

7-1-1960

## Brief Studies

Frederick W. Danker  
*Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*

Robert Preus  
*Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Danker, Frederick W. and Preus, Robert (1960) "Brief Studies," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 31, Article 47.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol31/iss1/47>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Concordia Theological Monthly* by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact [seitzw@csl.edu](mailto:seitzw@csl.edu).

## BRIEF STUDIES

### THE MIRROR METAPHOR IN 1 COR. 13:12 AND 2 COR. 3:18

The mirror metaphor in 1 Cor. 13:12 and 2 Cor. 3:18 is the subject of intensive investigation in a definitive monograph by Norbert Hagedé, *La métaphore du miroir dans les Epîtres de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens* (Neuchâtel and Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1957. 206 pages. Paper, Sw. Fr. 12.00.) Hagedé is particularly concerned with the meaning of 1 Cor. 13:12 and approaches the problem through a study of the word  $\kappa\alpha\tau\omicron\tau\tau\epsilon\lambda\iota\omega$  in 2 Cor. 3:18. He concludes that the apostle expresses, in the latter passage, an act of contemplation rather than self-reflection. This methodological procedure paves the way for an extensive inquiry into the sources from which Paul derived his metaphor (pp. 37—95) and enables the author to root his conclusions strongly in an historical context.

Gerhard Kittel (*Theologisches Wörterbuch zum neuen Testament*, I, 177—179, s. v.  $\alpha\lambda\upsilon\gamma\mu\alpha$ ), following Harnack, finds the apostle's source in the Hebrew text of Num. 12:8 and attempts to show that Paul interpreted the unvocalized  $\text{מִרְאָה}$  as  $\text{מִרְאָה}$  (mirror), instead of  $\text{מִרְאָה}$  (appearance), which the LXX read and rendered  $\epsilon\nu\ \epsilon\lambda\delta\epsilon\iota$ . This explanation does indeed appear to account for one of the apostle's sources, says Hagedé, but the difficulty is that Num. 12:8 contrasts the superior vision Moses enjoys with the partial vision of the prophets, whereas 1 Cor. 13:12 posits the relative inadequacy of visions via mirrors. Some solution must be found which will account for the apparent allusion to Num. 12:8 as well as the altered form in which the Old Testament passage is employed. Reitzenstein made the attempt by proposing the hypothesis of an additional source, namely, one

coming out of Paul's Hellenistic environment, where self-contemplation in mirrors was thought to lead to the acquisition of the divine spirit. The texts alleged to support this view fail, however, to endure Hagedé's searching scrutiny. The theory of Achelis that the text in 1 Cor. 13:12 suggests associations with catoptromancy, or divination with mirrors, usually effected with the help of children, is likewise rejected on two counts. First, the apostle specifically disclaims a child's knowledge, and second, the thought is otherwise wholly foreign to the apostle.

The rejection of these other theories leads Hagedé to examine the role played by mirrors in Greek and Hellenistic literature. He is impressed, first of all, by the pride of antiquity in its mirrors. It is a hazardous modernization of the text to assert, without support from the context, that St. Paul feels that the mirrors of his time reflect a fuzzy image. This thought (expressed in a good many Bible dictionaries, commentaries, and translations) never occurred to the ancients. They thought their mirrors reflected a very good image indeed (pp. 97—100). Secondly, Hellenistic literature makes frequent reference to the use of the mirror for moral self-reflection (pp. 101—114). Finally, the mirror is found useful in the reflection of objects other than one's own person (pp. 115 to 136). Thus it is a popular Stoic thought that God is observable through His works. It is precisely here, in the imagery of the Stoic diatribe, concludes Hagedé, that we are to find the additional source for Paul's use of the mirror metaphor. However, the imagery is purely formal. Paul's thought remains Jewish. Man does not, as in Greek thought, contemplate God's image in order to rise to perfection. The perfect aeon comes



only in the *eschaton*. It is this eschatological accent which mark's Paul's expression as peculiarly Jewish despite its Hellenistic dress.

The contrast Paul makes, then, is between the object itself and the sight of a reflection of it. A qualitative judgment on the reflecting agent or device is not to be inferred. This conclusion is reinforced by a detailed study of the word *αἰνίγμα* in 1 Cor. 13:12 (pp. 139—150). Its etymological history points to the basic meaning "illustration, example, symbol." Thus Sextus Empiricus characterizes a fable of Aesop's as an *Ἀισώπειον αἰνίγμα*, and Athenaeus (452 a) tells how one Hippodamus communicated with a herald from within a beleaguered city, *δηλών ἐν αἰνιγμῶ*, i.e., making clear his state of affairs by appropriate signs. The inadequacy of the vision in 1 Cor. 13:12, then, is not due to any haziness in the reflecting medium. The imperfection consists rather in this, that we now see the eternal splendors *indirectly*. But what we do see now through the eye of faith we see quite clearly, for the thought of unclear spiritual vision is foreign to the apostle's thought, observes Hagedé. The apostle knows in whom he has believed!

Hagedé might have made an even stronger case by following up a clue he himself uncovered in his citation of 2 Cor. 5:6, 7 (p. 162) but failed to exploit. We walk by faith, not by what we see. Here *εἶδος* refers to outward form. It is the word used in the LXX for *הַמַּרְאָה* (Num. 12:8). Moses hears God speak *ἐν εἶδει*, not *ἐν αἰνίγματι*. The opposite of walking by faith is having an *εἶδος*, or a sight of the real object. The opposite of having a firsthand look is to see a reflection of it, i.e., to observe it *ἐν αἰνίγματι*, indirectly.

This sketch cannot begin to do justice to this masterpiece of painstaking philological study. In addition to the bibliographical notes on a score of subjects (we missed, however, Hans Windisch's commentary on 2 Corinthians in the Meyer series [9th ed.,

Göttingen, 1924], which cites some of the extracanonical passages on which Hagedé builds much of his case), including much of the intertestamental literature as it relates to the New Testament, the student will appreciate the four plates included in the volume illustrating the use to which mirrors were put in antiquity.

Indexes to the passages cited, both profane and sacred, and a list of Greek terms terminate a work in which the author comes as close to an "assured result" as is possible in this type of research.

FREDERICK W. DANKER

#### THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

This is the title of one of the most significant books to be written lately on the subject of the Word\*, not because of the author's originality—for he makes no pretense of offering anything brand-new on the vast subject—but because he gives a brief, clear synthesis of what has been and is being taught on this matter by many prominent theologians. The author's own views are apparent throughout the book, but are summed up in the last chapter. He is sympathetic toward Barth and Brunner, but draws also from the ideas of Richardson, Hebert, H. H. Rowley, Visscher, and others.

In the first chapter Reid presents the problem. Biblical authority seems to be threatened by higher criticism and the theory of evolution, and if the difficulties of the problem have been lessened of late, they have by no means been resolved. Modern Christians are still perplexed concerning the nature and extent of Biblical authority. Reid explains why modern criticism, in pointing to errors and discrepancies in Scripture, tends to overthrow Scripture's authority altogether by suggesting that in post-Reformation times a "certain literal rigidity" toward Scrip-

\* *The Authority of Scripture*. By J. K. S. Reid. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957. 286 pages. Cloth. \$4.50.



ture developed which was absent at an earlier period. This he says in contrast to Cadoux and Gore (and we could list many more), who maintained that the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture was generally held until the time of modern higher criticism.

Such a supposition seems to fetter Reid somewhat in the chapters in which he discusses the doctrine of inspiration as taught by Calvin, Luther, and later orthodoxy. He contends that Calvin, even with his "scribe," "secretary," "mouth of God," terminology, still recognized the willing and conscious activity of the human authors in writing Scripture and hence Calvin must be exculpated from the charge of "verbal literalism." "Literalism" unfortunately does not designate anything definite and therefore becomes a loaded term suggesting to some a method of interpretation incapable of discerning basic linguistic figures, such as metaphor, synecdoche, hyperbole, etc. This "verbal literalism" the author equates with verbal inspiration. By verbal inspiration he seems to mean sometimes a doctrine approximating the teaching of Rohnert, Walther, Pieper, and Hoenecke, sometimes a mechanical caricature of that doctrine. At any rate, he suggests that a doctrine of Scriptural infallibility involves one in a hopeless obscurantism and is tantamount to an incarnation of the Holy Spirit. Reid drives a wedge between the doctrine of Luther and Calvin on Scripture and that of Lutheran and Reformed orthodoxy. Luther and Calvin, he avers, although they held that Scripture was God's Word, still recognized errors in Scripture and dealt with the difficulty frankly; later orthodoxy simply refused to admit the possibility of error. Moreover, orthodoxy, unlike Luther, did not see the Christocentricity in Scripture and thought of it merely as a textbook on doctrine. The latter distinction is untrue, the former oversimplified. The fact is that Luther did believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, as has been conclusively

shown by Dr. Reu in his *Luther and the Scriptures*. Any other assessment of Luther's position makes the man and his doctrine an almost incredible anachronism. If verbal inerrancy and a sound, natural interpretation of Scripture seem incompatible to Reid, they did not seem so to Luther or to a Gerhard or a Calov, as may be abundantly shown from their exegetical works.

Reid has made the mistake of following Brunner too closely in his judgments. Brunner is one of the most outspoken opponents of orthodoxy today (also the orthodoxy which marks our church body), an opponent who has apparently never made a serious attempt to understand either the theology or the spirit of orthodoxy. For instance, Reid tells us that the idea of revelation as an action in which God communicates Himself is foreign to the theology of orthodoxy and immediately cites Brunner, who speaks of the "fatal equation of revelation with the inspiration of Scriptures." But who ever made this "fatal equation"? A refutation to such a charge is found in Calov's very definition of revelation as "an external act of God whereby He discloses Himself (*sese patefecit*) to humans through His Word and makes known His salvation" (*Systema*, I, 170). Calov, Gerhard, and the other orthodox Lutherans insist that God is always the subject of revelation, not doctrine.

Reid's view of Scripture seems close to that of neo-orthodoxy. To him revelation is an event and does not consist of propositions. Whether God speaking through a prophet or through Scripture is considered as an event and thus revelation or merely as propositions is not made quite clear. It seems that at times this would be revelation, at times mere proposition, inasmuch as the author holds to Barth's dialectics that the Bible becomes the Word of God in an event. At any rate, the written and preached Word sometimes conveys God, sometimes not; it depends upon God's permission.



Scripture is not identified as the Word of God or even as one form or species of the Word of God. What, then, is the Word of God? Apparently it is God speaking, or God communicating Himself. But this is a tautology, and in answering the question we must still content ourselves with some sort of mysticism or subjectivism, or we must return to the old doctrine, viz., that the Word of God which communicates God is actually drawn from the written Word of the prophets and apostles.

The last chapter of the book deals specifically with the nature and extent of Scripture's authority. Here the author correctly emphasizes that the subject matter of Scripture is Christ and that there is a Christological unity of Old and New Testaments. He then says, "The authority of the Bible resides in the fact that, in statements some right and some wrong, and in practical application some of which is disputable and some even more dubious, a unified witness

is borne to Him who is at the center of the Gospel." Here he is not speaking of any sort of canonical authority but only of a causative authority which resides also in a preached Word. Thus the only advantage which Scripture has is that it is the first witness of God's revelation and is to that degree authentic. However, no infallible authority can be attached to Scripture as such. It is clear what this will do to the principle of *sola Scriptura*.

Prof. George Stoeckhardt once wrote a series of articles entitled "Was sagt die Schrift von sich selbst?" This is the question which our author avoids in his book. But are we allowed to pass over this question? We who would be disciples of Christ and who desire to follow Him also in His attitude toward Scripture must face this question seriously and accept the answer we find. For the question of Scripture's authority begins and ends here.

ROBERT PREUS