The term myth (Greek mythos) occurs five times in the New Testament — three of them in the pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 1: 4; 4: 4; 2 Tim. 4: 4; Tit. 1: 14; 1: 16). In each instance it signifies the fiction of a fable as distinct from the genuineness of the truth (cf. 2 Tim. 4: 4; Acts 8: 26; turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside into myths). This is in complete harmony with the classical connotation of the term, which from the time of Plato onwards always bears the sense of what is fictitious, as opposed to the term logos, which indicated what was true and historical. (This consideration sheds an interesting ray on John’s use of the term logos as a title for Christ, Jn. 1: 1, 14, where Paul’s frequent use of it as a synonym for the gospel which he proclaimed. Thus Socrates describes a particular story as an “unphilosophical mythos” or a true logos” (Plato Timaeus 265e). It is also the term’s connotation during the period of the New Testament. Thus Philo speaks of those “who follow after unregained truth instead of fictitious myths” (Exser. 162) and Pseudeotes, using a word to signal the fact that “nothing has been set down in Scripture to no purpose or in a mythical sense” (mythologia, Letter of Aristeas, 165). In the English language, too, the mythical is ordinarily synonymous with the fictitious or the unphilosophical, fantastic, and the historically inauthentic.

In contemporary theological discussion the term myth has achieved a special prominence. It is a consider­able degree the result of Rudolf Bultmann’s demand for an “demythologization” of the New Testament, that is, for the exclusion or expurgation from the biblical presentation of the Christian message of every element of “myth.” Bultmann’s judgment, this requires the rejection of the biblical view of the world as belonging to “the cosmology of a pre-scientific age” and as therefore quite unacceptable to modern man (cf. Kerygma and Myth, SCM Press, London, 1955, pp. 46, 75) and the Christ-event is transformed from an objective divine intervention into a relative historical phenomenon (Kerygma and Myth, p. 19). And it is in this, according to Bultmann, that the real offence of Christianity lies: “In the re-definition of the Christian concept of God’s choice of an ordinary mortal individual, different from every other man, and of an event, in no way miraculous or supernatural (Kerygma and Myth, p. 43), which in its essential relativity belongs to the normal order of all mundane events. Bultmann’s refusal goes hand in hand with subjectivism. The relevance of the Christian concept amounts to a merely subjective significance. Neither the incarnation nor the resurrection of Christ, for example, are to be understood as datable events of the past but as ‘eschatological’ events which are to be subjectively experienced through faith in the word of preaching (Kerygma and Myth, pp. 41, 209; Theology of the New Testament, vol. I, SCM Press, London, 1955, p. 195). It is in fact, only once experience, here and now, that can have any authenticity for me — not anything that has happened in the past or will happen in the future. In short, the Christian message is compressed within an existentialistic mould. mij. And it is in this sense that the doctrine of the kerygma is understood in terms of pure subjectivity. Pronouncements about the deity of Jesus are not to be interpreted as dogmatic propositions concerning His nature but as exist­ential judgements, not as statements about Christ but as propositions about me. Thus, for example, the absolute affirmation that Christ helps me because He is God’s Son conveys to the subjective a value-judgment of the ‘moment’ that He is God’s Son because He helps me (The Christological Confession of the World, SCM Press, London, 1955, p. 305). Truth, in a word, is identified with subjectivity.

While the message of Christianity is beyond doubt, in the truest sense existential and contemporaneous and demands the subjective response of faith, yet the faith it requires is faith in an objective reality. When robbed of its objec­tivity, faith means for me that God’s free and supernatural intervention through Christ in the affairs of our world, Christianity becomes a drifting idea, an abstraction, a rootless idealism, an ungraspable balloon loosed from its moorings. Bultmann, it seems to me, in his attack on the question of the world-view with that of Myth, criticizes Bultmann, and the effort to adapt the Christian Faith to “modern” or “modern concepts of existential philosophy, comes out continually in the fact that he “cleanses” the New Testament from ideas which necessarily belong to it, and do not conflict with the modern view of all, but only with the “self-understanding”; and in particular with the prejudices, of an Idealistic philosophy; while in his conception of the New Testament he is lacking in insight into the significance of the New Testament epochal, of the ‘once-for-all’ (or uniqueness) of the Fact of Christ as an Event in the continuum of history” (Dogmatics, vol. II, p. 267, 268).

Yet, while realizing that in Bultmann’s programme of demythologization what is at stake is nothing less than the central theological question of revelation, of “Saving History” and the meaning of God as a “Living God”, who is the Lord of History and of History” (Dogmatics, vol. II, p. 180), Bultmann refuses to “give up the right to criticize this or that recorded miracle, this or that mar­vellous event in the world of preaching (Kerygma and Myth, p. 31) and in the Word of Scripture (Sot. 4: 6, 7) comes out continually in the fact that Christ helps me because He is God’s Son” (in Essays, SCM Press, London, 1955, p. 280). Bultmann’s whole programme is firmly closed system, governed by fixed natural laws, in which there can be no history, no real change, only the eternal recurrence, in the highest form the “once-for-all” (or uniqueness) of the Fact of Christ as an Event in the continuum of history” (Dogmatics, vol. II, p. 267, 268).

17
of the origins of life given in the biblical

cal story of creation and Paradise (cf.

tbid., p. 74). Likewise he affirms the

he rejects as myths the Genesis ac-

counts of creation and Paradise

ibid.,

(Eternal Hope,

don, 1954). Again, and inversely (1),

that they are in fact unacceptable to

new discoveries may reinstate as re-

which are clearly mythical, in the sense

us who have no longer the

'pronouncement~

picture of the ancients and the apostles'

place, on the grounds that

spectable certain aspects of the biblical

was thought to have exposed as mythi-

world-picture which "modern science"

has today entered the sphere of the

apocalyptic fantasies of the Christian

was看电影 as characteristic of the

terms

of human life. The other side

are described

in this sense

events, for example Christ’s ascension.

indeed much

ment is necessarily and consciously

kerygma

in the sense that it
does, and must do, what Bultmann

conceives to be characteristic of the mythi-

cal — “it speaks of God in a human

way” (Dogmatics, vol. II, p. 265). And

in the same connection Bultmann explains

that ‘mythology is the use of

imagery to express the otherworldly in

terms of this world and the divine in

terms of human life, the other side in

terms of this side” (Kerygma and Myth,
p. 10). To eliminate myth in this sense

would mean that it would become im-

possible for man to say anything about

God, or for God to say anything intel-

ligible to man, for we have no other

medium of expression than the terms of

this world. But it certainly does not

follow that the terms of this side must

always be given a symbolical (= mythi-

ological) meaning, or that they are al-

ways inadequate for the purposes intended.

While there is indeed much sym-

bolism in the New Testament, it is

evident also that many things there are

intended in a literal sense, and that

events, for example Christ’s ascension,

are described phenomenally (i.e., from

the quite legitimate point of view of the

observer). Finally, it must be stressed

that the concept of myth which we have

been discussing in this article is incom-

patible with the Reformed doctrine of

the historical Jesus. The Christ of the Bible

is The Logos, not a mythos; He needs

no demythologizing at the hands of

human scholars.

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course of the article. The following

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