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THE HERMENEUTIC OF C. H. DODD

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Divinity

by
Robert James Buchanan

May 1968

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I. THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to enunciate the principles of the hermeneutic of Dr. C. H. Dodd. Dr. Dodd has been one of the important leaders in the biblical theology movement which was a reaction to classic liberalism. Dodd's reaction to liberalism will be noted and he will be placed historically and theologically within the biblical theology movement. Note will be made of Dodd's contribution to that movement.

In order to ascertain Dodd's reaction to the nineteenth century liberalism, the historical presuppositions of that century will be examined. Dodd's hypothesis will be compared to the presuppositions of historicism. As well, Dodd will be compared with the trends in twentieth century historiography.

Specific attention will be given to C. H. Dodd's hermeneutic in the following areas: first, Dodd's concept of the nature of history and the resultant interpretation; second, Dodd's concept of divine revelation in history; third, Dodd's concept of miracles and the resurrection in history. This evaluation will be determined from an examination of Dodd's writings in this field.

II. THE JUSTIFICATION OF THIS STUDY

There are two reasons for the investigator's attempting to do the study. First, C. H. Dodd, around the year nineteen hundred and thirty-five, distinguished himself as a leader in a reaction movement to classic liberalism--the biblical theology movement. Since those early years, he has distinguished himself as one of the great leaders in New Testament studies and in British theology.¹ Second, this study is a result of several professors and classes held at Asbury Theological Seminary. Professors Dayton, Lyon and Traina have challenged this writer to attempt to study both Dodd and the concept of hermeneutic.

III. THE DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS USED IN THIS STUDY

Hermeneutic. "Hermeneutic" only partially corresponds to the equivalent Greek noun, hermeneia. The meaning of this term was determined by the Greek verb, "hermeneuein", which corresponded to the Latin verb, "interpretari". "Hermeneia" was the activity of a herald or spokesman for the gods, whose function was to proclaim the will of the gods. The divine herald, Hermes, invented language as a medium of interpretation. The people of Lystra called Paul

¹cf., the Appendix enumerating Dr. Dodd's distinguished career.

Hermes "because he was the chief speaker" (Acts 14:72). The Greek noun, "hermeneia", embraced the whole broad scope of interpretation from speech (to clarify where obscure) to translation (from an obscure foreign language) to commentary (explication of obscure foreign language by means of clearer language).

Recently, James M. Robinson has popularized the term "hermeneutic" in America. In its contemporary usage, the thrust of the word is twofold. First, historical investigation has arisen in the process of interpreting bodies of literature whose authority is in one way or the other binding and whose meaning is therefore crucial. Second, historical investigation is required when these classical or canonical literatures assert their authority in a similar but not identical historical situation and into which their meaning must be translated if they are to be heard at all. "This necessity for translating authoritative literature has been the agens in the history of hermeneutical theory."²

In the popular mind there has been some confusion concerning the terms "hermeneutic" and "hermeneutics". The term "hermeneutics" (in vogue, especially at the beginning of this century) was concerned with the historical setting

²James M. Robinson, New Frontiers In Theology, Vol. II. The New Hermeneutic, ed. James and John B. Cobb. 2 vols: (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), pp. 7-8.

of biblical literature, in terms of which its original meaning was understood. The disciplines of exegesis and literary categories of the text were included in this study.

"Hermeneutic", on the other hand, does not emphasize the method of interpretation or the tools with which one reaches an interpretation of a given text but is concerned with the presuppositions regarding historical interpretation which make the scholar use these tools in a certain way.

Historicism. August Comte (c. 1822) coined the word "positivism" when he asserted that the only truth which can be known to be true is that which can be verified by the methodology of the natural sciences. Positivist historiography was based on the theory that the historian can look upon past events of history from a detached viewpoint, much as the scientist looks upon the object with which he is experimenting. The over-all concern was to ascertain "facts" and, by the use of certain evolutionary theories, to arrange these "facts" into a pattern of general laws.

The term "historicism", in this thesis, will be used in a positivistic context. The term "historicism" represents that historiography which was guided by concepts of an immanentist, evolutionary world view, by the classical liberal idea of progress, and by historical methods modeled after an empirical methodology of the natural sciences.

Interpretation. This term is used in a general sense, which includes both the terms, hermeneutic and hermeneutics. It is especially used in chapter three because the content deals with Dodd's hermeneutic and his hermeneutics.

Revelation. "Revelation" is the communication to man of the divine will. This term will be enunciated both from the standpoint of the investigator and of Dodd. "Revelation" will connote the over-all problem of how God's will is communicated in the historical process.

Nature. The term "nature", as used in the fifth chapter of this thesis, will be concerned with the intervention of God in nature, especially in the idea of "miracle".

IV. THE LIMITS OF THIS STUDY

Consideration will be given only to those areas outlined in the problem of the study. Other areas of study for which C. H. Dodd is noted will be used only when considered ancillary to his hermeneutic. Emphases such as the methods of biblical criticism, exegetical studies, etc., are the results of certain presuppositions and will be examined only in the context of his hermeneutic.

V. THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS STUDY

The procedure shall be as follows. First, the nine-

teenth century historicism, to which C. H. Dodd reacted, will be studied and Dr. Dodd's own reactions will be noted. Second, an examination will be made of Dodd's writings to show his concept of the nature of history and the resultant emphasis regarding "kerygma" and "didache". Third, Dodd's concept of revelation will be studied and the investigator's presuppositions of history and revelation will be given in regard to any criticism of Dodd. Fourth, Dodd's scanty writings on "miracle" and the resurrection will be studied. Fifth, the findings of this study will be compared with Dodd's own avowed reactions to historicism. A critique of the positive and negative factors of C. H. Dodd's hermeneutic will be given. The principles of his hermeneutic will be noted.

CHAPTER II

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY HISTORICISM

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF NINETEENTH CENTURY HISTORIOGRAPHY

Three characteristics dominated historiography in the nineteenth century. First, historiography in this period did not succeed in freeing itself from the incubus of eighteenth century rationalism. Many historians made little effort to see the past from the point of view of men and women of the past. Rather, there seemed to be a sense of superiority. For example, Lord Acton (c. 1890) was convinced that moral standards of the nineteenth century were universally valid for the historian. "He believed that the accumulated results of historical research were leading toward 'ultimate history', the final settlement of all the disputed points, which still wait liquidation."¹

The second characteristic was the perspective by which historical development as a whole was unified in the collective mind of that century. Richardson calls this the "rationalist myth"² of nineteenth century historiography. The "myth" promoted the idea that the Greeks had laid the

¹Alan Richardson, History Sacred and Profane (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), p. 106.

²Ibid., pp. 106-107.

foundations of science and history and had kindled the torch of intellectual freedom. But, also, from the conversion of Constantine until the Renaissance, there existed the long night of ecclesiastical dogmatism which was known as the age of barbarism and religion. Miraculously, the men of science of the Renaissance rekindled the Hellenistic torch of intellectual freedom and threw off the shackles of theology. Perfection was the goal of an upward bound mankind, and science was the means by which it was achieved.

The third and most devastating facet of historiography was a movement known as Positivism. This word was coined by Auguste Comte (c. 1821). The implication of positivism was that the historian was scientifically to ascertain facts which arrange themselves into general laws and are capable of being so arranged by sociologists. Positivism was a philosophy, though at times it masqueraded as science.

Two figures dominate this period and are responsible to a large degree in forming the presuppositions behind the nineteenth century English historiography. They are Auguste Comte and Charles Darwin.

Auguste Comte (1798-1857) was not a scientist, but his genius lay in the fact that he articulated the ideological aspiration of his age, that science was the instrument which could control man's environment and his behaviour.

Compte believed he had discovered the laws of human historical and social development. The logic of this development was characterized by three stages: the Theological (fictitious), the Metaphysical (abstract), and Scientific (positive). These stages represented the intellectual childhood, adolescence, and maturity of mankind. The task of the historian was to accumulate "facts" in the light of these laws.

In 1859, Charles Darwin's Origin of Species was published. Darwin took up a popular stand in that he emphasized that the life of nature was a progressive life resembling the life of history. The old conception of nature as a static system was superceded by the idea of species coming into existence in a time-process. R. G. Collingwood affirms that the novelty of Darwin's idea was not evolution "but that he held it to be brought about by what he called natural selection, a process akin to the artificial selection by which man improves the breeds of domestic animals."³ This discovery increased the prestige of historical thought, for, hitherto, the relation between historical and scientific thought had been antagonistic. The subject matter of science was essentially static. Darwin marked a point of departure for both history and science because they were now

³R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 129.

agreed that their subject matter was progressive.

"Evolution" was now a "blanket" term covering both historical progress and natural progress.

With Comte's "general laws" of progress and Darwin's union of history and science, whose subject matter was dynamic, there was a new impetus given to nineteenth century historiography. The dominant element in the new historiography was its emphasis on objectivity. The historian was to avoid all subjective value judgments--he was merely to ascertain and state the "facts". History was regarded as a purely descriptive and nonevaluative discipline.

II. THE METHODOLOGY OF HISTORICISM

The dominant element of nineteenth century historicism has been shown to be "objectivity". History, to the positivist, consisted of two things: first, ascertaining "bare facts"; second, framing laws. This was the outgrowth of positivist scientism, where facts were ascertained by sensuous perception and laws were framed through the generalizing of these facts by induction.

Historians set to work to ascertain as many "facts" as could be known. The result was a vast increase of detailed historical knowledge, based on critical examination of evidence. The historical conscience identified itself with scrupulously isolating every "fact".

History and development were conceived to be synonymous terms, and to trace out development was to state history. Darwinian ideas of "evolution" were extended to departments of knowledge to which they did not apply.⁴ The transferral of this hypothesis to the conduct of human affairs, did harm, because "evolution" in history is very different from "evolution" in nature. The human element in history plays a conscious role, exhibiting will and purpose.

A prime example of the use of this methodology was its application to the story of the resurrection. First, the resurrection could not have happened because it was a miracle, and a miracle is a breach of the laws of nature. The laws of nature are discovered by science, and therefore the whole prestige and authority of science is thrown into the scales on the side of denying that the resurrection really took place. Second, the members of the early Church were not scientifically minded people. Everyone in those days believed in miracles. Hence, it is only natural that their imaginations should invent miracles like this.⁵

Historians of the early and middle nineteenth century worked out a new method of handling sources, the method of philological criticism. This consisted of two operations.

⁴H. D. McDonald, Theories of Revelation (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1963), p. 80.

⁵R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History, pp. 135-136.

First was the analysis of literary or narrative sources. This meant distinguishing the earlier and later elements in them and thus giving the historian a clue as to the more reliable "source" (closer to the facts). Second was the internal criticism of even the most trustworthy parts, showing how the author's point of view affected his statements.⁶

Criticism of the nineteenth century expressed itself in minute analysis in order to separate "facts" from the many layers of "interpretation". Historians generally looked with contempt on the older school of historians because they were unable to distinguish what was genuine from that which was fiction, because they could not observe the "later accretions, which like rust on iron had gathered around the original event."⁷

III. HISTORICISM AND BIBLICAL CRITICISM

The literary criticism of the Bible was begun in earnest in the middle of the eighteenth century. As the methodology of natural science had been raised to the level of the methodology of the historians, biblical criticism could not escape.

The quest of the historical Jesus. The monumental

⁶Ibid., p. 130.

⁷McDonald, op. cit., p. 84.

"catalogue" of the quest of the historical Jesus was that of Albert Schweitzer (The Quest of the Historical Jesus, 1906). Schweitzer's book begins with an example of the use of historicism. Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768) was shocked by the immoralities of the Old Testament. The writers of the Old Testament were said to have been devoid of any historical sense of evolution from primitive to higher moral conceptions. The idea of revelation in the Bible was dismissed as childish. Reimarus held that the New Testament was to be treated like any other writing and that the intentions of Jesus and the early church were described in eschatological terms.

These attitudes held sway over biblical studies, especially the New Testament field. However, Reimarus' work was largely sterile of historical relationships.

G. E. Lessing had one foot planted in the age of reason while the other one touched the age of historicism in the nineteenth century. His book, Education of the Human Race (1780), marked the end of an era. Revelation was progressive enlightenment. The Old Testament marked a higher stage in man's development. The canon of Scripture only represented primitive stages of the race and though Lessing appreciated Christian tradition, he did not regard it as any final step in man's development. The "incidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of

reason; in other words, the notion of a final revelation, in history, is self-contradictory."⁸ This was significant, because nineteenth century biblical critics rested upon the dogma that the rational understanding of nature precluded both special revelations in history and miraculous divine interventions in it. Positivist historiography never questioned happenings contrary to reason, but they were judged by the standards of a scientific understanding of the world as governed by unalterable laws of nature. Lessing's influence was great, especially in the field of New Testament studies, and he was the author of a new kind of research along critical and historical lines, which was taken up by the school at Gottingen.

In 1835, the Christian world was startled by D. F. Strauss' book, Life of Jesus, which asserted that behind the legends of the Gospels (second century writings) and conciliar dogmas lay man's "inner hope" of the "resurrection" of "humanity", as expressed in myths about Jesus. Strauss, like Bultmann of this century, offered no explanation of how the "myth-making" community came into existence.

During the eighteen-forties, F. Christian Baur founded the Tubingen school. This was the first consistent attempt to explain the origins of Christianity by the use of

⁸Alan Richardson, History Sacred and Profane, p. 120.

biblical criticism. Baur, like Strauss, held that the resurrection of Christ lies outside the sphere of human history. Much of this scheme was taken from Hegel: the dialectic of Pauline and Petrine elements, with the early church, resulted in the synthesis of early Catholicism. The criticism which was applied to the narratives of the New Testament was very destructive. The destructiveness was not due entirely to methods of biblical criticism but also "to the positivistic spirit in which those methods were used".⁹ The critical historian was no longer content to say, "the authorities say that such and such an event happened, and therefore, I believe that it did."¹⁰ Rather he says, "the authorities say that it happened, and it is for me to decide whether they are telling the truth or not."¹¹

The Schleiermacherian influence caused a break in the Tubingen school, c. 1857. The leader was Albrecht Ritschl. The incidental truths of history seemed too problematical to guarantee religious truth, but Christian religious experience was the foundation of Christian theology. "In the result, theological enquiry tended to become the interrogative of religious consciousness, with a view to discovering in it

⁹R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History, p. 135.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

the assurance of truth."¹² The Ritschlian school, however, maintained one historical basis which could be emphatically investigated, that is, the impression made by Christ on the soul who confronts Him. The resurrection and the living power of Christ are only an inference from His historical personality, and does not rest upon the ability of historians to reconstruct what happened on Easter Sunday. The empty tomb signifies that the Crucified had attained an inward victory over death and had entered into life eternal. Any belief in the resurrection as an event in history was superseded by the assurance of the absolute value of the individual and immortality. It was the concentration upon the historical personality of Jesus which gave impetus to the rise of the "life of Jesus movement".

The search of the historical Jesus became the monumental evidence for historicism. The first century legendary embellishments of the Gospel story were to be stripped away and the historian was to see Jesus as He really was. Richardson comments that: "The rediscovered Jesus of history turned out to be the embodiment of a nineteenth-century ideal figure, who died for the causes dear to the age of progress."¹³

¹²Alan Richardson, History Sacred and Profane, p. 121.

¹³Ibid., p. 123.

Source criticism--early form criticism. It has been seen that secular historians employed certain philological methodology to peel off layers of interpretation in order to see objectively the "bare fact" or "event". Early in the quest of the historical Jesus, New Testament scholars (German, primarily) employed the method of formgeschichte. At an early date, scholars gave up the attempt to treat the Fourth Gospel as literal history.¹⁴ It was considered to be a theological reconsideration of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, "in the light of the deepest problems raised by that life, and in such a way that the theological problems cannot be evaded by any reader who devotes even a minimum of attention to the work".¹⁵ Hence, the quest of the historical Jesus, by use of the form critical method, flowered into the "Synoptic problem".

Following the lines which were laid down by Wellhausen on the Old Testament, New Testament scholarship employed the same methodology to search for the sources or documents that lay behind the Synoptics. "About 1890", Neill says, "the acceptance of the principle (of the priority of Mark) had become almost universal."¹⁶ Bernard Weiss, Holtzmann, Wrede,

¹⁴Stephen Neill, The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861-1961 (New York: Oxford Press), p. 221.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 236.

Johannes Weiss, Wellhausen, Gunkel, and Wendling were the chief German scholars in the field of literary criticism.

H. J. Holtzmann (1901) is representative of the early school of literary criticism. The starting point was the priority of Mark, and the use of Q by Matthew and Luke. There was some disagreement as to a special source for Luke. Some held it was a document, named L, while others, like Holtzmann, believed that it was not a document, but oral tradition. The over-all presupposition was:

A tendency to think that, once all these documents had been identified, their contents at least approximately worked out, and their relation to our Gospels in principle determined, all the major problems of Gospel criticism would have been solved.¹⁷

The transition period between source criticism and form criticism came when W. Wrede (1901) questioned the historical value of Mark. Mark "used" the sayings and narrative of the ministry of Jesus the same as did Matthew and Luke. Wrede did not believe that even Jesus knew of His "Messiahship". What we find is a theory of Mark improved by Mark on the narrative. All references and signs of Jesus as Messiah are clearly Mark's "interpretation". The Markan framework was made in the interests of supporting this hypothesis. This framework must be penetrated in order to get to the "fact" of Jesus. This was the beginnings of form

¹⁷Ibid.

criticism, and was accepted by Martin Dibelius, R. H. Lightfoot, and to-day, by Rudolf Bultmann.

Martin Dibelius (1883-1947) published Die Formgeschichte des Evangelium (1924), (From Tradition to Gospel), which is representative of this method. Dibelius' presupposition was that critical reading of the Gospels shows that:

The Evangelist took over material which already possessed a form of its own. They joined paragraphs together which beforehand had possessed a certain independent completeness.¹⁸

Dibelius distinguishes five main types of sayings of Jesus--paradigms, short stories, legends, edifying utterances and myths.

The paradigm, or pronouncement story, is a brief episode, often controversial in character, and yet, the culminating point of the story comes when Jesus makes a pregnant utterance: "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick" (Mark 2:17).

The short story is a longer narrative in which much detail is given but there is no decisive conclusion or fundamental principle. The story is told for its own sake. The best example of this is the Gadarene demonize (Mark 5:1-20).

¹⁸Martin Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), p. 4.

By the term "legend" Dibelius did not mean untrue or unhistorical. The point of view of the narrator is important. The story is told to reveal the moral or spiritual excellence of the one of whom the story is told. Dibelius picks on the story of Jesus in the temple when He was twelve years old (Luke 2:41-52).¹⁹

The term "edifying material" covers the greater part of the words of Jesus' address to the disciples in which the life of the believer is set forth as it has to be lived in the face of a hostile world. This material is further classified into a five-fold division: picture-utterances, actual parables, the prophetic call or challenge, brief commands, and more extended instructions by way of command.

"Myth" is to be recognized when a story breaks loose of the ordinary limitations of time and space. These stories usually have to do with the supernatural breaking in directly upon the human scene. Dibelius uses the story of Transfiguration as representative.

Once the general lines of development of the tradition have been established, the second step of form criticism was to determine the Sitz im Leben into which each of the separate sections in the Gospels is related. The earliest tradition would bring us close to the situation in

¹⁹Ibid., p. 106.

the life of Jesus. However, on the whole, form criticism really discovered even more of the situation of the life of the church. C. H. Dodd has much criticism for this method. However, he believes "the most important service . . . which the form critics have rendered to our studies is their insistence upon the living situation in which the material took shape."²⁰

Source criticism sought to test whether or not the events attested by the kerygma were true or not, while form criticism sought to inquire into the kerygmatic motives and the Sitz im Leben of the early Church. One must, in all reserve, say that these methods were begun with the presuppositions of historicism. Form criticism became the tool of positivistic historicism. "Historicism was very happy to decree what could or could not have happened in history."²¹ The historian, using this method, would approach the New Testament with a naturalistic view of history as an unbroken chain of immanent cause and effect.

Eschatology - the Kingdom of God. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Herbert Spencer extended the idea of evolution to sociology and ethics. He concluded that:

²⁰C. H. Dodd, "Thirty Years of New Testament Study", Union Seminary Quarterly Review V (May, 1950), p. 6.

²¹Carl E. Braaten, History and Hermeneutics, (New Directions In Theology Today Vol. II) (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 81.

Evolution is a change from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity, to a definite, coherent heterogeneity; through continuous differentiations and integrations. This law of evolution is applicable equally to the earth, the growth of living organisms, the development of human society, government, language, and art.²²

Human perfectibility, according to Spencer, was by virtue of this process, and man would eventually become suited to his mode of life and "be moulded into complete fitness for the social state; so surely must evil and immorality disappear; so surely must man become perfect."²³

From about 1890 onward, liberal scholars disparaged traditional eschatology as pessimistic and as implying a lack of confidence in man. The idea of any supernatural "invasion" of this world was written off as unscientific. Liberal thought in this period referred to the kingdom of God as the synthesis of Christianity and culture. This was the idea of Kant and Ritschl, who interpreted the kingdom of God as "a commonwealth of God", and the "co-working with God and man in a great moral enterprise".²⁴

Johannes Weiss, on The Preaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God, and Albert Schweitzer's book, The Quest

²²Ralph G. Wilburn, The Historical Shape of Faith (Philadelphia: Westminster Press), p. 107.

²³Herbert Spencer, Social Statics (London: D. Appleton & Company, 1896), p. 28.

²⁴E. W. Lyman, The Experience of God in Modern Life (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), p. 82.

of the Historical Jesus, had a combined effect of shattering the pillar on which liberal Christianity stood. Schweitzer believed that the real Jesus came forward publicly as the Messiah and preached the ethic of the kingdom of God and declared that the kingdom had come. He deliberately went to the cross to "trigger off" eschatological events. In this sense, Jesus was said to be deluded. Schweitzer felt that he was correcting the common view that Jesus was a figure, "designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in an historical garb."²⁵

Schweitzer replaced the quest of the historical Jesus by focusing on Jesus' eschatological preaching. He believed that Jesus' preaching of the kingdom is thoroughly stamped by the traits of "Jewish apocalyptic literature of the period between Daniel and the Bar Cochba rising."²⁶

IV. FACTORS THAT LED TO THE REJECTION OF HISTORICISM

The nature of historical facts. During the nineteenth century it was believed that an historical fact was an objective thing. Earlier historians were discredited because they had worked "unscientifically" and got their facts wrong. The positivist historian established the

²⁵Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), p. 398.

²⁶Ibid., p. 367.

"facts" and left the interpretation of the facts to the philosopher or theologian. Richardson calls this "a naively uncritical view of the nature of history."²⁷ The historian can only take apart the "sources"; he does not know the reality of the event, or the uninterpreted facts. There are no uninterpreted facts, which form the raw material for the scientific historian.²⁸

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), has profoundly influenced the historical thought of the twentieth century. Dilthey pointed the way in showing that the human sciences (Geisteswissenschaften) such as sociology are not to be considered inferior to that of natural sciences.

The historian, because he himself is an historical being, can project himself into the experience of others, and thus enlarge his own present experience through understanding the past.

The evolutionary principle. The combination of the evolutionary principle with positivistic historical research gave rise to a deterministic historical method. "All social, religious, or institutional phenomena was made fit into the unilinear scheme."²⁹

²⁷Alan Richardson, History Sacred and Profane, p. 191.

²⁸Ibid., p. 193.

²⁹W. F. Albright, From the Stone Age To Christianity, (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1957), p. 84.

The biblical theology movement. Historicism was responsible for the decline of Post-Reformation dogmatics as it was preoccupied with: a detached study of Scripture with no theological bias--just "objective, factual history"; an interpretation of history within an evolutionary framework that made a comprehensive theology derived from the Bible as a whole impossible; and the new emphasis on the variety of Scripture rather than its unity. In order to get back to the "facts", early attempts at source and form criticism tended to fragment the Scriptures.³¹

Karl Barth reflected the mood for a positive faith, following World War I, when he called theology away from historical relativism to a revelation of a transcendent God, found in Scripture.

Archaeological findings, as well as a wealth of philological materials produced by archaeologists and linguists, destroyed theories upon which historicism had spawned.

Connolly Gamble dates the beginning of the biblical theology movement at around 1935, with Walther Eichradt's Theologie Des Alten Testaments and C. H. Dodd's The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments.³¹

³⁰Connolly C. Gamble, "The Literature of Biblical Theology", Summary of Proceedings Seventh Annual Conference American Theological Library Association (Dayton: Bonebrake Seminary Press, 1953), p. 48.

³¹Ibid., pp. 50-51.

V. C. H. DODD'S ROLE IN THE REJECTION OF HISTORICISM

Following World War I, most churchmen re-examined the foundations of historicism on which theology and biblical criticism rested because of the "regression of great nations into barbarism".³² Karl Barth's emphasis on the "Wholly Other" and the "Word of God" had great influence on the Continent and in Britain.

In Britain, one of the first scholars to become a "converted liberal" was Edwyn Clement Hoskyns (1884-1937). Hoskyns could be called the predecessor to Dodd in reacting to historicism. His book, The Riddle of the New Testament (1931; 2nd ed., 1936), was the first to enunciate the new "Biblical Theology". The Old and New Testaments are related and the New Testament is essentially Hebraic and not Hellenistic.

While Hoskyn's³³ book was written from the point of view of the issue of faith and unbelief, C. H. Dodd's concern was historical. Both were Cambridge men and their scholarship complementary. Dodd's main concern is twofold: first, to examine the proclamation of the early church, which was news of an historical event; second, to get behind the

³²Stephen Neill, The Interpretation of the New Testament, p. 206.

³³One of the main criticisms of Hoskyn's book was that he paid little attention to the historical issues.

parables to grasp the central message of Jesus. Dodd's main thesis in relation to these problems is found in The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development (1936) and The Parables of the Kingdom (1935), respectively.

The rejection of a theology of immanence. Dodd rejected the idea that "Christianity might be reconstructed upon a basis of historical fact, scientifically assured."³⁴ The modern school has had a change of outlook, primarily due to a change in the theological atmosphere. Karl Barth, in 1919, swung the pendulum from the emphasis upon divine immanence to that of divine transcendence. Dodd interjects that the pendulum did not swing as violently in Britain as it did in Germany because "we took our Karl Barth in water".³⁵

Dodd goes on to explain the change of emphasis:

If the divine is to be identified with a tendency immanent in the historical process, then all that theology needs is to understand that process by purely "scientific" methods, which assume the homogeneity of the process in all its parts. There is no real place for a special revelation, which would make one particular piece of history different in character from all other pieces.³⁶

The consequences of nineteenth century historical criticism

³⁴C. H. Dodd, History and the Gospel (London: Nisbet & Company, 1941), p. 11.

³⁵C. H. Dodd, "Thirty Years of New Testament Study", Union Seminary Quarterly Review V, (May 1950), p. 6.

³⁶C. H. Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 12.

of the Gospels lose all importance for theology because:

The Gospels were not written from historical, or even from biographical motives. They were written "from faith to faith" That is to say, they were written as confessions of faith in Jesus Christ Their witness is a direct Word of the living God to us, calling for the response of faith³⁷

The concept of the transcendant God cast new light on hermeneutic for Dodd because, for him, the biblical records do not profess to report simply historical "events" but eschatological events. Scripture does not only possess "facts" but "a valuation of historical events as the medium of God's self-revelation in action".³⁸

This is a direct contradiction to Harnack's view that the earliest followers of Jesus had told their listeners of the Fatherhood of God and the infinite value of the human soul, but: "Dodd reaches the conclusion that the earliest preaching was a declaration of the mighty acts of God in Jesus Christ."³⁹

The rejection of the history of religions school.
Dodd declares that Christianity is an historical religion tied to particular events which have taken place in the stream of history. Dodd distinguishes Christianity from

³⁷Ibid., pp. 13-14.

³⁸Ibid., p. 19.

³⁹Neill, The Interpretation of the New Testament, p. 254.

other religions which evolve with the evolution of a people. Other religions are based on the teachings of holy men but are not dependent on historical events that take place in his life. "Their foundation is in ideas, not in events."⁴⁰

The history of religions school, which is an example of the application of evolutionary theories to Christianity, had as its foundation that Christianity was "the cross-fertilization of eastern and western thought".⁴¹ Christianity was said to have owed much to the "mystery religions" and from them to have derived the concept of the dying and rising Saviour god. The Christian Church owed its existence to the development of ideas in a Hellenistic milieu.

Dodd is emphatic when he rejects the subjection of Christianity to evolutionary theories and likens historicism to "nature-worship". This philosophy was dominant in the "natural religion" of the eighteenth century and was found in the nineteenth century, which said, "Some call it evolution, and others call it God."⁴²

The rejection of the positivist view of eschatology.
Dodd emphatically rejects the idea of the Kingdom of God as

⁴⁰C. H. Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 16.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 20-21.

an ethical commonwealth gradually coming to perfection in history through the moral and spiritual development of mankind. In particular, he rejects Schweitzer's futuristic character of the Kingdom as preached by Jesus. Dodd's flaming declaration to Schweitzer that the Kingdom had already arrived is found in Luke 17:21: ἡ Βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ ἔντος ὑμῶν ἔστιν. This was fully developed in the Shaffer Lectures, given in the Divinity School, Yale University, 1935.

The rejection of the early methods of form criticism.
C. H. Dodd rejected early forms of form criticism. In the inaugural lecture, delivered in the Divinity School, Cambridge University in 1936, he sees three fallacies of this methodology which was presupposed by historicism.

First, Dodd feels that in order to get back to the Sitz im Leben (which Dodd feels is commendable), the form critics fit the Christian tradition into a "botanical classification".⁴³ Dodd asserts that the early Christian community was "a living and growing thing, expressing itself through various forms of tradition".⁴⁴

Second, form criticism has completely left unfinished

⁴³C. H. Dodd, The Present Task of New Testament Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), p. 20.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 21.

the Johannine problem.⁴⁵ "The Johannine Problem represents their (the nineteenth century critics) most signal failure."⁴⁶ Dodd blames the method of form criticism on the failure to study the Fourth Gospel because "the methods applicable to the first three Gospels are not in the same way applicable to the Fourth."⁴⁷

As well, form criticism failed to realize that there is a basic unity underlying the New Testament. This canon represents "the judgment of the Early Church".⁴⁸ Form criticism tended to dissect and divide the New Testament. Dodd asks the searching question: "Was it this kind of treatment" that led to the propounding of unreal dilemmas, such as "Jesus or Paul?"⁴⁹

Dodd was one of the first to emphasize that the Bible "is not any longer to be treated as an historical corpus",⁵⁰ but the Gospels are religious documents. The Bible is "the Word of the transcendent God".⁵¹

⁴⁵Dodd does not reject source criticism, but accepts the early two document theory. He is concerned to make the distinction between early form criticism and source criticism, though he accepts a modified form criticism, unlike the early form.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 22. ⁴⁷Ibid., p. 24.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 32. ⁴⁹Ibid., p. 33.

⁵⁰C. H. Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 13.

⁵¹Ibid.

This was the beginning of a reaction in textual criticism from a critical positivistic attitude to a more receptive attitude to these religious documents.⁵²

VI. SUMMARY

Nineteenth century historicism had three traits: there was no effort to see history from the point of view of men and women who were actually participants in the historical events; the positivistic presuppositions of historicism forced the historian, as a detached observer, to seek for objective "facts" and arrange these "facts" into laws; the evolutionary theory created the law of progression which arranged the historical "facts" into an upward progression. Upon these bases alone, an historian could ascertain whether or not a said "fact" was true.

This historiography affected biblical criticism. The quest of the historical Jesus, the attempt to get to the "facts" by the use of early methods of source and form criticism, and the concept that the Kingdom of God was a synthesis of Christianity and Western culture were the direct outcome of historicism.

⁵²Merrill M. Parvis traces the historical development of the change, beginning with Dodd in the ranks of textual critics. This is found in an article, "The Nature and Tasks of New Testament Textual Criticism: An Appraisal", The Journal of Religion, XXXII (July, 1952), pp. 165-174.

Following World War I, the concepts of both the Kingdom of God and of history itself began to change. C. H. Dodd was one of the earliest British New Testament scholars to react. His reaction was found to be in the field of theology. He rejected Schleiermacher's immanent God, and, as a result, the biblical records were held to be religious and not historical records, which spoke of a transcendent God who acted uniquely in history. Dodd rejected the history of religions school, which was an outcome of the application of evolutionary principle to history. Schweitzer's view of eschatology was replaced by Dodd with a concept of "realized eschatology". As well, Dodd reacted to early form criticism, although he holds to the two document theory, as postulated by source criticism.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORY AND INTERPRETATION

I. THE PROBLEM OF A TWENTIETH CENTURY PERSPECTIVE

The preceding chapter has raised questions about the nature of historical knowledge. Historians who have repudiated the nineteenth century historicism recognize that the natural scientist and the historian approach their tasks differently. The historian is concerned with the particular and the unrepeatable and not with the general and the typical. Instead of undertaking "controlled experimental observation of recurrent phenomena, he attempts a descriptive portrayal of the uncontrolled--unrepeatable past".¹

History is the study of man, himself. "It is human self-knowledge historically understood."² Man alone, of all the creatures, has the power of self-determination and a measure of control over his environment. Man has a certain inner transcendence, the ability to enter into an inner dialogue with himself and to control his actions to a larger or lesser degree. In a real sense, man's "inner history" determines his outer actions, which go to make up history.

¹Eric C. Rust, Towards A Theological Understanding of History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 7.

²Richardson, History Sacred and Profane, p. 156.

History involves this unpredictable element. Even if one could know a man's inner structure, one could not, with certainty, determine his historical behaviour. Social or natural pressures will not always determine historical behaviour. The past "inner history" of man is beyond observation and experiment. For historical knowledge "we have to penetrate the outward actions and understand motives and intentions."³ Inference, sympathy, and imagination all play their part.

The study of history is also determined by the historian's own involvement in humanity. His participation in the life of his nation, of his immediate environment, and of his college stimulates his powers of sympathetic, interpretive imagination. The success of the historian lies in his historical interest, which rests upon the conviction that truly "historical" persons, whole societies, whole epochs, are worth getting to know for their own sake.⁴

The real problem of the twentieth century perspective for us and for C. H. Dodd is the "objectivity" of the historian. The historian can never "detach himself from the climate of opinion of his own day".⁵ It is because of this

³Rust, op. cit., p. 10.

⁴Richardson, op. cit., p. 157.

⁵Ibid., p. 193.

that he notices certain "facts" and ignores others; "what he does with evidence is determined by his belonging to a particular age and place."⁶ The historian's problem is that his interpretation of history and his view of what are and what are not "facts" is conditioned by the dominant ideas of the age in which he lives. The historian's final judgment will be determined "by the man he is".⁷ Nothing can abolish the personal element from the decision of what is and what is not a fact because the historian is himself an historical being with personal reactions toward or against the historical situation of his own day. For example, concerning a belief in the resurrection, Richardson shows how the followers of Barth, Brunner and Bultmann found it necessary to disengage the Christian kerygma from history because of the problems it would create with the concept of "scientific history" of their own day.⁸ History is a matter of interpretation "in the light of personal commitments, accepted values, and existential understanding in a way in which natural science is not thus a personal interpretation of nature".⁹

In short, the problem of the twentieth century (or

⁶Ibid., p. 193. ⁷Ibid., p. 203.

⁸Ibid., pp. 125-153.

⁹Ibid., p. 208.

any other period) lies with the historian's own personal commitment and faith to the Christian message.

II. THE NATURE OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE

C. H. Dodd believes that Christianity, as a religion, is unique in its affirmation of "the revelation of God either in nature or in spiritual experience".¹⁰ Christianity as characterized by the canon of Scripture, finds history the primary field of divine revelation. Truth about God cannot be discovered "by treating history as a uniform field of observation".¹¹ Dodd rejects those who attempt to collect "facts" and arrive by induction at a conclusion and thus reach a philosophy of history in this way.

Dodd defines what he means by history. History consists of occurrence and meaning; fact and interpretation. These two are indissolubly united in the reality of the historical event. Unlike historicism, Dodd rejects the idea that history can be limited to bare factual occurrences. To be historical, an event must possess interest and meaning for someone, "not merely private but public interest and a meaning which is related to broad and permanent concerns of human society".¹² There are innumerable events that happen

¹⁰Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 22.

¹¹Ibid., p. 24. ¹²Ibid., p. 26.

in that they have a definite locus in time and space, but no one is sufficiently interested in them to remember or record them. "Such occurrences do not constitute history."¹³

The events which make up human history are relative to the human mind, which is active in those events.

To ask whether the occurrence or the mind which is in it is the prior determining factor, is to ask a question which cannot be answered, for history as it is given is an inseparable unity of both in events.¹⁴

In a later book, The Bible Today (1946), Dodd qualifies what he means by "the facts of history". They are: "the things that happened with the meaning they bore for those who experienced them".¹⁵

Dodd differs from historicism when he takes into account the distinct nature of history in that it consists of human activity. To him, man cannot stand apart from the stream of history but is the subject matter of history. Man's intentions, purposes, actions and reactions enter into the fabric of history.

In this way, C. H. Dodd understand the Bible as containing historical documents.

It reports events, which are historical in the fullest sense, because they are laden with meaning; and these events are narrated in such a fashion as to bring

¹³Ibid. ¹⁴Ibid., pp. 27-28.

¹⁵C. H. Dodd, The Bible Today (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 145-146.

out clearly the meaning, which they bear.¹⁶

The historical study of the Bible is not just a chronological arrangement of events, but the interpreter must take into account the meaning which those events had for persons who were involved in them. However, Dodd does not reject chronology, for biblical criticism employs an important service. To get the documents into the right order is the first step toward studying them "intelligently as records of an historical process".¹⁷

Unlike Bultmann, Dodd implies that the meanings which the biblical writers experienced in the events recorded should be taken as seriously as non-biblical or modern assessments of them. Again one sees Dodd's rejection of nineteenth century criticism because those historians allowed their presuppositions to enter and distort the handling of biblical history. They put words in the mouths of the biblical writers. At this point, Dodd rightly assumes that the persons who were originally involved in particular events in history were likely to have formed a more accurate estimate of them than someone from the outside centuries later. "It follows", Dodd continues, "that a series of events is most truly apprehended and recorded when it is

¹⁶Ibid., p. 99.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 24.

apprehended in some measure from within the series and not from an entirely detached standpoint."¹⁸ Therefore, the early Christian community was in a better position to report and assess the significance of the events of history than those outside of it, such as Pontius Pilate or Tacitus. It was the Christian community which experienced these events and thus influenced further history by the resultant interpretation. Dodd says that, "It is only the apprehension of the facts in this particular light that could account for the emergence of the Church as an historical phenomenon."¹⁹

Knowledge of the Bible is not possible for the historian who operates from a detached viewpoint outside the Christian community. There is the subjective factor that is involved in the historian's knowledge of past events. Thus Dodd speaks of "living oneself into" the history of the Bible as a prerequisite to understand that history.²⁰ To do this one must so familiarize himself with this period of the past that he can feel and judge its significance, so that this does not "amount to a subjectivizing of history".²¹

¹⁸Dodd, History and Gospel, p. 28.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 109.

²⁰C. H. Dodd, The Authority of the Bible (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), p. 295.

²¹Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 28.

The investigator was disappointed at this point because Dodd fails to develop this side of his thought more fully. He only mentions it in passing. This omission could be attributed to another emphasis in which the concern was with the "givenness" and "objectivity" of the subject matter of history. This emphasis is apparent in History and the Gospel (1938), which was written as a polemic against historicism's concentration on the search for "bare facts" and the subsequent elimination of "whatever might be attributed to the faith or experience of the Church".²² For the Christian faith rests

. . . upon the affirmation that a series of events happened, in which God revealed Himself in action, for the salvation of man. The Gospels profess to tell us what happened. They do not, it is true, set out to gratify a purely historical curiosity about past events, but they do set out to nurture faith upon the testimony to such events. It remains, therefore, a question of acute interest to the Christian theologian, whether their testimony is in fact true. No insistence upon the religious character of the Gospels or the transcendent nature of the revelation which they contain can make the questions irrelevant.²³

Dodd is rightly concerned with "objectivity" on the part of the historian in order to guard against his own preconceptions and ideas being read into any history, for all Christian theology is based upon historical events and their subsequent interpretation. The over-all question is: How do

²²Ibid., p. 14.

²³Ibid., p. 15.

we come to know historical events and how is Divine activity related to these events?

Dodd's peril does not lie in the fact of his insistence on "objectivity", but it does lie in his particular conception of objectivity which is implicit in his writings. Dodd seems to err with his major emphasis in that he recognizes on the one hand that an historical event always involves the presence of a mind active in the event but that he, on the other hand, does not draw the further conclusion that subsequent faith knowledge of historical events (for example, one's knowledge in 1968 of the biblical events) is itself an historical event. Dodd assumes that the historian has a standpoint beyond the historical process from which it is possible to view the subject matter of history. Here history is treated like a natural science: it is external to man.

III. THE KERYGMA--OCCURRENCE PLUS MEANING

C. H. Dodd believes if one begins with the idea of history, as both occurrence and meaning, then it is possible to trace out the course of biblical history. This would not be just the jot and tittle meanings for certain writers but the broad general outline.

In one of his later books, The Bible Today (1946), Dodd devotes two chapters to discussion of the Old and New Testaments. Here he studies the movement of Old Testament

events and their culmination in the life of Christ and the emergence of the church. Dodd's concern is to survey the Bible critically and historically and to lay emphasis on what he calls its "public" - "objective" character. Dodd includes a chronology of events in the history of Israel plus the prophetic interpretation of those events. This is not something added to history. It grew out of the prophet's experience of history and entered into and directed the course of subsequent historical events. The prophetic writings of the Old Testament are the starting points for understanding biblical history because they are the clue to its meaning. The meaning to them was "God confronting man in judgment and mercy, and challenging him with a call, to which he must respond".²⁴ It was because they saw the meaning of history in that sense, inducing many to accept it, "that history took the shape it did".²⁵ As history was a series of crises, it took on the pattern of crisis.

The New Testament deals with the meaning of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This "meaning" is set forth in a basic pattern of New Testament thought, embodied in the kerygma. The kerygma is "the announcement of certain historical events in a setting, which displays the

²⁴Dodd, The Bible Today, p. 53.

²⁵Ibid.

significance of these events".²⁶ Dodd distinguishes the κήρυγμα from διδασχῆ which "is in a large majority of cases ethical instruction".²⁷

Dodd feels that the kerygma indicates that the New Testament is historical in the fullest sense. The writers were not interested in "bare facts" but set forth events laden with meaning. This meaning was not just added to the events. The kerygma is not just a creation of the Christian community but "it would be nearer the truth to say that the kerygma, or the facts and beliefs involved in it, created the community."²⁸ The historical tradition is contained in the structure of the kerygma. Dodd shows us that the Old Testament pattern of judgment and mercy "recurs in the story of the Gospels".²⁹ Jesus is set forth in the New Testament in such a way that judgment and mercy are united in Him, and the preceding history of Israel, as found in the Old Testament, is "clarified and confirmed by a final event in which "the Word was made flesh."³⁰

²⁶C. H. Dodd, According to the Scriptures (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 11.

²⁷C. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 7.

²⁸Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 77.

²⁹Dodd, The Bible Today, p. 86.

³⁰Ibid., p. 132.

Presuppositions and methodology. How does Dodd accomplish isolating the kerygma in the New Testament? Dodd's concern is "to recover the purest and most original form of the tradition, which inevitably includes both fact and interpretation".³¹ It is assumed that such recovery of the tradition can be effected with some objectivity that early criticism assumed possible. Dodd hopes to prove "that in the fourth decade of the first century the Christian church grew up around a central tradition, which . . . yields a coherent picture of Jesus Christ",³² what He stood for, what He said, did and suffered. Any step beyond that "will probably be taken by something more akin to faith than to objective historical judgment".³³ It appears that in Dodd's writings we have a substitution of the idea of objectivity of occurrence and meaning for the objectivity of bare factual occurrences of the nineteenth century. Therefore, the first obligation of the historian is to come to "conclusions with the straight-forward meanings, even if it seems offensive",³⁴ to read the ancient writings in their plain historical meaning.³⁵ This allows the biblical writer "to

³¹Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 103.

³²Ibid. ³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., p. 19.

³⁵Dodd, Authority of the Bible, p. 139.

give his own answers to his own questions and not insist that he must always be answering ours".³⁶ The critical method rejects restraint from without upon the liberty of interpretation and at the same time accepts "intrinsic control of the historical movement within the Bible itself".³⁷

Dodd is insistent on openness on the part of the historian to the subject matter of history. The means of accomplishing this is through an "objective" approach, in which the historian's presuppositions and standpoint in history are set aside. In a statement in The Bible Today, Dodd expresses some important implications: "In any field of thought to put the question rightly is to go a long way towards the answer."³⁸ "In order to put the question rightly" in his discussion, Dodd turns to Toynbee's Study of History, "to secure a point of view from which to approach . . . (the problem of) the bearing of the Bible upon the historical problem of our time".³⁹

There are three points which were vague to the investigator concerning Dodd's concept of the relation of the historian to the kerygma. Dodd says it is possible to recover questions and answers of concern to biblical writers which

³⁶Dodd, The Bible Today, p. 30.

³⁷Ibid., p. 32.

³⁸Ibid., p. 125. ³⁹Ibid., p. 130.

control the development of biblical history, as though it is better accomplished without the relationship to one's own situation in history. Yet, Dodd's own admission suggests that there should be, on the contrary, some relationship between the two, because it is impossible for historical understanding to take place apart from the activity of the historian's mind, which brings something to the study of history. Second, one is forced to compare Dodd's statement of Toynbee's conception of history, the idea of "challenge and response"--"withdrawal and return"⁴⁰ and his own discussion of biblical history as successive crises of judgment and mercy. Is Dodd not a victim of his own preconceptions rather than being ideally "objective"? Lastly, Dodd suggests that the historian be one,

Who has entered into the strange first-century world, has felt its whole strangeness, has sojourned in it until he has lived himself into it . . . who will then return into our world, and give to the truth he has discerned a body out of the stuff of own thought.⁴¹

The major difficulty here is that Dodd nowhere makes explicit in his writings the nature of entering into the experience of a past period of history.

The historical section of the kerygma contains only minimal reference to the "facts" of the life of Jesus. As

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 129.

⁴¹Dodd, The Present Task In New Testament, pp. 40-41.

Dodd accepts the theory that Mark is the primary Gospel, he believes an expanded amount can be traced in that Gospel as well as Acts, chapters ten and thirteen. Dodd brings together the short, generalizing summaries (Sammelberichte) which provide the framework for the arrangement of the pericopae, which forms the substance of the Gospel. These short transitions from one pericopae to another are often found in the insertion of connecting words such as ἔπειτα and πάλιν . When these summaries are placed together, Dodd believes that they fall into a continuous narrative. This pericopae was received by Mark, from the earliest tradition of the church and was fitted into narrative framework.⁴²

Does Dodd's attempt to find a connected narrative of the life and ministry of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark not reveal his predisposition to understand the historical character of the Gospels basically in terms of occurrences, a chronological account of "what happened", and therefore to define the historical study of the Gospels in essentially the same manner as historicism? By his own admission in 1950, Dodd said: "And so we turn back to the unfinished 'quest of the historical Jesus'; for we cannot escape it, in spite of the flourishes against historicism with which our

⁴²C. H. Dodd, New Testament Studies (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), pp. 1-11.

period opened."⁴³ The Bible is the primary evidence for biblical history. This does not mean that knowledge of that history is arrived at by sifting out a residuum of statements which reflect what happened in that epoch and ignoring the rest of the material as irrelevant. Such a procedure ignores the inferential nature of historical knowledge and obscures the fact that history consists of motives, purposes, and intentions involved in human activity.

Kerygma and didache. Dodd finds that Mark made "a perspicuous outline of the Galilean ministry, forming a framework into which the separate pictures are set".⁴⁴ He suggests that Mark arranged his material into the outline by a cross between a chronological and a topical order. Thus, there is "a genuine succession of events, within which movement and development can be traced".⁴⁵

Dodd's thesis is found in The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments (1936). The message which the apostles preached is best represented by Paul, who is the earliest Christian writer. So far as Paul's kerygma is concerned, it has been restored somewhat as follows:

The prophecies are fulfilled, and the new Age is inaugurated by the coming of Christ.

⁴³Dodd, "Thirty Years of New Testament Study", p. 5.

⁴⁴Dodd, New Testament Studies, p. 8.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 11.

He was born of the seed of David.
 He died according to the Scriptures, to deliver us
 out of the present evil age.
 He was buried.
 He rose on the third day according to the Scriptures.
 He is exalted at the right hand of God, as Son of God
 and Lord of quick and dead.
 He will come again as Judge and Saviour of men.⁴⁶

This outline of the kerygma can be reconstructed from the
 Epistles and the speeches in Acts and is substantially the
 same as the framework which resulted in putting together a
 continuous form of "generalizing summaries" in Mark's
 Gospel. This kerygma represents both event and interpreta-
 tion.

Alongside the kerygma, the primitive church "is
 likely to have preserved some memory of what He taught".⁴⁷
 This has been preserved in a practical catechesis of the
 early church. Dodd compares the catechetical material in the
 Epistles with parallel material in the Gospels and concludes
 that "the catechetical instruction, of the early church was
 largely based upon earlier models, partly Jewish, partly
 Hellenistic."⁴⁸ It was not the main channel through which
 the tradition came down but only influenced it.

⁴⁶Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments,
p. 17.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 44.

⁴⁸C. H. Dodd, "The Primitive Catechism and the Sayings
of Jesus", New Testament Essays (edited by A. J. B. Higgins,
Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), p. 116.

Dodd's fullest treatment of didache is given in his book, Gospel and Law (1951). Here he points out the various resemblances between the ethical section of the epistles and the ethical teaching of contemporary Hellenistic Judaism and Stoicism. The New Testament has the distinctly Christian features in the New Testament, the $\alpha\gamma\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta$ motif, as the foundation of all Christian conduct. Just as the Ten Commandments took their significance from the introductory declaration by God, who had delivered Israel from Egypt, so the law of Christ is significant in His redemptive act; "it is an obligation to reproduce in human action, the quality and the direction of the act of God by which we are saved."⁴⁹

In According To the Scriptures, the problem of historical method and the purpose of this method are discussed. The purpose is to "discover the true starting point of the development, which the New Testament writings exhibit".⁵⁰ Dodd accomplishes this by isolating from the various writings those elements which are common to all writings. He regards these as forming part of a central tradition which had some control over the writing of the various documents. Dodd is concerned with an estimate of the extent "to which this

⁴⁹C. H. Dodd, Gospel and Law (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), p. 71.

⁵⁰C. H. Dodd, According To the Scriptures (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 11.

common tradition is primitive or at least capable of being traced back to as early a period . . . as our research can reasonably expect to reach".⁵¹ Dodd felt this method would reveal "a genuinely chronological starting point for the history of Christian thought".⁵²

The form underlying the teaching of the earliest church was a primitive Christian catechism. Dodd has been able to discern a pattern of teaching in Thessalonians and other Pauline epistles. The pattern consisted of the following subjects:

1. The holiness of the Christian calling.
2. The repudiation of all pagan vices.
3. The assertion of the unique Christian law of charity.
4. Eschatological motives.
5. An order and discipline of the church marking out social responsibility.

The kerygma controlled the missionary preaching of the church, while the primitive catechism controlled the teaching when "Greek-speaking converts from paganism began to enter the Church in such numbers that the need for a standardized catechesis became pressing."⁵³

⁵¹Ibid. ⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Dodd, "The Primitive Catechism and the Sayings of Jesus", New Testament Essays, p. 116.

Dodd's thesis regarding the developmental character of kerygma and didache can be shown in the following sequence:⁵⁴

1. In the very earliest form of the church, a distinct activity called preaching was practiced.
2. Preaching had a particular historical content; the kerygma (occurrence plus meaning) formed the earliest missionary message of the church.
3. Discernable fragments of this earliest message are to be found in the New Testament.
4. Teaching was a second distinct activity of the early church.
5. The content of teaching was primarily ethical instruction and exhortation. Its form was derived from the Old Testament.

Critical evaluation of C. H. Dodd's theory. In Robert C. Worley's recent book, Preaching and Teaching in the Earliest Church (1967), he concludes that Dodd's severe distinctions between kerygma and didache cannot be substantiated. As well, D. E. Nineham in Studies In the Gospels (1955), has critically examined Dodd's hypothesis. These criticisms were made from the standpoint of critical and exegetical

⁵⁴Robert C. Worley, Preaching and Teaching in the Earliest Church (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), pp. 22-23.

studies. However, they complement our criticisms regarding Dodd's historical interpretation.

Worley has done a word study of κήρυγμα (noun), κηρύσσω (verb), and διδάσκω . In this study, it was found from context that the words for "preaching" and "teaching" were used interchangeably in the early church. The data revealed ambiguities of the meanings of the words. It could not be proved that preaching, as an activity, was uniquely a missionary activity. More evidence could be marshalled to show teaching as a missionary activity. Both words were associated with activities which took place in the Temple courtyard. The study showed that the content of preaching was more inclusive than Dodd allows.

Various fragments are arranged by Dodd to produce the outline which he called the kerygma in each of the writings. These fragments are: (1) Galatians 3:1; 1:3-4; and I Thessalonians 1:10. (2) I Corinthians 15:1-7. (3) Romans 1:1-2; 1:3-4; 8:34; 2:16; 10:8-9. The final outline proposed is a composite of these three groups of fragments. The complete outline of the kerygma must be obtained from the book of Acts. D. E. Nineham argues against an early outline.⁵⁵ His

⁵⁵D. E. Nineham, "The Order of Events in St. Mark's Gospel--An Examination of Dr. Dodd's Hypothesis", Studies In the Gospels: Essays In Memory of R. H. Lightfoot, ed. by D. E. Nineham (Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott, Ltd., 1955), p. 229.

argument is that if the speeches in the first section of Acts reflect the memory of the past by the apostles and what was said by them, then they offer no real evidence for the existence of an early outline of Jesus' life. The original apostles were not dependent upon any outline from tradition. They remembered Jesus!

Is this outline that of Dodd and not that of the early church, and is this not a further affirmation that Dodd views history as an objective thing with the historian "objectively" ascertaining the "facts"?

IV. SUMMARY

To view history from a proper perspective, the historian cannot separate the event, interpretation, or the historian, himself, from the stream of history. C. H. Dodd, in general context, seems to accept the fact that the historian is part of the stream of history, and in order to "know" the New Testament story he must have an empathetic view of history. This thought was never really developed. The greater part of his writings show his idea of "objectivity", as history that is external to the historian. History, to Dodd is analogous to the objects of natural science.

There is a distinction between Dodd and nineteenth century historicism. Dodd views history as a combination of occurrence and meaning. Historicism looked upon history as

just factual occurrences. Both views agree that the subject matter of history is external to the historian. At this point, Dodd never overcomes positivism. The kerygma comes close to the facts of Jesus' life and ministry with a minimum of early interpretation.

When Dodd thinks of Mark's Gospel as kerygmatic in character, he says that Mark wrote a form of kerygma. In other words, he built upon the objective chronological framework of the earliest kerygma which acted as a preservative of the tradition, which conveyed the facts. It was shown that Dodd received much criticism for radically distinguishing between the preaching and teaching of the early church. These criticisms point out from a different angle that Dodd's hypotheses tend to subjugate the Gospels to "Dodd's kerygma". "The new historical method to which he seems to have been moving has remained a promise rather than an achievement."⁵⁶

⁵⁶Hugh Anderson, Jesus and Christian Origins--A Commentary On Modern Viewpoints (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 82.

CHAPTER FOUR

HISTORY AND REVELATION

I. HISTORY AND PROPHETIC INTERPRETATION

C. H. Dodd believes that fact and prophecy constitute the mode of biblical revelation. "Fact and prophecy . . . weave by their interaction a fabric which shows the pattern of God's self-revelation to man."¹

In The Authority of the Bible (1928), Dodd develops the nature of prophetic inspiration and revelation through prophetic experience. The key to Dodd's position is the term "Word of God", which is "a means whereby the 'thought' of God, which is the truth, is mediated to the human mind".² Dodd places the word "thought" in quotation marks. It does not take the literal meaning but he likens the prophetic experience of "hearing" the "Word of God" to the poetic power of "apprehending an idea imaginatively". That which distinguishes them (the prophets) from other poets is not the manner of apprehension, but the nature of the ideas which they so apprehend.³

¹C. H. Dodd, "Revelation", The Expository Times, LI, (July, 1940), p. 448.

²C. H. Dodd, The Authority of the Bible, p. 27.

³Ibid., p. 68.

Two conclusions could be taken from this: first, either revelation is propositional (that is, the communication of ideas by God to the prophetic mind); or, second, it is the experience of the prophets and their writings as the result of reflections on that experience.

Dodd has recently attempted to clarify this concept of revelation and bring it into a closer relationship with history. The "Word of God" is described generally as God's approach to man which comes to men "keenly aware of the world situation in which they are living".⁴ The prophetic experience is not isolated from life but comes as an interpretation of the situation (insight into the situation). "The inspiration of the prophets displays itself as a divinely implanted faculty of insight into the meaning of events."⁵

As history is occurrence plus meaning, Dodd insists that the prophetic interpretation is not something added to the biblical history but constitutes a genuine part of the historical process. Prophetic interpretation of these events is nothing other than "the meaning which they experienced in the events, when their minds were opened to God as well as open to the import of outward facts".⁶ Dodd also says that

⁴Dodd, The Bible Today, p. 105.

⁵Dodd, "Revelation", The Expository Times, LI, p. 448.

⁶Dodd, The Bible Today, p. 51.

the historical facts "presented themselves to experience with this meaning".⁷ Therefore, Dodd would conclude that revelation is historical in the sense that "the conclusive act of God was at once upon the plane of outward fact, and upon the plane of interior illumination for the apprehension of the fact."⁸

Because the human action and purpose has been corrupted by sin, it is impossible to discern the activity of God in history apart from His action in illuminating the mind of the prophets and apostles to apprehend it. On the other side of the coin, revelation is not just the act of illumination, but "God reveals Himself to us, both by providing external, "objective" data for the knowledge of Him, and by creating in us the power to apprehend the data."⁹

The validity of Dodd's position depends upon the nature of the relationship or interaction between mind and event. At this point he seems to set mind over against the external occurrence. The subject matter of history "is the interaction of the human spirit with occurrences in the external world".¹⁰ Bultmann would criticize Dodd for giving

⁷Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 108.

⁸Dodd, "Revelation", The Expository Times, LI, p. 448.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Dodd, History and the Gospel, pp. 24-25.

the impression that the external, observable facts of history because they are "external and observable", have a more substantial, objective or real existence as history than the meanings and intentions present in the events through the activity of the minds relative to the events. Therefore, the idealist would imply that prophetic interpretation is not as solidly historical as the "facts" which the prophet interprets.¹¹ However, it seems in this phase of the discussion that Dodd comes close to a view that understands revelation as a religious experience and the prophetic interpretation is a reflection upon those experiences.

II. REVELATION AND THE PATTERN OF BIBLICAL HISTORY

Since history is both event and interpretation, Dodd has attempted to overcome the criticism that prophetic interpretation is something added to the historical process. Dodd affirms that the actual movement of biblical history discloses a pattern in which can be discerned God's activity in revealing His nature and purpose to mankind. The perception of this pattern requires a prophetic mind (genius), but the meaning which the prophets perceived is nothing other than the meaning which is there in the historical

¹¹cf., Rudolf Bultmann, The Presence of Eternity History and Eschatology (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), pp. 138-155.

process to be perceived. Dodd says, "We are invited to trace the manifest working of the divine providence . . . (God) reveals Himself in the movement of events."¹² Within the history of the emergence of the church one can see God's ways with men written in "large letters".¹³

Dodd's hermeneutic is conditioned upon the recurrence of a particular pattern in biblical history. This history is marked by a series of crises in which the "Word of God" comes to man. God makes the approach to man always in the context of historical situations. This is always in the pattern of judgment and redemption.¹⁴ The prophets always felt that the Old Testament pattern of history was incomplete, and hence they preached that "history will reach a climax in which the purpose of God in all history will be conclusively exhibited and His last Word spoken."¹⁵ This climax was in the event of Jesus Christ. In this day, the "Word of God" comes to man in a "final approach".¹⁶ Through the life and teachings of Jesus, "an absolute standard" is set up by which men are judged.¹⁷ The element of judgment had its climax in the crucifixion. Here, the mercy of God

¹²Dodd, The Bible Today, pp. 98-99.

¹³Ibid., pp. 156-157. ¹⁴cf., Ibid., pp. 104-106.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 61. ¹⁶Ibid., p. 109.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 110.

was revealed because God's mercy and judgment "are organically related".¹⁸ The resurrection turned defeat into victory, thus sealing God's action of rescue and renewal and judgment. Biblical history is what Dodd calls Heilsgeschichte, "history as a process of redemption and revelation".¹⁹

The view of history which defines revelation in terms of a movement or pattern of biblical history seems to have two basic difficulties. First, Dodd implies that revelation is an observable phenomenon which can be apprehended "objectively" apart from faith. This is especially seen in his most recent view (The Bible Today), where he says "this (patterned history) affords us a public, objective revelation of God to man."²⁰ Revelation is the movement of the historical process as recorded in the Bible but which is open to objective examination apart from faith. Dodd attempts to avoid this conclusion in that he relates God's action in revelation to the church in which the Word and Sacrament recreate the pattern of biblical history. Within the church, history comes alive. Perhaps it is because Dodd's encounter with God has been one of judgment and mercy that the pattern

¹⁸Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁹Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 168.

²⁰Dodd, The Bible Today, p. 144.

of biblical history seems so obvious and objective to him. History then is a process of revelation--something external to the individual and open to detached observation as revelation.

Second, this view involves another difficulty. Because Dodd begins with the movement of biblical history and shows how the pattern discloses the key to revelation in history, the emphasis falls upon the pattern of that history as the substance of that revelation. Is revelation really a patterned series of events instead of historical events? This view is good in that it shows a relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The real problem lies in the fact that it tends to do less than justice to the uniqueness of the New Testament events and subordinates the Christ-event to a mere patterned historical process.

In According to the Scriptures, Dodd endeavors to show that the New Testament writers used particular passages from the Old Testament "to elucidate the kerygma".²¹ He seems to press the argument when he says:

The foundations of the Church's Christology can more hopefully be sought in the application of prophecy in the earliest period accessible to us, because this represents the way in which the first witnesses found the clue to the meaning of events, and of words and deeds of their Master, which admittedly had eluded their

²¹Dodd, According to the Scriptures, p. 27.

understanding in His lifetime.²²

Isn't it more accurate to say: In the application of prophesy, the first witnesses found the clue to meaning in the events of the life of Jesus which include His death and resurrection? The incarnation and resurrection marked the beginnings of faith that in Jesus Christ God was acting for the redemption of mankind. This provided the clue by which they understood their relation to previous history. The incarnation and resurrection made previous history meaningful! Dodd fails when he emphasizes that the movement of the historical process is the key to the nature of revelation, and that the pattern illuminates the Christ-event, and not vice-versa.

Dodd says that the act of God in Christ was a clarification and a confirmation of a pattern which was implicit in previous biblical history. Therefore, even the crucifixion and resurrection are submerged "under a pattern of Old Testament history-- "judgment and mercy", "decision and renewal". For Dodd, history takes on recurrent aspects, but the idea that history is the sphere of the unique and non-recurring is not taken seriously.

Does this view really understand revelation as historical (Heilsgeschichte)? Is this real history, or some-

²²Ibid.

thing outside of, or added to the real substance of history? Dodd answers, "The same events enter into both sacred and secular history, but they form two distinguishable series."²³ Events, in secular history, include the total history of mankind, and are related to sacred history "by succession in time and by the operation of efficient causes".²⁴ The events of biblical history (part of secular history) also belong to another series (sacred history) "which empirical (secular) history fails to show".²⁵

It appears that there is no reason to deny that the historian can encounter the meaning or discern the pattern of biblical history as revelation in his study of those events, as a part of the empirical series. It is difficult in Dodd's writings to determine what function historical knowledge performs in our knowledge of revelation.

On the one hand, Dodd asserts that the historian can make an objective, critical study of God's searching activity in history. Christianity rests upon events and through objective study one can lay bare the pattern of God's revelation in history.

²³Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 166.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

On the other hand, Dodd implies that historical knowledge is incidental to knowledge of God's revelation in history. This is quite evident when he finds it necessary to use the category of "supra-historical". He says the Gospel story has both "an historical and a supra-historical aspect".²⁶ Again, "The Word of God is the supra-historical factor operative in that history."²⁷ It would appear that to Dodd sacred history is not genuinely historical. How can one understand God's intervention or activity in historical terms or as an historical event? Friedrich Gogarten says emphatically that:

One must also think in historical terms of the reality with which faith is concerned But this is very far from being accomplished by simply calling this reality a supra-historical one.²⁸

Therefore, the concept of sacred history does not solve the problem but simply poses a further problem of how God's action can be understood as an historical action.

This problem is emphasized by the concept of eschatology. Dodd believes that the Gospels report not just important historical events, but eschatological events. In the Old Testament there is the prophetic expectation of the

²⁶Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 36.

²⁷Dodd, The Bible Today, p. 104.

²⁸F. Gogarten, Demythologization and History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 47.

"Day of the Lord". In the New Testament, Christ has inaugurated the eschaton or the Kingdom of God. The "Age to Come" has arrived.²⁹

There are two factors which contribute to Dodd's exclusive emphasis on New Testament eschatology. First, the logical result of his conception of history and revelation is the emphasis on chronological sequence and development. The last turn of the series of events in sacred history happened in Christ. There is no place for further development; hence, the history of the church has little significance. Therefore, the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist is a re-enactment of sacred history. The New Testament events are "a slice of the actual history of the world . . . something that happened sub Pontio Pilato. It happened, and we are there."³⁰ In the Eucharist, the past, present, and future "are indissolubly united".³¹ The crisis in which the Kingdom came is recapitulated and the pattern of biblical history as judgment and mercy comes alive. "The church never gets beyond this."³² Any time sequence is inconsequential for history following the coming

²⁹cf. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching, pp. 196-208.

³⁰Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 164.

³¹Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching, p. 234.

³²Ibid.

of Christ.

Second, Dodd says that the eschaton must not be understood quantitatively as a temporal end of a series of events. Rather, it is the entrance of "the qualitatively final or ultimate . . . into the midst of history in a decisive crisis by which the meaning of the whole is determined".³³ This event marks the absolute entrance of the Kingdom of God,³⁴ the timeless and eternal realm into human experience. Dodd maintains that the eschaton is an historical event; yet the emphasis is on the absolute, the timeless and the eternal as the content of that event.³⁵ Yet because of its timeless quality, is there no reason to expect further interventions of God in history?

This raises a question: Does Dodd really understand the character of God's action as historical? This leads Dodd to one of two conclusions. First, when he defines the eschaton in terms of the timeless and eternal coming into history, history recedes into the background. Therefore, Dodd can say, "The spirit of man, though dwelling in history, belongs to the eternal order."³⁶ Man's essential nature is

³³C. H. Dodd, "The Kingdom of God and History", The Kingdom of God and History (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1938), p. 33.

³⁴Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching, p. 232.

³⁵cf. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom, pp. 107-108.

³⁶Ibid., p. 108.

not defined in historical terms but his real nature lies in the realm beyond history. God's action liberates man from history and lifts him to the realm of the eternal. This is the place through which "history has been taken up into the supra-historical, without ceasing to be history."³⁷

Therefore, Dodd can dismiss any reference to a future parousia in the sayings of Jesus as an exegetical tour de force. "In Platonic fashion", Dodd interprets those sayings as symbolical of a new transcendent, spiritual world beyond time and space.³⁸

Did God not enter the stream of human history in the incarnation event? Is Dodd's concept of God too transcendental?

Second, in more recent writings Dodd attempts to relate events climaxing the biblical history to human history by suggesting that their meaning is the meaning of all history. At this point he lays himself open to the charge that a philosophy of history has become the controlling factor in his understanding of God's acting in, and giving meaning to history. This pattern of judgment and mercy, disaster and renewal, obscures the ambiguous nature of the meaning of

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Braaten, History and Hermeneutics, (New Directions in Theology Today Vol. II), p. 164.

history. There is close affinity on Dodd's part to Toynbee's pattern of "challenge and response" in history.³⁹

III. THE HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF REVELATION

This section will be concerned with considering a satisfactory emphasis regarding the doctrine of revelation and history.

Dodd's basic problem has been his conception of history and historical knowledge. To him, history is something external to the historian. At this point it would seem that he has never been freed from this positivistic tendency. History has been "divided" into secular and sacred. Sacred history has become a patterned revelation which can be identified as an objective observable process.

It seems that Dodd's difficulty lies with his conception of history and that the nature of history should be considered. This does not mean that faith is replaced by history and that the Christian belief that God has acted in certain events will be less offensive to the non-believer. However, when one talks of God's action in history, one is talking about His action in man's history and not some esoteric realm above history. Therefore, any subsequent knowledge of His revelation to individuals or to a community

³⁹Dodd, The Bible Today, pp. 122-143.

is genuinely historical knowledge.

When the historian is seeking to know the events of biblical revelation, these events and their meaning cannot be defined as objects external to him and analogous to the objects of the physical world. Man cannot stand outside history as a spectator, but is a participant.⁴⁰ He constitutes the subject matter of history. The historian cannot adopt a "neutral standpoint" outside of history from which he can view history in detached objectivity. He can know the past by re-enacting or re-living the past.⁴¹ This is not simply a repetition of past experiences or events, but the historian can share the revelatory challenge of faith that comes to him by God with the writers of the Scriptures. Dodd comes very close to this in his concept of re-enactment in the eucharist and the church, but this idea is never fully developed.

Man's knowledge of the past is critical activity which takes place within the context of his own historical existence. The historian does not first trace out past history and then seek for meaning or relevance for his own life--for to know the past is to have re-lived it in terms

⁴⁰Rust, Towards a Theological Understanding of History, p. 7.

⁴¹Wilhelm Dilthey, Pattern and Meaning in History (B. G. Teubner, trans., New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), pp. 139-142.

of one's own existence. The past is known as it enters into and has significance for a subject involved in history. Therefore, the objectivity of historical knowledge is not impossible, but the nature of objectivity in historical study is different from that in the study of natural sciences.

The objectivity of modern historiography consists of one's openness to share revelatory encounter of God with those to whom God revealed Himself in sacred Scripture. This openness to God's revelation is "one's willingness to place one's intentions and views of existence in question".⁴²

This idea of history which begins with the recognition of man's involvement in history affects the interpretations of biblical history as a medium of God's revelation in two ways. First, it implies that God's action is an event in history that God has acted for man's redemption in the nation of Israel and finally in Jesus Christ. This cannot be known and decided upon in detached observation because the past is known in its historical character only as it enters into and modifies one's own existence. Dodd tends to place "observable" or "public history" over against the personal appropriation of that history in one's own existence. Second, this view makes it possible to maintain that the

⁴²James M. Robinson, A New Quest of the Historical Jesus (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1963), pp. 76-77.

knowledge of God's revelation in historical events is both historical knowledge and knowledge involving a decision of faith.

IV. SUMMARY

Dodd affirms that the prophets observed the acts of God and that in this sense prophetic interpretation is a reflection upon those experiences. God reveals Himself in the movement of events which are in the pattern of judgment and mercy. To apprehend Heilsgeschichte objectively, Dodd posits that history is formed in two distinguishable series. This supra-historical factor is the Kingdom of God and seems to inflict Dodd's interpretation with a form of Platonism. It was found that Dodd's presuppositions have affinity with Toynbee's patterned history.

The investigator attempted a satisfactory answer to Dodd's failure regarding revelation and history.

CHAPTER FIVE

HISTORY AND NATURE

I. MIRACLE AND HISTORICAL MEANING

The question of this chapter is: How is God's action in history related to the cosmos of which man is a part? Historicism said that the cosmos was governed by law. There was no place for the unique and non-recurring. Judgment was made in advance as to what can happen in history.

C. H. Dodd gives very little attention to the problems of miracles as such, but there are hints of a position. Dodd says that miracles must be understood in the light of the significance which they had for the early Christian community. They must be interpreted in the first instance as a manifestation that the new age had come in Christ.¹ They were not objective evidence for the nature of Christ and His mission since the recognition of their meaning rested upon a prior belief in Christ as the Lord of the new age.

Dodd does not conclude that the miracles attest the reality of revelation in Christ or provide rational grounds for belief. He maintains that the miracles are symbols in and through which God makes an approach to man. The peculiar

¹cf., C. H. Dodd, "Miracles in the Gospels", The Expository Times, XLIV (August, 1933), pp. 505-506.

character of a miracle is in "its effect in bringing to the person who experiences it an unusual sense of the supernatural, that is, of the presence and power of God".² The first requirement of an historical treatment of the miracle accounts is the recognition of the "symbolical import" which these had for the Christian mind. "This determines the real historical significance of the event, whatever may actually have happened."³

This final statement suggests that Dodd's method of dealing with the miracles reflects his conception of history as the combination of occurrence plus meaning. The historical study of an event must consider the total event (occurrence and meaning). Dodd concedes that the study of some of these events, for example the miracle stories, discloses the meaning of the event while the nature of the event remains hidden and obscure. It is from this perspective that Dodd treats the resurrection account in History and the Gospel. The resurrection is an event in history. The reports of that event "make the meaning of the fact clearer than the fact itself".⁴ The Gospels are concerned with an event which expressed for those who participated in it a meaning

²Ibid., p. 508.

³Ibid., p. 506.

⁴Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 108.

"greater than could be attributed to any other event in history".⁵ To those who formed the earliest church, the resurrection signified an act of God--the entrance of the eschaton. As such, it transformed their experience and entered into and shaped subsequent history.

Dodd's position does not preclude the question of the factual character of the event, but he does assert that various theories about this aspect of the resurrection are abstractions "from the record of the complete event" and cannot be made the basis for proving the actual historicity of the resurrection or any other miracle.⁶ This does not vitiate the reality of a miracle as an historical event, for Dodd says that:

There are even events of outstanding historical importance in which practically nothing at all happened, in the ordinary external sense of happening. It was simply that the meaning of the whole situation changed for an individual or a group, and from that change of meaning a chain of happenings ensued.⁷

Implicit in Dodd's discussion is the idea that history is the sphere of human existence and in so far as human history involves events in nature these must be understood not as the basic historical reality but as an element in a total historical event.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., p. 107.

⁷Ibid., p. 105.

Two distinguishing characteristics mark Dodd's discussion of the miracles and the resurrection. In the first place, Dodd understands miracles as integrally related to God's activity in revelation but not as an evidence for revelation.⁸ In the second place, his position implies that if the events of God's activity involve the natural order in any sense, this aspect of the event must be dealt with as a constituent of an historical event. Our knowledge of nature is historical knowledge. However, the problem of miracle cannot simply be settled by accepting or rejecting the historical evidence.

Unfortunately, these insights concerning the nature of history and historical knowledge never seem to become the controlling motif of Dodd's thought. There seems to be the over-all concern to know what happened or what the "facts" were.⁹ This seems to show the continuing influence of the nineteenth century historical method. Nowhere is there a coupling of the search for the "facts" and their meaning with the historicity of the historian and his faith.

⁸Dodd concludes that the miracle stories are symbolic of God's supernatural activity in eschatological history. Platonic presuppositions can be observed in the allegorizing of the miracle stories. cf., Dodd, "Miracles in the Gospels", The Expository Times, XLIV (August, 1933), pp. 505-506.

⁹cf., Ibid., p. 509. (Dodd's five concepts of treating the miracle stories.)

II. SUMMARY

Dodd does not deny the reality of the resurrection or the miracles as historical events. The most we can ascertain about them is their meaning and not their nature. A miracle is the symbol of God's activity in revelation. Dodd fails to give the reader his definition of "miracle"; thus his viewpoint tends to be vague.

Throughout Dodd's discussion it was noted that he attempts to ascertain the "facts" by a critical study of their "meaning" to the church. History is analogous to an external object so far as the historian is concerned.

It must be noted to Dodd's credit that he seems to accept the unique and non-recurring as historical.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

In the main the thrust of this study has been to determine C. H. Dodd's hermeneutic by showing his own avowed reactions to historicism and evaluating those reactions by a survey of his writings. The views of this investigator regarding the nature of history were made known. In chapter three the views of Robert C. Worley and D. E. Nineham were used to show Dodd's presuppositions and subsequent failure to fully escape historicism from the angle of hermeneutics.

Basically, the investigator has been confronted by Dodd's failure to reject historicism completely. It has been shown that the difference between Dodd and historicism is that historicism was an attempt to get to the "bare factual occurrence" while Dodd rejects this and rightly emphasizes that every fact of history has its interpretation by some mind. Fact and interpretation cannot be separated. Dodd never overcomes positivism in that he asserts that the subject matter of history is external to the historian. This one fact largely determines C. H. Dodd's hermeneutic.

Dodd's rejection of a theology of immanence is commendable. However, his concept of God is overly transcendent. God is not only qualitatively beyond history, but the

incarnation event took place in the stream of human history. Dodd denies that the revelation of God is found in the stream of human history. God reveals Himself in Eschatological History or an esoteric objective patterned history which is above human history. Here, Dodd seems to follow Toynbee's pattern of history. This is the Platonic aspect of Dodd's hermeneutic. Since Dodd places God in such a transcendent position, we could say that he also enunciates the principle of transcendental hermeneutic.

Dodd rejects the history of religions school which espoused the evolutionary presuppositions of the nineteenth century. In light of his rejection of the evolutionary principle, Dodd is to be commended.

The nineteenth century theology proclaimed the synthesis of Christianity and culture in which the Kingdom of God was coming to perfection in history through love and moral actions. Albert Schweitzer proclaimed a consistent eschatology. It was found that Dodd reacted to both forms of eschatology. He holds that the forms of Jesus' ministry was to realized eschatology. The Kingdom of God had come not into the history of man but as an objective revelation in eschatological history. This shows Dodd's hermeneutic to be eschatological. Dodd also places great emphasis on the preaching of Jesus and the early church. Kerygma was found to be the lowest common denominator toward retrieving the

actual "events" of that epoch of history. Dodd's hermeneutic is kerygmatic!¹

It has been shown that Dodd rejected early methods of form criticism because they savored of historicism. It was found that Dodd held to the older form of source criticism. However, Dodd (partially due to his continuing positivist tendencies) has maintained "what might be called a modified 'form critical' answer".²

C. H. Dodd has rightly reacted to the perils of historicism. In seeing strengths and weaknesses of Dodd's hermeneutic, this study has given the investigator some insight into the problem of history.

¹Dodd places little emphasis on the Incarnate God but rather is concerned with the preaching of Jesus. He fails to create a Christocentric hermeneutic at this point.

²D. E. Nineham, Studies in the Gospels Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot, p. 223.

APPENDIX

DR. C. H. DODD--A SHORT BIOGRAPHY AND HIS IMPORTANCE¹

Charles Harold Dodd was born on April 7, 1884, at Wrexham, Denbighshire, North Wales. He entered University College, Oxford, as a classical scholar in 1902, and achieved a first class in Classical Moderations (1904), and in the Final School of Literae Humaniores (1904). His earliest post-graduate activities were in the field of classical archeology. During a time as classical lecturer in the University of Leeds, he took in excavations on the site of Corbridge (Roman Corstopitum), in Northumberland. In 1907, he undertook research in Roman imperial numismatics at the University of Berlin. From 1907 to 1911, he studied theology in Mansfield College, Oxford.

In 1912, Dodd was ordained to the Congregational ministry and served until 1915 as minister of the Congregational Church in Warwick (to which he returned for a short time in 1918-19). In 1915, he was appointed Yates Lecturer in New Testament in Mansfield College in succession to James Moffatt. He remained in this post until 1930. During the later years of his Mansfield appointment, he also served the University of Oxford as Lecturer in New Testament Studies (1927-30) and Grinfield Lecturer in the Septuagint (1927-31).

¹P. E. Hughes (ed.), Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1966), pp. 239-240.

In 1930, he was appointed to the Rylands Chair of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis in the University of Manchester.

From Manchester, he was called in 1935 to succeed Francis Crawford Burkitt, as Norris-Hulse Professor of Divinity, in the University of Cambridge. He thus became the first non-Anglican to hold a university chair of divinity at Cambridge since 1660. He remained in the Norris-Hulse Chair until his retirement from active academic teaching in 1949. Both during these years and subsequently, he held many special lectureships. He was Speaker's Lecturer in Biblical Studies at Oxford (1933-37), Shaffer Lecturer at Yale (1935), Ingersoll Lecturer at Harvard (1935 and 1950), Hewett Lecturer in the Episcopal Theological Seminary, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Union Theological Seminary, New York, and Andover-Newton Seminary (1938), Olavs Petri Lecturer at Uppsals (1949), Visiting Professor of Biblical Theology, Union Theological Seminary, New York (1950), Brampton Lecturer at Columbia University, New York (1950), Stone Lecturer at Princeton Theological Seminary (1950), Syr D. Owen Evens Lecturer, Aberystwyth (1954), and Sarum Lecturer, Oxford (1954-55).

Since his retirement from the Norris-Hulse Chair at Cambridge, best-known responsibilities have been those associated with his General Directorship of the New English Bible

from 1950 onwards. He was Convenor of the Translator's Panel for the New Testament. The appearance of his name as a Companion of Honour in the Queen's Birthday Honours List of June 1961, three months after the publication of the New Testament in the New English Bible, was a well merited recognition of his work in this respect, over and above his many other contributions to biblical scholarship.

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