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Mass Communication and Scriptural Proclamation

by John Warwick Montgomery

The following paper was originally delivered as the invitational keynote address at the fourth Verkündiger-Konferenz sponsored by Evangeliums-Rundfunk, the German branch of Trans World Radio, held in Zurich in May 1973. Dr. Montgomery was then Chairman of the Division of Church History and Director of the European Program at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois; he is now Professor at Large at the Melodyland Christian Center, Anaheim, California, and Theological Consultant to the Christian Legal Society. On reading the first sentence in the second paragraph of Dr. Montgomery's paper, the Editor reflected with some satisfaction that any candidate for a teaching post in the Department of Comparative Religion at Manchester University who expressed the view that "all religions basically teach the same thing" would thereby automatically disqualify himself or herself for such a post.

IN a widely used survey of the history of printing, the reader's attention is arrested by the following suggestive passage:

Islam . . . was uncompromisingly opposed to the reduplication of its sacred writings through the medium of print. The reason for this opposition is not clear, but in all probability it was simply religious conservatism. The Koran had been given to the Moslems in written form, and writing, therefore, was the only means by which it might ever be transmitted.¹

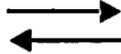
Here—in spite of later relaxations of the policy against reproducing the Koran by any technique other than lithography²—we have the stark opposition between revealed religion and mass communication:

- ¹ Douglas C. McMurtrie, *The Book; the Story of Printing and Bookmaking* (3d rev. ed.; London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1943), p. 93. Cf. John Warwick Montgomery, "The Apologetic Approach of Muhammad Ali and Its Implications for Christian Apologetics," *Muslim World*, LI/2 (April, 1961), 111-22, especially p. 114 (and note the author's "Corrigendum" in the July, 1961 *Muslim World*).
- ² "The printing of the Koran has always been resisted by the Ulema as unlawful; but, for the first time in the history of Islamism, an edition of the Koran was set up in type, and the Mufti of Cairo, Sheikh-el-Temimy, was asked to set his seal of permission upon it in order to ensure its sale" (A. A. Paton, *A History of the Egyptian Revolution*, II [2d rev. ed.; London: Trubner, 1870], p. 245). Even today the strictly orthodox Muslim Marmaduke Pickthall is careful not to title his English translation of the Koran simply "The Koran" or "The Glorious Koran," but rather *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (New York: Knopf, 1930), explaining in his Foreword: "The Koran cannot be translated. That is the belief of old-fashioned Sheykhs and the view of the present writer."

revelation has been given once for all in written form, so to communicate it in any other or more modern way would go against its sacral character and perhaps constitute an affront to the divine majesty.

Both the man-on-the-street (who may be excused for his ignorance) and a not inconsiderable number of professors of comparative religion (who certainly ought to know better) tell us that "all religions basically teach the same thing." Do all allegedly revealed religions have the same negative view of modern communications? Does the belief in a specific, written Word of God entail by its very nature a suspicion of modern media? Are scriptural proclamation and mass communication by their very nature antithetical concepts?

Whatever may be the case with non-Christian "book religions" or with cults on Christian soil that have supplemented or supplanted the Bible with other sacral writings, the present essay will endeavor to show that the relationship between historic Christianity and mass communication is neither negative nor even neutral; it is of the most positive character. We shall demonstrate, first, that Christianity—not in spite of, but precisely *because of* its focus on scriptural proclamation—places its theological imprimatur upon the communications media and is directly dependent on their services. Secondly, we shall discover that the inherently positive relationship between biblical Christianity and mass communications is like a reversible reaction in chemistry, symbolized by the double-arrow,



for not only does Christianity need the media, but mass communication can only become what it should be when informed by Christian faith. Finally, we shall observe the unique character of biblical proclamation and note the practical implications of this uniqueness for conveying the Christian message by way of the modern media.

I. CHRISTIANITY NEEDS THE MEDIA

1. *Mass Communications As a Threat?*

It would be inaccurate to give the impression that Christian believers have always welcomed the modern media with open arms. A mentality not unlike the Moslem opposition to printing has been characteristic of some Christians vis-à-vis technical advances in communications. In the early days of radio, a few voices were raised against the support of religious programming, for such programs were supposed to play into the devil's hands. Was Satan not "the prince of the power of the air"?³ The desire to correct a

³ T. C. Horton alluded to this bizarre exegesis of Eph. 2: 2 in a short note, "Restless over the Radio," in *The King's Business*, XIV/9 (September, 1923), 901.

later and parallel temptation to reject television wholesale was one of the motivations that led the philosophical apologist Edward John Carnell to step out of his usual role and produce an entire book devoted to the sane analysis of television from the viewpoint of biblical Christianity.⁴

But such negative attitudes on the part of Christian believers toward the modern media were expressed by a very small and almost lunatic fringe, as the tremendous growth of religious radio broadcasting from its beginning in the United States on January 2, 1921, to the present day so eloquently attests.⁵ No other religion in the world has so consistently employed the modern media as its servant as has Christianity. One must conclude that those Christians who opposed mass communications reflected not Christian belief *per se* in so doing, but a personal conservatism of temperament which had little to do with their Christianity, just as the political rightism of some Christians today operates independently of and often in direct tension with their biblical convictions.⁶

Perhaps, however, there is a matter of Christian principle involved in the reticence of some believers to embrace the modern media. Does not a proper biblical posture of separation from this world justify such an attitude? Is not Satan the "god of this world" and do not the technological advances of modern pagan civilization reflect the fallen Prometheus who defies the gods, and the makers of the tower of Babel who seek to reach heaven through their own accomplishments? In this light, does not the designation of Satan as the "prince of the power of the air" relate more seriously to modern communications than one might suppose at first glance? Should not our separation from evil dictate also our separation from communication techniques unrelated to the personal encounters by which men came to Jesus in New Testament times?

Here we meet one of the most persistent and dangerous undertows in the river of salvation: not a current, only an undertow, in the history of Christian thought, but fully capable of drowning its victims. The fundamental error of this pietism—which has as its motto the phrase of the Anglican litterateur Charles Williams, "neither is this Thou"—is its abrogation of the world to the devil. Nothing in the world is regarded as actually, or even potentially,

4 Edward John Carnell, *Television: Servant or Master?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1950).

5 This date marks the beginning of the history of religious broadcasting. Edwin Van Etten, rector of Calvary Episcopal Church of Pittsburgh, Pa., conducted an Epiphany service over Pittsburgh station KDKA.

6 Cf. Richard V. Pierard, *The Unequal Yoke: Evangelical Christianity and Political Conservatism* ("Evangelical Perspectives," ed. John Warwick Montgomery; Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1970).

sacramental. The pietist is tricked by Satan's lie to Jesus when he tempted our Lord in the wilderness: "The devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it" (Luke 4: 5-6). In point of fact, the kingdoms of the world were not Satan's to give. They remained entirely in God's hands, and were thus Christ's already. Thus Jesus quite properly replied to the devil's offer with the authoritative word of Scripture: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Luke 4: 8, quoting Deut. 6: 13; 10: 20). On another occasion, Jesus said expressly that the devil "abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8: 44). The pietist takes Satan too seriously when he claims to control the world; he should recognize, as the Book of Job so clearly teaches, that the Evil One operates on a stringently controlled scale, within the strict framework of God's sovereign will.⁷

So the classic commentators have understood the phrase, κατὰ τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος, in Eph. 2: 2. The great dogmatician and exegete of the period of high Lutheran orthodoxy, Abraham Calov (1612-1686), notes in his *Biblia Novi Testamenti illustrata* that the passage does not mean, as Theodoret thought, that Satan had originally been created as governor of the region of the air, but rather, as Theophylact perceived: "Paul calls him the prince of the power of the air, not because he has any sovereignty over the air, as, for example in ruling or regulating it, but—far from it—because he has surreptitiously entered into that region."⁸ Bengel rightly observed in his *Gnomon* that the Pauline expression means that "haec potestas est late diffusa et penetrans" (Satan's power is widely diffused and penetrating), and cautioned his pietistic readers that "Christus tamen superior est Satana, quamvis etiam in ἐπουρανίοις se hic teneat" (Christ is superior to Satan, even though the latter also abides in heavenly places).⁹ As a parallel passage, Bengel appropriately cites the opening chapter of Job.

Those Christians who have separated themselves from mass communications have in reality done so not on the basis of scriptural

⁷ See John Warwick Montgomery, *Principalities and Powers: The World of the Occult* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1973), especially chap. vi ("God's Devil"), pp. 151-66.

⁸ "Et ideo Paulus Principem potestatis aeris dicit, non quod ullam habeat in aere ditionem, ut illum scil. vel temperet vel moderetur, id quidem sit procul, sed quia se in illo insinuet" (Abraham Calov, *Biblia Novi Testamenti illustrata* [2 vols.; Dresden & Leipzig: J. C. Zimmermann, 1719], II, 672).

⁹ J. A. Bengel, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* (3d ed. [1773] rev.; Stuttgart: J. F. Steinkopf, 1866), p. 746.

principle but in reaction to unbelievers or rationalistic churchmen who have made a god of the media or turned the media to doubtful purposes. But, ironically, such a solution to a very real problem only compounds the evil, for it gives a powerful tool entirely into the hands of the wrong users. Moreover, it pulls the believing Christian down to the level of the unbeliever or inconsistent churchman, for the latter has erred in allowing the *Zeitgeist*, not Scripture, to create and condition his theology and practice; and now the believer, by developing a theology in reaction against this extreme instead of on the basis of what the Bible says, finds himself also mirroring the human situation—for his views are rigidly moulded by what he is reacting against. This is an exact parallel to the unbiblical fundamentalistic reaction against social amelioration, created by a desire to oppose the liberal “social gospel” exceeding the desire to be faithful to Holy Scripture.¹⁰

The confessing Christian believer rightly opposes—in theory—the basic operative motif of Bultmannian and post-Bultmannian theology: the “hermeneutical circle.” This conception finds an existential “life relation” subsisting between the biblical text and the interpreter, and the result is a necessary circularity in all scriptural interpretation (the interpreter influences the text even as the text influences the interpreter), and no exegesis can ever be regarded as genuinely objective.¹¹ As Käsemann puts it, following in his master’s (Bultmann’s) footsteps: “The Word, as biblical criticism makes plain, has no existence in the realm of the objective—that is, outside our act of decision.”¹² Christians in the historic, confessional tradition rightly see that such an approach substitutes for God’s objective proclamation to man a relativistic confusion of God’s truth and man’s sinful situation, with no possibility of distinguishing the two. Man loses all possibility of a clear word of salvation, and the dog returns to his own existential vomit. But let us carry out the implications of our perceptive criticism of Bultmannianism in practice: let us not determine our attitude toward mass communication by reacting against non-Christian attitudes (for this is simply to enter a new hermeneutical circle), but let us allow Scripture alone to

¹⁰ Cf. David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Evangelism versus Social Concern* (“Evangelical Perspectives,” ed. John Warwick Montgomery; Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1972).

¹¹ See especially Rudolf Bultmann, “Ist voraussetzungslose Exegese möglich?,” *Theologische Zeitschrift*, XIII (1957), 409-17.

¹² Ernst Käsemann, *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen*, I (2d ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 232-33. In critique: John Warwick Montgomery, *Crisis in Lutheran Theology* (2 vols., rev. ed.; Minneapolis: Bethany, 1973), I, 45-77. (For the German version of this essay, see “Lutherische Hermeneutik—und Hermeneutik Heute,” *Lutherischer Rundblick*, XV/1 [I. Quartal, 1967], 2-32.)

dictate the approach that we should take to these remarkable modern media. If we do, we shall quickly discover that mass communication, far from being a threat to scriptural proclamation, relates to its central teachings in the most positive way.

2. *The Trinity and Eternal Communication*

Nothing could be more basic to historic, confessional Christianity than the doctrines of the Trinitarian nature of Deity and Christ as the incarnate Word of God. The three ecumenical creeds of Christendom—the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—which constitute the defining mark of all confessional Christians, whether Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, or Protestant, focus directly upon these doctrines. The early church rightly recognized that Trinity and Logos are at the very heart of biblical teaching.¹³

Much less commonly recognized, however, are the implications of these fundamental doctrines for a Christian philosophy of communications. In point of fact, both the Trinitarian understanding of God and the conception of the Second Person of the Trinity as Logos bind the very idea of communication into the heart of Christian faith. Consider first the Trinity.

What was God doing before the creation of the world? Luther enjoyed Augustine's suggestion in his *Confessions* that God may have been making hell ready for those who pried into such meddlesome questions!¹⁴ Certainly non-Christian religions, with unitarian views of God, can say nothing whatever in answer to such a question, and Luther was striking out against those religionists who preferred to speculate on the basis of an anthropocentric *theologia gloriae* rather than to subject themselves totally to the biblical *theologia crucis*.¹⁵ But Christianity can, on the basis of scriptural revelation, say at least one thing about God in eternity, prior to the creation: He was a God of love even before the foundation of the world. How is this possible, since love cannot exist in isolation, but requires communication between at least two persons? The Christian alone can answer confidently: because God has been from eternity three Persons in one Godhead, and the mutual love of Father, Son, and

¹³ On the derivation of Trinitarian doctrine from the Bible and its parallel with scientific inference, see John Warwick Montgomery, "The Theologian's Craft: A Discussion of Theory Formation and Theory Testing in Theology," in his *Suicide of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1970), pp. 267-313, especially pp. 297-99.

¹⁴ *W.A.*, XLII, 9 (commentary on Gen. 1: 2 [1535]). Augustine (*Confessions*, Bk. XI) considers this facetious answer to "elude the pressure of the question" and uses it as his entrée into a discussion of the nature of Time.

¹⁵ Cf. Paul Althaus, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers* (2d ed.; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1963), sec. 5.

Holy Spirit has been communicated eternally. When Aristotle conceived of his unitary Prime Mover as contemplative “thought thinking on itself”—spending eternity loving itself, since there was nothing higher to love—he necessarily defined love in terms of selfcentred Ἔρως, which is not love at all but a kind of cosmic narcissism.¹⁶ Among the world’s religions and philosophies, only a Trinitarian conception of God has offered the genuine possibility of conceiving God as self-giving love by His very nature, before the world came into existence as a focus for that love. As James Orr so well expressed it in his classic, *The Christian View of God and the World*: “If, therefore, God is love in Himself—in His own eternal and transcendent being—He must have in some way within Himself the perfect and eternal object of His love—which is just the Scripture doctrine of the Son. This view of God is completed in the perfect communion the Divine Persons have with each other through the Holy Spirit—the bond and medium of their love.”¹⁷

The perfect communion and communication within the Godhead from eternity removes all need to move in the heretical direction of today’s “process theology” in order to arrive at a meaningful view of God’s personality. The process theologians, such as Norman Pittenger, Schubert Ogden, and John B. Cobb, Jr., reflecting the current anthropocentric and secular trend of Protestant thought, derive from the pantheism of Hartshorne and the metaphysics of Whitehead a concept of God as in some sense dependent on or in phase with His creation; He grows, develops, evolves in the mutuality of His relations with His creatures.¹⁸ But as Manchester exegete A. S. Peake observed over a half-century ago, such theologizing creates more problems than it solves, and any philosophical advantages it may seem to possess are vastly inferior to those of biblical Trinitarianism:

We achieve a sense of our own personality only in the society of our fellows. We can win it to a certain extent by contrast with animate and inanimate nature, but the deepest elements of our personality can find their satisfaction only in those who are constituted as ourselves. And, similarly, the material universe could never suffice for the need of the Creator. But neither can we make God dependent for self-realisation on personalities outside Himself. This would mean that God could not be completely God till He had created spirits for fellowship with Himself, and so once again His absoluteness would be impaired and the Infinite made to depend on the finite for His

¹⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk. Λ, 1072b. Cf. Anders Nygren’s classic treatment of the subject in his *Agape and Eros*, E.T. (London: SPCK, 21953).

¹⁷ James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World, As Centring in the Incarnation* (3d ed.; Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 1897), p. 274.

¹⁸ See inter alia, John B. Cobb, Jr., *A Christian Natural Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965); Norman Pittenger, *Process-Thought and Christian Faith* (New York: Macmillan, 1968); and—as general philosophical background—William A. Christian, *An Interpretation of Whitehead’s Metaphysics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1959).

perfection. Thus the doctrine of the Trinity guards the personality of God. . . . The postulates, that self-consciousness depends for its existence on a society, that the self can know itself only through contrast with the not-self, and, further, that love necessitates the lover and the loved, find their satisfaction in the Christian conception of God as no bare and abstract unity, but a unity rich and complex, embracing different centres of consciousness in mutual relation.¹⁹

The God of the Bible has always been "in society" and "in mutual relation"—and has therefore always been Communicator. When Christians encounter the field of communications, they do not enter an alien territory. Their God, by His *very nature*, has always been there; indeed, the very field of communication is in a most literal sense a reflection of the very being of the Trinitarian Deity of biblical religion.

3. *The Logos and Temporal Communication*

When scriptural revelation casts its spotlight from eternity to time, moreover, this great truth is even more sharply illuminated. The Second Person of the Holy Trinity is designated the Logos—the Word, the self-communication of the eternal God—and it is He who becomes flesh (John 1: 1, 14). The Triune God, out of love, deigns to communicate with the fallen race, and does so by the incarnation of the eternal Word, who conveys God's message to those dead in trespasses and sins: "Never man spake like this man" (John 7: 46).

The church in its earliest history settled the question of the reality of this divine communication. It rejected all forms of docetism—the heretical notion that the Logos only "seemed" (Gk. δοκεῖν) to become a man. Thus Ignatius of Antioch, on his way to martyrdom under the Emperor Trajan (A.D. 107), wrote that Christ "truly suffered even as also He truly raised Himself up, not as some faithless persons say, that His passion was a matter of semblance, whereas it is they who are mere semblance. Things will assuredly turn out for them in accord with their opinions: they will find themselves disembodied and phantasmal."²⁰ We today should make equally certain that we do not create a "disembodied and phantasmal" theology by accepting Martin Kähler's distinction between the "ordinary," i.e., non-miraculous, events recorded in Scripture (*Historie*) and the allegedly "suprahistorical" or "metahistorical" events of miraculous, incarnational, salvatory history (*Heilsgeschichte*).²¹ This historical dualism, which has so deeply influenced

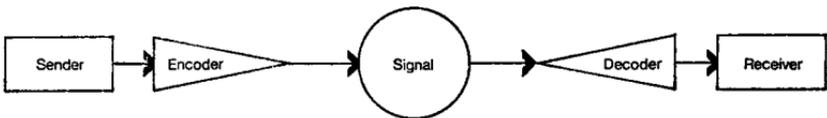
¹⁹ Arthur S. Peake, *Christianity: Its Nature and Its Truth* (10th ed.; London: Duckworth, 1915), pp. 100-103.

²⁰ Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Smyrnaeans*, ii.

²¹ Cf. the title of Kähler's most influential work: *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche, biblische Christus* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1956 [1st ed., 1892]), E.T. *The So-called historical Jesus and the historic, biblical Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964).

Barthian theology, is dangerous in the extreme, for it places the incarnation in a realm beyond meaningful historical analysis, and therefore (by definition) beyond genuine history itself.²² Wolfhart Pannenberg, notwithstanding his grossly deficient conception of biblical inspiration, has performed a great service in unqualifiedly opposing the *Historie-Geschichte* dichotomy and insisting on a truly historical understanding of the saving events of incarnation.²³ The Word entered our historical framework in the most literal sense, and thus specifically hallowed the use of human communication in imparting divine truth.

This concrete parallel can readily be seen on the basis of a diagram of the human communication system developed by one of the foremost communications theorists of our day, Professor Wilbur Schramm, Dean of the Division of Communications at the University of Illinois:



Comments Schramm: “Substitute ‘microphone’ for ‘encoder,’ and ‘earphone’ for ‘decoder,’ and you are talking about electronic communication. Consider that the ‘sender’ and ‘encoder’ are one person, ‘decoder’ and ‘receiver’ are another, and the signal is language, and you are talking about human communication.”²⁴ But note that this fundamental communications diagram equally well serves as a schematic model of the incarnation! The “Signal” is the Logos—the Word of God—in its primary sense as the Second Person of the Trinity, conveying God’s message to man, the receiver, from the eternal Sender, but also in its secondary and derived senses of the Gospel (the message of Christ) and the Holy Scriptures (which are able to make us “wise unto salvation through faith which is in

²² See John Warwick Montgomery, “Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology of History,” in his *Where Is History Going?* (2d printing; Minneapolis: Bethany, 1972), pp. 100-17. (This work will shortly appear in a German version published by Hänssler-Verlag in Neuhausen-Stuttgart.)

²³ Pannenberg’s two major publications are *Offenbarung als Geschichte* (the 2d ed. of 1963 contains a significant appendix in which the author criticizes his critics) and *Grundzüge der Christologie* (1964). For an exceedingly valuable treatment of the genuine historicity of the incarnation, see Oscar Cullmann, *Heil als Geschichte* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1965), E. T. *Salvation in History* (London: S.C.M., 1967).

²⁴ Wilbur Schramm, “Procedures and Effects of Mass Communication,” in *Mass Media and Education: The 53rd Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II*, ed. Nelson B. Henry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), pp. 114-15.

Christ Jesus"—II Tim. 3: 15-17). Here we see with utter clarity how the very plan of salvation is a communications enterprise, and perhaps we begin to appreciate what a powerful stake Christianity has in the realm of the media.

That the parallel we are drawing is by no means artificial becomes even more obvious (if possible) when we consider the four "proper conditions for communication" which Schramm induces from the above schematic formulation:

- (1) The message must be so designed and delivered as to gain the attention of the intended receiver.
- (2) The message must employ signs which refer to experience common to both sender and receiver, so as to "get the meaning across."
- (3) The message must arouse personality needs in the receiver and suggest some ways to meet those needs.
- (4) The message must suggest a way to meet those needs which is appropriate to the group situation in which the receiver finds himself at the time when he is moved to make the desired response.²⁵

If we now contemplate God's perfect communication of Himself to us in the incarnation of Christ, we see how fully these principles apply to it: (1) God "gained our attention" by a prophetic preparation for the coming of Messiah which extended from the Protoevangelion in Gen. 3: 15 to the last words of the Old Testament; and by the miraculous life of Christ on earth which commenced in a Virgin Birth and ended with Resurrection from the dead and Ascension into heaven. (2) The salvation God provided employed the sign of the Cross—extending from heaven to earth—to "refer to experience common to both sender and receiver." The Saviour linked heaven and earth, for He was fully God, yet fully man—"in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4: 15). Thus could He die in our stead, for He was our Brother, the Second Adam. (3) God's message in Christ aroused our most basic "personality need": the need to be reconciled to God. When faced with His demand for perfection, as set forth in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5: 48) and as exemplified in His own spotless life, men dropped to their knees and cried, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5: 8), thus opening the way for Him to pick them up and restore them to perfect fellowship with God. (4) The saving message of Christ never left men in doubt as to how their needs could be met: not by works, but by the faith that accepts Christ as the only Saviour. "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6: 28-29). The "group situation" in which man found—and finds—himself when encountered by the incarnate Christ is one strewn with the débris of towers of Babel which man has unsuccessfully raised to gain heaven by his own efforts; the incarnation offers the only remedy for this: "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man" (John 3: 13).

4. *The Fullness of Time*

We could likewise show, with no difficulty whatever, that the scriptural principles for proclaiming the incarnational Gospel to others entail these very same "proper conditions for communication"—an especially telling example being the comparison between condition 2 ("common experience") and the Pauline axiom that in order to bring men to a saving knowledge of Christ the Apostle becomes "all things to all men" (I Cor. 9: 22).²⁶ Indeed, an analysis of what C. H. Dodd termed "the Apostolic preaching and its developments"—the sermons in the Book of Acts—in terms of these conditions for successful communication would demonstrate how fully the imparting of the Divine Word is a communicative act.

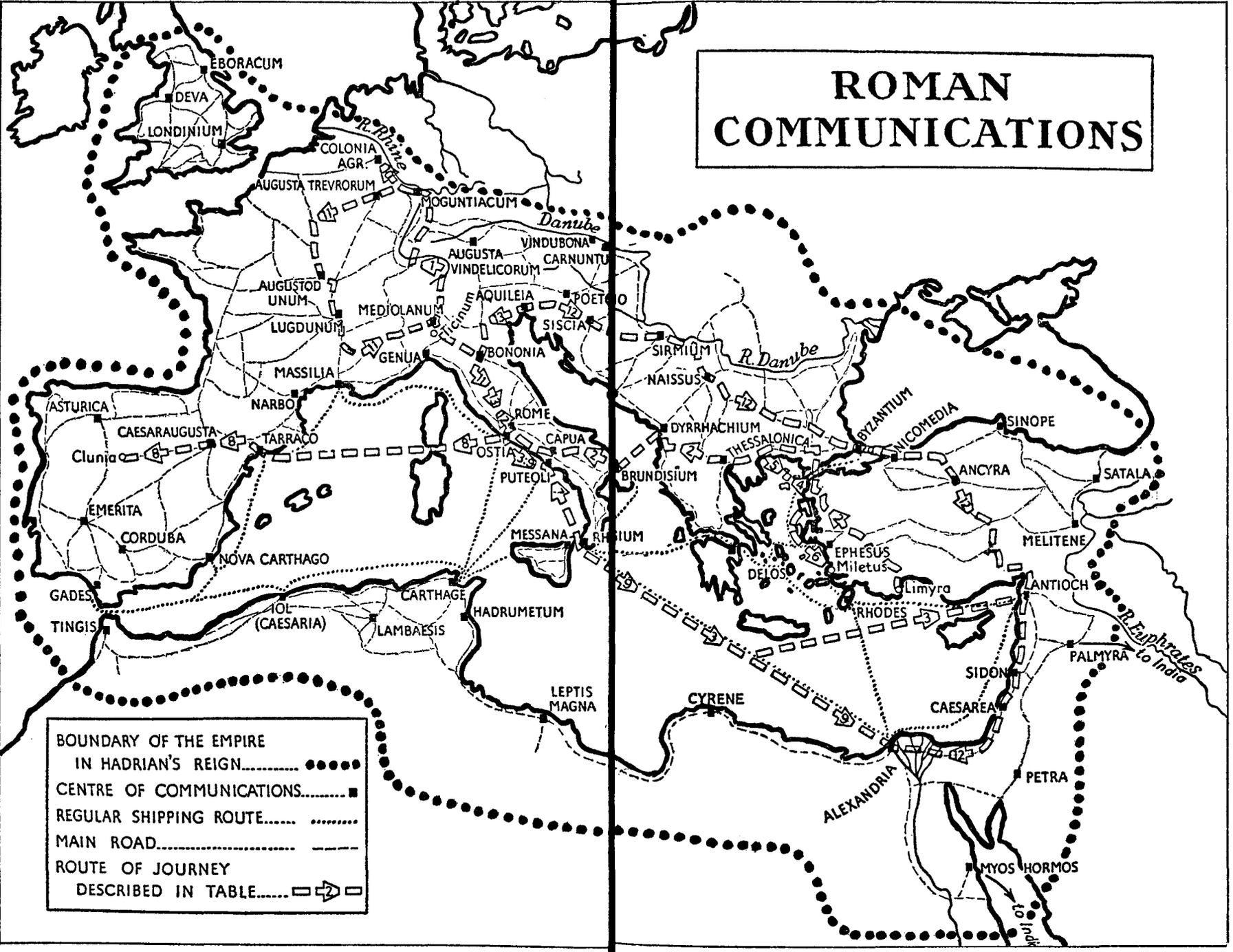
But a less obvious parallel between scriptural proclamation and mass communication warrants our attention, for it will help to put the great truth of the inherently communicative nature of the Christian faith into full historical perspective. We are all familiar with Paul's assertion in Galatians 4: 4 that God sent forth His Son "when the fulness of the time was come." But in what sense exactly did the Advent of our Lord occur at τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου? The prophetic times were fulfilled, to be sure;²⁷ but a neglected work by a contemporary English classical scholar allows us to hypothesize that equally important may have been the evolution of communications in the secular world of the first century! Lawrence Waddy, in his valuable book, *Pax Romana and World Peace*, shows that conditions at the time of Christ's coming were ideal for the rapid dissemination of God's Word. His discussion, explanatory table, and map warrant reproduction here:

The greatest material achievement of the Romans was the making of their communications. The map here inset is designed to show some of the main roads and shipping routes, and the times recorded as having been taken by

²⁶ See the excellent discussion of this key Pauline theme in Richard N. Longenecker's *Paul, Apostle of Liberty* (New York: Harper, 1964), chap. x, pp. 230-44.

²⁷ See especially Sir Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince* (11th ed.; Glasgow: Pickering & Inglis, n.d.); and cf. Montgomery, *Principalities and Powers* (*op.cit.* in n. 7 above), pp. 121-29.

ROMAN COMMUNICATIONS



BOUNDARY OF THE EMPIRE
IN HADRIAN'S REIGN.....●●●●●

CENTRE OF COMMUNICATIONS.....■

REGULAR SHIPPING ROUTE.....⋯⋯

MAIN ROAD.....- - - - -

ROUTE OF JOURNEY
DESCRIBED IN TABLE.....—▶—▶—▶

EXPLANATORY TABLE
(The routes shown are partly conjectural)

	Date	Details of Journey (Approx. Dist. in Eng. miles)	Average Speed For How Long	Facilities	Reference
1	9 B.C.	Tiberius: 180 miles in 1 day	180 for 1 day	Exceptional	Valerius Maximus, <i>Facta Memorabilia</i> , v, 3
2	A.D. 4	Special Messenger: Lycia-Rome: 1300+ miles in ?36 days	45-50 for 36 days	Exceptional	Inscription (D. 140)
3	A.D. 41	Imperial Courier: Rome-Antioch by sea, bad weather: 3 months	—	—	Josephus, <i>Bell. Jud.</i> ii, 10, 5
4	?A.D. 49	St. Paul: Troas-Neapolis (port near Philippi): 140 miles by sea in 2 days	70 for 2 days	—	Acts xvi, 11
5	?A.D. 56	St. Paul: Philippi-Troas: by sea, 5 days	30 for 5 days	—	Acts xx, 6
6	?A.D. 56	St. Paul: Mitylene-Miletus: by sea, 3 days	—	—	Acts xx, 15
7	?A.D. 62	St. Paul: Rhegium-Puteoli: by sea, 1 day	200 for 1 day	—	Acts xxviii, 14
8	A.D. 68	Special Messenger: Rome-Clunia, ?6½ days (including Tarraco-Clunia, 332 miles in ?1½ days)	190 for 1½ days	Exceptional	Plutarch, <i>Galba</i> 7
9	A.D. 68	Imperial Courier: Rome-Alexandria by sea, 28 days or less	—	—	Inscription
10	A.D. 69	Special Messenger: Mainz-Cologne: 100 miles in ?12 hours	200 for ¼ day	Exceptional	Tac. <i>Hist.</i> i, 56
11	A.D. 69	Special Messenger: Mainz-Rheims-Rome: 1300+ miles in ?9 days	145 for 9 days	Exceptional	Tac. <i>Hist.</i> i, 12
12	A.D. 193	Imperial Courier: Rome-Alexandria: by land, distance uncertain, 63-64 days	—	Exceptional	Inscription
13	A.D. 238	Imperial Courier: Aquileia-Rome: 470 miles in 3-4 days	120 for 4 days	Exceptional	S.H.A. <i>Duo Max.</i> 25

For further information about some of these journeys see W. M. Ramsay in *J.R.S.* xv, 60-74.

travellers over different journeys. These times were sometimes quoted because they had been exceptionally fast, but they may be allowed to give a fair picture of what was possible for the ordinary traveller. They compare favourably with anything to be found in accounts of travel in France or England before the Industrial Revolution. A Roman traveller went faster, on the whole, than the characters in a Jane Austen novel. He did not meet turnpikes, nor as a rule roads full of pot-holes. . . . Strange results occur if we try to transpose [St. Paul's] journeys into a modern context. Paul and his companions "loosed from Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphylia," we read. Paphos is in British Cyprus, Perga on the south coast of Turkey. Paul was a Greek-speaking Jew from Turkey, but a Roman citizen, and his travelling companion Barnabas was a Cypriote. They simply went down to the harbour at Paphos and booked a passage. Could you and I do the same, without a great deal of questioning and form-filling? Read chapters xvi and xvii of the Acts of the Apostles with a modern atlas in front of you. A map of Italy, the Balkans and Turkey in Bartholomew's *Comparative Atlas* marks in the political frontiers, and adds in the corner an "ethnographic sketch map." St. Paul was familiar with Greek terms, and would have understood the meaning of the word "ethnographic"; but he would have been at a loss to know what the map was all about. The area through which he made his journeys would certainly be a thorny one to the modern traveller. How much delay and difficulty would there be in obtaining permits, passports, visas, supplies of currency and so on, before one could pass between Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Greece, to name only three of the countries through which he journeyed? Yet from the time of Augustus a good road ran from Durazzo (Dyrracchium) and Valona (Apollonia) in Albania, through the mountain passes of Yugoslavia to Salonica, and on to Istanbul; and for most of the way it lay in the Roman province of Macedonia, in which no regular troops were stationed at all. Is this contrast unfair? There are admittedly large areas in the modern world where no passport is needed: the United States, Australia, and until recently India. But these are only separate compartments in our expanded world of seventy sovereign states. Rome virtually was the civilized world.

All roads led to Rome in Augustus' Empire.²⁸

Not only physical, but also linguistic communication had attained a πλήρωμα at the time the Word became flesh. Alexander's conquests had brought the Greek tongue, in the form today known as the κοινή, to the level of a world-speech which served in the first century A.D. as the language of the New Testament and the vehicle for the universal spread of the Gospel. Following Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, A. T. Robertson writes in his monumental *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*:

It is not speculation to speak of the κοινή as a world-speech, for the inscriptions in the κοινή testify to its spread over Asia, Egypt, Greece,

²⁸ Lawrence Waddy, *Pax Romana and World Peace* (New York: W. W. Norton, n.d.), pp. 122-23. I had the privilege of personal contact with Anglican Father Waddy, now with the English Department of the University of California at San Diego, while I was attached to the University's Department of Philosophy as Honorary Fellow of Revelle College during the winter quarter of the 1969-70 academic year. [The situation has not improved since Fr. Waddy wrote. Cyprus is now more divided than ever it was under British rule, and the number of independent sovereign states in the world has increased rapidly.—ED.]

Italy, Sicily and the isles of the sea, not to mention the papyri. Marseilles was a great centre of Greek civilization, and even Cyrene, though not Carthage, was Grecized. The κοινή was in such general use that the Roman Senate and imperial governors had the decrees translated into the world-language and scattered over the empire. It is significant that the Greek speech becomes one instead of many dialects at the very time that the Roman rule sweeps over the world. The language spread by Alexander's army over the Eastern world persisted after the division of the kingdom and penetrated all parts of the Roman world, even Rome itself. Paul wrote to the church at Rome in Greek, and Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor, wrote his *Meditations* (τῶν εἰς ἑαυτὸν) in Greek. It was the language not only of letters, but of commerce and every-day life. . . . It was really an epoch in the world's history when the babel of tongues was hushed in the wonderful language of Greece.²⁹

Another master philologist, James Hope Moulton, well summarized the double impact of this linguistic and physical communications-revolution which served as *praeparatio evangelii*; note his wryly effective introduction of teleology into the discussion:

No one can fail to see how immeasurably important these conditions were for the growth of Christianity. The historian marks the fact that the Gospel began its career of conquest at the one period in the world's annals when civilisation was concentrated under a single ruler. The grammarian adds that this was the only period when a single language was understood throughout the countries which counted for the history of that Empire. The historian and the grammarian must of course refrain from talking about "Providence." They would be suspected of "an apologetic bias" or "an edifying tone," and that is necessarily fatal to any reputation for scientific attainment. We will only remark that some old-fashioned people are disposed to see in these facts a σημεῖον in its way as instructive as the Gift of Tongues.³⁰

Thus we have every reason to believe that communications factors such as the Roman road-system and a universal language were directly bound up with the "fullness of time" for the impartation of the gospel; and this seems only natural when we recall the eternal Trinitarian communicativeness and the designation of the Saviour as God's Word to man. Now, moreover, we have acquired a principle of historical analysis which is of inestimable value in examining the spread of the Gospel through the ages. Just as communications media were vital to the original proclamation of the gospel in Christ's coming, so they have served as fundamental to the recovery and dissemination of that same Word in later times. Consider the success of the Protestant Reformation. "Above all," declares Seebohm, author of the perennial classic, *The Oxford Reformers*, "the invention of printing had come just in time to spread whatever new

²⁹ A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (4th ed.; London: Hodder & Stoughton; New York: George H. Doran, 1923), pp. 54-55.

³⁰ James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, I (3d rev. ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), 6.

ideas were afloat with a rapidity never before known."³¹ Echoes Grimm: "The importance of printing in the spread of the Reformation can scarcely be exaggerated."³² G. R. Elton makes the not implausible suggestion that "Luther might have been only another Wycliffe . . . if the printing press had not given him the chance of appealing to favourable sentiments far and wide."³³ No one who has visited the permanent exhibit of "Der Buchdruck im 16. Jahrhundert" at the Gutenberg Museum in Mainz can doubt the truth of these observations.³⁴ From the standpoint of bibliographical history, Denys Hay summarizes the evidence in the following terms:

The vast quantities of pamphlets issued in Germany (630 have been listed from the years 1520 to 1530) leave no doubt that without the printing press the course of the German Reformation might have been different. Luther's own writings constitute a third of the German books printed in the first four decades of the sixteenth century; his address *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (August 1520) was reprinted thirteen times in two years; *Concerning Christian Liberty* (September 1520) came out eighteen times before 1526; as for his translation of the Bible, Dr. Steinberg summarizes the complicated bibliographical story thus—"All in all, 430 editions of the whole Bible or parts of it appeared during Luther's lifetime."³⁵

Must we not say that the eternal Logos employed the mass communication technique of printing to insure and further the recovery of his gospel in the sixteenth century, even as He used Roman communications and the Greek language in the original dissemination of it in the first century? Would not the apostles have sinned terribly had they refused to use the Roman roads because they were the product of a heathen and materialistic civilization or the Greek tongue because it was the vehicle of pagan philosophy? Would not the Reformers have denied their calling if they had pietistically rejected the printing press as a technique already employed for making playing cards, issuing indulgences, and disseminating the literature of non-Christian antiquity? Fortunately

³¹ Frederic Seebohm, *The Era of the Protestant Revolution* (2d. ed.; New York: Scribner, 1893), p. 4.

³² Harold J. Grimm, *The Reformation Era: 1500-1650* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), p. 160.

³³ *The New Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. II: *The Reformation, 1520-1559*, ed. G. R. Elton (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge, University Press, 1958), p. 17.

³⁴ Display cases 140-150. Cf. Helmut Presser, *Gutenberg-Museum der Stadt Mainz: Weltmuseum der Druckkunst* (2d. ed.; München: Peter-Winkler-Verlag, 1966), pp. 38-39.

³⁵ Denys Hay, "Fiat Lux," in *Printing and the Mind of Man: A Descriptive Catalogue Illustrating the Impact of Print on the Evolution of Western Civilization*, ed. John Carter and Percy H. Muir (London: Cassell, 1967), p. xxix and see catalog entries 49-51, 56, 58, 65). Cf. A. Kuczynski, *Verzeichnis einer Sammlung von nahezu 3000 Flugschriften Luthers und seiner Zeitgenossen* (Leipzig, 1870).

—for them and for us—they recognized that the God of Christianity is uniquely a communicative Deity, and that techniques of communication are not to be given over to the devil and his minions, but are to be employed for the glory of the One whose nature they reflect.

Perhaps we regard as fanciful the mass communications interpretation of Revelation 1: 7—“Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him”—that only with the invention of television in our own generation has this ubiquitous seeing become technically possible. But, fanciful or not, the interpretation recognizes the great theological truth that the Christian God incorporates the techniques of mass communication into His sovereign plan for the ages, and expects believers in every age to cultivate a sensitive awareness of the media possibilities uniquely open to them for imparting the eternal riches of His grace to their particular generation. Are we personally carrying out this commission to the maximum?

II. THE MEDIA NEED CHRISTIANITY

A secular media man could well have followed our discussion to this point and—descriptively at least—agreed with it: the Christian religion is uniquely and inherently favourable to communication and must, to be consistent with its God and its gospel, involve itself in mass communication technique. But when we turn to the other side of the coin—the contribution of the Christian message to the media—the reaction may well be: “Like who needs it, man?”

Answer: *You* do, secular communicator, and *desperately*.

In a sense, to be sure, the foregoing discussion has already indicated that the relationship between scriptural proclamation and mass communication is a two-way street, for if God is indeed the Trinitarian Deity the Bible says He is, and if He did manifest Himself as the Word made flesh, then all communication has its existence and possibility only in Him. Just as human creative activity necessarily reflects the Creator of all,³⁶ so human communication is essentially and by its very nature a reflection of the communicative God. Conversely, to the extent that one separates himself from the eternal Word, to that degree he loses his ability truly to communicate. But these fundamental truths need to be driven home in the context of the present-day cacophony in mass communications.

The noise level in modern life is becoming almost unbearable. In terms of literal decibels the problem is serious enough, but it by

³⁶ Cf. Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker* (New York: Meridian Living Age Books, 1956).

no means stops there. Radio and television announcers, whatever their language or country, develop a truly remarkable capacity for facile speech which allows them to talk incessantly in a manner suggesting meaningful content and rational conclusions, but which is in fact often almost entirely devoid of either significance or sense. The non sequiturs of mass media advertising are notorious, and unworthy of illustration. Partially as a reaction to this all-embracing atmosphere in modern life and partially in reinforcement of it, not a few media people—such as disk jockeys—have given up virtually all semblance of rational communication and now speak as rapidly, loudly, and nonsensically as possible, endeavoring to parallel in their discourse the rhythm, ear-shattering intensity and total emotionality of the pop music they play. The more theoretically or philosophically inclined among them justify such use of the media on the ground that the future demands a new and revolutionary mode of communication, as little dependent on the past as the computer is on words or the drug experience and the eastern mysticisms depend on the verbal and rational structures of western thought.³⁷

Arguments along this line, however, are wrongheaded at best and dangerous at worst. Computers do not somehow bypass ordinary thinking or rational communication; the entire computer concept, involving a binary language in which one must always choose “yes” or “no,” is strictly founded on the law of non-contradiction.³⁸ As I have pointed out elsewhere, the computer will not even permit a Neo-orthodox dialectic of yes *and* no, to say nothing of the Bultmannian hermeneutical circle or a mystical transcending of the subject-object distinction.³⁹ The drug experience is a trip to *unreality*, not to greater meaningfulness: “French psychedelic specialist Roger Heim noted that under the influence of the drug [LSD] his handwriting, in reality black, appeared red; and a cat, given the drug, recoils in fear from a mouse.”⁴⁰ As for the eastern mysticisms, like drugs, their openness to all possibilities and their refusal to communicate a specific content make them perilous in the extreme. Ponder Arthur Koestler’s disillusioning judgment following a pilgrimage to the founts of eastern wisdom:

³⁷ See John H. Garabedian and Orde Coombs, *Eastern Religions in the Electric Age* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1969), *passim*.

³⁸ J. C. R. Licklider, *Libraries of the Future* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1965), pp. 126, 154-56, 191.

³⁹ John Warwick Montgomery, *Computers, Cultural Change, and the Christ. Les ordinateurs, l'ordre culturel et le Christ. Komputer, kultureller Wandel und Christus* (Wayne, N. J.: Christian Research Institute, 1969).

⁴⁰ John Warwick Montgomery, “The Gospel according to LSD,” in his *Principalities and Powers* (*op. cit.* in n. 7 above), p. 190.

At the start of this discussion of Zen, I quoted a few lines attributed to Seng-ts'an, who lived in the sixth century A.D., and was the Third Patriarch—that is, second in succession to the Bodhidharma. They are from his work *Hsin-hsin Ming*, which is regarded as the oldest Zen poem and one of its basic texts:

Be not concerned with right and wrong
The conflict between right and wrong
Is the sickness of the mind.

Fourteen centuries later, the last Patriarch [Suzuki] reaffirms the unbroken continuity of Zen's ethical relativism:

"Zen is . . . extremely flexible in adapting itself to almost any philosophy and moral doctrine as long as its intuitive teaching is not interfered with. It may be found wedded to anarchism or fascism, communism or democracy, atheism or idealism."

The difference between the two statements is in their historical setting, and in their degrees of concreteness. The first comes from a Buddhist-Taoist mystic, who looks with a smiling shrug at the sententious pedantries of Confucian society. The second could come from a philosophically minded Nazi journalist, or from one of the Zen monks who became suicide pilots.⁴¹

To be sure, it is this very ambiguity—this kaleidoscopic fluidity—that appeals to the modern media man. Impatient with the restraints of language, he delights in the non-language of the koan:

Question: Everybody has a place of birth. Where is your place of birth?

Answer: Early this morning I ate white rice gruel. Now I'm hungry again.

Question: How is my hand like the Buddha's hand?

Answer: Playing the lute under the moon.

Question: How is my foot like a donkey's foot?

Answer: When the white heron stands in the snow it has a different colour.⁴²

But our chameleonic media maniac (for thus he quickly becomes as he constantly changes colour while eating white rice gruel!) forgets two principles of the utmost importance for all communication: (1) Language cannot be transcended, for it is a defining mark of man *qua* man; and (2) Language is meaningful in direct proportion to its correspondence with reality.

First, no matter how sophisticated the technique of modern mass communication, there is no bypassing of language. Those who claim that language is non-essential to communication prove its essentiality by using it to present their claim. In this respect, language parallels logic: one must use it to argue against it, so opposition is futile *per se*. As Emerson said of Brahma, "When me they fly, I

⁴¹ Arthur Koestler, *The Lotus and the Robot* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), pp. 270-71.

⁴² These 11th century koans, known as the "Three Barriers of Hung-Lun," are the oldest of which we have record; they are quoted from Alan W. Watts, *The Way of Zen* (London, 1957), p. 106.

am the wings." The labours of one of the foremost linguistic theorists of our time has given this epistemological fact-of-life a solid ontological base. Noam Chomsky has collected overwhelming evidence in support of his contention that language is fundamental to the very nature of the human being, and qualitatively (not just quantitatively) sets man apart from all other creatures. He writes in summary:

Anyone concerned with the study of human nature and human capacities must somehow come to grips with the fact that all normal humans acquire language, whereas acquisition of even its barest rudiments is quite beyond the capacities of an otherwise intelligent ape—a fact that was emphasized, quite correctly, in Cartesian philosophy. It is widely thought that the extensive modern studies of animal communication challenge this classical view; and it is almost universally taken for granted that there exists a problem of explaining the "evolution" of human language from systems of animal communication. However, a careful look at recent studies of animal communication seems to me to provide little support for these assumptions. Rather, these studies simply bring out even more clearly the extent to which human language appears to be a unique phenomenon, without significant analogue in the animal world. If this is so, it is quite senseless to raise the problem of explaining the evolution of human language from more primitive systems of communication that appear at lower levels of intellectual capacity. . . .

As far as we know, possession of human language is associated with a specific type of mental organization, not simply a higher degree of intelligence. There seems to be no substance to the view that human language is simply a more complex instance of something to be found elsewhere in the animal world. This poses a problem for the biologist, since, if true, it is an example of true "emergence"—the appearance of a qualitatively different phenomenon at a specific stage of complexity of organization. Recognition of this fact, though formulated in entirely different terms, is what motivated much of the classical study of language by those whose primary concern was the nature of mind. And it seems to me that today there is no better or more promising way to explore the essential and distinctive properties of human intelligence than through the detailed investigation of the structure of this unique human possession.⁴³

It is not therefore merely an epithet when the disk-jockey style of communication is regarded as "animal": here is indeed manifested a "more primitive system of communication that appears at lower levels of intellectual capacity." More significantly, one witnesses in such attempts at non-language an abrogation of the uniquely human gift of genuine verbal behavior.

⁴³ Noam Chomsky, *Language and Mind* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), pp. 59-62. As an example of his point, Chomsky cites the following case (p. 85): "Modern attempts to train apes in behavior that the investigator regards as language-like confirm this incapacity. . . . Ferster attempted to teach chimpanzees to match the binary numbers 001, . . . , 111 to sets of one to seven objects. He reports that hundreds of thousands of trials were required for 95 per cent accuracy to be achieved, even in this trivial task. Of course, even at this stage the apes had not learned the principle of binary arithmetic." See also Chomsky's devastating review of behaviorist B. F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior: Language*, XXXV/1 (1959), 26-58.

In the second place, the language which constitutes a defining mark of the human being is truly language to the precise extent that it mirrors reality. The Analytical Movement in philosophy, stemming from the work of the great Wittgenstein, has brought this profound truth home to contemporary thought. Wittgenstein gave new life to the classic "correspondence theory" of truth (first presented formally by Plato and Aristotle) in the so-called "picture theory of language" set forth in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: language by its very nature pictures or mirrors external reality.⁴⁴ In his later thinking, as reflected in the *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (*Philosophical Investigations*), Wittgenstein, though turning his attention to non-cognitive forms of discourse, never ceased to emphasize the fundamental principle that language must carry out its proper "work," viz., mirror reality.⁴⁵ "Die Verwirrungen, die uns beschäftigen, entstehen gleichsam, wenn die Sprache leerläuft, nicht wenn sie arbeitet" (The confusions which occupy us arise when language is like an engine idling, not when it is doing work).⁴⁶ "Die philosophischen Probleme entstehen, wenn die Sprache feiert" (Philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday).⁴⁷ The validity of this position can well be seen in the Austin-Strawson debate on the nature of truth, where J. L. Austin, though operating with a view of correspondence weaker than Wittgenstein's, is easily able to show that there is no meaningful alternative to "the rather boring yet satisfactory relation between words and world."⁴⁸

But it is exactly this relation between words and world that is collapsing in so many areas of mass communication today. Our disk jockey who emotes without saying anything is perhaps only the mildest example. The advertiser who hawks his product on the basis of false analogies and misleading rhetoric is a more serious phenomenon. The perverse propaganda of modern totalitarianism displays the full horror of separating language from reality—and employing

⁴⁴ See, in spite of its limitations, the invaluable essay on Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* by my former professor Max Black, which focuses on the "picture theory"; it appears in Black's *Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1949), pp. 139-65, and serves as an excellent introduction to Black's later commentary: *A Companion to Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus'* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1964).

⁴⁵ Cf. C. B. Daly, "New Light on Wittgenstein," *Philosophical Studies* [St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Ireland], X (1960), 5-49, especially pp. 46-49, where the unity of Wittgenstein's epistemological thought is well demonstrated.

⁴⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen. Philosophical Investigations* (2d ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), Pt. I, para. 132. The English translator is G. E. M. Anscombe.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 38.

⁴⁸ J. L. Austin, in *Truth*, ed. George Pitcher ("Contemporary Perspectives in Philosophy"; Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 31.

it, as in George Orwell's solipsistic cacotopia *1984*, to create a counter-world of demonic unreality, in which all values are inverted. C. S. Lewis, with his characteristic perception, sees these degenerations as the product of the modern, secular disengagement of language from referential reality:

As words become exclusively emotional they cease to be words and therefore of course cease to perform any strictly linguistic function. They operate as growls or barks or tears. "Exclusively" is an important adverb here. They die as words not because there is too much emotion in them but because there is too little—and finally nothing at all—of anything else. . . .

We have all heard *bolshevist*, *fascist*, *Jew*, and *capitalist*, used not to describe but merely to insult. Rose Macaulay noticed a tendency to prefix "so called" to almost any adjective when it was used of those the speaker hated; the final absurdity being reached when people referred to the Germans as "these so-called Germans." *Bourgeois* and *middle class* often suffer the same fate. . . .

This is the downward path which leads to the graveyard of murdered words. First they are purely descriptive; *adolescent* tells us a man's age, *villain*, his status. Then they are specifically pejorative; *adolescent* tells us that a man's work displays "mawkishness and all the thousand bitters" confessed by Keats, and *villain* tells that a man has a churl's mind and manners. Then they become mere pejoratives, useless synonyms for *bad*, as *villain* did and as *adolescent* may do if we aren't careful. Finally they become terms of abuse and cease to be language in the full sense at all.⁴⁹

Yet how can the secular communicator prevent this devolution of language from taking place? Insofar as he remains secular—insofar as he separates himself from the Christian Logos—he *cannot*, for his language remains "on a holiday," disengaged from ultimate reality. As a self-centred, fallen man, he inevitably builds towers of Babel in a pitifully unrealistic endeavor to reach ultimacy by his own efforts, and the result is always what it was at Babel: the confusion of tongues. To put the linguistic mechanism back to work again one must become convinced of the essential relationship between language and reality, and then bring communication into accord with "whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report" (Phil. 4: 8). But this will occur only when the communicator has acquired this perspective himself, and such a radical change in values necessitates the transformation of personality which only the eternal Word can effect.

In short, the secular communicator needs to be saved, and the only way he can encounter the saving Logos is through biblical proclamation. In contact with the Christ of Scripture, he can "with unveiled face reflect as a mirror the glory of the Lord and be transformed into the same image" (II Cor. 3: 18). Henry Drummond

⁴⁹ C. S. Lewis, *Studies in Words* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp. 324-28.

rightly termed this truth "the formula of sanctification,"⁵⁰ noting that men become like those they love and emulate. When Christ places the image of Himself in us by His Holy Spirit, we are changed into his likeness. The Triune God, who perfectly communicated Himself to us in the incarnate Logos, can indeed impart the respect for linguistic reality so desperately needed by the media of today. Mass communication needs scriptural proclamation in as fundamental a way as the church needs to recognize how God's plan for the ages is a cosmic communication.

III. THE TASK BEFORE US AND THE AVAILABLE DYNAMIC

And here the ball is thrown back to the Christian communicator: for it is he who has the responsibility and privilege of proclaiming the biblical message to the secular man of today. What an overwhelming task it appears to be! And, if we fail, how terrible the consequences—C. S. Lewis' graveyard of language and Orwell's *1984*!

As we review the conditions for communication, the responsibility seems even more crushing when we recall the necessity of making a message "appropriate to the group situation in which the receiver finds himself at the time when he is moved to make the desired response" (Schramm's condition 4). How can we succeed in establishing such relevance in a world that, through the media, becomes more secular as every day goes by? Schramm underscores this point tellingly in his discussion of the low predictive effect of modern communication on personal value-systems:

There are two things we can say with confidence about predicting communication effects. One is that a message is much more likely to succeed if it fits the patterns of understandings, attitudes, values, and goals that a receiver has; or, at least, if it starts with this pattern and tries to reshape it slightly. . . . It is very hard to change the minds of convinced Republicans or Democrats through communication, or even to get them to listen to the arguments of the opposing party. On the other hand, it is possible to start with a Republican or Democratic viewpoint and slightly modify the existing party viewpoints in one way or another. . . .

The second thing we can say with confidence about communication effects is that they are resultants of a number of forces, of which the communicator can really control only one. The sender, that is, can shape his message and can decide when and where to introduce it. But the message is only one of at least four important elements that determine what response occurs. The other three are (a) the situation in which the communication is received and in which the response, if any, must occur; (b) the personality state of the receiver; and (c) his group relationships and standards. This is why it is so dangerous to try to predict exactly what will be the effect of any message except the simplest one in the simplest situation.

Let us take an example. In Korea, in the first year of the war there, I was interviewing a North Korean prisoner of war who had recently surrendered

⁵⁰ Henry Drummond, *The Changed Life* (Westwood, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.).

with one of our surrender leaflets on his person. It looked like an open and shut case: the man had picked up the leaflet, thought it over, and decided to surrender. But I was interviewing him anyway, trying to see just how the leaflet had its effect. This is what he told me.

He said that when he picked up the leaflet, it actually made him fight harder. It rather irritated him, and he didn't like the idea of having to surrender. He wasn't exactly a warlike man; he had been a clerk and was quiet and rather slow, but the message actually aroused a lot of aggression in him. Then the situation deteriorated. His division was hit hard and thrown back, and he lost contact with the command post. He had no food, except what he could find in the fields, and little ammunition. What was left of his company was isolated by itself in a rocky valley. Even then, he said, the morale was good, and there was no talk of surrendering. As a matter of fact, he said, the others would have shot him if he had tried to surrender. But then a couple of our planes spotted them, shot up their hideout, and dropped some napalm. When it was over, he found himself alone, a half mile from where he had been, with half his jacket burned off, and no sign of any of his company. A couple of hours later some of our tanks came along. And only then did the leaflet have an effect. He remembered it had told him to surrender with his hands up, and he did so.

In other words, the communication had no effect (even had an opposite effect from the one intended) so long as the situation, the personality, and the group norms were not favorable.⁵¹

Like the disciples, our first tendency is to cry: "Who then can be saved?" If the best of modern persuasion by the media generally does not go beyond the "slight reshaping" of existing patterns of belief, and if the effect of the message is so often negated by the total situation which it enters, what can one expect for a message that is radically disharmonious with the fallen state of mankind and directly inimical to the sinner's fixation to save himself at all costs?

The answer—and it is fully sufficient—lies in the unique nature of the biblical proclamation. This is a message nonpareil. Of all the messages ever communicated, it is the only one so impregnated with the δύναμις Θεοῦ that it cannot return void (Is. 55: 11). Indeed, the message *is* this power of God, for it is the Gospel (Rom. 1: 16), the Word of the Cross (I Cor. 1: 18), Christ Himself (I Cor. 1: 24). This message is the only communication that can literally turn the receiver's world upside down (Acts 17: 6). The dynamic of the Gospel message is such that by its very nature it produces saving faith, for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing διὰ ῥήματος χριστοῦ" (Rom. 10: 17). The power of the biblical proclamation offers no opportunity for Christian irresponsibility or indifference to the best techniques of communicating it relevantly vis-à-vis the sinner's situation, but at the same time it offers an absolute deterrent to despair in the face of seemingly overwhelming secular odds.

⁵¹ Schramm, *op. cit.* (in n. 24 above), pp. 124-27.

Another way of viewing this same magnificent truth is provided by the mass communicator's "fraction of selection":

Expectation of Reward

Effort Required

Schramm notes that mass communications entail a particularly frustrating unpredictability of effect, as compared with ordinary communication, for feedback occurs so seldom and in such a partial and inadequate way (how many radio listeners write to the announcers or the sponsors?). Faced with the necessity of "flying blind," the mass communicator needs to rely on the fraction of selection: he will succeed if he recognizes that "you can increase the value of that fraction either by increasing the numerator or decreasing the denominator, which is to say that an individual is more likely to select a certain communication if it promises him more reward or requires less effort than comparable communications."⁵²

Here again we see the uniqueness of the biblical message of salvation, and perhaps gain some insight into why it cannot return void. Presented in its fullness—without the adulteration of rationalistic criticism or the confusion of law and gospel—the biblical proclamation is the only message on earth whose fraction of selection is literally

$$\frac{100\%}{0}$$

This is the case because Scripture promises the sinner, as expectation, no less than reconciliation with the God of the universe, both in time and eternity; and it demands (praise God!) no human effort whatsoever: "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2: 8-9). The effort was God's—even to the giving of His own Son—and the wondrous expectation of life and peace is ours, through His love.

As Christian communicators then, we can take heart. "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (I John 4: 4). If we see that the biblical proclamation, by its very nature, requires to be communicated, and recognize that the only hope for the world of mass communication—as for the world in general—is Jesus Christ, then God will Himself win the battle for us. Martin Luther, who of all the towering saints in the history of the church perhaps

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 129.

best wedded an unadulterated biblical proclamation with the best mass communication his epoch afforded, tells us precisely where our confidence should lie:⁵³

Mit unser macht ist nichts gethan,
wir sind gar bald verloren:
Es streit fur uns der rechte man,
den Gott hat selbs erkoren.
Fragstu, wer der ist?
er heist Jhesu Christ,
der Herr Zebaoth,
und ist kein ander Gott,
das felt mus er behalten.

Anaheim, California

⁵³ Stanza 2 of the earliest High German text now accessible of Luther's "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott" (A Mighty Fortress Is Our God): *Geistliche Lieder* (Wittenberg, 1531), transcribed in C. E. Ph. Wackernagel, *Das deutsche Kirchenlied* (5 vols., Leipzig, 1864-1877), III, 19-21, E.T. by Thomas Carlyle:

With force of arms we nothing can,
Full soon were we down-ridden,
But for us fights the proper Man
Whom God Himself hath bidden.
Ask ye who is this same?
Christ Jesus is His name,
The Lord Sabaoth's Son;
He, and no other one,
Shall conquer in the battle.