is clearer in our everyday life than the distinction between dealing with a person and dealing with a thing" (WG, 13).

The rationalist is convinced of the reality of God and sees this reality as being predominantly characterized by personal will. We must begin with "the awareness of God as personal will which lies somewhere near the heart of all living religion" (WG, 160). Again, "the Christian teaching about God and His relationship with men is personalistic through and through. Christianity says that whatever else may be true of God, and much else no doubt is true, it certainly is true that He is personal. And whatever else may be true of us as men, and much else

no doubt is true, it certainly is true that God has created us persons and has set us in a world of personal relationship both to Himself and to one another."¹ And Heim declares that "the centre of the suprapolar space is the personal God" (TSWV, 229). Moreover, "everything depends upon the answer to the question [of] our belief in the personal nature of God" (CFNS, 203).

The rationalist is convinced that even the so-called objective world, if seen on its inner side, would reveal will in some sense or other. Although this conviction is by no means absent in Farmer, it is Heim who has devoted most study to it. And Heim gives at least four reasons for this conviction.

First of all, Heim believes that the objective world is animate through the argument of analogical inference. As we have already seen, there is an innermost area to which I alone have direct access, and into which nobody else can look. I alone know what I suffer and what joys I experience. It is true that another person can form an 'outside picture' of what I am like, but he can penetrate into my 'inner picture' only by analogy and only partially, and that only because he can look into himself and know

¹Farmer, God and Men, 33.

immediately the experiences which he imagines that he has. But we cannot stop there. The analogical inference from the visible outside picture to the invisible inner picture is by no means confined to our relations with fellow human beings. We cannot help extending the analogical inference to include other beings which are somewhat further removed from us but with whom we still possess a certain similarity. Thus, to begin with, we extend the inference to the higher mammals which closely resemble human beings in their nervous system, bone structure, blood circulation, heart, respiratory organs and digestive apparatus. But even at this point we cannot stop: whether we like it or not "we must extend the procedure to include all the rest of the animal world, not excepting the birds, insects and worms and even the simplest bacteria and bacilli which at first sight seem to have no more in common with us than the fact that they too seek nourishment, defend themselves, and reproduce" (CPNS, 87-8). We cannot help feeling a real affinity with all the members of the animal world. "When the drones soar up from the beehive into the blue sky on their marriage and death flight, when a fly is caught in the web and struggles desperately to escape the threads in which the spider has enmeshed it, when the chickens crowd together trembling while the goshawk circles above

them, or when the father lion plays tenderly with his cubs, then we suspect that behind all these various sounds and movements lie fears, desires and erotic passions such as we know in our own inner life" (CFNS, 88). Yet still we must press on with the analogical inference: and we are constrained to say that we have certain resemblances even to the life of plants. For, of course, the line dividing (plant) life from animal life is a very uncertain demarcation. The plant as well as the animal takes its nourishment from its environment, defends itself against its enemies with dangerous weapons such as thorns and barbs, and has a highly developed sexual life with male and female organs. And even here the rationalist Heim does not stop nor rest content: we must now shove over the boundary marking the organic from the inorganic. Even here "we must reckon with the possibility that behind inorganic nature too there is something which in some way resembles our own soul-life" (CFNS, 91). Nothing is inanimate, the rationalist is a panpsychist: and Heim summarizes his construction of panpsychism in the following terms. "The more closely any structure in the world around me resembles my human body in its organization and expressions, the more indications I shall have upon which to base my analogical inferences and the fuller will be the picture which I form of its inner life.

Conversely, the less closely such a structure resembles my body, the fainter and vaguer its 'inner picture' will become for me, and the more the inner life will appear to me as a soulless sleep or a semi-animate twilight" (CPNS, 90).

Secondly, Heim believes that the objective world is animate through the argument from the nature of time. Two examples which Heim employs help to explicate and to illustrate this argument. He points out that we experience a sense of crisis very intensely at times when fateful decisions are being taken in which everything is at stake. Consider, for example, the hours just before the outbreak of war. In such a situation we are almost physically aware of a painful tension at the dividing line between the decided and the undecided condition of the world. Before this line is reached, all possibilities are still open. The war may still be averted. Diplomats exchange telegrams. One alarming report follows close on the heels of another. The air is alive with rumours, the atmosphere electrically charged. The situation seems almost desperate. But the tide may still turn. No matter how dark things look, until the time is reached, the war may well be averted (CPNS, 65). The second example concerns the report of the reaction of a group of visitors to the Krupp works. There the visitors were shown a huge steam-hammer which came down with tremen-

dous force when a certain knob was pressed, and it was guaranteed to flatten any object beneath it. The mechanism of the hammer was so arranged that the engineer could stop the hammer at any point he chose. If a watch or a glass tumbler were placed beneath it, the hammer would plunge with all its weight and force towards the object, yet stop just short of it. But the interesting part of the report came when the engineer said: 'Now see for yourselves whether I am right. Put your hand on the platform and we will have a practical demonstration that the machine works properly'. Not a single visitor dared to accept the challenge. "The episode is interesting because it sheds a lurid light on what is involved in every instance of a transition from a past to a future event. . . . Always [any event] is only possible, potential, in the best cases probable, perhaps very probable, but never absolutely certain" (TSWV, 121-22). Even the objective world is only truly objective when it is past, when its conformation is decided. "If I enter into a relation with this substance at this stage of undecidedness, it is still in a non-objective state. It is thus together with me in the same sphere in which the encounter takes place between the I and the Thou" (CFNS, 69). "The world, in its inmost nature, that is to say, in its primary indeterminate nature, is Will, and only afterwards, when it objecti-

fies itself, does it become the visible and tangible world of substance, as we behold it."¹ In its indeterminate stage, the I-It world is really an I-Thou world, because, on its inner side, the objective world is really a conflict of living wills.

Thirdly, Heim believes that the objective world is animate through the experiments of modern physicists. This branch of knowledge has tended to undermine the classical theory of knowledge, whereby the absolute object is distinguished from the observing subject. Modern physics has emphasized that interaction between the 'subject' or 'spectator' and the 'object' is essential. Heim quotes von Weizsäcker on this matter. "The kind of interaction between observer and object which is necessary if certain properties of the object (e.g. its position) are to be displayed, cannot take place simultaneously with the interaction which is necessary if certain other properties (e.g. its momentum) are to be displayed. . . . The central part of quantum mechanics is therefore the refusal to describe atomic objects as structures in themselves to which properties such as appear in acts of observation can be described independently of the act of observation itself" (TSWV, 132-33). Heim

¹Heim, The New Divine Order, 40.

therefore concludes: "Since atomic physics has resolved the rigidity of lifeless matter into infinitesimal spaces in which elemental particles execute purposeful movements at enormous velocities like living individuals, the last possible reason has been eliminated for regarding the inorganic world as an unconscious inanimate mass" (CFNS, 101).

Fourthly, Heim sees the objective world as animated through the experiments in modern biology. Heim describes the fascinating experiments by which biologists have attempted to settle the old mechanistic-vitalistic controversy as to the nature of organic life. But Heim would break down the barrier between organic and inorganic, between 'live' and 'dead' matter. He shows that so-called 'dead' matter acts very like matter which is alive: indeed elements of both show the same wholeness-tendency. "In every fundamental structure, everything possible happens in order to build up the form appropriate to the structure in question, to maintain it and to diversify it at a higher level" (TSWV, 229). "Everywhere, outside organic life, we are confronted with mysterious wholenesses which construct themselves on principles akin to those of life. If we want to express in a single phrase the attitude to which we have been brought, we may call it a total neo-vitalism" (TSWV, 227).

The rationalist Heim has thus established a

panpsychic world: a "whole animate universe" (TSWV, 214). Farmer reaches the same conclusion by a somewhat shorter route. "We would suggest that in the ultimate order of things there stand human personalities, as created creators, set in a dimension of personal relationship with the Eternal Personal. Ranging down from the personal there are relatively independent creative entities, all of them, even on the lowest levels of a fundamentally mental kind, and all of them also in a continuous relationship or rapport with God, though not in a personal way. . . . All these and their relationships to God, are the ultimates of the real world, and through them the process goes on. Their activity is in what we, who can only think in the time-process, must call the creative present. Nature as it presents itself to us is a sort of depositum of this activity as it passes from the creative present into the past, and so becomes, on the one hand, a relatively settled routine on which future creativity must rest, but by which it is never completely determined" (WG, 175).

It is against this background of the two fundamental rational convictions - the necessity of a comprehensive world-picture and that seen from within, nature is a struggle of living powers of will - that we go on to discuss the specifically rational view of the concept of

miracle.

The rational view opposes the traditional supra-natural view of miracle. It is true that if transcendence be pictured as being literally above, then a miracle is an intervention or a suspension of natural law: "God could at any moment tear open the causal nexus like a piece of cloth" (TSWV, 170). "So long as we have not become aware that the presence of God is a space, encompassing the whole of reality just as the three-dimensional space does, so long, that is to say, as we conceive the world of God only as the upper story of the cosmic space; so long will God's activity, too, always be a force which affects earthly events only from above" (TSWV, 171). But by transferring the transcendence of God to suprapolar space, this great difficulty is overcome: since suprapolar space is the ground of, and embraces, all other relative world spaces. God, being a free personal will, can thus act at any point in any space. But this action is always from within.

God's activity, enacted from within, is only possible if he has rapport with all levels of reality in the world. And, as we have already seen, the rationalist has established a panpsychic universe. "Miraculous events are only understandable on the hypothesis that the process of nature in its deepest essence is not a dead mechanism

whose course is laid down in fixed terms, but that it is something which in some sense is alive; something which man may influence by the interposition of the will in the same way in which he can effect a human opponent" (TSWV, 174). The world is a conflict of living wills.

There is an essential element of faith in the exercise of will. That is to say, I have faith in my own will: if I tell myself to get out of bed, I believe that I can do it - there is no doubt here at all. Yet my will is not something which I can see, so my believing relationship to my will is an act of faith. I have a 'doubt-not-only-believe' attitude in relation to my own will. Similarly, in the method known as suggestion, someone outside of me places this 'doubt-not-only-believe' attitude in me: or better still, someone enables me to adopt this attitude. "Alterations can take place within the human body to a quite extensive degree, which are not induced from outside either by stimulus of the nerves or muscles, or by the effect of medicine, but solely through the certainty of successful achievement" (TSWV, 184). Therefore, in the power of suggestion there is faith, a faith lacking sight, "by which we know in advance by a clairvoyant certainty that successful obedience will follow" (TSWV, 186). We have faith in our own wills, and we can place reliance upon

other wills. In this regard, the rationalist points out that there are destroying, deathridden, demonic wills, just as there are creative, life-giving wills: and one can place reliance upon either kind. Faith in the activity of God is but an extension of this basic principle. Faith belongs, then, to the inner structure of the act of will. But since we can place reliance upon anyone, upon any will, how can we know that any particular event is due to faith in the will of God? "It is only when God has encountered us personally, and we live with Him in the fellowship of prayer, that we are able to 'discern the spirits'. Then we are able to trace at once whether the healing power under whose influence we stand comes from below and therefore makes us dependent upon men or upon demonic powers which draw us away from God and hurl us down into the awful depths of godlessness, or whether this healing power comes from above and brings us into closer relationship with God and deepens and strengthens our fellowship with Him in prayer" (TSWV, 193). In such an event, in such a miracle, when it is seen from within, "a higher will intervenes in the conflict of living wills. God encounters the destroying powers which permeate the created world" (TSWV, 191).

The rationalist emphasizes that a miracle is not an incontestable event by which a spectator could be con-

vinced of God's activity. "It is not possible to find in miracle an experimental proof of God's existence" (TSWV, 191). Like the insight into the existence of the suprapolar space, miracle is an unmerited gift from the hand of God. Farmer says that miracle, like revelation, "is God speaking to the individual personally, that is to say, in a way that is relevant to, and only understandable in terms of the individual's own concrete situation. . . . And it is impossible to take up a personal situation into a general proposition or syllogism without its concrete historical livingly personal quality vanishing in a cloud of abstractions" (WG, 114).

The rational analysis explains why what is a miracle to one man is not to another. As we have seen, in two-dimensional space only one line can be drawn at right angles to a given line at a given point. But in three-dimensional space an infinite number of such lines can be traced. To a person without the insight into suprapolar space, a so-called miracle is only another event in one of the two polar spaces.

Farmer goes on to discuss the phenomenology of miracle in relation to other aspects of the Christian's experience.

Farmer is convinced that miracle and revelation belong together, that there is an intimate connection

between the two. What then is the difference? Why retain the word miracle at all? The answer is that miracle refers to one particular aspect of revelation. All miracles are revelations, but not all revelations are miracles. In his preliminary definition of revelation, Farmer identifies two elements in every revelatory situation: the element of demand and the element of succour. But "the relative prominence of the element of demand and the element of succour in the total awareness of God may vary considerably according to the situation" (WG, 89). It is Farmer's contention that in miracle, which is a revelatory event and so contains both elements, the succour element is the stronger. Thus "a miracle for the religious mind is pre-eminently an event in which God is apprehended as entering succouringly into a situation" (WG, 116). Or, "the more intensely personal and individual the succour of God is felt to be, the more appropriate and inevitable the word miracle becomes on the religious man's lips" (WG, 118).

A miracle is different from what may be called general providence. A man surveying a piece of art or watching a sunset may be struck by the beauty of nature and the ultimate goodness of God. This is indeed revelation, but it would be wrong to apply the term miracle to it: it has not the spontaneity one usually associates with that word.

Moreover, carried to its logical conclusion, it could mean that everything is a miracle in that everything has something of mystery about it, and thus the term is robbed of any distinctive meaning. "The word miracle on the religious man's lips indicates something distinctive which is not applicable, even after reflection, to all events indiscriminately.

In other words, the more generalized the awareness of God's goodness and succour, the less the word miracle is applicable" (WG, 119).

Miracle is also different from what may be called special providence. At a particular moment of his life, the Christian may become aware of a thread or pattern in his existence: separate past events, having no particular meaning at the time they happened, now appear to fit together significantly, and the Christian is bound to ascribe this direction in his life to the hand of God. Although this experience of special providence is closer to what is meant by miracle, it is not yet precise: "we seem not yet to have reached the most spontaneous, inevitable, and typical usage of the word" (WG, 121).

Neither the experience of general providence nor of special providence is applicable to the experience of miracle. What experience comes closest to the Christian experience of miracle? "The answer is, in that relationship

which we call prayer" (WG, 122). Farmer cites an episode which came under his direct observation to explicate and illustrate this connection between miracle and prayer. "A mother was informed by the doctors that, so far as medical science could judge, her baby could not possibly recover from sickness; whereupon she called a friend, who, like herself, was a Christian believer, and asked him to pray with her that God would restore the child. So they prayed, and within a few hours the child was on the way to a recovery which confounded all the experience of the doctors, as they were frank to admit, even including one whose whole philosophy tended to profound scorn of 'all that sort of thing'. . . . The word which came instantly to the lips of the two people who had prayed, both of whom were intelligent and cultured, was 'miracle'. They did not say 'this is providential'; they said: 'this is a miracle', and no other word seemed appropriate to the awed sense of having transaction with the succouring will of God in a personal situation of critical need" (WG, 122). Farmer goes on to draw three conclusions as to the connection between prayer and miracle.

First of all, in both miracle and prayer, "there is an awareness of serious crisis or need or threat of disaster in the personal life, and of helplessness to deal with it adequately and victoriously through the exercise of

ordinary unaided human powers" (WG, 123). It can be said that in the everyday flow of events, man feels at home in the world, in essential harmony with nature about him. But sometimes the opposite is the case, occasions do arise when "the mind of man is concentrated in a peculiarly intense way on his own fate and destiny as an individual seeking a significance for his own being over against those natural forces which seem to have him entirely in their grip" (WG, 124). What seems about to happen is not God's will, or, the situation looks as if it will not evolve as God wills. Otherwise, prayer in such a situation would be hopeless and futile.

Secondly, in both miracle and prayer, "there is a more or less conscious and explicit turning to God for assistance" (WG, 123). In a situation like this, the matter is elevated above the ordinary run of affairs. In the religious man's awareness of the personality of God, it is recognized that God is not chained to the wheel of cause and effect, but that his will is free to act and to react with the will of the faithful believer. So the believer can cry to God for help.

Thirdly, in both miracle and prayer, "there is an awareness of an ad hoc response of God to the situation and to man's petitioning inadequacy in it, so that the crisis is met, the need satisfied, the danger averted, in an event,

or combination of events, which would not have taken place had man not so petitioned and God so acted" (WG, 123).

It is now possible to pass to a critical evaluation of the rational argument. As we have seen, the rationalist is convinced that a complete religious world-picture must be erected. The old supranatural world-picture has come crashing down, and science is now providing secular world-pictures of its own. The Christian Weltanschauung proposed by Heim is to replace the obsolete supranaturalism and be a more comprehensive view than any of those supplied by science. Two criticisms are necessary at this point.

First of all, science in itself does not and cannot provide a world-picture. The task of the scientist is (as we have seen in chapter two), to define, describe and classify with the faith that there is an interconnection between the phenomena which science investigates.¹ It is true that certain philosophies claiming a scientific basis have from time to time been put forward; philosophies providing more or less comprehensive world-pictures. Yet always these philosophies have gone beyond what science itself has established as certain.² Secondly, because these pseudo-scientific faiths (in the absolute object, absolute space and time,

¹Cf. above, 64ff.

²Cf. above, 76f.

absolute causal determinism) have been shown to be inadequate, it is false to go on to say that there is 'again room for God'. Because various pseudo-scientific absolutes are proven bankrupt, it is surely presumptuous to conclude that 'science is on the road to religion'. Other absolutes may well enter to fill this vacuum.

Is it really possible to build up a world-picture adequate enough to accom^modate all facets of reality, channeling faith and encompassing God in a space however commodious? Heim seems to be aware of this difficulty, for on the one hand he wishes to establish 'a reality which is beyond the reach of scientific investigation' and on the other hand, as he so constantly reiterates, the insight into the existence of suprapolar space comes only as a gift. Again, if it is possible to build up such a world-picture, the person who has once gained insight into suprapolar space should be able to recognize a miracle every time one happens. Yet Heim emphasizes that this is not possible.

The second rational assumption - that the world is essentially a battle of wills - is powerful at first sight. Yet does not this assumption undermine the concept of space or dimension which was so fundamental to the first rational assumption? There, each space had certain definite contents arranged in accord with certain definite principles.

But the assumption that this is a panpsychic universe blurs the lines separating the dimensions, and tends to make the one set of principles equally applicable to all. In other words, after erecting a fine structural world-picture with the concept of space, the rationalist tops it off with a panpsychic roof which the previous structure seems hardly able to support. The argument from the nature of time which Heim only introduces to support his space theories, seems, after all, to be the more fundamental concept or idea. It is the division between past and future rather than the difference between spaces which is determinative for Heim. This is a logical or philosophical criticism.

From the scientific point of view, not every physicist would agree that 'since atomic physics has resolved the rigidity of lifeless matter into infinitesimal spaces in which elemental particles execute purposeful movements at enormous velocities like living individuals, the last possible reason has been eliminated for regarding the inorganic world as an unconscious inanimate mass'. Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle must be employed with great care, as the following quotation would seem to indicate.

When in 1926 Heisenberg contributed his principle of Indeterminacy to the development of the theory of quantum physics, a new epoch opened in popular philosophy. What was intended to be a specialized theoretical contribution to a restricted field of physics was quickly

twisted by certain popularizers of science and by delighted clergymen into meaning the general overthrow of the laws of strict causality. The 19th century view of the Universe as a great machine was suddenly seen to be hazy in fine detail, there was still room for freewill, for miracles and the intervention of the hand of God; for once, modern science had been compelled to grant living space to religion - thus ran the new popular philosophy. It was a philosophy based on a misunderstanding at its scientific root. Heisenberg had been concerned to point out that we cannot by the nature of our methods measure simultaneously both the velocity and the position of an atomic particle; thereby stimulating closer scientific scrutiny of methodology in physics. But he said nothing about the behaviour of particles being causeless, or any need to abandon belief in causality: this was added by the popularizers.¹

Theologically, I would agree with Heim's world-picture - with its separation into various spaces and its universal panpsychism - were a tremendous 'as if' held over the whole philosophy. Our relation with the objective world is 'as if' . . . Our relation with the Thou is 'as if' . . . Our relation with God is 'as if' . . . But since this is manifestly a Weltanschauung, the 'as if' is removed in the interests of a unified and comprehensive world-picture.²

¹Crammer, "Editorial", 7.

²Farmer seems more complacent with regard to the necessity of an air-tight philosophy or world-picture. "It is not necessary for our purpose to attempt to set forth a complete metaphysic, which shall be argumentatively established against all possible demurrers or alternative views" (WG, 158). Farmer's philosophy is thus only "one possible theory" (WG, 159).

The specific rational treatment of the concept of miracle suffers from the same disability as the whole structural fabric. In particular, Heim's panpsychism allows him to postulate the existence of a plethora of demonic forces: belief in which is, in my opinion, obsolete. I would question as well his use of the word faith: as he employs the term it seems to imply almost solely psychological faith which is 'hoisted' from time to time, to theological faith. Farmer's differentiation between miracle and other expressions of Christian experience is most helpful; though his tying of the term miracle to prayer is open to question and criticism. Certainly in both there is a sense of crisis, we feel ^{disrupted} /in an existentiell way: though this sense of crisis would seem to be much less conscious in the experience of miracle than in the experience of prayer. Nor is it the case in miracle, as it is in true prayer, that there is necessarily a conscious turning towards God. Certainly in true miracle, as in true prayer, there is an awareness of an ad hoc response on the part of God.

The rationalist is a profound and sensitive apologist, and his system truly a work of love. Add to that - in Heim's case in particular - a facile pen, a prodigious scientific knowledge, and an apt use of simile, metaphor and example, and one is left with a work of no mean importance.

Yet even this gallant effort does not save the suprastructure from some inner inconsistencies. The two fundamental rational assumptions are not really in harmony: the second (panpsychism) tends to undermine the first (a comprehensive world-picture built up on the concept of space). The two basic pillars do not fit together perfectly: so it is not surprising that the whole building has some rather obvious flaws. But as an apologetic structure, the building is quite serviceable. Many men, scientists and others, may well find it a suitable temporary refuge until more adequate and commodious accommodation is found elsewhere.

The question has been asked: Is it possible to erect a suprastructure adequate to house all aspects of reality, including God? If we were to look at the rational structure only, the answer would be in the negative. But are there not other projects worthy of our attention and examination? There is at least one other, and in the next chapter we investigate another world-picture or, more explicitly, a word-picture, for the chapter is entitled "The Lingual View". Like the rational attempt it is both modern and profound. Like the rational attempt it is inspired by apologetic needs: to make the message of the gospel meaningful and intelligible to contemporary man. Starting from a different site, and with a slightly different clientele

in mind, this project is well worthy of our careful inspection.

Chapter VIII. The Lingual View.

"I am content to be employed as an under-labourer in clearing the ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way of knowledge." John Locke.

"One is often told that the process of analysis is falsification, and that when you analyse any given concrete whole you falsify it, and that the results of analysis are not true. I do not think that is a right view."

Bertrand Russell.

Mir = Ramsey, I.T. Miracles.

RL = Religious Language.

The linguist is convinced that the contemporary philosophical interest in language can be so developed as to provide a novel inroad into the problems and controversies of theology, illuminating its claims and reforming its apologetic. The tasks of the linguist are 1) to clarify the logic of theological language (including the concept of miracle), and 2) to provide a logical structure which relates religious key-words to all language logics.

The chapter is divided as follows. First of all, there is a brief historical summary of the movement leading to logical empiricism. Secondly, there is a straightforward presentation of the three fundamental lingual¹ assumptions, and the specifically lingual¹ approach to the concept of miracle. Thirdly, the assumptions and the treatment of miracle are critically evaluated.

The linguist is an apologete: he earnestly wishes to do "justice to the churchmen of the past and our own circumstances in the present" (RL, 186). He decries the

¹One of the meanings of the word lingual is "pertaining to language or languages." I use the term 'lingual' in preference to the perhaps more usual 'linguistic', though both words come from the same root. In this regard cf. Onions (ed.), The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, I, 1148. The word 'linguist' refers to one who holds the lingual view.

attitude of the theologian who buries his head in the sand in the face of contemporary scientific and philosophical discoveries. We must never give up "all idea of integrating the Christian faith with philosophical speculation and culture whether humanist or scientific."¹ In particular, the linguist is disturbed by the cleavage between the findings of logical empirical philosophy and the dogmatic assertions of Christianity. We have already seen how Heim, being a scientist and a Christian, attempted to formulate the faith in terms congenial to the scientist. Likewise the linguist, a philosopher and a Christian, attempts to formulate the faith in terms congenial to the logical empiricist. But what is logical empiricism? Ramsey tries to show its nature by a brief historical sketch, and in this sketch he distinguishes three steps (RL, 11-3).

First of all, it seems clear that logical empiricism goes back to the philosophical interest in language which dates from the turn of the century when men like G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell began to protest against the fluffy phrases and woolly ways of expression of the then-current philosophy; epitomized in the works of the idealist British philosopher F.H. Bradley. To Russell and Moore the key word

¹Ramsey, "Editor's Introduction", The Reasonableness of Christianity [by John Locke], 19.

was 'clarify', and the oft-repeated question was 'What precisely do you mean by such and such?'

Secondly, the rather anomalous movement received a more formal structure with the introduction into British philosophy of the works and findings of the Vienna Circle: amongst whom Carnap, Schlick and Wittgenstein were most prominent. The members of this circle were impressed by the experiments of physics which resulted in the elimination of unobservables from physical theory. For instance, the notion of 'the ether' which had found a place in the traditional statements of physical theory proved to be an empty concept. This programme of eliminating unobservables from physical theory seemed to promise immense gains in clarity and economy of statement. This process the Vienna Circle wished to extend into a definition of meaning in general: and the Verification Principle was the result - 'the meaning of a statement is the method of its verification'. "To say what a statement means is simply to say what observations or experiments would show it to be true or false. If a statement refers to what is unobservable and outside the scope of experiment, then it has no meaning."¹ Any proposition which cannot be verified by sense experience - by

¹MacIntyre, "The Logical Status of Religious Belief", Metaphysical Beliefs, 170.

what is seen, heard, touched, tasted, and smelt - is to be termed meaningless. The connection between the new movement in philosophy and contemporary science is most interesting, as Copleston points out. "The immense growth of empirical science and the great and tangible benefits brought to civilization by applied science . . . has created an atmosphere or mental climate which is reflected in logical positivism. Once philosophy was regarded as the 'handmaid of theology': now it has tended to become the 'handmaid of science'. As all that can be known can be known by means of science, what is more reasonable than that the philosopher should devote himself to an analysis of the meaning of certain terms used by scientists and to an inquiry into the presuppositions of the scientific method? The philosopher will not increase human knowledge in the sense of extending our factual knowledge of reality; but he will perform the humbler, though useful, task of clarifying the meaning of terms and showing what they denote in terms of immediate experience."¹

This second stage - the logical positivist stage - received its most popular form in the book Language, Truth and Logic by A.J. Ayer, first published in 1935. In this

¹Copleston, Contemporary Philosophy, 30.

work, Ayer divides propositions into three classifications. First of all, there are the statements of logic and mathematics, ultimately tautologous combinations of symbols, whose factual truth is guaranteed by the symbols involved. Secondly, there are the factual assertions of science and common-sense, verified or falsified by relevant sense experience. And thirdly, there are utterances which express emotions and attitudes, but have no factual meaning. Into this third category fall many ethical, metaphysical and theological assertions, such as the assertion that 'there is a God'. "No statement which refers to a 'reality' transcending the limits of all possible sense-experience can possibly have any literal significance."¹ The linguist is well aware of this problem: the problem of trying to prove that the proposition 'God exists' is logically significant. "Can 'God' sentences ever be falsified and if not are they even meaningful, let alone true? If events follow a regular pattern (it is said) we speak of God's 'constant control'. It might be expected then that should any irregularity occur, the assertion would be falsified. But not so. When events show irregularity, we speak of God's miraculous 'intervention' as well. The result is a quite useless 'hypothesis' without

¹Ayer, op. cit., 17.

any empirical relevance. The God hypothesis (the story continues) has a 'heads-I-win, tails-you-lose' character about it; there can be no genuine falsification; no genuine discussion about it; no genuine meaning in it. What is the cash-value, it is asked, of this concept 'God' which is retained even when compromised by the most contradictory qualifications? Come what may, the argument says, all sorts of stories - including inconsistent ones - will be told, but the word 'God' will be retained. 'God' is everywhere, only because 'God' means nothing anywhere" (Mir, 9).

As we have seen, the Verification Principle tended to dismiss any statement which could not be verified by sense experience. The method was carried to its logical conclusion by Russell who tried to formulate a perfect language, a language which should be free of all ambiguity, and in no way misleading. Russell believed that his quest had succeeded with the discovery of what he called sense-data, which could lead to 'atomic' propositions, which by a complex construction could give rise to all the compound sentences of ordinary language.¹

This second stage - the logical positivist stage - broke down under pressure from several sources. For one

¹Russell, Mysticism and Logic, 145ff.

thing, the concept 'electron' has no observable correlate, yet this concept occurs in theories which, taken as a whole, are verified or falsified by experiment and observation. Again, the statement 'Charles I was executed in 1649' is one which is verified by consulting the relevant documents. But the meaning of the statement is not, if you read and consult those documents, that you will there read that Charles I was executed in 1649. The meaning of the statement is that a certain individual lost his head in the past; not that certain words can be read in the future. Again, a number of people still talked about ethics, metaphysics and theology: 'meaningless' according to logical positivist analysis. And finally, what of the Verification Principle itself? "It must have an odd enough status, for as presupposed by all meaningful statements it cannot itself be meaningful in the same sense" (RL, 12). Thus the breakdown of strict logical positivism opened the way for logical empiricism.

The fact of logical empiricism brings us up to the present time, and is the third step in its own historical development. But what is the task of logical empiricism? "It has fallen to this movement to emphasize the variety of forms that human utterance may take. Philosophers have ceased to believe that we can lay down a priori standards

of meaningfulness which must be satisfied by every utterance. Instead philosophy has become the patient description and classification of all those ways of using language that are of logical importance."¹ Again, "the view arises that apparently homogeneous language may exhibit all kinds of logical differences" (RL, 13).

The logical positivist had already shown that sentences with the same grammatical construction have in fact different logical meanings. It had been pointed out that while words are symbols, many of the words used in the English language are ambiguous symbols. Take, for example, the word 'is'. "If we were guided merely by the form of the sign, we should assume that the 'is' which occurs in the sentence 'He is the author of that book' was the same symbol as the 'is' which occurs in the sentence 'A cat is a mammal'."² But when we have analysed the two sentences in such a way as to reveal their logical structure, we find that 'is' means something different in each case. Thus, the first sentence "is equivalent to 'He and no one else wrote that book', and the second to 'The class of mammals contains the class of cats'."³ Theologians, too, need to

¹MacIntyre, op. cit., 171-72.

²Ayer, op. cit., 72.

³Ibid.

understand the differences in logical structure of statements which have parallel grammatical form. "If anyone supposes that 'God is omnipotent' has a logical structure like 'Lord Beaverbrook is all-powerful'; if anyone supposes that 'I trust my Father in Heaven' is logically homogeneous with 'I trust my father in Hull', there is no limit to the insuperable problems he will generate."¹ Thus the aim of logical empiricism, as of logical positivism, "is analytic; it is so to analyse sentences and to examine the usage of words that thought is clarified and a new approach is rendered possible to the traditional problems of philosophical discussion."² The main difference is that while logical positivism assumed a priori that there was only one meaningful logical structure, logical empiricism tries instead to describe and classify all those ways of using language that are of logical importance. The linguist sees it as his particular task to clarify the logic of theological language. "It is plain that contemporary philosophy lays on us an urgent task and duty, viz. to elucidate the logic of theological assertions; . . . to state a case for religious language; to try to elucidate the logic of some of its

¹Ramsey, "Review", 414.

²Joad, A Critique of Logical Positivism, 21.

characteristic claims" (RL, 14).

In order to carry out this task of clarification the linguist asks: To what kind of situation does religion appeal? or What kind of empirical anchorage have theological words? Religious situations are characterized by two associated elements. First of all, religious situations involve a discernment which goes beyond the mere observation of an objective fact; and secondly, they involve a commitment which arises by way of an appropriate response to the discernment. A religious situation is characterized by a discernment-commitment: this is the first assumption of the linguist. But what specifically does the linguist mean by discernment and by commitment?

Discernment is that virtue/^{without} which "no distinctive theology will ever be possible; a 'self-awareness' that is more than 'body awareness' and not exhausted by spatio-temporal 'objects'. Such a discernment lies at the basis of religion, whose characteristic claim is that there are situations which are spatio-temporal and more. Without such 'depth'; without this 'unseen', no religion will be possible" (RL, 15). In a religious situation, this discernment goes beyond the mere noting of an objective fact. Consequently, "religious language is no set of labels for a group of hard objective 'facts' glanced at by passive ob-

servers" (RL, 26). In such a religious situation, with such a discernment, the only appropriate response is commitment - total commitment, involving a personal revolution. "We see religious commitment as a total commitment to the whole universe; something in relation to which argument has only a very odd function; its purpose being to tell such a tale as evokes the 'insight', the 'discernment' from which the commitment follows as a response. Further, religious commitment is something bound up with key words whose logic no doubt resembles that of the words which characterize personal loyalty as well as that of the axioms of mathematics, and somehow combines features of both, being what might be called 'specially resistant' posits, 'final' end-points of explanation, key-words suited to the whole job of living - 'apex' words" (RL, 37). And such a 'key' or 'apex' word is 'God'.

The religious situation is characterized as a discernment-commitment. This means that such situations are complicated - even 'odd' - when compared with other situations in life. Consequently, the linguist believes that the language which applies to a religious situation will be appropriately odd in its logical structure, even if grammatically it appears similar to ordinary factual logic. That religious language does exhibit a suitably odd logical

structure is the second fundamental assumption of the linguist. And religious language is logically odd in at least two ways.

First, if religious language has to talk about situations which are perceptual with a difference, perceptual and more: that is to say, object language which has been given very special qualifications, object language which shows logical peculiarities, then we should expect that language to be appropriately odd in logical structure. But have we any general guide to this logical peculiarity? "Does not the way in which distinctively personal situations closely parallel those which are characteristically religious, suggest/^a close logical kinship between 'I' and 'God'? Both, by the standards of observational language, are odd in their logical behaviour" (RL, 38). The true 'I' is something more than my body, my actions, even my thinking. The true 'I' - and here the linguist agrees with the rationalist - escapes the categories of objective language, though the 'I' is at the same time tied to this language. And, Ramsey argues, the word 'God' stands in much the same relation to world-language as the word 'I' stands to body-language. "The central problem of theology is how to use, how to qualify, observational language so as to be suitable currency for what in part exceeds it - the situations in

which theology is founded. At any rate, 'I' will never cease to be a useful guide for us when we are confronted with puzzles about 'God'" (RL, 38). The second characteristic of religious language is that it contains significant tautologies: "tautologies whose function is to command those key words - those ultimates of explanation - which arise in connection with religious language, and especially with its character as a commitment" (RL, 40). Such a tautology is 'God is Love'. "We all know the phrase 'God is Love' has been criticized as being a platitude, because it is alleged to say nothing. But may not this be because it has the logical form of a tautology? If so, we misunderstand it if we do not see it as a significant tautology labelling a commitment" (RL, 46).

What the linguist is saying is that the religious situation demands and needs a logic of its own, and the linguist sees it as his task to formulate this religious logic. But he goes on to say more than this. As we have noted, Ramsey believes that religious language deals particularly with apex or key words, key words suited to the whole job of living. And the key key-word is, of course, 'God'. So while the linguist constantly reiterates that the concept 'God' has no place in strict scientific language, yet 'God' can act "in the sense of 'answering' limiting

questions" not only in the field of science but in all other fields as well (Mir, 13). In other words, what is needed is a logical structure which relates the key or apex words to all language logics. Ramsey examines the language of science and the language of history and believes that "they each require, though in different ways, words with a different logic altogether. . . . It is the task of metaphysics both to organize the supply of all these supplementary words and at the same time to collect the simplest number of them to fulfill their task as ultimate co-ordinators, and then to offer the resultant group as a sort of index to the total language scheme, which comprises the index and the subordinate languages with their several logics" (Mir, 13-4). Thus the task of the linguist is two-fold: first, to clarify the logic of theological language; secondly, to provide a logical structure which relates such a key-word as 'God' to all language logics. Under the second task, Ramsey sees it as his duty to establish "'God's activity' on our language map" (Mir, 18) and so "to unite all the various languages of science" (Mir, 13). This metaphysical or meta-logical element, while not absent from RL, is given much clearer expression in Mir.

Having established that the religious situation is characterized as a discernment-commitment, Ramsey goes

on to consider some of the traditional ways of talking about God. Typical of such language are the elements known as models and qualifiers. For example, in the phrase 'infinitely wise', we have a model, 'wisdom', taken from our experience of people whom we know as more or less wise. But the qualifier, 'infinitely', shows that the model has in this case an odd currency - it is to be developed until 'the penny drops' or 'the situation comes alive' - until the typically religious discernment is evoked and the response of total commitment effected. The linguist also uses the discernment-commitment characterization of the religious situation in talking about the language of the Bible and the language of Christian doctrine. It is the former of these - the language of the Bible - which is of particular importance for our discussion.

The third lingual assumption is that the language of the Bible has an odd logical structure. Since the Bible records religious situations, we can expect a correspondingly odd language formulation. This does not mean that the gospel and epistle writers were all logical empiricists. But they were writing about religious situations - about discernment-commitment situations - and therefore the language of the Bible is written in an appropriately odd logical manner. "They could not help giving their language an odd structure

if it was to be appropriate currency for their significant situations" (RL, 92). Of course, many of the biblical reports are ostensibly, or grammatically, straightforward factual accounts. But this does not mean that the Bible is logically simple and straightforward. In fact, many of the attempts to render the Bible meaningful and significant have failed just because scholars have not realized that the Bible is couched in an odd logical framework. Much biblical criticism approached the Scripture with the tacit assumption that the logic employed was the same as ordinary observational logic. "Let us recognize that, when biblical criticism was in full swing, there lay behind the scientific approach to the Bible the desire to establish biblical facts as incontrovertibly as those facts talked of by science. There was, in short, the desire to find, by means of science, a firm foundation in fact for the religion of the Bible" (RL, 97). This mood inspired the search for the historical Jesus, and this search has failed. With this failure went the accompanying attempt to subject the Bible to the logical structure suitable only to science. "We have now come to see, by the development of biblical criticism itself, that the empirical anchorage of the Christian faith is not the kind of situation with which any scientific language, as such, could adequately deal" (RL, 97). "As source-criticism

(with its scientific approach) yielded to form-criticism (with its literary approach) may not the time be opportune for form-criticism to give place to a logical approach?" (RL, 122). Ramsey discusses three ways in which scholars have attempted to give a suitably odd logical structure to biblical events.

First of all, there is the 'fact plus interpretation' theory, suggested in one part of Dodd's work on the fourth gospel.¹ This view holds that the same 'facts' were paraded before both believers and unbelievers; both saw the same 'objects'. But the distinctive thing about biblical history in comparison with secular history lies in the 'interpretation' put upon the 'facts' by the writers of the gospels and the epistles. "The point may be put in another way, and from the standpoint of language. If we say that the facts of the gospels are 'history plus interpretation', the language of the gospels would only be 'odd' in the sense that it was a rather complicated version of a simpler language, viz. the 'plainest' history" (RL, 99). Valuable as this attempt may seem, the concept 'fact' seems to rest upon an epistemology with a history dating from the time of Locke: an epistemology which holds that knowledge is

¹Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, 447-53.

acquired by minds which scrutinize isolated and objective 'facts', peering at them from a distance. And the concept 'interpretation' reminds one of nineteenth century idealism. But the philosophies of which these two concepts form a part are now obsolete. "The moral is not to separate facts and interpretation so sharply. . . . The situations to which Christianity appeals are ontological curiosities; they are odd" (RL, 102).

Secondly, there is the 'existential' theory propounded by Bultmann and his followers.¹ Here the determining factor is the division between the objective-historical and the existentiell-historical elements of Christianity. The objective-historical element refers to the events associated with the Jesus of history: his birth, ministry, message, miracles, crucifixion and resurrection. This objective-historical element is open to historical criticism. But the existentiell-historical element is my total response to God in Christ at the present moment, and this element is not open to historical criticism. True, this present decision is linked in some way with the events which occurred in Palestine some two thousand years ago, but the connection

¹Cf. Macquarrie, An Existentialist Theology. Here Macquarrie's wording is slightly altered in line with the schema noted above, 268.

is somewhat tenuous: the existentiell-historical is related to the objective-historical only problematically. "On this view, the situations to which the gospels appeal are odd enough to be called 'existentiell-historical' where this description implies a situation which can neither be identified with, nor made wholly independent of, the 'objective-historical'. An existential approach may be helpful in emphasizing the fact of these characteristics, but to do that, it compromises, and may even exclude any reasonable account of the other, and there we must part company" (RL, 106).

Thirdly, there is the 'significant event' theory, accepted as most satisfactory by the linguist, though it was suggested in the first place by Dodd in the above-cited book. Dodd points out that "the events narrated in the fourth gospel are intended to be understood as significant events, semeia. . . . To a writer with the philosophical presuppositions of the evangelist there is no reason why a narrative should not be at the same time factually true and symbolic of a deeper truth, since things and events in this world derive what reality they possess from the eternal Ideas they embody."¹ Such a view of 'significant events' involves a fundamental Weltanschauung, as both Dodd and

¹Dodd, op. cit., 142-43.

Ramsey recognize. "What we have done then . . . has been to show that the claim that the Bible is 'history' is only substantiated if 'history' refers to situations as odd as those which are referred to by that paradigm of the fourth gospel: 'the Word became flesh'" (RL, 103). It is this third 'significant event' theory of the Bible which overcomes the difficulties of the first two theories, and best points to the logically odd structure of the biblical history. "The 'facts' of the gospels in particular are never facts for which science is appropriate currency, or history is appropriate currency" (RL, 106).

Before passing to what Ramsey has to say specifically about the concept of miracle, consideration may well be given to his treatment of the Resurrection. Ramsey points out that the question 'Did the Resurrection occur?' sounds very like the question 'Did Queen Anne's death occur?' But a moment's reflection will show that the similarity is but superficial. If the word Resurrection refers to such events as an empty tomb, visions and so on, all these may not only have happened but be believed in, without in any sense there being a Christian belief in the Resurrection: that is, without the total commitment which the Resurrection surely implies. Again, the question 'Did the Resurrection occur?' has not the same logical form as the question 'Did

the empty tomb occur?', for the second can be affirmed, while the first is denied. There are even some who deny the empty tomb, and yet affirm the reality of the Resurrection. Actually, the question 'Did the Resurrection occur' is closely related logically to the question 'Is that a case of duty?' or to the question 'Is that a case of genuine personal devotion?' Think for a moment of the spectator who sees a man jump into a deep river in order to save a child. On the face of it, the action of the man looks like a heroic deed. But there are - to the spectator - other possible explanations of the action. The man may have wanted only the reward, or the fame and publicity resulting from such a rescue. "Here again we have a question, for the answering of which evidence is relevant; but the evidence might all be believed without the question itself being answered in the affirmative. In both the case of the drowning child and the case of the Resurrection, 'evidence' has a strange empirical reference. It must certainly be examined, and is undoubtedly relevant. But in each case the puzzle arises that no amount of 'evidence' alone guarantees that in relation to which it is considered, namely, the 'Resurrection' on the one hand, or 'duty' on the other" (RL, 128). For that reason, it is impossible to 'date' the Resurrection in the same way as one can date Queen Anne's death. The

language of the resurrection applies to a situation which is indeed spatio-temporal, but which is also more than this.

We are now in a position to examine the specifically lingual view of the concept of miracle.

What is a miracle? "Our answer must start from the point that a miracle is a non-conforming event, a miraculum whose non-conformity, whose oddness, evokes, gives rise to, what we have called a characteristically theological situation. With a miracle, a situation 'comes alive', the light dawns, the penny drops" (RL, 144). The linguist hastens to add that this non-conformity cannot be spoken of as a breach or suspension of natural law. Miracle itself is not a scientific category, it is a term excluded from the logic of science. "We could never conclude more than that 'miracle' had no place in scientific language. Indeed, there is no 'conclusion' about it; the scientist is bound, as a condition of using scientific words, to exclude 'miracle' from the start" (Mir, 8). It is scientifically meaningless to say that God caused such and such an act. "The word 'God' does not work as a high-grade scientific word at all. It is not a 'hypothesis'. God-sentences do not belong to the logic of science" (Mir, 9). The man using the logic of science can say: "Whether such events as are commonly designated as miracles have ever actually occurred is a

question into which there is here no need to enter. For, even if they did occur, their occurrence would prove, not that the operation of the relevant laws could be suspended by a 'higher power', but simply that we were wrong in supposing them to be universal laws; and then we should be left with the task of trying to find some other laws to put in their place."¹ Thus the phrase 'breach of natural law' has no special religious significance, if it be considered as belonging only to the logic of science.

But what structure must the phrase 'breach of natural law' have, and what sort of event will it talk about, if it is to be theologically significant? Ramsey points out that this phrase 'breach of natural law' can be taken as a qualified model: 'natural law' being a model taken from the natural sciences, and 'breach' being a qualifying operator. Then we consider a law, contemplate circumstances to break it, reformulate the law, create a new situation to break it, and so on. The result is that one has the sequence: law, break, reformulate, break, reformulate, and so on. If at any time in this procedure we gain the insight that no scientific law, however often reformulated, ever gives an exhaustive explanation - that

¹Ayer, The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge, 208-09.

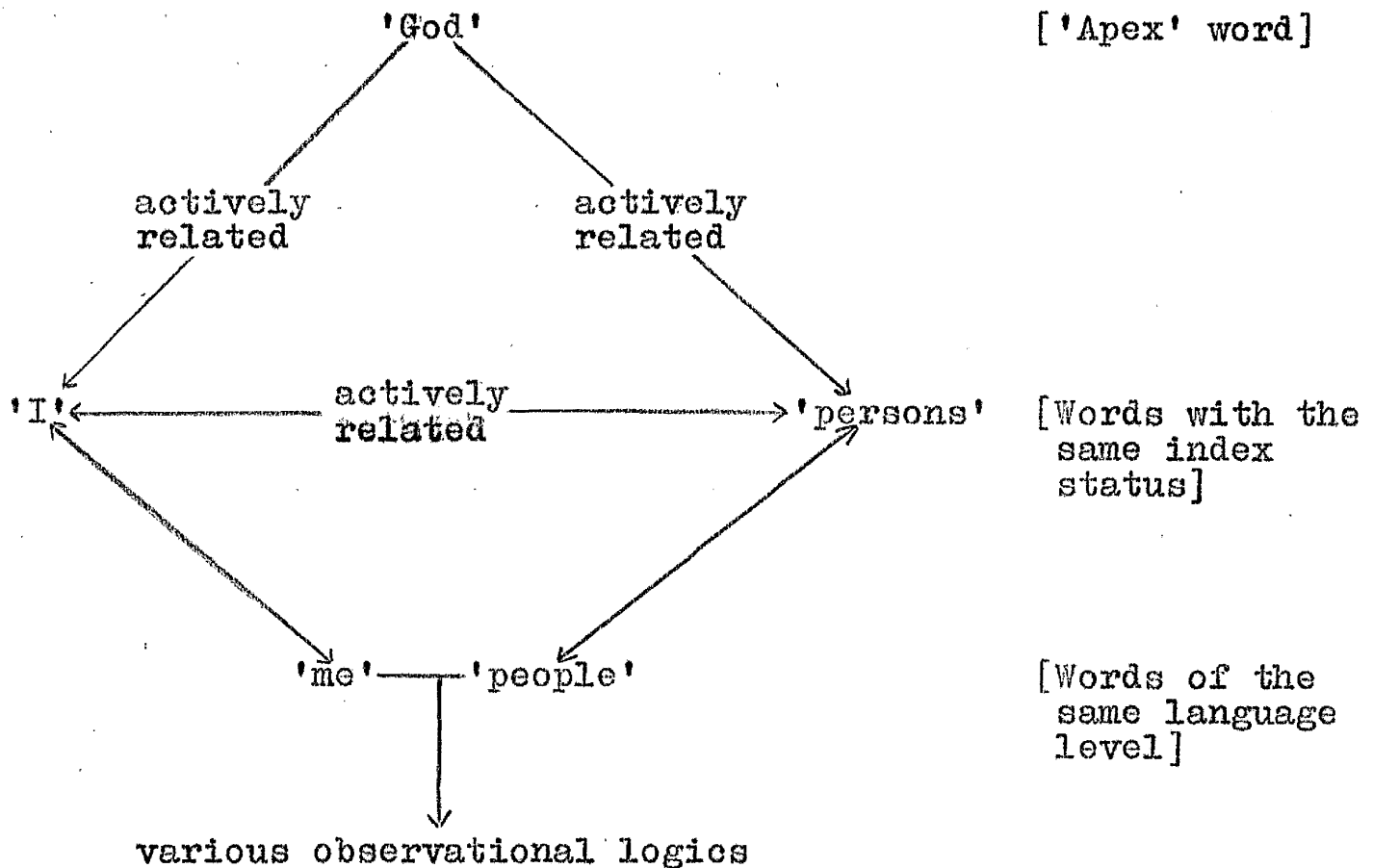
something more is needed: a metaphysical apex or key word to answer a limiting question; that the concept 'God' must be introduced to give an ultimate explanation - then one is in a characteristically religious situation (RL, 45). But considered as terms of scientific logic, neither 'miracle' nor 'breach of law' have any meaningful significance whatsoever.

Well then, has the concept of miracle any place in the logic of history? That depends, of course, on what one means by history. And Ramsey commences by saying that the language of history is concerned above all with persons. "We suggest that historical language is a technique for naming and organizing at a concrete level of personal encounter, such a selection of facts as endeavours to repeat certain 'events as they occurred', and thus to bring them into relation with contemporary experience. True, there are several varieties of history, economic and social history, constitutional history, historical geography and so on, but I would still assert that what is most distinctive about historical language, what distinguishes it from law or economics or geography, when the distinctive features of those languages have been severally elucidated, is that history is pre-eminently concerned with persons. Its distinctive feature is to use person-words as part of its

technique for comprehensiveness, to use person-patterns in its search for concreteness" (Mir, 11). Therefore, the logic of history, with its interest in persons, seems better suited than the logic of science to give meaningful expression to the concept of miracle: for "in a miracle story 'God' has been inserted into a language-frame from which a 'person' word has been deleted. Miracle stories are thus stories of a characteristically personal activity, with 'God' substituted for a person-word" (RL, 145).

But what do we mean by a person-word, by a 'person'? What person do I know best? Why I, myself. And as we have already seen, the linguist believes that 'I' cannot be talked about in terms of objective language. 'I' elude public gaze, yesterday, to-day, and tomorrow. "But ~~what~~ what, it will be said, does 'I' refer to? If 'I' can never be 'objectified' - but always (if the question is raised) distinguished from an objective 'me' - surely it can never be talked about. Hardly. All we can say is, it cannot be talked about in terms of language of ordinary 'observational' logic. . . . It will belong to a language of curious logic indeed; but there is nothing disreputable about that if this language is necessitated by the facts" (Mir, 15). The relation between 'I' and 'me' is the first stage in the lingual meta-logical system.

We are now prepared for a further step. As we have already noted, the word 'God' acts in relation to all world logics in the same way that 'I' acts in relation to 'me' logic. Therefore, the full meta-logical map looks something like this.



(Mir, 17 and 18).

Can a place for the concept of miracle be found on this meta-logical map? The linguist replies that "the question: Can we place 'miracle' anywhere on our language map? becomes: Can we place 'God's activity' anywhere on our language map?" (Mir, 18). And since we have located God's

activity, there should be no difficulty in locating miracle, especially when we remember that "in a miracle story 'God' has been inserted into a language from which a 'person' word has been deleted" (RL, 145). In a miracle, "we should be making the claim (to take as an example the simplest case of nature miracles) that there are groups of empirical facts to which the word 'person' is not normally applied which nevertheless demand for their description the word 'person' and in particular the word 'God'" (Mir, 22). In a miracle, we discern God's activity, to which the appropriate response is total commitment. It is true that not everyone may gain this insight, any more than that in the total language map everyone can find a meaningful place for 'God' or 'God's activity': there is, in some sense, a paradox about miracle. "Miracle stories are endeavours in terms of public language to express the fact that certain situations possess observable factors of a non-personal kind which by their odd pattern are nevertheless expressive of a characteristically personal activity" (RL, 150).

But now the question is asked: Is God only active in those situations which demand a 'person' word to make the event intelligible? Of course, replies the linguist, this is not so. Ramsey makes an empirical distinction between two orders of God's activity. "God's 'first-order' activity

would be that activity for whose description the logic of science is appropriate. His 'second-order' (or personal) activity, if and when it occurred, would need rather, we should expect, the logic of history, and be indicated in the empirical patterns appropriate to, and suggested by, historical techniques" (Mir, 20). This conception of different orders of God's activity may be schematized in the following manner.

<u>The Phrase:</u>	<u>belongs to:</u>	<u>In relation to which must be placed:</u>
1. Me-active	scientific language	God 'generally' active; God's 'first-order' activity = 'providence', a word in the theological supplement to science.
2. I-active	metaphysical language	God 'personally' active; God's 'second-order' activity = 'miracle', a word of (metaphysical) history.

(Mir, 21).

The linguist goes on to say that the question 'Do miracles happen?' when regarded as a question of historical language is no doubt better formulated thus: 'On such and such an occasion did a miracle 'M' occur?' If this is to be answered affirmatively, three things must be kept in mind.

First, if to the question 'On such and such an occasion did a miracle 'M' occur?' we are to receive an affirmative answer, we must adduce evidence for 'M'. But we must also remember that we are looking at 'M' from a

historical and not from a scientific point of view. So, in looking at the historical evidence for 'M', we should keep in mind the two factors - 1) its historical selection and 2) its historical extension. This means that "the bare question as to whether some event 'M' did, or did not occur, is to be answered more, or less, affirmatively according as to whether 'M' does or does not, give a stable historical insight which never loses, but gains significance and relevance as other events (of course in other settings) are adduced" (Mir, 22). As I understand this conception of historical selection and extension, it means that any alleged miracle 'M' must be tested as to its appropriateness with other events of which it forms an integral whole. In brief, Is 'M' suitable in the whole context? Does the changing of the water into wine 'fit' the character of our Lord? Is the blasting of the fig tree 'congenial' with the personality of Jesus? This whole conception recalls Lewis' test of appropriateness. "Each miracle writes for us in small letters something that God has already written, or will write, in letters almost too large to be noticed, across the whole canvass of Nature. . . . Their authenticity is attested by their style."¹

¹Lewis, M, 13.

Secondly, if to the question 'On such and such an occasion did a miracle 'M' occur?' we are to receive an affirmative answer, we must presuppose a meta-logical map where God has his rightful place; we must presuppose a fundamental Weltanschauung in which God is a meaningful term. "Ultimately the defense of miracle is the metaphysical defense of a personally active God. They stand or fall together" (Mir, 23). "In saying of an event that it is a 'miracle' we are in part commending a map which includes metaphysical words, and in particular the phrase 'God's second-order (or personal) activity'" (Mir, 22).

Thirdly, if to the question 'On such and such an occasion did a miracle 'M' occur?' we are to receive an affirmative answer, we must see in the event that the word 'God' has been inserted into a language from which a 'person' word has been deleted. Ramsey gives a number of biblical illustrations of this (RL, 145-46). For instance, the most characteristically personal activity is probably human reproduction: and so the Bible records stories of miraculous births, as in Gen. 21.7 (Sarah giving birth to Isaac).

We are now in a position to pass to a critical evaluation of the lingual argument. The attempt to make religious language logically significant is clearly a

worthy and necessary attempt. And Ramsey has shown that many traditional controversies could have been avoided had the disputants recognized different levels of language logic: and, in particular, had theologians recognized that biblical and doctrinal languages have appropriately odd logical structures. For this reason, Ramsey's discussion of the Resurrection is most illuminating. So too are his criticisms of the 'fact plus interpretation' and 'existential' theories: he has rightly seen the difficulties involved in both of these attempts to explicate religious language. It is doubtful, however, if his own proffered solution is much better. For one thing, he does not seem to have a consistent understanding of history. This is illustrated in his discussion of the concept of miracle.

In his smaller earlier work, Ramsey believes that he has justified "a use for the word 'miracle' which gives it a distinctive place in historical language" (Mir, 23). In the same book, he says that "'miracle' [is] a word of (metaphysical) history" (Mir, 21), a very significant alteration. And in his later book he declares categorically that "the 'facts' of the gospels in particular are never facts for which . . . history is appropriate currency" (RL, 106), yet among these facts are the biblical miracles. His confusion over the place of the concept of miracle in history

goes back, it seems to me, to a more fundamental problem: the relevance of a particular Weltanschauung.

In replacing the 'fact plus interpretation' and the 'existential' ways of explicating biblical language, Ramsey substitutes his own 'significant event' theory, which theory demands a fundamental Weltanschauung, as he readily admits (RL, 102). But what is the nature of this Weltanschauung? In his later book/ ^(RL) Ramsey only hints at its nature, saying that 'God' is a key or apex word. It is in his earlier work/ ^(Mir) that the exact nature of the Weltanschauung comes more sharply into focus. There it is pointed out that if 'miracle' is to have meaning, 'God' and 'God's activity' must be placed somewhere on the language map. And the linguist feels that if 'I' can be placed on the map, so too can 'God'. There is "a close logical kinship between 'I' and 'God'. . . . Take 'I'. . . . The same is true about 'God'" (RL, 38, italics mine). If 'I' is a significant term, then the term 'God' is equally significant: so runs the lingual argument. This contention is open to question. True, we can extend the meaning of 'I' to the meaning of 'God', but we do so by analogy only: we must recognize that the two are not exactly the same logically. In other words, in going from 'I' to 'God' we are taking not an absolutely certain, but at most a highly probable,

step.¹

One would feel much happier about the whole lingual approach if a tremendous 'as if' were held over it. The way the term 'God' works can be likened to . . . The event of a 'miracle' appears in history 'as if' . . . But the interests of a completely logical and inclusive Weltanschauung forbids such an analogical interpretation. And again, can we conveniently place God at the top of a logical hierarchy any more than house him in suprapolarity?

The treatment of miracle suffers from the linguist's ambiguous understanding of history. In his earlier book, (Mir), Ramsey lays down a schema whereby anyone can recognize a miracle: accept the overall map and details of the landscape (like the concept of miracle) will automatically and easily follow. And one will be enabled to recognize the difference between God's first-order and second-order activity. This particular conception - a dressed-up version of primary and secondary causation - has already been unfavourably criticized.² Moreover, the determination of a miracle by means of inserting the term 'God' where a person-word has been deleted is a procedure which anyone can understand and effect, once the index or key to the whole logical structure

¹Cf. above, 79.

²Cf. above, 40f.

has been accepted and mastered. In all these ways, 'miracle' is a concept which any spectator can recognize, handle and manipulate. Yet there is a second and contradictory strain in Ramsey's thought in regard to this concept. He points out that the Bible, by its logically odd structure, seeks to arouse in its readers the religious situation; characterized by discernment and commitment. One may hope that the 'light will dawn' or that the 'situation come alive' when one reads the Bible, yet no one can guarantee that this will in fact take place. Therefore, on the one hand, a miracle is an event which demands for its description the word 'God' (Mir, 22); on the other hand, miracle can only come as an 'insight' of what is spatio-temporal and more: and the insight is in some sense a gift.

The theological implications of the lingual view are much the same as those of the rational view. The linguist's structure, like the rationalist's, finds a place for God. But what is wrong with that? Just this: that it is impossible to house God in a space however commodious, or to place him in an exalted position on a language map, no matter how extensive that map may be. In both the rational and lingual views, God is compressed within a metaphysical structure or system: and in this regard both positions are akin to traditional supranaturalism (whether

that be construed in contra-, preter-, or supernatural terms). "Theologians often behave as if their natural allies in philosophy were to be found among the metaphysicians. . . . Nothing could be further from the truth. Metaphysics might almost be described as a sustained attempt to replace conversion by argument."¹

And now, having cut the final anchor tying us to metaphysics, we venture to expound a position which ^{purports to} have this as one of its merits - the merit of being free from a metaphysical system. The chapter is entitled "The Existential View".

¹MacIntyre, op. cit., 210.

Chapter IX. The Existential View.

"Earth's crammed with heaven
And every common bush aflame with God;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;
The rest stand round and pluck blackberries." E.B. Browning.

GV I = Bultmann, R. Glauben und Verstehen. Bände I,
II II.
(ET = English Translation).

ST I = Tillich, P. Systematic Theology. Vols. I,
II II.

To the existentialist,¹ a miracle is an event in which the activity of God in Christ becomes evident to the faithful participant. Because the two representatives of this existential¹ view have such diverse terminologies, their views on this subject are presented separately: first of all, Bultmann's view of the concept of miracle and then, secondly, Tillich's view of the same subject. This is followed by a comparison, where the respective analyses are critically evaluated.

A. Bultmann's View of Miracle.

In his essay on the subject of miracle (GV I, 214-28), Bultmann makes a distinction between the German words Mirakel and Wunder. While he is able to find a qualified place in his theology for Wunder (usually translated by the word miracle), the term Mirakel (also translated by the word miracle) is utterly rejected. This being the case, there is first of all a discussion of Bultmann's rejection of the concept of Mirakel. Secondly, there is an analysis of objectionable elements in the Wunder concept. Thirdly, there is a presentation of Bultmann's positive approach to the concept of Wunder or miracle.

What does Bultmann mean by the term Mirakel? The

¹For the meaning of this and similar words throughout this chapter cf. above, 268.

briefest description of Mirakel would run something like this. A Mirakel is a surprising and marvellous event which has no apparent cause: this being so, one assumes that God is the cause. A Mirakel is, first of all, "an event, which encounters us on the ground of nature or history, and has as its essential characteristic, that it makes the impression on the spectator of unusualness: that for human comprehension it falls outside the frame of the usual course of things in nature and history, and thereby becomes a problem for human reflection."¹ So, secondly, a Mirakel is that which "cannot be explained by the empirical laws of the prevailing world system, and therefore in this inexplicability contains the moment, which is suitable to bring the directness of divine working to men's consciousness."² A Mirakel is an extra-

¹Jelke, Die Wunder Jesu, 13. "ein Ereignis, das uns ebenso auf dem Boden der Natur wie der Geschichte begegnet, und das sein eigentliches Kennzeichen darin hat, daß es auf den Beobachter den Eindruck des Außergewöhnlichen macht, daß es für die menschliche Auffassung aus dem Rahmen des gewohnten Verlaufes der Dinge in Natur und Geschichte herausfällt und daher dem menschlichen Nachdenken zum Problem wird."

²Ibid., 19. "[daß es] aus den erfahrungsmäßigen Gesetzen des bisherigen Weltlaufs nicht erklärt werden kann und also in dieser Unerklärbarkeit das Moment enthält, das geeignet ist, den Menschen die Unmittelbarkeit des göttlichen Wirkens zum Bewußtsein zu bringen."

ordinary event, the causation of which is attributed to God because there is no other apparent cause. As such, any one - any observer or spectator - can agree with this Mirakel concept: Mirakel "is an established^{able} event" [ein konstatierbares Ereignis] (GV I, 220). Such 'established^{able} events' make no essential difference to the observer. "For we ourselves remain the same, whether we affirm or deny them."¹ "We can say about belief in the miracles of the New Testament what Paul said concerning the eating of flesh offered to idols. 'We are no worse off if we do not believe, and no better off if we do' (I Cor. 8.8)."² But why must we drop the Mirakel concept? Bultmann gives three reasons.

First of all, to find God in a Mirakel would be incompatible with the uniformity of causation. By this, Bultmann does not mean that science, in and by itself - its stressing of the interconnection of events - has made the Mirakel concept impossible. Nor does Bultmann mean that

¹Herrmann, Offenbarung und Wunder, 7. "Denn wir selbst bleiben dieselben, mögen wir ihnen zustimmen oder sie ablehnen."

²Bultmann, Marburger Predigten, 140. "Jedenfalls dürfen wir mit ähnlichen Worten, wie der Apostel Paulus über das Essen des Götzenopferfleisches sagt, auch vom Glauben an die Wundergeschichten des Neuen Testaments sagen: 'Glauben wir sie, so werden wir darum nicht besser sein, glauben wir sie nicht, so werden wir darum nicht weniger sein' (I Kor. 8.8)."

causal uniformity is based on empirical generalization. Rather the uniformity of causation is pre-scientific and ontological because it "is given with our existence in the world [ist mit unserem Dasein in der Welt gegeben]" (GV I, 215). Lotze expressed the same idea. "The annulling of a law of Nature, if it were to take place for a moment, would . . . set in confusion all the rest of the world, whose orderly and regular continued existence we presupposed."¹ And the uniformity of causation is pre-scientific, as Raven points out. "The process of experiment, of the observation and testing of its results, and the subsequent repetition and checking and defining, is as old as human nature. No one can have discovered the use of a wheel or the structure of an arch, the growing of corn or the baking of a cake, except by an identical sequence of actions. It is nothing but what we call common sense; and every child uses it when he builds a house of cards or discovers that wood floats on water and iron sinks."² And science has but sharpened this pre-scientific and ontological notion of the lawfulness in natural events. "The notion of regularity, of the regular connection of nature, is not in the first place a notion

¹Lotze, Microcosmus, I, 451.

²Raven, Christianity and Science, 20.

of modern science, but on the contrary - since it belongs to existence itself - it is a quite primitive notion, which has only been developed and radically thought out in science" (GV I, 215).¹ This does not mean, of course, that we completely understand all aspects of the regular connection of nature. True, science is working on these parts of nature, so that the unknown may be made known, so that the world may come more completely under man's control. But, as Bultmann readily recognizes, this process will never be completely carried out. New riddles shall always confront us in the world of nature. And in our human life we must always be prepared for the unexpected and the unusual. But we cannot call the unusual and the inexplicable the miraculous (as the preternaturalists do): this is not faith in genuine miracle.²

But there is a second reason why it is impossible to find God in a Mirakel. A Mirakel - in the sense of an event which suspends or sets aside the natural order of things - is always ambiguous. The question can always be

¹"Der Gedanke der Gesetzmäßigkeit, des gesetzmäßigen Zusammenhangs der Natur, ist nicht etwa erst ein gedanke moderner Wissenschaft, sondern er ist, da er zum Dasein selbst gehört, ein ganz primitiver Gedanke, der in der Wissenschaft nur ausgebildet und radikal gedacht ist."

²Cf. Bultmann, Marburger Predigten, 138.

raised - Is it good or bad? Does it proceed from God or from Satan? Supranatural power "may proceed as much from the devil as from God, a fact which the later church found very embarrassing, and we are no more 'impressed' by the record of alleged wonders . . . than were the Pharisees who declared that Jesus 'cast out devils by Beelzebub'." ¹

Bultmann believes that certain biblical events can only be termed Mirakeln. But this is due to the unconscious assumptions of the biblical writers: they had not clearly seen the consequences of this faulty Mirakel conception. Yet "the authority of the text has not been abandoned, when the Mirakel notion has been abandoned" (GV I, 217). ² For this reason - that a Mirakel can be traced to Satan as well as to God - Mirakel enshrines an unworthy conception of the activity of God.

The third reason for rejecting the Mirakel concept is the most fundamental. Basically, Bultmann believes that it is a sin for man to look for a Mirakel in the orderly course of nature. He begins by considering the specific case of the Jews. Why did the Jews seek for signs? Because

¹Rynd, "Bishop Gore on Miracles", 123-24.

²"[daß] aber die Autorität der Schrift nicht preisgegeben wird, wenn der Mirakelgedanke preisgegeben wird."

their approach to God was a radically sinful one. The Jews sought to justify themselves in the face of God by their achievements. "They understand themselves from what they achieve, and understand the other from what he achieves. And as they prove themselves before God by their achievements, so must God prove himself before them by his achievement" (GV I, 221).¹ But this is just the basic sin of mankind: man attempts to justify himself, to found his security upon his past deeds and achievements. This is self-centred righteousness, the most deadly sin of all. And when a man justifies himself on the basis of his past acts, he is prone to look at God and God's work in exactly the same sinful light. Because the one attitude is wrong, so also is the other. To look for a Mirakel in nature is as sinful as to congratulate oneself on one's goodness. But how can man properly regard his works, his own self, and so be in a proper position to regard the activity of God?

Bultmann draws a distinction between the two ways of looking at what man does. Man's doings can either be viewed as work (Werk) or achievement (Leistung) or else as

¹"Sie verstehen sich aus dem, was sie leisten, und verstehen den Anderen aus dem, was er leistet. Wie sie sich durch ihre Leistung vor Gott ausweisen wollen, so muß Gott sich vor ihnen durch seine Leistung ausweisen."

action (Tun or Tat). In the first case man's doing is thought of as external to himself - he could well have left it undone - and still remained essentially as he was. In the second place, man's doing is thought of as integral to himself; his actions make him what he is. Man is not being, he is becoming. Existence precedes essence. A man's actions make him what he is. And Bultmann would seem to say the same about God: therefore he is unwilling to ascribe to God causation of an event which could have proceeded equally as well from the devil. But to place our trust in past achievements is a sinful procedure. In so doing, we view the world as our world, we see ourselves as creators, we refuse to recognize the finitude of our lives. Yet in all this way of existing, we are uneasy, we realize that it is in some sense a wrong view, and consequently our lives are characterized by fear. But a Mirakel is of no help to us in this tragic situation.

But if it is sinful to look for God in a Mirakel, may we speak of God's activity in a Wunder? We may, but even here misunderstandings may develop. The concept of Wunder itself must be clarified: and in three ways.

First of all, when the Mirakel concept is dropped, Wunder adherents may say 'But, you see, God is found in every event, each happening is a Wunder'. This may be

called a philosophical defence of the concept of Wunder. But if this is the case, why retain the term Wunder at all? "If every happening is miraculous, then in truth none is, and God and the world are placed on an equal footing. God, creation and Wunder are then only edifying names for circumstances which meet me in my factual existence quite otherwise, namely as the scientifically fathomable, infinite connection of all happenings: as nature and natural event" (GV I, 218).¹ Bultmann is anxious to avoid this meaning of Wunder: he wishes to dissociate Wunder from pantheism.²

Secondly, when the Mirakel concept is dropped, Wunder adherents may say 'But if God is omnipotent, there can be no conceivable objection to the occurrence of a Wunder'. This may be called a dogmatic defence of the concept of Wunder. But the fact is, replies Bultmann, that there is nothing in the realm of nature or the world, in Mirakel or in Wunder, to tell us in and by itself that God

¹"Wenn alles Geschehen wunderbarr ist, so ist es in Wahrheit keines mehr, und Gott und Welt sind gleichgesetzt. Gott, Schöpfung und Wunder sind dann nur noch erbauliche Namen für Sachverhalte, die mir in meinen faktischen Leben ganz anders begegnen, nämlich als der wissenschaftlich erforschbare, unendliche Zusammenhang alles Geschehens, als Natur und Naturereignis."

²Cf. also above, 86f.; 335f.

is omnipotent. "The omnipotence which man rightly ascribes to God does not confront man in the world at all in such a way that he can recognize it and submit himself to it. . . . Nothing within the world is omnipotent, not even the world as a whole" (GV II, 86; ET 98-9). The Christian knows indeed that God is omnipotent: but he recognizes that he does not have this as a scientific hypothesis on the basis of which other phenomena may be explained. The insight into God's omnipotence comes only in the moment, and must be won over and over again. In order to understand that God is omnipotent, two things must be kept in mind. First of all, man must despair of seeing God the omnipotent in nature. "Man, thinking he sees in nature God's omnipotence, to which he can freely surrender himself, has not as yet seen the real power of nature at all, nor recognized its uncanny nature, and its ambiguity: for in his inner being he is constantly exposed to this power, so that at the deepest level he is powerless. Not until he has become a stranger to himself, and begins to take fright at himself, does he become aware of the real power of nature, yet also in doing so, of the impossibility of seeing God in nature. He is looking rather for an omnipotence which will free him from himself" (GV II, 89; ET 101-02). And how can man have such a sense of God's omnipotence granted to him? Only in

and through Jesus Christ: and this is the second thing man must understand if he would know that God is omnipotent.

"God has made his grace appear through Jesus Christ. . . . In this revelation Jesus Christ is really God made manifest; for in it God is, in fact, manifest as the Omnipotent, Holy and Eternal One - by virtue of this fact, of course, that the grace which he bestows in Christ is nothing other than the forgiveness of sin. The real reason for natural man's inability to see in God the Omnipotent, Holy Eternal One is, in fact, that man cannot free himself from himself. Only in the Word of divine grace is God's omnipotence taken seriously. In this Word man's finitude is seen with all its logical implications as his enslavement to himself. The Word of forgiving grace breaks through this boundary and does liberate man from himself; and in this it exercises a power which nothing else in the world possesses, apart from divine omnipotence" (GV II, 95-6; ET 109).

Thirdly, when the Mirakel concept is dropped, Wunder adherents may say 'But if you agree that God is the creator, there can be no conceivable objection to the occurrence of a miracle'. For "the creation of the world [is] the miracle of all miracles."¹ This is another dogmatic

¹Frank, Philosophical Understanding and Religious Truth, 59

defence of the concept of Wunder. Again, according to Bultmann, there is nothing in nature or in the world to tell us that God created the universe. "The creation notion helps here not at all; because it also simply suspends the notion of an orderly nature. In this, the world happening is understood as one in infinite time and space" (GV I, 218).¹ Once again, the creation notion is not a scientific hypothesis on the basis of which all phenomena can be explained. For "the creation notion . . . as a faith notion differs from a scientific notion, not that man approaches it in a curious, irrational manner, that is, through its origin (so far as origin is understood as a cause and a fact of the past), but on the contrary in this way, that it cannot become possessed and employed as a scientific notion" (GV I, 218).² Like the omnipotence of God, the creative activity of God

¹"Der Schöpfungsgedanke hilft dabei gar nichts; denn auch er hebt den Gedanken der gesetzmäßigen Natur einfach auf. In diesem nämlich ist das Weltgeschehen als ein in Raum und Zeit unendliches verstanden."

²"Der Schöpfungsgedanke . . . unterscheidet sich von einem wissenschaftlichen Gedanken als Glaubengedanke nicht etwa dadurch, daß man auf eine merkwürdige, unrationale Weise zu ihm kommt, also durch seinen Ursprung (sofern Ursprung als causa verstanden und also zu einem Faktum der Vergangenheit wird), sondern dadurch, daß er nicht wie ein wissenschaftlicher Gedanke besessen und angewendet werden kann."

can only be perceived in the moment and must be continually renewed. "I can only speak about God's creative act, if I recognize myself now as a creature of God" (GV I, 218).¹ And only in Jesus Christ can we see the creative activity of God.

We have seen that Bultmann has utterly rejected the concept of Mirakel, and has stated some objections which often accrue to the concept of Wunder. But what else can be said about Wunder? What is Bultmann's positive approach to the concept of miracle?

First of all, a miracle "signifies God's act as distinguished from a world happening" (GV I, 217).² But what does he mean by world happening? What does he mean by world? Bultmann does not mean the world of nature, as opposed to a supranatural realm. By world, Bultmann means an understanding of the world. "Here world signifies not primarily nature, as the regular connection of all happenings, but the reality in which I live, my world" (GV I, 219).³

¹"Ich kann von Gottes Schöpfungstat nur reden, wenn ich mich jetzt als Geschöpf Gottes weiß."

²"[daß] er Gottes Tun im Unterschied von Weltgeschehen bedeutet."

³"Hier bedeutet Welt nicht primär die Natur, als gesetzmäßigen Zusammenhang alles Geschehens, sondern die Wirklichkeit, in der ich lebe, meine Welt."

Instead of seeing the world as God's creation, I usually look upon it as my world, a world which I observe and can - to some extent at least - control. I look upon the world as past and decided, the sphere of my achievements and accomplishments, the world upon which I base my security and in which I place my trust. "In the everyday arrangement of my work, in the disposition of my time, etc. I regard the world as standing at my disposal. The world and my deed in it is from the outset godless" (GV I, 218-19).¹ The attitude of the spectator or observer is in some respects useful and even necessary, but as a godless attitude it is not an ultimate view and it is not the attitude one can take up towards God. Man can understand himself on the basis of his past activity (sin) or upon his present act (grace and obedience). And "miracle directs the critical question at man, how far he understands the world aright, if he understands it as the available work-world for himself; how far he understands himself aright, if he understands himself by what he does, and if he will guarantee himself by what he does. The concept of miracle radically abolishes the character of the world as the available work-

¹"In der Alltäglichkeit meiner Arbeit, in der Disposition meiner Zeit usw. sehe ich die Welt an als mir zur Verfügung stehend. Die Welt und mein Tun in ihr ist von vornherein gottlos."

world, since it abolishes man's understanding of himself as guaranteed by what he does" (GV I, 222).¹

Secondly, faith in God and faith in miracle signify the same thing. Because this is so, it is impossible to say that because God is omnipotent, therefore miracles happen: it is impossible to say that because God is creator, therefore miracles happen. For though we may well have the concepts of omnipotence and creation, we do not know God the omnipotent nor God the creator apart from miracle.

"I can well have the notion of God's omnipotence, that is to say I can represent God to myself as an omnipotent being (the godless man can also do this); but I do not thereby yet have God, the Omnipotent, whom I nowhere and never have save in miracle" (GV I, 219).² Again, since faith in God and faith in miracle signify the same thing, every kind of theistic

¹"[Aber] das Wunder richtet an den Menschen die kritische Frage, wie weit er die Welt richtig versteht, wenn er sie als die ihm verfügbare Arbeitswelt versteht; wie weit er sich selbst richtig versteht, wenn er sich aus seinem Werk versteht und durch sein Werk sichern will. Der Wundergedanke hebt den Charakter der Welt als der verfügbaren Arbeitswelt deshalb radikal auf, weil er das Verständnis des Menschen seiner selbst als durch sein Werk gesichert aufhebt."

²"Der Gedanken von Gottes Allmacht kann ich wohl haben, d.h. ich kann mir Gott als ein allmächtiges Wesen vorstellen (das kann auch der Gottlose); aber damit habe ich Gott, den Allmächtigen, noch nicht, den ich nie und nirgends habe als im Wunder."

Weltanschauung (on the basis of which miracle could be explained) is ruled out. "Such a view of the world is no Weltanschauung, that is to say, no theory concerning the world in general" (GV I, 225).¹ Once again, because faith in God and faith in miracle signify the same thing, "miracle as miracle is hidden, hidden for him, who does not see God in it" (GV I, 220).² It is impossible to separate God and miracle, for then one establishes miracle in the world, and God cannot be established in the world. A miracle is not a miracle unless one sees in and through it the activity of God. So the event which to one man is a miracle is to the other an event solidly entrenched within the causal nexus. "For the eye of unbelief the act of God is a past world event" (GV I, 225).³ "A miracle - i.e. an act of God - is not visible or ascertainable like worldly events. The only way to preserve the unworldly, transcendent character of the divine activity, is to regard it not as an interference in worldly happenings, but something accomplished in them in such a way that the closed web of history is left undisturbed.

¹"Solcher Blick in die Welt ist keine Weltanschauung, d.h. keine Theorie über die Welt in allgemeinen."

²"Das Wunder ist als Wunder verborgen, verborgen für den, der nicht in ihm Gott sieht."

³"Für das Auge des Unglaubens ist auch Gottes Tun ein geschehenes Weltereignis."

To every other eye than the eye of faith the action of God is hidden. Only the 'natural' happening is generally visible and ascertainable. In it is accomplished the hidden act of God. . . . When I am encountered by such an event, I can in faith accept it as the gift of God or as his judgement, although I can also see it within its context in nature or history. In faith I can understand a thought or resolve as something which is the work of God without necessarily removing it from its place in the chain of cause and effect."¹ Thus, in the 'natural' happening, God is hidden. Therefore faith in miracle can only be expressed in the form of a paradox: "it understands an ascertainable event in its context in nature and history as the act of God. Faith cannot dispense with its 'nevertheless'."² A miracle is an event "through which we become aware that in spite of everything, in spite of all the mystery of the world and destiny, in spite of the torment of self-judgement, God has acted graciously."³ In the natural happening, God is hidden. This does not mean that God is hidden in general; it means

¹Bartsch (ed.), KM, 197. ²Ibid., 199.

³Bultmann, Marburger Predigten, 144. "durch das wir dessen inne werden, daß uns trotz alledem, trotz aller Rätsel von Welt und Schicksal, trotz aller Qual der Selbstverurteilung Gott gnädig geschaffen hat."

that for me God is not apprehended in the world event.

"God's concealment signifies not his invisibility in general, it signifies not primarily that he is inaccessible to the senses or to experiment, but on the contrary that he is hidden from me" (GV I, 221).¹

Thirdly, miracle signifies God's revelation in God's act of forgiveness. As we have seen, man tends to look upon himself as creator. As Barth says: "Man can regard himself and treat himself as the measure of all things, just as if he were Creator or free or Lord like Him to whom he owes his being. He can therefore think that he dare not abandon himself but must serve and worship himself, and that he can therefore put his hope of salvation in himself. Without denying God, man can consider himself as having power over God. And not only can man do this but he actually does it."² Such a man bases his security on his past achievements. He is irresistibly and irretrievably tied to the past. And when man prides himself on his own righteousness and goodness, he engages in the most deadly form of sin. Man can only recognize that all his achieve-

¹"Gottes Verborgenheit bedeutet nicht seine Unsichtbarkeit im allgemeinen; sie bedeutet nicht primär, daß er den Sinnen, dem Experiment unzugänglich ist, sondern daß er mir verborgen ist."

²Barth, The Knowledge of God and the Service of God, 17.

ments are in vain: he can only despair of his own accomplishments. A miracle is a revelation, an act of forgiveness, in that man is forgiven his past, delivered from fear, freed for the future, for obedience, and for love. "There is only one miracle, therefore, that of revelation. But this means forgiveness, revelation of the grace of God for the godless. But it is to be understood strictly as an event, not as an idea of forgiveness, a notion of the grace of God as belonging to God's being, but as God's act" (GV I, 221).¹ Or again, "God frees us from ourselves, as we are, that is to say, he frees us from our past and points us to the future" (GV I, 223).² Only when we are free from our past, can we be free to act in obedience and in love. But how can we ever be free from our past? "There is only one possibility to become free from the past for a clear hearing of the claim which comes to us in the present: that freedom be given to us through forgiveness. For we cannot as temporal beings truly escape from our past so

¹"Es gibt aber also nur ein Wunder: das der Offenbarung. Das aber bedeutet: Offenbarung der Gnade Gottes für den Gottlosen, Vergebung. Aber streng verstanden als Ereignis, nicht als eine Idee von Vergebung, eine Gedanke von der Gnade Gottes als zum Wesen Gottes gehörig, sondern als Gottes Tat."

²"Denn er reißt uns von uns selbst los, so wie wir sind, d.h. er reißt uns los von unserer Vergangenheit und weist uns in die Zukunft."

that it is simply erased and ignored, so that we might receive such a thing as a new nature, in which we in any case would not maintain ourselves. We come always into our present out of our past and with our past. . . . But the question is, is our past in us at the present time as a sinful or as a forgiven past? If sin is for us forgiven, this signifies that we have freedom for the future, that we really hear God's claim, and that we can place ourselves at his disposal (Rom. 6.12ff.)" (GV I, 224).¹

Fourthly, we cannot speak about miracle as an act of God without speaking about ourselves at the same time. "To speak about miracle is to speak of my own existence; to say, in fact, that God has become apparent in my own life; and therefore to speak not of a general manifestation of

¹"Es gibt nur eine Möglichkeit, von der Vergangenheit frei zu werden zu einem reinen Hören des Anspruchs, der im Jetzt an uns vergeht: daß uns Freiheit geschenkt wird durch Vergebung. Denn so können wir als zeitliche Wesen ja nicht ihr loskommen, daß die Vergangenheit einfach durchgestrichen und ignoriert wird, daß wir so etwas wie eine neue Natur erhielten, in der wir uns ja auch gar nicht würden halten können. Wir kommen immer in unser Jetzt aus unserer Vergangenheit und mit unserer Vergangenheit. . . . Aber die Frage ist, ob unsere Vergangenheit in uns gegenwärtig ist als sündige oder als vergebene. Ist uns die Sünde vergeben, so bedeutet das, daß wir Freiheit haben für die Zukunft, daß wir Gottes Anspruch wirklich hören und uns ihm zur Verfügung stellen können (Röm. 6.12ff.)."

God, but of his revelation" (GV I, 221).¹ Or, "the action of God is not to be conceived as a worldly phenomenon capable of being apprehended apart from its existentiell reference, it can only be spoken of by speaking simultaneously of myself as the person who is ^{concerned} / in an existentiell way. To speak of the act of God means to speak at the same time of my existence."² The Christian will be continually tempted to see this present act of God as a past accomplishment, something on which he may safely rely. Against this temptation, Bultmann believes that the experience of forgiveness as an act of God must be won over and over again: by the renunciation of any claim upon our past and throwing ourselves wholly upon the mercy of God. "Each miracle is only evident on the ground of a miracle of forgiveness. But this is not a fact of the past, on the contrary I have it as forgiveness always only as newly accepted" (GV I, 226).³ And because this is so, "the Christian really has the

¹"Vom Wunder heit, von der eigenen Existenz reden, d.h. davon, da in meinen Leben Gott sichtbar geworden ist, also reden nicht von einer allgemeinen Sichtbarkeit Gottes, sondern von seiner Offenbarung."

²Bartsch (ed.), KM, 196. Fuller's/ is here slightly altered. translation

³"Jedes Wunder [ist] ja immer nur sichtbar auf Grund des einen Wunders der Vergebung. Diese aber ist nicht ein Faktum der Vergangenheit, sondern ich habe sie als Vergebung immer nur als neu ergriffene."

possibility to see even new miracles. The world happening, which must appear to the unbelieving eye as the orderly lapse of events, takes on for him the character of a world in which God acts" (GV I, 226).¹

Fifthly, but most fundamentally, miracle signifies God's act: that is, God's act in Jesus Christ. The real miracle for man is this present meeting with God in Christ, freeing man from the past and consequently imparting to him new possibilities for his existence. God's act of forgiveness, of grace, is revealed only in Christ. "God has revealed himself in the cross of Christ as the God of forgiving grace, Christ is the Word of forgiving grace. . . . The meaning of the Christian doctrine of justification of the sinner is quite simply this: that the sinner is justified; that God takes a man who is not as he is for the man that he is meant to be, and the man who really is such because God takes him to be so. It is in this way that the forgiving grace of God frees man from himself, his past, and what he has made of himself. And it is in this way that it makes him a

¹"Steht es aber so, dann hat der Christ wirklich die Möglichkeit, immer neue Wunder zu sehen. Dies Weltgeschehen, das dem ungläubigen Auge als gesetzmäßiger Ablauf von Ereignissen erscheinen muß, gewinnt für ihn den Charakter einer Welt, in der Gott handelt."

'new creature'" (GV II, 141; ET 160). Because man is so freed from his past by Christ, Jesus Christ is the eschatological event. "According to the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the eschatological event, the action of God by which God has set an end to the old world. . . . The old world has reached its end for the believer, he is 'a new creature in Christ'. For the old world has reached its end with the fact that he himself as 'the old man' has reached its end and is now 'a new man', a free man."¹ The possibility of becoming a new man, a new creature, comes to the individual through grace or forgiveness. "Only those who are loved are capable of loving. Only those who have received confidence as a gift can show confidence to others. Only those who know what self-commitment is by experience can adopt that attitude themselves. We are free to give ourselves to God because he has given up himself for us."² We are given the possibility of becoming new creatures in the "faith that the unseen, intangible reality actually confronts us as love, opening up our future and signifying not death but life."³ But "the demand for faith is the demand that the world surrender the understanding it has had of itself

¹Bultmann, History and Eschatology, 151.

²Bartsch (ed.), KM, 32-3. ³Ibid., 19.

hitherto - that it let the whole structure of its security which it has erected in presumptuous independence of the Creator fall to ruins. . . . Faith is turning away from the world, the act of desecularization, the surrender of all seeming security and every pretense, the willingness to live by the strength of the invisible and uncontrollable. It means accepting completely different standards as to what is to be called death and what life. . . . Faith, then, is the overcoming of the 'offense' - the offense that life meets man only in the word addressed to him by a mere man - Jesus of Nazareth. It is the offense raised by a man who claims, without being able to make it credible to the world, that God is encountering the world in him. It is the offense of 'the word became flesh'.¹ The only real miracle - the present encounter with God in Christ - makes man a new creature. As Gregor Smith says: "This is the kind of conversion which lifts the subject out of himself, out of his fears and sins, into a forgiven life. Thenceforth he is open to the world and to others, he is at peace. He is no longer confident in himself, boasting in the flesh; but his confidence is in the eternal Thou, recurrent in each personal situation of responsibility. This is the meeting

¹Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, II, 75-6.

of man with God which takes place, in faithful response, in human history."¹

There are two corollaries flowing from this fundamental conviction that the only miracle is the meeting with God in Christ in the present. First, there is little or no point in speaking about so-called pagan miracles: the important element is the fact that man is encountered by God in Christ here and now. "It is therefore . . . false to state a distinction between Christian and pagan miracle notions. Both can be thought of primitively and both can be thought of radically; both can cling to Mirakel, and in both can the notion of God's act be clearly developed. The difference between Christianity and paganism lies not in the diverse miracle notions, any more than in the diverse God notions generally; but only herein - that Christianity speaks about the real God, because it can speak about the real miracle [that is, forgiveness in Christ]" (GV I, 226).² Secondly,

¹Smith, The New Man, 90.

²"Es ist also falsch, abgesehen hiervon einen Unterschied zwischen dem christlichen und dem heidnischen Wundergedanken zu konstatieren. Beide können primitiv und beide können radikal gedacht sein; beide können am Mirakel haften, und in beiden kann der Gedanke des Tuns Gottes rein entwickelt sein. Der Unterschied von Christentum und Heidentum liegt nicht im verschiedenen Wundergedanken, so wenig wie im verschiedenen Gottesgedanken überhaupt, sondern nur darin, daß das Christentum vom wirklichen Gott redet, weil es vom wirklichen Wunder reden kann."

because the only miracle is the present encounter with God in Christ, Bultmann has a very restricted use for the miracles of the New Testament. On the one hand, he dismisses them outright, and for two reasons. First, the miracles of Jesus are termed Mirakeln, and are consequently of no value ^{events} to faith. This terming of certain New Testament / as Mirakeln connects with the attitude we have already noted in Bultmann's thought: namely, he seems to think that if certain events be admitted as factually true, God must be admitted as cause.¹ But there is a second reason why the New Testament miracles are of no concern to faith: they are happenings of the past. "As the work of a man of the past they [the miracles of Jesus] have nothing to do with us immediately. So seen, they are no works of Christ, in so far as we understand under the work of Christ the work of salvation" (GV I, 227, italics mine).² And because these events are past, "it is necessary to emphasize with all sharpness, that simply no advantages accrue to the Christian faith, to prove the possibility or the reality of the miracles of Jesus as

¹Cf. above, 276.

²"[daß] sie als Werke eines Menschen der Vergangenheit uns unmittelbar nichts angehen. So gesehen, sind sie keine Werke Christi, sofern wir unter dem Werk Christi das Werk der Erlösung verstehen."

events of the past, that on the contrary, this is only a confusion" (GV I, 227).¹ Herrmann states the same conviction. "Our faith can only recognize miracle when in an event within our own experience we recognize the impact upon our life of a power not ourselves. Hence comes our attitude to the biblical miracles. He who asks himself whether he finds in the Scriptures unquestionable facts which he experiences as God's working upon him will scarcely be able to give an affirmative answer. From this it follows that for every Christian the importance of these miraculous events of tradition must be entirely overshadowed by that which in his own life impresses him as a miracle of God. The word of God which we apprehend as addressed to us personally must be more important to us than anything else. He who refuses to admit this refuses obedience to God."² But on the other hand, Bultmann is prepared to find a limited place for the New Testament events which he usually terms Mirakeln. If they have nothing to do with the faith directly or immediately, perhaps they have something to do with it indirectly or

¹"Es ist mit aller Schärfe zu betonen, daß schlechterdings kein Interesse für den christlichen Glaube besteht, die Möglichkeit oder Wirklichkeit der Wunder Jesu als Ereignisse der Vergangenheit nachzuweisen, daß im Gegenteil dies nur eine Verirrung wäre."

²Herrmann, Systematic Theology, 85.

mediately. "If Christ becomes present to us as the preached Christ, then the miracles of Jesus can only come in question as they belong to the proclamation of Christ, that is, as testimony" (GV I, 227).¹ But now, in this statement, the Mirakeln have become die Wunder Jesu. And as such "they make clear the whole ambiguity of the Christian proclamation" (GV I, 227).² Like Jesus himself, the miracles can be considered as past events, and as such neither ^{Jesus nor the miracles} can be the means of showing God's grace or forgiveness, God's present act. "For Jesus Christ is for the unbeliever an attestable fact of the past, in a particular place in the past, historically circumscribed and historically understandable" (GV I, 227-28).³ But for the believer this past event is the most present reality. "The unique event of past history [the cross of Christ] is an ever-present reality."⁴ To put the matter in Macquarrie's terms, the 'objective-historical'

¹"Wird Christus uns zur Gegenwart als der gepredigte Christus, so können die Wunder Jesu nur in Frage kommen, sofern sie zur Predigt von Christus gehören, also als Zeugnisse."

²"Und zwar insofern, als sie die ganz Zweideutigkeit der christlichen Predigt verdeutlichen."

³"Denn Jesus Christus ist für den Ungläubigen ein konstatierbares Faktum der Vergangenheit, an einer bestimmten Stelle der Vergangenheit historisch einzugliedern und historisch verständlich."

⁴Bartsch (ed.), KM, 110.

has become the 'existentiell-historical'. The miracles are open to the same analysis and interpretation. They are past events. Even to some contemporaries of Jesus, they were past events - historically circumscribed and historically understandable: that is to say, some of these contemporaries saw these events as issuing from Satan. And they are past events to us now: if we look upon them as unusual, but historically circumscribed and historically determined happenings of the past. Yet these 'objective-historical' events are also capable of becoming 'existentiell-historical' actions: as the word of grace and forgiveness spoken by God now. But the ability to see these events as miracles demands the renunciation of the self, cessation of all self-glorying: throwing oneself in isolation, in trust, in obedience upon the grace of God. "The doubter, who claims to have at his disposal a criterion by which he can prove whether God exists or not, will never see miracles; miracles can be seen only by the doubter who despairs of his own ability and strength to see God if God does not reveal Himself, but who is ready to let God speak to him. . . . God is distant, wholly other in so far as everyday occurrences hide Him from the unbeliever, God is near for the believer who sees his activity."¹

¹Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, 178.

B. Tillich's View of Miracle.

Tillich's views on miracle may be grouped around six statements. A miracle is an event which 1) is astonishing, unusual, shaking; 2) does not contradict the rational structure of reality; 3) points to the mystery of being; 4) expresses the relation of the mystery of being to us in a definite way; 5) is received as a sign-event in an ecstatic experience; 6) is given only to those who receive it in faith. Of course, these six statements are not exclusive or independent, but rather complementary and interdependent. At the same time, these definitions do serve as appropriate schema around which to summarize Tillich's views on this subject.

A miracle is an event which is astonishing, unusual, and shaking. The occurrence of a miracle is that 'which produces astonishment' - the original meaning of the word miracle. A miracle is unusual in the sense that for the participant the normal subject-object relationship is transcended. "In many miracle stories there is a description of the 'numinous' dread which grasps those who are participators in the miraculous event. There is the feeling that the solid ground of ordinary reality has been taken 'out from under' their feet" (ST I, 129). In a miracle, a constellation of events occur in such a way as to shake the

observer or participant. A miracle is shaking in the sense that it is significant in an ultimate way. A miracle is astonishing in the sense that, like all revelatory experiences, it is the manifestation of what concerns us ultimately. Knowledge about history or nature, about individuals, about hidden things and happenings cannot be described as miraculous, because such things are not matters of ultimate concern. And although a miracle is astonishing, unusual and shaking, it does not contradict the rational structure of reality.

A miracle is an event which does not contradict the rational structure of reality. Tillich declares that "miracles cannot be interpreted in terms of^a supranatural interference in natural processes. If such an interpretation were true, the manifestation of the ground of being would destroy the structure of being; God would be split within himself, as religious dualism has asserted. It would be more adequate to call such a miracle 'demonic', not because it was produced by 'demons', but because it discloses a 'structure of destruction'" (ST I, 129). And similarly, "the term 'ecstatic' in the phrase 'ecstatic idea of God' points to the experience of the holy as transcending ordinary experience without removing it" (ST II, 8). The relation of revelation to reason is expressed in the same way:

revelation transcends, goes beyond reason; but it does not thereby negate or suppress reason. Tillich believes that the rational structure of reality is manifestly broken by some New Testament miracles - he mentions the stories of the empty tomb, the Virgin birth, and the bodily ascension (ST II, 146). "Rationalistic periods make the negation of natural laws the main point in miracle stories. . . . The more impossible, the more revelatory! Already in the New Testament one can observe that, the later the tradition, the more the antinatural element is emphasized over against the sign element" (ST I, 128). But another factor is at work besides that of ^{this} antinatural attitude: ^{namely,} popular piety. And popular piety is wrong in "wanting a God, walking on earth, participating in history, but not involved in the conflicts of existence and the ambiguities of life. Popular piety does not want a paradox, but a 'miracle'" (ST II, 166).

A miracle is an event which does not contradict the rational structure of reality. Yet anything within that structure of reality, by pointing beyond itself to the ground of being, can convey revelation. This is so because "within itself, the finite world points beyond itself. In other words, it is self-transcendent" (ST II, 8). "There is no reality, thing, or event which cannot become a bearer of the mystery of being and enter into a revelatory

correlation" (ST I, 131). A stone or a person, by entering into a revelatory constellation, may become miraculous. But there is a great difference between the stone and the person with respect to the significance and truth of the revelations mediated through them. Whereas the stone represents a rather limited number of qualities which are able to point to the ground of being, the person represents the central qualities which can point to the mystery of existence (ST I, 131). But the natural world cannot be eradicated from a miraculous constellation theoretically or practically. "Contemplating the mystery of the divine ground, considering the infinity of the divine life, intuiting the marvel of divine creativity, adoring the inexhaustible meaning of the divine self-manifestation--all these experiences are related to God" (ST I, 320). Persons or objects can enter into a revelatory constellation, can become the bearers of revelation: in this^{sense} transcending, but not violating or negating, the rational structure of reality. Such miracles point to the mystery of being.

A miracle is an event which points to the mystery of being. In Tillich's terminology, God is called the ground of being, Christ the New Being. In a miracle, the ground of being does not become a matter of knowledge: that which is essentially mysterious remains so. In a miracle,

we know nothing more about the ground of being, nor about the world of subject-object relationships. "Whatever is essentially mysterious cannot lose its mysteriousness even when it is revealed. Otherwise something which only seemed to be mysterious would be revealed, and not that which is essentially mysterious. But is it not a contradiction in terms to speak of the revelation of something which remains a mystery in its very revelation? It is just this seeming paradox which is asserted by religion and theology. Wherever the two propositions are maintained, that God has revealed himself and that God is an infinite mystery for those to whom he has revealed himself, the paradox is stated implicitly. But this is not a real paradox, for revelation includes cognitive elements. . . . Something more is known of the mystery after it has become manifest in revelation. . . . But revelation does not dissolve the mystery into knowledge" (ST I, 121).

Further clarification of the term 'mystery' is necessary. Mystery should not be applied to something which is known (i.e. ceases to be a mystery) after it has been shown or revealed. What is not known now but may well be known in the future cannot be called a mystery. The genuine mystery appears when reason transcends itself, when it is driven beyond itself. When the question is asked 'Why

something and not nothing?' reason is peering beyond her own borders with sightless eyes. When finitude is recognized with a shock, reason is driven beyond itself, and seeks to know the unknowable. This negative aspect of mystery must always be present; it is a necessary element in revelation. "Without the 'I am undone' of Isaiah in his vocational vision, God cannot be experienced (Is. 6.5). Without the 'dark night of the soul', the mystic cannot experience the mystery of the ground" (ST I, 122).

But the negative side of mystery - best illustrated by the experience of finitude and non-being - is taken up in the revelation of mystery without losing its negative characteristics. "Hence the mystery appears as ground and not as abyss. It appears as the power of being, conquering non-being. It appears as our ultimate concern" (ST I, 122). A miracle is shaking and astonishing in the sense that the participant recognizes his own finitude, the possibility of non-being, the abyss of nothingness. These elements are taken up in the actual miracle where ground conquers abyss, being non-being, infinity finitude.

A miracle is an event which expresses the relation of the mystery of being to us in a definite way. In a miracle, man is grasped by his ultimate concern. An objective miracle is a contradiction in terms. "Christianity

was born, not with the birth of the man who is called 'Jesus', but in the moment in which one of his followers was driven to say to him, 'Thou art the Christ'. And Christianity will live as long as there are people who repeat this assertion. For the event on which Christianity is based has two sides: the fact which is called 'Jesus of Nazareth' and the reception of this fact by those who received him as the Christ" (ST II, 112). "Jesus as the Christ is both an historical fact and a subject of believing reception. One cannot speak about the event on which Christianity is based without asserting both sides" (ST II, 113). Because a miracle is an event which expresses the relation of being to us in a definite way, there is no such thing as revelation in general. There is no such thing as natural theology or natural religion. "Revelation grasps an individual or a group, usually a group through an individual: it has revealing power only in this connection. Revelations received outside the concrete situation can be apprehended only as reports about revelations which other groups assert that they have received" (ST I, 123). In a miracle, something must happen (the factual side), and something must be received (the receptive side). "Revelation is always a subjective and an objective event in strict interdependence. Someone is grasped by the manifestation of the mystery;

that is the subjective side of the event. Something occurs through which the mystery of revelation grasps someone; this is the objective side. These two sides cannot be separated. If nothing happens objectively, nothing is revealed. If no one receives what happens objectively, the event fails to reveal anything. . . . The mystery appears objectively in terms of what has been called 'miracle'" (ST I, 123-24). The objective side has but a logical priority. Thus "the objective reality of the New Being precedes the subject participating in it" (ST II, 204).

A miracle is an event which expresses the relation of the mystery of being to us in a definite way. The term 'miracle' belongs to revelation, and in some senses the two words are interchangeable. Tillich makes a distinction between original and dependent revelation: and so between original and dependent miracle. "An original revelation is a revelation which occurs in a constellation that did not exist before. This miracle and this ecstasy are joined for the first time. Both sides are original" (ST I, 140). Dependent revelation differs from this. The original event in its occurrence and reception is now the objective side of a dependent miracle. But the miracle does not become such until it has been received: this is the subjective side of a dependent miracle. When we peruse the account of

a biblical miracle, the original constellation and its reception is object to us; only when it becomes subject in us - when we receive it in ecstasy - can the word miracle be properly employed. "Every revelation occurs in a correlation of ecstasy and miracle" (ST I, 152). The 'correlation' concept is fundamental in this, as in all areas, of Tillich's theology. "The method of correlation explains the contents of the Christian faith through existentiell questions and theological answers in mutual interdependence" (ST I, 68). There is a correlation between past events and present miracles. "There are many healing stories in the gospels, a stumbling-block for scholars and preachers and teachers, because they take them as miracle stories of the past instead of taking them as healing stories of the present. For this they are."¹ Again, "the word 'resurrection' has for many people the connotation of dead bodies leaving their graves or other fanciful images. But . . . resurrection happens now, or it does not happen at all."² The original constellation and its reception must be received anew in ecstasy. "A dependent revelatory situation exists in every moment in which the divine Spirit grasps, shakes, and moves the human spirit. Every prayer and meditation, if it fulfils

¹Tillich, The New Being, 37.

²Ibid., 24.

its meaning, namely to reunite the creature with its creative ground, is revelatory in this sense. The marks of revelation - mystery, miracle and ecstasy - are present in every true prayer. Speaking to God and receiving an answer is an ecstatic and miraculous experience; it transcends all ordinary structures of subjective and objective reason. It is the presence of the mystery of being and an actualization of our ultimate concern" (ST I, 141).

A miracle is an event which expresses the relation of the mystery of being to us in a definite way. Miracle occurs to a man in a concrete situation. But what is ^{the} concrete, existentiell situation of modern man? "It is not an exaggeration to say that to-day man experiences his present situation in terms of disruption, conflict, self-destruction, meaninglessness, and despair in all realms of life. . . . The question arising out of this experience is not, as in the Reformation, the question of a merciful God and the forgiveness of sins; nor is it, as in the early Greek church, the question of finitude, of death and error; nor is it the question of the personal religious life or of the Christianization of culture and society. It is the question of a reality in which the self-estrangement of our existence is overcome, a reality of reconciliation and reunion, of creativity, meaning and hope" (ST I, 55). So revelation and

miracle can be received only in the depths of a personal life, in its struggles and decisions, in self-surrender. Of course, "the depth of the personal life will not itself produce revelation or miracle" (ST II, 14). But no constellation of events is a miracle for me unless I receive it under the conditions of estrangement and finitude.

A miracle is an event which expresses the relation of the mystery of being to us in a definite way. Yet this does not mean that a miracle is received by a man, simply for that man himself. If a man receives a miracle, "he receives it for his group, and implicitly for all groups, for mankind as a whole" (ST I, 141). This original miracle (constellation of events and reception) can be received by individuals and by groups "who enter into the correlation of revelation in a dependent way" (ST I, 142). Only as an individual receives the revelation or the miracle in this dependent way, is the original revelation of any meaning for him. "The knowledge of revelation can be received only in the situation of revelation, and it can be communicated - in contrast to ordinary knowledge - only to those who participate in this situation" (ST I, 143).

A miracle is an event which expresses the relation of the mystery of being to us in a definite way. In such a miracle, being conquers non-being, infinity finitude, divine

power existentiell destruction. All miracles must be so interpreted. "It is understandable that, as early as the New Testament, a rationalization takes place which expressed itself in the desire to emphasize the antinatural element in the stories instead of their power to point to the presence of the divine power overcoming existentiell destruction" (ST II, 186). Thus a miracle is a healing event: reuniting the existentiell destructiveness of the participant with the ground of being, in a measure at least.

"Healing means reuniting that which is estranged, giving a centre to that which is split, overcoming the split between God and man, man and his world, man and himself" (ST II, 192). In brief, "salvation is healing."¹ One of the elements of a miracle is its healing power, though this is probably most evident in the healing miracles themselves. "In all the miracles performed by Jesus, some of the evils of existentiell self-destruction are conquered. They are not finally conquered, for the people to whom miracles happened were again subject to sickness and death and to the vicissitudes of nature. But what happened to them was a representative anticipation of the victory of the New Being over existent self-destruction. . . . Miracles are performed by Jesus because he fully

¹Tillich, The New Being, 37.

participates in the misery of the human situation and tries to overcome it wherever the occasion offers itself. In a special way the healing stories show the superiority of the New Being in him over mental possession and its bodily consequences. . . . God's presence and power should not be sought in the supranatural interference in the ordinary course of events but in the power of the New Being to overcome the self-destructive consequences of existentiell estrangement in and through created structures of reality" (ST II, 185-86).

A miracle is an event which expresses the relation of the mystery of being to us in a definite way. The crucifixion and the resurrection are meaningless as reports about revelatory experiences: they must be received in the way of dependent revelation. But how are we to explain the resurrection? Does it not seem to contradict the rational structure of reality? Tillich faces these problems with characteristic courage. The cross of Christ and the resurrection of Christ are both fact and symbol, and the two events are interdependent: they cannot be separated without losing their meaning. And "if Cross and Resurrection are interdependent, they must be both reality and symbol. In both cases something happened within existence" (ST II, 177). But between the two events there is a great difference, for "while the stories of the Cross probably point to an event

that took place in the full light of historical observation, the stories of the Resurrection spread a deep veil over the event" (ST II, 177). Well, can the symbol of the Resurrection be retained without any kind of objective reality? Not so. "The character of this event remains in darkness, even in the poetic rationalization of the Easter story. But one thing is obvious. In the days in which the certainty of his Resurrection grasped the small, dispersed and despairing group of his followers, the church was born, and, since the Christ is not the Christ without the church, he has become the Christ. The certainty that he who is the bringer of the new aeon cannot finally have succumbed to the powers of the old aeon made the experience of the Resurrection the decisive test of the Christ-character of Jesus of Nazareth. A real experience made it possible for the disciples to apply the known symbol of Resurrection to Jesus, thus acknowledging him definitely as the Christ" (ST II, 178). And again, "the factual element is a necessary implication of the symbol of the Resurrection, as it is of the symbol of the Cross" (ST II, 179).

But what in this case constitutes the 'factual element'? What was the objective constellation awaiting the reception of the first disciples? Tillich rejects several theories which try to make the objective constellation

plausible. These respective theories he terms the physical, the spiritual, and the psychological theories of the resurrection. Tillich introduces his own hypothesis ^{of the} resurrection and claims no greater status for it than just that. He calls it the restitution theory, claiming I Cor. 15 as his scriptural corroboration.

In order to describe it [the Resurrection], we must look at the negativity which is overcome in it. Certainly it is not the death of an individual man, no matter how important. Therefore, the revival of an individual man or his reappearance as a spirit cannot be the event of the Resurrection. The negativity which is overcome in the Resurrection is that of the disappearance of him who was the New Being. It is the overcoming of his disappearance from present experience and his consequent transition into the past except for the limits of memory. And, since the conquest of such transitoriness is essential for the New Being, Jesus, it appeared, could not have been its bearer. At the same time, the power of his being had impressed itself indelibly upon the disciples as the power of the New Being. In this tension something unique happened. In an ecstatic experience the concrete picture of Jesus of Nazareth became indissolubly united with the reality of the New Being. He is present wherever the New Being is present. Death was not able to push him into the past. But his presence does not have the character of a revived (and transmuted) body, nor does it have the character of the appearance of an individual soul; it has the character of a spiritual presence. He "is the Spirit" and we "know him now" only because he is the Spirit. In this way the concrete individual life of the man Jesus of Nazareth is raised above transitoriness into the eternal presence of God as Spirit. This event happened first to some of his followers who had fled to Galilee in the hours of his execution; then to all those who in every period experience his living presence here and now. This is the event (ST II, 180-81).

'In an ecstatic experience the concrete picture of Jesus of

Nazareth became indissolubly united with the reality of the New Being'.

A miracle is an event which is received as a sign-event in an ecstatic experience. The word 'event' refers to the objective constellation which is one necessary side of every miracle. The term 'sign' has already been adequately discussed in relation to the third point: a miracle is an event which points to the mystery of being. The part which demands particular attention is the term 'ecstatic experience' or 'ecstasy'. What does Tillich mean by these phrases?

In the experience of ecstasy, mind is transcended, but not violated. "'Ecstasy' ('standing outside one's self') points to a state of mind which is extraordinary in the sense that the mind transcends its ordinary situation. Ecstasy is not a negation of reason, it is the state of mind in which reason is beyond itself, that is, beyond its subject-object structure" (ST I, 124). Ecstasy is not enthusiasm, a kind of pulling one's self up by the bootstraps, it is not subjective in that sense. Rather "ecstasy occurs only if the mind is grasped by the mystery, namely, by the ground of being and mystery" (ST I, 124). There is no revelation, no miracle, without the experience of ecstasy. Ecstasy indeed involves psychological factors, but is not

circumscribed by these factors. "Ecstasy is the form in which that which concerns us ultimately manifests itself within the whole of our psychological conditions" (ST I, 125-26). In the state of ecstasy - in revelation or in miracle - the ground of being grasps the receiving participant. Emotions and thought are transcended in this experience: reason is transcended in this experience. And this means that faith is an essential element in the experience of revelation or miracle.

A miracle is an event which is given only to those who receive it in faith. "This is emphasized in the synoptic records of the miracles of Jesus. Miracles are given only to those for whom they are sign-events, to those who receive them in faith" (ST I, 130). For "faith is not a human act, although it happens in man; faith is the work of the divine Spirit" (ST II, 205). And because faith is an indispensable element in miracle, miracle - being a revelatory experience - will make an existentiell difference to the participant. "The certitude of faith is 'existentiell', meaning that the whole existence of man is involved."¹ The experience of miracle, like the experience of faith, affects the total man.

¹Tillich, The Dynamics of Faith, 34.

A miracle is an event which is given only to those who receive it in faith. Are such sign-events reserved only for those under the influence of the New Being? Are miracles the exclusive property of Christians only? Tillich would answer negatively to both of these questions. Miracle can occur outside of Christianity, just as revelation can occur outside of Christianity. "There is a history of revelation, the centre of which is the event Jesus the Christ; but the centre is not without a line which leads to it (preparatory revelation) and a line which leads from it (receiving revelation)" (ST II, 192). We must not deny the reality of preparatory revelation. "To assert that a revelation is final revelation without pointing to a history of revelation in which there has been a preparation for it dehumanizes man and demonizes God" (ST I, 155). But all preparatory revelations, and all preparatory miracles, are judged and fulfilled in the final revelation and the final miracle: the New Being in Jesus the Christ. "The final revelation, like every revelation, occurs in a correlation of ecstasy and miracle. The revelatory event is Jesus as the Christ. He is the miracle of the final revelation, and his reception is the ecstasy of the final revelation. . . . The final revelation, the revelation in Jesus as the Christ, is universally valid,

because it includes the criterion of every revelation and is the finis or telos (intrinsic aim) of all of them. The final revelation is the criterion of every revelation which precedes or follows. It is the criterion of every religion and every culture, not only of the culture and religion in and through which it has appeared. It is valid for the social existence of every human group and for the personal existence of every individual. It is valid for mankind as such, and in an indescribable way, it has meaning for the universe also. Nothing less than this should be asserted by Christian theology" (ST I, 152).

For all of these reasons, Tillich is convinced that "a genuine miracle is . . . an event which is unusual, astonishing, shaking, without contradicting the rational structure of reality. . . . It is an event which points to the mystery of being, expressing its relation to us in a definite way. . . . It is an occurrence which is received as a sign-event in an ecstatic experience. . . . Miracles are given only to those . . . who receive them in faith" (ST I, 130).

So far in this chapter we have presented Bultmann's views on miracle and Tillich's views on miracle. We now pass to a comparison where Bultmann's and Tillich's analyses are critically evaluated.

C. Comparison and Criticism.

In spite of a great difference in terminology, Tillich and Bultmann are in essential agreement with regard to the concept of miracle. But even on wider issues, there is a large measure of accord.

Tillich, for instance, declares that God does not have or possess existence. "The being of God is being-itself. The being of God cannot be understood as the existence of a being alongside others or above others. If God is a being, he is subject to the categories of finitude, especially as to space and substance. . . . When applied to God, superlatives become diminutives. They place him on the level of other beings while elevating him above all of them. Many theologians who have used the term 'highest being' ought to have known better. . . . The question of the existence of God can be neither asked nor answered. If asked, it is a question about that which by its very nature is above existence, and therefore the answer - whether negative or affirmative - implicitly denies the nature of God. It is as atheistic to affirm the existence of God as it is to deny it, God is being-itself, not a being" (ST I, 261, 263). And Bultmann declares that God is not an object among other objects. "If a man believes that to speak 'of God' means to speak 'concerning God', such a way of speaking has no

meaning, for the moment in which it happens, it has lost its object, God. For whenever the notion of 'God' is thought, this purports to mean the Omnipotent, that is to say, the All-determining reality. But this notion is not thought of at all, if I speak concerning God, that is to say, when I see God as an object of thought: concerning which I can orient myself, when I take up a standpoint, from which I stand neutral concerning the question of God, raise considerations about God's reality and nature, which I can reject, or, if they are enlightening, can accept" (GV I, 26).¹

Again, Bultmann believes that Christianity is not a Weltanschauung, on the basis of which the Christian can explain all phenomena. And Tillich is convinced that Christianity is not a 'religion': stressing, like Bultmann, the elements of danger and risk in faith. In short, both theologians

¹"Versteht man unter 'von Gott' reden 'über Gott' reden, so hat solches Reden überhaupt keinen Sinn; denn in dem Moment, wo es geschieht, hat es seinem Gegenstand, Gott, verloren. Denn wo überhaupt der Gedanke 'Gott' gedacht ist, besagt er, daß Gott der Allmächtige, d.h. die Alles bestimmende Wirklichkeit sei. Dieser Gedanke ist aber überhaupt nicht gedacht, wenn ich über Gott rede, d.h. wenn ich Gott als ein Objekt des Denkens ansehe, über das ich mich orientieren kann, wenn ich einen Standpunkt einnehme, von dem aus ich neutral zur Gottesfrage stehe, über Gottes Wirklichkeit und sein Wesen Erwägungen anstelle, die ich ablehnen oder, wenn sie einleuchtend sind, akzeptieren kann."

utterly reject the supranaturalism of traditional theology. Tillich writes, and Bultmann would surely agree: "The main argument against it [supranaturalism] is that it transforms the infinity of God into a finiteness which is only an extension of the categories of finitude. This is done in respect to space by establishing a supranatural divine world alongside the natural human world; in respect to time by determining a beginning and an end of God's creativity; in respect to causality by making God a cause alongside other causes; in respect to substance by attributing individual substance to him. Against this kind of supranaturalism the arguments of naturalism are valid, and, as such, represent the true concern of religion, the infinity of the infinite, and the inviolability of the created structures of the finite" (ST II, 6-7). Finally, both theologians are apologues: anxious to present the gospel in terms meaningful to modern man, while doing full justice to the inherent scandalon of the Christian faith. "Both men [Bultmann and Tillich], in their separate ways, are continuing the mediating, reconciling approach in theology, though Bultmann does not broaden his apologetic to include as many areas as Tillich surveys. Both theologians are speaking to the challenges offered Christianity by science and philosophy. Tillich's theology is more receptive to philosophy than Bultmann's

and, consequently, he extends his reconciling task to cover many disciplines, though the primary purpose of clarifying the Christian message remains central in his philosophical theology."¹

On the specific subject of the concept of miracle, the two theologians are in agreement on many fundamental issues: though there are some areas in which disagreement is quite pronounced.

First of all, when Bultmann declares that a miracle is an event in opposition to a world happening, Tillich expresses the same idea by saying that in the experience of a miracle the normal subject-object relationship is transcended, and by saying that a miracle is a sign-event received in an ecstatic experience. Bultmann's discussion of the 'world happening' or the normal 'subject-object relationship' is fuller and more satisfactory than that of Tillich. Tillich adds that such an event is shaking, unusual, astonishing: though he interprets these terms quite carefully. Bultmann's analysis lacks such descriptive adjectives altogether, yet he would agree that a miracle is astonishing, unusual and shaking in the sense that an act of God which frees man from his past and frees him for

¹McClendon, The Development of the Concepts 'Myth' and 'History' from Hegel to Bultmann, 760.

the future, is an act of grace and forgiveness: and in this sense a miracle is unusual. "The need for forgiveness of sins has been felt by multitudes in circumstances which outwardly at least have been far less dramatic than those of the helpless paralytic who lay at Jesus' feet. These events in which the majority of Christians have believed themselves to have been touched by the hand of God have only been ordinary in the sense that there was no question of any violation of natural law. Otherwise, for the believer himself, the occurrence is most extraordinary."¹

Secondly, both theologians reject an 'objective' miracle. Bultmann's distinction between Mirakel and Wunder is helpful in that it clarifies the nature of an 'objective' miracle. Here again, his analysis is longer and more fruitful than Tillich's, who nevertheless is in full agreement: an 'objective' miracle is a contradiction in terms. In both authors there is a tendency to dismiss altogether some New Testament events traditionally called miracles: either because they are Mirakeln (demanding as their cause the activity of God, or of Satan), or because they contradict the rational structure of reality. But as we have

¹Dew, "Natural and Supernatural in the Miracles", 37. As terms are used in this thesis, Dew's article actually refers to 'Natural and Supranatural in the Miracles'. In this regard, cf. above, 3.

seen, no event, however unusual, needs to be attributed necessarily to the causality of God.¹ And who is to say what event does, and what event does not, contradict the rational structure of reality? Tillich himself says: "The historical method [does not] approach the miracle stories . . . with the assumption that they have not happened because such events would contradict the laws of nature" (ST II, 119). For the phrase 'the laws of nature' we could well substitute 'the rational structure of reality'. But it seems that Tillich has approached some miracle stories with just this assumption: the assumption that certain miracle stories have not happened because they contradict the rational structure of reality. Therefore, in both theologians, there is an unfortunate hang-over of the pseudo-scientific philosophy which falsely tends to say that certain events are 'inconceivable' or 'impossible'.²

Thirdly, both see in miracle an act of salvation or an act of forgiveness. Bultmann says that man is freed from himself, from his past, so that he is, so that he is open for the future and for love: he is made a 'new creature'. And furthermore, the experience of miracle is not the

¹Cf. above, 66ff.; 71ff.

²Cf. above, 61ff.; 244f.; 275ff.

exclusive right of the recipient alone. "His [the Christian's] act is, if it springs out of the experienced love of God, itself an act of love, and so the Christian has the power to testify and to make distinct to other men the love of God. A man, whose being and actions are carried on a cheerful love, is for other men a miracle. And in such a sense are we all called not only to see God's miracle, but also to work miracles on our own part."¹ Tillich believes that in a miracle a healing process takes place, demonic structures are negativized, man is reunited with the creative ground of being: in short, he receives 'new life'. Moreover, man never receives a miracle for himself alone - it is for his group, and implicitly for all groups, for mankind as a whole. To put this matter in terms common to neither, but acceptable to both: in a miracle God's grace is received which enables a man to live as he is intended to live - to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

¹Bultmann, Marburger Predigten, 147. "Sein Tun aber ist, wenn es aus der erfahrenen Liebe Gottes entspringt, selber ein Tun der Liebe, und so hat er die Macht, auch für andere Menschen Gottes Liebe zu bezeugen und vernehmlich zu machen. Ein Mensch, dessen Wesen und Tun von heiterer Liebe getragen ist, ist für andere Menschen ein Wunder. Und in solchem Sinne sind wir alle aufgerufen, nicht nur Gottes Wunder zu schauen, sondern auch an unserm Teil Wunder zu wirken."

Fourthly, both theologians stress the receptive side of the experience of miracle. Tillich believes that a miracle expresses the mystery of being to us in a definite way: miracle always happens in a concrete situation, it must be received inwardly to be a genuine miracle. Bultmann is convinced that we cannot speak of a true miracle without speaking simultaneously of ourselves. Tillich strongly emphasizes that the activity of God can be received in any constellation of events. Bultmann seems to give priority to preaching and the encounter between person and person as the most likely media for the activity of God and so for the occurrence of miracle. "A miracle is every deed . . . and every event that comes to pass where Jesus rules. And where does he rule? Where the Word of the gospel is preached and heard."¹ And "a man learns what God wants of him immediately out of his own situation in the encounter with his neighbour."² Yet Bultmann is prepared to admit other media as well: the experience of being in a Russian prison camp could well be the situation in which one could

¹Bultmann, Marburger Predigten, 94. "Ein Wunder ist jede Tat . . . und jedes Ereignis, das sich da ereignet wo Jesus waltet. Und wo waltet er? Wo das Wort des Evangeliums gepredigt und gehört wird."

²Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 24.

experience an act of God - i.e., a miracle.¹ And, "certainly there may be moments given in our lives, when we believe, when we are aware of God's creative rule; moments in which his miraculous action is strikingly present. Perhaps by a view of a beautiful and impressive natural scene, in being caught up by a great piece of art, by the experience of a highly gifted destiny or in the shock through an historical event, which we must understand as the judgement of God."²

In the fifth place, there is at least partial agreement as to the status of New Testament miracles. We have already noted the ambiguity in Bultmann's treatment of the miracles of Jesus. On the one hand, they are past events and they are Mirakeln, and as such they may be dismissed without further ado. On the other hand, they are die Wunder Jesu, and share the same ambiguity as Jesus

¹Bartsch (ed.), KM, 198.

²Bultmann, Marburger Predigten, 141-42. "Wohl mag es unserm Leben Augenblicke geben, da wir glauben, des Schöpferwaltens Gottes inne zu werden; Augenblicke, in denen uns sein Wundertun eindrucksvoll gegenwärtig ist. Etwa beim Anblick schöner und erhabener Natur, in der Ergriffenheit durch ein großes Kunstwerk, beim Erleben eines begnadeten Schicksals oder in der Erschütterung durch ein geschichtliches Ereignis, das wir meinen als Gericht Gottes verstehen zu müssen."

himself: to be understood either as events of the past or as eschatological events - that is, acts of God in the here and now. This ambiguity in Bultmann's treatment of miracles is at one with his treatment of the Jesus of history. On the one hand, the Jesus of history - an objective-historical fact - has little or nothing to do with us at the present time: yet, on the other hand, Christ - God's word - can confront us here and now. The objective-historical fact has become an existentiell-historical event. But both theologians agree that as past events the New Testament miracles are meaningless: only if man sees in them now the present activity of God are they miracles in the genuine sense.

But in another sense, the two theologians are in disagreement as to the status of New Testament miracles. Tillich uses the phrases 'original revelation' and 'dependent revelation', and so 'original' and 'dependent' miracle. There seems to be nothing in Bultmann's theology which corresponds exactly with these phrases. Since the only miracle is the present gift of God in Christ, any talk of original and dependent miracle is meaningless. To Tillich, the miracle of Christ is in some sense a standard, in the light of which all other miracles are to be judged. But to Bultmann, man can only recognize the miracle of God in

Christ now - it either happens or it does not - there are no gradations in miracle apologetic: the 'standard' or 'original' miracle is received now, there is no other.

For that reason, there is little agreement as to the place of secular or pagan or non-Christian miracles. This disagreement goes back to the more fundamental discord as to what Tillich calls 'preparatory revelation'. Bultmann is indeed prepared to admit that there is a preparation for revelation, 'natural man' has a 'life-relation' to the gospel message, otherwise it would be completely meaningless to him.¹ "The fact that the Christian proclamation, when it encounters a man, is capable of being understood by him, shows that he has a pre-understanding of it" (GV I, 295).² But the role of any such preparatory revelation seems to be essentially empty, if not negative. 'Natural man' can only see that he and his past acts are as nothing. He can only despair of seeing or knowing God by his own efforts. "God's action in the first place brings to nothing the man it seeks to make alive" (GV II, 119; ET 135, italics mine). Or, "God becomes manifest in history only to such as

¹Cf. above, 264; 266.

²"Die Tatsache, daß die christliche Verkündigung, wenn sie einen Menschen trifft, von ihm verstanden werden kann, zeigt, daß er ein Vorverständnis von ihr hat."

allow themselves to be broken by him" (GV II, 102; ET 116). Yet 'natural man' seems unable to grasp this necessity, he imagines not that he is a creature, but rather believes himself to be creator. He looks upon the world as his, he places his trust in his own achievements. "God's action conflicts with man, and with man in his religion at that, in which he seeks to safeguard himself and to assert himself over against the world which oppresses him, and to soothe his cares and fears. Every self-abasement and self-sacrifice which takes place in the name of religion is in reality rebellion against God - just as for Paul Jewish service of the law is simply a means of achieving one's own glory. God's grace is to man grace in such a thoroughgoing sense that it supports the whole of man's existence, and can only be conceived of as grace by those who surrender their whole existence and let themselves fall into the unfathomable, dizzy depths without seeking for something to hold on to. The revelation of God is God's conflict with man in his religion" (GV II, 119-20; ET 135-36). In other words, "man's sin is the point of contact for the contradicting Word of grace" (GV II, 120; ET 137). "Unbelief is disobedience" (GV I, 304).¹ So preparatory revelation is

¹"Unglaube ist Ungehorsam."

empty: indeed it is negative and illusory in character, though this negativity is the point of contact. "The new is understood from the old, just when it is its negation" (GV I, 296).¹ At best, such preparatory revelation can only bring a man to his knees, and this does not often happen. "In the light of the Christian belief everything that is specified as God's revelation is indeed shown to be illusory. Christian belief knows that only God's grace which forgives sin can be designated as the revelation of God. . . . This finally is the significance, therefore, of the revelation in nature and history: it constantly refers us to the revelation of the forgiving grace of God in Christ. But it is only in doing this that it is revelation for us; and that means that, apart from Christ, it is not a revelation for us. But when we do start from Christ, the whole of the world in nature and history can receive the illumination of revelation" (GV II, 100, 103-04; ET 114, 118).

Tillich has a place for preparatory revelation, a place which seems to be more fruitful and positive. He first, insists, that there is what he terms 'universal revelation'. By this, he does not mean general revelation. "Revelation

¹"Auch dann aber wird das Neue vom Altem her verstanden, gerade wenn es seine Negation ist."

occurs or it does not occur; but it certainly does not occur 'generally'. . . . 'Universal', as distinguished from 'general' means (or can mean) a special event with an all-embracing claim" (ST I, 154). ^{secondly,} Nor is universal revelation to be confused with natural revelation. "As we have seen, there is no natural revelation. Only revelation through nature can be asserted. And revelation through nature is special and concrete" (ST I, 154). Thirdly, universal revelation must not be confused with the assumption that revelation is occurring always and everywhere. "Nothing like this can be said in view of the marks of revelation and its existentiell character" (ST I, 154). But there is universal revelation, and its content is positive and fruitful. "Only on the wide basis of universal revelation could the final revelation occur and be received. Without the symbols created by universal revelation the final revelation would not be understandable. Without the religious experience created by universal revelation no categories and forms would exist to receive the final revelation. The biblical terminology is full of words whose meaning and connotations would be completely strange to listeners and readers if there had been no preceding revelations in Judaism as well as in paganism. Missions could not have reached anyone if there had not been a preparation for the Christian

message in universal revelation. The question of the final revelation would not have been asked; therefore, the answer could not have been received" (ST I, 154-55).

Can this disagreement between the two theologians be overcome? Bultmann's analysis is very powerful, especially as he constructs his argument on Pauline theology, and in particular ^{on} the first eight chapters of Romans. Theoretically, man can despair of himself and his world, and open himself to God: practically, this has not been done, especially in the religion of religions itself, namely, Judaism. The good Gentile following his pagan moral values and the devout Jew jealous of the law, are both alike under condemnation, sin and death. The only release is God's act in Christ, for one as for the other. Yet there is considerable merit in Tillich's contention that the Christian cannot speak of a final revelation or an eschatological event at all, unless he is willing to grant the existence of a fruitful, if fragmentary, preparatory revelation. And the Epistle to the Hebrews would seem to bear out this contention. "These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar. . . ." (Heb. 11.13). "Since the final revelation is the criterion of every revelation, the criterion of finality must have been envisaged and applied, though fragmentarily,

and by anticipation" (ST I, 158).

Therefore, I myself conclude that there is no revelation apart from God in Christ: but that this act of God in Christ is open to those of faith, though they never hear of Jesus of Nazareth. That is to say, God's act in Christ is open, at least fragmentarily and by anticipation, to those who despair of themselves and their works and cast themselves utterly on the mercy of God.

There are two matters which demand criticism in the existential approach. First, an oft-repeated criticism: the existentialists are clearly wrong in rejecting the historicity of certain events because such things are said to be impossible or inconceivable. Secondly, the relationship between past events and present miracles seems to have been dealt with in an inadequate manner. This problem has already^{been} encountered in the chapter devoted to the demythological movement. There the question was: How can the miracles be transferred from the sphere of Vorhandenheit to the sphere of Dasein? How does the Jesus of history become the Christ of faith? How does the objective-historical become the existentiell-historical?¹ In this chapter we have a similar and allied problem: Exactly how do the

¹Cf. above, 283ff.; 297f.

the Mirakeln Jesu become the Wunder Christi? Why does the existentialist not explain explicitly how past events become present miracles?

This is one of the questions upon which I seek to throw light in the conclusion. And there it will be obvious that this existential view is the position with which I find myself in greatest accord. But before passing to that conclusion, we stop to consider the three arguments in Part Three in the light of Tillich's 'point of view'.

A sound theology attempts to be faithful to the truth of the eternal message and at the same time to speak meaningfully to the temporal situation. Traditional theology, or supranaturalism, no longer does either. Barth's exclusive concern with the eternal message blunts the impact of his theology upon the temporal situation. Form criticism's exclusive concern with the situation seems at times to negate and forget the truth of the eternal message. And as it is presented in chapter six - that is, in its merely negative form - demythologizing might be said to be open to the same charge. Up to this stage Tillich's 'point of view' has served rather well: we have had relatively little trouble in diagnosing the faulty part or parts of each of the theological arguments. But now the situation is different,

and much more difficult. And this difficulty is not due to any fault in the diagnostic apparatus: rather the fact of the matter is that all the contemporary views presented in Part Three seem to me to be both sound and healthy.

All three are sound in that they are really theological, really biblical, really apologetic. They honestly attempt to maintain the uneasy balance between message and situation. And any theology which is not concerned with both is not really biblical, is not really apologetic, is not really theological. All three views are healthy in that they cast interesting insights into the eternal message; and all are aware of, and attempt to speak meaningfully to, the contemporary situation. All three are good. But in my opinion the last of the three - the existential view - is better than the former two - the rational and the lingual views: the existential position is better in that it is more faithful to the truth of the eternal message while being equally cognizant of the contemporary situation.

In both ^{the} rational and lingual ~~views~~, the transcendence of God is not taken really seriously. As we have already seen, God and his activity are trapped and enmeshed in a this-worldly setting. And as we have already noted, ^{the} the philosophies of both rationalist and the linguist would be

greatly enhanced were a tremendous 'as if' held over them. Yet the interests of a broad and inclusive Weltanschauung thoroughly rule out this possibility. And with the introduction of a world view there is the implicit danger that one can 'understand' miracle in a this-worldly setting. All these faults are avoided in the existential view, which is marred only by the existentialist's narrow views as to what is possible or conceivable.

In the conclusion, I put forward my own positive views of the concept of miracle.

Conclusion.

"It does not, of course, invalidate a process of reasoning that it has been used by a sceptic, but it does raise a legitimate doubt whether such reasoning can be of much service to faith."

A.B. Bruce.

"I would rather hear wisdom from Balaam's ass or from a philosopher against his will than from an angel or an apostle."

J.G. Hamann.

"We may conclude that the Christian religion was not only at first attended with miracles but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one. Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity; and whoever is moved by faith to assent to it is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience."¹ I propose to employ this statement by Hume as a suitable framework for stating my own conclusions concerning the concept of miracle. It is to be noted that in so doing, I am stating my own convictions, and I make no attempt to expound Hume's own arguments, except incidentally. At the same time, it is my conviction that this conclusion contains most insights necessary to any adequate understanding of the concept of miracle. This is not to deny that the interpretation here given is different from, if not entirely opposed to, Hume's own views. In what follows, I repeat that I am giving my own views, and often Hume is (as Hamann says) 'the philosopher speaking against his will'.

intend to
Having explained how I use it, Hume's conclusion

¹Hume, An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding, x, 140-41.

may be conveniently broken into six separate statements, around which my own beliefs may be clustered and clarified. . We may conclude that 1) the Christian religion was at first attended with miracles; 2) even at this day the Christian religion cannot be believed by any reasonable person without a miracle; 3) mere reason is insufficient to convince us of the veracity of the Christian religion; 4) whoever is moved by faith to assent to the Christian religion is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person; 5) this continued miracle subverts all the principles of a person's understanding; 6) this continued miracle gives a person a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience.

'We may conclude that the Christian religion was at first attended with miracles'. By this, I mean two different things.

First of all, if miracle were to mean simply 'an unusual event' then Christianity was at first attended with 'miracles'. It is quite true that we do not know to-day how many of the events traditionally called miracles actually did occur. Probably a few of them actually did happen. Perhaps many of them. Possibly all of them. Opinions here will vary. It seems quite likely that Jesus actually did some quite unusual things. Jesus was an unusual man. But

there was no single activity which he performed that proved conclusively that he was unique. It is not true to say that the ancient world was full of miracle-workers, any more than it is true to say that the twentieth century is full of statesmen. Nevertheless, the number of miracle-workers in the first century was considerable, just as the number of statesmen in the twentieth century is considerable. The title 'miracle-worker' in the first century was no greater, and no lesser, claim to fame than the term 'statesman' is in the twentieth. I believe that Jesus performed some very unusual deeds. But I do not think that any single event (or the events taken together), in and by itself (or themselves) proved to anyone that Jesus was the Son of God, or that he was not of this world, or that in the flesh of this man dwelt the Word of God.

Secondly, if by miracle is meant 'an event in which the activity of God becomes apparent to a particular person', then Christianity was at first attended with 'miracles'. There can be no doubt that through the media of certain events, men and women were transformed, changed, converted. There can be no doubt that by means of certain happenings, individuals were convinced of the presence, compassion, forgiveness and love of God. There can be no doubt that in and through certain occurrences, individuals

were convinced that they had been reformed and reshaped by the redeeming hand of a loving Heavenly Father. But now the question arises: Were these certain events, in and through which men felt the activity of God the 'unusual events' referred to above? In some instances, this was undoubtedly the case. But what I wish to point out is that there is no necessary connection between the two. Now, as then, a person may become aware of the activity of God in an unusual, marvellous or extraordinary event, but that person does not necessarily see the activity of God in that particular event. An unusual worldly event does not, in and by itself, either prove the existence of God or point to his presence. On the other hand, a very ordinary event may point to the presence and activity of God, though again, this is not necessarily the case. The miraculum in miracle does not refer to its unusualness as a worldly event. The miraculum refers rather to the gracious activity of God towards^a/man who realizes that he does not deserve this act of grace and love; and moreover, this gracious love may become apparent to him in the most ordinary or the most extraordinary world event. As Brunner says: "Both the 'ordinary', and the 'extraordinary' action of God, is equally wonderful; for everything that God does is wonder-

ful, for those who see that it is God who does it."¹

We conclude that the Christian religion was at first attended with miracles; in the sense of 'unusual events' and in the sense of men becoming aware of 'the activity of God'. And it is clearly the second definition which comes closer to what I mean by miracle. The Christian faith was at first attended with miracles, but what about now?
that

'We conclude/even at this day the Christian religion cannot be believed by any reasonable person without a miracle'. Unless there is one event, or a complex of events, or a series of events in and through which one feels or sees or is convinced of the activity of God, one cannot believe in the Christian religion. I believe that this is the case. And one must first point out that this present activity of God has little to do with anything that happened in the first century.² It is not enough to be convinced that Jesus was an unusual man. It is not enough to be assured that certain mens' lives were transformed in the first century. It is not enough to be certain that specific individuals long ago became aware of the activity of God. No event is a miracle for me unless in and through this event I feel the activity of God in the here and now. The only meaning-

¹Brunner, D II, 160.

²But cf. below.

ful miracle is the one that takes place in the present. Of course, a particular report or passage of the Bible may be the means of mediating God's activity to a person in the here and now. The church indeed proclaims this: that the Bible can and does mediate the activity of God. When through an event or a passage of the biblical message, I become aware of the activity of God, then the Bible is the Word of God to me and for me in that moment. In the Bible we are presented with a gospel, a redemptive message, awaiting the response of the person moved by faith. But more than God's activity is mediated through the Bible: rather God's activity in Christ is mediated through the Bible. The Bible mediates God's activity in Christ. Preaching mediates the kerygma. The sacraments mediate the gospel. Whereas we may properly say that the Bible, the tradition, the liturgy and the worship of the church are the chief mediators of God's activity in Christ, they are not the sole mediators. Any event may mediate God's activity in Christ. For the distinctive thing about God's activity in Christ is that it occurs to-day, now, at the present time in and through the encounters, things, responsibilities and decisions which confront one in everyday life. Christ is the ever-living, ever-present Lord of life. Thus, any event which mediates God's activity in Christ to me and for me at the present time

is a miracle. We conclude that even at this day the Christian religion cannot be believed by any reasonable person without a miracle: that is to say, one must be convinced of God's activity in Christ in one's own life, in the here and now - else Christianity is meaningless. And this point is sharpened in the following paragraph.

'We may conclude that mere reason is insufficient to convince us of the veracity of the Christian religion'. No compilation of the facts of Christianity will itself coerce one into belief. No chronology of the lives of the saints, however glowingly presented, will itself lead to belief. No recitation of the facts of the history of Christendom, however favourably presented, will itself prove God's activity. No string of arguments, however persuasively cited, will itself convince the sceptic. Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of the presence or existence of God: Hume himself clearly saw this. "What a noble privilege is it of human reason to attain the knowledge of the supreme Being; and from the visible works of nature, be enabled to infer so sublime a principle as its supreme Creator? But turn the reverse of the medal. Survey most nations and most ages. Examine the religious principles, which have, in fact prevailed in the world. You will scarcely be persuaded, that they are anything but sick men's dreams: Or perhaps

you will regard them more as the playsome whimsies of monkies in human shape, than the serious, positive, dogmatical assertions of a being, who dignifies himself with the name rational. . . . The whole is a riddle, an enigma, an inexplicable mystery. Doubt, uncertainty, suspense of judgement appear the only result of our most accurate scrutiny, concerning this subject."¹ And again, "Look round this universe. What an immense profusion of beings, animated and organized, sensible and active! You admire this prodigious variety and fecundity. But inspect a little more narrowly these living existences, the only beings worth regarding. How hostile and destructive to each other! How insufficient all of them for their own happiness! How contemptuous or odious to the spectator! The whole presents nothing but the idea of a blind nature, impregnated by a great vivifying principle, and pouring forth from her lap, without discernment or parental care, her maimed and abortive children."² Mere reason is insufficient, in and by itself. But then, is scepticism in regard to reason equivalent to unbelief? This seems to have been Hume's position: hardened into a rather dispirited resignation. I should

¹Hume, The Natural History of Religion, xv, 75-6.

²Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, xi, 259-60.

say rather that scepticism in regard to reason is a pre-condition of belief. It is the experience of the shock of finitude: the recognition of, or better still, the insight into, limits - limits of both being and knowing. It is a recognition that in and by himself man cannot find God, or reason his way to him, or create him in man's own image. It is a recognition that man in himself does not know God, except God reveal himself. Man cries out for that which he cannot attain. Reason peers over her borders with sightless eyes. The thirst for God can be quenched by God alone. Yet even this thirst is a contact, even the cry of despair a communication, even the black night of scepticism a medium of God's presence. "You have to reason the faith that is incipiently in you: you can seldom be reasoned into faith, if it is not already genuinely there. 'Lord, I believe: help thou my unbelief'. You are not really asking for knowledge, but for understanding of what you already perceive and know. Hence to-day, it is not a religious expertise that people are really seeking, but rather an ars spiritualis, - a far more difficult task."¹

'We may conclude that mere reason is insufficient to convince us of the veracity of the Christian religion'.

¹McCulloch, "Integrity and the Parson", 336.

That is why I reject the attempt to accomo^mdate God in suprapolarity (as in the rational view), or to place him in an exalted slot on a language framework (as in the lingual view). Terms like 'God', 'faith', 'miracle', cannot be categorized and placed in a suitable niche of a Weltanschauung. We cannot construct a world-picture and then explain miracle in terms of it. At best, we can only say 'God's activity in Christ is like . . .'. 'A miracle works as if . . .'. We speak falteringly about such things, we speak by analogy only. We must resist the natural impulse and tendency to force God into a philosophical system, or to find an impervious metaphysical method by which to explain miracle. 'God acts'. 'But exactly how does God act?' 'I confess that I do not know exactly how - God's activity cannot be precisely pin-pointed in this manner - but he acts as if . . .'. All this analogical way of speaking does not mean that God works rationally, irrationally or non-rationally. It is a confession that such terms are not to be termed false, but rather that such terms are totally inadequate to express God's activity. It is a confession that all our categories and ways of expression can but hint at his ways; that none of them circumvent or adequately speak about his nature. Nor does this analogical way of expression mean that our response to the activity of God is an irrational or non-

rational response: but it also means that if we said only that it was a rational response, we should be saying considerably less than the facts of the experience actually demand. . . . The activity of God in Christ confronts or encounters the whole man (and not just his intellect, though this is included), releasing him from the bondage of sin, demanding and making possible a total existentiell response in obedience and in love.

'We may conclude that mere reason is insufficient to convince us of the veracity of the Christian religion'. It goes without saying that he who has faith in the veracity and efficacy of mere reason as an absolute will be unable to see in any event the activity of God. I should say that this is the continual temptation of the man under the influence of the scientific attitude and the scientific method: the temptation to say or to think that when one has explained an event scientifically everything meaningful has been said about that event. Thus, anything outside of a strictly scientific explanation is ruled out a priori. This position - the decision to regard the scientific explanation as the only meaningful one - is, of course, a philosophical, and not a scientific, position. Basically, there is no conflict between science and theology. Conflicts do arise between a scientist and a theologian when either man does not recognize

the value of the other discipline and the limits of his own. The scientist has a right to demand respect for the scientific explanation of every single event. Yet the scientist will recognize that his is not the sole or ultimate explanation. If he does fail to recognize this, he ceases to be a scientist and at the same time, runs the risk of offending the theologian. Again, the scientist, as scientist, cannot be expected to support, defend, follow or criticize the theologian in his interpretation; though since the scientist's own explanation is not the sole or ultimate one, he may have a varying degree of respect for the interpretation of the theologian. Therefore, the scientist may well salute the theologian's interpretation, though he cannot (as a scientist) speak of it. On the other hand, the theologian must not attempt to stay the heuristic passion of the scientist, or to mark out^a a realm of so-called sacred events as utterly beyond the comprehension and explanation of the scientist. This, it seems to me, is what Barth tends to do. In other words, the theologian will respect the scientist's explanation, although he will also insist that it is not the sole or ultimate explanation.

'We may conclude that mere reason is insufficient to convince us of the veracity of the Christian religion'. A miracle mediates the divine mystery, which is ultimately beyond the range of human comprehension. It is impossible,

therefore, to explain miracle - as God's act - on a par with worldly acts. It is therefore false to say that God's activity is against nature (as in contranaturalism), beyond our present knowledge of nature (as in preternaturalism), a new supraorganic level in nature (as in supernaturalism). As I see it, all attempts to explain God's activity in worldly terms (whether against nature, beyond nature or above nature) are not really explanations: largely because such attempts are not speaking about God at all. We can only say that God's activity transcends the activity of this world, confess that 'activity' and 'transcends' are only analogous ways of expression. And if we go on further to discuss God's activity, we must freely and fully recognize that we speak only by analogy: and that our best analogies are inaccurate. We must hold a tremendous 'as if' over all our pronouncements about God's activity. That is the fault of the rational and the lingual views: God is categorized. Thus all the faults of traditional supranatural theology tend to be repeated, save that these faults are dressed in modern verbiage. In short, I do not think that miracle can be 'explained' at all, our comprehension is inadequate to enable us to pin-point God's activity in a manner acceptable to 'mere reason', there must be the essential catalyst and ingredient of faith.

We cannot 'explain' or 'define' a miracle -- since such an event mediates mystery, since faith is necessary, (the term miracle) since it/ seeks to give expression to the activity of God. No more can one 'explain' how the events of two thousand years ago become now the media of God's present act. We have already noted how the extentialists have failed, on the whole, to explain the relationship between past events and present miracles. Bultmann does not 'explain' how the Mirakeln Jesu become the Wunder Christi, he does not 'explain' how the Jesus of history becomes the Christ of faith.¹ Macquarrie's analysis suffers from the same lack of precision in his discussion of the connection between the objective-historical and existentiell-historical elements of Christianity.² In each case there is an uncomfortable hiatus of explanation. We must now ask the question: Is this hiatus a lack of clear thinking on the part of the existentialists? Is this hiatus a failure to follow arguments to their logical conclusions? Or Is this seeming lack of clarity demanded by the facts of the case before the Christian? Is this hiatus essential to an adequate statement of the faith? For myself, I feel that the latter alternative is the case. For we cannot explain in any other than analogous

¹Cf. above, 283ff.; 408ff.; 446f. ²Cf. above, 364f.; 377.

terms how God works: how the Jesus of history is also the ever-living Lord. Any attempt to 'explain' how past events become present miracles cannot satisfy the claims of 'mere reason'. It would be folly to think that any attempt could do so: the folly, incidentally, that traditional theology tries to commit.

'We may conclude that whoever is moved by faith to assent to the Christian religion is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person'. The phrase 'whoever is moved by faith' points to the fact that the insight which enables a man to recognize in an event the activity of God, is a gift from God himself. "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 16.17) were the words of Jesus to Peter when this apostle recognized Jesus as the Christ. To be moved by faith to assent to the Christian religion is to be given grace to believe, and this grace is imparted by the Heavenly Father. Barth shares with the existentialists this clear emphasis upon the fact that true faith is a God-given insight: that in this sense genuine faith is theological, rather than psychological, in character. Moreover, this 'assent' is not the mere determination to accept in an uncritical fashion a corpus of Christian doctrine: which seems to have been Hume's interpretation of the verb 'to assent'. 'To assent', as here

interpreted, means rather a total existentiell response on the part of man to the unmerited gift of God in Christ Jesus. No argument or metaphysics can conjure up this gift of grace. It is given only to him who despairs of getting it himself, it is granted only to him who knows that he cannot seek God out, but throws himself unreservedly on the mercy of God.

Yet if one 'assents' to the Christian religion, is one conscious of a continued miracle in his own person? As we have seen, the ability to assent is given by God himself. In other words, the faith to assent to the Christian religion demands in itself a miracle. Is one miracle enough to sustain one in the Christian religion? Can one live the Christian life on the basis of one experience of the activity of God? I should say that one miracle is clearly insufficient; though the first time one consciously experiences God's activity may be not only dramatic, but formative and to some extent determinative in all those which follow. One miracle does not suffice for the person living the Christian way: he must despair over and over again of his own abilities and virtues, throw himself on the mercy of God, and so be open to God's gracious activity. But is a miracle the only form of God's activity? What about prayer, providence and other forms of revelation? Not too much is gained by trying to draw a sharp and rigid line separating miracle from

other forms of Christian experience, though the differentiation between miracle and other aspects of Christian revelation as given and expounded by Farmer, seems to me to be both scholarly and profound. He points out that when in any event or complex of events, one is aware of the compassion and grace of God's activity in Christ, then that is a miracle for that particular person. The more immediate the presence of God is felt to be, the more likely is the Christian to employ and use the word miracle.¹ Beyond that it is probably unnecessary to proceed: the essence of miracle runs through all forms of revelation.

Hume's phrase 'in his own person' points out two further elements necessary in any adequate statement of the concept of miracle. First, a miracle is an event in and through which a particular person becomes aware of the activity of God in Christ. At best, any event can only mediate God's activity. Without a particular person to become aware of God's activity in and through an event, miracle is a meaningless term. In a miracle, a particular person sees the activity of God in Christ. In a miracle, a particular person becomes aware that God is entering into his own personal situation. An event is not a miracle for me

¹Cf. above, 334ff.

unless I am personally aware of God's gracious activity in Christ. Secondly, although in a miracle a particular person becomes aware of God's activity, this miracle is not received exclusively for that person's own individual benefit. But rather, God's gift in Christ is to be shared with those in the situation of faith. And the experience is to be used in speaking to those outside the situation of faith; that they too, by faith, may experience the gift of God. We may conclude that whoever is moved by faith to assent to the Christian religion is aware that if he is to continually see God's activity in Christ, he must despair over and over again of his own abilities and achievements, and so open himself to that activity of God's in Christ Jesus.

'We may conclude that this continued miracle subverts all the principles of a person's understanding'. This is undoubtedly the 'hardest' of all Hume's conclusions concerning the concept of miracle. Yet properly understood, it enshrines a basic insight into this same concept. The traditional supranatural view of miracle (whether it be contranaturalism, preternaturalism or supernaturalism) attempts to expound this insight by saying that an extraordinary event which has no apparent natural cause must be attributed - by default, as it were - to the causality of God. As we have already noted, such a view has some very

obvious flaws from logical, scientific and theological standpoints. The rationalist Heim attempts to expound this insight by saying that the existence of suprapolarity subverts the principles of a person's understanding. But this is a Weltanschauung, in terms of which miracle can be understood. The lingual approach suffers from the same basic fault. It is the merit of the existential view that it expounds this Humian insight in a meaningful and acceptable way. The exposition goes something like this. In ordinary everyday affairs, I look upon this world as mine, the sphere of my achievements, the realm in which I am creator and king. And because this is a godless attitude, this world becomes, consequently, the scene of anxiety, fear and hatred. In a miracle this ordinary everyday relationship is transcended: I am no longer the centre and soul of this sphere; God is recognized as creator, upon whom I throw myself, from whom I receive freedom from this world and from my sinful past, to whom I now owe the glad obedience of love. Consequently, in that moment I am truly free, free to be myself, free to love. In this sense, we may conclude that a miracle subverts all the principles of a person's understanding. So explained, the interpretation of the word 'subverts' could be much better rendered by the word 'transcends'. A miracle does not demand (as Hume seems to have thought and Barth seems

to imply) a sacrificium intellectus. Rather, as we have already noted, worldly relationships are transcended, though not destroyed, in the experience of miracle.

'We may conclude that this continued miracle gives a person a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience'. A man without the insight into God's activity - that is to say, a miracle - sees this world as his own. He sees it as the sphere for his conquests and his achievements. Though this attitude is quite necessary in many of man's activities, it is not an ultimate attitude: and it is clearly not the one to adopt towards God. Moreover, the constant pursuit of this worldly attitude leads one into unhappiness: the more one gets the more one wants, the more man accomplishes, the more he runs away from his true existence. Only when he despairs of being himself, thrusts himself utterly upon God, can God speak to him. In a miracle, man recognizes that this is not his world - the sphere of his own achievements, however good - but God's world, the sphere of obedience, the realm of love. Such a man is forgiven, healed, redeemed. A miracle, as God's activity in Christ, always contains this redemptive element. Man's past no longer shrouds him as guilt, but is forgiven and truly past: hence man is now free, free to be himself, free to love. The other is no

longer my adversary, but a man for whom Christ died. The world has ceased to be mine, and is now the sphere of joyous obedience to the Heavenly Father. For this reason, one cannot speak about a genuine miracle without at the same time speaking about oneself: one is now a new creature in Christ, the old Adam and the old reign has passed away. One is empowered to live, to be free, to be in a genuine way. In this sense, a miracle gives a person a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience. Man now lives in the world, but he is not of it. God is the most real being of all. One lives in the light of things invisible. In a miracle - an event in which God's activity is apparent to faith-filled persons - we are certain that nothing can "separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8.39).

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