

# DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD

## Lecture Outline

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### Introduction

#### I. The Comprehensiveness of God's covenant Lordship.

- A. Centrality of Lordship in Scripture: "Lord," (*Yahweh, Adonai, Kurios*) is the basic covenant name of God, Ex. 3:13-15, 6:1-8; cf. John 8:59, Rom. 14:9.
1. Use in confessions of faith: Deut. 6:4ff; cf. Rom. 10:9, I Cor. 12:3, Phil. 2:11.
  2. God performs his mighty acts "that they might know that I am the Lord," Ex. 14: 18, I Kings 8:43, Ps. 9: 10, etc.
  3. "I am Lord, I am he," Isa. 41:4, 43:10-13, etc.
- B. Lordship is a covenantal concept.
1. "Covenant": relation between the Lord and a people whom he has sovereignly consecrated to himself. He rules over them by the sanctions of his law and fulfills in and through them the purposes of his grace.
  2. Lordship is a relation. Where you have a Lord, you have servants, i.e. a people over whom the Lord rules. "Lord" names God as head of the covenant relationship. The centrality of lordship implies the centrality of covenant, and vice versa.
- C. The Attributes of Lordship  
The following three concepts seem to be particularly prominent in biblical descriptions of divine Lordship. Learn them well, for they define a basic conceptual scheme which will be invoked frequently in all of my courses.
1. Control (kingly office)
    - a. Though God's lordship is a covenant relation, his existence precedes the covenant, and his power brings the covenant servant (with the whole world) into existence, Isa. 41:4, 43:10-13, 44:6, 48:12f. The covenant, therefore, is not a relation of mutual dependence, even though "Lord" denotes a relation. The Lord is in control, and the servant is dependent upon him.
    - b. Emphasis on divine control within the covenant structure: Ex. 3:8, 20, 14 (cf. 33:19, 34:6, Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 129-134), Ex. 20:2.
  2. Authority (prophetic office) (=right to be obeyed): Ex. 3:13-18, 20:2, Lev. 18:2-5, 30, 19:37, Deut. 6:4-9, Luke 6:46ff.
    - a. He cannot be questioned, Rom 4:18-20, Heb. II, Job 40:1f, Rom. 9:20.
    - b. His covenant transcends all other loyalties, Ex. 20:3, Deut. 6:4f, Matt. 8: 19-22, 10:34-38, Phil. 3:8.
    - c. His authority covers all areas of life, Ex.-Deut., I Cor. 10:31, Rom. 14:23, II Cor. 10:5, Col. 3:17, 23.
  3. Presence, or Covenant Solidarity (priestly office)
    - a. "I will be with you," Gen. 26:3, 28:15, 31:3, 46:4, Ex. 3:12, 93:14, Deut. 31:6, 8, 23, Judges 6:16, Jer. 31:33. Isa. 7:14, I Cor. 3:16ff, John 17:25, Matt. 28:20, Rev. 21:22.
    - b. The nearness of the covenant Lord, Jer. 31:33, Deut. 4:7, 30:11-14, Rom. 10:6-8, Lev. 10:3, Ps. 148:14, Eph. 2:17, Jonah 2:7, Col. 1:27.
    - c. Involvement with people in blessing and cursing (notice how this seems almost to ~ "lordship" (*Yahweh*) in the passages cited), Ex. 3:7-14, 6:1-8, 20:5, 7, 10, Ps. 35:13f, Isa. 26:4-8, Hos. 12:4-9, 13:4ff, Mal. 3:6, John 8:31-59.
    - d. Each attribute presupposes the other two. Each presents the whole idea of Lordship from a different "perspective."
      - i. Control involves authority, for God controls even the structure of truth and rightness.

- ii. Control involves presence, for God's power is so pervasive it brings us face to face with him in every experience.
  - iii. Authority involves control, for God's commands presuppose his full ability to bless obedience and curse disobedience.
  - iv. Authority involves presence, for God's commands are clearly revealed.
  - v. Presence involves control, for nothing in heaven and earth can keep us from God or God from us (John 10, Rom. 8).
  - vi. Presence involves authority, for the presence of God is always a presence in the word, Deut. 30: 11 ff.
4. Lordship, Creation and Providence
- a. Control: Gen. 1:3, Ps. 33:6,9,148:5, John 1:3, 10, Heb. 11:3, II Pet. 3:5-7, Heb. 1:2, Gen. 8:21, Ps. 145:15f, 119:89-91,148:8, Eph. 1:11.
  - b. Authority: Gen. 1:5, 8, 10 (*qara'*), 1:26ff, 2: 17, etc. Note the prominence of God's word in the passages describing divine control--the model of the king speaking and being obeyed.
  - c. Presence: Gen. 1:2, Isa. 66:1, Matt. 5:35, Acts 7:49ff, I Kings 3:27ff (note covenant context), Ps. 139.
5. Lordship and Salvation ("Salvation is of the Lord," Jonah 2:9), Ex. 3:7-14,20:2, 33:19. Jer. 33:31-34, Rom. 5,10:9, "the Kingdom of God;" "the covenant."
- a. Control: Ex. 3:19-22,6:6, Isa. 52:7,59:15-20, John 5:37,44,65, Rom. 8:28-39, 9:11-24, Eph. 1:3-14, 2:8f.
  - b. Authority: Isa. 43:1-7, Matt. 9:1-9, Luke 7:1-10, Rom. 10:9f, I Cor. 2:6-16.
  - c. Presence: Num. 6:23-27, Deut. 27: 12ff, II Cor. 16:9ff, Ps. 1, 139, I Cor. 10:16,11:27-32,Rev.1:20,2:1ff.
6. Summary: In the Reformed faith, the sovereignty of God involves not only God's control, but also his authority and covenantal presence. It involves authority: the reformed faith is much more interested in being Scriptural than in achieving consistency with an abstract idea of divine control. It involves presence: one of the most precious things in reformed literature is the emphasis on living *coram deo*, living every moment in the presence of God, confronted by him in every fact, in every event, in every person. Because of this covenantal lordship, all of life must be brought under God's dominion (I Cor. 10:31, etc.) Nothing is neutral, nothing may be left as is. (Calvin's slogan: "My heart I give thee, promptly and sincerely.")
- It is, then, the comprehensiveness of God's covenant Lordship which is most precious to reformed people. Salvation is not merely a way of escaping divine Judgment, but a reorientation of all of life, and, ultimately, of all human society, of the earth itself.

## II. Theology Under God's Lordship

### A. Knowing God

- 1. God knowable (Rom. 1:21), but incomprehensible (Isa. 55 :8-9).
  - a. In one sense, all people know God (Rom. 1:21)
  - b. Only believers possess saving knowledge, knowledge of God as friend (John 17:3, Matt. 11:27, John 1:14, I Cor. 2:9-15, I John 5:20). Some of what I say below will pertain to both kinds of knowledge, but I am focusing on the first.
- 2. To know God is to know him as Lord (Ex. 14:18,33:11-34:9, I Kings 8:43, I Chron.28:6-9): "that they may know that I am the Lord."
  - a. Knowledge about God is about his Lordship, his control, authority, presence.
  - b. Knowledge-(in the highest sense) subject to his Lordship.
    - i. Knowledge is based on revelation (Matt. 11:25-28), therefore under God's control.

- ii. Knowledge is subject to God's authority. So it correlates with obedience.
  - aa. Knowledge of God produces obedience (John 14:15,21, 17:26, 2 Pet. 1:3,5,2:18-20).
  - bb. Obedience leads to knowledge (John 7:17, Eph. 3:17-19, 2 Tim. 2:25f, 1 John 3:16). Spiral relationship.
  - cc. Obedience is knowledge, and knowledge is obedience (Hos. 6:6, Jer.22:16.)
  - dd. Obedience is a criterion of knowledge (Matt. 7:21ff, Luke 8:21, John 8:47,14:15,21, 23f, 15:7,10,14,17:6,17, 1 John 2:3-5,4:7, 5:2f, 2 John 6).
  - ee. So knowledge must be sought in an obedient way (1 Cor. 1-2, 3:18-23,8:1-3, Jas. 3:13-18).
- iii. Knowledge is exposed to God's presence. Knowing God personally.
  - aa. Knowing facts about God (Psm. 100:3, Rom. 3:19,6:3, 1 John 2:3,3:2)
  - bb. Knowing new skills: obedience, prayer, spiritual gifts.
  - cc. Knowing God as friend or enemy: marriage (Hosea, Eph. 5), sonship (John 1:12, Rom. 8:14-17), friendship (John 15:13-15).

B. Objects of Human Knowledge: God's Word, the World, Ourselves

- 1. Problems in Secular Epistemology
  - a. Need for a standard
  - b. Subject and object
- 2. Our knowledge of these objects interdependent.
  - a. We need the Word to understand the World.
  - b. We need the World to understand the Word (i.e., to understand how to apply the Word).
  - c. Self-knowledge and knowledge of the World are correlative.
  - d. Self-knowledge and knowledge of God (by the Word) are inseparable (Calvin's Institutes,1.1.1).
- 3. Perspectives on knowledge.
  - a. Normative, focusing on God's Word, but applying it to the world and the self.
  - b. Situational, focusing on the world, but governed by the Word and from the viewpoint of the self.
  - c. Existential, focusing on ourselves, but in context of our world-environment, governed by the Word.
  - d. Each involves the others, so each serves as a perspective on human knowledge as a whole.

C. Theology

- 1. Schleiermacher: "Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech." Subjectivist.
- 2. Hodge: "the exhibition of the facts of Scripture in their proper order and relation." But doesn't Scripture itself place the facts in proper order? Why do we need another?
- 3. Frame: "The application of the Word of God to his world and to all aspects of human life."
  - a. Not subjectivist, because under biblical authority.
  - b. Beyond Hodge: gives the ~ for putting biblical truth into a new form: to apply the Word to situations and to people.
  - c. This activity has biblical warrant.
    - i. Scripture requires us to apply its truth to current situations (Matt. 16:3, 22:29, Luke 24:25, John 5:39f, Rom. 15:4,2 Tim. 3:16f, 2 Pet. 1:19-21).

- ii. This is the purpose of Scripture (John 20:31, Rom. 15:4,2 Tim. 3:16-17).

D. Traditional Theological Programs

1. Exegetical Theology: application of particular passages of Scripture.
2. Biblical Theology: application of Scripture as "history of redemption," or "history of the covenant. "
3. Systematic Theology: applies Scripture as a whole. "What does the whole Bible teach about x?"
4. All three are misnomers! All three, at best, are exegetical, biblical, and systematic.
5. Each involves the others.
  - a. No "primacy ."
  - b. Each is a perspective on the whole.

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SUMMARY: DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD

Lordship Attribute	Control	Authority	Presence
I. Concept	Powerful	Meaningful	Self-expression
II. Creation-function	Decree	Address	Presence
III. Media	Events	Words	Persons
IV. Message	History	Law	Sanctions
V. Response	Belief	Obedience	Participation
VI.-VIII. "Attributes"	Power	Authority	Clarity
IX. Necessity (of VI-VIII)			
X. Sufficient (of VI-VIII)			
Cf. "Naming" (I, C, 3)	Control	Characterize	Locate
"Perspectives"	Situational	Normative	Existential

- I. The Concept of the Word of God: The Word is God's powerful, meaningful, self-expression.
- A. Powerful: Ps. 33:3-6, 46:6, 148:5-8, 29:3-9; Rom. 1: 16; cr. VIII below.
1. The power of the word is the omnipotence of God himself, Isa. 55: 11, Gen. 18: 14 (Luke 1:37). It is therefore never void, never weak.
  2. To study the word (in seminary or anywhere else) is to encounter something explosive, something that inevitably changes you--either for the better or the worse. (Isa. 6:9-10, NT parallels).
- B. Meaningful
1. Power is what the word does; meaning is what it says.
  2. Therefore, meaning can be regarded as an aspect of power: "saying" or "meaning" is one of the many things which the word does.
  3. On the other hand, it is also important to point out that God's word is never a "blind force" or "raw power." It is a power which expresses his wisdom, and therefore is a meaningful power. God's word, in fact, is never devoid of meaning. It always says something.
    - a. Creation: Gen. 1:5, 8, 10, 17, 22,25 (*qara*), 27[ (the definition of man), Ps. 147:4, Isa. 40:26.
    - b. Providence: the word determines the nature of things throughout history. The course of nature and history is determined by God's wisdom, Ps. 104:24, Jer. 51:15, etc.
    - c. Judgment: The word categorizes, classifies men as sinners, pronounces sentence. Imputation of sin is by divine declaration (Rom. 5:12-21) in contrast with human self-interpretation (Matt. 7:21-27,25:31-46).
    - d. Grace: The word categorizes, classifies God's people as righteous through Christ.
      - (1) God "names" his people, Isa. 43:7,44:5, Num. 6:27, Hos. 1:9-2:1, Isa. 43:1,49:1,62:2, 65:15f, I John 3:1, Rev. 13:16.
      - (2) Imputation of righteousness by divine declaration, Rom. 5:12-21; vs. self-interpretation, I John 3:20.
  4. Therefore it is wrong to define the word narrowly as a kind of "power" while relegating its meaning-functions (i.e. its linguistic character) to a subordinate status (e.g. as a temporal/cultural manifestation of the power). Barth, Bultmann, the "new hermeneutic," and the Amsterdam Philosophy ("Toronto") are guilty of this error in some degree. The word is "powerful;" that needs to be said. But "power" is not the only, or the most important way of characterizing the word.
- C. Self- Expression
1. Parallel with human language: when we speak, even deceptively, we reveal something of what we are-
    - a. Man's first activities are linguistic, Gen. 1:28ff, 2: 16ff.
    - b. Centrality of language in human life, Prov. 12:18,13:3, 18:20f, 21:23, Matt. 12:34ff, Jas. 3:1-12.
    - c. Prominence of linguistic sins; Jas. 3:1-12, Prov. 12:17-19, 10:19, Ps. 12, Rom. 3:13f, Gen. 11 :6, Isa. 6,29:13, Ezek. 33:31, Jer. 9:8, Ps. 57:4,64:3, 140:3.
    - d. Redemption or the tongue, Isa. 6, Ps. 51:15, Isa. 35:6,43:21,45:23,49:2, 65 19, Zeph. 3:9ff, Rom. 10:9f, I Pet. 2:9, Jas. 5:16.
    - e. Consummation: Rev. 14:5,27,27,22:15, Prov. 12:19.
    - f. Cf. emphasis on language in biblical teaching on devils, angels:
      - (1) The Devil is "slanderer," "accuser," "liar"; (John 8:44). Note also emphasis on the mouth in the serpent figure.
      - (2) Angels are messengers (*mal'ak*, *aggelos*), Acts 7:38,53, Gal. 3:19, Heb. 2:2.
  2. Similarly, God's word is crucial to his nature and is always an expression of himself, in at least the following senses:
    - a. The word reveals God; we know him through his word, II Tim. 3:15, Deut 4:5-8, etc.
    - b. God is always present with the word; where God is, the word is, and vice versa. Note biblical correlations between word and spirit, Gen. 1 :2, Ps. 33:6, Isa. 34:16,59:21, John 6:63, I Thes. 1:5, II Thes. 2:2, II Tim. 3:16, II Pet. 1:21, Acts

- 2: 1-4, John 16: 13. So in Israel, the nearness of God was the nearness of the word, Deut. 4:5-8,30:11-14, Rom. 10:6-8.
- c. All divine acts are performed by speech.
- (1) His eternal plan (eternal inter-trinitarian communication), Gen. 1:26,Ps.2:7-9, 110,45:6-8, Matt. 11:25-27, John 5:20, 17:1-26, Acts 2:33-36, John 4:34,6:38f
  - (2) Creation, Gen. 1:3, Ps. 33:6,9,148:5, Prov. 8:22[, John 1:3,10, Heb.11:3, II Pet. 3:5-7, Heb.1:2.
  - (3) Providence, Gen. 1:9,11,22, 8:21f, Ps. 145:15f, 119:89-91, 148:8, Job 37:12, 33:11f, Ps. 18:15,28:3-9, Matt. 8:27, Heb. 1:3, II Pet. 3.
  - (4) Judgment, Gen. 3: 17ff, 6:7, 11 :6f, Ps. 46:6, Isa. 66:6, Ezek. 1: 1, 3:22, Hos. 6:5, Isa. 30:30, C£ VIII, below.
  - (5) Grace: Luke 7:1-10, Rom. 1:16, Phil. 2:16, I John 1:1, II Tim. 1:10, Isa. 43:1,62:2,65:15, "effectual calling."
- d. God is distinguished from all other gods because he is the God who ~, Hab. 2:18-20, I Kings 18:24,26,29,36, Ps. 115:5ff, 135:15ff, I Cor. 12:2.
- e. The persons of the trinity are distinguished from one another in Scripture according to their role in the divine speech. This is not the .Q!ILy scriptural way of representing the trinitarian distinctions, but it is one significant way.
- (1) The Father exerts his lordship through speech, Ps. 29, 147:4, Isa. 40:26,43:1,62:2,65:15, Eph. 3:14; c£ above, c.
  - (2) The Son is the word spoken, John 1:1, Rev. 19:13, I John 1:1-3, Heb. 1:1-3, Rev. 3:14, II Cor. 1:20, Rom. 10:6-8, (c£ Deut. 30).
  - (3) The Spirit is the powerful breath that drives the word along to accomplish its purpose. C£ b above.
- f. The speech of God has divine attributes: righteousness (Ps. 119:7), faithfulness (Ps. 119:86), wonderfulness (119: 129), uprightness (119: 137), purity (119: 140), truth (119:142) (c£ John 17: 17), eternity (11989, 160), omnipotence (Gen. 18:14, Luke 1:37, Isa. 55:11), perfection (Ps. 19:7ff).
- g. The word of God is an object of worship, Ps. 119: 120, 161 f, 34:3, 9:2, 68:4, 138:2,56:4, 10, Isa. 66:5.
- h. The word is God, John 1:1 (c£ Rev. 19:13, I John 1:1-3, Heb. 1:1-3, Rev. 3: 14, II Cor. 1:20, Rom. 10:6-8, Deut. 30: 11 ff
- (1) Christ is the creative word of Genesis 1.
  - (2) Christ is God, and so is the creative word.
  - (3) John 1:1, therefore, correlated God, Christ, creative word as equally divine.
3. Parallel with "the name of God."
- a. God's "name" is his whole self-revelation, and thus is more or less equivalent to "word." C£ Josh. 7:9, Ezek. 20:9.
- b. "Naming" in Scripture has three functions which correspond roughly to A-C above:
- (1) Naming is an exertion of power or control: the controller names the one under his control (Adam names Eve, the parent names the child, the conqueror names the city which he conquers, etc. Gen. 4: 17, 11:4,Ps.49:11,IISam.12:28.
  - (2) Naming is a characterization: the namer tries to say something significant about the one named--c£ God's naming of Abraham, Israel, etc. Gen. 17:5, etc.
  - (3) Naming is a way of locating, of picking someone out of a crowd. We can locate someone by calling his name, for wherever his name is, he is. To admire his name is to admire him; to disparage his name is to disparage him, etc. Thus the person is one with his name (see references below).

- c. Union between God's name and God himself: Ex. 3:14,33:19, 34:6f, Ps. 7:17,9:10,18:49,68:4,74:18, 86:12,92:11, Isa. 25:1,26:8,56:6, Zech. 14:9, Mal. 3:16.
  - (1) Union between name and angel of the Lord, Ex. 23:31, Gen. 16:7ff, 21 :27ff; 22:11ff, 31:11 ff, Ex. 3:2ff, Judges 2: Iff (Ex. 33: 14, Isa. 63:9).
  - (1) The name and the sanctuary (where God dwells), Gen. 28,31:13, 35:1,7, Deut.12:5, 11,21, 14:23f, 16:2,6, 11, 26:2 (Ex. 20:24).
  - (2) The name and the glory (God's presence), Isa. 59:19, Ps. 102:15, Ex. 33: 18ff

4. Summary and Implications

- a. Speech ("word") is an attribute of God. God is a speaking God, by his very nature, as over against all of the "dumb idols."
  - (1) It is not that "word" is purely and simply a synonym of "God;" the two cannot be simply substituted for one another in every context.
    - (a) God does things "by" the word
    - (b) Scriptural references to the "names" also sometimes distinguish the name from God himself: Ps. 54:1,89:24, 20:5,44:5, 118:10-12, 124:8,20:1, 54:6f, 148:13, Prov. 18:10, Jer.10:6, Mal. 1:11,14,2:5.
  - (2) Although there is a mysteriousness about the unity and difference between the word and God himself, a mystery reminiscent of that of the trinity and perhaps related to the trinity), we do not want to make "word" or "name" a person of the trinity, parallel with Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It would, perhaps, not be wrong to equate "word" in a particular way with the second person (John 1:1); but Jesus also ~ the word. Relations among these are evidently complicated, and perhaps beyond our knowledge.
  - (3) Thus, it is probably best to describe "word" as an attribute of God. All divine attributes exhibit the remarkable unity and difference with God himself that we have noticed in this case.
- b. As an attribute of God, "word" is "coterminous with the divine essence."
  - (1) For this concept of "coterminous," see theology texts on the Doctrine of God or "Theology Proper," on "the relation between the divine attributes and essence."
  - (2) My own (somewhat simplified) account of this:
    - (a) Divine attributes are not "parts" of God. They are inseparable aspects of his being. You cannot cut off one attribute and still have the God of the Bible. God without his righteousness, or omnipotence--or word !-would not be God.
    - (b) Each attribute applies to each of the other attributes: his holiness is wise, his wisdom is infinite, etc. So that if you lose one attribute, you lose them all, and if you have one attribute, you have them all. Thus, again, each is inseparable from the others.
    - (c) Yet the attributes are not all synonymous. We cannot simply say "righteousness" when we mean "infinity." Thus the attributes are diversified as well as unified.
    - (d) The relationship is best pictured this way: each attribute is a "perspective" on the divine being. It is as if the attributes were speaking of the same thing (God's nature), but viewing it from different angles. Hence diversity in unity.
- c. The identity of "word" with God's essence does not make, e.g. the Bible necessary to God's being.
  - (1) It is necessary to God's being that he ~; without his speech he would not be God.
  - (2) The eternal inter-trinitarian communication is necessary to the divine being, as are all other aspects of the ontological inter-trinitarian life.

- (3) It is not, however, necessary to God's being that he speak ill creatures. If it were, then creatures themselves would be necessary to God, and he would be dependent upon them.
  - (4) Speaking to creatures. then, is a free act of God, not determined by his nature as such. Similarly, creation itself is a free act, and God's knowledge of creation is a "free knowledge." (Cf., again, the various theological texts on the Doctrine of God--the distinction between God's necessary and free will, and the distinction between God's necessary and free knowledge.)
  - (5) Therefore, the Bible, together with all the divine speech to and about creatures, is free speech not necessary to the divine being.
  - (6) Nevertheless, it is the product of the divine faculty of speech, the divine word, which is always united to God himself. Thus the words of the Bible are never separated from God himself.
- d. The word, of course, is not God's only attribute. We are not saying that God is "word," rather than righteousness, wisdom, etc.
- e. Since God is word, all of his being is expressed. As Van Til says, God is fully self-conscious. He is not ignorant of the depths of his own being, but is fully rational. What he is and does, he expresses, and vice-versa. Of course, there is much that he does not express to us.
- f. Where God is, the word is, and vice-versa.
- (1) Don't demand an encounter with God while by-passing the word.
  - (2) Remember that when you hear or read the word, even carelessly, you are involved with the living God! You must not trivialize. The word is living and powerful.
- g. The word is always divine. It is God himself, expressing himself.
- (1) *Contra* liberalism, the word is never something merely human, merely creaturely.
  - (2) *Contra* some church fathers, Platonizing philosophers and Dooyeweerdians, the word is never something in between divinity and humanity. It is never semidivine or semi-creaturely. It is not merely a "boundary" between creator and creature. There is no halfway house between creator and creature, between Lord and servant. Everything that is not God is subject to him as creature. The word performs all the acts and has all the attributes (the character, the nature) of God himself.
  - (3) Thus, again, when we read Scripture we must read it in the fear and awe of one entering the holy place of God.
  - (4) Does this teaching justify bibliolatry, worship of the book?
    - (a) No, for the Bible as such is not necessary to God's being (above, c).
    - (b) No, for the paper and ink of our Bibles are not divine, nor are they the word. They are the created media by which the word comes to us (cf. below, III).
    - (c) Nor do we worship the word which comes to us in and by the Bible as if a new sanctuary had been established between the covers of our book. It is true that the presence of the word (the tables of the law) contributed to the holiness of Israel's sanctuary (the ark). But there is no similar sanctuary in New Testament worship. Christ, the New Covenant Temple, is in heaven.
    - (d) No, for we are never called to worship some attribute of God in distinction from God himself. Worship is directed toward the person of God, and to his attributes (his word) only as aspects of his person.
    - (e) Nevertheless, it is possible (especially for evangelicals) to be too sensitive about the charge of bibliolatry. We must never forget that since Scripture is God's word, we are expected to respond to it as to the personal voice of God--in obedience, reverence, awe. If this appears bibliolatrous to some, we must not shrink from it on that account.



- (f) Some would define bibliolatry as any unconditional obedience to any word uttered in space and time. On that definition, evangelicals are, and ought to be bibliolaters. But that definition is false. It would condemn something that Scripture requires. It presupposes an unscriptural concept of idolatry. The second commandment was a word uttered in space and time, and it demands unconditional obedience.

## II. The Functions of the Word in and for Creation

In I, above, we have been talking about God's speech as such, whether uttered purely in reference to himself (*ad intra*, necessary speech) or having some reference to the creation (*ad extra*, free speech). Now we focus particularly on the latter category and ask about the various works which God's word performs in creation and for creation. The three creation-functions will correspond roughly to the triad "meaning, power, self-expression" which we considered under I. Since the word is the powerful, meaningful self-expression of God, and since God is related to creation as Lord (cf. Introductory lectures), the word functions in and for creation as the self-expression of God's lordship. The threefold function outlined below, therefore, parallels the "lordship attributes."

### A. The Word as God's Decree

As Lord, God controls all things, and controls them by his speech. As we have seen (I, C, 2, c), all of God's actions are performed by his word, his speech. His "decretive will," therefore, by which he controls the whole course of nature and history, is a function of his word. Everything happens because God has ordered it to happen by his word (Eph. 1:11).

### B. The Word as God's Decree

1. God not only controls all things, but he also speaks to his creatures. Only in biblical religion does the highest being, the ultimate being, confront us in personal address. Truly all the gods of the nations are "dumb." And those of non-Christian philosophy.
2. The biblical story, from Genesis to Revelation, is a story of God's address to man and man's response to that address, in obedience or disobedience. God calls his people to govern their lives by reference to this address (cf. below, VII on "authority").
3. The norm for man's life is not God's decree ("decretive will") but his address ("preceptive will"). This fact is obvious: God wishes us to base our lives upon what he has said to ~, not to someone else; and what he has said to !!2 is his address to us. Much of the "decretive will" is secret (though not all). We do not know precisely how God will govern the world over the next, say, ten years. God does not want us to rely ultimately on our fallible forecasts concerning the future, but upon his commands and promises. E.g., we preach the gospel not because we are sure that God will save this or that person, but because God has commanded us to preach.

### C. The Word as God's Presence

1. God's name is placed upon his people; Gen. 17:5, Num. 6:21, Deut. 12:5, etc. (cf. above, A, 2,8), 1 Sam. 12:22, Isa. 43:1,7, 45:3f, 62:2, Amos 9:12, Matt. 28:19f, Rev. 2:17,22:4.
2. The word is written on their heart: Deut. 6:6, Prov. 3:3,7:3, Ps. 119:11, Ezek. 11:19, 18:31,36:26,37:23,27, Isa.11:9, 51:7,54:13, Hab. 2:14, Ps. 37:31,40:8, Jer. 24:7,32:40, John 6:45, II Cor. 3:2f, I Thes. 4:9, Heb. 8:8-12, I John 2:27, Jer. 31:31-34 key text.
3. "Revelation" as the knowledge of God given to all believers: Matt. 11:25, Eph. 1:17, Isa. 53:1, John 3:3, Rom. 1:17, II Cor. 4:6, Eph. 5:8, Phil. 3:15, Gal. 1:15f, Isa. 54:13, I John 2:27.
4. Christ as the present word: John 1:14, Matt. 28:20, Acts 1:1f, John 15:1-14, Rom. 10:6-10 (cf. Deut. 30:12ft).
5. The Spirit empowers, illumines, demonstrates, arouses response: I Thes. 1:5, Rom. 15:18f, I Cor. 2:4, 14. Cf. Murray on the "internal testimony of the Holy Spirit;" cf. also below VIII, B.
6. Formulation:

- a. not a new address in addition to 2 above.
  - b. the taking root of God's address in our heart so as to determine our whole-souled response.
  - c. In Scripture, those who have the word written on their heart are obedient to God. (Rom. 2:14f guardedly uses different language in reference to unbelievers.)
  - d. But other Scripture suggests that God is present in his word to harden hearts and hasten judgment: Isa. 6:9ff, parallels.
  - e. Though the word in this sense gives us no new content, it is most helpful in enabling us to make new applications of that content already revealed. Cf. above, Part One, II, C.
- D. Mutual Involvement of the Three Functions (each united with the others so as to form a "perspective" on the whole.)
1. Decree includes address and presence. His addresses and his indwellings are part of his eternal plan.
  2. Address presupposes decree, needs presence to be rightly understood.
  3. All we know of decree and presence, we learn through address.
  4. The word of God's address is a decree; it is powerful to achieve its purposes (Rom. 1: 16, etc.), even when disobeyed.
  5. The word of presence is also a decree in that its purposes are achieved.
  6. The decree is an address to the cosmos (Ps. 147:15, 148:5,8, etc.).
  7. Presence is the powerful working of address in changing lives.
  8. Presence operates in bounds established by decree and address.
  9. The decree is efficacious because God's power is omnipresent in the cosmos. The decree expresses that presence.
  10. The address is a presence of God within a particular place and to particular hearers and readers.
  11. Presence is a secondary address (but not a new address, a new content--see above, C, 6, a) by which the full implications and applications of the address become known to us and experienced by us.

### III. The Media of the Word

- A. All of God's words to creatures are mediated; i.e., they come by way of means. In fact, revelation to creatures always involves created means of some sort. In that sense, there is no "direct" revelation.
1. Even when God spoke ~ directly, as to the people at Mt. Sinai, he utilized human language, the natural processes for the transmission of sound, the human brains of the hearers, etc.
  2. Even inspired writers of Scripture often get information by "natural" means (Luke 1: 1-4). Revelation does not ever exclude such means.
  3. At some point, of course, there is "direct" involvement between the divine energy and some natural process. But that point is long before the point at which we become conscious of the word.
  4. Van Til sometimes speaks of "direct revelation in history" (over against Barth) meaning that God's word in history is "clear," "unambiguous," "unquestionable." In that sense, of course, **I** would agree that direct revelation exists.

- B. The Humanity of God's Address to Mankind
1. When God addresses human beings, he uses human language. Therefore, even the most "direct" revelation (like that on Mt. Sinai) has a human side, a human nature, a human aspect to it. In his more normal procedure, he brings his address to us by means of human authors, and that adds an even greater "human element."
  2. Is the humanity of the revelation a liability?
    - a. No, it is a perfection! The very goal of revelation is for God to express himself clearly in human language so as to communicate with us.
    - b. Does humanity entail fallibility?
      - (1) Murray: If so, then there is no infallible revelation at all. But if God can overcome fallibility at one point, surely he can do it at all points. So humanity does not necessarily imply fallibility
      - (2) Humanity entails limit, finitude and therefore ignorance. But ignorance and error are not the same. One who is ignorant, yet perfectly aware of the extent of his ignorance and sinlessly honest might never make a false assertion.
      - (3) Christ was fully human, yet not fallible.
      - (4) If God cannot correct the mistakes of human authors, he is not the God of Scripture.
      - (5) Is human language inherently incapable of referring to God? See Frame, "God and Biblical Language," in Montgomery, ed., *God's Inerrant Word*.
- C. Enumeration of the Media
1. Event-media  
 God reveals himself to us through what he does, in nature and history . We might be inclined to associate these media with the word as decree, and the other two types of media with address and presence, respectively. In general, that is a legitimate parallelism. But the "event-media" are not the same as the "word as decree." Event-media bring us God's address as well as his decree. There are other non-parallels in the scheme.
    - a. Nature and General History: Ps. 19, 46:8-10, 65, 104, Rom. 1-2, Deut. 4:26, 30:19,31:28,32:1, Gen. 9:12-17.
      - (1) Nature and history are not the word, but media through which the word conveys its message to man.
      - (2) Through this revelation, the "invisible power and deity" of God are "clearly seen" (Rom. 1).
      - (3) His "ordinances" are also revealed, Rom. 1:32, so that God's moral law is known. Hence all are responsible before God.
      - (4) Scripture does not teach that nature apart from the message of the gospel can bring anyone to salvation.
        - (a) Fallen man resists, hinders, perverts the revelation in nature (Rom. 1).
        - (b) Salvation comes only through the preaching of Christ, Rom. 10: 13ff. Unless they hear that message, there is no hope. Cf. Acts 17.
      - (5) God did not intend for anyone to study nature in abstraction from his spoken and written words.
      - (6) The believer discerns in nature the wisdom of God's plan, and rejoices therein.
      - (7) Nature furnishes information necessary for the application of other revelation. (Adam's eyes told him where the fruit was that God was forbidding.)
    - b. Redemptive History: "the mighty acts of God," Ex. 14:31, 15, Deut. 8:11-18, Ps. 66:5-7,135,136,145:4,12, John 2:11, Acts 2:22,15,12, Rom. 1:4, Heb.2:1-4, Rev. 15:3f.

- (1) Perform all the functions of (a) above.
- (2) Indicate God's saving purposes, including the special judgments he performs in delivering his people.

c. Miracle

- (1) Biblical terminology for miracle overlaps with (b) above--the terminology for "mighty acts of God."
- (2) Its revelatory function virtually the same as (b), though with more intensity, excitement.
- (3) Definitions of miracle will be given in the course "Doctrine of God." In my view, Scriptural usage is somewhat fluid. The N. T. terms, *dunamis*, *semeion*, *teras*, suggest: (note interesting correspondence with our triadic scheme).
  - (a) Manifestations of divine power
  - (b) Giving revelation
  - (c) Arousing awe, wonder

2. Word-media

Of course, all media are media by which the word of God reaches us. But in this group of media, the word of God takes the form of actual human words; thus it is "verbal" in two senses. It was once fashionable to say that in Scripture God reveals himself only by "events," and that words ascribed to God were not to be considered as revelation at all except perhaps in a secondary sense (e.g., G. Ernest Wright). James Barr (*Old and New in Interpretation*) pointed out, however, that attractive as this notion might be to modern theologians, it has no basis in Scripture. In Scripture, God clearly speaks as well as acts. As prophecy, the words precede the events; as interpretation, they follow the events. Event and word form an inseparable revelatory unit.

a. The Divine Voice

- (1) The divine voice, heard without any "secondary author," is very rarely heard. by God's people generally. Ex. 20, Luke 3:22 are the only clear examples I know of. In one sense, the voice of the incarnate Jesus would fall in this category. And of course Gen. 1:28ff, 2:16, etc.
- (2) Generally, the divine voice is addressed to specific men, usually called prophets or apostles, who are charged with bringing the divine message to others.
- (3) In theophany and vision, the divine voice is usually more crucial, more important, than the visual content. The prophet is more a listener than a viewer. What is seen, usually, is intended to reinforce what is said (Hence in these lectures, I speak of the "doctrine of the Word," usually, rather than "doctrine of revelation." The latter has a more visual coloring, the former more auditory. It is interesting that "revelation" is almost never used in Scripture (as it is in theology) as a general term for divine-human communication. It tends, rather to describe consummations, heightenings, of the revelatory process.) In Scripture, divine communication is more a matter of hearing-obedience than of seeing-contemplation (*contra* Eastern religions). Cf. John 14:9ff.
- (4) Revelation can be given to a prophet or apostle without theophany, vision, or divine voice. It can be a much more "natural" process (as Luke 1:14).
- (5) Clearly, the divine voice is the word of God. No one dare disobey or despise it. Though adapted to the creature's understanding, and though expressed in human language, it nevertheless carries with it all the power, authority, wonder which God himself exhibits. The divine voice addressed to man has no less power, authority, etc. than the word spoken by God to himself in eternity.

b. The Word Through Prophets and Apostles: God not only speaks to prophets and apostles; he speaks through them to others in such a way that their word is truly

his. A sort of "incarnation" of the word. Yet there is no decrease in power or authority from the divine voice to the prophetic utterance.

- (1) Before the Fall: Man is God's image, is capable of truly reproducing God's interpretation of reality, Gen. 2:19f, 23.
  - (2) Fall to Noah:
    - (a) Despite sin, man takes the promise of grace upon his lips, Gen. 3:20,4:1,26.
    - (b) Lamech's false prophecy of defiance, 4:23f.
  - (3) Noah: II Pet. 2:5, Gen. 9:24-27.
  - (4) Patriarchs: Gen. 27:27-29, 39f, 49:2-27.
  - (5) Moses (the classic prophet)
    - (a) distinctiveness of his experience, authority of his words, Num. 12:1-8, Deut. 18:15-22.
    - (b) word of God in his mouth; above passages, also Ex. 4:10-16, 7:1ff. (cf. Ps. 82:6, John 10:34).
    - (c) covenant mediator, substitute for God's voice, Ex. 19:9, 20:18-22 (cf. Deut. 18:16t).
    - (d) authority of his words--that of God, Deut. 1: 1-3,4: 1-9, 5:1, 29ff, 6:1-9, Luke 16:29-31, John 5:45-47.
    - (e) religious veneration given to word of Moses, Ps. 19, 119, 12, etc.
  - (6) Old Testament Prophets (after Moses) (E. J. Young, *My Servants, the Prophets*): Deut. 18:15-19, Jer. 1:6-19, Ezek. 13:2f, 17 (cf. Jer. 17:9, I John 3:20). "Word in the mouth."
  - (7) New Testament Prophets: Acts 11:27, 13:1, 15:32, 19:6, 21:9, 19, Rom. 12:5, I Cor. 11:4f, 12:10, 14:1ff, I Tim. 1:18, 4:14, Rev. 11:3ff (cf. Joel 2:28-32, Acts 2:17f). Same authority as O.T.?
  - (8) Apostles cf. Peter Jones in Montgomery, ed., *God's Inerrant Word*
    - (a) the promise: Matt. 10:19f, 40ff, John 14:23-26, 15:26f, 16: 13.
    - (b) the fulfillment
      - i) Gift of the Spirit produces apostolic preaching, Acts 1:5, 8, 2:4, 4:8, 31, 6:3, 5, 10, 7:55, 9:17, 13:9f, 52ff.
      - ii) Apostles claim divine source for their message: II Thes. 2:2, II Cor. 4:1-6, Gal. 1:1, 11[16, 2:2, I Cor. 2:10-13, 7:40, II Cor. 12:1, 7, Eph. 3:3, I Cor. 4:1, Rom. 16:25 (cf. Rom. 3:1f).
- C. The Written Word: God gives his word in written form. The word is not identical with any particular bit of paper or ink (or recording tape, or microfilm, or whatever), but the message conveyed by the paper and ink or other medium is identical with God's very word. It is no less the word of God than is prophecy, the verbal message given in theophany, or any other utterance of the word of God. The written word is, like prophecy, a kind of "incarnation": a divine message in the form of human language and created media of communication. It has both divine and human attributes. Again, no loss of power or authority as we move from a to b to c.
- (1) Covenant Memorials: Books Of Generations: Gen. 28:18, 22, 35; 14f, 8:20, 12:7f, 13:18, 35:3, Gen. 2:4, 5:1, 6:9, 10:1, 11:10, 11:27, 25:12, 19, 36:9, 37:2--demonstrates possibility and desirability of permanent documentary attestation of covenant history, from the beginning of that history.
  - (2) Covenant Document: Kline, *Structure of Biblical Authority*
    - (a) The Lord addresses the servant-emphasis on divine authorship: Ex. 24:12, 31:18, 32:15f, 34:1, 27f, 32; cf. Deut. 4:13, 9:10f, 10:2-4, 31:14-29 (God's "witness" against the people, not the people's witness to God.)
    - (b) Original: the "book of life"? (Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 42, note). Ex. 32:32, 17:14, Dan. 12:1, etc.

- (c) N.B.: The concept of a written word of God does not begin with twentieth-century fundamentalism or seventeenth-century rationalism or medieval scholasticism or post-apostolic defensiveness or late Jewish legalism. It is embedded in the original constitution of the people of God and is assumed throughout Scripture (see below).
- (3) Written Prophecy: Isa. 8:1, 30:8ff, 34:16f, Jer. 25:13,30:2,36:1-32, 51:60ff, Dan. 9:1f(cf. Jer. 25:11f, II Chr. 36:21, Ezr. 1:1); cf. Jer. 26:17ff with Mic. 3:12f, Isa. 2:2-4 with Mic. 4:1-5, Hab. 2:14, Isa. 11:9, Dan. 9:9ff.
- (4) The Old Testament as a Whole
- (a) Formulae and titles used in N.T. "it is written," "Scripture says, it says--God says," (Warfield, "It Says, etc.," *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 299-348), "oracles of God," (Warfield, *ibid.*, 351-407), "Scripture," (*ibid.*, 229-241 "Holy Scripture," "law," "prophets," "royal law of liberty," etc.
- (b) N.T. teaching about the O.T.: cf. Murray in *The Infallible Word*, various articles of Warfield. Matt. 5:17-19, John 5:45,10:33-36, Rom. 15:4, II Tim. 3:16, II Pet. 1:21, Jas. 4:5, 11.
- (c) Warning: be careful that you do not make the whole argument appear to rest on II Tim. 3:16 and II Pet. 1:21, sometimes dismissed by liberals as late and legalistic. Though these two passages are important, it is more important that people come to see how the idea of a written word of God permeates all of Scripture. Cf. later discussion on "The Necessity of the Word."
- (5) The New Testament
- (a) In the nature of the case, the N. T. could not talk about itself as a completed collection of writings. Yet it leaves no doubt that it is God's purpose to give such a collection to his church.
- (b) Probabilities: If God promised, then gave, a distinctive verbal revelation for the new covenant community (above, b, viii.), we would naturally expect that this revelation, like that of the O. T., would be inscripturated, unless there were cogent reasons for thinking otherwise.
- (c) The N. T. revelation was codified into a permanent "body of truth" (*paradosis*, tradition): Matt. 11:27, I Cor. 15:2f, II Thes. 2:15 (cf. II Tim. 3), II Thes. 3:6, I Tim. 6:20 (cf. Rom. 3:1f), II Tim. 1:12ff, 2:2, II Pet. 2:21, Jude 3.
- (d) N. T. writers claimed this status for their writings, claimed divine inspiration as their source: Col. 4:16, I Thes. 5:27, II Thes. 3:14 (cf. 2:15), I Cor. 14:37, I Tim. 5:18 (Deut. 25:4, Luke 10:7), II Pet. 3:16.
- (e) Which books? Cf. course in N. T. Canon.
- (6) Transmission of The Written Word
- (a) Was the word given to the human authors by "dictation?"
- (i) Sometimes, yes: Ex. 34:27f, Rev. 2:1ff, I Pet. 1:10f, Jeremiah.
- (ii) Generally, no. Infallible documents are usually produced through normal human research under God's inspiration. Inspiration is not bound to the process of dictation as a means of authorship. Luke 1:1-4.

- (iii) "Dictation" as a metaphor to stress the conformity of the document to the mind of God? Yes. Used as such by many theologians including the Reformers.
- (iv) How can God produce such conformity to his mind without literal dictation? By controlling the writer's heredity, environment, education, concerns, etc. Inspiration is a Calvinistic doctrine.
  - a) Transcendence and immanence: the Word can be perfectly human because it is so perfectly divine. Because the speaker is sovereign over all things, he can speak human language without "dictating"; he can speak human language "naturally." The world cannot shut him out; he is not compromised by speaking human language; on the contrary, in that act he demonstrates his deity.
  - b) "Organic inspiration": God inspires Scripture using the human faculties of the writers. The product displays the human characteristics of the writer--his background, skills, concerns, style, personality, linguistic peculiarities, etc.
- (b) The *autographa* and the *apographa* (original manuscripts and copies) (See Greg Bahnsen, "The Inerrancy of the Autographa," in Geisler, Inerrancy (Zondervan, 1979).
  - i) "Only the autograph (the original prophetically certified document) is inspired"-because God has not promised inerrant transmission.
  - ii) Scripture itself recognizes a distinction between the original manuscript and the copies.
    - aa) Use of Scripture portions that are obviously copies: 1 Kings 2:3, Prov. 25:1, Ezra 7:14, 2 Tim. 4:13, Luke 4:16-21.
    - bb) So it is not important for us to possess the physical page of the original, but the original message.
    - cc) But Scripture assumes that the teaching of the copies is authoritative because they are faithful to their origin, prophetic and divine.
    - dd) Scripture references to the authority of the original: Ex. 32-34, Deut. 10:2,4, Jer. 36:1-32, Deut. 17:18-20, 2 Kings 22, 2 Chron. 34, Deut. 4:2, 12:32, Prov. 30:6, Rev. 22:18-19, Matt. 15:6.
  - iii) Can we trust our present Bibles?
    - aa) To the degree that our Bibles reflect the autographic text, they are the Word of God.
    - bb) There are objective means of determining what belongs to the autographic text: textual criticism.
    - cc) Can we be wrong in making this determination? Yes. But one could also err in his understanding of the autographic manuscript. So,

- iv) Larger issue: all our knowledge of Scripture, our access to it, is burdened with human fallibility . Even if we had the autographs, we would have imperfect means of understanding their language, their teaching, and even if we had perfect knowledge of the languages, grammar, etc., we would still distort the teaching because of our sin. So having the autograph would not be much help; in fact it might even compound the problem by providing a "holy object" for human idolatry .
- v) God might, to be sure, have imparted infallibility to the whole process by which he transmitted his Word to us.
  - aa) He might have given infallibility not only to the inspiration of the autographs, but also to the copying of these, their publication, their interpretation and application. For his own reasons, however, he determined not to do that.
  - bb) Or he might have chosen to grant infallible autographs, plus an infallible textual tradition, but to leave the interpretation of the text to fallible readers. This is the assumption of those who defend the "majority" text underlying the KJV.
  - cc) But there is no biblical reason to assume that God did either or these things. Rather, he imparted infallibility to the original autograph and then left the rest of the process of transmission to fallible human beings.
- vi) The question, then, is: of what use is an inspired, infallible text when our only access to it is humanly fallible?
- vii) Response:
  - a) The "infallible autograph" enables us consistently to confess the truthfulness of God.
  - b) Our access to the text is not merely human, not merely fallible, for the testimony of the Spirit guides us.
  - c) Van Til's "underwater bridge" --though you can't see it, you're glad it's there.
  - d) On most all teachings of Scripture, there is room for doubt only on the most skeptical epistemological presuppositions; but these presuppositions are forbidden to the Christian. We must assume that God has spoken clearly and has given us adequate means to learn what he has said. Else, the whole biblical story makes no sense. Cf. X, below.
  - e) On these fundamental doctrines, the Spirit builds the regenerate life. They become, to the Christian, the most fundamental presuppositions of life. They are, therefore, convictions of utter certainty, whatever



theoretical doubts there may be as to their epistemological justification. In fact, these doctrines, to the believer, are more certain than any extra-biblical epistemological considerations can be.

- f) On some areas there is room for debate within the general framework of Christian presuppositions. Here is needed the paradoxical yet practicable combination of boldness and teachability noted earlier in connection with preaching (III, H). The N.T. quotes the Septuagint O.T. translation as the word of God,--and sometimes corrects it!
  - g) Even if we had only the Old Testament, we would have a book which is sufficient to make us "complete, thoroughly furnished unto every good work" (II Tim. 3: 17). There is enough redundancy in natural language that loss of a few words (and most textual problems deal only with a few words) or even, sometimes, of a great many, brings little net loss of meaning. Of course there is always some loss - loss of nuance or color if nothing else; and the Christian textual critic must be concerned not to lose anything of God's precious word. But such questions do not detract from the completeness of what we already have. No one can use the incompleteness of our present access to Scripture to excuse himself for disobedience.
- d. Uninspired Preaching and Teaching; Christian Insight
- (1) The teaching office continues, though inspiration has ceased. Even during the biblical period, we have no reason to assume that ~ teacher was inspired, especially since, in one sense, the teaching function was universal in the church (the "general office", Col. 3:16, Eph. 4:29, I John 2:27, "word as presence").
  - (2) Thus we must assume that it is possible to preach the truth without inspiration, i.e., that God uses uninspired people to convey his truth.
  - (3) In such teaching, we cannot say that the teacher is infallible, or that his word has the power and authority associated with God's word.
  - (4) At the same time, insofar as he faithfully and rightly proclaims the word of God that word continues to be fully powerful and fully authoritative, even on the lips of an uninspired person.
  - (5) The Spirit is active in the uninspired preacher if he is preaching obediently. The Spirit brings forth the truth. Therefore, though there is no inspiration, something ~ inspiration is going on.
  - (6) Cf. Second Helvetic Confession, I, "The preaching of the Word is the Word."

- (7) There is paradox here: fallibility, but also authority. Practically, it calls us to boldness, combined with teachability.

3. Person-media

Not only does God reveal himself through events and words, but also in persons, both his own person and in other persons who reflect him in significant ways. Since he is a person, he is, in many ways, most clearly revealed in personal lives.

a. Theophany

- (1) In theophany, God appears in the form of something created, often as an angel or man. Ex. 23:31, Gen. 16:7ff, 21:17ff, etc.
- (2) The theophany tends to stress the giving of a verbal message (above, 2a).
- (3) The theophany shows how God is the mediator of his own revelation. There is always a divine "medium" as well as created media. God does not speak and then allow his message to be taken over by autonomous created forces. Rather, he speaks, and then personally accompanies his word until it accomplishes its purpose ( cf. Jer. 1: 11 t). This fact will be clear in what follows.

b. Christ, the Mediator of All God's Speech: Christ is the word, and also the ultimate mediator of the word, as he is the one mediator between God and man (I Tim. 2:5).

- (1) Creation and Providence (A-B above), John 1:3, 10, I Cor. 8:5, Col. 1: 16, Heb. 1 :2.
- (2) Redemptive History, Prophecy, Scripture: Christ the worker of mighty deeds, the theme of the Scriptures: Luke 24:25-27, John 5:45-47, I Cor. 10:4, etc.
- (3) Christ, the prophet, John 12:47-49,7:16, 3:34ff, 5:20,8:28,19:24, 31,17:8.
- (4) Christ the ultimate example: John 13:35, Matt. 11 :29, 16:24, I Pet. 9:21,1 John 3:16.
- (5) Christ the Spirit through whom the word is illumined and the life made exemplary, II Cor. 3:17f.

c. The Spirit Inspires, Illumines, Demonstrates, Sanctifies: Cf. above, II, A, I, c; II, B, 3, e; Murray, "The Attestation of Scripture."

- (1) Inspiration: A work of the Spirit creating an identity between divine and human worlds. Isa. 61:1, I Cor. 2:13, II Tim. 3:16, II Pet. 1:21.
- (2) Illumination: Noetic regeneration, through which we rightly discern and use the word of God already revealed. I Cor. 2:12--16, II Cor. 3:15-18, John 3:5f.
- (3) Demonstration: Powerful persuasion of the truth. I Thes. 1:5, I Cor. 2:4.
- (4) Producing Sanctified Speech (above, H), Rom. 8: 15f, Gal. 4:6, I Cor. 12.2, Eph. 5:18f, Col. 3:16.
- (5) Indwelling: By which the word is "written on the heart" and we become conformed to the image of Christ (cf. II, C).

d. The Apostolic Example: Words have no meaning except as they are put to use by persons. Thus divine acts interpret divine words, as well as vice versa (above, A-C). Similarly,

the apostolic example is correlative to the apostolic teaching. Cf. also Part One, II, C. Not every apostolic action is normative (Gal. 2:11-14); yet the apostles' lives embodied a godliness adequate to demonstrate the meaning of their teaching.

- (1) Exhortations to imitate: I Cor. 4:16, 11:1, Phil. 3:17, I Thes. 1:6, 2:6, II Thes. 3:7-9, Heb. 13:7.
- (2) The "travelogue" or "apostolic *parousia*": The personal visit of the apostle adds something significant to the force of his written word, Rom. 1:8-17, 15:14-33, I Cor. 4:14-21, 5:1-5, II Cor. 7:5-16, 12:14-13:10, Gal. 4:12-20, Eph. 6:21, Col. 4:7ff, I Tim. 3:14f, II Tim. 4:6-18, Tit. 3:12-14, Heb. 13:8f, 22f, II John 12, III John 13f.
- (3) Teaching by godly example did not cease at the end of the apostolic period. The uninspired teachers or the church are also urged to be godly examples: I Thes. 1:7, I Tim. 4:12, Tit. 2:7, I Pet. 5:3. Cf. 2, d above on uninspired teaching. Instruction by example is always part of the work of teaching, and inseparable from it.

e. The Human Constitution

- (1) Not only Christ, the apostles and the church teachers reveal God in their persons. To an extent, human beings reflect God, for we are made in his image, Gen. 1:26f, 5:1, 9:6, I Cor. 11:7, Jas. 3:9. Even unbelievers retain the image, though in them it is "marred." Cf. course in "Doctrine of Man."
- (2) The "work of the law" is written on every heart, to which "conscience" bears witness, Rom. 2:14f
- (3) Believers are renewed in the image of Christ, and thus come to reflect God in a new way: Eph. 4:2, Col. 3:10, Lev. 19:2, Jer. 31:31 ff. Cf. I, C, 1, II, C.

4. Interrelations of Media (perspectival)
  - a. When God acts (events) and speaks (words), he thereby reveals that he is personally present. Thus, there is a kind of theophany wherever there are divine acts or words. The acts and words always involve the presence of Christ through the Spirit.
  - b. Mighty acts of God always communicate something to man and thus function as a verbal address, though that address may be interpreted only by revelation which is more focally verbal.
  - c. The speaking of God's word is always an impressive event, a mighty act. Speaking is an act of God.
  - d. The presence of God is also a mighty act.
  - e. The presence of God in person is also a kind of "word" by which the more explicitly verbal revelation is applied to the heart and to the changing circumstances of life. It does not confer infallibility on the hearer however, and it communicates no ~ content; it applies that content already given--unfolds it, makes explicit what was implicit, etc.

#### IV. The Message of the Word:

In the broadest sense, the Word utters a declaration of God's Lordship (cf. II, above). It expresses that Lordship in a great many ways as it directs all things to the fulfillment of God's purposes. The unity and diversity of the message must both be guarded.

- A. The Content of Covenant Revelation: Meredith Kline (*Structure Of Biblical Authority*) argues that the Decalogue and the book of Deuteronomy are examples of an ancient near eastern literary genre known as the "suzerainty treaty," of which extra-biblical examples (from the Hittite culture) have been discovered. In Kline's view, the decalogue and deuteronomic "treaties" are the origin of the biblical canon, and the rest of the Bible is but an expansion of these "treaties," both in its character and content. Whether or not we endorse this analysis in detail, Kline's outline of the elements or the treaty form provides a useful tool for organizing the aspects of God's revelation as a whole. Note references to the decalogue.
  1. Declaration of Lordship: "I am the Lord thy God..."
    - a. Revelation as exposition of God's name--cf. above I, C, 3.
    - b. Includes all aspects of his character and works--cf. references just noted, also Prologue.
    - c. Declares God's relation to his covenant people: "Lord" (relational term) "thy" God. Cf. "book of life", above, III, C, 2, c, (2), (b).
  2. Historical Prologue: "...who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Recitation of past blessings, grace; emphasis upon deliverance, redemption. "Situational perspective."
    - a. Note priority of grace to law. Though the whole covenant is "law", the grace of God is set forth before specific commands are given.
    - b. Note intimate "I-thou" language. God addresses Israel as if it were one person.
    - c. In Psalms, especially, the "marvelous works" include, not only redemptive history in the narrow sense, but also the works of creation and providence, Ps. 136:4, 145:4-6, 12; Ps. 107, 136:25, Job. 37:5ff, 14ff, 42:3 (Cf. Ps. 77:14-20), Prov. 30:18, Ps. 8,104. Cf. Van Til's "revelation about nature from God," etc.
  3. The Love Command: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me..."; cf. Deut. 6:4f, Matt. 22:37, parallels. "Normative perspective,"

- a. "Love"--exclusive covenant, loyalty, rejection of allegiance to any other lord. Jesus demands such allegiance for himself (Matt. 10:37, etc.)--proof that he claimed deity.
  - b. The love-command follows the historical prologue, for the Lord desires love out of gratefulness for past blessings. "We love, because he first loved us," 1 John 4:19.
4. Specific Commandments: "Honor thy father and mother," etc.
- a. This legislation follows the love-command. We obey the Lord, not out of slavish deference, but out of love. "If you love me, keep my commandments," John 14:15; cf. many parallel verses.
  - b. The law is comprehensive, covering all areas of human life. Cf. Prologue, 1B, 2, c.
5. Sanctions: curses for disobedience, blessings for obedience. "Existential perspective."
- a. Curse sanction: "The Lord will not hold him guiltless..." Law as a way of death, Gal 3:12, Rom. 7:8ff, II Cor. 3:6.
  - b. Blessing sanction: "That thy days may be long in the land..." Law as a way of life, Ps. 119, Lev. 18:5, Ezek. 20:11ff, Luke 10:28, Deut 5:33,8:3, 11:13-15,28:1-14, 30:11-20,32:47, Jer. 38:20, Amos 8:11ff, Josh. 1:8, Ps. 1:2.
  - c. Response of people noted.
6. Confirmation of Sanctions:
- a. The blessings sanction: This is not part of the Hittite treaty form, but Kline argues that the promise of guaranteed blessing which is so prominent in the Abrahamic Covenant (and also present in the Mosaic) may be seen as a variation on the usual structure. In this "variation," the Lord promises that the blessing sanction will certainly be fulfilled, for he will see to it that the requirements are met. Note how this brings eschatology into the covenant.
  - b. The curse sanction: Scripture as a whole (though, again, not the treaty form as such) contains not only unconditional promises of blessing, but also predictions of certain destruction. Eschatology of judgment
7. Covenant Continuity: Not found in decalogue, but prominent in the Deuteronomic "treaty," Deut. 31-34. Provisions for continued administration of the covenant--"church government"
- a. Executive branch: the royal succession, Deut. 31: 1-8, 34. b. Judicial branch: the witnesses
- (1) Nature: ("heaven and earth," replacing customary list of gods), Deut. 4:26,30:19,31:28,32:1; cf. III, C, 1, a, above.
  - (2) Scripture: Deut. 31: 14-29. The covenant document is itself a "witness"--of God against the people (not a witness of the people concerning God, as often asserted in modern theology). It is placed in the holiest location, the ark. Note that within the covenant structure it is natural for the covenant document to contain an account of itself.
8. History of Covenant Administration: Like 6 above, this is not part of the treaty structure as described by Kline. Yet in fact God has added to the covenant document a record of the history of the response made by the people to the covenant and of the administration of blessing and curse sanctions.
- a. Note how human response is incorporated into revelation. Cf. V, below.
  - b. Fulfillment of curse sanction: the "covenant lawsuit" Prophet charges people with breaking the covenant, invokes curse.
  - c. Fulfillment of blessing sanction: Despite covenant breaking, promise still proclaimed, history of faithfulness set forth, fulfillment noted.
  - d. This history can become the historical prologue to a later covenant--cf. books of generations.

B. Some Formal Features of this Structure1. Unity

- a. Consistency of elements, vs. sundering of modern theology.
- (1) revelation of person (cf. A, 1,2, b) and word, person and fact.
  - (2) revelation of act (A, 2,8) and in word (Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation* ).
  - (3) grace and law (A, 2, a, vi).
  - (4) giving the law is an act of grace (Deut. 5:33, etc).
  - (5) obedience is the result of grace, and means of grace
  - (6) love and law (A, 3,4)
  - (7) judgment and blessing
  - (8) God's word, man's response (A, 5, 8)
  - (9) history and eschatology (A, 2, 5, 8) redemptive history, abiding norms
  - (10) nature and Scripture (A, 7)
  - (11) redemptive focus, application to all of life (Beware of any narrowly "redemptive" interpretation of Scripture's "purpose" or "message").
  - (12) Person, character of God and divine acts (A, 1,2).
- b. Perspectival relation of elements: each is a perspective for viewing the whole revelation. All Scripture is history, law, prophecy, promise, etc.
- (1) All is history: everything in Scripture relevant to a description of the historical process.
  - (2) All is law: everything in Scripture imposes obligation of some sort upon the reader, and the total obligation is a function of the entire Book. John 10:34,15:25.
  - (3) All is promise: all in Scripture speaks of Christ.
  - (4) Revelation may be described under any of these categories as long as other categorizations are neither excluded nor their contributions ignored. Each includes (never excludes) the others.
- c. Perspectival unity of various styles, types of language, illocutionary and perlocutionary functions: Statements of fact ("propositions"), commands, questions, promises, VOWS, expressions of emotion, poetry, wisdom sayings, songs, parables, letters, apocalyptic, etc. Is Scripture "propositional truth"? It does contain propositional truth, and all Scripture communicates that truth (propositional truth as "perspective"). But Scripture is not only propositional truth; it contains other sorts of language, and these also may be seen as perspectives on the whole: all Scripture is command, question, promise, love-letter, song of triumph, etc.

2. Diversity

- a. Elements and language forms are not all synonymous.
- (1) not all revelation says the same thing.
  - (2) different perspectives supplement one another.

- b. Nature, general history , and the constitution of unregenerate man (III, C) do not communicate the full message of God to man; they do not communicate the way of salvation. Rom. 10: 13-17.

## V. The Recipients of the Word

### A. Intro: Relation of Word to Response

1. Word includes descriptions, expressions of man's response (IV, A, 2,5, 8); but these are ~ descriptions and divinely chosen expressions. Hence these "responses" are properly the Word of God, not something merely human mixed in with the Word.
2. Does revelation exist where there is no response? No. All revelation provokes some response, for it always achieves its purpose (Isa. 55: 11).
3. Does the word exist if I fail to acknowledge it? Yes for the word as decree and address (II, C), no for the word as presence--at least presence in blessing.
4. Is the response part of the revelation? Does the response "complete" the revelation?
  - a. Yes, in the sense that the revelation contains descriptions and expressions of the response (above, I).
  - b. Yes, in the sense that the word as presence involves an identification of word and response: the word is the obedience in that case (II, C).
  - c. Yes in the sense that all revelation demands response and accomplishes its purpose only when response is given.
  - d. No, in the sense that the canon is incomplete until all responses have been given and noted, nor in the sense that the canonical word cannot be distinguished from the response to it, nor in the sense that it is not revelation until I accept it.

### B. Enumeration of Recipients

1. Inter-trinitarian Communication: Gen. 1:26, Ps. 2:7-9, Ps. 110, 45:6-8, Matt. 11:25-27, John 5:20, 17: 1-26, Acts 2:33-36, John 4:34, 6:38f.
2. The Word to All Creatures
  - a. The decree (II, B, 1).
  - b. The covenantal "address"--Gen. 1:9, 20, 22, 24, 4:9-17
3. The Word to All Humanity
  - a. The decree and the address in nature, general history, and man's natural constitution have already been communicated to all, so as to leave none without excuse, Rom. 1.
  - b. The redemptive address is given to the church to be proclaimed to all men, Matt. 28: 19f.
4. The Word to the Church
  - a. The redemptive address, though proclaimed to all, is savingly appropriated only by the regenerate. As such it has a special reference to them.
  - b. The word as God's presence in blessing (which is nearly synonymous with the regenerate life itself) is only to the regenerate (II, B, 3).

### C. The Response Demanded (cf. triadic scheme )

1. Belief: When God describes his mighty acts, we are expected to accept his description and interpretation. When he promises blessing or threatens judgment, we dare not call his word in question (cf. VI, below).
2. Obedience: What God commands in word must be obeyed without question.
3. Participation: Since the word is not exclusively propositional or imperative, God expects more from us than is easily summarized in the above two headings (though either of them may be taken as a perspective on the whole of our response). Since the word includes poetry , symbol, parable, exhortation, etc., God wants us to take his word into our heart, to let it work upon us in all the subtle ways in which poetry changes people. The word thus changes our interests, our priorities, our perspectives, our preoccupations. God wants us not

only to believe him and obey him, but to be involved with him personally in a wide variety of ways.

4. Interrelations
  - a. To believe is to obey God's command to believe.
  - b. Belief and obedience are both aspects of participation.
  - c. Obedience presupposes belief that God is who he says he is, etc.
  - d. Participation is required by a wholehearted belief and obedience.

*Excursus:* "General" and "Special" Revelation These terms are not found in Scripture itself, but are a common theological device for making various sorts of distinctions concerning "revelation" under a simple two-fold division. In my view, however, the twofold division is inadequate, for the two concepts require so much explanation and modification that they tend to over-complicate, rather than simplify, the questions. Following are the areas where the terms come under discussion:

- D. The Functions of the Word (above, II):
  1. It is tempting to say that general revelation is the word as decree, special the word as address, while a third category ("existential revelation"?) designates the word as presence. But general revelation, as commonly understood, is also an address (Rom. 1:32, etc.).
  2. It is often said, rightly that man is blind to general revelation apart from regeneration; but the same is true of special. Thus neither can produce a "word of presence" apart from a divine work.
- E. The Media of the Word (above, III):
  1. It is sometimes said that general revelation is "natural" while special revelation is "supernatural." It is not clear what is meant by this. Is this an indirect/direct distinction? Cf. III, preface.
  2. Or: on some accounts, general revelation is "natural" in the sense of coming through nature, general history, and man (as existing prior to redemption), while the next categories under III above, from B, 3 through H, are "special." On other accounts (e.g. Van Til) theophany at least could function as "general" revelation before the fall. And if theophany, why not prophecy, etc. ?
  3. In some theologies, special revelation is "verbal" or even "written," while general revelation is not. However:
    - a. If general revelation is not verbal, are we to conclude that, say, *The World Almanac* is not revelation at all? Clearly it is not special revelation!
    - b. If special revelation is "verbal," what about the redemptive acts of God? What about the apostolic example? Of course, all of this is verbal in the broad sense of proceeding from the word of God; but it is not verbal in the sense of being documentary in character. There !2 what is often called "nonverbal communication" in redemptive revelation.
  4. Neither category does justice to the sense in which preaching, teaching, Christian insight are revelatory. We don't want to say that these convey new special revelation. Nor do we want to say that these are "general" (i.e. non-redemptive).
- F. The Message of the Word (above, IV)
  1. It has been said that general revelation communicates a message which does not presuppose man's sin. But if this be the case, what of the revelation of God's wrath in Rom.1:18? If that is not general, what is?
  2. "Special revelation presents the way of salvation; general revelation does not." On the whole a good observation. However, some, such as Vos, have spoken of "redemptive special revelation" to describe the speaking of God to Adam before the fall. The question depends on whether special revelation is defined in terms of its distinctive message or in terms of the distinctive media of its communication. It would be less confusing if the two questions (media and content) were handled separately.



- G. The Recipients of the Word (above, V): "All men are aware of general revelation; special revelation is given to a few, to be proclaimed to all." On the whole this is a good observation. Note, however, that the original redemptive promise was given to the whole human race (Gen. 3:15), and there are in the O.T. some indications or a knowledge of redemption existing outside the messianic family line.
- H. Conclusion: The general/special distinction is used to make some valid points. However (1) there is not universal agreement as to its proper formulation; (2) it sometimes confuses issues under discussion; (3) at best it ties questions together which are best discussed separately. If a more simplified scheme is needed, try a contrast between "nature" and "scripture," saving other categories for more advanced students.

## VI. The Power of the Word

Sections VI through VIII deal with perfections of the word which derive from the attributes of Lordship. If the function of the word is to express God's lordship, then it will express his control, authority and presence. This fact is the basis of its power, authority, clarity. Although the control of God is particularly associated with the word as decree, his authority with the word as address, and his presence with the word as presence, the power, authority and clarity of the word pertain to all forms, all utterances of the word.

- A. The Greatness of the Power: The word is not just an intellectual object, but a great power, indeed the divine omnipotence itself. It has this power because of its union with God. We tend to ignore its power because we are insufficiently aware of the presence of God in the word. With such power, with such a God, we dare not trifle.
  - 1. The Word as God's Decree: for its power in creation, providence, judgment and grace, cf. above, II, A.
  - 2. The Word as God's Address
    - a. The Utterance from Heaven
      - (1) In judgment: Gen.3:17ff, 11:6f,Ps.46:6,Joel2:11,Amos 1:2, II Pet. 3:5-7, "fire" (Ps. 18:7f, 13f, I Kings 18:24, I Chron. 21:26, Job 41:49, Rev. 9:17-19,11:5).
      - (2) In grace: Gen. 3: 15, "efficacious calling".
    - b. Prophecy: Gen. 9:24-27,27:27-29, 39f, 49:2-27, I Kings 17:1, II Kings 1:17, Isa. 40:1-8,55:11,59:21, Jer. 5:14,20:9,23:28, John 15:24f.
      - (1) The word and the hand, Isa. 30:30,66:6, II Chron. 6:15, Ezek. 1:1ff, 3:22, Hos. 6:5.
      - (2) The fire, Ezek. 1, Jer. 5:14,20:9,23:28.
      - (3) The weapon, Isa. 14:29, Jer. 23:28, Isa. 49:2, Hos. 6:5.
      - (4) The Gospel as blessing and judgment, Isa. 6:9], Matt. 13:14f, Mark 4: 12, Luke 8: 10, John 12:36-40, Acts 28:26ff, Rom. 11 :8, John 15:22.
      - (5) The commandments as blessing and judgment, Ex. 20:7, 12, Deut 8:3, Deut. 27ff, Lev. 18:5, Ps. 19,119:25,50, Rom. 7.
    - c. Scripture: Ps. 12:6f, 19:7-11, II Kings 18:6, II Kings 22-23, Neh. 8, II Tim. 3:16. Cf. other categories under this section (A, 2), for all the words in question have been incorporated into Scripture.
    - d. Jesus: Luke 24:19, Matt. 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33.
      - (1) Judgment: Isa. 11:4, Rev. 1:16,2:16,9:17-19,19:15, John 9:39, Matt. 13:14f, Mark 4:12, Luke 8:10, John 12:40.
      - (2) Grace: Luke 7:7ff, Matt. 8:16, Ps. 45:2, Luke 4:22, John 5:25,6:63, 68,8:51,14:23,15:3.

- e. Apostles: Rom. 15:19,16:25, I Cor. 2:4f, II Cor. 6:7, I Thes. 1:5.
  - f. Note: no lessening of power from one medium to the next. Cf. Ps. 19, which implicitly compares the power of the word for creation to that of Scripture. Also Ps. 147:15-20.
3. The Word as God's Presence: The word in this sense is virtually synonymous with a transformed life, at least when used of believers. To have the word written on your heart is to be faithful, obedient to God's address. This obedience is the result of this address being driven into the heart by the power of the Spirit
- B. Word, Power, Spirit: On the relations among these three, cf. references above under A, etc.;
- II, C; III, C, 3, c.
  - 1. Although the Holy Spirit is not always mentioned as the source of the "power," it is clear from a number of passages (e.g. I Thes. 1:5) that the power of the word is the power of the Spirit.
  - 2. The power, therefore, is not simply the "perlocutionary" power which pertains to all language (though it is often described in such terms), nor is it the "power" of true doctrine and morality (rationalism), nor is it a deposit of divine supernatural power residing in the word as such (Lutheranism).
  - 3. It is a personal power, the power of the Spirit, who works as he wills.
  - 4. As such, it is a sovereign power. The differences in the effects of the word upon men are not ultimately due to man's free will (Lutheran, Arminian doctrine), but due to the sovereign working of the Spirit.
  - 5. This doctrine should not be formulated, however, in such a way as to suggest that the word is sometimes powerless. The word always has ~ effect, the effect intended by God (Isa. 55: 11, Luke 1:37). That effect upon man may be blessing or judgment; the Spirit will decide. But the Spirit never abandons the word. Those who appear to be unaffected are in fact affected, generally for the worse.

## VII. The Authority of the Word

- A. The Concept of Authority
- 1. Divine authority: God's sovereign right to govern the conduct of his creatures. Cf. Prologue, I, B, 2.
  - 2. The word has the same authority because of its union with God (above, II, A, also VI).
  - 3. Meaning is a prerequisite of authority, and authority is fundamentally a characteristic of meaning. Cf. the distinction between "power" and "meaning" in I, B. If the word is to be authoritative, it must say something. A blind power or raw force can be effective, but cannot be authoritative. Thus any view which reduces the word of God to such bare power cannot have a meaningful view of the word's authority.
  - 4. Unity and diversity
    - a. The authority of the word is always the ~ in degree and in basic character; it is an absolute authority because it is the authority of God Himself.
    - b. The authority of the word ~ in the specific requirements it imposes on its hearers. Cf. IV, B.
      - (1) Differences in illocutionary functions: questions, commands, assertions, promises, threats, etc., determining different types of responses. Cf. "acteth differently," *Westminster Confession*, XIV,ii. Do not limit authority to the propositional function, as if authority = the infallibility of statements. Authority includes more than infallibility in that sense.
      - (2) Differences in literary forms: narrative, poetry, treaty, proverb, etc. What is an "authoritative poem"? Think! Let the question surprise you. Do we have too narrow a concept of "authority"? Cf. e, below. Differences of content between literary and illocutionary forms of the same type.

- c. "Does the authority of the word depend on its content?" (cf. later discussion of inerrancy).
  - (1) No. Whatever its content, it is authoritative because God has spoken it.
  - (2) Yes. The specific requirement imposed upon us by this authority depends upon what the word says-its content. Christian Reformed "Report 44". This fact does not in any way relativize inerrancy; see below.
  - (3) Yes. For truth, justice, consistency, etc. are necessary (though not sufficient) conditions of authority , and they are qualities of the content. Since God is God, he cannot speak in ways which contradict his character .

B. The Word as Criterion of Godliness

As mentioned earlier II, B), the Bible is a story about God's address to man and man's response to that address in belief or unbelief, obedience or disobedience, participation or rejection (alienation). At each point in redemptive history, the word of God is the thing at issue. That word may be in the form of command, promise, name of God (Gen. 4:26, etc.), covenant, law, gospel, prophecy, song, history, letter, teaching. Whatever form it takes, man's response to it (under God's providence) has eternal consequences.

- 1. Before the Fall:
  - a. Gen. 1:28f: Man's first experience, determines course of his life, defines his ethical status.
  - b. Gen. 2: 17: The Probation:
    - (1) The Word defines an exception to its general principles.
    - (2) Issue is obedience to the word. No independent means of determining the character of the trees.

2. The Temptation
    - a. The tempter as talking animal: attempted reversal or the pattern of linguistic authority--animal, woman, man, God.
    - b. The tempter's strategy: questioning the veracity of God's word, asserting the veracity of his own.
  3. Fall to Noah:
    - a. God's word in judgment; promise: Gen. 3:8,9-19.
    - b. Man takes God's word on his lips--in faith: Gen. 3:20, 4: 1, 26.
    - c. Further disobedience to the word: 4:1-15.
  4. Noah: Gen. 6:22, 7:5, 9, cf. Heb. 11:7, II Pet. 2:5, II Pet. 3:5- 7, Matt. 24:32-44; Gen.1:8, 17ff, 9: 1ff (8: 17). At each point, the word is at issue.
  5. Abraham: known for his faith--specifically faith in God's word. Gen. 12:1ff, 15:1ff, 17:1ff,22:2f.
    - a. Land: owned none, but trusted the promise--Gen. 23: 17ff, Heb. 11:9f.
    - b. Seed: perseverance through delay, threat: Rom. 4: 17ff, Heb. 11:8-19, Gen. 18:14, Jer. 32:17,27, Luke 1:37f, Gen. 15:6, Rom. 4:3, Gal. 3:6, Jas. 2:23.
    - c. Isaac, Jacob, the Twelve Patriarchs: Grasping at the promise, though often unrighteously. Gen. 26:3ff, Gen. 25,27,32:9-12,50: 24f(cf. Heb. 11:21f).
  6. Moses: cf. III, E, 5, F, 2, IV.
  7. Jesus: His word is the supreme criterion of discipleship. Matt. 7:21 ff, 28f, Mark 8:38, Luke 9:26ff, 8:21, John 8:47,12:47[, 14:15,21, 23[, 15:7, 10,14,17:6,17, I John 2:3-5,3:22, 5:2[, II John 6, I Tim. 6:3, Rev. 12:17,14:12. Note pervasiveness of this theme.
  8. Apostles: Rom. 2:16, I Thes. 4:2, Jude 17[, cf. III, E-G.
  9. Scripture: See III, F, I- V, A, 7. Scripture as witness.
  10. Note: there is no difference in authority among the heavenly utterance, the word in prophecy, the word from Jesus' life, the word in Scripture. The authority of each is absolute, because divine.
- C. Forms Of Authority (cf. Above, A, 4). We have seen that authority may take many forms, may demand many sorts of response from us. Let us look at a few of these in more detail:
1. Commands
    - a. Clearly, when God utters a command, he does not want us merely to believe that he has said it, or merely to assent to whatever information may be conveyed or presupposed by the command. A command demands obedience, and not only the obedience of intellectual assent.
    - b. Are biblical commands ever annulled (dietary laws, etc.)?
      - (1) God does give some commands which are mandatory only in a given situation. In fact, all commands presuppose an appropriate situation for their application, which may be broad or narrow, as the word defines it.
      - (2) In the history of redemption, no command is "abrogated," but all are "fulfilled" in Christ Fulfillment takes various forms. (cf. Matt. 5:17).
        - (a) Laws of ceremonial cleanliness (including dietary laws): no longer literally binding, for Christ shows they are a shadow typifying his purity. These laws still admonish us to an imitation of Christ's perfection.
        - (b) Sacrifice: Christ has put an end to the sacrifice of bulls and goats by the perfect sacrifice of himself. The sacrificial legislation now requires us to trust in that one perfect sacrifice.
        - (c) Decalogue: In Christ, no longer a sentence of death, but the delight of the redeemed heart.

- (3) Application of a particular command depends upon the teaching of the whole Scripture on the subject.
2. Questions: demand an answer." Adam, where art thou?" "Has thou eaten the fruit?" "Peter, do you love me?" "Shall we sin that grace may abound?"
3. Poetry, Music: What is an "authoritative poem?!"
  - a. In Scripture (and in language generally) there are no sharp lines between prose, poetic prose, poetry, chant, song. Continuum.
  - b. In general, then, poetic and musical language have the same functions as other language. When inspired, they have the same functions as any other form of revelation.
  - c. Scripture tends to use more lyrical forms to achieve intensity and memorability (related qualities). Deut. 31: 19-22, 30ff.
  - d. The song deals with matters of great importance (*contra* modern tendency).
  - e. "Lyric authority": The songs or the word must become the songs of our own hearts, instructing us (Col. 3:16) of redemption in such depth that our deepest feelings are affected and we burst into joyful praise.
4. Propositional Teaching ~ Inerrancy
  - a. Inerrancy is that form of authority which attaches particularly to the propositional teaching of Scripture. It is not, therefore, the only form of authority, and should not be made synonymous with authority as is common in evangelical circles. However, to say that a piece of propositional (informational) teaching is authoritative involves saying that it is inerrant.
  - b. Inerrancy is simply freedom from error, whether that error arises out of mistake or deceit. ("Infallibility" is used in a variety of ways-- sometimes as synonymous with inerrancy, sometimes as the assertion that error in Scripture ~ exist, sometimes as the assertion that Scripture is trustworthy in a broad, general sense, apart from specific questions of error. The second of these three meanings, I think, is best.)
  - c. In the above sense, Scripture teaches its own inerrancy:
    - (1) God does not lie: Heb., Titus 1:2, II Tim. 2:13, Num. 23:19.
    - (2) God is not ignorant: Heb. 4:13, Ps. 33:13-15.
    - (3) Scripture is his word: II Tim. 3:16.
    - (4) Therefore, Scripture is inerrant.
  - d. Inerrancy must be further defined, because of ambiguity in the concept "error."
    - (1) The concept of "error" depends on the context in which error is being discussed. If I say "The book has 300 pages" when it actually has 297, have I made an error?

- (a) Yes, if in the situation a precise figure has been expected. (E.g., I am working for a publisher, and he wants to know exactly how many pages to set up.)
  - (b) No, if in the situation a round figure is acceptable. (E.g., I am answering a student's question, and it is perfectly obvious that I don't claim to give the exact number from memory.)
  - (c) In the second case, there is no claim to absolute precision, and so no error is ascribed.
  - (d) An "error," then, arises when one fails to make good on his ~, whether implicit or explicit
  - (e) In scientific contexts, the claims tend to be rather severe. (A difference of three decimal places between alleged and real figures can be said to be "error." Cf. the phrase "margin of error.")
  - (f) In ordinary language, the claims are less demanding. Ordinarily people do not expect one another to give perfectly precise figures, descriptions, etc. In fact, too much precision ("pedantic precision") --e.g., telling your age down to the hour--can ~ clarity and communication I may tell you that the book has 300 pages (above illustration), even though I know it has 297. I do that because I know that 300 is an easier figure to remember, and that it would give you a better picture of the book's size than if I left you with the impression of some vague figure over 200.
- (2) The "inerrancy" of Scripture, then, may be further defined by saying that Scripture makes good on its ~.
- (a) It does not always claim absolute precision. In fact, it contains many phenomena which would be incompatible with such a claim:
    - i) Inconsistency with modern historiographical conventions:
      - a) Non-chronological narrative
      - b) Imprecise quotation
      - c) anachronistic references (Gen. 14:13, etc.)
      - d) historical telescoping (Mt. 9: 18, Luke 8:41,49.)
    - ii) Other "imprecisions"
      - a) round numbers
      - b) unrefined grammar
      - c) pre-scientific phenomenalist description ("The sun rose")
      - d) omission of pedantic qualifications (Mark 1:5)
      - e) use of figures, symbols
  - (b) Do these phenomena refute inerrancy? Only if Scripture ~ to avoid such practices, while failing to make good on that claim.
  - (c) Scripture, however, does not make such a claim.
    - i) Scripture follows historical practices common in its day--e.g. loose quotation of

- sources, giving the substance, rather than the precise words being referred to.
      - ii) The purpose of Scripture is not to provide us with a precise scientific treatise, but to motivate us to faith in Christ, with all its implications (John 20:31).
      - iii) To carry out that purpose most effectively, it was not only permissible, but even necessary, to avoid pedantic side-trips, to speak the ordinary language of the people, to use figures and parables, etc.
    - (3) Scripture, then, is not inerrant in the sense of being absolutely precise, and/or of meeting every conceivable demand. Rather, it is inerrant in that it makes good on its own claims and carries out its own purpose.
- e. Current controversy over inerrancy
  - (1) Liberalism
    - (a) Argues that modern man cannot accept the idea of supernatural revelation or submit to the notion of infallible authority; therefore the historic doctrine must be abandoned.
    - (b) But this argument merely substitutes one infallible authority for another. Instead of the Bible, modern man becomes the supreme judge of truth and falsity. In liberalism, one religion is simply substituted for another.
  - (2) Neo-Orthodoxy (Barth, Brunner, Hordern, etc.)
    - (a) God, not Scripture, is ultimate authority. Scripture is only a witness to God.
    - (b) Revelation is of God himself, not doctrinal or "propositional" truths.
    - (c) God uses Scripture, though Scripture in itself is fallible.
    - (d) Comment: Unlike liberalism, neo-orthodoxy speaks of the need of an authoritative God and authoritative revelation. But the refusal of neo-orthodoxy to locate this authoritative word leaves us with no real authority at all, only an empty shell.
  - (3) "Limited Inerrancy" views among evangelicals
    - (a) These evangelicals are supernaturalists; they do believe in miracles, resurrection, blood atonement, the necessity of faith for salvation, etc. They do not say "yes and no" to these doctrines as do the dialectical (neo-orthodox) thinkers. Yet they have problems of various sorts with inerrancy.
    - (b) Problems of the "phenomena of Scripture" (Beegle, etc.)
      - i) "Phenomena" of Scripture are the full range of facts about the Bible as it presents itself to us.
      - ii) Some of those facts present problems--e.g., apparent contradictions, apparent inconsistency with scientific opinion, etc.
      - iii) Beegle argues that to arrive at a satisfactory doctrine of Scripture, we must take into account "all the evidence of Scripture"--i.e.,

the problems as well as the teaching. We must not assume the truth of the teachings until we look at all the phenomena--an "inductive" approach, as opposed to the merely "deductive" approach of 4, c, above.

iv) Since many of the problems cannot be resolved satisfactorily, Beegle says that "the totality of the biblical evidence does not prove the doctrine of inerrancy to be a fact. It is still a theory that must be accepted by faith."

v) Comments:

a) Beegle's statement under (4) could be made concerning any doctrine. For all the doctrines of the Christian faith have problems associated with them. All of them are plagued by some apparent contradiction or some apparent disparity with experience. Does that mean that no doctrine can be asserted with confidence until all the problems are worked out?

b) The last comment indicates Beegle's fundamental misunderstanding of the way Christian faith operates. Its very nature is to believe, to trust in God, even against apparent evidence to the contrary (cf. later discussions of apologetics, Heb. 11, Rom. 4). In no area may we wait for "all the evidence" to speak unanimously before we believe.

c) How, then, do we come to a conclusion, when the evidence is not seen to be unanimous? The biblical answer is that we accept the teaching: of God through his prophets and apostles (above, B), even when other sources of information lead us in other directions.

d) Thus we cannot put the teaching of Scripture and the "phenomena" of Scripture on a par with one another as Beegle and others want to do. If Abraham had pointed to the "phenomena" he never would have left Ur.

e) We must, however, take account of the phenomena. We dare not ignore the problems. However, we dare not treat them, as Beegle advocates, as neutral observers, without any



presuppositions at all. We must look at the phenomena from a Christian standpoint presupposing all that Scripture tells us about God and his redemptive purposes. Without any presuppositions, nothing: follows from a study of phenomena.

- f) Presuppositions and phenomena are closely linked, of course. The teachings of Scripture about itself are themselves "phenomena;" i.e. they are discovered in Scripture, not imposed upon it. Further, the problems among the phenomena may lead us to ask if we have rightly understood the teachings, the presuppositions. But we must never adopt a position where the two are set over against one another so that phenomena invalidate teaching. (Cf. apologetic discussions or the relation of presuppositions to evidence.)
- (c) Problems in regard to the "purpose of Scripture." (Orr, Fuller, Berkouwer)
  - i) Some evangelicals have argued that since the purpose of Scripture is to bring saving knowledge of Christ, it should not be expected to provide accurate historical information, at least on "peripheral" matters.
  - ii) In studying parables, e.g., we consider it beside the point to ask whether the events described really occurred, etc. Such questions show an ignorance or the purpose of the parable. Might not such reasoning apply more broadly to Scripture as a whole?
  - iii) Comments on this view:
    - a) It is certainly true that we must take into account the purpose of Scripture when we discuss inerrancy. In our discussion (above, d, ii), we argued that the saving purpose of Scripture makes certain kinds of precision unnecessary, suggesting that Scripture does not claim precision in those senses.
    - b) Does this consideration, then, mean that Scripture makes no claim concerning the place where Jesus was born, or the length of the wilderness sojourn, or the names of the Roman governors to whom Paul spoke?
      - i) Here we must remember that the salvation of which

Scripture speaks is a historical salvation, based on historical events. The fact that Scripture has a saving purpose does not make it indifferent to historical events; quite the contrary.

- ii) Even beyond that, the salvation proclaimed by Scripture is a comprehensive salvation (recall earlier discussion of the comprehensiveness of the covenant). It aims to change our attitude toward everything. We dare not exclude history from its scope.
- iii) Many historical events are crucial to the biblical story of salvation: the reality of creation, the literal disobedience of the first man Adam, etc.
- iv) Most historical references in Scripture make no sense unless we assume that some historical claim is being made--not a claim to detailed precision, perhaps, but a claim to historical accuracy, nonetheless.
- v) Such questions cannot be answered without detailed exegesis. If someone wants to show that Scripture doesn't claim accuracy in some historical reference, he ought to show that by exegesis. (If he can show exegetically that Genesis is a parable, then it is.) But the question cannot be answered (as neo-evangelicals tend to answer it) simply by the general observation that Scripture is not interested in such things. In view of the above considerations, that is not at all evident.

- vi) The orthodox position, therefore, is the one which repudiates easy answers and advocates hard struggling with the text. It is the limited inerrancy view that would give an easy answer here, contrary to some assertions.
- f. Summary considerations on inerrancy:
  - (1) Scripture claims that it is inerrant, and that claim must take precedence over any difficulties we may have with its "phenomena." That is simply the way faith works.
  - (2) Inerrancy is compatible with some imprecision, since Scripture does not claim absolute precision. However, Scripture is concerned with telling us a great deal about history and the cosmos, and we must exegete very carefully before rejecting an apparent Scriptural historical claim as in fact no claim at all.
  - (3) The question of inerrancy, therefore, has everything to do with our faith-presuppositions. To ask about inerrancy is not only to ask about the teachings of Scripture (normative perspective) and about the phenomena of Scripture (situational perspective), but also to ask about ourselves--our own faith, our own values, our own criteria (existential perspective: cf. the triad scheme). When wrestling with questions about inerrancy, we must constantly ask:
    - (a) Have I rightly understood the text?
    - (b) Have I rightly understood the problem, the phenomenon?
    - (c) Is my attitude a faithful, obedient attitude? Am I like Abraham, or like Peter at the cross? Am I willing to hear and accept something from Scripture that goes against my grain, that rebukes the spirit of my age? (On some limited inerrancy views, it is impossible to imagine Scripture teaching anything: that would contravene the assumptions of modern critical scholarship; that, in my view, is the greatest defect of that position.)

### VIII. The Clarity of the Word ("Perspicuity")

- A. Clarity and the Divine Presence
  - 1. Connection with covenantal blessing and curse: Deut. 30: 11-20.
    - a. Israel's problem: not understanding, but choosing.
    - b. The reward and curse are also near (v. 15)--God's covenantal presence.
  - 2. Presence of Christ in the word preached: Rom. 10:4-11.

3. Since God is near, word is near. "Direct revelation in history," vs. much modern theology.
- B. Clarity and Human Responsibility
  1. Nearness of the word underlines the responsibility of the people (the curses and blessings).
  2. Unclarity is impossible--for that would give man an excuse for disobedience (same passages).
- C. Clarity and Mystery - the more we know, the more we fail to comprehend!
- D. Clarity and Unclarity: Isn't there ~ sense in which ~ Scripture is unclear--II Pet. 3:16? 1.
  1. Scripture "unclear" to the unregenerate, Isa. 6:9ff, parallels, II Pet 3:16, Isa. 28:9-13, I Cor. 14:21, II Cor. 3:14ff, yet clear enough that they ought to understand and are responsible for their failure to do so.
  2. Not all Scripture equally clear, even to the regenerate (*Westminster Confession*, I, vii), but the Scriptural way of salvation is plain even to the unlearned (Ps. 119: 105, 130).
  3. Even regarding those teachings of Scripture which are "less clear," we may not use that obscurity as an excuse for our ignorance. God has provided teachers, and has promised wisdom to those who ask (James 1:5). No Scripture is clear to one who has no wisdom.
  4. General principle: Scripture is always sufficiently clear to make us aware of our present responsibility to God. Its unclarity will never lead us into sin.
- E. Implication: vs. clericalism, tyranny of human experts. The job of teachers is not to lord it over their students or to set themselves up as mediators of God's truth. Nor ought we ever to insist that the Scriptures must be funneled through some philosophical or hermeneutical scheme in order to be made intelligible. Scripture is intelligible. The problem is with us, and the teacher ought to "explain" or "interpret" Scripture only to resolve our obscurity and our obscurities are often best resolved through pastoral care rather than through scholarly ingenuity.

## IX. The Necessity of the Word

### Prefatory Comments

1. Sections VIII - X dealt with attributes of the word arising out of the lordship attributes. XI-XII, though also grounded in the lordship of God, are perhaps best described as categories showing the logical relations between God's word and his purposes. The word is necessary and sufficient to fulfill God's purposes. Necessity and sufficiency "cut across" the attributes of VII-X: the power of the word is necessary and sufficient, the authority is, etc.
2. I have found that this matter of the "necessity" of the word is a good place to begin with people who are relatively uninstructed in these matters. No one ever becomes a militant defender of biblical authority until he sees the importance of the doctrine, its centrality. Here is where that fact becomes most evident.
- A. No Word, No Lord
  1. The word is inseparable from God himself (II, A).
  2. It is, of course, not necessary to God's being that he speak to us. He might freely have chosen not to speak to us, and would still have been God.
  3. When, however, God freely chose to create and rule us within a particular covenant structure, he thereby determined to speak to man. That speaking is a central element of that structure. Without that speaking, there is no covenant. Cf. "the necessity of the atonement."
    - a. The word is implicit in the very concept of lordship. The Lord is one who commands. No word, no commands; no commands, no lord.
    - b. The covenant document (IV) is the covenant. To break its provision is to break the covenant. Without the document, the covenant has no constitution, no documentary witness. No word, no covenant, no lord.
    - c. Without the word, therefore, there would be no criterion of sin or of godliness (IX, B).
    - d. Without the word, no discipleship, for Jesus made obedience to his words the criterion of discipleship (IX, B, 7). One may not say " Jesus

is Lord" (the basic Christian confession) unless one has his words and obeys them.

- e. We must not say, therefore, that the Lordship of God or Christ is a central matter while the authority of the word or Scripture is peripheral. Without the word, we have no lord.
  4. Form of the word: even in paradise God spoke not only through nature, but also through words and sentences. Without that, the probation is unintelligible, IX, B,
- B. No Word, No Salvation
1. Salvation is a particular exercise of God's lordship. It is an aspect of the covenant structure (IV). Thus, it presupposes a word from God, since lordship and covenant presuppose such a word.
  2. Salvation involves God writing the covenant words upon the heart (Jer. 31:33), efficacious calling, gospel promise, declaration of righteousness, declaration of forgiveness. All of these are utterances of the word of God. Only God can promise salvation, declare sinners to be righteous, forgive sins, call sinners into union with Christ, write his words on their heart.
  3. Salvation necessitates, not only the word as such, but a special utterance of the word distinct from the word given through nature (IV, B, 2). Scripture is a "republication" of natural revelation, but not only republication; for it contains a distinct message not found in nature, the message of salvation.
  4. Necessity of written prophecy:
    - a. When predictions come true, the prophet is vindicated; thus the predictions ought to be preserved: Isa. 8: 1, Deut. 18, Hab. 2:2.
    - b. Written document bears witness against the unbelief of the generation in which it was written; Isa. 30:8ff.
    - c. Written prophecy also preserves the promise for a more responsive generation: Isa. 30:8ff, 34: 16f, 59:21. Attests the permanence of God's revelation (Isa. 40:8).
  5. Conclusion: as " Jesus is Lord" presupposes a clear verbal revelation, so does " Jesus is Savior." Without a clear word from God, a clear promise, we are without hope. To "accept Christ as Savior" while denying the reality of such words is an impossible position.
- C. The Alternative: Modern theology in general tries to uphold just such an impossible position. Cf. Introduction, A, 2, substitutes.
1. Lordship without the Word: Especially since Barth, theologians have said much about the "lordship" of God. They frequently offer, however, a word devoid of intelligible content, a word with no clear meaning, a word which imposes no concrete demands. In Barth's view, this ability to speak without saying anything accentuates the divine sovereignty. From a Scriptural standpoint, however, we must characterize this position as idolatry--worship of an unknown god on the basis of human wisdom.
  2. Salvation without the Word: The salvation offered by most modern theologians is based upon wishful thinking, not upon divine promise. Such a salvation is no hope at all.
- D. Proposal for a Reformation
1. The situation:
    - a. In the 4th century, Origenism, a clever synthesis of Christianity and Greek philosophy, had captured the Christian intellectual establishment, producing confusion over the person of Christ.
    - b. In the 16th century, the "medieval synthesis," a clever synthesis of Christianity, Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism developed by Thomas Aquinas and others, had captured the Christian intellectual establishment, producing confusion about justification.
    - c. In the 19th and 20th centuries, a series of syntheses between Christianity and Kantian philosophy (developed by man, led by Schleiermacher and Barth), have captured the Christian intellectual

- establishment, producing confusion about Scripture (and many other things).
2. The breaking point:
    - a. In the 4th century , Arius maintained that the Son of God was a creature.
    - b. In the 16th century, the monk, Tetzal, went about huckstering salvation.
    - c. In the 20th century, what? "Christian atheism" and "Christian Marxism" don't seem to have done the trick. What must happen to arouse us?
  3. The reformer:
    - a. In the 4th century, Athanasius stood courageously in the breach, against an often vindictive Arian establishment.
    - b. In the 16th century, Luther showed the same courage and zeal for the truth.
    - c. In the 20th century , who? You? Kuyper was Wycliffe; Machen, Huss.
  4. The reformer's message:
    - a. Athanasius: Abandoned subtle philosophical points, stuck to religious simplicities from Scripture.
      - (1) Arianism is idolatry: it would have us worship a creature.
      - (2) Arianism leaves us no salvation, for there can be no salvation through a mere creature.
    - b. Luther: Same. A simple, biblical message, showing how basic was the issue.
      - (1) The Mass is idolatry .
      - (2) Salvation through the Roman church gives no certain hope.
    - c. You? Don't try to be more subtle than Barth. Go to the heart of it, show how basic the issue is, how simple.
      - (1) The Kantian synthesis is idolatry, for it would have us worship God after our own imaginations.
      - (2) The Kantian synthesis leaves us no salvation, for it takes away the forgiving, promising word.
  5. The consolidator
    - a. After Athanasius came Augustine, who found in the Nicene trinitarianism a key to the whole biblical teaching, who gave to the church a profound insight into the grace of God.
    - b. After Luther came Calvin, who found in Luther's soteriology the key to a full-orbed Christian world view.
    - c. After you will come.... Moral: the greatest achievements in Christian thought develop out of the momentum of reformations.
- E. Conclusion: When people see the necessity of the word, they see something of monumental importance--something of the importance upon which reformations are built. We must proclaim the authority of the Word as something necessary, not as something peripheral or of secondary importance. When they see the necessity of the word, they will see the urgency of locating the word in Scripture, and of learning the word for themselves.

## X. The Sufficiency of the Word

- A. God's word always is sufficient in power, authority and nearness to accomplish God's purpose for it (Isa.55:11).
- B. God's Word through Nature is Sufficient for its Purpose: to declare the glory of God to all men, to leave all without excuse for their sinfulness before him, and to provide the necessary background for understanding the redemptive revelation. It is !!Q! sufficient to proclaim salvation, but that was not its purpose.
- C. The General Sufficiency of Redemptive Covenant Relation:
  1. The "inscriptional curse" on the covenant document forbade anyone to add or subtract from the contents of the document, Deut. 4:2, 12;32, cf. Prov. 30:6,

Rev. 22:18f. Note sharp polemic against substituting man's words for God's: Deut 18, 1 Kings 13, Isa. 29:13, Matt. 15:1-10, Gal. 1:8f, II Thes. 2:2.

2. The fact that Joshua and others added to the document despite the curse (Josh. 24:26) suggests that they regarded these additions as words of God, not merely words of men. For the logic of these "additions," see IV, A, 8.
3. At every point in redemptive history, the covenant revelation is sufficient for salvation and good works (II Tim. 3: 15ff). No one of God's people from earliest times can claim insufficient revelation as an excuse for sin. Yet God graciously gives much more as the history develops, opening the veil, leading us from shadow to glorious reality.

D. The Particular Sufficiency of the New Covenant Revelation

1. During the development of the canon, the objective sufficiency of covenant revelation was compatible with divinely authorized additions. Ought we to expect more of those?
2. No, for Jesus Christ is the final word of God to men (Heb. 1: 1-3, 2: 1-4). In Him we receive everything pertaining to life and godliness (II Pet. I :2f). On his word rests all sanctification until the eternal kingdom (II Pet. 1:4-11).
3. Scripture contains the all of the authorized (apostolic) new covenant revelation. Therefore, Scripture has the particular sufficiency noted here (D) as well as the more general sufficiency noted in C.

E. Misunderstandings Of Sufficiency

1. Sufficiency is not limited to "matters of salvation" in some narrow sense. Rather it is comprehensive. Scripture is sufficient to reveal God's will in all matters.
  - a. The statement in *Westminster Confession* I, vi, does mention salvation explicitly. However,
    - (1) The Confession does not regard salvation as something narrowly "religious" as over against other areas of life. Salvation is of the whole person.
    - (2) Besides salvation, the Confession refers to "all things necessary for his own glory," "faith," and "life."
    - (3) Nor is it possible to restrict "faith" and "life" to some narrowly defined compartment. Faith is what we believe, and life is what we do (cf. *Shorter Catechism*, Q. 3).

- b. Scripture places no limit on the sufficiency of Scripture in telling us the will of God. Rather, it speaks comprehensively of the sufficiency of Scripture to equip us "for every good work."
  - c. This is not to say that Scripture contains all the world's information or instructs us in all human skills. The point: in any area of life, our duty toward God will be an application of Scripture. Cf. 3, below, on the concept of "application."
2. Scripture is not merely sufficient as a general guide by which we discover divine norms beyond Scripture. Scripture contains all of God's authoritative requirements upon us.
- a. Scripture draws a sharp distinction between the sufficient word of God and the traditions of men. To promulgate a norm as God's will which is not an application of Scripture is to lie or at least to deny that distinction.
  - b. This misunderstanding gains its plausibility from the fact that indeed we do need extra-Scriptural information to apply Scripture. But that fact does not imply that we have duties which are not applications of Scripture (cf. 3, below).
  - c. Scripture never speaks of any extra-biblical norms which are not also found in Scripture. Romans 3: 1 f, in fact, may imply that the Scriptures contain a fuller transcript of God's will than what is available to the Gentiles in natural revelation.
3. Scripture does not rule out the use, even the necessity, of extra-biblical information in the determination of our duty before God ( cf. the relation of presuppositions to evidences in apologetics).
- a. God is revealed in the whole creation, though that revelation is opposed by the natural man.
  - b. Creation is the necessary medium by which the law is applied to specific situations.
    - (1) Note the moral syllogism: Sabbath breaking is wrong; operating a factory on Sunday is Sabbath breaking, therefore operating a factory on Sunday is wrong. In order to evaluate that syllogism, you need to know, not only something about the Bible, but extra- Scriptural information as well (What is a "factory"?). Most moral reasoning is of this kind.
    - (2) Scripture itself assumes that man will use his knowledge of creation in applying God's law. When God told Adam to abstain from the forbidden fruit, Adam had the knowledge of creation to distinguish trees from other things and to single out the particular tree in view, etc. God does not spell out explicitly in his revelation all this information. To do so would be ludicrous. It would also be impossible; for no matter how much detail is written down, there will always be need for a human act of application, i.e. seeing the relation between the writing and the situation and translating the writing into concrete obedience.
    - (3) In Scripture, men are rebuked for failing to make such applications to current questions: Matt. 16:3,22:29, Luke 24:25, John 5:39f, Rom.15:4, II Tim. 3:16f,II Pet. 1:19-21 (in context).
    - (4) If such applications of Scripture are not permitted, we could not ~ Scripture at all. We would then lack, in effect, not only the applications, but the norm itself. The meaning of Scripture 1'? its application. (Cf. *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God.*)



4. Sufficiency does not rule out the necessity of the illumination of the Spirit for a saving understanding of Scripture, for its proper use and application. Note statement in the Confession to this effect. In a sense, that illumination is a form of "revelation" (cf. II, C). Thus Scripture, even in its sufficiency, must be taken in correlation to event-revelation (point 3, above) and to person-revelation (this point). The concept of sufficiency must not be taken in such a way as to destroy the unity of the triad.
- F. Will there be New Revelation?
1. The Word as decree continues every day, every moment.
  2. God's address to all men in nature, history and man's constitution--likewise.
  3. Redemptive covenant revelation has ceased because completed in Christ There will therefore be no more Scripture.
  4. The word as God's presence, the application of the covenant revelation to God's people, continues. Note: do not be over intellectualistic in your conception of how this happens. It is essentially a work of God's grace. It operates on the mind, the will, the emotions, the whole person. It is not directly proportional to one's academic theological achievements.
  5. At the return of Christ will come the *apokalupsis*, the revelation "par excellence," when every eye shall see the Lord. This is revelation of an entirely different order. I Pet. 1:7,4:13, I Cor. 1:7, Rom. 8:19, Luke 17:30, II Thes. 1:7.
- G. Response to Alternative Positions
1. Roman Catholicism
    - a. Recent Roman Catholic thought regards Scripture and tradition, not as two distinct sources of authority, but as a single stream.
    - b. That stream, however, is the stream on tradition. On this view, Scripture itself is a tradition. So its authority is correlative to the authority of post-canonical tradition. Roman Catholic theology still fails to maintain a clear distinction between the scriptural Word of God and the words or men.
  2. Charismatic Theology
    - a. Most Charismatics do want to maintain a clear distinction between the authority of Scripture and that of the continuing prophecies they acknowledge.
    - b. However, they are unclear, and somewhat divided among themselves, as to how this distinction should be drawn.
    - c. These lectures provide "talking points" between Reformed and Charismatic Christians:
      - i. The senses in which revelation continues.
      - ii. The sense in which God gives words to uninspired preachers and teachers.
      - iii. The importance of the Spirit's illumination or "existential revelation."
        - a) When we feel we need enlightenment beyond our normal reading of Scripture, this is what we need.
        - b) Not
          - i) Mere academic study of the Word, as some Reformed would advocate.
          - ii) Continuing prophecy, as Charismatics typically want (Desiring more prophecy is also intellectualist, assuming that what we need are more words to examine.)
        - c) Our real need at those times is for God to impress on our minds and hearts the content of his written Word, so that we can understand and apply it.

3. Protestant Traditionalism: In my view, there is much confusion today in the protestant churches between what God has actually commanded and what comes only from human tradition:
  - a. Fundamentalism on the use of wine, etc.
  - b. Strict subscription to confessions. (Two forms)
    - i. Required subscription to every statement in the confession.
    - ii. Allowance for exceptions, but prohibitions against teaching those exceptions.
    - iii. Comment: on these views, the confession may never be questioned in the church, so it can never be reformed according to the Word of God. Such a position, therefore, in my view, violates the principle of Sola Scriptura
  - c. Traditionalist orientations regarding worship and other aspects of church life. See Frame, "Traditionalism." Many today would limit, for example, the ways in which the church may worship, not on the basis of any credible biblical argument, but on the basis of dubious aesthetic criteria, or out of a desire to follow a historical model. This type of approach does not do justice to sola Scriptura.

FRAME\_Doctrine of the Word of God.indd 2 9/23/10 6:03:08 PM. faithfulness. But mostly I trust the God whom John Frame worships with such passion. A case in point is The Doctrine of the Word of God. This (along with the three other volumes in this series) will be one of the most valuable books in your library, and you'll rise up and call me blessed for recommending it to you. "Steve W. Brown, Professor of Preaching Emeritus, Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando. The doctrine of the eternity of man cannot be supported. Fossil remains extend back but 6,000 years. Man is an effect; he has not always existed." The emphasis in this verse is on the word "God," and may read, "GOD no one has seen at any time." In 5:37 Jesus says: "Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape." From This it seems clear that the "seeing" here, the which has been the privilege of no man, refers to the essence rather than to the person of God, if such a distinction can really be made. God Word as His Personal Presence 16. The Permanence of God's Written Word 41. Assurance 44. Writing on the Heart. ! Appendix A: Antithesis and the Doctrine of Scripture. To purchase the entire work, please visit the Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing website here. A Theology of Lordship. A series by John M. Frame. He knew, somehow, that God had spoken to him, and he knew what God expected him to do. 3. FRAME\_Doctrine of the Word of God.indd 3. 9/23/10 6:03:10 PM. 4 Orientation. We question Abraham at this point, as did Søren Kierkegaard in Fear and Trembling.1 But if God is God, if God is who he claims to be, isn't it likely that he is able to persuade Abraham that the speaker is really he? Isn't he able to unambiguously identify himself to Abraham's mind? : God the Father, God the Son God the Holy Spirit The Church and the Last Things Great Doctrines No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam. 337 Pages·2010·1.28 MB·69,174 Downloads·New! Reza\_Aslan\_No\_god\_but\_God\_\_The\_Origins,\_Evolutio(b-ok\_org).pdf No god but God: The Origins The Ministry of God's Word. The Ministry of God's Word. WATCHMAN NEE. Christian Fellowship Publishers, Inc. New York. Page 2 The Power Of Your Words: How God Can Bless Your Life Through The Words You Speak. 170 Pages·2016·1.01 MB·2,718 Downloads·New! The Power Of Your Words: How God Can Bless Your Life Through The Words You Speak Robert Morris God speaks but Word is one of Jesus's names. God's personal communications take other forms, through prophets, apostles, and the written Word. Sloppy editing and unjustified length aside, the book is a very good treatment of the doctrine of God's word, though those who've read Packer, Grudem, or others won't much new ground, and those new to it probably won't have the patience. Most illuminating, however, were Frame's radical critiques of contemporary Christian intellectualism.

God then created man from the dust of the earth, and he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being (Genesis 1:1-2 NIV) (Genesis 2:8 NIV). In this essay I will explain how the doctrine of the Word of God impacts and affects the career choice I have made in become a Clinical Christian Counselor, made in the image of God. Having a biblical worldview affects every fiber of a person's existence and every part of their lives. Therefore, a career will not contradict the morals of any person nor will it refuse the existence of the glory of God. Deciding on a career should be a platform for displaying and modeling your biblical worldview in of the lives of other people to model from. Fred Zaspel reviews John M. Frame's "The Doctrine of the Word of God" (P&R, 2011), the fourth and final volume in the Theology of Lordship series. Can anything new be said about the doctrine of Revelation and Scripture? We've had Augustine, Calvin, Westminster, and now a century of continued discussion since the watershed moment of Warfield, and we wonder with each new book on the subject what it could possibly have to offer. Truthfully, not a lot has been added since Warfield in terms of substance. But it is of the nature of divine revelation that it is inexhaustible and ever affords fresh insights into "old" truth. And in this volume well-known Reformed theologian John Frame provides the fruit of more than 40 years of faithful and insightful reflection on this most basic doctrine. Only RUB 220.84/month. Grudem/The Doctrine of the Word of God. STUDY. Flashcards. a phrase that refers to several different things in the bible, including the son of god, the decrees of god, god's words of personal address, god's words spoken through human lips (prophets), and god's words in written form (the bible). decree. the eternal plans of god whereby, before the creation of the world, he determined to bring about everything that happens. personal address. a form of god's word in which he speaks directly to people on earth. apocrapha. the collection of books included in the canon of scripture by the roman catholic church but not included in the canon by protestants. apostle. While the developed doctrine of the Trinity is not explicit in the books that constitute the New Testament, the New Testament possesses a "triadic" understanding of God[6] and contains a number of Trinitarian formulas.[7] The doctrine of the Trinity was first formulated among the early Christians and fathers of the Church as early Christians attempted to understand the relationship between Jesus. In the Pauline epistles, the public, collective devotional patterns towards Jesus in the early Christian community are reflective of Paul's perspective on the divine status of Jesus in what scholars have termed a "binitarian" pattern or shape of devotional practice (worship) in the NT, in which "God" and Jesus are thematized and invoked.[12] Jesus receives prayer (1 Cor. The doctrine of the eternity of man cannot be supported. Fossil remains extend back but 6,000 years. Man is an effect; he has not always existed. The emphasis in this verse is on the word "God," and may read, "GOD no one has seen at any time." In 5:37 Jesus says: "Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape." From This it seems clear that the "seeing" here, the which has been the privilege of no man, refers to the essence rather than to the person of God, if such a distinction can really be made.