

For Such a Time as This

A Daily Devotional

Friday, August 12, 2022

In this sense, the Scriptures are both the human witness to God's Word and God's Word itself in human witness. God has decided to use these human words as God's own Word, to speak infallible Word of God in the form of fallible human witness. It is in this sense that the Scriptures become God's Word out of the witness of human words because God determines these words as God's own witness.

Today's devotion concludes our week-long series drawn from theologian Stephen Morrison's thoughts on Karl Barth's view of scripture. The above paragraph is the last of four points that Morrison makes in his analysis of Barthian views on the Bible.

As Presbyterians, we affirm that the Scriptures bear witness to the Word of God. Other Christians seem to hold that the Bible IS the Word of God full stop, that there is no confusion between the human voice within scripture and the divine Word directed to us. This may seem to be splitting hairs, but it does make a great deal of difference when it comes to honestly embracing the Bible as the Scriptures.

Barth writes in one place in his great work *Church Dogmatics*:

In view of the actual constitution of the Old and New Testaments this is something which we cannot possibly deny [the human authorship of scripture] if we are not to take away their humanity, if we are not to be guilty of Docetism. How can they be witnesses if this is not the case?

Barth raises the specter of an old heresy, Docetism, in this brief passage. Docetism held that Jesus of Nazareth was truly God, but not human in any way. In Docetic thought, it was as if God 'plopped' his Son into the midst of human existence, fully formed and whole, but without any human attributes other than to look or appear to be human. This turns compassionate incarnation into something more like a magical trick, designed to fool us rather than save us. In a like manner, some Christians treat their Bibles as if they were some divine icon rather than the product of Spirit-inspired human authorship. They place their faith IN the Bible, rather than in the mercy and grace of God.

We too are called to be witnesses to Jesus Christ and we undertake this calling not from the point of view of perfection, but rather from our own human vulnerability and imperfection. In order for our witness to Christ to be authentic, it must be like us – human. The same can be said for the Scriptures: God's very Word to us through the medium of human word. How else we would ever understand; how else could we ever respond in faith?

Prayer for the Day: (From *Fifty Prayers* by Karl Barth)

Lord our God, come to us now! Awaken us! Give us your light! Be our Teacher and Comforter! Speak to each of us, so that we may hear just what we need and what will help us! Amen.

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