

inscripturated revelation of what is "necessary for salvation" and revelations that "go beyond" the Bible and bear on individual life situations, needs, and concerns.

Such an understanding of revelation is in irreconcilable conflict with what the Bible itself shows to be the covenantal, redemptive-historical character of all revelation. God does not reveal himself along two tracks, one public and one private. As long as revelation is viewed in the first place as God's Word to me as an individual and as given primarily to provide me with specific, explicit directives and answers to the particular concerns and perplexities of my individual life situation, it is fundamentally misunderstood and a sense of the inadequacy of the Bible alone as a guide for life is almost inevitable.

According to the overall witness of Scripture, at least two characteristics are basic to all revelation and control the giving of it. Very briefly, (a) revelation is covenantal. God reveals himself as the God of the covenant. He reveals himself, not to a mass of undifferentiated individuals, but to his covenant people, in order to build them up and make their number complete as one people. His revelation is always to and in the interests of the whole covenant people, although the exact bearing of any revelation may vary from individual to individual, depending on their differing life situations. (b) Revelation is redemptive-historical. Apart from the brief period before the fall, God reveals himself as the Redeemer of his covenant people and the Savior of the world. Revelation is given as a component part of God's work in history to accomplish, once for all, the salvation of his covenant people. Revelation is an integral element in the ongoing covenant history which has reached its initial consummation in the sufferings, death, and exaltation of Christ. It documents this history, particularly Christ as the fulfillment of the promises, and interprets it by drawing out the implications for the life and obedience of the redeemed covenant people. Since the history of redemption has been definitively accomplished and since after Pentecost its ongoing movement is delayed until Christ's return for the application of redemption and the ingathering of the nations to share in the salvation of the covenant, the basis and rationale for new revelations is lacking and revelation has therefore ceased. . . .

3. Closely related to the point just discussed is the relationship between prophecy and the New Testament canon. It will not do to reject this question as irrelevant, a "red herring" which confuses the issue. The foundational, apostolic era of the church is as such (foundational) an "open canon" period, that is, a period in which material for the (eventually consolidated) new covenant canon is in the process of formation. Prophecy is one of the principal revelatory word-gifts operative in this period. It is a foundational word-gift in two distinct respects: (a) in producing what is eventually recognized to be canonical (e.g., the Book of Revelation); but also, and primarily, (b) in meeting contemporary needs in the church that are bound up with and peculiar to the foundational, that is, incomplete canon situation.