

(3) As L. merges, and Paul splits, prophecy and tongues, higher-educated Christians tended to the criterion of intelligibility in "prophecy," and lower-educated to the other element in "prophecy" as evidence of Presence, viz. ecstasy ["charismatic gifts"]. ("Spirit" direct, Scripture, bishop, tradition--on which see #53e.)

\*And a straight line to Boethius! See #1003.

1. Having some Muslims briefly living with us, and beginning family devotion each evening with a reading I selected from the Koran (before reading the Bible), I became aware more deeply of a radical contrast. Muslims are of the conviction that heaven is the origin of the Koran [in their mythology, the descent of the Koran corresponding in Christianity with John's incarnation of Jesus and Luke's descent of the Spirit and John the Revelator's descent of New Jerusalem], whereas we Christians believe that, though all things begin in the mind of God, earth, history, is the origin of the Bible. While German "higher criticism" has had some baneful results, surely a blessing has been "Religionsgeschichtliche Schule" (religio-historical criticism), which has repristinized for us the Bible's earth-origin, over against Catholic tendencies to subordinate the Bible as having a "Church" [between-earth-and-heaven!] origin, and over against the Protestant tendency to Koranize, i.e. to interpret the Bible as though it'd dropped from heaven (therefore, literally, propositionally, allegorically, and according to the dictates of infallibilism).

2. Which is to say that the Bible came out of a thousand years of divine-human encounter, God's steady will not to violate our freedom but to offer us the grace of new life, and our ambivalence toward God--yearning for, revolting against, communing with, resisting, hating and loving. Contrast Islam: the revealing angel pinning the Prophet in a cave and saying "Write it down or I'll kill you!" and the Prophet using up all his stratagems to avoid recording the heaven-sent, verbally-inspired Holy Book! [For a parallel myth of a holybook's freedom from human participation in its original composition, cf. Mormonism's "golden plates." To heighten this monergistic, God-alone provenance or origin, both Islam and Mormonism emphasize that, in each case, the founding prophet was a near-illiterate, utterly incapable of either the imagination or the literary sophistication necessary to compose "the Book."]

3. This life-context-origin of the Bible was a heavy element in my 1943 ThD dissertation, and appears as a life-literature-life flow-chart as thinksheet #27. One result is that "canon" must be seen as a pragmatic artifice rather than as divine revelation. Another is that God must be seen at work in all of literature and all of life, and therefore in all the neighbors of "the people of God," Jews (OT) and Christians (NT). How this enriches the reading of the Bible, a small price to pay for increasing interpretation-difficulties! Let's look at a few dimensions of this:

(1) In the Hellenistic world, Jew and Greek were widely separated in the middle class [in sense of educational sophistication], not so much so below and above. The lower class thought in spiritistic terms, largely Persian-shaped. Apocalypses provided elaborated furniture (e.g., Jew-shaped, Dan.; Greek-shaped, 2P.). M. hit hard at this cultural level, construing the Christian Event as a successful warfare against the demons or evil spirits; and another Synoptist, L., stressed the guidance and gift of good spirit, "Holy Spirit." I'm not suggesting that spiritism was limited to the lower class; it penetrated the whole society; rather, the higher you went culturally, the weaker you found belief in good and evil spirits--unless, as in the case of middle-class Luke, spiritism was impressed into a particular service, in Luke's case a dramaturgic rendering of the biblical conviction that God guides his folk personally, steadily, trustworthily.

(2) The upper class was increasingly penetrated by the Greek mentality in philosophical mode, translating the divine into metaphysics (e.g., "logos") and ethics (e.g., Plato's "the Good" and Neoplatonism's "the Fullness").\* Among Jews, here we have the late stages of "the wisdom literature," Philo, Josephus, and the earliest [i.e., immediate-post-AD70] rabbis. [Where's Paul? He, only he, is everywhere, "all things to all" cultural levels! Accordingly, from the cultural perspective alone, to say nothing of the religious, an endlessly fascinating, seminal author. E.g., his handling of spiritism in 1Cor.]