

INCARNATION AND INSCRIPTURATION: THE CHRISTOLOGICAL ANALOGY IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT DISCUSSION

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Introduction

Christian theology is accustomed to using the phrase 'word of God' in two distinct and important senses, to refer to the Son of God, and to the Bible.¹ Unless these two are considered — which plainly they are not — to be identical, or unless 'word of God' is considered as a mere homonym with two independent significations, we must hold that some kind of analogical relationship exists between the two usages, and, therefore, between the two *loci* to which the term 'word of God' refers. This observation is the point of departure for the discussion which follows, since it inevitably raises questions concerning the extent, status and usefulness of the analogy.

There can be no doubt that some such analogy is widely presumed to operate. As one recent writer has it, 'frequent appeal' is made to such a parallel.² It is, as we shall see, a major theme of the neo-orthodox school, and it is also plainly important amongst conservative evangelical writers, though it must be said that it is very much more frequently assumed or referred to in passing than it is actually addressed.³ In the Roman Catholic Church, too, it is seen as possessing great significance. So Pope Pius XII wrote:

Just as the substantial Word of God became like to men in all things, sin excepted, Heb. iv.15, so the words of God, expressed in human language, became in all things like to human speech, error excepted.⁴ At the same time, some have explicitly denied the analogy, while

1. It is also, of course, used of preaching; and of this three-fold significance Barth has made much.
2. J. H. Crehan, "The Analogy Between *Verbum Dei Incarnatum* and *Verbum Dei Scriptum* in the Fathers", *JTS*, 6:87-90. Thus Berkouwer speaks of a "frequent, vague and inarticulate use of this analogy", *Holy Scripture*, p. 199.
3. P. R. Wells offers as his interpretation of the work of James Barr that "It can be considered as an ongoing critique of the christological analogy as imposing on interpretation and on views of the status of Scripture", particularly as "it applies to the two movements where interpretation and the doctrine of Scripture have been most influenced by considering the divine and the human in Scripture, namely, the near orthodox "Biblical Theological movement" and the conservative Fundamentalist positions. For both these cases the character of the human element in Scripture in relation to the divine is problematic." *James Barr and the Bible*, p. 9.
4. *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, C.C.H.S. para. 36J, cited J. K. S. Reid, *The Authority of Scripture*, p. 111.

others have remained lukewarm about its significance. Generally the rejection of the analogy has not been total, but rather a judgement that its extent is limited or its discernment so subjective that, although there are indisputable parallels between the Bible and the Incarnation, it is not helpful to construe them in strictly analogical terms. When — as in one case we shall discuss — a wholesale rejection of the divine-human mode of understanding Scripture has been suggested, a similar repudiation of the Christology of Chalcedon may follow.

Recent discussion of the analogy

We begin by surveying some recent references to the analogy, before moving on to attempt some analysis of the question. As will soon become evident, most of these discussions focus to a greater or lesser extent on the degree to which the infallibility of Scripture may or may not be upheld on the ground of its analogy with Christ's sinlessness.

H. D. McDonald, in his survey of thinking about revelation, typically remarks that the 'mechanical dictation' conception of inspiration was, by analogy, 'Apollinarian . . . with regard to the agents of the divine revelation. Its advocates saw the human element, as it were, "reduced" and the deficiency made up by the presence of the Spirit.'⁵ Such an understanding, McDonald suggests, was adopted to defend the inerrancy of Scripture; but in fact it sacrificed its humanness, whereas 'the Divine moulds the human to its ends, and in the result God's strength is perfected in human weakness'.⁶ By contrast, the opposing liberal view tended toward a Nestorian position, with the human and divine divided from one another. McDonald asks, 'Does this hold in the case of Christ . . . ?'⁷ A. G. Hebert offers a similar analysis of the debate. The 'liberals' he too terms Nestorian, though he is meaning the Liberals of the early twentieth century, and not the lesser liberalism of his own position. For he continues: 'We who are not liberals must acknowledge our debt to the liberals', particularly for their fight 'against the Monophysite heresy, with its denial of the true humanity of our Lord'.⁸ He quotes R. H. Fuller to the effect that 'Fundamentalism' (in the context in which Hebert wrote, conservative evangelicalism) 'denies the reality of the Bible as a human book'.⁹ In other words, not merely in its more extreme forms, but in itself, it is Monophysite. As Hebert writes elsewhere of the 'dictation-theory of inspiration' (which he equates with the infallibilist position) it is 'pure Monophysitism'.¹⁰

James Packer takes issue with Hebert in his *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, published originally by way of reply. 'Insofar', he claims, as the analogy 'is valid, it confirms the evangelical view of Scripture as against' that of Hebert and others. Packer offers four comments in

5. H. D. McDonald, *Theories of Revelation 1860-1960*, p. 257.

6. *Ibid.*, citing James Orr, *The Faith of a Modern Christian*, p. 16.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

8. A. G. Hebert, *Fundamentalism and the Church of God*, p. 77.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 78, citing R. H. Fuller in the *Religious Book Club Bulletin*, No. 110, Jan. 1956.

10. A. G. Hebert, "The Bible and Modern Religions: Fundamentalism", in *Interpretation* 11, p. 195.

support. First, the analogy is 'at best . . . only a limited one'; in other words, we must be wary of pressing it. Secondly, if the analogy is seen as limited simply to the fact that Scripture contains divine as well as human qualities, Hebert's thesis is too detailed. Thirdly, if however we are to carry the analogy further, and take it as indicating something about the character which the human element has by virtue of its conjunction with the divine, we must say that it points directly to the fact that, as our Lord, though truly man, was truly free from sin, so Scripture, though a truly human product, is truly free from error.

That is the force of the analogy.

Finally, if we are to carry the analogy further still, and take it as indicating something about the reality of the union between the divine and the human, we must say that it is in fact the approach of the Evangelicals to Scripture which corresponds to Christological orthodoxy, while that of their critics really corresponds to the Nestorian heresy, since they divide 'the Bible as a human book' and 'the word of God that is in it.' He adds:

Incidentally, once we see this, we see why they are so ready to accuse Evangelicals of Monophysitism; for Nestorians have always regarded orthodox Christology as Monophysite.¹¹

It is important to realise that Packer does take up Hebert's argument *ad hominem* and with some reluctance, despite the fulminations which James Barr (as we shall see) pours upon the Evangelical use of the analogy. Warfield (whom Barr also indicts) is very cautious indeed about it. 'It has been customary', he writes, 'among a certain school of writers to speak of the Scripture . . . as a Divine-human book, and to appeal to the analogy of Our Lord's Divine-human personality to explain their peculiar qualities' The analogy 'holds good a certain distance', but 'it may easily be pressed beyond reason', since 'there is no hypostatic union between the Divine and the human in Scripture'. He continues: We cannot parallel the 'inscripturation' of the Holy Spirit and the incarnation of the Son of God. The Scriptures are merely the product of Divine and human forces working together . . . the human forces . . . under the initiation and prevalent direction of the Divine.

By contrast,

the Person of Our Lord unites in itself Divine and human natures, each of which retains its distinctiveness while operating only in relation to the others. Between such diverse things there can exist only a remote analogy.

More precisely, 'the analogy in the present instance amounts to no more than that in both cases Divine and human factors are involved, though very differently'. Yet he avers that from 'even so distant an analogy' one may 'recognize' the parallel between Christ's real yet sinless humanity and the real yet errorless humanity of Scripture.¹²

T. F. Torrance, reviewing the republication of Warfield's volume on Scripture, is more enthusiastic about the analogy. 'There is no question',

11. J. I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, pp. 82-84.

12. B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, p. 162.

he claims, 'that a proper doctrine of Scripture must be grounded analogically' upon the incarnation; but 'we must take seriously the fact that the Word has assumed our fallen humanity, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh'. Two points of clarification are added: first, that while Jesus Christ was sinless, 'even in Holy Scripture we see through a glass darkly, not yet face to face. . . . Meantime we have the Word only in conditions of imperfection and limitation'. Secondly, there can be no parallel to the unique act of Incarnation. 'Here in the doctrine of Holy Scripture there is no incarnation, even though it is grounded in the unique relation of the God-man.' Torrance adds: 'the basic error that lurks in the scholastic idea of verbal inspiration [*sc.*, in Warfield] is that it amounts to an incarnation of the Holy Spirit'.¹³

We turn now to Karl Barth, with the acknowledgement that in the compass of this survey we can only touch on his theological scheme in which this analogy plays a central part. Barth openly avows its importance, concluding a discussion of the two natures of Christ with this sentence: 'When we necessarily allow for inherent differences, it is exactly the same with the unity of the divine and human word in Holy Scripture.'¹⁴ Barth, of course, holds the analogy side by side with a frank disclaimer of Biblical infallibility:

within certain limits . . . they [*sc.*, the Biblical writers] are all vulnerable and therefore capable of error even in respect of religion and theology. In view of the actual constitution of the Old and New Testaments this is something which we cannot possibly deny if we are not to take away their humanity, if we are not to be guilty of Docetism.¹⁵

That is to say, fallibility is required if Scripture is to be fully human. Klaas Runia discusses Barth's position. He is in agreement with Barth when he says that "all Docetism (or Monophysitism) is entirely objectionable in the doctrine of Holy Scripture". He goes so far as to admit that orthodox theology, in particular, must always be aware of this danger.¹⁶

And he maintains:

Undoubtedly nothing can save us better from such docetic tendencies than a good apprehension of the parallel between the incarnation and inscripturation. For this parallel says more clearly than anything else: The Bible is on the one hand fully divine, it is God's Word; but it is at the same time fully human, written as it is by truly human beings with all their peculiarities.¹⁷

Yet Barth goes beyond this to see fallibility as involved in humanity, and to claim that every denial of fallibility 'brings us back into the shadows of Docetism'. This move Runia claims to have 'no adequate grounding', since human activity under the operative guidance of the Holy Spirit is a matter distinct from human activity alone. The parallel

13. T. F. Torrance, Review of Warfield, *op. cit.*, *SJT* 7 (1954) pp. 106, 7.

14. K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I:2, p. 499.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 510.

16. K. Runia, *Karl Barth's Doctrine of Holy Scripture*, p. 72.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

with the sinlessness of Jesus Christ suggests rather the Spirit's prevention of error. If error is present, 'the only thing that is left is a purely human book which can be used by God to communicate His divine message, but which as such *is* not the message.' Such a stance either overthrows the analogy or undermines the very doctrine of the incarnation.¹⁸

G. C. Berkouwer subjects the analogy to a critique. He notes its very widespread use, and in particular that

a certain conclusion to this argument should be noted along with others, namely, that a parallel exists not only in general between incarnation and inscripturation, but also between Christ's sinlessness and the infallibility of Scripture.¹⁹

But the essential difference between Scripture and the 'personal union' in Christ 'has always led to a delineation of the boundaries of this analogy'.²⁰

It is noteworthy in all this that the analogy is first relativized because of the absence of the 'personal union,' while later the analogy is used as an apologetic with reference to the parallel between sinlessness and inerrancy. Yet these are comprehended on such different levels that they can surely not be used convincingly to clarify the infallibility of Scripture.²¹

Berkouwer continues his critique by asking not — as others have — whether the analogy does not demean the hypostatic union in Christ, but whether, conversely, the analogy can do justice to Scripture:

'Sacred Scripture *is* the Word of God' . . . this confession does not say that Scripture originates from a union of divine and human factors, but points to the mystery of the human words *as* God's Word. The approach of Scripture, which points to men moved by the Spirit (II Pet. 1:21), is quite different from that of a 'mysterious' union (as it is often called), which could be paralleled with the personal union.

Moreover, such a 'union' would be 'something truly quite different from the "from God,"' so decisive for the confession of the God-breathed character of Scripture'.²²

James Barr, as we have suggested, vigorously rejects the analogy, since he regards it as liable to falsify the truly human character of Scripture. He regards the conservative evangelical espousal of it as a necessary element in the defence of the doctrine of inerrancy, but believes that, in a curious way, it leads them to a Christology that is less than orthodox. So he writes:

I do not believe that either Packer or Warfield have taken this stand about the person of Christ [*sc.*, on the divine authority of the teaching of Jesus] but for the pressure of the issue of biblical inerrancy. That is the obvious and only motivating power for the argument they present Christological doctrine has to be so defined as to give the

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 8.

19. G. C. Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture*, p. 200.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 203, 4.

maximum possible shelter to inerrancy.²³

Paul Wells comments:

According to his analysis, the Barthian analogy of Christ and Scripture becomes in the hands of theological conservatism a boomerang in which Christ actually becomes analogous to inerrant Scripture.²⁴

In fact, as we have seen, both Warfield and Packer take up the analogy only with much reservation, Packer treating of it wholly *ad hominem*. One wonders whether Barr, in alleging this impropriety in their theological method, has given any consideration to their actual discussions. Barr's interest is in moving away from static and ontological notions of Christ and Scripture towards so-called dynamic and relational ones, so that he can suggest that 'the true analogy for the Scripture as the Word of God is not the unity of God and Man in the Incarnation; it is the relation of the Spirit of God to the People of God.'²⁵ It then becomes possible to re-think inspiration in purely human terms, free from the pressure of Chalcedon, such that the concept may be 'purified from all suggestion of inerrancy and infallibility, and from all teaching that identified the production of the Bible with the revelation of God'.²⁶

The Nature of the Analogy

A major defect of the generally occasional or controversial nature of references to the Christological analogy in recent writing emerges in an almost total failure to attempt a definition of the terms involved. As we began by stating, there is inevitably *some kind* of parallel or analogy between the 'Word of God' in Christ and in Scripture, unless they are either identical or unrelated; the question is, *what kind* of analogy. We turn to a recent discussion of the idea of analogy as such to gain an understanding of the options that are open to us, before moving on to apply the idea to the question in debate.

John McIntyre instances our particular analogy as one example of common theological use of the concept.²⁷ The value of the concept is that it has suggested new things to say on certain subjects. By using the analogy of the hypostatic union in reference to Scripture, or to the Church, we establish access to a whole new range of descriptions of these two subjects.²⁸

Furthermore,

In opening up a new range of possibilities, the analogy also exerts a controlling influence on the possibilities. It becomes determinative of the kind of thing we may say on the subject, and exclusive of the kind of thing we may not say. For that reason, many of our disagreements in theology are not differences over minutiae of exegesis, or details of historical occurrence, so much as radical conflict over the proper analogies to use in our exegesis or historical judgments.²⁹

23. J. Barr, *Fundamentalism*, p. 172.

24. P. R. Wells, *James Barr and the Bible*, p. 17.

25. Cited *ibid.*, p. 39.

26. Cited *ibid.*, p. 41.

27. J. McIntyre, "Analogy", *SJT* 12 (1959), pp. 1-20.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

29. *Ibid.*

There are several kinds of analogy. *Analogy of inequality* involves the participation to differing extents of a number of terms in some one concept. *Analogy of proportion or attribution*, writes McIntyre, is applied to those entities which, while different in other respects, are the same in that they are all related, even by different relations, to one identical thing. This one thing is predicated of them analogically.³⁰

A third type is termed *analogy of proportionality*. McIntyre writes: Different things are said to be 'good' proportionately, not because of their dependence upon a first principle, or their extrinsic relation to a prime analogate, but in virtue of a goodness inherent in them. Thus sight performs the same function in relation to the body as intelligence does to the soul. Sight is as good proportionately as intelligence is to the soul. The structure of analogy of proportionality is A:B::C:D.³¹

A further example is given to make the matter clearer: 'God's Essence: God's Intelligence::Man's Essence: Man's Intelligence.' That is, 'Man's Intelligence is determined by Man's Essence in a manner proper to humanity; so God's Intelligence is determined by God's Essence in a manner proper to Deity.' 'In this analogy', McIntyre adds, 'the similarity lies not in the attributes of the terms, but in the relations that hold between them.'³² It would seem that the analogy with which we are concerned is an analogy of this type. A passage from the conclusion to McIntyre's article bears closely upon the discussion which follows. 'My dilemma', he writes,

with the use of the analogy of the *unio hypostatica* is as follows. On the one hand, it proves to be a most effectively sharp theological tool when it is used as an analogy of inequality, the secondary analogates being regarded as particular instances of the prime analogate — in which case, however, analogy of proportionality is violated. On the other hand, when it is really treated as an analogy of proportionality, it tends to break in our hands, for it gives no criteria for distinguishing the ways in which the secondary analogates resemble and differ from the primary.³³

That is to say, it is by no means clear how *precisely* the sinlessness of Jesus, let alone the complexities of *en* and *anhypostasia*, effect how we understand the Biblical documents. This is no doubt the major factor behind the occasional or merely assumptive use of the analogy in recent theological writing.

McIntyre has earlier suggested that in fact Thomas' *analogia entis*, when taken in the context of his doctrine of creation, is not unacceptable, the latter providing the relation in which the analogates are to be set. Now he writes:

just as in St. Thomas analogy of proportionality requires to be taken with the doctrine of Creation, so in the Reformed use of the *unio hypostatica* it is necessary that some indication of the relation of the prime analogate to the secondary analogates be given beyond that

30. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 10.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

stated in the proportionality. The point is perfectly clear in symbolics. The formula $A:B::C:D$ is inadequate without some indication of how A is related to C and/or B to D . The use which L. S. Thornton makes of the analogy of the *unio hypostatica* [*sc.*, a use very like that in conservative evangelicalism] in relation to the Bible is vitiated, partly at least, by his failure to relate the human nature in Christ to the human element in the Bible. In other words, because the analogy of proportionality is an analogy of *relations*, it requires to be supplemented by some form of analogy which relates the *terms* of the analogy.³⁴

Paul Wells, in his study of Barr, follows McIntyre with much the same criticism of the Christological analogy. He writes:

The fundamental difficulty in the use of the analogy of the *unio hypostatica* with Scripture appears to be that when such an analogy is constructed in terms of attribution or proportionality there lacks the ontological underpinning necessary to support the analogy. To provide such an ontological foundation to the analogy Christ-Bible it would be necessary to consider the secondary analogates as being a particular instance of the prime analogate. In this case another different analogy would be appealed to — the analogy of inequality. Here an ontological foundation for the analogy is furnished, but the principle of the analogy of proportionality is put aside. Where the analogy of proportionality which claims resemblance of relation or properties is appealed to, there lacks a real link between the *analogans* and the *analogatum*.³⁵

Wells adds to this further and equally fundamental criticisms of the use of the analogy, and we shall return to them and profit from them below. This question, however, must now be met. Is it in the nature of the case that the Christological analogy of Scripture is untenable because it is limited to proportionality?

The Analogy and the Teaching of Jesus

In response we may turn back to the work of James Bannerman. Bannerman's massive work on inspiration contains a full exposition of the Christological analogy as a buttress to his infallibilist thesis. He points out — as we have earlier suggested — that

the circumstance that the same term, *the Word of God*, is used in Scripture to denote both the Eternal Son and the revelation contained in the Bible, is itself sufficient to call attention to the analogy.³⁶

There are, of course, 'points of obvious distinction' between the two, notably that the one is personal, the other impersonal. The Incarnate Son was 'a Person to whom belonged all the proper attributes and distinctive character both of God and of man', whilst 'in the case of the manifestation of the eternal wisdom in human language,' to the written word 'beyond all the real attributes and distinctive properties of the word of God and of the

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 14. McIntyre regards proportionality as lying behind the analogy of being.

35. P. R. Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

36. J. Bannerman, *Inspiration: the Infallible Truth and Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures*, p. 465.

word of man.³⁷ That is to say, the objection — repeated by Wells among others — that the *unio hypostatica* cannot be paralleled in a book rests on a failure to recognise the proper nature of analogy of proportionality. 'It is not necessary', writes Bannerman, 'to assert that the mode in which it was effected or exemplified was the same. It was personal in Christ; and it was verbal in Scripture.'³⁸

But Bannerman goes further, and though we might not wish to follow him in the expression he gives to his argument, his essential thesis is suggestive of a real answer to the objections of McIntyre and Wells to which we have referred. Bannerman concentrates his attention not on the Incarnation as such, but on its fruit in the teaching of Jesus. So he affirms:

The personal union was one that stands alone and unparalleled, and to which we have no analogy that answers. But the verbal union, seen in every word that He uttered, has its parallel in the word which His own Spirit put into the lips of His inspired servants, and enabled them infallibly to record. The spoken word of Christ, and the written word impressed by His Spirit upon the pages of Scripture, are exactly alike, in that they are both to be received as equally the word of God and the word of man.

The analogy to this extent is complete, and affords a sufficient answer to those who allege that the union of the divine and human elements in inspiration is an impossibility.³⁹

It would seem that Bannerman does not hold — despite his earlier statements — to a full analogy of the person of Christ and Scripture, or holds one only by extension or implication. In any event, his concentration upon the teaching of Christ is enough for his purpose of providing an *ad hominem* case for the possibility of the infallible inspiration of human words. 'All Christ's words were, in the highest and strictest sense of the terms, the words of God, and no less the words of a man.'⁴⁰

The suggestion we would make is that in the teaching of Jesus Christ we have that connexion between the prime and the secondary analogates which McIntyre and Wells have requested, such that the analogy is not so subjective in its application to Scripture as they would suppose.

There are of course other questions involved here which we cannot now discuss. It is, it would seem, hard to avoid the conclusion that the teaching of Jesus presented to us in the Gospel narratives is intended to be regarded as wholly authoritative. The exegetical case for this position has been well made.⁴¹ Further, though the inter-connexion of the sinlessness of Christ and infallibility in Scripture may depend upon the efficacy of the analogy, that between his sinlessness and the infallibility of his own teaching does not. Klaas Runia touches upon the subject:

The question may be asked, of course: what does this sinlessness of Jesus mean? How far does it go? Does it refer only to His spiritual

37. *Ibid.*, p. 466.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 467.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 468.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 467.

41. E.g., in J. W. Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*.

relation to the Father and His moral relation to His fellow men? Or also to His *knowledge*, so that we must say: there was *never one error* on the part of Jesus?⁴²

He calls in evidence James Orr, who rightly points out that anyone who says that Jesus was subject to 'illusion' or 'false judgement' must realize the consequences. Illusion and false judgment are not isolated processes of the mind, but the basis for subsequent actions. Jesus, then, would be subject to sin. . . . But since He was sinless, we must conclude that He was infallibly preserved from all error in all that He revealed as the One sent by His Father.⁴³

At all events, we see that the teaching of the Incarnate Son, itself recorded for us in Scripture and thereby taking upon itself the character of Scripture too, provides a point of contact between relations in the two parts of the analogy. The hypostatic union in Jesus Christ gives rise to and is itself analogically related to the teaching of the God-man, in which human words are pressed into divine service. If the consequence of Incarnation is to bring about infallibility in the human language of the Incarnate One, infallibility will be the inevitable product of an analogous divine-human book. In McIntyre's symbolic terms of A:B::C:D, we see that the teaching of Jesus Christ brings about just such a relation as he requires between B and D on the human sides of the prime and secondary analogates to such a degree that it is actually subsumed under D: it is contained within the divine-human corpus of Scripture. If the teaching of the God-man is infallible teaching, the analogous teaching of the divine-human book will be infallible too. The divine-human principle evident in the *unio hypostatica*, when giving rise to human language, gives rise to language which is infallible.

The Analogy of Revelation

That brings us to a further question, which takes us behind the particular discussion in which we have been engaged, and seeks the factor which unites these two aspects of revelation and explains their relationship to one another. We may speak of it as the analogy of revelation. It has of course been common to speak of the Incarnation itself as the controlling principle of revelation. Paul Wells, in his study of Barr, reacts against the placing of an Incarnational strait-jacket on theological discourse to such a degree as to label talk of the divine-human nature of Scripture 'dualistic', and to accept in essence Barr's critique of the analogy while dissenting from his own alternative position. Wells suggests that the real duality in Scripture is not between divine and human, but between obedience and disobedience. He writes,

the fundamental perspective of Scripture is not centred on man as finite and God as infinite, on the human and the divine, but on the contrast between man in covenant community and man in covenant-breaking sin.⁴⁴

42. Runia, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

44. Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

It is, therefore, 'sinfulness, not finitude, which separates the creature from the Creator', though he is careful to admit the 'distinction between Creator and creature'.⁴⁵ But the root problem is ethical and religious, and without that problem the metaphysical distinction between God and man would be no barrier to communion between them.

That this, thus boldly put, is something of an over-reaction to the Incarnational hegemony of recent thought Wells implicitly admits. But in giving the priority to moral and religious questions rather than to ontological (and, by implication, to Atonement rather than to Incarnation) there can be no doubt that he is seeking to redress a balance. Yet there is no reason why this recognition should rule out an analogy of revelation which will subsume both Christ and Bible without giving a false priority to metaphysical concerns. For it is, of course, in the nature of man's createdness that knowledge of God must be revealed to him, whether in general or special revelation, whether before or after the Fall. Revelation in the context of sin must needs be appropriate to the condition of man to whom it is made.

If revelation is to take place at all, its content must be both a faithful declaration of the message or person of the revealer, and in a form capable of apprehension and comprehension by the intended recipient. These are *conditiones sine qua non*. It follows that when revelation comes to man it must come in a manner suited to his ignorance and his essential inability to judge of things divine. An ambiguous revelation, whether personal or propositional, in which elements of revelatory truth are combined with other elements which do not reveal but which obscure and mislead, can be no revelation at all. Only to a super-human recipient already possessed of knowledge and judgement in the truth of God could such a 'revelation' reveal. Its deficiencies as revelation to man as he is go wider and deeper than may appear. For, though only ten per cent, let us say, of the *prima facie* revelation (whether the actions of Jesus Christ or the propositions of Holy Scripture) may be in error (moral in the one case, factual in the other), that will be sufficient to undermine the revelatory character of the whole, since *which* ten per cent misleads and *which* ninety per cent reveals is not apparent. An appearance of ninety per cent revelation resolves into one hundred per cent failure. The entire medium, personal or propositional, is seen to be questionable. However much actual truth it may contain, that truth remains hidden. Revelation, in the logical sense of successful revelation, wholly fails to take place.

The analogy of revelation dictates otherwise, with a whole revelation and a revelation wholly authoritative for rational but creaturely and fallen men. Kuyper addresses this question, subsuming the two analogates of Christ and Scripture under the third of revelation itself:

If man is created after the Image of God and thus disposed to communion with the Eternal, then this *Word of God* [*sc.*, the revelation] also must be able to be grasped by man; and even after his fall into sin, this Word of God must go out to him, though now in a way suited to his condition. This takes place now, since man has received

45. *Ibid.*, p. 355.

being and consciousness, in two ways. In the way of the *esse* by the *incarnation* of the Logos, and in the way of consciousness as this self-same Logos becomes embodied in the Scripture. Both are the spoken Word (Λόγος προφορικός); but in the one case it is the Word 'become flesh' (σάρξ γενόμενος), in the other 'written' (εγγράφος), and these two cover each other. Christ is the whole Scripture, and the Scripture brings the *τό esse* of Christ to our consciousness.⁴⁶

Kuyper goes on to trace out the parallel of the transcendent/immanent nature both of Scripture and of Christ, a duality required by their revelatory role and manifest in the 'servant form' taken by them both.

In Conclusion

We suggest, therefore, that the analogy of Christ and Scripture may be sustained. It has, like every analogy, clear limits; and, in particular, is governed by proportionality and not by inequality. It may stand, therefore, without prejudice to the unique hypostatic union or to the equally special manner of Biblical inspiration, both modes of revelation appropriate to the natures of the media concerned. At the same time, both lie under the analogy of revelation, which must govern all the relations of God and his creatures, since it arises out of the nature of the distinctions, moral and metaphysical, which separate them.

In the teaching of Jesus Christ we see the production of human language as the fruit of the *unio hypostatica*, and we find a point of contact between the human side of both prime and secondary analogates: both analogous relations bring about human speech, and the speech of Jesus Christ is in part incorporated within the speech which makes up Holy Scripture. The two are therefore comparable, and free the analogy from the charge of helplessness in actual theological questions. If the teaching of Jesus Christ is infallible, then so must be the teaching of Holy Scripture. The question of the infallibility of Holy Scripture takes on a distinctly Christological significance.

46. Abraham Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology*, pp. 476, 7.