



THE SPRINGFIELDER

June 1971
Volume 35, Number 1

Christology As A Problem In Our Day

WALTER KUNNETH, Erlangen, Germany

Translated by Wilhelm Torgerson

OUR GENERAL TOPIC "Christology as a Problem in our Day" is concerned with central assertions of Christian confession and thus of faith in Christ. But what does that mean today? If I see things correctly, then we can only face up to this question properly by first attempting to clarify what the controversial and ambiguous term "Christian faith" really means today. In doing this, it dare not be overlooked that Christology and faith must be seen in a corresponding relation to one another. Therefore we must make every effort at the outset to eliminate misinterpretations that would all too easily lead us in the wrong direction.

The problem of "Christology in Our Day" becomes focally acute in the proper concept and understanding of faith. Accordingly, we start with a delimitation against a double misunderstanding.

1. There is an interpretation of faith that understands "faith" as the acknowledgement of a certain number of confessional statements. In this case, "faith" means saying Yes to a sum of Christological statements and claims that are accepted as a whole and are looked upon as valid, without real personal claim on oneself. Such faith regards as true certain extraordinary events expressed by traditional church doctrine. In this case faith becomes a quantitative entity where people ask "What must I believe? What all is part of the things I must believe?" With this understanding of faith, the faith of the Reformation would be a reduction of the Roman Catholic medieval faith, arrived at by means of a subtraction. Accordingly the Protestant is a Christian who is obligated to believe less than the Catholic, of whom less is demanded; with this type of thinking, he is a person who needs to believe less.

2. This objective, quantitative thinking about faith is opposed today by a totally different phenomenon, which also must equally be recognized as a misinterpretation. We are concerned here with the purely formal concept of faith, i.e., with a specifically existential basic attitude of man that renounces definite content. Thus the reaction to the quantitative understanding of faith puts the accent on faith's determining quality. Faith understood in this way is therefore a present event here and now. It is only an interpretation of one's

Professor Walter Kunneth, Th. D., D. D. is professor for Systematics at the University of Erlangen and is recognized widely as the outstanding critic of the Bultmannian school's method of combining existentialism and demythologizing. He became prominent at a debate held with Professor Ernst Fuchs of the University of Marburg in the 1960's. Kunneth held to an actual, real or physical resurrection of Jesus, while Fuchs, a disciple of Bultmann, gave the existential interpretation. A founder of the conservative and pietistic movement NO OTHER GOSPEL (KEIN ANDERES EVANGELIUM), he has continued as its leading light. He is also a signer of the FRANKFURT DECLARATION, a protest against universalism, which is a concomitant of the denial of the supernatural and miraculous in contemporary theology. In this essay, delivered at the German-Scandinavian Theological Conference in 1968, he points to the faulty concept of faith held by prominent New Testament scholars.

personal existence and of a new self-understanding. This is its sole interest. This faith is opposed to any objectivity. To put it another way, it is opposed to historicizing the objective contents of faith. Of course, now the question must needs arise whether faith in this case is still in a position to make definite statements about objective contents or whether it is satisfied with formally circumscribing manners of faithful conduct. Faith would then be "being open for God, for fellow man, for whatever comes to me." It would be attentively listening to the Word that now and then comes to me. It is concerned with taking a responsible attitude over against various and always changing situations. This kind of faith refuses to make concrete statements about content. This concept of faith knows no doctrine, no fixed creed that expresses with definiteness what faith believes. It is only in subjective way, *in actu*, in the course of events, that faith can know what is obligatory for the believer.

We must keep in mind these two ways of understanding faith, as we now proceed to the problem of Christology. Over against these two typical misinterpretations we must now point out that which makes Christology what it is, and in so doing we will be identifying the *specificum christianum* of Biblical Reformation faith. In what way must we identify the substance and structure of christology more clearly? We start with the first basic thought:

PART I

The Theological Understanding of Faith in Christ

I should like to delineate more carefully our general topic by making assertions developed along two lines. First we enquire about *the basis on which faith originates* (*Entstehungsgrund*). In contrast to the two misinterpretations of faith sketched above, the quantitative and the formalistic, the characteristic trait of faith in Christ, according to the understanding of the New Testament, must be seen as follows: Faith does not represent an independent, autonomous quantity, a quantity that ordains what is to be believed, rather faith lives from the fact that its event has already taken place. This event the NT calls *apokalypsis*, revelation, the removal of a veil, unveiling. It is concerned with the unveiling of the *megaleia tou theou*, of the great deeds of God. Gal. 1:16, I Cor. 2:9, Rom. 1:17, Acts 2:11 together with countless other passages present this case of the matter.

The background, the prerequisite and thus the basis that faith's origin lies in some reality *extra hominem*, outside of man, in the reality that God, whose revelation occurred concretely in Jesus Christ and who has spoken in the realm of human history (Heb. 1:1). That certainly is the basis for everything! God spoke and acted. God intervened. Not long ago, in a discussion with leading theologians of our time, I was told: If I were to speak of God's intervention I would be using pagan language. The conception of God's intervention was pagan. I am of the opinion that it is a genuinely Christian way of thinking. But "event" does not refer to a general truth, to an idea, rather it refers to a concrete historical reality in a definite locale, at a definite point of time in the history of humanity. In self-

manifestation of the hidden God He becomes *Deus revelatus*, the revealed God, the God close to us. He concentrates in the reality of the *Incar-natus*, of Him who became flesh, of the *Crucifixus*, of the *Resurrectus*, of the Risen One. This is the heart, the center, the culmination, the pivot point of all revelation of God.

But there is still another factor: certain men were drawn into this revelation-event in history. Men were affected by this event of encounter with God. The revelation-event results first in faith, the faith of people overwhelmed by the revelation of God. The second result is the message of those people. Therefore the witness of the NT—and I say this in strict opposition to Bultmann—is a message of something, about something. It is report, announcement, proclamation of what God has done for us. Medium and means for the arising of faith therefore is the revelation-message. For that the eye-witnesses are of fundamental significance. According to the NT then, Christian faith has its historical origin and starting-point in an act of hearing and seeing and in being actually there. On these alone, faith and its proclamation are based. Without the Risen One having been seen, without His appearances—and people do not like to hear such things today—there would be no early Christian (*urchristlich*) faith. The earthly Jesus as such—or using another term which is quite questionable, “the historical Jesus”—the cross by itself, could never be the historical impulse of faith. The early Christian witness (*Urzeugnis*) that awakens faith therefore is: *ontos egerthe*, “The Lord—truly risen and seen by Simon.” Here I could cite a number of passages, but with a view to the space available I shall forego doing so.

In the NT we are dealing therefore—if I may formulate it this way—with specific facts of a matter, with actual reality. The decisive factor in the arising of faith is this reality. Thus we point out without any equivocation: Faith is totally dependent on revelation having taken place. Therefore the content of this faith is strictly defined. Faith’s life depends on the definite substance it contains. The event of faith points to another event. Faith is directed towards this point of reference, to one central point; it is without analogy, nevertheless it is a personal, central point of reference. Faith is directed towards God revealed and present in Christ, to the living *Kyrios Iesous Christos* (Rom. 10:9). It becomes clear precisely at this point: He, the Crucified, is identical with the earthly Jesus and at the same time with the Risen One. Therefore faith is vitally and ardently interested in these salvation events (*Heilsereignisse*) in history. For any further dialogue and discussion in our day it is necessary to fight the decisive battle on this point. Did something really take place? Or did nothing happen? Did everything remain as it was? Do we merely have all sorts of religious-ethical impressions and notions, beliefs, attitudes of piety? Or did something occur? If this is so, then everything depends on the reliability of these witnesses of the faith. It would be a disastrous perversion of faith if one were to conclude that everything had its origin in the early Christian community’s (*Gemeinde*) faith as it reflected on itself.

It is claimed by those who follow this procedure that the assertion of the resurrection of Jesus was invented at a later date. This would be an inversion of cause and effect. What really is *Gemeindeftheologie*? An anonymous quantity. In a direct way I cannot find anything of it in my NT. Perhaps *Gemeindeftheologie* is a modern myth?! The early Christian community itself would become the source of revelation. But the faith of the community is, according to the NT, not the origin but the result of the Easter occurrence. It is the fruit of a revelation event. The community is founded on the actual resurrection and from that results its faith. Thus faith is understood as response and as reflection of the preceding saving activity (*Heilshandeln*) of God.

With this presupposition in mind, Christian faith can express with all clarity what it believes (Acts 2:42). Faith is not sublimated in enthusiastic tongue speaking or in theological stammerings. Some claim that one cannot know things exactly, or—as some repeatedly like to assure us—that genuine faith is proven precisely in uncertainty, in the state of doubt, in vulnerability. In the final analysis everything is supposed to remain an open question. *Pistis*, “faith” in the NT, is always also *gnosis*, knowledge: “We have believed and have come to know!” Or how about that marvellous formulation in Romans 8:38, “For I am sure!” Faith is certainty, *certitudo*; not a lazy, impotent *securitas*, self-contentment that is always looking for crutches.

Such an understanding of faith has consequences. I think I am theologically justified to point now to the unity and congruity of the old dogmatic distinctions. One cannot play off these different concepts, of which the Reformation also made use, against one another. They represent a unity. Faith is always also *notitia historica*. Faith must have heard something. It must know something. Without *notitia historica* there is no Christian faith. Secondly, faith is always also, as the old theologians formulated it, *assensus*, the acknowledgement that this witness has validity *pro me*, for me, a claim to commitment. Along with these two emphases there is an inseparable third element: Faith is always *fiducia*. It is personal and trusting with total commitment to the revealed God. If we want to make legitimate assertions about christology, we must be mindful of the situation in which the faith in Christ originated.

The second assertion under our first basic thought must be considered. Besides the situation in which faith originates, we are faced with *the situation in which a decision is required* (*Entscheidungssituation*). The witness of revelation, Christology's very matter, lays claims on the individual. A decision is demanded. Fundamentally there are two possibilities of confronting this witness to Christ and taking a position on it.

The First Possibility: Faith can be explained anthropologically as an aspect in the philosophy of immanence. This view classifies all revelatory assertions dealing with salvation events as only horizontal in dimension. They happen only within the world, on the historical

plain. Restricting faith only to the horizontal has far-reaching consequences.

Revelation of God as a real breaking through, as a *novum*, as an occurrence that has never taken place before, as an extra-ordinary event, is fundamentally impossible for those who hold to this closed system regulated by time and space. For such there is no means of verifying a revelation, i.e. a reality outside of our existence. Whatever does not happen in our world of historical events cannot be proven to be true for them. Thus causality, i.e. the new, pure, immanent understanding of reality in this instance, becomes dominant as the new dogma of how we are to look upon all things (*weltanschauliches Dogma*). While the traditional doctrines of the Church are eliminated, rejected or given a new interpretation, a new dogma arises. According to this dogma, the closed system of time and space, basic to historical-critical research, is set up as having absolute and exclusive validity. All historical processes are subject, therefore, to the control and standards of criticism, analogy, causality, correlation. This has been the basic dogma since the day of Ernst Troeltsch. In this, however, there is something of immense significance. An ideological decision (*weltanschauliche Vorentscheidung*) of considerable significance has been made *a priori*.

What are the effects on christology if this immanence, the "this-world-only" aspect is proclaimed as absolutely, exclusively valid?

First, the NT assertions can only claim historical credibility insofar as they can be proven to be conceivable and possible according to the standard of the rational, the psychological, and of the environmental. All christological conclusions can be made, therefore, only in the realm of the historically comparable and understandable. The general postulation therefore is that Jesus was human, nothing but human, and He could not have been anything else. Here we could cite uncounted quotations. Perhaps one saying is rather instructive: "The Christian message is not directed toward something in the great Beyond, for Jesus was a social revolutionary." As a consequence of this secularizing theology, God and Christ stand as representational characters for the shared humanity. That is why faith in Christ—if indeed we can make use of this term now in a meaningful way—can be put into language only in the categories of historical immanence.

Secondly, we have to be clear about what this means for the witness to Christ. Everything metahistorical, everything going beyond history, the transcendent, the miraculous, everything bursting or superseding the horizon of historical understanding, must be consigned to the realm of the legendary and to mythological conception. This is not a necessary result demanded by the text nor because of defective documents. It is a result of a preconceived ideological conviction (*weltanschauliche Ueberzeugung*). This results in the well known thesis of "the mythological accretion of the New Testament," a characteristic point of unity for all existential theologians. But the focal points of apostolic proclamation—incarnation, atonement death and sacrifice, resurrection of Jesus, His claim to absolute

authority, but certainly also miracles, preexistence, parousia—must collapse, if the canons of reality as established by such theologians is to be connected with them.

There is a *Second Possibility*. It must be seen like this: The situation into which faith in Christ puts us and demands a decision from us can also receive a quite different response. For the possibility exists—and that is equally conceivable—to recognize the witness to Christ in the perspective of faith itself and to make any judgments from that perspective. The following arguments cannot be ignored. As in the case of the anthropological viewpoint, so we must here take note of an *a priori* decision. With what *a priori* decision are we dealing? Faith is preceded by an axiom, an ultimate and no longer provable principle that goes before any attempted demonstration. One foundation, one cornerstone has been laid once and for all (I Cor. 3:11; I Peter 2:4-8). One can deal with the early Christian elementary message, "He is truly risen!" only by letting ourselves be told it, listening to it, accepting it, speaking the Yes of faith to it, or on the other hand, by rejecting this news as absurd and saying No. Already early Christendom knew of many who went to pieces on this cornerstone. Axioms cannot be proven, but they can be accepted. Their evidence and their persuasive power are demonstrated in the verification and confirmation of precisely this premise. With this axiomatic presupposition the conclusion is: God in Jesus Christ really intervened in the course of the world. There is real revelation, a change of situation! If God were actually at work, then of course, as a matter of principle, the anthropological-historical categories of immanence and a closed system do not suffice for grasping the revelation-event. Then our understanding of reality proves to be insufficient, untenable, and even nothing. We must take note of the following:

1. What appears in the New Testament as the transcendent, the divine, the irrational, the metahistorical, or what is reported as miracle—of course the resurrection of Jesus is at the very center—this is the intrinsic characteristic of the revealed God, *Deus revelatus*. The elimination or any change in the interpretation of these testimonies must have catastrophic consequences. When these miraculous events are judged to be "mythos," "mythological concepts," "legendary details," the essential element itself is destroyed.

2. Jesus of Nazareth can therefore never be thought of only as true man on the horizontal level of the historical. Rather he must be regarded simultaneously in the vertical perspective as He who comes from God, as the true God. Thus the historical reality of Jesus represents something like the intersection of two dimensions, of the human-historical and of the divine-suprahistorical (*göttlich-übergeschichtlich*). It is just this identity of the two assertions "man and God at the same time" that is essential for basic christological understanding. Let us recall the symptomatic assertions of the judgement arrived at by the people of early Christendom's environment, John 6:42—"Surely this is Jesus son of Joseph; we know his father

and mother. How can he now say: "I have come down from heaven"?" And on the other hand Matthew 16:15—"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." These two assertions belong together. They stand in utmost tension toward one another, but they form an inner unity.

3. Accordingly we are then dealing with the authentic and binding force of this situation in which a decision is required. "Who do men say that I am?" (Matthew 16:13) From the view of the decision of faith this means: The confrontation with Jesus Christ is in the deepest sense confrontation with God. This can be nothing else than confrontation with Jesus Christ the Lord. Faith in Jesus Christ therefore becomes identical to faith in God Himself. Christology is thus in its nature theology, and vice versa, theology is basically knowledge of Christ. But this faith in Christ is not faith *in the witness* to Christ, but *through this witness faith in the living Lord*. Thus faith in Christ is realized in its nature in personal relationship which today is controversial and even denied, in the I-Thou relationship, in a dialogical relation. The historical (*historisch, geschichtlich*), earthly Jesus is the crucified and at the same time the living *kyrios*, who is present. Therefore the classic test for the proper understanding of faith in Christ is praying to Christ.

4. This aspect of faith then discloses the fundamental justification for, and also the limitation of historical-critical research. Revelation occurs within the bounds of history; it becomes possible and necessary to probe into the historical deposition of these events with all the means of historical reason. But at the same time it must be realized that no matter how exactly this research method is employed, it must flounder on the revelation dimension itself. The Christ-event as revelation evades any rational grasp. It was that way during Jesus' life-time as it is now. Actual revelation is never dependent upon the variable, unsure results of the research instrument. Were that the case, then Luther could not have recognized the possibility of a legitimate interpretation of the Scriptures.

PART II

The Theological Language Form of Christology

Here too we find developments along two lines—though I may not yet be able to draw them to a conclusion.

1. We are dealing with the problem of in what form faith in Christ expresses itself. Faith made possible by the witness to Christ cannot remain silent, it needs to be expressed. How this is done is important. Faith's expression is not inconsequential. Even this involves its authenticity and its deriving from God. Not every form of language can do justice to what God's revelation intends. There are forms of expression which are not reconcilable with the reality of revelation, as some forms darken, retouch or distort.

Let us consider the following. Christological language makes faith possible, awakens it and deepens it. Thus we are dealing with a written witness, a comment on what took place. The characteristics of this written witness insist that in the Christ-event, the

Incarnate, the Crucified and the Risen One are the same person. This is a very specific and definite content, a content without analogy. Jesus' awareness of His own authority cannot be compared with that of other men. It is not the awareness which the prophets had of their mission. Jesus had an understanding of His suffering and death peculiar to Himself. The personhood and the new pneumatic-corporeal reality of the Risen One are real. Where could there be an analogy in history to the realm of the dead? The Christ-event as a revelatory event is the imparting of a new concrete reality. Christology always involves the unity of reality and truth, of event and interpretation. There must be harmony between the Easter event and the message which is the primary witness to it. Considered historically, this is done by taking over and using contemporary concepts available then. How else could it happen? Such contemporary ideas about the world were either Israelite or Hellenistic. Here are such concepts: *Logos*, Word; *Soter*, Saviour; *Kyrios*, Lord; righteousness; reconciliation; high priest; Lamb of God; He gave Him up; resurrection; etc. The following elements can be noted about these concepts.

a) The choice of concepts, names, images and comparisons is made in the interpretative reflexion of those who were immediately involved with the first witness of the Risen One. The original report of the eyewitnesses awakens faith to consciousness and brings about and gives it form.

b) This does not mean, however, that the witness to Christ is by itself a subsequent interpretation of the faith, or that it represents a product of the reflexion. In other words, it is not that the Christian community subsequently invented all these divine titles (*Hoheitstitel*) and then, justly or unjustly, conferred them on Jesus. Rather this was the situation, that all of Christology is already present *in nuce* in confrontation with the person of Christ. Therefore the subsequent interpretation represents only an unfolding, a mental explication of this unique, incomparable event of the reality of God's revelation in Christ.

c) The use of ancient contemporary Jewish concepts means at the same time their transformation and recasting. That could not have been otherwise, for we are, after all, dealing with a completely new content, a content which excludes previous contents, a content which bursts the prevailing traditional frame of language. Thus the demythologizing of concepts and notion takes place really *within* the New Testament itself. Old terms, names, concepts, notions are fitted out to be bearers of revelation. That is why these words and concepts no longer express the same meaning they had in Judaism or in the Qumran community or in Hellenism. From this context there arises for theology and proclamation the task of an ever new translation of terms. The process of translation, of putting into modern terms dare not, however, lead to a change of the content matter. Therefore a false accommodation which falsifies the content for the world around us to make it understandable, must be avoided. We are dealing here solely with the criterion of suitability. We

must constantly ask which concept, which manner of expression is able accurately to reflect the central content. Of course, as theologians we know only too well, all concepts are encumbered with the mortgage, as it were, of the profane philosophical use of language. Therefore no particular philosophical materials can hold a monopoly position. We do not see why only existentialist philosophical terms should today possess theological relevance in contradistinction to earlier metaphysical terms. A theological method can be objective only as an eclectic attempt or as selection, or when it attempts to break out of the quarry of the history of ideas the usable material.

Basically there can be a free choice in formulating christological language. There is also a limitation, a circumscription because of the necessity to retranslate into the form of expression employed by the NT witness. Within this witness we meet with inexchangeable, unique "*Urworte*," that is, words which in the final analysis cannot be separated from their substance, which are identical with their content. "*Urworte*" express the very nature of revelation itself; we cannot do without them. Some examples would be: *Jesus Christ, cross, reconciliation, resurrection, creator, Father, Lord*, to name only a very few. Certainly these concepts must be translated, but they are not exchangeable. A fundamental relinquishing, a leveling of these concepts to mere symbolic signs, to mere interpretations, would destroy the reality of revelation at a decisive point.

2. With all speed I come to a consideration of our second line of thought which we must consider in the problem of language. With the above provisions we must look through the errors of the formulation of language in existentialist theology.

In our modern world a disarrangement of fundamental has taken place. Under the premise that modern man's scope of understanding and his view of reality must be the determining standard for what can be real, principles of philosophical thought and ideological categories are taken over to make intelligible, express and interpret faith in Christ. The acceptance as solely valid of the highly questionable so-called "immanent world view" as source of new ideological insights necessitates a critical preconceived understanding of the New Testament witness. This involves the demands for anthropological reasonableness and for a rational dovetailing with the thought system of historical research. Such a demand makes it impossible for theology to see the "wholly other," that which is specifically God's revelation, much less to express this transcendence, this "wholly other." Man's understanding of his existence establishes the norms for the use of theological language as well as for what is to be considered truth. The results coming out of this basic misinterpretation must be judged as disastrous. In reference to cardinal christological statements we then meet with the following interpretation.

Now the Christ-event can only be described as part of a scheme of entirely human character, of mere historicalness and this-worldliness. What gives offense today are the words "reality of salvation," "facts of salvation," "deeds of salvation," "salvation events." These

currently are under fire from existential theology. But this might indicate that precisely these are the words of crucial significance. Talk about facts is replaced by talk about the anthropological significance. For example, Jesus coming into the flesh is no longer the incarnation of the *Logos* (How could it be?), but it has become a symbol for man truly becoming man. Jesus of Nazareth is the example for faith, for love, for humanitarianism. He is the man for others, the witness of faith. Here appears once more the moral character image which we know so well from Liberalism. Jesus is the free man whose freedom is contagious. To believe in Jesus means to press Jesus' cause, to make the decision Jesus made. The cross of Jesus cannot have the significance of an atoning death, nor is it an event in the past. Rather its significance depends upon its presence now, that is, *we* must be crucified to the world. The cross is the sign of human impotence, of total reliance on God, of the uselessness of our existence. "Theology of the Cross" means that God declares His solidarity with the crucified, and that means with the godless, with lost man. All this is without sacrifice, without atonement, without remission of guilt. With equal consistency the resurrection of Christ is subjected to a process of total reinterpretation. Here too a dissolution of an event of cardinal importance into its apparent present significance. A great many words of synonymous quality are at our disposal. Here too it is said that believing the resurrection is to know that the cause of Christ goes on.

The religious broadcaster Wilhelm Schmidt has expressed this most sharply and unmistakably—something we cannot say of all present-day theologians. His judgement was that Christian preaching in the modern age is in trouble because it clings to the old Christology. The christological statements simply are no longer correct in connection with our improved knowledge of nature. But one thing remains: "Man is man not as the risen and exalted Lord, but as being dead and yet effective." That is the ultimate and clear consequence of this theology of immanence.

The end result of this basically false attempt must be seen in the following effects. We are confronted by a questioning and denial of what we mean in saying that Jesus is God. This denial is made identical with the failure of God's revelation itself. It means nothing less than the questioning of God as a revealed God.

Here is a summary of the results of our study.

1. Christology shows us the two-dimensionality of Christ's reality as a revelation-event within the realm of history. Therefore we must always make two assertions at the same time, assertions which express a paradox that cannot rationally, cognitively be analyzed: Jesus Christ the Lord, true man and true God. The confessional decision of the Christian Church has answered this witness to Christ in the classic formulation, *vere homo et vere Deus*. Again we recognize, this is not the product of the ideology of any one era or of philosophy or of theological reflexion. Rather the content of this assertion is already part of the Christ-event itself. Of course, the

question may arise whether the traditional form of the christological confession of the Church expects too much of or can still be useful to "modern man." I would answer, that in the final analysis we are dealing here not with the problem of language but with the expression of substance. This expression of substance is exemplified in the question which is as valid today as it was 2,000 years ago: What is Jesus for you? No new formulation, no matter how cleverly arrived at, can free us from making the ultimate decision. Here we are dealing with a reality of substance.

2. It is precisely this paradoxical intensification of the christological substance which marks the appropriateness of this vessel as a theologically legitimate form of language. In this vessel the content of revelation, on which everything depends, is unequivocally preserved. Any breaking of this form means some loss of content, a deformation of substance, a corruption of the faith itself. Of course we need translation into familiar terms. Certainly we need interpretation. But if we corrupt the substance by using concepts in which the substance is no longer transparent or does not clearly shine through, then the result will be what we see so shockingly before us today, namely christological tragedy.

3. Certainly with the mere recitation of old confessional statements we have gained nothing. We have been challenged to act kerygmatically, proclamationally, pastorally and with a sense of mission. But in this, too, it is important to hold fast to the tension: Man and God, the living true God in man. It is indeed our task to say this to modern man so that he might understand it.

4. What does it really mean when we speak of "trying to make things more clear"? Here we should remember a twofold distinction:

a) Making things more clear means that any man might, with ordinary presuppositions, come to see what is meant, what assertions proclamation makes. The prerequisite for being able to understand is the solidarity of being man, the unity of the human spirit, the unity of man's thought patterns. The prerequisites are also basic human questions and the human dilemma. That is to say, we must do everything that the man of today might understand what we mean when we enunciate the message of Christ. Making this clear is our task and duty.

b) But we must guard against the kind of clarification that makes the attempt to explain something rationally or to prove or demonstrate something. Such an attempt goes beyond the limits. The dimension of divine dealings raises a warning here: Rationally we cannot enter into the mystery of God's revelation. Where the revelation of God takes place in Jesus Christ we are always confronted—then and now—by a *skandalon*, by a *moria*, a rational absurdity. We cannot grasp that.

Therefore faith at all times, then as now, for Luther and for our time, must go through the realm of trials, must fight through these trials, until we ever anew arrive at the confession: "My Lord and my God."