

## A STUDY IN NEW TESTAMENT COMMUNICATION

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IT is often claimed that the problem of communicating the Gospel is the major practical problem facing the Church to-day, as it may also be the major theological problem. This concern is a very healthy sign, but it is becoming increasingly apparent that we are apt to be so concerned with devising new methods of evangelism as to forget the one factor of supreme importance: the burden of the Gospel itself, that is, to forget that the Gospel is not simply the message of divine love, but the actual way in which God communicates Himself to us in history. No technique that forgets that the Gospel has already been made supremely relevant to sinful humanity in the Incarnation and death of Jesus Christ will ever avail for the communication of the Gospel. This is therefore an attempt to probe into what the New Testament has to say to us about this, and into the way in which, as a matter of fact, the New Testament actually communicates the Gospel to us.

We may take as our starting point the Parables in the Synoptic Gospels with the parallels in the Fourth Gospel. According to Professor C. H. Dodd, "a parable is normally the dramatic presentation of a situation intended to suggest vividly some single idea" (*The Parables of the Kingdom*, p. 165). Jesus used parables to "illustrate what Mark calls the mystery of the Kingdom of God" (p. 33, Mark 4.11)—i.e. He presented His teaching in a concrete fashion and not in abstractions. However, because "there is no mere analogy but an inward affinity between the natural order and the spiritual order" (p. 24) the Parables are so self-luminous that "the interpretation will show through" (p. 20). Professor Dodd goes on to say: "The Kingdom of God is intrinsically like the process of nature and of the daily life of man . . . the sense of the divineness of the natural order is major premiss of all the Parables" (p. 22).

In this view Dr Dodd follows Jülicher in rejecting the idea that Parables are allegories where the elements are treated as

mysterious cyphers or allegorical equivalents for eternal ideas, but he refuses to follow Jülicher in making "the process of interpretation end with the generalisation". No doubt the Parable has the character of an argument but "the way to an interpretation lies through a judgment of the imagined situation, not through a decoding of various elements in the story" (p. 23). "The Parables bear upon the actual and critical situation in which Jesus and His hearers stood: when we ask after the application we must look first not to the field of general principles but to the particular setting in which they are delivered. The task of the interpreter of the Parables is to find out, if he can, the setting of a Parable in the situation contemplated by the Gospel and hence the application which would suggest itself to one who stood in that situation" (p. 26).

Unquestionably Professor Dodd has put us greatly in his debt for his exposition of the Parables, and for the astonishing light that his method of interpretation casts on them again and again. It is difficult to avoid the feeling, however, that his restricted definition of the parable and the resulting method of interpretation are unduly narrow. A more balanced and, certainly to the preacher, a more satisfying account has been given by the Rev. R. S. Wallace in a previous number of this Journal (24, pp. 13 ff.). In that article Mr Wallace raised the question whether the relation upon which the Parable reposes is a natural or a sacramental relation. That is the point of crucial importance for a doctrine of communication. Is it really true, as Dr Dodd maintains, that when we scrutinise the Parables and relate them to the original situation so far as we can reconstruct it, the conclusion regarding the original meaning and application follows or shines through (C. H. Dodd, op. cit. p. 31)? That would mean that so far as we can reconstruct the original Jesus in His setting in history (*Sitz im Leben*), we can read off the divine Revelation because there is an inward affinity between the natural order and the spiritual order, and because of the divineness of the natural order. Surely that is not the message of the Synoptic Gospels, nor the teaching of the Parables. Undoubtedly the divine communication must involve analogy if it is to get across to men who can only think in terms of human and worldly analogies, but the whole significance of the Parable is that it is *analogy with a difference*, analogy

which has at its heart an eschatological event which, until it actually overtakes us, nothing in the natural or historical order can begin to reveal. Even when it happens, absolutely necessary as the analogical elements are to convey the Revelation, they are unable of themselves to point to the truth. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16.17). The extraordinary fact is that while Professor C. H. Dodd recognises this teaching quite unambiguously (op. cit. p. 197), he fails to carry it into the heart of his epistemology. In other words the eschatological relation upon which he has thrown such a flood of illumination is not truly realised in the depth of faith. That is the significance of the *mystery* of the Kingdom (cf. Wallace, loc. cit. p. 14).

The Synoptic passage which we must discuss here is Mark 4.1 ff., especially 4.11 ff. Professor Dodd's thesis is that the Evangelist has misunderstood the Parables and the significance of the Parable itself, and the result is a series of interpretations attached to the Parables which he pronounces a confusion. This leads him to reject every New Testament interpretation of the Parables. In this instance Dr Dodd's own method of interpretation does not allow him to make sense of the passage as it stands, and he is forced to mutilate and reconstruct it. In particular he lays the axe to the word *mysterion* as not being a genuine word of Jesus, in spite of the fact that an *agraphion* survives through Clement of Alexandria and the Clementine Homilies in which *mysterion* in a similar connexion is found on the lips of Jesus, apparently from a different source altogether, which makes the genuineness of *mysterion* in this passage all the more certain. However, it does not matter ultimately whether the word itself is scored out, for the thought is inextricably woven into all three Synoptic accounts as well as the Johannine, going back to Old Testament passages such as Deut. 29.29; Ps. 72.12; Isa. 6.9 ff.; 42.18 ff.

What did Jesus mean when He said, "How shall we liken the Kingdom of God?" or "the Kingdom of God is like" this or that? Surely that Kingdom or the Word of the Kingdom or the Mystery is difficult to express directly. It is like this and it is like that, and yet it is like this and like that. We cannot say, "Lo, here is the Kingdom of God" or "Lo, there is the Kingdom of God", for the Kingdom of God does not come

like that. It does not come with observation. As the *Fourth Gospel* puts it, "Except a man be born again (from above) he cannot see the Kingdom of God".<sup>1</sup> "How shall I liken the Kingdom?" says Jesus. "I shall express it by a parable" (*ὑποβόλη*).<sup>2</sup> The Word of the Kingdom can be expressed only indirectly by a series of parallels on a different analogical level side by side with it. The Word of the Kingdom can be expressed to men of flesh and blood and concrete existence only by throwing a parallel in flesh and blood and in the language of humanity to the Word of the Kingdom. That means, as Julicher and Dodd agree, that the parable is not an allegory, although to say that the parable yields *one idea* is to make it as much an allegory as if it yielded a series of ideas. Behind the parable, or rather beside it, there is the Kingdom which has broken into the midst, the *eschaton* which is here and now. Dr Dodd agrees that it is this which gives the parables their peculiar significance. The *basileia* or *eschaton* is identified with the Word of the Kingdom. That comes out very clearly, as K. L. Schmidt points out, when we compare the Synoptic parallels. The parable therefore is the picturesque, dramatic and analogical speech thrown alongside the invisible Kingdom already in the midst, already "among you" (*ἐντὸς ὑμῶν*). "The Kingdom of God is come upon you" (Matt. 12.28; Luke 11.20: *ἔφθασε ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ ὑμῶν*). The parable is thus essentially two-sided. It has a visible side, the analogical; but that is thrown alongside the invisible Kingdom and is, so to speak, contrapuntal to it. The parable is essentially sacramental in form and that is always its intention on the lips of Jesus. Jesus Christ, in teaching and Person, is Himself the great Parable of the Kingdom of God.

If the Word of the Kingdom is identical with Christ Himself then it is clear why the Word cannot be expressed directly in speech. Christ Jesus cannot be put into words. In Him we have the Word and the Act of the Kingdom, *logos* and *dynamis*, in one: a Person in the midst. As Professor Dodd says, the parable describes an aspect of Christ's own ministry and the developing situation and the crisis which His coming has brought upon history. But the design of the parable does not lie in itself or in any symbolic meaning to be read off the face of it or even

<sup>1</sup> cf. 1 Cor. 2.1 ff.

<sup>2</sup> The Greek word used by the Evangelists is particularly significant. *ὑποβόλη* indicates the act of throwing alongside (*παρὰ βάλω*).

in any single idea. It is designed to put a man into a situation in which he is confronted with God and can hear for himself the Word of the Kingdom which flesh and blood cannot reveal. Consequently the relation between the Word of the Kingdom and the parables is conceived in terms of *mysterion* or *krypton*. It will help us to understand this if we remember that *mysterion* is not used in any sense relating to the Greek mysteries. A passage such as 1 Tim. 3.16 is helpful, "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh". That is the fundamental sense in which it is nearly always used in the New Testament, in the Synoptics, in St. Paul's Epistles, and in the Apocalypse as well.<sup>1</sup>

There is a very illuminating sentence from the Fourth Gospel (8.43) which throws a flood of light upon the situation here. "Why do you not understand my speech (λαλῶν), because you cannot hear my word (λόγον)?" The Jews were unable to make anything of the speech (λαλῶ) of Jesus, i.e. the parables (παραβολαί) because they could not hear or could not bear to hear His Word (λόγος). If we ask the Fourth Gospel what the relation is between the speech and the Word the answer is given in the expression "abiding" (μένειν). It is when a man abides in the Word or when the Word abides in a man that the man understands the speech and knows the Truth which will make him free. Thus the preaching of Jesus is broadcast to all who hear it as speech but only he who has ears to hear or who makes room for it (χωρεῖν), as the Synoptics say, can hear the Word. In this way the Word is broadcast to all and sundry through speech and parable, but only those who are prepared to receive it in faith actually hear it as the Word of the Kingdom. That comes out again and again in the Fourth Gospel. The voice of God speaks; the unbelieving crowds say that it thunders, but the believers say that it is the voice of an angel. "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and *not unto the world*? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me he will keep my word (λόγον) and my Father will love him and we *will come unto him and make our abode with him.*" (John 14.22, 23). That is the Johannine way of putting the Mystery of the Kingdom.

This helps us to understand the teaching in Mark and the

<sup>1</sup> There is, of course, a counterfeit *mysterion* in evil.

Synoptic parallels. "To you is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God but to them who are without all things are spoken in Parables." Then Jesus declares that the clue to all the Parables is the same—the Word (λόγος). "Do ye not know this parable? How then shall ye know all parables? He who sows, sows the word (λόγον)."<sup>1</sup> And so Mark goes on to say (v. 37): "And with many such parables He spake (ἐλάλει) the word (τὸν λόγον), as they were able to hear." (καθὼς ἠδύναντο ἀκούειν: recall the οὐ δύνασθε of John 8.43). "Without a parable He did not speak unto them (χωρὶς παραβολῆς οὐκ ἐλάλει αὐτοῖς)."<sup>2</sup> There is little doubt therefore that the thought of the Synoptics is close to that of the Fourth Gospel.

We come now to what is usually reckoned exegetically most difficult, the scandal of a *ἴνα* (Mark 4.11), "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God but to those who are without all things are done in parables that seeing, they may see (*ἴνα βλέποντες βλέπωσι*) and not understand (*καὶ μὴ ἴδωσι*): and hearing, they may hear; lest at any time they should be converted and their sins should be forgiven them." Several things must be said here.

(1) Its very harshness is the strongest argument for the authority of *ἴνα*.

(2) No doubt the Greek is harsher in sound than the Aramaic. It may be that the Aramaic was capable of ambiguous interpretation as Professor T. W. Manson avers.

(3) This *ἴνα* must be put side by side with *εἰν μὴ ἴνα* in v.22, which indicates that the Parables, while they concealed the mystery, only concealed it with the intention of revealing it (4.21-23), while the expression in v. 33 *καθὼς ἠδύναντο ἀκούειν* also throws a flood of light upon the passage.

Why, then, does Jesus speak in parables?

(1) He speaks in parables in order to reveal that the Kingdom of God has come into the midst in His own Person and to direct men to believe in Him in such a way that there is evoked from them full decision. The parable is chosen by Christ as the means of confronting men with Himself, the Word, in such a way that men can choose Him in love and yet not be over-

<sup>1</sup> K. L. Schmidt points out that in each Synoptic set of parallels Kingdom and Word of the Kingdom are equated with the key of knowledge (Luke 11.52). The hearing of the Word is the key to knowledge, the key to the Parables of Jesus. cf. G. Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum NT*, Bd. 1, pp. 581 ff.

whelmed by His divine majesty. The Word comes through the parable in such a way that men have to choose God in order to know Him, to surrender to His will in order to understand. The Word is so nigh that it creates room for faith and decision. Jesus consistently avoids giving a compelling manifestation of Himself for that would leave no room for faith and decision and men would be fixed in their sin by the unveiled divine majesty instead of being wooed to belief and trust so that Christ can heal them. In the parable, so to speak, the Kingdom of God comes into the midst and throws a man into the crisis of decision, and yet by its veiled form the Word of the Kingdom holds man at arm's length away in order to give him room and time for personal decision.<sup>1</sup>

(2) We can say with Calvin that Jesus spoke in Parables not simply for the purpose of instruction but to keep the attention of the hearers awake until a more convenient time. He kept the un-understanding and the unbelieving in a state of suspense till a fitter opportunity arrived. And so in the parable Jesus accommodated the Word to men's capacity who were yet rendered inexcusable by the amount of light they got from the surface of the parable but whose final verdict is suspended because as yet they were not sufficiently prepared to receive instruction. That is the force of the words "as they were able to hear" (*καθὼς ἠδύνατο ἀκούειν*, Mark 4:33). Above all forms of speech the parable is calculated to have the greatest propensities for suggestion in which with the light and skilled thrust of a rapier Jesus gently touches men to the quick of their soul by the two-edged Word, summoning them to decision without crushing them to the ground by an open display of majesty and might. It is by means of the parable that Jesus pierces to the heart in such a way as not to crush the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax—*καθὼς ἠδύνατο ἀκούειν*. In Johannine thought, this means that Jesus did not want to judge the hearers on the spot in any final fashion. The *eschaton* had broken into the present but if men were confronted openly with the *eschaton* in the Word and presence of Jesus in their unbelief, they would be finally damned on the spot. But Jesus veiled the *eschaton* so that it encountered men obliquely. "I

<sup>1</sup> This necessary time-element is really eliminated by a realised eschatology which holds that "the time-scale is irrelevant to the ultimate significance of history" (C. H. Dodd, op. cit. p. 71).

judge you not but the word that I speak that shall judge you at the last day" (John 12:48). The Word of God is always creative. It always acts upon a man whether he will or no; but in the event of a man's 'no', in the event of his unbelief, Jesus intends that the judgment shall fall with a delayed action still leaving room and time for decision and faith. The Word of the Kingdom creates ferment among men and sooner or later there must be an explosion. There may be conversion now, which is an eschatological event: "Repent for the Kingdom of God is come upon you." It may be damnation in the *eschaton*: "Depart from me for I never knew you."

(3) Jesus deliberately concealed the Word in the parable lest men against their will should be forced to acknowledge the Kingdom, and yet He allowed them enough light to convict them and to convince them. Jesus refused to reveal Himself to men in such a way as to command their assent and still leave them unbowed in the haughtiness of their pride. He revealed Himself in a way that often involved offence (*οκάνδαλον*) so as to cut across the grain of human pride and demand humility and rebirth.

We make a real mistake if we imagine that the Jews simply did not recognise Jesus as the Son of God. They did indeed and yet they did not recognise Him. They were blind, but they were willfully blind. They had such an obstinate disposition of soul that in the very act of perceiving the truth they insisted that it should not apply to them for they could not bear the Gospel; they could not endure the Word of Christ because it cut clean across all their proud national aspirations, their rigid ideas and desires. Thus they rendered themselves morally and spiritually incapable even of understanding the speech (*λαλῶν*) of Jesus. In the language of St. Paul they deliberately held down the truth in unrighteousness. When a man does that, God delivers him over to a reprobate mind. That is God's punishment for the perverter and evader of the truth; and so Jesus said quite plainly, "For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind" (John 9:39). That is the force, the terrible force, of the *eva* in Mark 4:11. It is not, says Calvin,<sup>1</sup> that the teaching of Christ by itself or by its own nature causes

<sup>1</sup> Comm. ad loc.

blindness. "Where the Word of God blinds and hardens the reprobate, as this takes place through their own depravity it belongs truly and naturally to themselves, but is accidental as respects the Word." The Word of God in its own nature is always full of light, but its light is choked by the darkness of man and it becomes a savour of death to death and a savour of life to life (2 Cor. 2.15, 16).

That is surely the meaning of this difficult passage. As we have seen in the interpretation that follows, the Word of the Gospel is broadcast to all and sundry. Only where it is received in good soil does it bear fruit. That does not mean that the Word presupposes an esoteric aristocracy and acts selectively upon them. Professor C. H. Dodd points out that Jesus told another series of parables to show how this selective activity (if we may call it that) works. The appeal goes to all and sundry. The saved are separated from the others by their free reaction to the demands which the appeal of the Word involves (op. cit., p. 189). This selection is itself the divine judgment, though men pass it upon themselves by their ultimate attitude to the appeal. That is very apparent in the series of *pericopae* in Mark 10.17-22 and Luke 9.57-62. The fact that in Mark 4.11 we have a *ἴνα* and not just a *ὅτι* means that this is a divine judgment. That inevitably happens when the Kingdom of God comes into the midst. It takes full charge of the situation and acts upon men whether they will or no. God is always Subject. He is the King. This is the breaking of His sovereignty (*βασιλεία*) into the midst of men's desires and decisions and choices, throwing them all into critical ferment and giving them an essential form vis-à-vis the Kingdom. Had Jesus spoken openly (*ἐν παρηρησία*, John 16.29) men would have been damned on the spot, but as He spoke in the veiled encounter of the parables men were judged in unbelief and yet given freedom still to believe. However, because in the breaking in of the Kingdom the emphasis is laid upon the action of God, the *δύναμις* of the λόγος, this experience is viewed as divine act.

So far we have been dealing with the relation of Word to speech, of mystery to parable, but here is another relation which is also central to the question of communication, the relation of Word (*λόγος*) to power (*δύναμις*). It will be sufficient to say here that in the Synoptics there is the closest relation between

the Word and the Act in Jesus' preaching. Word and Act are inseparable and complementary. The Kingdom is essentially God's saving intervention among men, and that takes place in the preaching and the miracles of Jesus in inseparable unity. This identity of Word and divine Act is most obvious in Mark's Gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 4.20), but the notable passage is that of Matt. 12.28 (with the Lukan parallel 11.20). "If I by the Spirit (or finger) of God cast out devils then the Kingdom of God is come upon you"; and so Jesus went about *preaching* and *healing* (Matt. 4.23) and sent the disciples out to *preach* and to *heal* (cf. Matt. 13.15: *καὶ ἰάσομαι αὐτούς*). This "and to heal" (*καὶ ἰάσθαι*, Luke 9.2; cf. Matt. 10.7 ff.; Mark 3.13 ff.) is of special importance as it throws considerable light upon Mark 4.12 (and parallels), where Jesus says, "Lest they should be converted and I should heal them" or "Lest it should be forgiven them".<sup>1</sup> In the eyes of Jesus the Act of healing thus appears identical with the Word of forgiveness. The classic example of that identification is found in the case of the paralytic in Mark 2. There, however, for the purpose of faith there is a lapse of time inserted between forgiveness and healing—"That ye may know the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins". It is precisely that lapse of time or eschatological reserve-between the Word of the Kingdom and the power (even the violence—*βιάζεται*) of the Kingdom that Jesus is concerned to preserve in the Parable where the *Word* is spoken in such a way that full Action is still suspended, even in the case of the believer who enters the Kingdom of God.

Jesus is not one whose Action falls short of His Word. Therefore, though the Word of forgiveness is spoken in such a parable as that of the Prodigal, that same Word is acted out in Himself on the Cross. There the Word of pardon is enacted in flesh and blood and inserted as a reality into our history and life. There the Word of forgiveness becomes an actual fact not just a mere idea, not just a word spoken into the air, but an accomplished fact. "It is finished."

We may now see further why the Word was indirectly communicated through the parable because the Act is also part of

<sup>1</sup> This is a quotation from Isa. 6.9 ff.; the LXX has instead of "and it should be forgiven them" the words "and I should heal them", both of which come in the Synoptics.

the Word. The Word of God is not mere speech (*λαλῶν*) but power of God (*δύναμις τοῦ Θεοῦ*), Christ crucified, as St. Paul said. It is because the Word is also power that it cannot be conveyed in mere speech but has to be conveyed in saving acts, in miraculous signs (*σημεῖα* or *δυνάμεις*) until the final great Act is completed. In the death of Jesus the Word and the Action are completely one. God is just and the justifier of the ungodly.

The next conception which demands our examination is that of *witness* (*μάρτυρ*). Fundamentally there are two kinds of witness in the New Testament. First there is witness in the sense of John the Baptist, the man sent from God to bear witness to the light of the world. He was not himself the light, but pointed away from himself to another. So much did he concentrate upon bearing witness to this other that he reduced himself, as it were, to a bony finger pointing and the voice of one crying "Behold, the Lamb of God". Here the light is not mediated through himself. He himself fades out of the picture. "I must decrease, He must increase." He is witness only in the sense that he is a voice. It is in that sense that the preacher of the Gospel is witness in the act of preaching. He does not call attention to himself, but points away to the Lamb of God, so that all the focus of attention is concentrated upon Him to whom witness is borne. It is such preaching that as a result there takes place an encounter, a conversation, and an abiding with Jesus Christ (cf. John 1:35 ff.).

Second, in the profoundest sense Christ is witness. He does not witness to a light that is other than Himself for He is the light of the world. Here, then, the witness and the light witnessed to are identical. Jesus Christ is in His own Person witness to Himself. That is why in the Fourth Gospel Jesus says "I am the Truth". He is Truth in the form of personal being. He Himself is the Truth of God embodied forth in history, personally encountering man. Some of the most significant passages in the Fourth Gospel are concerned with this majestic *I am*. The most illuminating passage in this respect is that which describes Jesus before Pilate: "To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice. And Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? ". Why did Jesus

not answer Pilate?<sup>1</sup> Just because to ask Jesus Christ, who is Himself the Truth, a question about the Truth is to assume that He is not the Truth and that He only thinks *about* it or knows *about* it. Suppose we are talking to a man and then suddenly we say, "Do you exist?"; what can a man say if he is asked that question? He can only say something like this. "If you who stand here and talk to me cannot feel sure that I exist, what good can I do if I *tell* you that I do exist. If you do not believe that I exist you cannot believe what I say." That was the situation before Pilate. We can almost hear Jesus saying, "Pilate, if you do not hear my word you cannot understand my speech". But here we go a step deeper. "Pilate, if my person or my life does not open your eyes to what truth is, then it is utterly useless for me to *tell* you what the truth is." The Word is identical with the Person of Jesus Christ. That thought comes out again in the trial with the majestic, kingly words of Jesus, "ΕΤΩ ΕΙΜΙ, when the cry went up, "What need have we of further witness?" This man is witness Himself. He is a witness in which Word and Person are identical.

That event made a profound impression upon the early Church—indeed to such an extent that the fact that Jesus witnessed a *good confession* before Pontius Pilate became part of one of the earliest creeds of the Church.<sup>2</sup> The point is this: It is in His death that the Word and the Act of Christ, the Teaching and the Person of Christ become absolutely identical. It is there that He is supremely "the faithful and true witness" (Rev. 1:5; 3:14). It is there that the Captain of our salvation is made perfect through suffering. He is God's Truth done into flesh and blood. God's Truth in the midst of sin and guilt being true to itself. It is God's own witness in the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, a witness consummated in His death. The New Testament calls that witness God's testimony (*μαρτύριον*): Christ crucified who is both Word (*λόγος*) and Power (*δύναμις*), that is the Word made flesh, the witness who is Himself the Truth.

We must now ask in what sense we Christians are witnesses. How may we communicate the Truth by personal witness?

We are witnesses without doubt in the sense of John the Baptist when we preach, when we proclaim Jesus Christ in

<sup>1</sup> cf. S. Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity*, pp. 199 ff.

<sup>2</sup> cf. O. Cullman, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (Eng. trans. by J. K. S. Reid) p. 25 f.

such a way that the person of the preacher fades out of the picture altogether and the Person of the living Christ is in the foreground encountering men face to face. But we must say more than that of Christian witness, for he that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist. This Truth, to which we bear witness, is no longer a bare word but Truth in the form of personal being. The Christian has an intimate relation to the Truth such as John the Baptist did not have. Because Truth and personal being, Word and Deed are now one, the Christian does not know the Truth without being true, without in a profound sense becoming one with the Truth. That is why the New Testament uses such expressions as "doing the truth", "being true" and in particular ἀληθεύοντες ἐν ἀγάπῃ (Eph. 4.15), and so St. Paul could say, "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me". In a profound sense the Word becomes flesh in the Christian by his incorporation into Christ, i.e. not through any extension of the incarnation but through an eschatological repetition of the incarnation in faith. And that is why real faith is always a virgin birth in the soul, for Christ, as St. Paul says, becomes formed within the believer. John the Baptist could never have said, "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me"; but now that the Word has been made flesh and the incarnation has been completed upon the Cross, the Truth is done into our flesh and blood. It is part of the *mysterion* that "he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit". The word that St. Paul uses here is very enlightening. It is κολλάω, the word that is used for the marriage union when a man shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh. Behind that lies an idea that comes out more clearly in the Johannine literature, expressed in the Hebrew word *yada* which means both to *know* and to *love*. The knowledge of the Truth is an act of the most intimate union. And so the Christian is a witness to the Truth in a profound sense because he is in the Truth and the Truth is in him. He has a relation to the Truth which Paul calls "communion" (κοινωνία) and which John calls "abiding" (μείνω). Christ alone is absolutely identical with the Truth. No one can be a witness to the Truth in that unique sense except Jesus Christ. The Christian, however, can be a witness to the Truth in a parallel fashion in so far as he is Christ and Christ is in him.

The early Church thought of this union with the Truth as

begun in baptism where the believer is sealed with the Truth and joined to Christ in death and resurrection. What he is in baptism he becomes through suffering inasmuch as through the fellowship (κοινωνία) of Christ's suffering he becomes conformable to Christ. Just as Jesus Christ began His ministry as a witness at baptism, identifying Himself with men, and completed that in His terrible baptism of blood in which He was so straitened till it was accomplished, when He became God's Testimony, God's Word-deed, God's Witness in flesh and blood, so the Christian in the thought of the early Church follows his Lord beginning with baptism when he starts to be a witness (μάρτυς) but becomes a witness in deed and in life through suffering for Christ. Thus, it is in the Christian's suffering witness (μαρτυρία) or martyrdom that he becomes conformable to Christ, and there, as far as is possible for men, he, the martyr-witness, becomes in his death and resurrection at one with Christ the Truth, who in Himself has already wrought out that atonement. He is a complete witness in word and life and seals it with his blood.<sup>1</sup> This is not the same as truth mediated through personality in the modern sense. It is something vastly different. How different we shall see now as we discuss the New Testament thought of proclamation.

According to St. Paul (1 Cor. 1.2) God's testimony, *martyrion*, takes place through proclamation (κήρυγμα). God's testimony, as we have seen, is defined concretely as Christ crucified, Power of God. *Kerygma* may be defined as the straight-forward proclamation of this *martyrion* in such a way that the original *martyrion* actually takes place in the experience of the hearer. That is to say, the original event becomes event all over again through the power of the Spirit so that in *kerygma* a man encounters the living Christ, Christ crucified but risen. No doubt the *kerygma* in itself is mere speech (ἁπλᾶ or simply λόγοι) but it is not in the enticing words of man's wisdom nor with the excellency of speech, nor indeed by human or logical demonstration that the *martyrion* takes place, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power (ἐν ἀποδείξει πνευματος καὶ δυνάμεως). In other words, God bears witness to Himself as men proclaim the crucified and risen Christ. Through the power of

<sup>1</sup> There is a similar thought in the Epistle to the Hebrews in the idea of the death of the Testator where the promise is sealed with blood and where the Christian bearing witness to Christ must resist evil unto blood.

the Spirit God's Testimony is self-authenticating. Thus St. Paul goes on to say that *kerygma* is a revelation (*ἀποκάλυψις*, see also Rom. 16.25) or a mystery (*μυστήριον*). In itself *kerygma* is simply speech (*λαλιά*) but it becomes the power of God (*δύναμις τοῦ Θεοῦ*)—that is the great mystery (*μυστήριον*): God manifest in the flesh. This is the treasure that we may possess in earthen vessels. The Christian is put in trust with the Word of the Gospel, the *mysterion*, and it is in that sense that it pleases God to reveal His Son in the Christian's witness, while the Christian's sufferings in witness are the signs and the marks of Christ upon him. We may put this in our own words by saying that *kerygma* is objective, sacramental preaching with an eschatological result such that the original event (Christ crucified) becomes event all over again in the hearer.<sup>1</sup>

In the parable, as we saw, the full action of the Word was suspended until the Crucifixion. Now the Word and Act are one, as one they take the field in *kerygma*. Whenever Christ crucified is preached in the demonstration of the Spirit there is power (*δύναμις*). Whether a man believes or not, the creative Word continues activity. It cannot return void. It is the Word-Deed that always acts upon man, the unbeliever as well as the believer. Hence it becomes a savour of life unto life or of death unto death. Some eat and drink salvation; others out of the same cup and the same plate eat and drink damnation. The Word of God is never idle. It always accomplishes its action upon man in the *kerygma*.

No doubt that is a terrible thought for the preacher (*κηρύξ*), to think that through his preaching some may be damned. That is what Paul called the "terror of the Lord". But the constraint of the love of God was so heavy upon him that he was unable to resist. He was impelled to go on preaching as an ambassador of the reconciling love of God in Jesus Christ.

It is at this point that we meet again with the difficult passage of Mark 4.11. If we score out the *ἴνα*, then we deny the *kerygma* its gracious and yet dread urgency, an urgency that

<sup>1</sup> That is why we cannot reject outright the thought of *repetition* in the Roman Mass. In the teaching of the New Testament, however, this is not temporal repetition, but eschatological event. Thus there is also an element of truth in the Roman doctrine of the *opus operatum*, for the Word-deed of God, that becomes event and becomes flesh in the sacrament, is the creative Word, the creating Word, the active Word, the original Word-deed of God (cf. John 1.1 ff.). It is that Word that is the *dynamis* in *kerygma*.

modern preaching has largely lost. In Jesus Christ God's Word and God's Action are absolutely identical. He is the *Eschatos* who confronts men in His own Person, in His teaching and in His work, with the final Word and Act of God, and demands absolute love and obedience. The situation has the urgency of finality, of salvation and judgment. It is that eschatological urgency that lies at the heart of *kerygma*. *Kerygma* is not the proclamation of ideas or a bare message, but such a proclamation of Christ, the Word-Act of the living God, that by the Holy Spirit it becomes itself the actualisation of that Word-Act among men in salvation and judgment. *Kerygma* has thus a dual significance corresponding to the eschatological tension at its heart. It is used by God to intervene Himself in the human situation as He who once and for all has wrought out His final Act in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, so that through the *kerygma* the hearer is brought face to face in the present with the *eschaton* and may pass from death to life here and now. That takes place in the Church of Jesus Christ where the age to come has already overtaken this age and overlaps it. In the mercy of God, however, Jesus Christ, the *Eschatos* by whom God will judge the quick and the dead, has withdrawn Himself visibly from history, *without being absent*, and has appointed a day when He will *appear* again in glory and power. Meantime the Word of the Gospel and the final Deed of God are partially held apart in eschatological reserve until the *Parousia* or the *Epiphaneia*. This is therefore the age of grace, the age of *kerygma*, in which the Word of the Gospel is proclaimed to all, in which time and space are given for repentance and decision. But this is the age too when by the Spirit of God all who believe the *kerygma* of the Church may taste already the powers of the age to come and with her enter into the Kingdom of God. Because this Kingdom is neither an ideal nor a bare message but actuality in the midst, the *kerygma* of the Church is power of God, and through it the sovereignty of God (*βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ*) overtakes men and by the passion of Christ struggles with them (Matt. 11.12—*βιάζεται*). Those who lay violent hands upon it (*βίασται ἀπράξουσιν αὐτήν*)<sup>1</sup> may press into it (Luke 16.16—*βιάζεται*), but whether they will or no the grace of God will abound and reign over all.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Luke 24.29: *καὶ παρεβιάσαντο αὐτὸν λέγοντες, Μένειν μεθ' ἡμῶν.*