

man. The character of this event, therefore, is plainly epistemological (i.e., having to do with the sharing of *knowledge*) and not just metaphysical. The Father was not merely there; *he spoke*. He did not merely make a reference meaningful to himself alone; he called the disciples' attention to Jesus *and was understood in doing so*. To labor the point, with respect to reference, the Father *meant* his words to single out Jesus and that is precisely the intended reference *understood* by Peter, James, and John.

(2) Identity of Meaning

How about identity of meaning? The special semantic property of meaning has to do with the meaning of the assertion itself—the *content* being asserted, independently of reference (or truth, for that matter). For example, the sentence "This rose is red" makes perfectly good *sense*, is *meaningful*, whether or not I intend it to refer to an actual rose. Or consider the fictional novel in which there may be four hundred pages of sense but no real-world reference at all (e.g., J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring*). Bear in mind too that truth is not the issue here either; our present concern is not whether this sentence is true or false (the issue of truth will be addressed shortly), but only its meaning independently of whether or not it states a fact. The question now before us is whether the disciples' grasp of the *meaning* of "This is my beloved Son . . ." has any semantic sameness as the Father's understanding of the same sentence.

Certainly there is at least *some* such identity. While the disciples may not have had a clear grasp of the divine sonship of Jesus, they certainly took the utterance to be a declaration of Jesus's divinity. The utterance also conveys that the Father loves the Son and is well pleased with him. Their understanding would of course improve with experience and time. But I can hear the Van Tillian object that I am missing the point, for the meaning the disciples entertained in their minds was at best systematically analogical of the meaning entertained in the mind of the Father. Whatever initial understanding the disciples may have had, or later enhanced understanding they may have acquired, it was all analogical and "at no point" coincided with any content in the mind of the Father.

The Van Tillian response, however, is simply incoherent. For suppose that the "no identity-no coincidence" doctrine were true: in that case an *omniscient* God cannot entertain *in his mind* whatever the disciples