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A Prolegomenon to New Testament Language in Light of Contemporary Linguistic Analysis : A Look at Paul's Meaning and Use of Theological Language in I Corinthians 2:6-16

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A PROLEGOMENON TO NEW TESTAMENT LANGUAGE
IN LIGHT OF CONTEMPORARY LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS:
A LOOK AT PAUL'S MEANING AND USE OF
THEOLOGICAL LANGUAGE IN I CORINTHIANS 2:6-16

A Research Paper
Presented to the faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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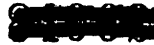


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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

That there has been a wealth of material written and presented to modern students of theology regarding the question of religious language and its place in the field of New Testament Theology there can be no denial. But to say that this material has been always useful and intelligible to those undertaking the task of finding a significant relationship between the meaning of religious assertions and their use within the complex of human language is something less likely to be affirmed. Human language is a very complex thing. And it has no doubt fascinated man ever since he realized that he was a creature who could verbally symbolize and express in many ways the thoughts taking place in his own mind. That these thoughts were understood by other men or that communication always was taking place is another question. The fact remains, man is a social animal. And as such his thinking, feelings and speaking do not take shape within a vacuum. Moreover, the very form of his words and the very content of his speech are delimited by the conditions of his environment and his historical existence in time.

Admittedly, human language is a thing which escapes easy definition. But that does not hinder us from using it in our daily lives. The fact that man is both a thinking and a speaking creature is for all purposes a truism; but the more profound fact is that human language and human existence are intrinsically related. And this relationship becomes even more remarkable once we realize that it demonstrates and reflects the tremendous creative hand of Almighty God.

Moreover, the fact that human language can give expression to God's creation and His Love in the form of words will always remain a mystery. But we can speak about God. We do have the power to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ and we also have the power to understand that Good News when it is being expressed to us. But how is this communication possible? How is it that we understand the words we hear or read regarding the activity of the Triune God? Do these words carry some hidden power all their own? Or are they just ordinary words which have taken on some special meaning and thrust? Furthermore, what is the relationship between the use of religious language and the form of other kinds of languages? And if there is a form of religious language, what is its place within the framework of theological studies? Is there a list of criteria which help us to examine and explain the meaning and use of religious expressions? These questions and others like them have been posited and (to some degree) answered by philosophers and theologians for quite some time. And especially to students of New Testament Theology these questions are becoming increasingly significant. This, then, is the purpose of this study: to look more closely at what scholars in many fields have had to say regarding the matter of human language and its ability to make religious assertions. In an attempt to define this purpose more accurately, it will be necessary to: (a) examine the field of contemporary Linguistic Analysis in light of its historical setting; (b) describe the relationship between the phenomenology of language and religious language; (c) consider the work being done presently in the area of modern linguistic studies in biblical research and see its effect upon the formation of theological assertions; (d) present the opinions of those scholars who discuss the very nature of theological language; and (e) investigate St. Paul's meaning and use of religious language.

This outline may appear to be quite challenging. We would agree that to consider all the intricacies of all the areas would result in a tome far beyond the scope of this study. But that does not mean that the material cannot be handled in limited space. Indeed the material must be discussed. As Stephen Neill maintains:

We have . . . a vast amount of lexical and grammatical material at our disposal. Are we sure that the best use is being made of this material, and that the linguistic principles which underlie much current work of interpretation are reliable and genuinely scientific? Have New Testament studies taken adequate advantage of the general progress in the sphere of "linguistics" and "semantics", the theory of speech and of the nature of communication between human beings?¹

We do have a plethora of material at our disposal. But it is one thing to acknowledge this fact and it is yet another to make this information intelligible to modern man. Modern men have very different views about history and historical processes. It has often been said that we cannot really tell our people what it was like back in First Century Christianity because times were so different. This is the problem of continuity which has beset the minds of many New Testament scholars. The problem may be expressed:

In our age . . . we live in a universe of thought and discourse radically different from that of the first century. How, then, is it possible to transmit to people of today a message rooted in an era which looked at the world in quite another way? What does it take to translate words spoken and written long ago into terms and concepts which might be comprehensible to people living some 1,900 years later?²

That question is not easily answered. But at least it can be answered with some degree of sureness once the matter of religious language is discussed. The challenge must be taken up by serious students of New Testament Theology who are concerned about the present attitudes of religious skepticism so common in our society today. "In an important sense ours is an age in desperate search for meaning. . . . Meaning by

definition must have language as its basic medium."³ Paul Van Buren takes up this challenge and also offers what he hopes to be a viable solution:

In an era in which men are being called to patriotism, nationalism, racial superiority, and the preservation of economic systems and various ways of life, in the name of religion, "God," the church, and all that is "holy," the clarification of the language of faith and of the Gospel by means of linguistic analysis is much needed. The chief benefactor of this clarification is the empirically-minded man who has been touched by the Gospel and who seeks a meaning and a logic to being a Christian in the world today.⁴

Thus Van Buren and others like him are convinced that the only sure way to understand the Gospel today as well as give it life and meaning in a world hungry for meaningful expressions is to see that Gospel in light of Linguistic Analysis. For language "is to be conceived of not as an abstraction but as a concrete activity of speaking men."⁵

This, then, should give the reader some idea of the attitudes of some theologians who are decidedly concerned about the challenge of modern man's search for meaning in life and religion. How well this challenge is met through the efforts of those championing the method of Linguistic Analysis has yet to be observed.

CHAPTER II

CONTEMPORARY LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

Modern Linguistic Analysis has its roots in both the school of Logical Positivism and the school of Phenomenology. The former had its beginnings in Vienna and later became centered at Oxford University. The latter¹ with its focus upon existentialism was centered in France and Germany. For both schools of thought language was the central issue. Moreover, both schools maintained an opposition against all forms of "ideal" languages. Both said: "Meaning does not exist in an ideal realm of perfect clarity and distinctness, apart from and antedating the ambiguous domain of ordinary usage."² In other words, "no word has a single meaning as its essence. Words have meanings, depending upon the context of their usage."³ This philosophical opposition really stemmed from a dissatisfaction with the idealism of Plato, Leibnitz, Husserl and others who would say, "language is composed of signs that point the mind to ideal meanings,"⁴ as well as against the empiricism of Locke, Hume and others who would say, "words refer to meanings outside themselves, to concepts."⁵ What these schools of thought both maintain, in brief, is that meaning is not detached from words and that words are not signs that refer elsewhere for their meaning. Rather, meaning is correlative to the speaker in the act of speaking and the writer in the act of writing.

It would be helpful to look more closely at the background to contemporary Linguistic Analysis as it is really an outgrowth of Logical Positivism. There actually have been many variant forms of Logical

Positivism since its inception in 1929 as an outgrowth of the Vienna Circle formed by Moritz Schlick in 1922. Logical Positivism or Logical Analysis is quite different from Linguistic Analysis, which itself is considerably less empirically oriented. The old Vienna Circle, which broke up after World War II, argued that "there was one thing all sciences had in common that could be delimited: language."⁶ But it is a well known thing that philosophers long before the time of the Vienna Circle had likewise been interested in the matter of language, but not to the scientific degree as were the followers of Schlick. One very notable figure, however, to come out of that school of thought was Ludwig Wittgenstein who really represents the bridge between the old Logical Positivism and the form of Philosophical Analysis which was beginning to form around the year 1936. Van Buren states that:

Linguistic analysis, although it is related historically to the Logical Positivism of the Vienna Circle of the 1920's, should not be confused with the somewhat dogmatic spirit and teachings of that philosophy.⁷ Indeed, its deepest roots lie in the tradition of British empiricism. It is more accurate to speak of linguistic analysis as a method than a school or movement of philosophy, for what its practitioners share is only a common interest and a common logical method. Their interest is in the function of language, and their method lies in the logical analysis of how words and statements function, both in normal and in abnormal use. Linguistic analysts are not opposed in principle to the use of religious or theological language, as the logical positivists were.

To be sure, the Logical Positivists were a hard-headed group of philosophers who demanded much from the spoken and written word. For them any forms of emotive language were held in suspicion and anything short of scientific verification was not acceptable. We would have to agree with David Crystal who says, "there is no possibility of compromise between logical positivism and religion."⁹

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) presented a refreshing change from the coldly analytic Positivism to a more appealing linguistic method.

Unlike the early Wittgenstein who manifested many of the philosophical tendencies of the old Vienna Circle, the later Wittgenstein of the Philosophical Investigations (1945-1949) made it clear

that one cannot lay down in advance that one kind of language is meaningful and other kinds nonsense, but that one must recognize that there are many kinds of languages, and that the meaning of each is to be studied from the way in which it gets used.¹⁰

But this does not mean, for instance, "that the philosophical movement stemming from Wittgenstein has suddenly become more friendly towards the claims of theological or religious language."¹¹ But what it does mean is that "theological language is no longer summarily dismissed as nonsense."¹²

Wittgenstein himself said: "It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and of the ways they are used . . . with what logicians have said about the structure of language."¹³ Moreover, "For a large class of cases -- though not for all -- in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language."¹⁴ And again, "One cannot guess how the word functions. One has to look at its use and learn from that."¹⁵ Finally, "Language is an instrument. Its concepts are instruments."¹⁶ The matter of use has always been a pivotal term for the linguistic analyst. As Crystal states:

Moreover, if meaning is ultimately determined by use, and use resides in the users, then the beliefs of the users are obviously going to be an important part of the total context which must be considered before language can be assessed.¹⁷

Dallas High says much the same kind of thing: "the most important feature is that language is always intimately connected with the user."¹⁸

In addition to rejecting the notion of the possibility of a private language, Wittgenstein would maintain that language is a form of life.¹⁹

It is to be observed that the phrase "form of life" is used to denote

life as a whole, not some sort of psychological fragmentation as if feelings, attitudes, or poetic expressions were antithetical to logic, reason, mathematics, and science. . . . Rather, a "form of life" is embodied in the language-using situations. . . . This. . . is. . . stressing the intimate bond between man (persons) and language.²⁰

Still another helpful concept supplied by Wittgenstein is that of "family resemblances."²¹ This concept plays a very important role in the understanding of the New Testament Gospel. In the words of Van Buren:

If no family resemblances were allowed between the language of the Gospel and the way in which we speak of being loved by another human being, we should have to abandon all hope of understanding what the Gospel means. But languages do have family resemblances, and it is by noticing them as well as by seeing their limits that we can understand the language of theology.²²

We remember Crystal's statement in which he asserted that Logical Positivism and religion are not in the least compatible; but at the same time we should be reminded of the fact that Linguistic Analysis and religion are compatible in a number of ways. First, Linguistic Analysis would agree that "there is a multiplicity of languages."²³ Secondly, Linguistic Analysis, unlike Logical Positivism, has a "distrust of reductionism"²⁴ and tends to move away from the language of physics. Thirdly, the followers of the Later Wittgenstein would say that within all languages there is indeed a "diversity of meaning."²⁵ It is to be seen that these three points have much in common. Most important is the fact that we are made aware of the wide range of possibilities for meaningful discourse. Following this, the Linguistic Analysts would say that there is room for "indirect discourse"²⁶ within the realm of intelligibility, i.e., there can be such a thing as language which is not really emotive but still has some level of empirical worth (e.g.,

parabolic language, symbolic language, and the like). Finally, the Linguistic Analytic method would stress very heavily the matter of the "context of the situation."²⁷ Yet is this saying the whole story? Surely, there is much of worth in these statements regarding the harmony between Linguistic Analysis and the use of religious language. But what about the whole matter of truth? Can this be tested? Some analysts would say that it can:

Some means must then be contrived in order to test whether language and understanding do in fact have reference to reality, whether they are "true!". . . . Philosophy . . . endeavors to discover criteria appropriate to various forms of discourse. This type of philosophy is known as functional linguistic analysis.²⁸

And where are these criteria to be located? "Contemporary linguistic philosophy accepts as fundamental the principle: the proper locus of meaning is the proposition or statement."²⁹ The statement or the proposition, then, is the primary locus in which the criteria for understanding are most evident. Said another way, the meaning of a word is decided by the context in which it is used. Herein lies the heart of the verification principle for the Linguistic Analyst. That is,

the meaning of a statement is to be found in, and is identical with, the function of that statement. If a statement has a function, so that it may in principle be verified or falsified, the statement is meaningful, and unless or until a theological statement can be submitted in some way to verification, it cannot be said to have a meaning in our language-game. This means that the context of the language of faith may not be neglected.³⁰

This, then, is the kind of thing Ferre has in mind when he says that "we must abandon the closely circumscribed techniques of verificational analysis and search for a style of linguistic analysis which can better appreciate the extraordinary variety of the functions of language."³¹ Although he is not among the majority of scholars in the field of Linguistic Analysis, Langdon Gilkey expresses a profound caution to

those who would glibly assent to the verification principle as it is put forth by Van Buren and others. Gilkey contends that Linguistic Analysis and biblical theology can get together only if we see that "such an analysis of Church language must. . . accept the language of the Church as 'given' and therefore also its faith as 'given'."³² Moreover, "by its nature, linguistic analysis cannot move beyond this churchly scene to relate religious language to ordinary experience."³³ He goes on to say that it would take an optimist to maintain that religious discourse "when used in the churches, communicates meaningfully to those who use and those who hear it."³⁴

In much the same way as Gilkey, the British scholar Crystal would assert that Linguistic Analysis is quite useful but one must constantly be aware of its drawbacks. He writes:

No matter how much linguistic perfectibility was attained, there could still be only an inadequate knowledge of God for a human being. Secondly, what possible verifiable criterion could one set up for deciding when language has expressed a metaphysical truth best of all? . . . Thirdly, and most important, an over-concentration on language form in religious matters involving fundamental truths is bad, because no amount of stylistic knowledge will eradicate a confused mind.³⁵

Here Crystal is arguing against those who would say that language is the prime conveyor of meaning irrespective of the whole context of belief. Said another way, language is really too inadequate to speak about God who far transcends the limits of human discourse; but language is in fact all we have got. So we had better make the most of it. In another place, Crystal contends that

it is quite helpful to look on language as a kind of indispensable tool, which many scholars, Christian and otherwise, would do well to understand better. To make it a fundamental criterion for living, however, is to get one's priorities wrong. Language makes a good servant, but it is a bad master.³⁶

At the other end of the spectrum is John Macquarrie who would

maintain that there are at least three areas in which theologians might profit from the work being done by contemporary linguistic philosophers.

The first of these areas in the self-criticism of theology itself. . . . A second area . . . is the field of biblical theology. . . . A third area . . . the work of logical analysis . . . can make its contribution toward the construction of a new philosophical theology.³⁷

Perhaps this is the kind of thing which Woelfel has in mind when he writes that sooner or later Christian rationalism and metaphysics will have to move beyond their present status and "incorporate their insights into a more profound synthesis."³⁸

If there is to be any kind of synthesis forthcoming it will of necessity have to confine itself at first to the matter of language itself. For it would stand to reason that for both Christian theologians and Linguistic Analysts alike the focal point of agreement would be that centering on an adequate methodology. That methodology would be confined to the relationship between theological assertions and ordinary language.³⁹ Whether this can be fully achieved, i.e., that both theology and philosophy could decide upon a common language, is another question. In any event, at least prior consideration must be given to the feasibility of such an inclusive language, a language which would participate on the same level of discourse. But is such a language possible? In one of his more recent studies on the subject, Langdon Gilkey writes: "Clearly there is no special vocabulary or 'language' in religion; what, then, are the peculiar usages and rules of application that make ordinary words. . . 'religious' in character?"⁴⁰ This is no idle question. And one possible answer lies in the fact that both theology and philosophy alike should not overlook or in any way disparage the meaningfulness of the language of faith. For it this language of faith which has a function that could be clarified by

Linguistic Analysis. And at the same time Linguistic Analysis must realize that "the language of Christian faith is the language of a believer, one who has been 'caught' by the Gospel."⁴¹ Moreover, the Linguistic Analyst must be made aware that "a believer is speaking and the circumstances in which he is speaking may not be ignored. The actual function of the words is the key to understanding the language of faith."⁴²

Thus in light of what many scholars in both fields have had to say, there is beginning to come about a strong appreciation for each other's stylistic tendencies and linguistic methodology. But before we consider the common realm of theological and philosophical discourse it will be necessary to discuss another branch of philosophy which has made substantial inroads into the matter of New Testament language.

CHAPTER III

PHENOMENOLOGY OF LANGUAGE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

Although they look at language in much the same way, "phenomenology of language is not a kind of linguistic analysis."¹ That is, Linguistic Analysis, at least in form of verificational analysis, operates with the law of the single perspective, while "the phenomenology of language takes the view that language participates in the creation, preservation, and modification of the appearances."² Said another way, "Linguistic Analysis of the functional variety seeks to discriminate among the manifold ways in which language is actually used."³ However, the phenomenology of language "attempts to press language for its ontological bearings."⁴ That is, Linguistic Analysis seeks to investigate the uses of language, while the phenomenology of language attempts to examine the various "modes of language."⁵

It goes without question that the recent developments in New Testament Theology, especially in the area of hermeneutics, have largely been affected by the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. As one of his most notable students, Heinrich Ott, has said,

it is under the influence of Martin Heidegger that the problem of language has most recently entered into theological discussion. There are today several theologians who have recognized the theological significance of the problem of language.⁶

James Robinson maintains that "for Heidegger, the term language (Sprache) does not merely designate audible or verbal articulation. It is more basically related to the conveying of meaning."⁷ This matter of the relationship between the ontological basis of language and New Testament

Theology will be discussed in more detail under the area of the New Hermeneutic. Before this is done, it would be well to consider some of the later Heidegger's thoughts on language. Ott claims that for Heidegger

(a) language is not to be understood in terms of its sign function . . . simply its phonetic symbols; (b) language is not to be understood in terms of its expressive function; (c) language is a 'transcendental' . . . event that overtakes man and in which man is allowed to participate: 'language speaks'; (d) the 'dimension of the object' must also be considered. Our understanding of the text does not proceed simply between two points, ourselves and the text being apprehended. . . . It is not the 'opinions' of the author that count. . . . If we wish to understand at all, then our concern must rather be with the relation of the past thinker to the object confronting him, an object which must be capable of becoming ours as well.⁸

Ott himself has "undertaken the specific task of mediating between Bultmann and Barth on the basis of Heidegger."⁹

Thus it should become increasingly evident that the phenomenology of language has indeed played a significant role in German schools of thought regarding the language of the New Testament. For it was on the basis of the existential quality implicit in phenomenology that Rudolf Bultmann and his students, Gerhard Ebeling and Ernst Fuchs gave impetus to what is today referred to as the New Hermeneutic.

On language, Fuchs can be compared with the later Heidegger in that both maintain that "only that which can become present as language is real. For 'where meaning is, there also is language. And where language is, there is reality'."¹⁰ There is, then, a decided correspondence between language and hermeneutics. As the Roman Catholic scholar, Luis Alonso-Schökel has said, "understanding language is an act of hermeneutics."¹¹ He also said that we can consider language to be operating on three levels. First, "as the human faculty of speech (language); secondly, as a concrete language (langue); and thirdly in its personal

use (parole) -- we shall discover in all three an interpretive function."¹² Thus for him language has a hermeneutical function. Language does not, however, repeat unchanged external reality, "nor does it simply carry to the exterior the interior realities of man. Language is itself a complex hermeneutic activity on several levels."¹³ Despite this emphasis upon the interpretative character implicit in human language there is still the question of understanding that needs to be resolved. For that is the focal question in contemporary hermeneutics: how does the language of the Scripture become meaningful for Twentieth Century man? Ott has stated the problem thus:

what is understanding, and how does a given text become intelligible? The problem of language asks: What is the nature of language, and how, quo modo, does a given text speak (to us)? The two problems converge; in fact, they are both finally identical.¹⁴

This, then, is the problem to which the German scholars Ebeling and Fuchs addressed themselves.

Basically, the New Hermeneutic is characterized by those scholars who are interested in the connection between current philosophical-theological problems of method and the actual exegesis of the New Testament texts. The kind of problem with which they are confronted has been very well summarized by Martin Scharlemann.

An awareness of the historical distance between text and interpreter, induced by life in a world of rapid movement into the future, has created the need to distinguish sharply between what a Biblical passage once meant and what it signifies today. With the many textual, grammatical, and lexicographical tools available today, it is a comparatively simple task to determine what a Scriptural passage once meant. It is much more difficult to transpose that meaning into the contemporary situation, because of the size of the gap which has grown out of our moving into a new kind of univers_e.¹⁵

The New Hermeneuticians are thus most concerned with providing a link between what was once said and how that same thing can be said today.

Their analysis of a Biblical text provides (hopefully) a better understanding

of, and a keener insight into, the reality of modern man's existence. For them, "hermeneutic is basically 'trans-lation,' meaning the transportation of the subject matter from then to now, as the event of language in the past speaks in our language today."¹⁶ Here it is to be observed that the New Hermeneuticians indeed place much emphasis upon the matter of language as an event. But where it would appear that these scholars could help us the most, they have only succeeded in making the issue more confused. This language as event is much like language itself: difficult to define. As Robinson writes: "Neither verificational analysis nor the theory of language as an arbitrary system of signs and symbols is prepared to cope with the notion of . . . language as event."¹⁷ In spite of the efforts of the New Hermeneuticians, their description of the language of Scripture is fraught with many difficulties. Dallas High appears to have sounded the knell when he writes:

Even though there is a certain justification for representing language as "event" . . . nevertheless this may well be more of an abstraction of language and words, as if to claim that words themselves are the events, or could perform these events. . . . It is to withdraw language from its personal backing and human condition.¹⁸

The question of interpretation of the text for modern man, however, is still a very important one. If the New Hermeneuticians could not find an adequate answer to the problem, the young scholar David Crystal maintains that a viable solution can be found within the area of Linguistic Analysis. It is evident that hermeneutics aims to discover and expound the true meaning of scriptural language. Hermeneutics also

involves the three stages of noemantics (the determination of the possible senses of Scripture), heuristics (the determination of the true meaning by a known set of rules), and prophoristics (the explanation of the text to others). The practical utilization of interpretative procedures is known as exegesis.¹⁹

He further asserts that "as such problems begin in language, and end

with the verification of the meaning of that language, linguistics should be able to provide valuable assistance."²⁰

With this brief look at the relationship of the phenomenology of language to religious language we have seen that the former has really only succeeded in clouding the issue due to its emphasis upon the ontological quality of human language. That there is a definite correlation between human language and human existence goes without saying. But to lay too heavy an emphasis upon the role of human existence is to enter into the realm of metaphysics; and the role of philosophical categories and abstruse world-views is not the intention of this study. Our concern is chiefly that of the understanding of New Testament language in light of Linguistic Analysis. A very similar attitude, although taken by a man in a somewhat different area, is one expressed by James Barr. His concern is that

though frequent mention will be found of "the problem of language" or "the phenomenon of human language", the questions which have been discussed in this kind of hermeneutics have not been linguistic questions, although occasional reference may be made to linguistic facts, but philosophical-theological questions.²¹

It is now to the question of linguistics that we turn our attention.

CHAPTER IV

MODERN LINGUISTICS AND SEMANTICS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO NEW TESTAMENT LANGUAGE

No better introductory words could be found to this particular section than those expressed by James Barr: "by studying language linguistically one is making a genuine and valid contribution to the understanding of it."¹ But who is such a person? Is it one who examines language in terms of grammatical and syntactical constructions in hopes of elucidating the meaning contained within the sentence structure? Surely, studies of this nature are valuable for students of foreign and domestic languages. Or is it more than simply lexicographical and semantic disciplines that are needed? Can it be that the minutia of sentence elements must give way to a broader concept of contextual criticism which emphasizes a less restrictive meaning sometimes at the expense of the finer points of grammar? Or is it possible that some kind of synthesis can be worked out between both schools of thought? The purpose of this chapter, then, is to look more closely at the types of concepts which distinguish each school of thought from the other. In this manner it will help us to see those differing points of view of the linguist, the semanticist and the lexicographer and how these viewpoints affect the study of New Testament theology.

In the words of William Smalley, the New Testament linguist

doesn't see Greek as some kind of fixed language ideal for the presentation of Christian teaching, but as a language among languages, with its niceties and its ambiguities, its vagueness and its preciseness, a product of its history and its culture. The linguistic point of view does not see all the meanings of a Greek word in every occurrence of that word but sees meanings selected and delimited by context.²

This kind of thinking has a valid place in the area of Bible translation. Here we can see both elements, i.e., grammatical constructions and contextual nuances, are essentially at work. On the surface, Smalley's words appear to make a good deal of sense. But before we nod our heads in final affirmation to his description of the cult of New Testament linguists, it would be wise to consider some of the more profound and scholarly remarks of some other students of biblical theology.

We are told that "semantics empinges upon theology at many levels,"³ and that "one cannot build a sound theology upon an unsound use of language."⁴ What, then, is the way to build a sound theology? It has been suggested that it "cannot be conclusively stated in Biblical terms,"⁵ and that we must turn to outside sources for more information. What are these sources? The tone of this present study would seem to indicate that Linguistic Analysis could provide us the answer. But to this opinion Barr would issue a caution:

If it is true that modern philosophy (of which I have only an amateur knowledge) lays much emphasis on the examination of everyday language, it may be that we have here a point at which the isolation of biblical theology from such philosophy within the intra-biblical area is a source of much harm.⁶

Yet he is willing to modify his position somewhat in maintaining that the most reliable use of biblical language will be that in which "ample and unambiguous evidence from usage leads us to suppose that we use a word in a way that adequately conveys a deliberate and conscious purpose . . . in the sentences spoken or written by the men of the Bible."⁷ Such an expression might very well play into the hands of the contemporary Linguistic Analyst who can see much of his own point of view reflected in the words of the semanticist, Barr. But Barr's concerns are not wholly centered about the ambitions of the Linguistic Analyst. His main interest is in pointing out the deficiencies of certain biblical

lexicographers whose idealist philosophy adversely affects their accuracy. To Barr, these idealists say the linguistic structure of the biblical text is "an expression of, and reflects the inner relations of, the relevant thought-structure, Greek-metaphysical or Hebrew-theological."⁸ Moreover, they are unable to "keep to linguistic method strictly and the tendency to replace it by theological and philosophical argument."⁹ And to make matters worse, they are unable to "see and present evidence except where it appears to follow the lines of a thought-structure of metaphysical-theological type."¹⁰ For Barr, too little concern is given whether or not it is the thought or the language of the Greek or Hebrew in particular or the Indo-European or Semitic in general. In his opinion.

The contrast of Greek and Hebrew cultures and languages has its value because of the relation of the two in the New Testament; and also for its importance for us in disentangling the different threads in our culture since the beginning of the Christian era.¹¹

David Crystal also finds a similar problem in analyzing Greek using one linguistic theory and Hebrew using another. Moreover, there is a tendency for some lexicographers to find parallels between dissimilar languages which are not there and to overlook those which are present. One ought to note the closeness of thought between Barr's criticism and that of Crystal.

The derivation of a word is irrelevant for determining the current meaning of a word at any given time. . . . Appeals to etymology are dramatic, but irrelevant; the "basic" or "correct" meaning of a word depends on a statistical survey of its uses, not in what it used to mean or what one individual thinks it ought to mean.¹²

But who are these individuals who make the decisions regarding the meaning of certain biblical words? And who are those who impose their particular thought-structure upon the meaning of biblical material? We now inspect those who may be guilty in the eyes of Barr and Crystal.

In the year 1886 the noted German scholar, Hermann Cremer, made the following remark: "Lexical works upon New Testament Greek have hitherto lacked a thorough appreciation of what Schleiermacher calls 'the language moulding power of Christianity'."¹³ Furthermore he maintained that "the terms hackneyed and worn out by the current misuse of daily talk received a new impress and fresh power."¹⁴ Barr would contend that where Cremer says "new impress," Gerhard Kittel, the editor of the famed Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,¹⁵ uses the phrase, "new content."¹⁶ Thus, in Barr's opinion,

the "old" is the Hellenic-Hellenistic thinking associated with the words, the "new" is the Hebraic-Christian stream of thought, which itself is ancient but when expressed in Greek creates a "new content" for the words of that language.¹⁷

It would be well to consider a quote from one of Kittel's lectures given in the year 1938.

The language of the New Testament has quite definitely but one single purpose, that of expressing that which has taken place, that which God has done in Christ. New Testament words are thus essentially like a mirror; they reflect the fact of Christ, and this they do not in any broken or indirect way, but in actual reality and in genuine truth. That which has taken place in Christ, itself and through its own dynamis,¹⁸ creates and shapes its own message, the very message which henceforth bears witness to it throughout the whole world. For the words and sentences in which the message is framed are formed by men who are imbued with the fact of Christ. They never speak in order to communicate their own wisdom or any theological or philosophical ideas.¹⁹

To this kind of thinking Barr responds, "the method of TWNT at places comes nearer to offering idea-histories than word-histories."²⁰

Furthermore, Barr maintains that

Theological thought depends considerably on the degree to which the word becomes a technical term. . . . Theological thought of the type found in the NT has its characteristic linguistic expression not in the word individually but in the word-combination or sentence. . . . The value of the context comes to be seen as something contributed by the word, and then it is read into the word as its contribution where the context is in fact different.²¹

Barr's devastating criticism concludes at this point with the statement: "A treatment of such combinations might come nearer to fulfilling the general purpose of TWNT; but it would be less like what could be called a dictionary."²²

In Kittel's preface to his TWNT he indicates that his work stems from the previous work done by the above mentioned Hermann Cremer and also Julius Kögel.²³ It was this latter scholar who, in 1915, remarked:

The word is only the outward expression of the inner possession, and this inner possession always remains the first thing. . . . The expression has to be judged from within, just as it on the other side leads to the inward.²⁴

And certainly Barr is not one to let a comment like this go uncriticized.

He rebukes Kögel's comments with the words:

A general lexicon of language has to deal with semantics just as a special lexicon of one writer or group must; it has to record usage of special groups if known; and it is extremely precarious to suggest that one must penetrate to "the inner world of thought" in a way that the other does not.²⁵

In short, the "whole Kögel-Kittel theory of lexicography must be judged an erroneous one."²⁶ It is not possible, according to Barr, for certain religious expression to be lexicographically dealt with properly. Such expressions like the "love of God" and the "mind of Christ" go far beyond any lexicographer's ability to handle them. These kinds of expressions and others like them "are not linguistic functional units but formulations; they are not interchangeable like words, and do not fit freely into contexts as words do."²⁷

Now the reason that so many of Barr's criticisms are offered to the reader is that the following quotation of his, which is to be understood in light of the foregoing, does present a valid caution to those who would unquestioningly assent to the method of contemporary Linguistic Analysis:

such failures can be traced to the philosophy of language which allows a theological argument to do duty for a linguistic one, or assumes that the linguistic facts will fit the patterns of theological relations. Such a misuse of argument arises, I repeat, not from a deliberate intrusion of theology as such but from a philosophy which believes the language of the Bible somehow to reflect in its structure the pattern of the biblical events themselves. I think nevertheless that this ill-defined philosophy of language has been followed and cultivated because it seemed to serve and support the interests of certain types of theology.²⁸

This criticism has been taken up by another student of language analysis, Heinrich Ott, who was mentioned earlier in another context.²⁹ Ott claims, in much the same manner as would Barr, that we should not superimpose any particular schema upon the content of biblical material. In his words, we ought not "interpret language from the outset in salvation-historical terms, nor attempt to press 'salvation-history' and the particularity of biblical text into an important theory of language."³⁰

Moreover, another scholar has given his opinion of Gerhard Kittel's methodology. It is presented below since it relates directly to the topic now under consideration and in general to the theme at large. John Macquarrie has said that in Kittel:

the investigations have been directed to the history of the meanings of words. The question about the logical functions of words and the kind of discourse in which they operate has been neglected. . . . These remarks are obviously related to some of the things James Barr has said in his criticisms of certain aspects of biblical theology. The burden of his complaint has been that too much attention is paid to single words, too little to the connected discourse within which words get their significations. In stressing the sentence as the minimal unit of discourse, Barr is saying precisely what Wittgenstein had said.³¹

Before we consider what effect this matter of linguistics and semantics has upon Paul's meaning and use of the phrase, "the mind of Christ," it would be well to examine what some scholars have had to say in regard to the nature of religious language.

CHAPTER V

THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

In spite of the fact that the linguistic method has dominated the English-speaking philosophic scene for nearly a half-century, the concern over language and its function "is not reflected alone in a single philosophic method."¹ Indeed, there have been a number of diverse opinions expressed within the past decade to warrant such a statement. The traces affecting the contemporary method of Linguistic Analysis have been as diffuse as the schools of thought from which they emanate. It will be the intention of this present chapter, thus, to try to collate these expressions and traces into some recognizable pattern in an attempt to bring us to the point where we can speak more knowingly of St. Paul's meaning and use of religious language.

First of all, it might be well to consider Crystal's comment regarding the social nature of language itself.

An important line of argument for the Christian is based on the way a technique of language use is introduced into a society: it is taught. A linguistic ability or habit is always learned; language in any form is not instinctive . . . speech . . . requires a teacher.²

In another place he asserts that "Christianity is for all; it must therefore be comprehensible to all."³ Despite the fact that human language is fraught with numerous inadequacies, we still should use it to speak about God because it really is the only means we have. Moreover, it still contains more than enough meaning and potential for the vast majority of its users."⁴ Let us now weigh the evidence of some of its users.

William Blackstone, in his very profound study on the nature of religious language, states that the religious sentences which provide the biggest problem to one asking if there is religious knowledge are "those which claim to impart knowledge but to which no falsifying evidence applies or which must be taken as analogically or symbolically true."⁵ However, it must be said in the same breath that "the appeal to so-called analogical or symbolical . . . function of these key religious sentences does not help us to discover their meaning."⁶ Thus we still are left with the question of meaning unresolved. But "this conclusion does not imply that those beliefs or attitudes have no value in the lives of people."⁷

Dallas High would have us believe that we can become deluded into thinking that

all sorts of schemes or views of religious speech are somehow appropriate. . . . One may further assume, although quite mistakenly, that the theologian, at least in his saying things religiously, remains unaffected by all this analysis since all that is being added is an analysis and an understanding of the meaning of what the theologian says.⁸

But before we go too far afield with this matter of religious language we should take into account what High says regarding this very concept. He claims that religious use of language is different from religious language precisely for the reason that there is "no 'language' peculiar to religion. Rather, it is the case that people make particular and sometimes special uses of language which . . . may be considered religious language."⁹ Yet for our purposes, the phrase "religious language" is acceptable. If the writer could not use this phrase in the manner he chooses then it would vitiate all the claims made up to this point. Before examining the uniqueness of religious language some brief comments on the nature of language itself will be made.

There are a number of erroneous theories regarding the nature of language. High¹⁰ would mention four in particular: (a) the "referential" or "word-object theory" which affirms a one-to-one correspondence of word to thing; (b) the "word-image theory" which holds that language is composed of symbols that point to ideas and abstractions of the mind; (c) the "behavioral theory" which states that the meaning of language is a matter of an observational function of stimulus and response; and (d) the "verifiability theory" which focuses on the public dimension of meaning. These erroneous theories have much in common with one another. First, it would appear that "language is discussed predominantly as a detached, abstract, and theoretical object of critical investigation."¹¹ Moreover, "it is commonly assumed that meaning is detached from the words uttered and the understanding carried on between speakers and hearers in the linguistic act."¹²

An interesting theory on the nature of language and the art of communication is one propounded by John Macquarrie. The "discourse situation"¹³ is comprised of basically four features: (a) a person who speaks; (b) a person spoken to; (c) a thing spoken about; and (d) something that is said about the thing. Macquarrie would contend that there is a personal dimension which links one person to another. And that which links the person(s) to the thing spoken about is intuition.

Both the erroneous concepts of language as well as the personal dimension of language are useful to a more profound appreciation for the nature of religious language. It will be helpful to bear these items in mind as we now evaluate the nature of religious language itself.

There can be no doubt that religious language has a uniqueness about it that escapes simple explanation. But scholars such as Frederick

Ferre have attempted at least a partial interpretation.¹⁴ Ferre holds that there are essentially five significant descriptive functions within the uniqueness of religious language: (a) there is a "worshipful function" as put forth by J.J.C. Smart et al; (b) a "convictional function" as set forth by Willem Zuurdeeg; (c) an "oddness function" as described by Ramsey and MacIntyre; (d) a "reference range" as discussed by Ian Crombie; and (e) the "significant situation" as put forth by Ferre himself. Such concern over the uniqueness of religious language would seem to result in having this kind of language restricted to a systematic box when nothing like that should be the case.

Van Buren is one who is willing to grant that there is indeed a uniqueness about religious language in the present situation but that does not take into account the dynamic relationship between the language of the believer and that of the writers of Scripture. Such a relationship is thus described:

Although the language of conversion differs from the language of those in the Easter event, they function in a remarkably similar manner. The difference between the two lies in the fact that the believer's expression of faith depends logically and historically upon that of the apostles. That language of faith, whether that of the first apostles or of a modern believer, contains an exclusive element: it claims the universal significance of a particular, historical individual, Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁵

Even within the realm of the uniqueness of religious language, Van Buren claims "that the New Testament proclamation contains primarily statements whose logic is at least partly empirical."¹⁶ It should be noted that Van Buren is quite cautious himself at this point in saying that the "logic" (not "meaning") of the New Testament proclamation is only partially empirical. In other words, he is not willing to grant that religious statements are able to withstand the kind of verification principles that modern analytic men would posit. Yet that does not

mean that these or any other religious statements are not internally verifiable. That is, they cannot be falsified on the basis of independent criteria whose realm of operation is completely extraneous to that of statements of faith. This imposing of one set of criteria upon that of another is the mistake the positivists made when they demanded that all statements stand up under the rigors of scientific verification otherwise they were judged to be cognitively meaningless. Thus it is entirely possible that religious statements do have a level of meaningfulness (as Ferre and others have tried to demonstrate); and this degree of meaningfulness is established by the very nature of the thing being expressed. That is, the language of religion has within itself its own standards of verification.

This concern over the "verification" (or as some would maintain, the "falsification") principle has led to what R. M. Hare would call the concept of a "blik".¹⁷ For all practical purposes a "blik" is that which refers to some kind of point of view on the part of a person which may be either cognitively meaningful or nonverifiable but which is not within the realm of the disprovable. Robert Funk, then, sees this concept as implicit in Van Buren's understanding of religious language.

As he states:

Van Buren comes to language with understanding of language predominant in philosophical linguistic analysis: language is an arbitrary system of signs, devised to convey information. Because he takes this definition as his starting point, he is constrained to opt for a noncognitive "blik" as the basis of faith.¹⁸

Moreover, Funk continues, "he is burdened with a deficient view of language . . . [and] he cannot accord secular man his final rights because he has not grasped the interdependence of language and reality."¹⁹

Lest the reader get caught up in this discussion of the meaningfulness of the concept of "blik" (much time and paper has been wasted over such

an enterprise by scholars already) it should be noted what Antony Flew has had to say. In Flew's opinion there is room for such a concept as a "blik" in philosophy. However, "any attempt to analyse Christian religious utterances as expressions or affirmations of a blik rather than as . . . assertions about the cosmos is fundamentally misguided."²⁰ What, then, can be said about religious assertions? Perhaps we can look at the question from yet another point of view.

The principle of "eschatological verification" is an attempt to provide some sort of substantiation where other concepts, methods or theories have failed. According to Van Buren,

those who take this approach to the language of faith grant that verification must apply to this language, but they argue that this can only be done in the eschaton, in the final day of the Kingdom. In the eschaton, we shall see clearly whether or not faith as knowledge is correct. . . . Logically, however, the statements of faith are in principle verifiable, and therefore, meaningful, as cognitive assertions.²¹

Moreover, "to speak of verification as philosophers do presupposes certain empirical attitudes, and no one knows the empirical attitudes which would be either possible in or appropriate to the eschaton."²² In theory, the principle of "eschatological verification" could provide that basis upon which theological and religious assertions might lay their claims. But this principle has not found much of an audience in either the theological or the philosophical realm. In that so many philosophers and theologians alike are skeptical of such a principle, Van Buren offers what he considers to be a valid claim. He sees many similarities between religious statements and moral assertions in that they are both neither logically necessary nor empirical. Yet they do indeed have a use: "that of guiding conduct."²³ Although this does not appear to be a particularly profound claim, at least it implies something which Robert Funk uses to describe the inherent quality of St. Paul's language: intention.

Before we discuss the intentionality of Paul's language, let us look briefly at what some noted Roman Catholic scholars have had to say in regard to the nature of religious language.

In the year 1943, Pope Pius XII issued his Papal Encyclical, Divino Afflante Spiritu, in which he stressed the purpose of biblical research:

The interpreter must endeavor very carefully, overlooking no light derived from recent research, to determine the personal traits and background of the sacred writer, the age in which he lived, the oral or written sources which he used, and his way of expressing himself.²⁴

Taking very seriously this dictum, Michael Novak has said that there are three general types of questions occupying the current attention of Scripture students: (a) those concerning facts about manuscripts, culture, and archeology; (b) those involving the meaning of a text; (c) those concerned with the verification of that meaning.²⁵ And Basil De Pinto has offered what might serve as a useful introduction to the next chapter or to any discussion concerning the nature of religious language. According to De Pinto, we must not change the language, but learn to find within it the expression of life which it contains, and to recognize the similarities it bears to our own experience. That is, we must learn to realize that the Word of God is a living thing, addressed to us as living creatures. He states:

There is no point in trying to avoid the fact that our Christian vocabulary is quite proper and specific and is conditioned by the course of revelation itself. It contains words, concepts, expressions which do not belong to any other segment of reality as we know it. Our task is to adapt ourselves to this language . . . not to change it to suit ourselves.²⁶

This, then, is to be the attitude that modern men must have when they are doing any kind of biblical research. This attitude, that language of the Scripture is really speaking to us, is implicit in the following study.

CHAPTER VI

ST. PAUL'S MEANING AND USE OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

The language within a Christian community is to a large degree determined by the very nature of that community itself. James Barr contends that the language within such a community depends to some extent on the relation of the community "to the Bible as sacred scripture and on the commitment of the community to see its story as its own and to familiarize itself with its style and expressions."¹ Moreover, the Christian community not only tends to shape its own language and the things which that language express in the light of what Scripture says, but it also must take very seriously the fact that there may exist what Barr calls a "cultural conflict between this community and the wider circle of those speaking the same language."² Thus there are two forces at work with regard to the relationship between a Christian community's view toward the written Word of God: (a) its own use of religious language; (b) the world's use of a language which contains the same words.

What this study proposes to do, then, is look more closely at the language which Paul uses in writing to the Corinthians to see how the two forces mentioned above are at work in that particular community. Although it will not be explicitly stated, the reader is encouraged throughout to regard the words Paul uses in his letter as the actual words being spoken today. That is, in conformity with De Pinto's statement above,³ the reader is asked to regard himself as a member of the Christian community to which Paul is addressing the words of I. Cor. 2:16. In so doing, he will better envision the force of such religious language.

In that the language used throughout the entire First Epistle to the Corinthians is so diverse (due to the complexity of the situation and the nature of specific problems), it will be necessary to view just a brief phrase in light of its immediate context. This does not mean, however, that the full thrust of Paul's language will be diminished. For the remarks made will be specific to the paragraph (2:6-16) without losing sight of the entire letter's general content.

Throughout the epistle, but especially in this part (2:6-16), Paul is hampered by the fact that he must use the word wisdom (sophia) in two senses (Barrett).⁴ In the bad sense, Paul uses the word to denote the simple, human arguments which in themselves are not evil. These arguments do become evil once they give over to understanding truth in terms of human standards rather than those which are given in Christ who has been crucified. In the good sense, Paul contends that the word of the cross is really the wisdom of God. But more important it is actually the wisdom of God which must be understood as God acting through "the wise plan of salvation."⁵ This discussion of wisdom, then, should cast some light upon the paragraph now under discussion.

There is indeed a Christian wisdom. And there is also a very distinct difference between infant and mature, natural and spiritual, Christians. Thus Paul can speak (2:6) wisdom to those who are spiritually mature. But it is to be noted that the type of wisdom Paul speaks about in I Cor. 2:5 is in marked contrast with that type of wisdom spoken about in I Cor. 2:7.

The sophia which Paul speaks is not the sophia of this age or of the powers of this age (2:6). No (alla), the sophia we speak is the sophia of God (2:7), for God reveals it to us (2:10a). It is the sophia by which we identify the Lord of glory as the Crucified (2:8); we have received the sophia (pneuma) of God in order that we may discern the gifts given us by God. . . . We do not speak sophia, therefore, in language informed by human sophia, but in

language informed by the Spirit (sophia of God). . . . For the Spirit not only confers wisdom and spiritual gifts, but it stands in critical judgment upon wisdom and spiritual gifts.⁶

The earlier antithesis, dynamis/sophia, is retained in 2:5 (Funk), however, where Paul comes at last to speak of faith, "his proclamation gives presence to the crucified Christ in order that their faith may rest on the power of God rather than on the sophia of men."⁷ Furthermore, it may be observed that

the underlying theme of language is carried further in 2:6ff. "But (de) we do speak (laloumen) a kind of sophia but (de) a sophia. . . ." The sophia which Paul speaks is the sophia of God (1:24), which is the word of the cross (cf. 1:30).

The fundamental contrast for Paul is between sophia logou (wisdom of the word) and logos staurou (word of the cross). In light of this it becomes evident that Paul is speaking about two types of languages (Funk). But at the same time it should be noted that Paul is not talking about two types of christologies: (a) a christology of the cross; (b) a christology of wisdom.

This view that Paul sets a stauros christology over against a sophia christology in what follows is therefore only superficially correct. It is more than a dispute over opinions about Jesus Christ. Is a dispute about faith itself, and Paul's concern is therefore not so much to correct a faulty christology but to bring the Christ to stand. By bringing the Crucified anew into language Paul hopes to confront the Corinthians again with the word of faith, with the word that is power, in which case the need for controversy will have ceased. . . . For to bring the Christ to stand means to flesh him out within their horizons. And if within their horizons, within the language that is their home.⁹

It becomes clear from the above that, for Funk, Paul's main concern in 2:6-16 is Christ the Crucified. Indeed, Paul attaches sophia precisely to the Crucified which produces a radical change in term as the Corinthians understood it (Funk). Paul identifies the Lord of Glory as the Crucified, which proves to be a stumbling block to the Corinthians. At this point, Paul is "deforming Corinthian language in the

interest of gaining a hearing of the word of the cross. It follows that one must inquire closely after the intentionality of the text."¹⁰

In light of this, Funk offers us a quite meaningful definition of intentionality. That is, in his opinion, intentionality is to be distinguished from purpose or aim as generally understood. Moreover, it "refers to the 'world' held in view by the writer or speaker, but it should also be taken to imply a locus from which that "world" is seen."¹¹ For the most part, Paul is concerned about the proclamation of the Gospel and how that proclamation takes effect among his readers. In this regard, Paul moves between two poles: "(a) what the proclamation intends . . . ; (b) the way in which that proclamation is being heard."¹² Paul thus juxtaposes what is to be heard and the hearing of that thing within a language that brings each to bear on the other. It remains, therefore, that "the question of intentionality must . . . be raised with respect to what the text fixes attention on, its 'object'."¹³ Now when we inquire of Paul what he intends, it becomes evident that he intends Jesus the Crucified as the ground of faith. Thus it is "for this reason that the exegete must take as his proper concern the intentionality of language in view of its linguistic horizons."¹⁴

With regard to the language of the Corinthians, Funk maintains that they "did not hear a phrase or even a sentence in isolation, but were brought under the impact of the whole."¹⁵ Moreover, it is clear that Paul makes an effort "to bring the Corinthians, via their own language, within hearing range of the eschatological-critical power of the word."¹⁶ How he does this is simply through a special use of religious language. That is,

old, worn-out expressions were rejuvenated and given new lustre. . . . Words expressing servility, ignominy and sin were washed

clean, elevated, and baptized with new meaning. . . . This mighty, transfiguring, creative force within Christianity is persuasive throughout the language of the entire New Testament.¹⁷

Moreover, as Crystal sees it, "the criterion of a spiritual (or typical) meaning is quite distinct from the literal meaning of a text."¹⁸ He further states that "each text must be considered in the light of its special purpose within its temporal and geographical context, if the nature of the permanent religious truths is to be at all apprehended."¹⁹ In light of the above comments, then, we take a more critical look at the specific context of I Cor. 2:6-16.

It should be made clear that the context of 2:6-16 must be seen as an expression of Paul's own theological position.²⁰

That Paul must have had an esoteric wisdom teaching entirely separate from his kerygma; that one must judge he drew this teaching directly from Jewish and Christian apocalyptic-wisdom theology, and that the main motifs revealed in these verses, so far from indicating a concession to foreign ideas, are consistent with his theology as a whole.²¹

Moreover, it is evident that at this point Paul is involved in defending himself and the Gospel which he has proclaimed. In regard to this defense, Paul feels it necessary to insist that he does possess a certain type of wisdom. And he contrasts his wisdom with the wisdom of this age, which can be nothing but the wisdom the Corinthians have boasted as possessing. I Cor. 2:6-16 is thus a personal defense by Paul, but it is embedded in the midst of his attack on one disrupting element in the church (Scroggs).

In this section it is no longer kerygma against sophia, but God's wisdom against human wisdom. The issue is still that of the proclamation of Christian teaching but on an entirely different level. Here the contrast is clearly one of content, not of form. . . . The emphasis is now on what the wisdom is, what it is the rulers of the age did not know, the things (i.e., the content) God has revealed to Paul.²²

Exegetically, it is to be seen that 2:16a recapitulates 2:11. Paul has reserved his scriptural quotation until the end of the section as a climax (Scroggs). But the similarity in form of 2:11a and 2:16a suggests that Paul is 2:11a already had in mind his later use of Isaiah 40:13. The quotation fits Paul's purpose well. It allows him both to summarize the inaccessibility of God's wisdom and to set up his own affirmation in 2:16b. It is perhaps important to note that the Hebrew of Isaiah 40:13 has ruah, which the LXX translates by nous (and only here of all appearances of ruah). Scroggs thus maintains that "for this context, for reasons obscure to us, he preferred the LXX."²³ Moreover, the tis gar egnō is proof of what Paul has just claimed for the pneumatikos (Robertson/Plummer). Here it is to be noted that 2:16 omits the phrase from the LXX, kai tis autou symboulos, which is included in Romans 11:34. However, Romans 11:34 omits the phrase hos symbi-basei auton, from the LXX which is contained in 2:16. In either case, the respective omission does not appear to be that significant.

Regarding the phrase nous kyriou, in 2:16a, it is to be noted that here nous corresponds to the LXX's rendering of ruah as pneuma (Robertson/Plummer). In light of this, we note that "in God, nous and pneuma are identical . . . but not in aspect, nous being suitable to denote the Divine knowledge or counsel, pneuma the Divine action either in creation or in grace."²⁴

Concerning the phrase in 2:16b, hemeis de noun Christou echomen, "we have this by agency of the Spirit of God; and the mind of the Spirit of God is known to the Searcher of hearts."²⁵ As for the actual use of nous in this case, much can be said both in terms of theological and philosophical categories.

Paul nowhere else uses nous in such a way to refer to God or Christ, as pneuma usually does (Scroggs). Moreover, "the renewal of the nous is an important concept for Paul, but it always remains for him the human mind or inner man."²⁶ What Scroggs means by this kind of statement might become more evident once we consider the philosophical temper of the first century.²⁷

The Stoic philosophy maintained that the origin of the knowledge of God is to be sought in man himself. Knowledge of God is achieved through the awakening of man's innate knowledge of God. For the Stoics, logos is an important word; the logos of the individual man knows the logos that permeates the whole kosmos.

In the Hermetic traditions, the principal doctrine concerning God is that his nature is nous. As Bertil Gärtner states:

Because the Father of all things consists of Light and Life, man, through knowing himself, identifies himself as qualitatively akin with Father, the Nous. The word used in this context is not pneuma but nous, and the latter denotes man's qualitative prerequisite for the knowledge of God.²⁸

Philo's theology, or rather philosophy, stresses that "man's nous could not by its own power attain to knowledge of God. God had to reveal himself to the human reason."²⁹

But perhaps the most influential form of philosophical thought-construct was that implicit in first century Gnosticism. Although Gnosticism is the general title given to many groups each of which expressed its system of thought in much the same manner, it is felt that such gnostic groups expounded a very complicated metaphysical dualism. Broadly speaking, however, the gnostics of the first century held that man consists of matter, soul, and pneuma. It was this pneuma which represented a portion of the divine essence.

C. Freeman Sleeper contends that Gnostic terminology is introduced in 2:6-16 "in order to challenge the Corinthian anthropology --- not by trying to substitute a different anthropology, but by grounding their own language in the event of the Cross."³⁰ Thus it would appear that Sleeper is saying much the same thing that had been said earlier:³¹ that Paul is using the Corinthian language in order to get his own particular point of view across. That Paul uses the words prevalent in first century theology and philosophy there can be no doubt. That Paul means the same thing by these words is another question: a question which has involved the entire content of this study.

One who would assert that Paul is not intending comparable meanings for comparable words is Johannes Behm. He states that "there is no need to suppose that Paul is equating nous and pneuma after the manner of Hellenistic mysticism."³² He also mentions that nous in the New Testament has the meanings: mind, disposition, practical reason (in the sense of moral consciousness as it determines man's will and action), understanding, and thought, judgment or resolve. Behm would hold that "resolve" is the kind of thing Paul intended when he used the word "mind" in 2:16a. As he states, "the context points to the hidden plan of salvation which is now manifested."³³ Moreover, "the sharp contrast of meaning which the word undergoes in v. 16b . . . represents a play on the word, which now bears [the] sense . . . 'mind'."³⁴

At the other end of the spectrum is Gärtner who contends that in the first century there were different ways to gain knowledge of God. There was a lower way which involved man's reason and a more perfect way which was the gift from God. This kind of idea was important in New Testament times in that

it would be a surprise if the principle had not been used in Early Church as it is such a fundamental idea in Hellenistic

teaching and many New Testament passages contain examples of the Hellenization of Jewish and Christian ideas.³⁵

Thus, for Gärtner, it would appear that Paul used the term nous with this background in mind, but used it in a Christian sense and context. Paul, therefore, had "to distinguish between the Christian and the natural man, the non-Christian, and apply the principle only to the Christian."³⁶

Whatever may be said about the influence, either direct or non-direct, of Hellenistic thought-patterns upon the language of St. Paul, Barrett contends that Paul does not share these gnostic convictions. He holds, rather, that for Paul "there is no profounder truth than the word of the cross, and only the Spirit can of himself know, and then communicate, the truth about God."³⁷

Finally, Robertson and Plummer maintain that the noun Christou is the mind of Christ which is "the correlative of His Spirit, which is the Spirit of God . . . and this mind belongs to those who are His by virtue of their vital union with Him."³⁸ Moreover, "the emphatic hemeis . . . serves to associate all pneumatikoi with the Apostle, and also all his readers, so far as they are . . . among the hoi sōzomenoi."³⁹ And Funk would conclude that the phrase, noun Christou, indicates that Paul is under the judgment of the Lord through the word of the cross.⁴⁰

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Paul Van Buren has said that the Gospel is good news of a free man who has set other men free; men who have been "liberated . . . [and] are 'in Christ,' which is to say that their understanding of themselves and their lives . . . is determined by their understanding of Jesus."¹ Such men about whom and to whom Paul was talking no doubt "knew" what he meant when he said that "we have the mind of Christ."

The purpose of this chapter, then, is not to draw the reader to a conclusion as such. Rather, it is our intention to bring the reader to an understanding in light of the material presented in the previous discussion regarding the relationship between the language of the New Testament and the principles of contemporary Linguistic Analysis. The reader, moreover, should also bear in mind that Van Buren said in regard to the aim of his own study:

We explored the logic of the language of the New Testament authors concerning the man Jesus of Nazareth. Our aim has been to discover the meaning of their words and to find appropriate and clear words with which to express that meaning today, asking after a functional equivalence between a contemporary Christology and the language of the New Testament.²

Beyond this statement regarding the aim of putting the language of the New Testament into contemporary words which are understandable to modern man, there is the method of Linguistic Analysis which can help to make that task practicable. In this respect, Van Buren has said that Linguistic Analysis "exposes the function of language in just those areas on which modern theology seeks to shed light: the world in which the 'average' Christian finds himself."³ Furthermore, theologians concerned with the

"'relevance' of the Gospel for ordinary believers . . . should be particularly open to a method of analysis which appeals so frequently to the ordinary use of language."⁴ He concludes that Linguistic Analysis

shows the various empirical footings of different theological assertions, and it suggests ways in which the meaning of apparently transempirical aspects of the language of Christian faith may be understood.⁵

Finally, no study of New Testament language in light of contemporary Linguistic Analysis is complete without the insightful comment of Luis Alonso-Schökel, "a little philosophy of language would be an excellent addition to clerical education."⁶

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

¹Stephen Neill, The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1961 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 341.

²Martin Scharlemann, "Hermeneutic(s)," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXIX (September 1968), 615.

³Dallas High, Language, Persons, and Belief (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 10.

⁴Paul Van Buren, The Secular Meaning of the Gospel (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), p. 192.

⁵High. p. 24.

Chapter II

¹Infra, pp. 13-17.

²Georges Gusdorf, Speaking (La Parole), translated from the French by Paul T. Brokelman (Evanston, Illinois: Northwest University Press, 1965), p. XIII.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. XVII.

⁵Ibid.

⁶David Crystal, Linguistics, Language and Religion in Faith and Fact Books (London: Burns & Oates, 1965), CXXXI, 161

⁷For a more detailed discussion on Logical Positivism see Ian Ramsey's Religious Language: An Empirical Place of Theological Phrases (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), pp. 11ff.

⁸Van Buren, p. 14.

⁹Crystal, p. 161.

¹⁰John Macquarrie, God Talk (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 61.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, translated from the German by G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), p. 12^e

¹⁴Ibid., p. 20^e

¹⁵Ibid., p. 109^e

¹⁶Ibid., p. 151^e

¹⁷Crystal, p. 176.

¹⁸High, p. 64.

¹⁹Wittgenstein, p. 226^e

²⁰High, p. 104.

²¹Wittgenstein, p. 32^e

²²Van Buren, p. 199.

²³Macquarrie, p. 111.

²⁴Ibid., p. 112.

²⁵Ibid., p. 113.

²⁶Ibid., p. 114

²⁷Ibid., p. 117.

²⁸Robert Funk, Language, Hermeneutic and Word of God (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1966), p. 5.

²⁹Frederick Ferre, Language, Logic and God (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1961), p. 5.

³⁰Van Buren, pp. 104-105.

³¹Ferre, p. 57.

³²Langdon Gilkey, Naming of the Whirlwind (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969), p. 238.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., p. 240.

³⁵Crystal, p. 138.

³⁶Ibid., p. 189.

³⁷Macquarrie, pp. 119-121.

³⁸James Woelfel, "'Non-Metaphysical' Christian Philosophy and Linguistic Philosophy," New Theology No. 2 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), p. 61.

³⁹Supra, pp. 24-30.

⁴⁰Gilkey, p. 235.

⁴¹van Buren, p. 100.

⁴²Ibid., p. 101.

Chapter III

¹Funk, Language, p. 227.

²Ibid., p. 226

³Ferre, pp. 55ff.

⁴Funk, Language, p. 231.

⁵Dan Via, "Language and Reality: A Review," The Journal of Religion, XLVIII (January 1968), p. 70.

⁶Heinrich Ott, "Language and Understanding," New Testament No. 4 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), pp. 125-126.

⁷James Robinson and John Cobb, The Later Heidegger and Theology in New Frontiers in Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), I, 48.

⁸Ott, pp. 143-144.

⁹Macquarrie, p. 53.

¹⁰Gerald O'Collins, "Reality as Language: Ernst Fuchs's Theology of Revelation," Theological Studies, XXVIII (January 1967), 77.

¹¹Luis Alonso-Schökel, "Hermeneutics in the Light of Language and Literature," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XXV (July 1963), 377.

¹²Ibid., p. 375.

¹³Ibid., p. 372.

¹⁴Ott, p. 126

¹⁵Scharlemann, p. 613.

¹⁶James Robinson and John Cobb, The New Hermeneutic in New Frontiers in Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), II, 54.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁸High, p. 194.

¹⁹Crystal, p. 141.

²⁰Ibid..

²¹James Barr, The Semantics of Biblical Language (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 275-276.

Chapter IV

¹Barr, p. 2.

²William Smalley, "The Place of Linguistics in Bible Translation," Bible Translator, XVI (July 1965), 111.

³Geoffrey Marrison, "The Art of Translation and the Science of Meaning" Bible Translator, XVI (October 1965), 182.

⁴Ibid., p. 183.

⁵Ibid., p. 179.

⁶Barr, p. 281.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 204.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 205.

¹¹Ibid., p. 19.

¹²Crystal, pp. 145-146.

¹³Barr, p. 238.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Gerhard Kittel, "Preface," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, translated from the German by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), I, vii.

¹⁶Barr, p. 241.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸The underlined Greek word is the English transliteration. Hereafter, this will be the procedure regarding all foreign words; when a word is not so underscored, it means that the word is in actuality its English equivalent.

- ¹⁹Barr, p. 208.
²⁰Ibid., p. 229.
²¹Ibid., p. 233.
²²Ibid., p. 234.
²³Kittle, p. vii.
²⁴Barr, p. 242.
²⁵Ibid., p. 245.
²⁶Ibid., pp. 244-245.
²⁷Ibid., p. 246.
²⁸Ibid., p. 261
²⁹Supra, pp. 13-15.
³⁰Ott, p. 145.
³¹Macquarrie, p. 120.

Chapter V

- ¹High, p. 6.
²Crystal, pp. 135-136.
³Ibid., p. 137.
⁴Ibid.
⁵William Blackstone, The Problem of Religious Knowledge (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 167.
⁶Ibid.
⁷Ibid.
⁸High, pp. 134-135.
⁹Ibid.
¹⁰Ibid., pp. 29ff.
¹¹Ibid., p. 43.
¹²Ibid.

¹³Macquarrie, pp. 64ff.

¹⁴Ferre, pp. 136ff.

¹⁵Van Buren, p. 137.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 69.

¹⁷For a more detailed discussion regarding this matter of a "blik," see, Antony Flew and Alasdair Macintyre's, New Essays in Philosophical Theology (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1961), pp. 100ff., as well as, William P. Alston's, Philosophy of Language (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1964), pp. 71ff.

¹⁸Funk, Language, p. 86.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Flew and Macintyre, pp. 107-108.

²¹Van Buren, p. 97.

²²Ibid., p. 98.

²³Ibid., p. 93.

²⁴Crystal, p. 119.

²⁵Michael Novak, "The Philosophy Implicit in Biblical Studies," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XXII (July 1960), 307-308.

²⁶Basil De Pinto, "The Mystery of the Word, Thoughts on Biblical Language," Scripture, XI (January 1966), 17.

Chapter VI

¹Barr, p. 268.

²Ibid.

³Infra., p. 30.

⁴Whenever general comments are made regarding the opinions of a certain scholar, that individual's name appears parenthetically in the text.

⁵Charles Kingsley, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians in Harper's New Testament Commentaries, edited by Henry Chadwick (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968), pp. 67-68.

⁶Funk, Language, p. 293.

⁷Ibid., 283.

⁸Ibid., p. 285.

⁹Ibid., p. 284.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 296.

¹¹Ibid., p. 237 n53.

¹²Ibid., p. 238.

¹³Ibid., p. 302.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 301.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 305.

¹⁷Bruce Metzger, "The Language of the New Testament," The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick, et al (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1951), VII, 56.

¹⁸Crystal, p. 147.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Robin Scroggs, "Paul: Sophos and Pneumatikos," New Testament Studies, XIV (October 1967), p. 35.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., p. 37.

²³Ibid., p. 54.

²⁴Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians in The International Critical Commentary, edited by Samuel Rolles Driver, et al (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1911), XXXIII, 51.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Scroggs, p. 54 n1

²⁷For a more detailed discussion regarding the philosophical temper of the first century, see, Bertil Gärtner's, "the Pauline and Johannine Idea of 'to Know God' against the Hellenistic Background. The Greek Philosophical Principle 'Like by Like' in Paul and John," New Testament Studies, XIV (January 1968), pp. 210ff.

²⁸Ibid., p. 211.

²⁹Ibid., p. 214.

³⁰C. Freeman Sleeper, "Language and Ethics in Biblical Interpretation," The Journal of Religion, XLVIII (July 1965), p. 302.

³¹Supra, pp. 33-35.

³²Johannes Behm, "nous," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, and translated from the German by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), IV, 959.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Gärtner, p. 214.

³⁶Ibid., p. 215.

³⁷Barrett, p. 74.

³⁸Robinson and Plummer, p. 51.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Funk, Language, p. 298.

Chapter VII

¹Van Buren, p. 138.

²Ibid., p. 156

³Ibid., p. 195.

⁴Ibid., pp. 195-196.

⁵Ibid., p. 196.

⁶Alonso-Schökel, p. 372.

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