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THE EXISTENTIALIST INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE

by

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We begin with a discussion of Existentialism in general. "Existentialism" is a mood in which thinking is done. It is not a philosophy with a single set of principles. It strives to discover "authentic existence." The name and the quest are the only two things all Existentialists have in common.

Martin Heidegger is primarily interested in finding the form "being" which is the specific being of man ("Existenz" and not "Vorhandenheit"). "Dasein" (that being who exists as "Existenz" and not "Vorhandenheit") is always a "who" and never a "what." Two possibilities for action are open to "Dasein" - existential (i.e. things he can or cannot do simply because he has the same physical and mental endowments as all other humans) and "existentiell" (i.e. things he can or cannot do simply because of his own individual physical and/or mental endowments or lack of same). "Dasein" can act either authentically or inauthentically. He may progress from inauthentic to authentic existence if he listens to his conscience which makes him aware of his powerlessness. "Dasein," in an inauthentic state, is characterized by dread which is the obscure consciousness of death. But the fundamental structure of man is care which is the stage inauthentic man must go through as he tries to become authentic. The nature of man is "Geschichte" (i.e. transcending the temporal) and not "Historie" (i.e. limited to the temporal).

We take note of the fact that Bultmann has a corresponding concept for each of the main areas of Heidegger's thought.

Bultmann's "God" is non-anthropomorphic. He sees "God" as that force or power in the universe which can give an individual greater self-

knowledge (i.e. authentic existence).

Bultmann feels the New Testament shows one how to attain authentic existence. The kerygma teaches this. In order to hear it, however, one must have the preunderstanding of one's own existence and also demythologize the text (i.e. strip away the myth and give it an existential interpretation). Form Criticism is the first step in this demythologization process. Bultmann's goal is to make Christianity more intelligible to modern man.

To achieve authentic existence we must recognize our own powerlessness (i.e. "decision of faith") and accept it. At that point that process will begin working (i.e. "God") and we will find meaning in life. This decision of faith must be renewed constantly; but man cannot control even that. All is dependent upon "grace."

The basic criticism of Bultmann is that he contradicts himself by insisting on eliminating myth but also keeping the kerygma. There is no contradiction, however, if we remain aware of how Bultmann redefines "God," "Jesus," "kerygma," etc.

Buber's notion of the "I - Thou" relationship is as follows: One is aware of a Presence, and attempts to continue in this awareness. If "grace" allows same, one gets the sense of being raised and bound up in a relation of whose cause or mechanics one knows nothing. He is dumbfounded that his being and the being of the other are somehow coming together in some indescribable way. This experience fills him with the sense of life's meaningfulness.

God, for Buber, is that process or force in the universe which

makes authentic existence possible - since the Eternal Thou is at the core of each individual "I - Thou" relationship.

Buber's methodology in dealing with the Bible is very close to Bultmann's. He has concepts corresponding to "myth," "non-myth," "demythologizing," and "Form Criticism." "Miracle," for Buber, is when one enters an "I - Thou" relationship with the central element in a natural event. "Revelation" is when one attempts an "I - Thou" relationship and almost succeeds. Man is subordinate to God. God's will is "Justice and Love" (i.e. attempt "I - Thou" relationships - but remember it all depends on "grace"). The Sinaitic Revelation bound the Hebrews together in a community whose common goal it was to have each member attain "I - Thou" relationships so that the community could be an example to the rest of the world as to how to attain authentic existence.

Thus we see how two men, each using the same basic tools, come up with two different answers. Bultmann's "authentic existence" is basically isolationistic while Buber's depends on involvement with something outside of oneself.

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Chapter I

Existentialism and Rudolph Bultmann

Rudolph Bultmann is a modern Protestant Theologian whose philosophical work vis-a-vis the New Testament is largely indebted to Existentialism in general and to the particular Existentialist thought of Martin Heidegger. Thus, it seems most appropriate to begin our discussion of Bultmann's thought with a brief description of the broad outlines of Existentialism followed by a consideration of some of the high points in Heidegger's own brand of Existentialism. The chapter will conclude with a short comparison of some terms and concepts of Heidegger and Bultmann.

The great difficulty in attempting to formulate a definition of Existentialism is that its nature does not permit one to do so. Existentialism is not a philosophy or one single set of principles, but a number of philosophies - some of which are different from others. At best, we can describe Existentialism as a mood in which thinking is¹ done by a group of thinkers of very different outlooks.

The problem² with which the Existentialists are dealing is that of human existence. They are concerned with man choosing to make his³ existence authentic as opposed to inauthentic. They see man's existence as meaning that man is a free, self-transcending subject. In the process⁴ of studying this, they do so in a dramatic light. By this we mean that Existentialists use colorful and dramatic language in order to "break through the crust of social consciousness and crowd mentality and awaken the individual to a vision of his existential situation and of his responsibility and potentialities as a free individual."⁵ What they seem

to be trying to do is break down man's inhibitions with respect to honestly confronting himself as he really is.

But what is man really like? What is his existential situation? It is the human condition. It is the fact that man finds himself in the world as a finite, unstable being, menaced by death from the start. He is free and, thus, shapes himself by his choices. This makes him a⁶ subject and not an object.

At this point we can divide the Existentialists into two groups - those who accept a "Religious" solution to this problem and those who do not. But it is nevertheless true that whether they admit of the religious solution or not, all Existentialists "make allowance for some sort of movement of transcending or seeking beyond the immanent structure of human nature."⁷ In other words, the solutions to the problem of being which the various men in this movement come up with all deal with something more than the physical body and mind of the human organism.

How do the Existentialists go about their task? What kinds of⁸ questions do they ask? The following list gives us some type of idea as to the general areas they go into:

1. What does it mean to exist?
2. With what does one start?
3. How can one make the most of his worldly opportunity?
4. Does man have a given nature or does he make his nature?

In dealing with these and other related issues the Existentialists develop five areas (or "themes"). First of all they have a philosophy of⁹ Philosophy. Their's is a personalist approach to Philosophy which sees

Philosophy not merely as an interesting intellectual pastime, but a 10
pursuit involving the most momentous consequences for man's existence.

Secondly, the Existentialists strive for a renewal of metaphysics. They
begin the metaphysical inquiry with an analysis of the questioning self
and its situation. ¹¹ The third theme they develop is that of man and the
world. It is because man finds himself thrown into the world that the
Existentialist dialectic comes about. ¹² That is to say that if man found
himself on this planet alone, he would not be faced with the problem of
how to be authentic in the midst of an impersonal "Das Man" which seems
to be able to rob him of his authenticity completely if he gives into it.

Fourthly, there is the theme of man and his fellow man. As is obvious
¹³ it is hard to distinguish this then from the one we just mentioned.

The distinction might best be described thusly: The theme of man and
the world deals with how man copes with the problem of maintaining his
authenticity in the midst of an impersonal society which is trying to rob
him of it. The theme of man and fellow man deals with the problem of how
to maintain authenticity at any given moment with any other given finite
human being who may also try to rob him of his authenticity. The reverse
is also true - "Other existents cannot be approached as utensils but only
as free selves, jointly present in and to the world." ¹⁴ The fifth and
¹⁵ final theme is that of man and God. We have already seen that not all
Existentialists accept a religious answer to the problem of being, but
even these look beyond the individual.

What is Existentialism? It is a name by which various men call
themselves or are called by others. This name plus their common quest for

a solution to the problem of human existence are the only two things they may have in common. Some accept Kierkegaard's "leap of faith" to God as a means of attaining authentic existence - others do not. We shall now turn to one Existentialist in particular - Martin Heidegger - a so-called "non-Religious" Existentialist. This, however, is an appellation¹⁶ which one writer, at least, is not willing to grant as entirely correct. Heidegger is considered the man who most contributed to the development¹⁷ of the purely philosophical side of the Existentialist movement.

Heidegger attempts to find an answer to the question "What is¹⁸ Being in itself?" He is concerned with, if you will, the form "being" and not with any particular being (i.e. God) or group of beings (i.e. men, etc.). He is looking for that common element by virtue of which all beings are properly called such. It does not seem that Heidegger can avoid this analysis of his work since it really is not the case (as some would have us believe) that if there were Being apart from beings it would be a¹⁹ being. It is true that it would exist; but this is not the same thing as being a being - at least in the ontological sense in which Heidegger takes this term. The fact that he begins his analysis of Being with an analysis of man "as the being who is open to Being"²⁰ takes the problem outside of the realm of semantics and into the realm of ontology. If Heidegger were merely interested in an analysis of what it means "to be," he would have done so. But by analysing man, he is telling us that man's being consists of something other than mere existence. Thus, Heidegger, himself, sees the distinction between "being" and "existence." Thus, it seems that we are justified in claiming that what Heidegger is looking

for is the form "Being" - a form which exists but which is not a being.

This is not really totally farfetched if we examine Heidegger's work. We know that he is studying "Dasein" - the "being there" which is the mode of existence peculiar to human beings.²¹ His aim is to discover the totality of "Dasein" which is composed of both "Existenz" and "Vorhandenheit."²² "Vorhandenheit" applies to everything which is (including inanimate objects). This could probably best be described as a valid description of any given thing to which an existential quantifier could correctly be connected in a given symbolized sentence which talks about that thing. "Existenz," however, is something more. This term can only be used to describe the being of a subgroup of those objects whose existence is described as "Vorhandenheit." This term is reserved only for the being of man - "Dasein."²³ The specific characteristics of this will be discussed shortly. For the moment our discussion must remain on a more general level if we are to get a complete over-view of Heidegger's work.

"Dasein" for Heidegger must always be understood as being a "who" and not a "what."²⁴ "Dasein" has two possibilities for action - "existentiell" and existential.²⁵ The former refers to the possibilities for action which any individual "Dasein" may or may not have open to him depending upon his individual circumstances (i.e. a "Dasein" born without legs does not have the "existentiell" possibility of becoming a track star given the lack of ability of modern surgery to give him functional limbs). The latter refers to those possible actions open to every "Dasein" simply because he is a "Dasein" - provided, of course, nothing in the life of a

given "Dasein" makes such an existential possibility an impossible "existentiell" one. In such a case the existential possibility is still open to the particular "Dasein" but he may never be able to do it because he doesn't have the "existentiell" possibility.

Besides these two possibilities for action there are two other areas which classify the actions of "Dasein." Every "Dasein" is a member of "the one" by virtue of the fact that he was born on this planet. To the extent that he becomes immersed in crowd-consciousness in order to gain assurance at the expense of personal responsibility and self-direction, to that extent his existence is termed "unauthentic."

"Authentic existence" is predicated of those men who, within limits at least, assume personal responsibility for their destiny, freely choosing their own possibilities, above all the destiny to death.²⁶ A second aspect of inauthentic existence is that the inauthentic man will be preoccupied with the world of things and fail to realize the gulf²⁷ which separates his being from the being of the world.

The term Heidegger uses for this first threat to the authenticity of "Dasein" is "Das Man."²⁸ It is impossible, according to Heidegger, for one to have a purely authentic existence given "Das Man," for a man always retains his membership in "the one." But authentic existence is possible within limits.²⁹

How does one move from inauthentic to authentic existence? For Heidegger it seems to be when one opens himself up to the call of his conscience. "Conscience" for Heidegger is something other than that internal censor which voices the standards and customs of "Das Man."³⁰ Conscience is the call of the authentic self to the fallen self.

Conscience belongs to the very structure of man's being. In the fallen man these two selves are split. But this can only be understood if the authentic self is conceived of in terms of possibility.³¹

Conscience summons man to guiltiness. "Guilt" means (in ordinary language) something is owing for which I am responsible. In other words, something is lacking. For Heidegger, what is lacking to which conscience summons man is man's ability to master the possibilities for which conscience demands that we accept responsibility.³² In other words, what Heidegger seems to be saying is that conscience summons man to become aware of his powerlessness.

We are now ready to examine some of the more specific characteristics of "Dasein" in the light of the above description of his existential situation. The first thing we note is that inauthentic man has a feeling of Dread. Dread is the obscure consciousness of the individual's ultimate end.³³ - the fact that "my being is a flight from nothingness to nothingness."³⁴

But the fundamental structure of man is care. The three elements of care give man's nature past, present, and future. Man's concern with what he is to be - i.e. Existenz and self-projection ground the future. The fact that man finds himself thrown into the world grounds the past.³⁵ Finally, being with things in the world grounds the present. This state of care is the middle ground between inauthentic and authentic existence.³⁶

It should be noted at this time that this is the second time we have had occasion to mention that man's being transcends himself. How is this possible. How can we refer to man's authentic self as "possible" or that man is composed of "future?" The reason is that man is historical, not in the sense of "Historie" but in the sense of "Geschichte." The former

refers to the study of events which took place on a certain date and which can be verified by ordinary experience. The latter, however, refers to the study of events which have no temporal reality. Such "Geschichte" events didn't just happen at one set time in the past - they are constantly occurring, and will continue to do so. ³⁷ With respect to man, the idea that he is "Histroical" in the "Geschichte" sense of the word seems to imply that as long as man lives he will always have before him, in his own being, possibilities for actions in the "Historical" ("Historie") future which nevertheless are part of his "Historical" ("Historie") present existence.

To summarize our study of Heidegger's thought we can say that he is primarily interested in finding the form "being" which is the specific being of man ("Existenz" and not "Vorhandenheit"). "Dasein" (that being who exists as "Existenz" and not "Vorhandenheit") is always a "who" and never a "what." Two possibilities for action are open to "Dasein" - existential and "existentiell." As "Dasein" acts he can do so in either an authentic or an inauthentic manner. He may progress from inauthentic to authentic existence if he listens to his conscience which makes him aware of his true state of powerlessness. "Dasein" in an inauthentic state is characterized by dread which is the obscure consciousness of death. But the fundamental structure of man is care which is the stage inauthentic man must go through as he tries to become authentic. The nature of man is "Geschichte" and not "Historie."

We now turn our attention to the final portion of this chapter - namely, how much of Heidegger is in Bultmann. Since this precedes our discussion of Bultmann's thought we will simply point out those terms and concepts which are to be found both in Heidegger and Bultmann. That there is such correspondence will become evident as we subsequently work out

Bultmann's thought more fully.

One further word. It has been pointed out that even though one can show that Bultmann borrows much from Heidegger, the leading ideas of the philosophy of existence are not peculiar to the twentieth century, but rather represent a rediscovery of truths which appeared very early in the history of Philosophy - some of which were familiar to Biblical writers. This is important lest one feel that Bultmann is reading something into the Bible which is not there. But this statement does not relieve Bultmann of the charge that he derives much of his thought from Heidegger since Bultmann's Existentialism did not appear until after Heidegger. 38

Of the main areas of Heidegger's thought Bultmann has a corresponding concept for each. Bultmann makes the distinction between existential and "existentiell" possibilities. He has concepts which correspond to "Das Man," care (although he uses the term in a way different from the way Heidegger uses it), inauthentic existence, authentic existence, being with others not as an object but as a coexistent, dread, and "Dasein." Bultmann also makes the distinction between "Historie" and "Geschichte."

FOOTNOTES

1. James Brown, Subject and Object in Modern Theology, p. 85.
2. Frederick Copleston, Contemporary Philosophy, p. 144.
3. Ibid., p. 145.
4. Ibid., p. 144.
5. Ibid., p. 143.
6. Ibid., p. 201.
7. James Collins, The Existentialists, p. 10.
8. George W. Davis, Existentialism and Theology, pp. 5-6.
9. Collins, op. cit., p. 193.
10. Davis, op. cit., p. 6.
11. Collins, op. cit., p. 196.
12. Ibid., p. 202.
13. Ibid., p. 210.
14. Ibid., p. 217.
15. Ibid.
16. Copleston, op. cit., p. 176.
17. Brown, op. cit., p. 85.
18. Copleston, op. cit., p. 177.
19. Ibid., p. 178.
20. Ibid.
21. Brown, op. cit., p. 88.
22. John Macquarrie, An Existentialist Theology, p. 87.
23. Ibid., p. 32.
24. Ibid., p. 37.
25. Ibid., p. 34.
26. Copleston, op. cit., p. 180.

27. Macquarrie, op. cit., p. 101.
28. Copleston, loc. cit.
29. Ibid., p. 180.
30. Macquarrie, op. cit., p. 145
31. Ibid., p. 142 - 143.
32. Ibid., pp. 144-145.
33. Copleston, loc. cit.
34. Ibid., p. 182.
35. Ibid., p. 181.
36. Macquarrie, op. cit., p. 159.
37. L. Malevez, The Christian Message and Myth, pp. 73-74 and Macquarrie, op. cit., pp. 160-161.
38. Macquarrie, op. cit., p. 108.
39. John Macquarrie, The Scope of Demythologizing, p. 149.
40. Macquarrie, An Existentialist Theology, p. 98.
41. Ibid., p. 115.
42. Ibid., p. 104.
43. Ibid., p. 206.
44. Ibid., p. 212.
45. Ibid., p. 80.
46. Malevez, op. cit., pp. 29-30.
47. Ibid., p. 73.

Chapter II

The Theology of Rudolph Bultmann

It is the purpose of this chapter to discuss and to attempt to clarify just what Bultmann means when he uses the word "God." Such an analysis will go a long way towards helping understand in greater depth Bultmann's existentialist interpretation of the New Testament.

We begin, then, by asking the question "Can we speak of God as acting and still remain outside the realm of the mythological?" Bultmann feels we can speak meaningfully and non-mythologically about God as acting; but such usage is very much different from what we might first imagine it to be. In mythological thinking the action of God is seen as breaking into the natural course of events. It breaks in but¹ also links those events. Bultmann's non-mythological notion of God's actions sees God working not outside of worldly events or even with such events on an empirically verifiable level. Rather, Bultmann says that such an action of God "...is not visible, not capable of objective, scientific proof which is possible only within an objective view of the world. To the scientific observer God's action is a mystery."² In other words, God's actions happen within worldly events; but such actions are hidden from every eye except the eye of faith.³

But there is more to God's action than such an objective understanding, for God's actions are just not that separate from the individual. "In faith I can understand an accident with which I meet as a gracious gift of God or as His punishment, or as His chastisement. On the other hand, I can understand the same accident as a link in the chain of the natural

course of events." At first this may seem like a very trivial view of "miracle," but it need not be. "Belief in the almighty God is genuine only when it actually takes place in my very existence, as I surrender myself to the power of God who overwhelms me here and now." This is not just a case of calmly and coolly saying "I choose to call this occurrence a miracle; but that one I will simply view as a naturally caused event." Something happens to the individual - something existential - which makes him realize (not necessarily on an intellectual level) that God is addressing him in this perfectly natural and (scientifically) explainable event. This is the reason Bultmann maintains that statements of belief in God are not general statements once and for all - but they constantly arise anew out of new "meetings" with God.

This personal, momentary experience is the only evidence for Bultmann's claim of God's working within events. He makes this quite clear when he tells us:

Christian faith can only say, "I trust that God is working here and there, but His action is hidden, for it is not directly identical with the visible event. What it is that He is doing I do not yet know, and perhaps I never shall know it, but faithfully I trust that it is important for my personal existence, and I must ask what it is that God says to me. Perhaps it may be only that I must endure and be silent."

In the eyes of anyone who was not sympathetic to the orientation of the Existentialists such a statement could immediately be taken as a complete admission of the unscientific nature of the arguments and conclusions of the writer. This, however, is not our viewpoint. We do see a great deal of value in approaching reality in a mere "human" manner. Such personal involvements seem to be able to give one greater insights and gratifications which the detached "scientific method" deprives one of. Nevertheless, we

must not abandon all appeal to reason, thus limiting our ability to make a fair and honest judgment of Bultmann's work.

With this in mind, we move a bit deeper into the experience of being confronted with God. Bultmann tells us that when we emerge from such an experience and use such terms as "God loves me," "God is my father," etc., we are speaking in an analogical sense. We don't mean that God literally looks like a man or that He loves me like my father loved me (i.e. embraces, pat on the back, etc.). What Bultmann seems to be saying here is that when we do perceive one of God's miracles we get a certain feeling. If a human being instilled that identical feeling in us we would label it as "He loves me," "He protects me," etc. Since we acquired such feelings independent of either human beings and while experiencing an event which we felt was a miracle, we say that it was God who gave us that feeling and label it accordingly.⁸

Two points are immediately evident for Bultmann given this analysis. The first one is that the only legitimate statements about God which can be made are those which express the existential relation between God and man. Statements which speak of God's actions in any other way (i.e. as cosmic events, etc.) are illegitimate.⁹ Secondly, it is illegitimate to speak of God's will in any universal sense (i.e. political, juridical, etc.). Such statements are, at best, symbols. God must be seen as a personal being acting on persons.¹⁰

There are some objections which can be brought against such an analysis. The first one is that God's actions are deprived of any objective reality. They are, by Bultmann's analysis, reduced to purely subjective, psychological experience.¹¹ In attempting to answer this Bultmann reminds us that "...the affirmations of faith in its relation

to its object, to God, cannot be proved objectively." ¹² But Bultmann does attempt to point out that the experience of God's actions need not necessarily be seen as only being within the individual. He points out that faith grows out of an encounter with the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God. Faith is simply hearing this - but not as a manual of doctrine or a record of a faith I sympathize with - but hearing it as ¹³ the kerygma which is addressed to me personally.

At this point the following observation seems to be in order. Bultmann's reply sounds very much like question-begging. He was asked to show how his analysis did not make the notion of "God's actions" purely a subjective one. He answered by saying that no such objective proof is possible. But he didn't leave us there. He did say that we have some indication of the fact that God's actions are external to man. He used as his prime example the kerygma of the New Testament which the man of faith hears as the Word of God addressed to him. Thus, since the New Testament is external to man, and since man's faith grows out of the New Testament, God's action (viz. the proclamation) is external to man. What he has done here is an evasion of the issue. What evidence do we have that the kerygma of the New Testament is external to the man of faith - especially in the light of the fact that it is not really God's proclamation until the individual reading (or hearing) it decides to let it be so? I as a Jew, for instance, do not read the New Testament in that manner. Why should I? No evidence has been brought to bear which convinces me that I am missing anything by reading it without such "faith."

A second objection which Bultmann considers with respect to his analysis is the following: If we can speak of faith only in terms of

personal existence, and faith is regarded (as Bultmann does regard it) as bringing redemption, it seems to follow that what faith brings is a new understanding of ourselves. "In short, revelation is not recognized as a wonder. Then, the objection goes on, nothing happens but understanding or consciousness of the self; the content of the self-understanding is a timeless truth; once perceived it remains valid without regard to the occasion, namely, revelation which has given rise to it."¹⁴

Bultmann's response to this is clear and most satisfactory. It involves the distinction between "existential" and "existentielle" with which we dealt quite fully in the previous chapter. Suffice it to say for the moment that the former term refers to the existence of mankind as a whole whereas the latter refers to the personal existence of any particular man. Bultmann's answer to the problem is that revelation gives the individual "existentiell" knowledge and not "existential" knowledge. In other words, he gains no ultimate philosophical truths about the nature of "existence" in the abstract, etc. He does gain some insight into himself as a person and how that self and the relationships in which it is involved can be seen as being together in some way.¹⁵ If we are not totally clear as to the content of revelation it is no problem since this too will be dealt with in much greater depth in chapter 4. What is important is that we be clear that the content (whatever it is specifically) is "existentielle" and not "existential."

A third, and final, objection to Bultmann's analysis is this: If God acts only with the individual here and now how can we speak of His having acted once and for all on behalf of the whole world?¹⁶ Bultmann answers this in the same manner as he did the second. He alludes, again,

to a distinction in terms. This time the terms are "historie" and "geschichte" - two more terms which we had occasion to discuss in the last chapter. "Historie" simply refers to that which occurred at a given time or place in the past. Bultmann sees Jesus of Nazareth as such an historical person.¹⁷ But he was also a "geschichte" - type person. What happened to him and its results for men is still happening and will continue to happen - it is happening here and now,¹⁸ Because Jesus really lived and could be located in time, the redemptive results of his death have historical (viz. "historie") validity. But because it was such an extraordinary event which is outside the bounds of time, it has a timeless, or eternal (viz. "geschichte"), validity. Thus, one's personal involvement with God at any given moment in objective "historie" (and we saw that he could participate in the redemptive event of "historie" only because that event was also outside of "historie" and was "geschichte") does not imply that that same event couldn't have also occurred at another point in "historie."

What, then, can be said about the nature of Bultmann's God? Even if we grant Bultmann everything he wants us to we still come up with a very strange type of picture. The only way Bultmann will allow us to talk about God is in terms of His relations with individual persons. But He isn't a God with anthropomorphic characteristics - that Bultmann is very explicit about. His actions can be perceived only through faith. Faith gives the individual greater self-understanding (vis-a-vis himself personally). Events of "historie" in which God acts are available to everyone for all time because they are also "geschichte."

Thus, it seems the best we can do is describe Bultmann's God as that force or process in the universe which, if an individual will submit himself to (i.e. be willing to experience, etc.) will give that individual greater self-knowledge. Much more has to be said about this whole procedure for gaining this revelation, and it is to this procedure, the core of Bultmann's message, that our next two chapters will direct themselves.

FOOTNOTES

1. Rudolph Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, p. 61.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 62.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 63.
6. Ibid., p. 64.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., pp. 68-69.
9. Ibid., p. 69.
10. Ibid., p. 70.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p. 72.
13. Ibid., p. 71.
14. Ibid., p. 73.
15. Ibid., p. 74.
16. Ibid., p. 78.
17. Ibid., p. 80.
18. Ibid., p. 82.

Chapter III

Bultmann's Methodology

At first glance the Biblical work of Rudolph Bultmann seems to go in all directions at once. Individual terms, areas of inquiry, and philosophical statements seem to be in direct conflict with one another. However, after carefully working through most of the available material written on or by Bultmann, it becomes quite evident that his message is both simple and consistent in itself. Basically, Bultmann is outlining for his reader a process which, if followed diligently, will give one the greatest of all gifts - one's authentic existence. But the road towards authentic existence is found in the Bible, and so that is where we must begin. It is the purpose of this chapter to show how Bultmann interprets the New Testament so that it yields the guidelines man needs to follow in order to attain his goal.

As one picks up the New Testament, what should his first thoughts be? It is Bultmann's view that no one can understand any historical document without "preunderstanding" ("Vorverstandniss"). This pre-understanding partially consists of the awareness of the interpreter that there is a commonality between him and the author. Each has a special living relation to the subject - they have a common interest in a common¹ subject.

But this is not to say that "preunderstanding" is the same as "prejudgment."² What preunderstanding is preunderstanding of is one's own existence. This is most understandable since the subject of the New Testament is nothing other than the question of man. It talks about human potential, not just in general but each reader's own individual

potential. It gives one not merely information about man in general, but also an insight into the existential significance of human life.³

And so we see that before one even opens the New Testament that individual must be aware of his own existence as a human being. He must realize that the Bible talks mainly about human existence and what its potentials are. It speaks not only about human existence in general, but gives each individual reading it some personal information or insight.

What is the central message of the New Testament which the reader will be looking for? It is known by the term "kerygma," which means "proclamation." The kerygma of the New Testament is the proclamation that God, in and through the historic Jesus of Nazareth, performed a redemptive act of such magnitude that it was sufficient to deliver man from the power of sin, and lead him from death into authentic life.⁴

But how can such an act, no matter how significant it was in the past, help the 20th century reader find authentic existence? The key lies in the word "Historical." German has two words for our one - "historisch" and "geschichtlich." By applying both of these terms to God's actions through Jesus, Bultmann maintains that the same act which saved so many centuries ago can still save us today and our descendants in the future. The distinction between these two terms (as we saw in chapters 1 and 2) is as follows: "Historisch" refers to an event or fact which took place on a certain date and which can be verified either by ordinary experience or with the aid of the historical method. "Geschichtlich," on the other hand, refers to a non-temporal (but nevertheless a real) event. The event is not connected with a date and cannot be verified in the same manner as one of the "Historisch" variety.⁵ And so we see that because of

the non-temporal, timeless quality of God's actions in the historical ("historisch") past, the man of today is capable of attaining the same authentic life as those before him.

But one cannot simply open up the New Testament and hear this pure message of the kerygma so clearly and distinctly. In order to be able to do that one must read the New Testament in a very special way. That special way is to read it after one has gone through the process of demythologizing ("entmythologisierung") the New Testament.⁶ If the New Testament contains a truth which is quite independent of its mythical setting (and Bultmann certainly seems to feel that it does), then theology must undertake the task of stripping the Kerygma from its mythical framework through the process of demythologization.⁷ But "stripping away" the myth is not the whole answer. Once one recognizes the mythical elements in the New Testament, one must then interpret these existentially in order to find the pure message of the kerygma.⁸ Thus, we see that demythologizing is a two-fold process of recognition followed by interpretation.

But what is it that we seek to recognize? What is "myth"? "Mythology" can be defined as "the use of imagery to express the other-worldly in terms of this world." It can also be defined simply as "a narrative of the gods," since it reports events or occurrences in which supernatural elements or beings are at work. In short, myth describes man's life in terms of his relationship to the divine.⁹

Just how strictly Bultmann adheres to this definition is a subject we will have to consider seriously later on. But for the moment let us take his definition as it stands. The following is an illustration of "myth" - the cosmology of the New Testament:

The cosmology of the New Testament is essentially mythical in character. The world is viewed as a three-storied structure, with the earth in the centre, the heaven above, and the underworld beneath. Heaven is the abode of God and of celestial beings - the angels. The underworld is hell, the place of torment. Even the earth is more than the scene of natural, everyday events, of the trivial round and common task. It is the scene of the supernatural activity of God and his angels on the one hand, and of Satan and his daemons on the other. These supernatural forces intervene in the course of nature and in all that men think and will and do. Miracles are by no means rare. Man is not in control of his own life. Evil spirits may take possession of him. Satan may inspire him with evil thoughts. Alternatively, God may inspire his thoughts and guide his purposes. He may grant him heavenly visions. He may allow him to hear his word of succour or demand. He may give him the supernatural power of his Spirit. History does not follow a smooth unbroken course; it is set in motion and controlled by these supernatural powers. This aeon is held in bondage by Satan, sin and death (for "powers" is precisely what they are), and hastens towards its end. That end will come very soon, and will take the form of a cosmic catastrophe. It will be inaugurated by the "woes" of the last time. Then the Judge will come from heaven, the dead will rise, the last judgement will take place, and men will enter into eternal salvation or damnation.¹⁰

From what has been said thus far, one could conclude that Bultmann's entire purpose is to make religion more acceptable to modern man. This is not the case. The purpose of demythologizing, according to Bultmann, is to make the Christian faith clearer to modern man. Since modern man lives at a time when his world view is determined by science, the myth of the New Testament (its cosmology, etc.) must be removed so that there will be no more false stumbling blocks to an understanding of the true¹¹ meaning of Christianity - the pure message of the kerygma.

But our grasp of demythologizing is not complete yet; for although we have some understanding of the first part of the process (i.e. recognizing myth and stripping it away), we still have to clarify the second part - namely, "What is the nature of this 'existential' interpretation which we impose on the myth?" In English we have only the one

word "existential," but in German there are two - "existential" and "existentiell."¹² (This is the same type of phenomenon we encountered above with the word "historical.") We must apply both an existential and an existentiell interpretation to the myths of the New Testament if we want to be doing true demythologization.

At this point it would be logical to present Bultmann's entire demythologized New Testament. However, this is impossible since no such document exists. "Bultmann does not claim to offer us more than a first attempt, in broad outline."¹³ He leaves the working out of the details to future generations of scholars.¹⁴ But Bultmann has done some concrete work viz. Form Criticism. Form Criticism seems to be a method whereby (at least the first part of) demythologizing can be accomplished. What is Form Criticism? Its central principle is that the earliest gospel traditions circulated orally within the church. They were only later gradually collected, edited, revised and reset. Form Criticism consists in determining and restoring the original form of the gospel traditions.¹⁵

But the work of Form Criticism is not just that of description and classification. It also attempts to discover the "Sitz im Leben" - the "life situation" of the world in which this gospel tradition came about.¹⁶ However, this historical-environmental orientation is not within the scope of this paper.

What, then, can we say about Bultmann's methodology? Before one even begins reading the New Testament the individual must have the pre-understanding of his existence as a human being. He must be aware that the New Testament talks primarily of existence (in general and of his own particular existential possibilities). He is seeking the kerygma - the

proclamation of divine salvation through Jesus. That saving act of the past can also save us today because it is both "historisch" and "geschichtlich." But one cannot just open up the New Testament and find all of this neatly laid out. He discovers this only after he demythologizes the text. Form Criticism is an approach which seems to be able to partly accomplish this (viz. identify myth...but it says nothing of the second part, viz. existential interpretation of it). Bultmann is not doing all of this just to make Christianity more acceptable to modern man. He is doing it to make Christianity more intelligible to modern man.

FOOTNOTES

1. Heinrich Ott, "Rudolph Bultmann's Philosophy of History" in The Theology of Rudolph Bultmann, Charles W. Kegley, ed., p. 55.
2. Rudolph Bultmann, "Reply," in The Theology of Rudolph Bultmann, Charles W. Kegley, ed., p. 274.
3. Edwin M. Good, "The Meaning of Demythologization," in The Theology of Rudolph Bultmann, Charles W. Kegley, ed., p. 24.
4. George W. Davis, Existentialism and Theology, pp. 9-10.
5. L. Malevez, The Christian Message and Myth, pp. 73-74.
6. Davis, op. cit., p. 13.
7. Rudolph Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in Kerygma and Myth, Hans Werner Bartsch, ed, p. 3.
8. Ibid., p. 10.
9. Good, op. cit., p. 27.
10. Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," pp. 1-2.
11. Rudolph Bultmann, "The Case for Demythologization" in Myth and Christianity, by Karl Jaspers and Rudolph Bultmann, p. 59.
12. Eduard Ellwein, "Rudolph Bultmann's Interpretation of the Kerygma" in Kerygma and History, Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville, trans. and ed., p. 32.
13. Malevez, op. cit., p. 50.
14. Macquarrie, The Scope of Demythologizing, p. 211.
15. _____, "Preface to the Torchbook Edition" in Form Criticism, Frederick C. Grant, ed. p. lx.
16. Rudolph Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, trans. John Marsh, p. 4.

Chapter IV

Attaining the Goal

In the previous chapter we saw how Bultmann reads the New Testament in order to derive from it the promise of authentic existence. In this chapter we shall study the content of that promise. In other words, we shall try to determine just what the New Testament says (in the light of Bultmann's methodology) concerning how man can attain the goal of a truly meaningful life.

To begin with, Bultmann (like Heidegger) sees man as "Dasein."¹ He understands "Dasein" in basically the same sense as does Heidegger. As we have seen above, Dasein can be either in a state of authentic or inauthentic existence. Man, for Bultmann, has lost himself (i.e. is unauthentic) instead of being himself (i.e. being authentic).

To clarify this further we can say that inauthentic existence is a way of looking at the world which deceives the self. A man with such an outlook lives a life of care which is terminated by death. The great illusion in this type of existence is that man is the master of his own destiny and of his world. Occasionally anxiety breaks in to destroy this illusion, but Man flees from this realization and continues his self-deception until the illusion is finally shattered by death.²

What the inauthentically existing "Dasein" must now do to reach authentic existence is to make the decision of faith. "Faith" is the "...reaching toward the future, a future seized in the decision made in the present..."³ But faith is much deeper than this. It is a renunciation of all self-glorification; and yet even that knowledge must be gained from outside of Man. In other words, faith is not merely the abandoning

of the urge for self-recognition and self-glorification; it is also the knowledge (1) that this insight into his own limitations and that (2) authentic existence comes only through such an insight are both gifted to him from outside himself.⁴

With respect to the Kerygma we can say that "Faith is the decision in the face of the grace which confronts us in the proclamation of the Word."⁵ In other words, inauthentic man does make a decision in the face of the Kerygma, but this decision is only possible because God first made it possible for Man to make this decision. Man is free to accept or reject the possibility which God offers - a choice he wouldn't have if the possibility weren't there in the first place.⁶

But this is not the end of the matter. The decision of faith does not last forever. It has to be renewed and reconfirmed in each concrete situation the believer meets.⁷

We now ask the all-important question, "What happens to a man when he makes this decision of faith?" First of all, in making the decision of faith man also makes the transition from inauthentic to authentic existence. What is the nature of this transition? Essentially it consists in allowing oneself to be crucified along with Christ. One gives up all strivings to attain selfhood through his own efforts. This is the affirmative response to Scripture's cry for man to repent. God then saves this man and that man is given his life and selfhood from the hand of God exclusively.⁸

What Bultmann seems to be saying is that this transition brings man existential knowledge (or "understanding") of God. Another term for "existential knowledge" is "zuhanden" (i.e. discovering something in its

being - understanding which comes from experiencing the instrumental character of something) as opposed to "vorhanden" (considering something as purely an object).⁹ "Vorhanden" can also be rendered as "scientific knowledge."¹⁰

But the decision of faith gives man more than this. It also gives him justification. "Justification," for Bultmann, seems to mean that the previously inauthentic man is now pure and freed from sin (viz. the sin of self-glorification). But he doesn't get that way by himself. He takes the first step and God, even though the man is not pure yet, treats him as if he were pure and brings him all the way to being pure and, thus, closer to Him.¹¹ Thus, "justification" seems to mean "the state of being in complete faith" (in the sense of "faith" we saw above). In a sense, then, all that Bultmann is saying here is that the decision of faith brings the state of faith (with the help of God, of course). This statement will take on much greater significance in a few moments.

Finally, the decision of faith gives man revelation.¹² What is revelation? Bultmann tells us that, in general, it is "the disclosure of what is veiled, the opening up of what is hidden."¹³ This can be done in one of two ways - either by communication of knowledge by the word, or by an occurrence that puts one in a new situation as a self.¹⁴ From what we have seen so far it would seem that the decision of faith gives man revelation in both senses of the word. But, again, what is the nature of the revelation which man receives upon making the decision of faith? It is primarily self-understanding. But it is not the understanding of one's own being exclusively. By understanding his own being, man also

becomes more aware of "being" in general of which the mystery of God
 15
 consists.

At this point the reader may see an apparent contradiction. In chapter II we saw that revelation gives man existentielle knowledge of himself but not any philosophical truths about the nature of "existence" in the abstract. Haven't we now, in fact said, that revelation brings such abstract, general knowledge? No, at least not in the sense Bultmann seems to understand the term "philosophical truths." Earlier in this chapter we saw that the decision of faith gives man existential knowledge of God in the sense of "zuhanden" as opposed to "vorhanden." This is immediate, experiential knowledge which seems to be as temporary as the decision of faith itself. If every decision of faith brings such knowledge, and this decision must be constantly renewed, it seems to be the case that this knowledge is in need of constant renewal as well. The only other possibility is that the quality of this knowledge increases with each ensuing act of faith. But Bultmann nowhere, to the best of my knowledge, makes such a claim. Indeed, if this were the case, there would be no reason to suppose that the other products of the decision of faith might also not be given permanently the first time. This would lead to a most peculiar situation. We saw above that one of the things this decision of faith brings is justification. Further, we say that "justification" was nothing other than "the state of being in complete faith." If justification were given permanently but faith had to be constantly renewed, we would be forcing Bultmann into a contradiction which he obviously would not make.

Thus, it seems that what one receives in revelation is existentielle knowledge of his own being. This, then, gives that individual the existentielle (as opposed to "existential") possibility of understanding that which is beyond himself (i.e. "being," "the mystery of God," etc.) experientially (i.e. "zuhanden") but not scientifically (i.e. "vorhanden"). Of course that individual still has both the existential and the existentielle possibilities of having such "vorhanden" knowledge. The only point here is that the product of revelation is not such "vorhanden" understanding.

To put it as simply as possible, what Bultmann seems to mean is that once one has achieved (through grace, of course) experiential knowledge of his own being, he now can have such experiential knowledge of something outside of himself - even of "being" in general. The only thing is that such understanding is still of the temporary, experiential variety and not the permanent, scientific type.

We now come to the crux of the issue to which we have already hinted. "Faith," rather than simply being the transition from inauthentic to authentic existence, is in fact (for Bultmann) authentic existence; for "faith" is the category of authentic existence in terms of existentialist philosophy.¹⁶ Bultmann describes "authentic existence" in just the same terms he uses to describe "faith." He sees authentic existence as that state in which man gives up any idea that he can bring about his own security and happiness. He becomes conscious of his nothingness and is,¹⁷ thus, able to receive from God.

Let us now summarize our findings concerning Bultmann's approach to the New Testament. First of all we noticed that Bultmann's God seems to be a force or process in the universe which may give the individual who submits to it completely greater self-knowledge. From what we have

learned in this chapter about Bultmann's notion of "authentic existence," it seems reasonable to conclude that God, for Bultmann, is that process in the universe which makes it possible for man to attain authentic existence, and which is the source of any man's authentic existence. Secondly, we learned in chapter III just how Bultmann would have us read the New Testament in order to find the secret of authentic existence. We must come to it with some understanding of our own existence and of the fact that the Bible speaks primarily about existence - mine in particular as well as "existence" in general. Through demythologization (it's practical beginnings being Form Criticism) we are able to hear the pure message of the kerygma which tells us that authentic existence is just as possible for us today as it was for those living in the time of the historical ("historisch") Jesus. For God's saving act through Jesus is also of the "geschichtlich" variety and is, therefore available to us. Finally, in this present chapter, we saw just how Bultmann feels the New Testament tells us how to attain this authentic existence. We must make the decision of faith - we must recognize our own powerlessness to do anything for ourselves - submit ourselves to the fact of our nothingness. Then and only then will the promise of the Kerygma come about. We will not be lost in nothingness - that process in the universe will begin working on us and we will finally understand in a very "zuhanden" way what our existence is all about. We will also understand "existence" in general in the same way. This will fill our lives with meaning and significance, but not forever. We will constantly be tempted to rely on ourselves - we must fight such a temptation constantly and, thereby, continually renew our decision of faith - our decision that man is nothing and can become nothing without the "grace" of "God" outside of him.

FOOTNOTES

1. L. Malevez, The Christian Message and Myth, pp. 29-30.
2. John Macquarrie, An Existentialist Theology, pp. 125-126.
3. Gustaf Wingren, Theology in Conflict, p. 49.
4. Rudolph Bultmann, "Grace and Freedom," in Essays, James C.G. Greig, trans., p. 171.
5. Macquarrie, op. cit., p. 193.
6. Ibid., p. 196.
7. Malevez, op. cit., p. 54.
8. Roy A Harrisville, "Bultmann's Concept of the Transition From Inauthentic to Authentic Existence" in Kerygma and History, p. 216.
9. Macquarrie, op. cit., p. 48.
10. Ibid., p. 56.
11. Rudolph Bultmann, "Humanism and Christianity," in Essays, pp. 160-161.
12. John Macquarrie, The Scope of Demythologizing, p. 226.
13. Rudolph Bultmann, "The Concept of Revelation in the New Testament," in Existence and Faith, Schubert M. Ogden, trans., p. 59.
14. Ibid.
15. Macquarrie, The Scope of Demythologizing, p. 219.
16. Regin Prenter, "Myth and Gospel," in Kerygma and History, p. 128.
17. Malevez, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

Chapter V

A Significant Criticism of Bultmann's Approach

One could easily write many books dealing with the various criticisms made against Bultmann; and yet such a task really doesn't seem necessary. Nearly all of the arguments against Bultmann's suggestions center around one central flaw in his entire approach - he seems to contradict himself. Thus, he has been attacked both from the right and from the left - the former feeling he has gone too far, and the latter feeling that he has not gone far enough. This has resulted in the fact that "contradictory charges are made against Bultmann and he could not possibly¹ be guilty on both counts at once."

What, then, is the paradox in Bultmann? Simply stated, it is the fact that he speaks with two voices. Sometimes he leads us to believe that what is really important about the New Testament is God's dealings with men in Christ. At other times, however, he seems to be telling us that what the New Testament teaches about the philosophy of existence is² all-important.

Many writers have seen this paradox in Bultmann - among them are:
³ John Macquarrie, ⁴ Eduard Ellwein, ⁵ Ernst Kinder, ⁶ Walter Kunneth, ⁷ Regin Prenter, ⁸ L. Malevez, ⁹ and Gustaf Wingren.

The question now seems to be "Why should such a paradox have come about in Bultmann's writings?" Several answers have been suggested. The first one is that the New Testament does not speak to mankind as a whole, but only to believing Christians.¹⁰ Since Bultmann is offering an interpretation of a document which may, therefore, have many biases, his attempt at an objective analysis (if, indeed, he is making such an attempt) may contradict the things he is writing about. Along these same lines it

has been pointed out that Bultmann is the product of many influences -
 Existentialism, Christianity, and Liberal Modernism, to name a few.¹¹

These both seem to be plausible reasons for Bultmann's contradicting himself, but they do not exhaust the possibilities. A third suggestion is offered by Malevez who has pointed out that Bultmann may very well be guilty of vacillating between two usages of the word "myth." Simply stated, Malevez says that Bultmann sometimes uses "myth" in the broad sense of the word to mean "every type of divine intervention." Taken to its logical conclusion, this would call for Bultmann to "dekerygmataze" as well as demythologize the New Testament. On the other hand, Bultmann desires to keep the Kerygma as the essential element of the New Testament. When he speaks thusly he is using "myth" in the narrower sense - viz. "divine intervention conceived in terms of physical reality." But this, too, leads Bultmann into difficulty since it transforms an act of God into a mere subjective experience.¹² It is interesting to note that¹³ Wingren, and Macquarrie¹⁴ have also noticed this same difficulty in Bultmann.

Writers have made suggestions as to how this paradox can be vindicated. Their answers seem to basically consist of recognizing the value of each side of the dilemma. Davis, for instance, while he sees the kerygma as the more important side, still feels it is necessary to preserve the philosophical element in Bultmann in order to clarify the kerygma.¹⁵ Macquarrie also sees the need for preserving both elements but for a different reason. He feels that both sides have a contribution. Demythologizing helps one understand that the kerygma (if there is such a thing) addresses man as existing and, thus, the philosophy of existence does have

a place in Christianity. On the other hand, Christianity is not Christianity without the kerygma. Thus, both sides are needed if one is to truly
 16
 describe the nature of the Christian religion.

If the reader has followed the thread of this paper thus far, it probably strikes him as strange that I have taken the time to present these criticisms of Bultmann. I have done this deliberately in order to point out what seems to me to be a fundamental problem in the secondary literature on Bultmann, today. If our analysis of Bultmann is accurate, we see that Bultmann is entirely consistent and unambiguous. Given Bultmann's definition of "God" and the function of the crucifixion of the "historical" (both senses of the word) Jesus, Bultmann is entirely justified in using "myth" in the broad sense of the term and still insists on keeping the Kerygma. For, after all, what does the kerygma say? It tells us that if we want authentic existence it can be had simply by submitting ourselves to the "saving event in Jesus' death" which is still available today. What is the saving event? The teaching that when one gives up all reliance on self, and desire for self-glorification, there is a process which will begin working on him and give him authentic existence. That's all Bultmann is saying; and that statement is consistent both with the broad use of the term "myth" and the insistence of saving the kerygma.

What Bultmann has done, it seems, is to preserve traditional Christian terminology (viz. "God," "Jesus," "Kerygma," etc.) but invest them with meanings all his own. His readers, not fully conscious that he redefined these terms, understand them in some "traditional" sense. Thus, they see a paradox while Bultmann insists that there is no paradox, and

that his readers do not understand him. In a sense both Bultmann and his critics are correct from their own points of view. And, obviously, they are both wrong as well. His critics really don't understand him; and Bultmann is guilty of not making his redefinition of Christian terminology more explicit. This seems to be the most significant criticism which can be brought against Bultmann.

FOOTNOTES

1. John Macquarrie, The Scope of Demythologizing, p. 30.
2. Ibid., p. 26.
3. Ibid.
4. Eduard Ellwein, "Rudolph Bultmann's Interpretation of the Kerygma" in Kerygma and History, Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville, trans. and ed., p. 26.
5. Ernst Kinder, "Historical Criticism and Demythologizing" in Kerygma and History, pp. 70-71.
6. Walter Kunneth, "Bultmann's Philosophy and the Reality of Salvation," in Kerygma and History, pp. 93-94.
7. Regin Prenter, "Myth and Gospel," in Kerygma and History, p. 121.
8. L. Malevez, The Christian Message and Myth, pp. 64, 82.
9. Gustaf Wingren, Theology in Conflict, pp. 50-51, 143.
10. Rudolph Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in Kerygma and Myth, Hans Werner Bartsch, ed., p. 28.
11. John Macquarrie, An Existentialist Theology, p. 25.
12. Malevez, op. cit., pp. 68-70.
13. Wingren, op. cit., p. 135.
14. Macquarrie, An Existentialist and Theology, pp. 3-4.
15. George W. Davis, Existentialism and Theology, pp. 3-4.
16. Macquarrie, The Scope of Demythologizing, pp. 227-228.

Chapter VI

The Theology of Martin Buber

Having now considered Bultmann's existentialist approach to Scripture, we may now turn our attention to the approach of another existentialist thinker - Martin Buber. Our method in these two chapters will be similar to the one used with Bultmann. We will first consider Buber's theology in isolation. This will help us (as it certainly did in the case of Bultmann) to understand much more fully just what Buber is telling us that the Bible teaches.

We begin, then, by attempting to understand just what Buber's notion of the "I - Thou" relationship is. The first important thing to note is that "I - Thou" has something to do with "relation." As Buber¹ says, "The primary word "I - Thou" establishes the world of relation." Again he says with respect to the thing which has an "I - Thou" relation-² ship: "I become bound up in relation to it."

The second important thing to note is the fact that "...in each 'Thou' we address the eternal 'Thou.'"³ In other words, "...God, the eternal Thou, is at once the supreme partner of the dialogue and the power underlying all other I - Thou encounters."⁴

There is a third important observation we must make, namely, the distinction between the world of "I - It" and "I - Thou": "The terms I - It and I - Thou stand, respectively, in intimate relation to the existential distinction between the detached approach to truth and that of engagement..."⁵ What this seems to boil down to is the fact that once one attempts to describe or analyze the "I - Thou" it immediately becomes "I - It": "In the work of art realisation in one sense means less

of reality in another. Genuine contemplation is over in a short time; now the life in nature, that first unlocked itself to me in the mystery of mutual action, can again be described, taken to pieces, and classified -
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 the meeting-point of manifold systems of laws."

With this third point especially in mind, we see that it would be fruitless to look for Buber's description of the "I - Thou" experience. But we are not totally at a loss for some knowledge of what such an experience entails. Buber has provided us with an explanation of the necessary prerequisites for such an "I - Thou" relationship, plus a brief description of what a man engaged in such a relationship receives at the time. Knowledge of this will go a long way towards giving us some "feel" for the nature of the world of "I - Thou."

What is this prerequisite? "...only acceptance of the Presence is
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 necessary for the approach to the meeting..." This Presence has one indivisible content which Buber says he can divide (for the moment) so that his readers may see it as clearly as possible. The first thing this Presence gives is a sense of being raised and bound up in a relation; but the one in the relation does not know how the relation came about. Secondly, the Presence gives one absolute confirmation of meaning. Nothing in life is any longer meaningless. Thirdly, this meaning is for this life right now, and not for some future life. It is for this world and not any
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 "yonder" world. Thus, we see that one is ready for an "I - Thou" relationship if one accepts the Presence. Acceptance of this Presence gives him a sense of being in a completely meaningful "this worldly" relationship which, in turn, makes all of life seem meaningful.

It seems to me that what Buber has done here not only gives us the prerequisite for the "I - Thou" relationship, but also to give us the content and nature of that very relationship. To put it as simply as possible (and this is meant only as a preliminary formulation at this time - much meat has to be added to the skeleton): One attains an "I - Thou" relationship with something at the very moment one's own presence (i.e. one's own being) is engaged by the presence (i.e. the being) of that thing. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to the task of seeing whether or not such a formulation as this can be considered to be in accordance with what Buber had in mind. To accomplish this, we now turn to the most central problem in the whole issue - the nature of the Eternal Thou.

As we have seen above, the Eternal Thou is at the core of every "I - Thou" relationship. If the nature of the Eternal Thou does not conform to our formulation we have no case. It does not seem, however, that this is so. Buber sees the etymology of God's name as follows:

The Dervish cry Ya-hu is interpreted to mean "O He!," and in one of the most important poems of the Persian mystic, Jelaluddin Rumi, the following occurs; "One I seek, and one I know, One I see, One I call. He is the first, He is the Last, He is the outward, He is the inward. I know no other except Yahu (O He) and Ya-man-hu (O-He-who-is)." The original form of the cry may have been "Ya-huva," if we regard the Arabic pronoun "huwa," he, as the original Semitic form of the pronoun "he" which, in Hebrew as well as in another Arabic form has become "hu." The name "Ya-huva" would then mean O-He! with which the manifestations of the god would be greeted in the cult when the god became perceptible in some fashion. Such a "Ya-huva" could afterwards produce both "Yahu" and "Yaveh" (possibly originally "Yahvah").⁹

In discussing the name "Ehyeh asher ehyeh" which God reveals to Moses, Buber translates it as "I am and remain present" or "I do not need to be conjured for I am always with you, but it is impossible to conjure me" or "he who is here. He who is present here; not merely some time and somewhere but in every now and in every here."¹⁰ He also translates it

as "I shall be present howsoever I shall be present." God describes Himself as the one who is not restricted to any specific manner of manifestation, but permits Himself to be seen from time to time by those He leads and, in order to lead them, to be seen by them after the fashion which He prefers at the given moment.¹¹

These comments seem right in line with what Buber says elsewhere about God (i.e. the Eternal Thou). "Of course God is the 'wholly Other'; but He is also the wholly Same, the wholly Present. Of course He is the Mysterium Tremendum that appears and overthrows; but He is also the mystery of the self-evident, nearer to me than my 'I'."¹²

These three comments taken together seem to give us confirmation of our original idea. The Eternal Thou for Buber seems to be something which has (at least) two describable aspects or characteristics. First of all, it is ever present and immediately recognizable; secondly, it is quite mysterious and never knowable. When we confront the Eternal Thou in this first aspect, we are confronting the Presence; for how could something which is "wholly Present" be experienced in any way other than a Presence?

Buber has provided us with a further clue to discover what he means, when he talks about the Eternal Thou as being a mystery. He says that we cannot know God as He is (i.e. "God-in-Himself"). We can only come to know Him as a person, because that is the way He encounters us in relation.¹³ In other words, we cannot know the essence of God. What is the essence of anything? Its existence - its being. Of course God has being. If He has Presence then it follows that He must, by necessity, exist. Furthermore

it would seem that in the light of the fact that Buber says the Eternal Thou is at the core of each individual "I - Thou" relationship, and if the essence of that core is being, then it seems we must conclude that the mystery of each "I - Thou" relationship is the mystery of being - a mystery man becomes aware of only by confronting something (or someone) as a Presence having being.

This analysis of the nature of the Eternal Thou and of the "I - Thou" relationship seems to clarify several of Buber's statements which seem unclear without it. The first one, obviously, is his notion that the Eternal Thou is ever present and recognizable and yet never knowable. We see, in the light of the above, that only an aspect of the Eternal Thou is knowable to man (i.e. the Presence) while another aspect is never knowable (i.e. the nature of the being of the Presence).

Secondly, Buber tells us in a roundabout way that things viewed in an "I - Thou" relationship have both exclusiveness and universality.¹⁴ By "exclusiveness" he seems to mean "uniqueness." The man who sees something (or someone) as an It, fails to see (or has no interest in) its uniqueness.¹⁵ What could be more unique than suddenly becoming aware of any object or an individual as it really is? In other words, what is more totally different than moving from a perception of the world where nothing exists in the present ("I - It") to a perception of the world where some one thing exists in the present ("I - Thou")? This doesn't mean we comprehend the mystery of being; but it does mean that in the "I - Thou" relationship some one thing suddenly becomes known to us for what it really is - namely, something which exists (the nature of which, however, we will never know) in the present, confronting us with its Presence.

The third thing this analysis helps clarify is Buber's term "bodied over against me." This term can now take on the very understandable meaning of "existing in the present and different from me," or some similar phrasing.

Fourthly, this analysis clarifies the following: "For the "I" of the primary word "I - Thou" is a different "I" from that of the primary word "I - It."¹⁶ It also helps us understand Buber's related comment that¹⁷ "Through the 'Thou' a man becomes 'I'." Is it conceivable that at the moment when one becomes aware (possibly for the first time in his life) of something as truly existing in the present that his own self-awareness will not, in some way, be altered? It seems quite natural to assume that if one becomes aware of something outside of himself as truly existing that he would all the more (at that moment) become aware of himself as truly existing. The converse also seems to be the case.

Before we state our conclusions in a bit more formal manner there are a few additional points which have to be made. First of all, man cannot simply enter into an "I - Thou" relationship any time he wishes. He is dependent upon "grace" to bring him to the "Thou." But this doesn't mean that man does nothing but wait. He must make the first move by speaking "Thou." "Hence the relation means being chosen and choosing."¹⁸ In other words, the "self-willed man" will not succeed in his attempt to establish an "I - Thou" relationship.¹⁹ We can only surmise the reason for this; but the very beautiful thought which does emerge is that all being has the right to be without interference from other beings - even the interference of an "I - Thou" relationship. After all, Buber has told us that there is a certain aspect of mutuality even in the "I - Thou"

relationship between a man and a tree. It is true, as we shall soon see, that the tree may not have any consciousness of responding to the call for such a relationship; but, nonetheless, something does seem to come from the tree to man, and this something, according to Buber, is not necessarily always at the beck and call of man.

Before going on it is appropriate to make the observation at this time that with respect to "grace" both Buber and Bultmann hold the same general notion. Without it, neither can reach his respective goal.

We have but one final point left to discuss which is intimately related to the concept of "I - Thou." What we are concerned with now is the second phase of the "I - Thou" relationship. We have seen how one may attempt to enter such a relationship and what the content of that relationship probably consists of. But what happens in the relationship? "Relation" implies some type of interplay between two things. So far, one might suspect that this interplay goes on entirely in the mind of the man who is aware of being in an "I - Thou" relationship - a purely psychological, subjective type of experience. But Buber has told us (as we have seen) that there is a certain mutuality. "I - Thou" is not a subjective experience. "The tree is no impression, no play of my imagination, no value depending on my mood; but it is bodied over against me and has to do with me, as I with it - only in a different way." ²¹ The nature of this relationship has been described by Buber as "the flow of mutual action." ²² It has also been called an "encounter with being." ²³ All of this seems to suggest that what occurs in an "I - Thou" relationship is that the being of the one and the being of the other somehow come together - not necessarily merging, but doing something with each other

which they were not doing before the relationship began.

At this point we must take up the whole problem of mutuality as it applies to the "I - Thou" relationship. Simply stated, the problem is "What is the nature of this mutuality?" If the tree is fully conscious of giving something within the context of an "I - Thou" relationship, what we have is a theory of anamism or something of the like, which is totally alien to the monotheism which Buber's work reflects. Buber readily admits that there can be no mutuality in the sense that a tree or a work of art can in any way be conscious of man.²⁴ In fact, Buber all but concedes the point that an "I - Thou" relationship may take place between two men without full mutuality.²⁵ On the other hand, if the tree is not conscious of man and there is no mutuality, then "I - Thou" is a subjective experience - something, as we have seen, Buber will not grant.

One way of getting out of this dilemma is to point out the fact that "being" is not the same as "consciousness." Being can encounter or engage being without any consciousness whatsoever. Thus, it does seem possible to admit the objectivity of the "I - Thou" relationship (with its limited notion of mutuality) without granting that there is a total mutuality (i.e. that the tree has consciousness).

The obvious objection to this is the question, "How can such an occurrence come about?" Unfortunately, we have no answer - and this is the best answer; for as we have seen, one of the two aspects of the "I - Thou" relationship is the aspect of being which is totally mysterious. In fact, it could be just this very sense of how or why the "Thou" is doing what it is doing which is the "mystery" aspect of the relationship.

In other words, one enters the relationship, realizes something is happening between his being and the being of the "Thou" and is completely overcome by the incredibility of whatever occurs between his being and the being of the "Thou."

Let us, then, put down in final form our conclusions. On the basis of what we have seen thus far it seems that we would be pretty much in accord with what Buber had in mind if we describe the "I - Thou" relationship as follows: One is aware of a Presence. One accepts the Presence (i.e. this seems to mean something like "one attempts to continue to be aware of the Presence"). If one is lucky (i.e. if through "grace" - whatever that is - one is allowed to continue in this awareness), one gets the sense of being raised and bound up in a relation; but he knows nothing about the cause or mechanics of this relation. All he can do is be dumb-founded at the fact that his being and the being of the other (whether it is human or not, aware of him or not) are somehow coming together in some indescribable way. This entire experience fills him with the sense of this life's intrinsic meaningfulness.

God, for Buber (as with Bultmann) seems to be that process or force in the universe which makes authentic existence possible - since the Eternal Thou is at the core of, and is the power behind, each individual "I - Thou" relationship. More will be said in the next chapter concerning the equation of "I - Thou" with "authentic existence."

FOOTNOTES

1. Martin Buber, I and Thou, p. 6.
2. Ibid., p. 7.
3. Ibid., p. 6.
4. Malcolm Diamond, Martin Buber Jewish Existentialist, p. 39.
5. Ibid., p. 20.
6. Buber, op. cit., p. 17.
7. Ibid., p. 111.
8. Ibid., p. 110.
9. Martin Buber, Moses, p. 50.
10. Ibid., pp. 52-53.
11. Ibid., p. 126.
12. Buber, I and Thou, p. 79.
13. Diamond, op. cit., p. 49.
14. Buber, I and Thou, p. 30.
15. Maurice Friedman, Martin Buber Life of Dialogue, p. 58.
16. Buber, I and Thou, p. 3.
17. Ibid., p. 28.
18. Ibid., p. 11.
19. Ibid., p. 60.
20. Ibid., p. 8.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., p. 29.
23. Diamond, loc. cit.
24. Ibid., p. 31
25. Ibid.

Chapter VII

Buber's Interpretation of Scripture

Now that we have a fairly good understanding of what Buber probably means by the terms "The Eternal Thou" and "I - Thou Relationship," we are in a position to attempt an exposition of his interpretation of the Bible. It is within the pages of Scripture that Buber says he found his total philosophy: "The basic doctrine which fills the Hebrew Bible is that our life is a dialogue between the above and the below." ¹ This chapter will be divided into two sections. First we shall deal briefly with Buber's methodology. Finally we shall give an account of Buber's interpretation of some Biblical concepts - an interpretation which (as we shall see) grows directly out of his methodology and his notions of "I - Thou" and "The Eternal Thou."

In considering Buber's methodology we see that he makes a distinction between "saga" and "history." The difference seems to be that an historical narrative tells about something which actually took place or came about. A saga, on the other hand, does not correspond to anything which actually occurred. ² It can be termed a "legend." ³ This does not necessarily mean that there is not a kernel of historical truth even in saga. What it does mean, however, is that saga is the product of an enthusiastic and spontaneous, creative memory rather than of an uninvolved, objective recorder. ⁴

Having made this distinction between "saga" and "history," Buber proceeds to give us a method by which we can come to a more accurate understanding of what the Bible is telling us from an historical point of view. Buber would have us begin by separating the earlier strata of

Biblical literature from the later. The supplementary strata can be identified through their language, content, style, and tendency.⁵ In other words, "The student must attempt to penetrate to the original nucleus of saga which was almost contemporary with the initial event."⁶ There are, however, two types of saga in the Bible. The earlier is merely an enthusiastic report of an historical event. The second type is farther away from the actual event and has the aim of completing and rounding out the original report. The critical Biblical scholar must be aware of this distinction as well.⁷

What do we do once we have identified all of these various elements? Do we eliminate saga? No. For even though it may not be historical in the truest sense of the word, the writer of saga still has his mind on the actual event. To eliminate saga would be to possibly eliminate a very important clue to what really happened.⁸

At this point it has, no doubt, occurred to the reader that this view is very similar to that of Rudolph Bultmann. Buber's "saga" can be seen as corresponding to Bultmann's "myth" (of course their respective definitions make it clear that the two terms are not totally synonymous). Buber's idea of penetrating the saga but not eliminating it seems to be somewhat parallel with the first aspect of Bultmann's notion of "Demythologization." "Who borrowed from whom?" is a question I am not in a position to answer at this time. Of course it is possible that each could have developed his ideas independently of the other since neither acknowledges a debt to the other. However, it is very interesting to note that Buber uses the term "tradition criticism" for his position; while at another point he also uses the exact term Bultmann uses - namely, "form criticism."⁹
¹⁰

We now turn our attention to a discussion of Buber's interpretation of some Biblical concepts. The first of these is Buber's notion of "miracle":

Miracle is not something "supernatural" or "super-historical," but an incident, an event which can be fully included in the objective, scientific nexus of nature and history; the vital meaning of which, however, for the person to whom it occurs, destroys the security of the whole nexus of knowledge for him, and explodes the fixity of the fields of experience named "Nature" and "History." Miracle is simply what happens; insofar as it meets people who are capable of receiving it, or prepared to receive it, as a miracle. ^{II}

Seen in the light of the distinction between "I - It" and "I - Thou," it seems that what Buber is saying here is that on an "I - It" level a miracle is simply a natural occurrence. However, since life is really intrinsically meaningful (much more meaningful than could ever be imagined from the world of "I - It") this meaning can be perceived by one who is willing to engage in an "I - Thou" relationship at the moment of the occurrence of the event. If one is prepared to do this and if, furthermore, one is permitted to do this (viz. through "grace"), one is granted the thrill and blessing of seeing the true meaningfulness of this life - a meaningfulness which, by comparison, makes all so-called "scientific" knowledge seem insignificant. One technicality here seems to be the fact that nowhere does Buber describe an "I - Thou" relationship between someone and some event. This is easily explained, however, when we consider the fact that an event to be an event must have at least one object or person as part of it (i.e. The Sea of Reeds, the plague of darkness, the "miraculously consumed" sacrifice, etc.). Apparently, one attempts to establish an "I - Thou" relationship between oneself and the central object or person of the event.

The next concept is that of "revelation." Buber talks about the revelation at Sinai as not having taken place at just that time or place. Buber hints at the fact that each man, no matter when he lives, can experience the revelation at Sinai at any time in history.¹² In other words, what Buber seems to be telling us is that the Sinaitic revelation was not an event of mere history ("historie"), but was rather one of "geschichte" - an event which transcends time, and is equally happening at any point in the objective history ("historie") of the world. Of course, this distinction between "historie" and "geschichte" is one with which students of Bultmann and Heidegger are very much at home.

Buber points out that revelation can also be classed as "miracle" in the sense of the word we have already seen (viz. a natural event to the casual observer, but saying something much more to the one who is willing to hear it). Revelation, therefore, is both revelation and a miracle when the one who experiences the event also experiences the revelation it contains.¹³ What is the ultimate goal of revelation? It is to motivate man to human service, and in doing such, man will authenticate himself.¹⁴

What, then, is the difference between "miracle" and "revelation"? Both are what they are only if one is prepared to experience a natural event as being a "miracle" or as containing revelation. We can distinguish the two, however, in terms of their respective contents. A revelation is designed to motivate man to authentic existence. A miracle seems to give man authentic existence - that is, if we can assume that "authentic existence" (for Buber) means "intrinsically meaningful existence." To put the distinction more precisely - one who is aware of a revelation is in a state of desiring authentic existence and now knows how to achieve it.

On the other hand, one who is aware of a miracle is in a state of authentic existence.

Thus, "miracle" seems to be higher than "revelation." Therefore, if "miracle" is equated with "a successful attempt to engage in an "I - Thou" relationship, "revelation" may very well be Buber's way of giving credit to one who made the attempt, but for some reason failed to establish the relationship entirely. Whatever small insights or brief awareness of Presence comes of this, motivates the individual to try again so that he, too, may gain authentic existence. One cannot point out too often, however, that a certain amount of "humility" is a vital aspect of this whole process. Buber seems to want to be taken quite literally when he says that an unsuccessful attempt at attaining an "I - Thou" relationship would motivate the individual to human SERVICE - a connotation of "subordinance" to be sure. We recall that the "self-willed" man will not succeed in his attempt. Success comes only through "grace."

At this point it seems fitting to compare Buber and Bultmann on these two concepts. Bultmann (as we have seen) holds a similar view with respect to "miracle" (viz. a miracle is a natural event to anyone who is not prepared to see it as a miracle). "Revelation" for Bultmann, however, is different. Basically, "revelation" is authentic existence (since revelation is self-knowledge which is the core of authentic existence for Bultmann). Buber, on the other hand, sees revelation as only a preliminary step to authentic existence. Thus, Bultmann makes authentic existence much more available to modern man since the Kerygma (the promise of revelation) is a "geschichte" event. Buber's revelation is also "geschichte" - but that is simply the motivation for further attempts to

achieve authentic existence (of course, there is no value judgement intended here).

The next problem with which we must be concerned is that of the relationship between God and man. God is a guardian deity. Men trust Him because He addresses them by word. He tells a man that He is loading him. He is hidden, yet manifest.¹⁵ This leader-God wishes only that men should hearken to His voice.¹⁶ To the prophets He was seen as a God asking nothing more than justice and love. His only offering was that of self-oblation.¹⁷ The relationship is that of a man given up to the oneness of his God.¹⁸ And yet, man remains independent of God. Man continues God's work on earth by carrying out the words God speaks to him.¹⁹

And so we see that the relationship is one of subordination. Man is independent but, nevertheless, is under the obligation to listen to God's word and carry it out. What about the collective people of Israel? What is their relationship to God? Buber tells us that it is the same. He translates the name "Israel" not as "God strives," but, rather, as "God rules."²⁰ Thus, Israel as a whole is also under the kingship of God.

Besides individual Israelites and the corporate body of Israel, there is a third category - that of the prophet. What is the relationship here? The prophet is one to whom God speaks so that he may inform the people what God's will is.²¹ It seems to be Buber's idea that the goal was to make each and every member of the people of Israel a prophet. It is not enough for man to be willing to hear God's word. He can only hear it if God permits him to hear it.²² Thus, we see the full extent of man's inferiority vis-a-vis God. What is it that God asks? Over and over again

we hear the refrain "Justice and Love."

What Buber seems to be saying here is that the relationship of each and every Israelite, whether individually or collectively, is that of subordination with respect to the Eternal Thou. A few people, called in the Bible "prophets" were able to successfully engage the Eternal Thou in an "I - Thou" relationship and, thus, saw the meaning in life, and also understood how others might attain such a relationship. The goal was to make every Israelite a prophet. The way to do this was through justice and love, and, of course, the "grace" of the Eternal Thou.

Just what Buber has in mind with respect to the terms "justice" and "love" we can only surmise; but it does not seem too far off to say that "justice" refers to the right of each thing to be what it is without any interference from anything else. "Love" seems to refer to that desire one may have to become engaged with another as a "Thou." Justice and Love," therefore, seems to be Buber's way of referring to that very delicate balance which balance which one must maintain in order to successfully attain an "I - Thou" relationship, if "grace" is also present.

The next problem we shall deal with is that of the Sinaitic Revelation. Before the people could become His people - a holy people, they had to unify themselves. "The melekh YHVH does not want to rule a crowd, but a community."²⁴ The individual does not lose his identity in the community. The "I" of the individual does remain transparent into the "I" of the community."²⁵ But there is a union. For only when the community in its entirety dedicates itself to YHVH as its Lord does it become His holy people."²⁶ This is also the soul of the Ten Commandments.

They are not articles of faith nor rules of behaviour. Rather, their prime intent is to constitute a community which is a community by virtue of having common regulations. ²⁷ Only one more thing is needed to make

this complete:

And above all this there hovers the consecration to YHWH, to whom the earth belongs and who, by means of that earth, nourishes His dwellers and sojourners. They ought not to thrust one another aside, they ought not to impoverish one another permanently or enslave one another; they must again and ever again become equal to one another in their freedom of person and free relation to the soil; they must rest together and enjoy the usufruct together; the times dedicated to God make them free and equal again and again, as they were in the beginning.

The land is given to them in common in order that in it and from it they may become a true national Community, a "Holy People." Such is the unfolding of the promise of Canaan to the Fathers, which had doubtless lived on in the Egyptian exile, even though almost forgotten. This earth, so YHWH had promised the Fathers, He would give to their "seed"; in order that they might become a berakah, a blessing power.²⁶

Thus, we see that the Sinaitic Revelation indeed was a "revelation" in Buber's sense of the word. Both the Ten Commandments and the promise of the Land of Canaan were done to motivate the people to unite themselves under the kingship of the Eternal Thou and, in so doing, they would have the potential of becoming a "Holy People" - a people with the blessing power to show all the nations of the world the road to intrinsically meaningful existence - the "I - Thou" relationship. It does not seem that Israel had a collective "I - Thou" relationship with God at Sinai, according to Buber; but it is fairly clear that whatever happened at Sinai was designed to motivate each individual Israelite to seek the "I - Thou" relationship on his own - with the reinforcement of knowing that he was a member of a Community whose goal was to help each individual member of that Community attain such intrinsically meaningful existence. Of course the Community also had the universalistic goal of showing others the way;

but, apparently, this is to come after the Community as a whole has achieved authentic existence.

The final Biblical concept we shall deal with is that of "authentic existence." We have already talked about this in various other connections and so, therefore, it will only be necessary for us here to add a few foot-
 notes to what we have already said. Buber's definition of "inauthentic
 existence" seems to be "keeping away from God."²⁹ This can also be termed
 "mere conscious being" as opposed to true existence which is characterized
 by the nearness of God.³⁰

Buber equates "authentic existence" with "being pure in heart."³¹
 Only the pure in heart can experience God's goodness. This experience
 is not a reward for being pure in heart. Rather, he who is able to purify
 his heart is able to perceive the fact that God is good.³² This is a
 revelation.³³ We are not told directly how one becomes pure of heart.
 However, one of the things which happens to the pure of heart is that he
 completely accepts the fact of his own complete death. He knows that
 nothing will remain of him after he dies. He will move into God's eternity
 which is something absolutely different from any kind of time.³⁴ It seems
 to me that this means "no time" - nothing - ever again.

From all indications, acceptance of one's own death is as much a
 prerequisite as a result of being pure in heart. With strains of Heidegger,
 Buber hints that such an authentic individual will will his own death so
 that he will no longer be separated from God.³⁵ A true prophet, for Buber,
 tells the people just this - "the hard truth."³⁶ The other prerequisite
 Buber mentions is combining the evil and the good inclination. Only by
 having his whole being united in the love of God can man become authentic.³⁷

What about the community? Can man retain his authenticity there? Again we hear Heidegger as Buber tells us that man must imitate God by ³⁸ being in the world and yet distinct from it.

At this point the question may be legitimately asked, "How can these two items be considered prerequisites to authentic existence if it is by authentic existence that one gains the ability to accept death and become whole?" The answer seems to lie in what we said earlier about God's will - "Justice and Love." "Love," we saw as the desire to enter an "I - Thou" relationship - part of that desire, then, seems to be the attempt to accept death and the attempt to unify oneself. If one is sincere in one's desire, "grace" may allow that one to fulfill that desire.

One final problem. We saw that the perception of the fact that God is good is considered by Buber as a revelation. Our first reaction is to term such an insight a "miracle" (in the light of the distinction we made above). Were we wrong in our observation? It doesn't seem so since it was the words of Buber, himself, which lead us to the conclusion that revelation merely motivated action towards authentic existence, whereas miracle was the awareness of meaning which comes from being in a state of authentic existence. We can only conclude, therefore, that Buber was not consistent in his use of the term "revelation" when he used it to describe "being pure in heart."

FOOTNOTES

1. Maurice Friedman, Martin Buber Life of Dialogue, p. 242.
2. Martin Buber, Moses, p. 13.
3. Ibid., p. 14.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 8.
6. Ibid., pp. 15-16.
7. Ibid., p. 18.
8. Ibid.
9. Martin Buber, The Prophetic Faith, p. 7.
10. Ibid., p. 205.
11. Buber, Moses, p. 76.
12. Buber, The Prophetic Faith, p. 51 and Buber, Israel and the World, pp. 94, 96.
13. Buber, Israel and the World, p. 98.
14. Buber, Good and Evil, p. 142.
15. Buber, The Prophetic Faith, p. 35.
16. Ibid., p. 62.
17. Ibid., p. 91.
18. Ibid., p. 110.
19. Ibid., p. 129.
20. Ibid., p. 44.
21. Ibid., p. 62.
22. Ibid., pp. 164-165.
23. Ibid., pp. 101, 171-172.
24. Ibid., p. 55.
25. Ibid., p. 181.

26. Buber, Moses, pp. 106-107.
27. Ibid., pp. 130-131, 138.
28. Ibid., p. 181.
29. Buber, The Prophetic Faith, p. 200.
30. Buber, Good and Evil, p. 6.
31. Ibid., p. 34.
32. Ibid., and Buber, The Prophetic Faith, p. 99.
33. Buber, Good and Evil, p. 41.
34. Ibid., p. 47.
35. Ibid.
36. Buber, The Prophetic Faith, p. 177.
37. Buber, Good and Evil, pp. 97, 130, 131.
38. Buber, The Prophetic Faith, p. 128.

Chapter VIII

Some Concluding Observations

In the course of this paper we have seen a good deal of similarity between the views of Bultmann and Buber. Both of them see their respective Bibles as teaching the road to authentic existence. Both of them recognize the necessity for separating the factual parts of their Bibles from the non-factual parts. It would seem, therefore, that there is not much difference between them aside from the fact that one sees the New Testament as containing the correct path and one sees the Old Testament as containing the correct path (Here I am making the implicit conclusion that the Eternal Thou for Buber is the Hebrew deity YHWH, and not just any neutral force. I do the same with Bultmann - letting him hold to the notion that the force making authentic existence possible has some definite relationship to the historical Jesus of Nazareth. It seems that such a conclusion follows logically from the "spirit" each of these writers generates. For even though, as we have seen, "God" for both of them is nowhere near a "traditional" concept, nonetheless, each seems particularistic enough to feel that the truth is to be found within the teachings of his own respective faith.).

There is a significant distinction, however, which must be pointed out. If we ask the question, "What is the nature of the experience of authentic existence?", we receive two different answers. Bultmann tells us that the authentically existing individual is "desecularized." He is not isolated from the world, but neither is he constantly involved in it. He is... "detached" so to speak, in order that he be able to maintain his authenticity as long as possible in his own personal acceptance of his nothingness.

Buber, on the other hand, has a different answer. While he will agree that the authentic individual cannot lose his personal identity in the community, he does maintain that the only way of achieving authentic existence is by becoming involved with something outside of one's own being (albeit, on a different level than one might ordinarily think).

There is no value judgement implied in my pointing out this very vital distinction. I do so merely to delineate between the work of these two men whose views have seemed so close in parts of this paper. It is of interest to see how two individuals, using much the same tools and methods (i.e. the outlines of Existentialism, a "demythologizing" approach to Scripture, etc.) can come up with two very different conclusions to a problem.

And so the "existentialist" teachings of both the Old and the New Testaments have been laid open to us through the work of Rudolph Bultmann and Martin Buber. The choice is ours. We may accept one approach over the other, try to reconcile them by eliminating the particularistic elements of each, or go on to develop a new theory as to what the Bible has to teach us about intrinsically meaningful existence.

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