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Paul Moser (pmoser)
Loyola University Chicago
6525 N. Sheridan Rd.
Chicago, IL 60626

THE GIVEN WORD

THE MESSAGE OF THE UNVARYING GOSPEL

By JOHN BAILLIE, D.D.

THE fact that I should have been asked to speak to you about 'the given Word, the essential and unvarying Gospel', carries with it the implication that there are other Christian words which are not in this sense given but which may legitimately be added, and that, though the essential Gospel does not vary, there may well be a variable element in the elaboration and presentation of it. My task, then, is to distinguish, as best I may, the variable from the invariable, and to define the proper relation of each to the other.

I

We might be tempted to identify the given Word with the words of Holy Scripture, and the variable word with all that is said in exposition or expansion of them. That, however, would be to make our problem altogether too easy, and it would also be to ignore the guidance which Scripture itself gives us towards the solution of it on a deeper level. For the apostolic writers are themselves aware of a distinction between the Gospel which they received and their own necessary elaboration of it for the further instruction of their converts. One obvious example is in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, where St Paul clearly discriminates between what he calls the foundation and the building to be subsequently erected upon it.

I could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh who were babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not with solid food. You could not yet support that; nor can you do so even now, for you are still fleshly. . . . Like a wise master-builder I laid a foundation according to the commission given me from God. But another is building upon it. Let whoever does this think well how he builds. For nobody can lay any other foundation than that which has been laid, namely, Jesus Christ. Anybody can set on that foundation a building of gold or of silver or of precious stones or of wood or of hay or of straw, but in each case his work will be exposed, for the Day will disclose it. . . . If the work which any man has built survives, he will receive reward . . . (1 Cor. III, 1-14).

Another passage in the same context reveals still more clearly the sort of distinction he has in mind between the foundation and the further upbuilding or (to use the Latin word) edification.

When I came to you, I did not come proclaiming the witness of God with an excess of word or wisdom. For I decided to ignore everything among

you except Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ crucified. . . . Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though not the wisdom of this world . . . but we speak in a mystery the hidden wisdom of God (1 Cor. II, 1-7).

And later in the same letter he writes:

Let me remind you, brethren, of the Gospel which I gospelled to you, the Gospel on which you stand, the Gospel by which you are saved. . . . For I passed on to you to begin with [or *perhaps* as of first importance] that which I myself received (1 Cor. xv, 1-3).

He then goes on to indicate what this received Gospel was, and to this we shall have to attend presently; but in the course of his exposition he soon finds himself going beyond the statement of the received foundation and speaking the more mysterious wisdom that he reserves for the mature. 'See, I am telling you a mystery!' (v. 51). It is possible also that in the three passages in the Pauline correspondence where the phrase 'my Gospel' occurs, a similar discrimination is intended between the terms in which St Paul received the Gospel and his own more individual presentation of it.

Clearly the distinction which St Paul has in mind is, on one side of it, a distinction between the kind of speech which is likely to draw men into the Christian community and the kind which is required for the further instruction of those already within it; while on another side of it, it is a distinction between the common, indispensable and invariable foundation and the less invariable edifice of wise discourse that may be built thereon. We owe especially to Dr C. H. Dodd the clear demonstration that a consciousness of this distinction runs throughout the New Testament documents and was certainly present to the mind of the early Church. On the one hand, there is the *kerygma* or public proclamation of the Gospel, and on the other the *didache* or subsequent instruction. Since the *kerygma* is manifestly the given Word, our chief task must be to see what account the New Testament gives of that.

II

We might begin either by interrogating those New Testament documents which were the first to be written, or by interrogating those which, though written somewhat later, record the earliest events. It is the latter procedure that better serves our present purpose. I therefore begin with the account of our Lord's own *kerygma* given in the opening chapter of our earliest Gospel.

After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming (*keryssōn*) the glad tidings of God, and saying, The decisive hour has come, and the reign of God is at hand. Change your hearts and trust the glad tidings.

That is our account of our Lord's first preaching. That was the beginning of evangelism. That was how the Christian movement

started. No sentence in all Scripture therefore deserves closer attention than this one.

Several things about it deserve careful note. It shows that our Lord began His preaching with the announcement of an approaching event or situation. His coming into Galilee is the beginning of this event and therefore marks history's decisive hour. The word which I have rendered as the decisive hour is *kairos*, which more or less corresponds to the Latin *opportunitas*. It is here a very highly charged word and remains a key word throughout the New Testament. The next phrase tells us what it is that approaches. It is the reign of God for which the prophets had taught men to wait. This announcement is then followed by a call, demanding a decision on the part of the hearers: 'Change your hearts and trust the glad tidings'. It is most important to keep in mind that the word usually translated as Gospel means, as Gospel itself meant in Anglo-Saxon, nothing but good news. All through the New Testament the Christian message is presented as good news, as glad tidings of great joy. This note of joy pervades the New Testament literature as it pervades no other literature in the world. I have the uncomfortable feeling that not a few contemporary interpretations of Christianity, in reacting strongly against the too light-hearted optimism of many nineteenth-century interpretations, are now disturbing the balance of original Christianity in an opposite direction, giving men the impression that our Lord's message was one of dark foreboding. It is indeed made plain both in our Lord's teaching and throughout the New Testament that for those who reject its blessings the reign of God can bring no joy but only greater doom. Yet it is everywhere clearly affirmed that this was no part of God's intention. 'God sent *not* his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him should be saved.'

The burden of our Lord's first preaching was thus that a new age was about to dawn, and that men must make up their minds at once whether they were going to belong to it and share in the blessedness of its consummation, or continue to live as children of the old age and share in the doom that awaited it. The earliest Christian *kerygma* was that a turning-point in history had arrived. This was the hour for which the centuries had waited, the hour to which all future time would look back; as we to-day look back to it, dating even our business letters according to the years that have passed since it struck.

III

But why should such an announcement be believed? Why did the first disciples believe it, and ten thousand times ten thousand since their time? Nobody was going to believe it simply because an

unknown preacher had come saying it. Nobody was going to take the mere word of Jesus for it. No, they believed it, and we believe it to-day, only because the words He spoke were in Himself made flesh. What made that hour the turning-point of history was that history was then invaded by a Presence of a new kind, a Presence that 'dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth'. Very soon the conviction formed itself in the minds of some men of Galilee that in sending them this Presence God had done something decisive for the fortunes of the human race. Our Lord's announcement that the reign of God was at hand was made credible to them by the fact that He Himself showed them the way to a new kind of life, a life worthy of being called the reign of God, and that His Presence with them made this life possible. In His Presence they felt themselves challenged to a decision, as they had never been challenged before. And still to-day, when we stand in the Presence of Christ, we know ourselves to be so challenged. There is indeed a challenging quality in other historical figures, and men had been challenged to decision long before Christ came. The experience of conversion is not unknown to other spiritual traditions. But not conversion comparable to that which is brought about by the impact of Christ upon men's minds. The alternatives of obedience and disobedience are present throughout the Old Testament, and the necessity of choosing between them was familiar to the men of Galilee before Christ came. Nevertheless it is simple truth that in the old days the choice had never been either so well-defined in its terms or so inevitable in its urgency as it was now. Never before had the lists been so cleanly drawn, or the issue at stake been made to seem so tremendous. Never before was there so little excuse for hesitation or delay. The saints of the Old Testament had looked forward to an hour of decision, to a crisis in history which was still in the future. The future tense is strong in the Old Testament. But our Lord's teaching is in the present tense. Jesus came into Galilee preaching that the clock had struck, that the decisive hour had come, that the final issue was now before men in its final form, that for them it was now or never. And there is a sense in which that hour, without ceasing to be that particular hour of Christ's first appearing, has lasted ever since; a sense in which the two hours, of Christ's coming into Galilee and of his coming to me personally, are fused for me into a single hour, which is both nineteen hundred years ago and also to-day. For 'faith has still its Olivet, and love its Galilee'; and still to-day I hear Christ's voice calling me 'as of old Saint Andrew heard it, by the Galilean lake'. 'The Word (*Logos*) of God', says the writer to the Hebrews, 'is a living and active thing, more cutting than any two-edged sword, piercing to the very division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and discerning the

very impulses and intentions of the heart. And no created being is hidden from him; all lie naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we have to render account (*logos*).' (Heb. IV, 12-13.)

Rudolf Bultmann in his book called *Jesus* (in the English version *Jesus and the Word*) has admirably shown how these men of Galilee, when confronted with Jesus, knew themselves to be standing in the decisive hour, knew that the reign of God was really as imminent as He proclaimed it to be. But he writes as if this effect were brought about by the *teaching* of Jesus alone. He seems almost to be saying that what Jesus did was to convince men, by a fresh presentation of the case, of the urgent situation in which they had always stood before God, though never before fully realizing it. That is no doubt part of the truth, but it is by no means the whole of it. It cannot be the whole of it, first, because it is difficult to think that the words of Jesus could have had this effect, had they not been made flesh in His own Person, in His manner of life and in the deeds He wrought. The disciples could not have believed that the new age had dawned, had they not seen the life of the new age already realized in their Lord's bearing and behaviour. He Himself exemplified the powers of the coming age, and mediated them to His disciples. When John the Baptist sent messengers to ask Jesus, 'Are you the coming one, or must we look for some one else?' Jesus answered, 'Tell John the things you hear and see'; but what they heard was the good news being preached to the poor, and what they saw was a mighty ministry of healing. Secondly, it is plain that what started the Christian movement was not merely a more vivid realization, mediated by the preaching of Jesus, of the situation in which men had always stood before God, but the conviction that, in the appearance of the Person of Jesus, God had done something for the human race such as He had never done before. We may even ask ourselves whether those who had opportunity to see the kind of Person Jesus was, and how He behaved in response to life's varying situations, might not dimly have known that the *kairos* had come, and that God's reign was at hand, even if He had not said so in so many words; just as He left it to them to be the first to say that He was the promised Messiah. But Bultmann is so strongly in reaction against the romantic emphasis upon the 'personality of Jesus' that he places the whole stress on the spoken word rather than on the word made flesh. Not only, he writes, can we 'now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus', but 'the early Christian sources show no interest in either'. He pours scorn on 'the tendency to regard His personal power of faith, His enthusiasm, His heroism, and His readiness for sacrifice as attestation of the truth of His word'. 'On the contrary, it was on the ground of the authority of His words that the Church confessed that God had made Him Lord of the Church.' 'For the truth of His word He offers us no evidence

whatever, neither in His miracles, the significance of which is not to accredit His words . . . nor in His personal qualities, which apparently aroused in His contemporaries antagonism rather than faith. If He had for some men a certain fascination, this may have tended to distract attention from the content of His words; and certainly there is no mention of this in the record.' Further, 'I am personally of the opinion that Jesus did not believe Himself to be the Messiah.'¹ While we may share his dislike of much of the nineteenth-century writing at which he is here tilting, we cannot but feel that Bultmann himself errs grossly in an opposite direction, making in fact the whole story almost incredible.

However, just as our Lord could not remain in Galilee, but was constrained to go up to Jerusalem, so the Galilean *kerygma* is less than the whole message of His Church. Before His ministry was far advanced, we read that

From that time onwards Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders and high priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised on the third day (Matt. xvi, 21).

And again:

I came to cast fire on earth, and how I would it were already lit. But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how constrained I am until this has come to pass! (Luke xii, 49 f.).

His disciples were slow to accept this, slow to believe that the whole divine event, which was to inaugurate the reign of God and make possible the life of the new age, had not already been completed in Galilee. But in Jerusalem, after their Lord's death and resurrection and the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, we find them at last believing it fully, and eager to preach the Christian *kerygma* in this its full and final form. In one of the New Testament epistles we read of

the life of the Age, which God who never lies promised endless ages ago, and in the proper decisive hours (*kairois idiois*) manifested as his Word in a *kerygma* . . . (Titus i, 2-3).

It is to the consideration of this apostolic *kerygma* that we must now turn.

IV

We read that on the day of Pentecost St Peter made public proclamation of the glad tidings in the following terms:

Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know,—this Jesus, betrayed according to the definite purpose

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 8-9, 215-16.

and fore-knowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by death. . . . Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and receiving from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear. . . . Change your hearts, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts II, 14-39).

Such was the *kerygma*, and following on it we read that those who accepted it

devoted themselves to the *didache* of the apostles, and to the *koinonia*, to the breaking of the loaf, and to prayers. . . . And all who believed were together and had all things in common, they sold their possessions and goods and distributed to all, according as any had need (Acts II, 42-45).

On reading that, we feel that in truth the new age has dawned, the era of the Spirit and the years of grace. The fullness of the good news is now being preached, and the true Christian life being lived, setting a standard for the Church through all the centuries to come.

We must try to understand the relation to each other of these three elements, the *kerygma*, the *didache* and the *koinonia*; for that I take to be the essence of the task which you have set me.

The *kerygma* is the given Word, summing up in itself the essence of the Gospel, that is, of the glad tidings which Christianity brings to the world. Dr Dodd has shown us in how nearly identical terms it is formulated in the different apostolic writings. Two further statements of it may be taken as typical. One is St Paul's statement (already partly quoted) in I Corinthians xv. :

Let me remind you, brethren, of the Gospel which I gospelled to you, the Gospel on which you stand, the Gospel by which you are saved. . . . For I passed on to you to begin with that which I myself received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. . . . So we preach (*keryssomen*), and so you believed.

The other is the speech of St Peter in Acts x. :

You know the word which God sent to the children of Israel bringing good news of peace by Jesus Christ (who is Lord of all), the word which ran through all Judaea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached; how that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how he went about doing good and healing all that were harassed by the devil, because God was with him. And we are witnesses of all the things he did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They slew him by hanging him on a gallows-tree, but God raised him up on the third day, and let him be seen openly. . . . And he commanded us to preach (*keryxai*) to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be the judge of the living and the dead.

The striking thing about this *kerygma* is that it is from beginning to end a recital of events—of events which are all part of a single

grand event. The good news is that something happened in history at a particular time. The events themselves are of course capable of being apprehended and recorded in such a way as to rob them entirely of their decisive significance as glad tidings. Modern positivism habitually apprehends and records them in this way; and I suppose Pontius Pilate did the same. But it is not in this way that the Apostles proclaim them. They proclaim them as an act of God in history. The whole burden of their *kerygma* is that in these events God was doing something decisive for the human race. This is the good news which they call on men to receive (*paralabein*) and to trust (*pisteuein*), just as their Lord in His earliest *kerygma* had called on men to 'change their hearts and trust the good news'. And this is the essential respect in which the Christian *kerygma* differs from that of all other religions. It calls men, not to give assent to a system of abstract notions, but to put their trust in something that happened, laying their minds open to the decisive significance of it, and allowing it to be decisive for them in their own personal and community life. Christianity had its origin not in something men did or in something they thought or believed, but in something that happened to them. And to this day what makes a man a Christian is not anything he does, nor in the last resort is it anything he thinks or believes, but something that happens to him. It is because this happens to him that he believes as he now does and at the same time begins to act in a different way. If he neither acted nor thought in a different way, that would of course be the clearest possible indication that nothing effective *had* happened to him; for though it is not by their fruits that Christians are made, it is by their fruits that they are known. Yet neither the Christian's action nor his thought, being fallible human activities, are ever such as to reflect the fullness of the thing that has happened to him, which is God's action, and on which his salvation primarily depends.

The given Word is therefore essentially of the nature of a story — 'the old, old story of Jesus and His love'. It is a reminder of the initiative taken by God in history for the redemption of the human race. The *kerygma*, as has been said, is the substance of the public proclamation which Christians are commissioned to make to the world, and at the same time it is the substance of their personal Christian confession. The apostolic *kerygma*, of which I have quoted several examples, became the basis of the earliest baptismal confessions, and so later of the Apostles' Creed, which follows it closely. That creed differs from the usual modern idea of a creed precisely in that it is a recital, not of abstract truths, but of the mighty acts of God. What we have here is an expression of faith in God who created all things; in Jesus Christ who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate;

who died and was buried; who descended into Hades, rose again on the third day, ascended to the heavens, where He sits at the Father's right hand, and from whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead; and in the Spirit given at Pentecost, the Christian Church, the *koinonia* of the faithful, the remission of sins, the resurrection of the flesh and the life of the new age. Moreover, all this is introduced, not by *credo ut* but by *credo in*, not by *pisteuo hoti* but by *pisteuo eis*.¹ The Greek word *pistis* is susceptible of a more intellectual and also of a more practical use. It can mean either assent to the truth of propositions or reliance upon something concrete. Of course it is true that when I rely upon anything or anybody, I am implicitly assenting to the truth of certain propositions which may be affirmed concerning it or him. Yet I may exercise my reliance very fully without being able clearly to say or to think what these propositions are. Now it seems plain that our Lord's use of *pistis* is of this more practical kind, standing for a response of the whole personality, not of the assenting intellect alone, or of that primarily. In His *kerygma* He calls on men to put their reliance on the glad tidings that the reign of God is at hand. When He said 'Have faith in God' (Mark xi, 22), He did not mean 'Believe that God exists'. There was none among those He addressed who denied with his intellect the existence of God. Alike the intellectual affirmation and the intellectual denial of God's existence are Greek rather than Hebrew. Our Lord meant rather, 'Put your full reliance in practice on the God of whose existence you apparently have no intellectual doubt'.

My point, then, is that the given Word is a much less intellectualist and theologic thing than we moderns, with our training in the Greek tradition, are usually inclined to make it. This does not mean that our systems of theology are in any degree superfluous. I, whose whole life has been that of a theological teacher, would naturally be the last to say that. But, generally speaking, their place is much more in the later explication of the intellectual implicates contained in faith than in the proclamation which evokes faith. About this explication I shall have a little more to say when I come, finally, to speak of the *didache*. Meanwhile let me quote only Dr Dodd's comment on Romans ix, 9-10: 'Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, and you will be saved.' The comment is as follows:

This is the only passage where he [St Paul] seems to equate saving faith with belief in a certain proposition, and he probably does so here only

¹ It is perhaps to be regretted that the Latin verb which introduces the Christian confession is not formed, as is the Greek verb which it translates, from the word for faith; since the original signification of trust or reliance is much more clearly present in the noun *fides* than in the verb *credere*, though the true meaning is really conserved when that is followed up by *in* instead of *ut*.

because he is approaching it through the exegesis of an Old Testament passage. It is quite clear that for Paul faith is fundamentally a trustful attitude towards God, and not intellectual belief (*Commentary on Romans*, p. 166).

I would, however, add that even in this passage the proposition in question affirms not a general truth but an act of God in history.

This discrimination of the given Word, which was made flesh in human history, from the derived but none the less indispensable words expressed in propositional form, was insisted on by my early teacher, the Ritschlian Wilhelm Herrmann, in his constantly reiterated distinction between the *Glaubensgrund* and the *Glaubensgedanken*, the basis on which faith rests and the thoughts to which it gives rise. I recognize it again in the teaching of Dr Barth, who apparently sat with me on the benches of Herrmann's class-room, when he distinguishes what he calls *das geschehene Wort Gottes*, the word of God as eventuated, from *das geschriebene* and *das verkündigte Wort*, the word of God as written and as preached:

The Bible [he writes] is not itself and in itself God's revelation as eventuated. . . . Therefore we honour the Bible in the wrong way, and in a way unwelcome to itself, when we directly identify it with this other thing, with revelation itself.

Again,

The revelation towards which the Bible witnesses look, looking and pointing away from themselves, is already other than the word of the witnesses, other in the purely formal sense in which an event is other than even the best and most faithful report of it. But this difference is inconsiderable compared with that to which there is no analogy, namely, that revelation has to do with the Jesus Christ who was to come and who finally, when the time was fulfilled, did come—and so with the actual, literal Word spoken now really and directly by God Himself. Whereas in the Bible we have to do in all cases with human attempts to repeat and reproduce this Word of God in human thoughts and words with reference to particular human situations. . . .¹

William Temple was making fundamentally the same point when he wrote:

There is no such thing as revealed truth. There are truths of revelation, that is to say, propositions which express the results of correct thinking concerning revelation; but they are not themselves directly revealed. . . . What is offered to man's apprehension in any specific revelation is not truth concerning God, but God Himself.²

I am well enough aware of the deep theological differences separating Ritschl, Barth and Temple; but I think that each is here saying essentially the same thing in his own characteristic way.

¹ *Dogmatik*, I/1, pp. 114-16.

² *Nature, Man and God*, pp. 317, 322.

V

We must pass now from the *kerygma* to the *koinonia*. The burden of our Lord's original *kerygma* was, as we have seen, that the new age was at hand and that men must make up their minds at once whether they were going to share in its life. But the Christian *koinonia* is precisely the life of the new age, in so far as that can be lived while Christians are also living in the midst of the present age as citizens of both worlds. We cannot here discuss the much-debated question of the sense in which, either for Jesus Himself or for His followers, the new age is already come or is still to come. But I shall take it as clearly true (a) that the apostolic writers conceive the life of their own Christian *koinonia* to be controlled by the powers of the new age and (b) that they believe these powers cannot be enjoyed in their fullness until the final act in the drama of redemption breaks upon the earthly stage. There is a profundity of insight in their very alternation between fruition and hope. St Paul writes:

You know the *kairos*, that it is now the hour to wake from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed. The night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light (Romans XIII, 11-13).¹

So in one of the Johannine epistles it is said that

The darkness is passing away, and the real light is already shining (1 John II, 8).

And in the Epistle to Titus:

The grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, schooling us to renounce impiety and worldly desires, and to live temperately, uprightly and piously in the present age, awaiting the blessed hope of the appearing of the glory of the great God and the Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself up for us to redeem us from all lawlessness, and to purify for himself a peculiar people, zealous for good deeds (Titus II, 11-14).

This peculiar people is the Christian *koinonia*. The given Word of the Gospel is thus the glad tidings that, through the gracious intervention of God in Christ, culminating in the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit, a new kind of life has been inaugurated for society—a life which men may begin to enjoy without delay, having, as St Paul says, 'the first fruits of the Spirit . . . while we wait for the redemption of our bodies' (Romans VIII, 23). This, however, is no life on the merely human plane, but is at all points irradiated by the divine. It is such a togetherness with one's fellow men as can

¹ St Paul writes again that 'We all, our unveiled faces reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same likeness from one glory to another . . .'; yet at the same time he looks forward eagerly to a 'surpassingly unsurpassable measure of glory in eternity' when what he calls the slight troubles of the present moment are overpast (2 Cor. III, 18; IV, 18).

be enjoyed only in a joint togetherness with God in Christ through the Spirit, and it is at the same time such a togetherness with God as can be enjoyed only in togetherness with one's fellow men. The New Testament word for this triangular relationship is *agape*—a word inadequately rendered in modern English either as love or as charity. *Agape* is the cement which holds the *koinonia* together; hence it was not unnatural that the common meal which was the highest expression of this togetherness should in early Christian circles often have been called simply the *agape*.

To be a Christian is to belong to the *koinonia* of the new *aeon*, being bound in *agape* towards one's fellow members in God. A man becomes a Christian when God so takes hold of him in Christ that he puts his whole trust in the good news of the dawn of a new age which makes possible this kind of life. This is what conversion meant for the converts of the apostolic age. 'By grace you have been saved through faith', writes St Paul (Eph. II, 8). The Christian's faith is his response to God's gracious approach to him in Christ. It is his trustful acceptance of the good news, and his surrender to its implications. But since the substance of the good news is precisely the possibility of a new life in the *koinonia* of *agape*, in the fellowship of love, the test of whether a man really puts his trust in it is whether he actually does begin to live this new life of fellowship. Being a Christian means both believing and belonging. A man cannot really belong without believing; but if he does not belong, that is the best proof that he does not really believe. This is why the New Testament says that Christians are made by their faith, but are identified by their fruits; made Christians by their trust in the good news, but identified as such by whether or not they live as if the good news were true. And identified *infallibly*. 'A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a rotten tree cannot bear sound fruit' (Matt. VII, 18). 'Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments' (1 John II, 3). 'In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother' (1 John III, 10). 'God is *agape*; and he that dwelleth in *agape* dwelleth in God, and God in him' (1 John IV, 16). This does not mean, of course, that *we* are ever in a position to make infallible identification; for we can never be certain how far men are really moved by love of their brethren. Nevertheless we are far from helpless in the matter, and it is the only test we have. 'By this shall all men know that you are my pupils, if you have *agape* towards each other' (John XIII, 35). 'I am made manifest to God', writes St Paul to the Corinthians, 'and I hope I am made manifest in your consciences also' (2 Cor. V, 11).

It is often thought that St Paul and St James are at odds with one another on this question of the relative primacy of faith and

love. Yet neither does St James deny that the deeds of love presuppose faith, nor St Paul that faith would in itself be quite valueless if it did not issue in deeds of love. The one writes that 'faith, if it have not deeds, is dead, being alone' (James II, 17); and the other that 'though I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing' (1 Cor. XIII, 2).

This means that it is only from the life of the fellowship that the true significance of the Gospel can be understood. If our Christian life in community were more nearly what it ought to be, then men would by looking at us really know what the good news portended. Most of ourselves would have to confess that we were drawn to believe the good news through its exemplification in the life of the Christian community into which we were born, or with which we later came into touch. What really challenged and drew us was that kind of life, that kind of togetherness with one's fellows in the love of God. It was Christ Himself who thus acted upon us, but He acted upon us through His embodiment in the *koinonia*. And it is almost vain to hope that men will ever understand what we mean by the love of God in Christ, if we provide them with no object-lesson of how it works out in the relationship of man to man.

If we look back upon the long story of the evangelization of Europe, we shall, I think, realize that the life of the Christian community, grossly imperfect as it often was, has nevertheless acted in this way as an evangelizing agency on the largest scale. We can say, I think, that throughout most of the Christian centuries faith and love went hand in hand. The men who believed and worshipped were the men of goodwill, and the men who neither believed nor worshipped were for the most part men of mischievous will. The heavy burden of our time is that there has lately developed something of what the biologists would call a fission in this traditional organism of the life of Christendom. There is now in our midst a large fund of charity and brotherly kindness, of zeal for the redress of wrong, and of genuinely sacrificial living which, however Christian in its ancestry, has become entirely divorced from the Church's faith and worship; while on the other hand the Church itself is better known among us for its faith than for its love. Yet what prospect is there for the spiritual recovery of our peoples until this hurt be healed?

VI

Finally, let us consider the *didache*, that is, the instruction given to those who have been drawn into the *koinonia* by the *kerygma*. The New Testament epistles are examples of such instruction, being all addressed to those who are already within the fellowship.

'Occasionally', writes Dr Dodd, 'it seems to include what we should call apologetic, that is, the reasoned commendation of Christianity to persons interested, but not yet convinced.'¹ I should say, however, that the apologetic is much more than occasional, and that it is provided for the guidance of those who have attained a real measure of conviction, yet whose minds are still beset with difficulties, or who are at a loss how to answer certain questions that may be put to them. An example is Romans ix to xi, where St Paul is facing the difficulty raised by the fact that, though God's promises were made to Israel, the Christian fellowship, which claims to be the inheritor of these promises, now contains more Gentiles than Jews. Another is Hebrews v to x, where the writer faces the parallel difficulty that Jesus, who for Christians is the great High Priest, is not in the line of the Levitical priesthood. Otherwise the instruction given to the converts was, as the Epistles show, at the same time both what we should call ethical and what we should call theological; the theological exposition usually appearing as a preparation and basis for the ethical exhortation, yet without any consciousness of such a sharp distinction between the two as this modern terminology suggests.

It seems clear, however, that the New Testament writers not only distinguish between preaching and teaching, but also between two levels of teaching. There is the elementary teaching given to all, and there is the *sophia* or *gnosis* or *mysterion*, that is, the more advanced wisdom and knowledge given to the maturer minds, and especially to those who have the necessary gifts to become teachers themselves. The Epistle to the Hebrews offers an example of such more advanced teaching. As the writer embarks on the most difficult part of his exposition, the part about Melchisedek, he reproaches those whom he is addressing with the backwardness of their understanding:

Though by this time you should be teaching other people, you need some one to teach you again the elements of the beginning of the revelation of God. You need milk, not solid food. . . . Solid food is for the mature.

But at once he relents, and says:

Let us then go on to what is mature, leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of trust in God, of *didache* about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and the judgement of the Age. With God's permission, we shall do this; since in the case of people who have once been enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift and had part in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the Age to Come, and then fall away from it, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance (Hebrews v, 12-VI, 6).

¹ *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*, p. 4.

It will be remembered that in the passage from 1 Corinthians with which this paper began, St Paul draws exactly the same distinction between milk for those who are babes in Christ and the solid food of wisdom for those who are more mature.

Now it seems to me that what we know to-day as theology or dogmatics falls almost in its entirety, not only within the *didache* as distinct from the *kerygma*, but within the higher *sophia* as distinct from the elementary *didache*. And about the higher *sophia* offered by the Epistle to the Hebrews Dr Ernest Scott says this:

An eminent teacher, believing that he has arrived at a truer and deeper conception of the work of Christ, communicates his discovery to a group of his more mature disciples for whom the bare elements of Christian instruction are no longer sufficient. He is convinced that the doctrine which he expounds is in full harmony with the accepted faith. He finds it adumbrated in passages of Scripture which are no doubt mysterious, but which reveal their meaning to the mind that has been duly enlightened. Nevertheless it is a new doctrine, a Gnosis, and he lays it before his readers with a certain reserve. He speaks to them, not in the name of the official Church, but as an individual thinker, who has arrived at this interpretation along a path of his own. . . . The author is at pains to impress upon us that he acquiesces in the ordinary teaching, and takes his departure at the point where it leaves off (*The Epistle to the Hebrews: its Doctrine and Significance*, p. 39 f.).

It would be a happy thing if we theological teachers of later days laid our conclusions before our readers with a like reserve, recognizing the large extent to which they represent individual interpretations. And even when they do not represent personal interpretations, but interpretations deep rooted in the tradition of Western theological discussion as a whole, it may still be important that we should distinguish them most carefully from the 'given Word, the essential and unvarying Gospel' which they profess to elaborate; thus leaving room for other and different elaborations emanating from other theological traditions that have grown up, or may yet grow up, in other parts of the world where the Gospel has now been preached.

JOHN BAILLIE