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ABOUT THIS JOURNAL

FAITH AND THOUGHT, the continuation of the **JOURNAL OF THE TRANSACTIONS OF THE VICTORIA INSTITUTE OR PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN**, has been published regularly since the formation of the Society in 1865. The title was changed in 1958 (Vol. 90). **FAITH AND THOUGHT** is now published three times a year, price per issue £1.50 (post free) and is available from the Society's Address, 130 Wood Street, Cheapside, London, EC2V 6DN. The price of recent back issues (when available) up to the end of vol. 100 is 80p (post free).

FAITH AND THOUGHT is issued free to **FELLOWS, MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATES** of the Victoria Institute. Applications for membership should be accompanied by a remittance which will be returned in the event of non-election. (Subscriptions are: **FELLOWS**, £7.00; **MEMBERS**, £5.00; **ASSOCIATES**, full-time students, below the age of 25 years, full-time or retired clergy or other Christian workers on small incomes, £1.50; **LIBRARY SUBSCRIBERS**, £5.00. **FELLOWS** must be Christians and must be nominated by a **FELLOW**.) Subscriptions which may be paid by covenant are accepted by Inland Revenue Authorities as an allowable expense against income tax for ministers of religion, teachers of RI, etc. For further details, covenant forms, etc, apply to the Society. The Constitution and Aims of the Society were last published in **FAITH AND THOUGHT**, vol. 98, No. 1.

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FAITH AND THOUGHT

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A Journal devoted to the study of the inter-relation of the
Christian Revelation and modern research

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Institute was held at Chelsea College, London, S.W.3., on Saturday, 22nd. May 1976, with the retiring President in the Chair.

The Minutes, previously published in the Journal, of the Annual General Meeting held on the 17th. May 1975 were taken as read and approved.

The Council gave notice that the resignations of Prof. R.L.F. Boyd from the office of President and Prof. D.M. MacKay from membership of Council had been received; and these were accepted, with an expression of appreciation of the services of both to the Institute over many years.

The Council's nominations of Prof. Sir Norman Anderson for the Presidency and Prof. R.L.F. Boyd for a Vice-Presidency were warmly approved.

The Vice-Presidents, with the exception of Sir Norman Anderson, and the Honorary Treasurer were re-elected for further terms of office.

Mr. F.F. Stunt, Prof. R.L.F. Boyd, and Mr. G.E. Barnes, nominated by Council, were re-elected for a further period of service on the Council.

In the absence of both the Treasurer and the Secretary to Council, the Assistant Secretary presented the Annual Accounts and Auditors' Report for the year ended 30th. September 1975, which were adopted *nem con.*

The re-appointment of Messrs. Metcalfe, Blake & Co. as Auditors was confirmed.

The Chairman gave a report, summarized below, on the affairs of the Institute.

THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman introduced his remarks by saying that he thought a general account of the Institute's affairs would be more useful than a formal report of the year ended 30th. September 1975; and accordingly commented on the following matters:

(a) He expressed the thanks of the Society to the retiring President, Prof. R.L.F. Boyd, who had served in that office for nearly eleven years, not just as a figurehead, but as an active participant in all its affairs. The VI would continue to benefit from Prof. Boyd's re-election to Council and his acceptance of the appointment of Vice-President.

(b) He reported that Council was exceedingly pleased to be able to nominate Prof. Sir Norman Anderson for the Presidency. In appointing him to that office the institute has acquired a leader of great eminence in both academic and ecclesiastical spheres. He is an authority on Islamic Law, and held the appointments of Professor of Oriental Laws and Director of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies in the University of London. In addition, his interests include theological and ecclesiastical matters; and his contributions in these areas have been recognized by the award of an Honorary Doctorate of Divinity by the University of St. Andrew's. His influence in these fields, however, had not been academic only: for as Chairman of the House of Laity in the General Synod of the Church of England he has played an important practical part in the affairs of the Church.

The Institute already owes a debt of gratitude to Sir Norman for his twenty-one years' service as Vice-President, and now gratefully welcomed him as President.

(c) The Chairman reviewed the changes in the Institute in recent years. As a small society with correspondingly small finances it has had to rely very largely on the freely-given services of its officers, who were busy people with many other commitments. As a result, ten years ago the Institute's affairs became rather chaotic:

records were out-of-date, subscriptions remained uncollected, the Journal was appearing late, and some members of Council were even wondering if the Institute had reached the end of its useful life. Since then, however, things have improved markedly, and the Chairman paid tribute to the work of those responsible for the improvement.

The administration of the Institute was now on a sound basis, thanks to the efforts of the Secretary to the Council and the Assistant Secretary. Together they have developed an efficient system of management, and the Assistant Secretary has implemented and maintained it.

To the Honorary Treasurer the Institute owes a great debt of gratitude both for his provision of full office facilities for the Institute and also for his efforts to put the Society on a sound financial footing. The Annual Accounts for 1974 - 75 showed, for the first time for many years, a healthy excess of income over expenditure; and, as far as one can tell at this stage, we should be within our budget for this present year. The Chairman pointed out, however, that the excess of income over expenditure for last year was largely attributable to donations, for which we were very grateful, but upon which we should not rely. The Society's aim ought to be to pay its way by means of its regular subscription income, and this means increasing its membership at a more rapid rate than at present.

It was impossible, in a few words, to relate how much time and effort Dr. Robert Clark had, for many years, been putting into the work of editing *Faith and Thought*, often in circumstances of considerable personal stress. Although his name had not often appeared between the covers of the Journal, most readers would have realised that much of the material there had come from his pen. This had entailed spending innumerable hours at the University Library in Cambridge, keeping himself informed of new developments and new books of interest to the VI, and distilling their essence for consumption by Journal readers. Under his editorship, the Journal was soon brought up to schedule; and it has been published regularly three times a year since.

(d) It was therefore with great regret that the Chairman announced that Dr. Clark had intimated nearly a year ago that he would have to resign from the editorship because of personal circumstances. Since then the Editorial Committee of Council had been trying, unsuccessfully, to find a successor. Fortunately, Dr. Clark had been able in the meantime to continue the editorial work, although under difficulties, and Council was very grateful to him for this.

It was now a matter of urgency that a new Editor should be found.¹ The publication of *Faith and Thought* was the most important part of the work of the Institute: only relatively

few members could attend our meetings, whereas all members received the Journal; furthermore the Journal was taken by libraries in many parts of the world, and represented the Institute's chief service to the world-wide Church.

(e) The Chairman appealed to the Society's Membership to further the work of the VI in any ways open to them, e.g.,

(i) by offering suggestions of topics for discussion at meetings or in the Journal,

(ii) by reviewing, for the Journal, relevant books in their own field,

(iii) by submitting to the Journal papers and other articles on subjects of interest (of any length, from snippets of news up to 7000 words),

(iv) by making nominations for election to Council,

(v) by offering to act as local secretaries to assist with arranging occasional meetings in provincial centres of population (preferably with universities), e.g., Birmingham, Merseyside, Yorkshire, South Wales/Bristol,

(vi) and especially by recruiting new members to the Institute (publicity materials are available from the Assistant Secretary).

(f) Lastly, the Chairman put forward for consideration the suggestion that there was a need, in the VI and in the Church generally, for suitably qualified people to specialize in studying the relation of modern thought to the Christian faith. Just as others felt called to devote a large part of their spare time to such Christian service as Sunday School work, youth work, preaching, etc., so some might consider the possibility of devoting much of their time to studying aspects of 'faith and thought'. Although some Christian academics do give thought to such intellectual problems, very few have made it their major service (our Editor is a notable exception). Surely there is today a need, greater than ever, for such specialists: and the VI would welcome opportunities both for encouraging and helping them, and of enlisting them in its work.

NOTE

- 1 Dr. Clark has since indicated his willingness to continue as Editor for the time being.

EDITORIAL

At the recent Council meeting Rev. J.S. Wright was elected as Life Fellow.

We are glad to state that in this issue it has been possible to include three of the four papers given at the recent (22 May, 1976) Symposium on "Communicating the Christian Faith Today". It is hoped that the fourth paper will soon be available. Readers are reminded that a prime object of the VI is *discussion* in the fields where faith and thought impinge. In the old days galleys of papers to be given at meetings were made available beforehand so that members had an opportunity of presenting their considered comments which, together with authors' replies, were later published at the end of the papers. As the Journal was only issued once a year this procedure also had its draw backs. Today galleys are no longer available cheaply and published discussion has fallen into desuetude. The more's the pity. Aposite comments on papers are still, however, most welcome and if sent to the Editor will be submitted to authors for reply and later publication. Readers of older issues of our JOURNAL will remember how often discussion has served to add useful points to papers or to stimulate authors to clarify their positions.

C.S. Lewis Society. We recently heard from Mr. K.D. Demain (38 The Drive, Ilford, Essex) who is the Founding Secretary of the C.S. Lewis Society of Great Britain and Ireland. This Society now has members in many countries but the interest shown in Lewis's homeland is minimal - a prophet is not without honour save in ... We are sure Mr. Demain would be glad to hear from any members of the VI who are interested in the work of the new Society. The width of CSL's vision was quite amazing and the apparently easy way in which he expressed himself, more than enviable!

By Council's decision, entrants for the Langhorn-Orchard Prize 1976 (see this JOURNAL 103 1) will be considered in conjunction with relevant papers already published in the JOURNAL over the past three years.

News & Views

MIRACULOUS HEALING

A recent issue of the *Life of Faith* (Talking Point: 29 May 1976) contains a sensible article on 'Miraculous Healing'. The healing of the NT were open to critical investigation. Even the Sanhedri declared "that a notable miracle has been wrought ... is manifest all that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it" (Acts 4:16). Apart from miracles susceptible to psychological interpretation (demons cast out, insanity cured) frankly physical disorders were cured (a severed ear, a woman with hæmorrhage, a withered hand, congenital blindness, leprosy, raising the dead). They were immediate (one NT exception is noted but took a few minutes at most complete and, apparently, lasting — or at least there is no mention of a relapse. It seems unlikely that writers of the NT, who were honest enough to record the failure of the disciples to keep awake in the garden, their desertion of Jesus when He was about to be taken and the oath of Peter (founder of the Church!) that he did not even know Jesus, would have failed to record relapses if they had occurred. It would have been no dishonour to Jesus if, sometimes, men and women had returned to Him a second time to be told, perhaps, that moral failure was the cause of the relapse of their physical condition. (Cf. Jn 5:14, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee").

Yet, Francis MacNutt, whose book *Healing* is in wide demand, records that the commonest charismatic healings today consist of relief of migraine, back-ache, and slight mis-alignment of the leg ('leg-lengthening'). He can find only one physical case, the cure of a diabetic woman who stopped taking her tablets. The 1956 BMA committee reported, after the Archbishops had issued their report *Healing*, that while psychogenic disorders, including occasional cancers, are cured by various forms of suggestion, no evidence of organic cures was forthcoming. Even the cures of cancers seemed no more frequent among those who had been healed by divine means than the spontaneous remissions in the population at large. Has the situation changed? asks the writer. "Ultimately, this is a question of truth. What, in fact, is happening?"

ENERGY

On 3rd Feb. 1976 three senior engineers who have worked all their adult lives for the General Electric Company of USA resigned. One of them, G.C. Minor, gave as the reason that he was "convinced that the reactors, the nuclear fuel cycle, and waste storage systems are not safe. We cannot prevent major accidents or acts of sabotage. I fear that continued nuclear proliferation will quickly consume the limited uranium supply and force us into a plutonium-based fuel economy with even greater dangers of genetic damage than terrorist or weapons activity." (*Nature*, 259, 441) According to the press, a further resignation followed shortly afterwards. There is a growing feeling that, despite early optimism, uranium is an unsuitable fuel for man's needs. Increasing attention is being given to alternative unconventional sources of energy. One of these is wave power, utilising the rolling motions of a floating structure. Another depends on wind. The orthodox windmill is inefficient because it can only draw energy from a small volume of passing air but James Yen, of the Grumman Aerospace Corporation has suggested drawing power from an enclosed tornado. (*Science* 190, 28) The proposed structure resembles the cooling tower of a power station. Slots are opened near the bottom on the windy side and air enters, forming a tornado (which drives a dynamo) - air rises and leaves the structure at the top. Energy is drawn from a considerable area around. Man needs energy. Thomas Edison's philosophy expressed with reference to electric light filaments, is peculiarly relevant here. "Somewhere in God Almighty's workshop is dense woody growth, with fibres almost geometrically parallel and with practically no pith from which we can make the filament the world needs". (Quoted W.A. Simonds, *Edison; His Life, His Work, His Genius*, 1935).

MAGNETIC FIELD

Recent controversy on the magnetic field of the earth shows how increasingly difficult it is to decide, in science, which view is likely to be correct when opposing specialists press their claims.

For generations physicists left the origin of the earth's magnetic field well alone. Text-books confined themselves to the magnitude of the field, its angle of dip, its relation to latitude, its variations in magnetic 'storms', etc. with appropriate calculations. They did not ask why the earth possesses a field at all.

In the 1940s the theory was advanced that the field is due to thermal convection in the earth's core, the actuating power being provided by radioactive heating and the whole system acting as a self-exciting dynamo. Later (1963) Malkus suggested that the driving

force is the earth's precession, a theory which has since received wide acceptance.

In a recent highly polemical paper Rochester *et.al.* *Jour. Geophys. Res.* 1975, 43,661) it is argued that precession cannot provide more than a tenth, or even a hundredth, of the energy necessary to keep the earth's core stirred. The authors claim that the Malkus paper contains inconsistent equations, relies on dubious analogies, falsely claims agreement with earlier work, is wrong in its mathematical logic, contains numerical errors, and is oversimplistic.

The cause of the earth's magnetism is a matter of great interest but what conclusion can one who is not a specialist in such matters draw? A reviewer in *Nature* (259, 270) remarks that the 1963 and 1975 papers are both "so esoteric that only a handful of people in the world can understand them". In earlier days it was taken for granted that scientists, by appealing to objective facts, could settle issues and so avoid acrimonious controversy. But when science becomes a matter of difficult mathematics and involves calculation too difficult for anyone who has not devoted years to the study of a single highly specialised topic, what then ...?

The magnetic field of the earth has been much to the fore in other connections in recent years, especially in discussions concerning continental drift. In recent times it has been falling and this has suggested to some USA fundamentalists, that, because if we extrapolate backwards the field must have been enormously strong - in fact, unbelievably so - not far back in geological time, the earth cannot be much older than say, 10,000 years! We have encountered this argument several times recently but were very shocked the other day to find it seriously put forward in an English publication. The author, it turned out, is an Sc. D., holds a responsible academic post in London and has done outstanding work in his own field. It seems astonishing that despite thousands of papers on magnetic reversals, published in scores of journals, with added publicity afforded by TV and newspapers, such as the *Times*, the well-established fact of reversal can still be unknown to some scientists. Reversal was suggested long ago. *Nature* (258, 481) recently reprinted a memoir on "Does the Earth's Field Reverse?" which first appeared in 1875.

At times of reversal the earth's field must, for a brief period, be zero. This leaves the earth wide open to ionised radiation from space - protons from the sun and low energy cosmic rays - which are normally deflected. There has been much speculation on whether this is the cause of vast extinctions of species in the past. Another suggestion, made very recently, is that solar protons 'kill' the ozone layer (a mechanism is suggested) leaving life exposed to the sun's ultra violet radiation (*Nature*, 259, 177-179). Though

at first there was some doubt, it seems to be accepted now that extinctions of faunal life and magnetic reversals coincide in time. The last reversal, apparently, was a rapid one at 12 350 BP.

Discoveries and suggestions of this kind add emphasis to the teaching of Scripture that we are puny beings living in a universe in which we might at any time so easily be destroyed. "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening [earnestly desiring, marg.] the coming of the day of God" (2 Pet.3:11-12).

REAPING THE WHIRLWIND

Put your hands in a basin of water. Move your left hand towards your body and your right hand away from your body. Then take your hands out of the water. Repeat the operation several times, in any direction. Finally take the plug out and watch the water swirling down the drain. The direction of rotation will be anti-clockwise (cyclonic), for your hands have transferred cyclonic angular momentum to the water.

According to J.D. Isaacs *et.al.* (*Nature*, 1975, 253, 254) this is precisely what US traffic does to the atmosphere every time one vehicle passes another on a high road. Because the US rule of the road is to keep to the right cyclonic angular momentum is transferred to the atmosphere and much of this momentum rises into the troposphere where it accumulates. Now because of the rotation of the earth there is already, on average, some cyclonic angular momentum in the atmosphere (for the earth and therefore the atmosphere rotates more rapidly at the equator than near the poles) and the traffic rule must therefore increase this motion North of the equator. Where air is rapidly rising (or falling, compare the water basin experiment) the fact that angular momentum is not destroyed makes air rotate with ever increasing speed where rise is taking place and a tornado forms. Is this the cause of the great frequency of tornadoes in the USA?

The suggestion can be tested in several ways. (1) Have tornadoes increased with the increase in motor traffic? They have and by a factor of at least six times since 1950. (2) Has the ratio of cyclonic to anti-cyclonic tornadoes altered? It has. The proportion of the anticyclonic ones has diminished very markedly. (3) Has there been a tendency for tornadoes to increase especially where traffic has increased. This appears to be so, for there has been a shift toward the West. (4) If motor traffic is connected with tornadoes, we might expect tornadoes to be fewer on Saturdays when traffic on average leaves the great cities, since traffic travelling in one direction only will not create angular momentum.

Saturday tornadoes are in fact rarer, the probability that this is due to change being less than 10^{-9} . This fact alone suggests that at least 14% of tornadoes are man-made.

Recently *Nature* devoted 12 columns to discussion on the point (260, 457), many interesting issues being raised. Isaacs is convinced that the effects are not due to inadequate reporting. The Saturday effect, for instance, is not shown by thunderstorms. A simple remedy might be to reverse the rule of the road, like those sensible English who keep to the left! This would tend to neutralise rather than augment the natural angular momentum present in the atmosphere. However, Americans think this is a rather drastic remedy and government will have to be quite sure before changing the traffic rule.

It seems that here we have a new hitherto unsuspected form of pollution. It is quite extraordinary how habits and practices which have gone on for long periods are so often found to have sinister effects. It is interesting to note that in their original communication Isaacs *et al* quote the Bible: "For they have sown the wind and they shall reap the whirlwind".

CANCER CRUSADE

President Nixon inaugurated a "great crusade against cancer". To the lay mind it seemed that, after science and technology had shown the way to enable men to walk on the moon, it was clear that given sufficient resources and determination science could do almost anything. It was natural, therefore, to ask scientists to find the cure for one of the greatest causes of fear and suffering in the world - cancer.

Cancer research in the US is now provided with all the money it needs. But we read of deep divisions within the biomedical research community who object to the idea that such research can be managed like an Apollo-style landing on the moon. Astronautical comparison is all very well. But Newton provided us with the equations of motion, chemists with the fuels for rocket propulsion, engineers with alloys and gadgetry. In principle people knew how to do the job long before it was tackled: all that was needed was money, men and determination. But it is pointed out that this is not so in cancer research. A great deal goes on in a living cell which we do not understand at all and no one knows why some cells become cancerous. The basic knowledge is missing and it cannot be bought with money.

Meanwhile huge sums are being spent. Other deserving programmes often have to do without the funding they need. The search for cure rather than prevention tends to take precedence. Yet survival rates

of those suffering from the more prevalent forms of cancer have shown little rise over the past twenty years and it is now becoming increasingly certain that a large fraction, perhaps as much as 90%, of cancer can be traced to environmental causes. (*Nature*, 259, 4. Etc.)

BALL LIGHTNING

New photographs of ball lightning have recently appeared (*Bull. Amer. Phys. Soc.* 20, 659) together with a number of hitherto unpublished eye-witness accounts (N. Charman, *New Scientist* 26 Feb. 1976) which hang together well both amongst themselves and with previous cases. A great many physical explanations have now been offered and the number continues to grow, but still there is no known convincing mechanism which will account for all, or most, reportings.

The phenomenon is very rare and it seems is not always associated with lightning flashes or even storms. However, it is undoubtedly genuine, although not so very long ago it was "all too easy for conventionally-minded sceptics to dismiss the numerous eye-witness accounts as being subjective after images of normal lightning strokes or figments of fevered imagination" (Charman).

Though perhaps a little dated now a fascinating book by C.M. Cade and D. Davis (*The Taming of the Thunderbolts: The Science and Superstition of Ball Lightning*, Abelard-Schuman, 1969) is still well worth reading. The authors appear to think that the military, in their classified work, have discovered a way to make and control thunderbolts so that they can be projected at objects from a distance.

The phenomenon of ball lightning is one of the many instances in which the over-sceptical mind rejects undoubted fact because no adequate explanation seems possible, which is, of course, the usual secular attitude towards the Christian miracles.

Inter addition. A further case has been reported (*Nature*, 260, 596, 15 Ap. 1976). A Midland woman has described a ball 10 cm in diameter moving across her kitchen towards her, making a rattling sound, giving off heat and producing a singeing smell. She brushed the ball downwards to fend it off and it burnt an oval hole in her dress, 11 cm by 4 cm. The damaged area is being studied at the Royal Holloway College.

ASTROLOGY

It is said that in the Western world twice as many people read their horoscopes as read their Bibles. The danger of astrology is now increasingly recognised, not only by Christians but also by scientists and humanists. Last September 168 prominent scientists including 18 Nobelists issued a statement attacking astrology. This was published in the American secularist magazine *Humanist* (1975, 35 (5), 923) and also in the *New Humanist*, the Journal of the Rationalist Press Association (1975, 91 (6), 154).

The issue of the *Humanist* contains two articles on the subject, one by B.J. Bok (a past President of the American Astronomical Society) and the other by L.E. Jerome who is currently writing a book on the subject.

Professor Bok has been opposing astrology since 1941 but, until now, his activities have received little encouragement from his fellow scientists - for why flog a dead horse? But the last decade has witnessed an enormous rise in the popularity of astrology, notably among the young, and many are realising that something ought to be done about it. Bok points out that astrology has stood quite still since the time of Ptolemy (2nd century AD) whereas astronomy, on which it is supposedly based, has changed out of recognition. Yet today courses in astrology are being offered to university students in USA. Initial interest is often kindled by astrological columns in newspapers: it starts as "a sort of fun game, but it often ends up as a mighty serious business".

Jerome takes the line that astrology must be opposed because it is a form of analogical magic. Mars is red and blood is red, so Mars is the planet of war - is the level of thinking invoked! Also it is probably wrong because no good evidence of its truth has been advanced. (*The Case for Astrology* by J.A. West and J.G. Toonder, 1970 and later PB, offered no serious argument.) Jerome is highly critical of the much publicised work of Michel Gauquelin who claims to prove, by statistics, that the month of one's birth and one's choice of occupation are related. When properly worked out, says Jerome, the supposedly convincing results are "well within chance level". There is "absolutely no correlation between the positions and motions of the celestial bodies and the lives of men", he says.

In two directions, however, there is an element of truth in astrology. Events on earth are certainly influenced by events in the sun (subspots, magnetic storms and meteorological conditions) and even perhaps by conjunctions of the heavy planets (a suggested cause of sunspots). This, however, is science, not astrology!

Secondly, as Jung points out, belief in celestial influence on human affairs may influence those affairs: if the stars say that I shall do something on a certain day, I may do it to prove them right. On a broader basis the same mechanism could, in theory, influence stock markets and therefore the entire economy, or it could influence the onset of wars. Much depends on how many people believe in astrology and on how seriously they take their beliefs.

The popularity of astrology is ascribed to, (1) a longing for guidance in making major decisions and, (2) a desire to avoid moral responsibility for what we do — if I believe that what I do is in whole or in part determined by astral forces beyond my control, I shall feel relieved to some extent for responsibility for the wrong things I do.

The resurgence of astrology is one reflection of a decline of faith in God. A year ago Opinion Research Centre reported the results of a nation-wide religious poll, sponsored by the BBC. Only 29% of the population now believe in a personal God as compared with 38% in the Gallop Survey of 1963 (*Sunday Times*, 13 Oct. 1974, p.3). "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Lk. 18:8).

Turning to the possible effect of the moon, to quote *Bible Science News Letter* (Dec. 1975), Dr. Arnold Liever claims that his "15-year study reveals that murders peak at full moon and that mental patients also show violence in full and new phases of the moon. Liever speculates that the gravitational forces of the moon may exert a tide effect on the water mass of the human brain!" Here, as so often, a bizarre explanation is offered instead of a quite simple one. In the old days it was sometimes remarked that it was strange that scientific discoveries were so often made, or at least announced, when the moon was full. The reason was soon pointed out. Before the days of cars and street lamps people would only visit their friends in the evening when the moon was full, and it was at such times that scientific meetings were held ("lunar societies"). Similarly today, a man bent on murdering his enemy might choose a night when visibility was good.

Even in the hands of the experts, it seems, a knowledge of astrology is not always exactly helpful! France's most eminent astrologist, Madam Soleil, was recently ordered to appear before an examining magistrate, charged with evading income tax to the tune of £28,000. The stars had given her no warning but retrospectively all was simply explained. "That's what happens when one comes under the negative influence of Saturn" said Madame Soleil, who then went on to explain that the finance minister who brought her to book was born under Libra, the sign of justice (*Times*, 15 Jan. 1976).

ICE AGES

It seems to be quite fashionable these days, in scientific circles, to revive an old theory of ice ages or to think up a new one. The century-old Milankovitch theory, that a combination of periodic changes in the eccentricity of the earth's orbit, precession of its axis and changes in its tilt will account for the ice ages still has its followers (See *Nature* 260, 396; 261, 17 etc.) Other suggestions are that they are caused by outbursts of volcanic activity (1974, 252, 679); by continental drift (1970, 226, 409); or to instability of the Antarctic ice sheet (A.T. Wilson).

A year or two ago Professor W.H. McCrea (who once honoured the VI with a paper on Continuous Creation, this JOURNAL 83, 105) pointed out that the sun rotates round the centre of the galaxy in about 300 million years and if, twice in a rotation, it encounters regions of interstellar cloud, ice ages might result. The best evidence seems to suggest that ice ages do, in fact, set in about every 150 million years, the half rotational period. This fits in well with the earlier suggestion of F. Hoyle and R.A. Lyttleton (*Proc. Cambr. Phil. Soc.* 1939, 35, 405) that entry of the sun into a cosmic cloud may start an ice age. M.C. Begelman and M.J. Rees return to the theme in a recent letter to *Nature* (261, 299) where they argue that, even if the interstellar cloud is so thin that the light and heat received from the sun is little changed, the same result could follow from the cutting off of the solar wind.

The causes of ice ages might seem to have little to do with the objects for which the VICTORIA INSTITUTE was founded, yet strange to say members in earlier years were often enthralled with the subject. We may well wonder why.

Recent observations on the ice in the Ross Sea do seem, however, to have a bearing on 'faith and thought'. Independent studies by T. Hughes and H. Flohn (see article by J. Gribbin, *New Scientist* 25 Mar. 1976, p.695) though, differing in detail, indicate that ice ages start when the West Antarctic ice sheet disintegrates. This is undoubtedly happening today at an accelerating speed compared with past millenia. Such evidence as there is points to "a full ice age within about 1000 years' time." To the Christian this is extremely interesting. If correct it means that in most countries civilisation will have little chance of surviving beyond that period. If our Lord's coming takes place fairly soon, then there will be time for the Millennium after which the life of man, at all events on this planet will be terminated (Rev. 20:7, 11f). Of course not all Christians believe in a literal thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, but many do.

THIXOTROPY, ETHER, OR MIRACLE?

From time to time readers of the daily papers hear stories of how that faithful oldfourth century bishop and martyr Saint Januarius (San Gennaro *d.* A.D. 303, 309?) rarely forgets to liquefy his dried blood (kept in two glass vials in the Cathedral at Naples) every 19 Sept., 16 Dec. and on the first Sunday in May. Here, for example, are summaries of some snippets from the London *Times*.

12 Aug. 1972. Indignation rising at proposed scientific examination of the miracle. This is "regarded as yet another attempt to demote the great saint, who defended the City from the plague in 1497 and an eruption of Vesuvius in 1631, and whose blood liquefies ... on four specific days in the year and sometimes on the other days as well" (Further information is given, this was repeated later, 21 Sept. 1972 - see below)

The Saint was martyred in Pozzuoli in 303 AD when a woman scooped up and kept his blood. Earlier scientific examinations in 1902 and 1904 confirmed that the rust-coloured powder in the reliquaries is human blood. A team of scientists from Naples University hope to find the explanation or else "as many hope, confirm that it is a miracle". The RC Church does not officially declare that the liquefaction is miraculous but permits veneration of the blood.

22 Aug. 1972. Pious opinion in Naples scandalized by recent questioning of the alleged miracle ... Solace provided by a widow, aged 70, who saw blood dropping from a picture of Christ wearing the crown of thorns. She shouted 'miracle' and her house was invaded by a crowd of people who wept and beat their chests. Medieval religious frenzy in Naples has increased since the Archbishop began his efforts to reduce superstition and excessive public emotion.

21 Sept. 1972. The blood liquefied on Sept. 19 after only 40 minutes prayer. The Naples diocese decided to have the phenomenon studied by scientists. This proved the last straw to the Saint's devotees already seething with indignation since a new Italian encyclopaedia described the cult as "the remains of a form of Christianized paganism" - an insult which followed soon after San Gennaro "was declassified from a universal to a local saint in the revision of the RC calendar". The "Relations of San Gennaro" (who claim descent from the woman who scooped up his blood 1670 years ago) demonstrated their anger by boycotting the ceremony. As a rule they sit in front rows, become wildly hysterical, and scream insults such as "come on you old stinker" to encourage the saint to hurry up with his miracle and not keep the people waiting.

21 Sept. 1974. Packed Cathedral. Crowd started to pray at 9am and 48 mins. later the blood liquefied. "Thousands burst into applause and joyful tears". Sometimes prayers have to continue for many hours before the Saint obliges.

5 May 1976. Cathedral packed on 4th May. Blood failed to liquefy. Why? Cardinal Ursi, the Archbishop, said that perhaps there is "some blockage within us which we cannot dissolve, some blockage of selfishness, violence, sensuality, or envy" or perhaps there had been some support for abortion in the City. The Naples newspaper said only, "The disappointment is great. In the present difficult moment for the life of the city, an immediate liquefaction would have been of great comfort."

The promised scientific study has not, as far as we know, materialised. Perhaps the mysterious material in the phials is thixotropic. As the hysteria rises is it possible that the Archbishop, perhaps unconsciously, gives it a good shake? According to another suggestion he adds some ether which is suggested (a) by the fact that the blood is seen to boil (E.C. Brewer, *Dictionary of Miracles*, 1897, p.184) and (b) that the miracle did not occur till about 1450 AD (*EB* 11th ed. St.J.) before which time ether would not have been available. But seriously, what sort of Christianity is it that can sink to such silliness?

The usual RC argument is that if such marvels help the faithful they are not to be condemned. But this seems a very selfish rationalisation. Among those who are not so faithful, religious humbug of this kind is more than enough to create bitterly anti-religious attitudes. Christians need to think first of the effect of their way of life on others and only secondly of keeping their own faith secure. He that loveth his life shall lose it ...

SOCIAL DARWINISM TODAY

Edward Wilson's recently published book *Sociobiology* (Harvard U P) in which he attempts to explore the genetic basis of human behaviour is being fiercely criticised as politically dangerous. Many see in it a revival of Social Darwinism because it has all the appearance of scientific proof that "much of man's behaviour towards his fellows may be as much a product of evolution as the structure of the hand or the size of the brain" (New York Times).

Types of human behaviour, claimed by Wilson to be genetically coded, includes aggression, altruism, ethical behaviour, genocide, love, male dominance, military discipline, sexual division of labour, spite and xenophobia. The argument rests on supposed similarities between human and animal behaviour.

In a recent article "The New Synthesis is an old Story", (*New Scientist*, 13 May 1976 p.346) the writers point out that "modern biology has not discovered any part of DNA that codes for any human behaviour". But Wilson, agreeing that the existence of behaviour genes is a possibility only, later speaks of them as fact. "The effect of this confusion is to leave the reader with the idea that there is a firm basis for the existence of genetically coded traits while at the same time permitting Wilson and his defenders to argue that in fact they are only speculating that such genes might exist." This new version of Social Darwinism is no less dangerous than the old, in that it tends to justify human inequality and sin.

Sociobiologists study the "hereditary basis of social behaviour" and argue that because human beings are the result of natural selection which acts on genes, human societies are to be understood as products of interactions of genes with environment. In a letter to the *New Scientist* (20 May, p.433) Steven Rose of the OU points out that "as a scientific statement it [the foregoing argument] is vacuous because it is both tautological and without explanatory power. To see why, consider the statements: if humans had three legs each, or propagated parthenogenetically, their societies would be materially different; having two legs and reproducing sexually are genetically determined; therefore human societies are genetically determined. Q.E.D."

More than ever Christians need to emphasise that people are responsible to God for what they do, what ever the extenuating circumstances. It is unprofitable to put the main blame on astrological influence, bumps on the head (phrenology), environmental influences, lack of education, hormones, imaginary genes or other real or supposed causes.

PROOF OF GOD?

Mathematicians, or at least the less humble of the fraternity, have traditionally felt that their subject is intellectually superior to other fields of learning in that it, and it alone, offers possibilities of absolute proof with no room for doubt whatever. "The glory of mathematics", we are told, "is that existing methods of proof are essentially error-free". What a contrast to theology in which even learned theologians no longer think they can prove God's existence with certainty!

Now, at long last, it seems that mathematics is coming down from its high pedestal, (*Science*, 1976, 192, 989). Propositions which can be proved neatly and concisely are, it seems, now nearing exhaustion, and those which interest researchers at the boundaries of knowledge require proofs which contain so many stages that they

cannot be written down by a man within his allotted three score years and ten, nor even by a powerful computer! Sometimes the number of steps required is an iterated exponential!

2
2
2
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2

Some of the long proofs now being published, especially in group theorems, we are told, lie near "the limits of the amount of information the human mind can handle". Even so, how can the proofs be checked? One researcher in topology, wrote a 400 page thesis proving that a certain proposition is true; another wrote 400 pages and reached the opposite conclusion. So they exchanged theses but neither could find the flaw in the other's! Then a third researcher worked on another approach and supported one of the first two. Now its 2 to 1 but the matter is still in doubt!

Michael Rabin of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, cuts the gordian knot by using computers which are programmed to produce highly probable, but not certain, results. In this way he is able to very-nearly-prove that $2^{400}-593$ is a prime number. The older generation look at him askance! He has let the side down!

It seems as if proof in the legal, scientific, every-day and even theological sense is becoming less sharply distinguishable from proof in the mathematical sense. If the word 'prove' is to remain in use, the theologians who deny that proof of God is possible may have to think again.

'EXPLAINING' MIRACLES

The 'all Fool's Day' (1 Ap. 1976) issue of the *New Scientist* contained an article by George Sassoon and Rodney Dale entitled "Deus est Machina?" The authors claim that the manna which the children of Israel ate in the wilderness was manufactured in a machine which had been provided by an astronaut from another planet. Every week the machine was cleared out, so no manna was available on Saturdays, but double output was arranged for Fridays.

In support of this thesis the authors quote a passage from the Zohar, a 13th century work contained in the Kabbala. Though the passage was written over 2000 years later than the Exodus, it is assumed to give the more authentic account of what happened. Of course it has to be interpreted in a highly imaginative way. Skull = vessel; hairs = wires; cords = pipes; wisdom = fluid used in the manufacture of the manna; Ancient Holy One = a hidden retort or similar vessel; apples = bellows which blow air through a suspension of chlorella-type algae. The machine, an astronaut's dream, is illustrated by a diagram. It makes 1.5 cubic metres of manna a day, enough to feed the 600 families of Israel. Of course its makers must have been much more highly advanced in fermentation technology than modern man.

On TV the authors assured us that all this is 'no joke': they did not at all like the first of April as publication date. "Deadly serious" was one expression used. However, on 6 May the *New Scientist* (p.319) published a letter from John C. Hay of Edinburgh who claims that any Scotsman from the Highlands will recognise the Zohar description as referring to a whiskey distillery. The terms used very plausibly refer to a still - "the description seems ingenious and somewhat garbled but all the elements are there".

Another recent attempt to explain (or rather explain away) biblical miracles appeared last year in *Applied Optics* (1975, 14, A92). This time it concerns the crossing of the Reed (not Red) Sea by the Israelites and also the miracle of Jesus walking on the water. The records are explained by the formation of mirages (a suggestion first made in connection with walking on water in 1947 by W.S. Humphreys). When the air near the surface of earth or water is warmer than the air above, rays of light are bent. As the day's heating progresses the resulting caustic moves closer to the observer's eye. The Israelites looking towards Pharoah's host saw that "the waters returned and covered ... all the host of Pharoah ... there remained not so much as one of them ... The Egyptians of course saw things the other way round; for them the Israelites would have drowned". Similarly walking on water is a convincing illusion - a photograph of walkers on sand which had been uncovered at low tide is shown. In this the sand and feet, lying below the caustic, have vanished and the walkers seem to be walking on water near to an intervening boat.

Not unexpectedly letters followed arguing that such explanations play fast and loose with the text of the Bible (*Applied Optics*, 1976, 15 (2), 323). The Israelites saw dead Egyptians on the beach; Exodus mentions a strong east wind but air must be still for temperature inversion; Jesus walked on the water when the sea was rough and the boat further out in the open water than seems compatible with a mirage of a person still on the shore; since Jesus and Peter were so close together that Jesus was able to save Peter from drowning, it is hard to see how Jesus appeared to walk on water and Peter to sink.

GENETIC ENGINEERING

A recent issue of *Science* (1976, 192, 938) contains an impassioned letter by Erwin Chargaff, doyen of American biochemists, on the subject of genetic engineering. He complains that the numerous committees making decisions on the subject have consisted only of men who are determined to pursue these researches at all costs, irrespective of the risks to which they subject mankind. He comments on what he describes as their bizarre attempts to make the subject palatable. They picture their opponents as saying petulantly, Don't you want cheap insulin? Or cereals which will fix nitrogen? Or perhaps men with green skins whose genes ingrafted in their chromosomes will enable them to feed themselves by photo-synthesis from carbon dioxide and sunlight? (Ten minutes sunbathing for breakfast, half an hour for lunch and an hour for dinner plus a glass or two of water.)

The cardinal folly of these men, says, Chargaff is their choice of *Escherichia coli* as host for their experiments, chiefly because it happens to be an organism about which more is known and more has been published than about any other living organism. *E. coli*, of which there are many varieties, inhabits the gut and has lived in happy symbiotic union with man for as far back as we can tell. It causes few infections. If new genes are put into this organism they will reproduce to the end of time and one day, sooner or later, they may enter the human body, perhaps producing new diseases which are incurable, perhaps cancers, perhaps further exchanging genetic material in the gut but in any case eradication will be virtually impossible. Who knows? It is an ethical question that is at stake. Have we "the right to put an additional fearful load on generations that are not yet born". Neither the scientists involved nor the National Institute of Health are equipped to deal with such questions. An irreversible attack on the biosphere is now being planned. Those responsible seem oblivious of "the awesome irreversibility of what is being contemplated": what they create, if they create it, will survive you and your children and your children's children. An irreversible attack on the biosphere is something so unheard of, so unthinkable to previous generations; that I only wish mine had not been guilty of it. Hitherto nature has kept apart the genomes of eu- and prokaryotic cells but to mix them now is an enterprise fraught with danger" If such experiments are to be done at all they must be strictly controlled by law and confined to organisms which do not readily find a home in man.

Chargaff concludes, "The world is given to us on loan. We come and we go: and after a time we leave earth and air and water to others who come after us. My generation, or perhaps the one preceding mine, has been the first to engage, under the leadership of the exact

sciences, in a destructive colonial warfare against nature. The future will curse us for it".

EVOLUTIONARY ETHICS

The late Professor C.H. Waddington, an eminent authority on genetics and embryology, also made important contributions to the philosophy of biology. In a recent commemorative lecture (*New Scientist*, 15.4.76) Professor John Maynard Smith reviewed Waddington's arguments on evolution and ethics as presented in his book, *The Ethical Animal* (1960). (Waddington's earlier writings on the subject have been discussed in this JOURNAL, 1958, 90(3), 200-204).

Our livelihood depends to a large extent upon technology, based upon a scientific world-view; but our values depend, at least in the West, on Christianity: and many of our present problems, believes JMS, are the result of "irreconcilable differences between these two methods of thought". This situation has produced two contrasting responses: Jacques Monod (*Chance and Necessity*, 1971), on the one hand, accepts the dualism, maintaining that science has nothing to say about values (although it itself derives from a value judgment, the 'ethics of knowledge' based upon a 'principle of objectivity'); while Waddington, on the other hand, attempts to build a unified and coherent world-view embracing both science and ethics. The basis of this world-view, according to Waddington, must be the theory of evolution.

A number of other writers (including eminent biologists such as J.S. Huxley and G.G. Simpson) have argued the case for basing an ethical system on this theory, but all can be convicted of committing the logical error known as the 'naturalistic fallacy', *i.e.*, the mistake of inferring what should be from what is. Waddington was aware of this danger, but thought that in *The Ethical Animal* he had managed to avoid it.

His argument was that he was not inferring an ethical principle from evolution but rather deriving a criterion for judging between ethical principles; and such a criterion he said, could be derived objectively from the 'facts' of evolution. The key to his argument is the concept of 'function': just as we can identify the function of a heart by seeing what part it plays in the orderly workings of a body, so too we can identify the function of man's ethical faculty by seeing what part it plays in evolution. It appears, in fact, to be important in cultural evolution. Now if one can identify the function of a heart (*i.e.*, to pump blood round a body for transport purposes) one is then in a position to compare hearts; one can say that one heart is better (*i.e.*, more efficient in its function) than

another. In the same way it is possible to say that one ethical principle or system is better than another, if it promotes cultural evolution. So one merely has to determine the main trend of evolution (identified as a general evolutionary direction towards more numerous and complex interactions between organism and environment) and select ethical principles which support it.

Now although JMS considers Waddington to have made important contributions to thought about the human ethical faculty, he nevertheless criticises certain parts of this argument. Firstly he points out the difficulty in using the concept of function, which has come to acquire a special meaning in evolutionary thought since Waddington wrote *The Ethical Animal*. This does not seem to be a very serious criticism as, no doubt, Waddington's argument could easily be sharpened up to accommodate it. Nevertheless, JMS's comments are a timely warning of the danger of using 'function' without careful definition. Secondly, and more seriously, Waddington was confusing two different things: man's ethical faculty (*i.e.*, his capacity for ethical judgment) and his actual ethical judgments or choices. Thus JMS says: "What has evolved ... is the capacity to hold ethical beliefs, not the beliefs themselves. It is this capacity therefore which has a 'function' which can be interpreted in evolutionary terms. But in making an ethical choice I am not comparing the capacities of two individuals to form ethical beliefs; I am trying to decide whether my actions should be guided by this belief or that". This criticism is, I think, valid, and would by itself undermine Waddington's main argument.

But JMS's paper prompts further questions, which he himself does not tackle. Firstly, if one were to accept Waddington's argument, there would be the practical problem of deciding what is the large-scale direction of evolution which our ethical principles should promote. Presumably all pre-human evolution would be irrelevant, since, as Waddington, Huxley, and others, have repeatedly maintained, human evolution is mainly cultural or psychosocial and quite different in mechanism and other characteristics from the genetic evolution which preceded it. If, on the other hand, one limits one's attention to cultural history, how does one distinguish at the appropriate time between a main trend and a local aberration? An observer in AD 30 faced with this problem would probably have identified a movement towards world military domination, coupled with licentious polytheism, as the main cultural trend, and Christianity as a local aberration. In retrospect we can see that he would have been wrong. Similarly, who can say in 1976 what is to be the future major direction of cultural change which our present ethics must promote? Any identification is bound to be subjective. This is well exemplified by JMS who argues that naturalistic ethics would provide a powerful argument for male chauvinism, of which he does not approve; and therefore concludes that 'naturalistic ethics are bunk' as far as this argument is concerned.

But despite Waddington's efforts to clarify thinking on the biology of human ethics, he has not, in fact, avoided the naturalistic fallacy. In choosing as his criterion for selection of ethical principles that which promotes a major evolutionary trend he was still assuming that what is is what should be. But why choose evolution instead of some other natural process? For example, it is a very general physiological process for human beings to produce urine; so why not an ethic to encourage beer drinking? It is a very general geological process for mountains to be thrown up and then to erode away; so why not encourage the building of slag heaps of the Aberfan type? The possible range of ethical principles is endless, to suit all tastes!

Surely Monod is right in maintaining that science can tell us nothing about values. But do we then have to embrace his dualism, and keep science and ethics in water-tight compartments, or can we, like Waddington, aim at a world-view that includes both? If this is a possibility, it is obvious that our thinking cannot start from science, firstly for the reason just stated that science cannot lead us into ethics, and, secondly, for the reason that science itself depends upon a value judgment, as Monod points out. So any such world-view must be based upon values. The Bible provides such a basis: it not only provides a system of values but also, as an implication of its doctrine of creation, supplies an *a priori* justification for the pursuit of science. The strange thing is that, despite all that has been written in recent years on science and Christianity (often by highly competent scientists), such authors as Monod, Waddington, and JMS seem quite ignorant of the fact that Christianity is still a tenable belief and that it is not incompatible with science.

GEB

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REVIEWS

Hans Schwarz, *The Search for God*, SPCK, 1975, 288pp.,
PB £2.95, boards, £5.95.

This book, written by the Professor of systematic theology of Capital Seminary, Columbia, Ohio is a scholarly account of man's attempts to find God. It is divided into three parts: (1) Is there a God?; (2) The search for ultimates; (3) the revelation of God in Judaeo-Christian tradition.

The scope of the book is considerable. There are informative sections and comments on the history and rise of atheism, 18-19th century German philosophy, existentialism, non-Christian religions (especially Buddhism and Islam), ways of thinking about God, freedom, holiness, syncretism, the failure of attempts by man to find a basis for ethics within himself, and much else beside. The style is concise and the publisher's blurb claiming that the volume is "an ideal text for the traditional first course in Christian theology" seems fair enough. The heavy documentation (over 80 pages) will be appreciated by scholars.

Needless to say the text neither makes, nor is intended to make, for light reading. At times it consists of paragraph after paragraph telling us, but always with considerable skill, what the VIPs X, Y, Z have to say about a question at issue.

One smallpoint (p 27) is worth mentioning. The author quotes Laplace's famous reply to Napoleon, "Sir, I do not need this hypothesis" when asked where he put God in his astronomical system. Schwarz comments that for Laplace, "God was no longer necessary within a scientific world-view. The world made sense without any reference to God. Not even the hypothesis of the Creator seemed necessary any longer". Though it may be *strictly* true that Laplace did not require God as a *scientific* hypothesis, this comment hardly seems fair to the great scientist whose work was motivated by the desire to discover if the laws of nature are contingent (acted on and modified by God) or necessary (nature behaving naturally without interference by God, though God could have made things differently). Science, Laplace decided, pointed to the latter view. God for him, was Creator and Supreme Calculator of the future — an activity in which man, in a limited way, could participate with his Maker (R. Hahn, *Laplace as a Newtonian Scientist*, Los Angeles, 1967).

Schwarz is here arguing that science, or at least 19th century science, seemed to support atheism. Following Karl Heim he next cites J. Robert Mayer's statement of the first law of thermodynamics as evidence of the world's eternity. "Thus the starting point of a first creation and the God hypothesis of the first creator, are obviously obsolete." Curious logic! The second law of thermodynamics also belonged to the 19th century and led to the opposite conclusion. Furthermore, the law of conservation of mass long antedated that of energy, so it is far from clear why Mayer is introduced especially as he was so little known in his day.

REDC

John S. Dunne, *A Search for God in Time and Memory*,
Sheldon Press, 1975, £2.25.

If one just glances through this book, and reads the chapter headings and index, one will probably class it as 'existentialist'. I suppose no two writers usually classed thus would define their approach in exactly the same way, but there is a negative point of agreement — the absence of natural theology and of any detailed study of Christian origins — an apparent lack of interest in the metaphysical case for Theism and in precisely what happened immediately after the crucifixion of Jesus. On page viii of the preface Professor Dunne seems to favour an autobiographical method. "Composing a personal creed would set you searching for something in memory. The object of the search would be your God. The common creeds and declarations and manifestos describe the shared faith of the multitudes, but if you wish to know ... what God really is to you, your own memory and your anticipations would have to be consulted rather than public documents." He agrees that you will naturally ask yourself how you stood personally on matters that figure in the common creeds, but he suggests that your main task is to analyse your inner states — your certainties and uncertainties, happiness or unhappiness, inner assurance or quiet desperation.

Such an approach is, of course, quite different from a metaphysical or a historical one. Its technique, moreover, is quite different from that of the mystic's; there is no urge to transcend human psychology. "You would", he tells us, "ask yourself ultimately about your mental image of God, what God was once to you, what he is to you now, what you expect of him." A vast number of Christians, I imagine, would refuse to choose this method if it meant that we were *excluding* natural and philosophical theology, history and mystical experience. My memories of childhood are of a metaphysical approach — crude and childish of course — followed by a conviction that however strong the metaphysical case for Theism, certainly can be attained only if we are convinced that God has revealed Himself in particular historical events. I see no reason for changing my mind on this point. When the author tells me (page viii of the Preface) that

the object of my memory search would be 'your God', I must insist that if God is only *my* God, and not the objective Source of all that is, I am not concerned to learn a psychological technique for acquiring 'authentic' life on this earth. For if there is no *reason* for belief in God, the existentialist's 'authentic experience' may well be self-deception.

In saying that his method is autobiographical, Professor Dunne is not denying that by a process of 'passing over' one can relate one's own story to those of other people, and thus attain something approaching the communicability of public knowledge. We can construct from the accounts in the four gospels the unfinished life of Jesus as it might have appeared to Jesus and His disciples before His death. Then we can study the accounts of Christian experience in Paul's writings, in Augustine's *Confessions*, and in writings from Luther to Kierkegaard, and then study the accounts of secular experience from Rousseau to Sartre. He remarks on page x of the Preface that in modern times the human life-story treats human life as a pause in God's time; once there was a God, now there is no God, someday God will be. He calls this the conception of "the dark God" — the God hidden in the darkness of the past and future — and proposes to compare and contrast this with the God of Jesus, the God whom Jesus called 'Abba'. What would it be for a contemporary man to relate to the dark God as Jesus related to Abba?

This way of talking I find confusing. It does not clearly enough distinguish between God and human conceptions of God. If some people think of God as good and others as beyond good and evil, it does not follow that we can rationally talk of two Gods, the good one and the God beyond good and evil. The illicit 'reification' of nouns and substantive expressions — treating them as standing for existents, is very common in existentialist writings. One common example is the imperfect participle of the verb 'to be'. It is only muddling to spell the word with a capital 'B' and assume that 'Being' stands as 'no thing'; and treat this as an entity. Another example is the word 'time', and the question "What is time?" as if it were a sort of *thing*.

This book contains, in addition to the Preface, 224 pages of close reasoning, and it is impossible to offer a short summary. It is by no means easy reading, but a patient study will be rewarding since it relates the studies of the 'passing-over' process throughout human history to the study of the gospel accounts of Jesus.

In the last chapter he considers the 'Socratic wisdom' — awareness of one's ignorance. He suggests three types of experience. First, a failure to realise that man has an essential ignorance. This is like living in a windowless room lit by artificial light, in ignorance of the outside world of sunshine. Second, a life in outer space remote from any suns — a night that does not pass. This is a

despairing realisation of man's essential ignorance. Third, the Socratic wisdom, which requires a knowledge of one's *personal* ignorance; it is a turning-point in one's life when one transcends this by a *personal* realisation. This is like an earthly experience of daylight which is the richer because it follows night.

The author holds (page 214) that in each epoch there is a prevailing *mythos*, a fundamental story which appears in many particular stories. In the earliest part of the A.D. period, including Paul and John, the story is one of deeds. In the second, Augustine for example, the stories are of experiences. In the modern period the story has become a drama of the self, a story of appropriation. Kierkegaard, for example, contended that the truth of Christianity was not a matter of public knowledge but of personal appropriation and inwardness. Whatever we may think of this where the first two periods are concerned, the author certainly has a point where Kierkegaard and those influenced by him are concerned. He regards these pioneer thinkers as 'seeing through' the *mythos*. Paul saw through 'works'. Augustine saw through the notion of human experience, and saw experience as a changing image of eternity. The modern story of appropriation is a process in which a sickness is induced to destroy itself, as in fever therapy, and thus brings health. Doubt carried to its limit ends in certainty; despair ends in confidence. We come to feel we cannot change the world, but only our relationship to the world.

At the end of the book the author is very critical of the adage, "Act as if everything depends on you, and pray as if everything depends on God". On the contrary, a trust relation with God involves relinquishing control of one's life in that central area where one cares and can exercise control. *Before* trusting this looks like 'taking a chance' on God. From inside, and in the act of trusting, it means experiencing the trustworthiness of God.

Finally he deals with death. Here, too, we have to go over from the quest for certainty to the quest of understanding. We then discover that certainty will come unsought, that the happy ending will come if we abandon the attempt to bring it about. There are those of us who have made a quite different approach - that from metaphysics - who have had much the same experience. My own faith is largely a scepticism of scepticism.

F. H. CLEOBURY

The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell, 3 vols. in one.,
750 pp., Allen and Unwin, 1975, PB £2.00.

Bertrand Russell's autobiography, now available in cheap but pleasantly readable form, is a deeply interesting and moving document. For 20 years his struggle to find out if anything can be known resulted (with A.N. Whitehead) in the publication (1910-13) of the *Principles of Mathematics*. Exhausted with the fruitless effort "after some

20 years of very arduous toil I came to the conclusion that there was nothing more that I could do in the way of making mathematical knowledge indubitable". Then came WW1 and he began to concentrate his attentions on "human misery and folly": in his later years he achieved a prodigious amount of good by exposing injustice throughout the world. Repeatedly his protests were heard and many were released from unjust imprisonment. He was also vitally concerned to open mens' eyes to the inconceivable folly of nations in preparing for all-out atomic war: sooner or later, as he repeatedly said, someone will pull the trigger, perhaps in error, and the world will be plunged into a holocaust which will destroy civilisation. Twice he was imprisoned for his beliefs (once in WW1 as a conscientious objector and once as the writer of a pamphlet urging civil disobedience in connection with atomic weapons) but in the end he achieved respectability, receiving the Nobel prize for literature, an OM conferred by George VI and other honours.

From early years BR rebelled against the Christian faith. For a time he continued to believe in God but was ever on the look out for some reason why he should not do so and finally, on the pretext of the 'Who made God?' argument, he rejected theology in every form. At Cambridge his brilliant wit made him a leader of men: it was as a result of his influence that many intellectuals rejected the Christian faith towards the close of last century. The late Professor C.D. Broad, the Cambridge philosopher, was a case in point. In later years Russell sought to prevent his children from hearing the Christian message. It is a joy to read that his own daughter Kathline Jane, became a keen Christian who with her husband trained as missionaries and went to Uganda. BR loved them both dearly.

In his youth BR was carefully shielded from theology. The result was an enthusiastic acceptance of the evolutionary philosophy then in vogue: "Victorian optimism was simply taken for granted. It was supposed that freedom and prosperity would spread gradually throughout the world by an orderly process, and it was hoped that cruelty, tyranny and injustice the world over would gradually diminish ... Hardly any one thought of the 19th century as a brief interlude between past and future barbarism." Many of us older Christians today are deeply grateful for an early Christian upbringing: it saved us from facile Victorian optimism and from the disillusion which Russell and so many others experienced. Nor did he ever learn the lesson. "I set out with a belief that love, free and courage could conquer the world without fighting. I came to support a bitter and terrible war." To the very end he believed that reason would conquer in the end and mankind would learn to be loyal to a world-wide central government - the very thing that Scripture predicts, a state all-powerful but all-wicked too.

In clarity of mind, good heredity, natural sensitivity, increased good health and resistance to disease (despite world-wide travelling

few men have been as fortunate as BR. This makes his failures all the more remarkable. Despite his passionate sensitivity to suffering, he caused great suffering among women. After years of devotion to Alys his first wife, "I went out bicycling one afternoon" he says, "and suddenly, as I was riding along a country road, I realised that I no longer loved Alys." When the Christian is confronted by such ghastly insights he knows what to do: in passionate prayer he can ask, indeed demand, of God the rekindling of the flame — nor will he ask in vain. But Russell blurts out the truth and divorces his wife who, with utter faithfulness, never ceased to love him and rejoice in his successes: we find her writing to him most lovingly when both are very old. The sordid story of idealic love followed by divorce is repeated again and again — BR married four times and there were other love affairs too.

REDC

Geoffrey Parrinder, *Mysticism in the World's Religions*, 210 pp, Sheldon Press, 1976, £4.95.

The present-day interest in mystical experience, psychic, religious or drug-induced, makes this a particularly relevant and important book for the Christian. Few people, if any, are better qualified than Professor Parrinder with his wide knowledge and understanding of world religions in all their complexity, to deal with the subject. He has drawn on his twenty years residence in West Africa and forty years study of comparative religion, to provide us with a survey covering historic Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist and Christian mysticism, not to mention the mystic elements in Taoism, Shinto and Animism for good measure.

Mysticism in these world religions should not be written off as the fad of the few but should be taken seriously today because some such experiences seem to be what so many people are now looking for. The author takes the Christian Church, of which he is a distinguished minister, to task for being excessively preoccupied with re-organisation and reform on the one hand, and with debunking the supernatural element on the other, at a time when our present generation is specially open to any religion that can offer it not dogmatic statements however true, but vital experiences however strange.

Professor Parrinder deals first with monistic mysticism by which is meant the belief that only one universal being exists but is in no way personal and cannot be thought of in terms of *He*, much less as *Thou*. Monistic mystics seek to become absorbed into the divine essence and we find them talking in such terms as 'Thou art That' and 'I am Brahman'. Classic Hinduism is monistic in this sense, and Buddhism to a certain extent. Forms of Yoga are often used by devotees who seek this kind of union with the Ultimate.

While such *monistic* mystics seek identity with the divine, *Theistic* mystics look for union with a more personal God in terms of a relationship between the divine and the human that stops short at any final merging or absorption of the one into the other. Muslim Sufis and Hindu followers of the Bhagavad Gita are of this type, and it is here that Christian mysticism has its special and unique contribution to make. The writer of this handbook deals with this in a restrained fashion for clearly he desires to retain an objective balance between the various religions with which he is dealing. He reminds us of the leading Christian mystics both Catholic and Protestant down the ages, though the impression is given that such experiences as theirs are not for all men, and such devotion as theirs can be expected only of the spiritual élite.

Professor Parrinder might perhaps have laid greater emphasis on the Christian idea of God as a Person, as being unique and quite different from the Hindu or Muslim understanding of Him. He mentions the Johannine teaching of the believer abiding in Christ and Christ in him, and the Pauline emphasis on the indwelling spirit, but he does not develop the contrast between these and non-Christian experiences. He also makes no mention of the part that active faith plays in the relationship between the Christian and his God, for mystic, ecstatic or charismatic experiences are not for every Christian, but a knowledge that we are mystically united with Christ in God is the birthright of every true Christian believer.

However, these omissions do not detract from the value of this book. It will be helpful to anyone who wants to know about the complex history of mysticism in different lands and will help him to understand the spiritual hunger of the present generation which yearns for something which can make God real in experience without first demanding assent to a developed creed, or commitment to a definitive religious body.

H. EVAN HOPKINS

Ralph P. Martin, *New Testament Foundations. A Guide for Christian Students. Vol 1: The Four Gospels.* Eerdmans and Paternoster Press, 1975, 325pp., £4.80.

Those accustomed to traditional New Testament introductions will find Dr. Martin's book (to be followed next year by a second volume covering the rest of the New Testament) either a refreshing change or a bewildering irrelevance, depending on their willingness or otherwise to adapt to new approaches. The book arises out of years of classroom teaching, but also out of an enviably wide and up-to-date acquaintance with scholarly literature from many parts of the theological world. Dr. Martin's classes must be very different from those most of us knew in the past.

The difference arises not from the omission or repudiation of the normal critical commonplaces. Indeed Dr. Martin's views on such bread-and-butter issues as the Synoptic Problem or the authorship of Matthew are quite traditional. Q is treated with customary respect, and Proto-Luke given a good hearing. Such matters are dealt with competently but briefly (the Synoptic Problem rates only 20 pages out of over 300). The difference lies precisely in the fact that such issues are not allowed to monopolise the attention, but are subordinated to a fascinating study of the Gospels themselves from a literary, historical and above all theological point of view. For too long we have bored and deterred potential students of the Gospels by turning their study into a kind of mathematical puzzle, and forgetting to focus their attention on why the Gospels were written.

An outline of the ground covered will explain what I mean. A study of what a 'Gospel' is (in the light of Mark 1:1) is followed by a sketch of recent Gospel studies (too brief to initiate a novice?), inevitably focusing on German historical scepticism. Then comes a long section (64 pp.) on 'Backgrounds to the Gospels', consisting of a résumé of Jewish history from Alexander to Bar-Cochba, an introduction to the literature and beliefs of mainstream Judaism, and a useful guide to the various Jewish parties in Jesus' day (not forgetting the 'silent majority', and paying special attention to Jesus' relationship to the Zealot movement), and concluding with a too brief introduction to apocryphal and apocalyptic literature.

The section on 'How the Gospels came to be written' (55 pp.) properly studies tradition-, form- and redaction-criticism before coming to the Synoptic Problem. Dr. Martin succeeds in grounding the traditional question in the life and mission of the church, and thus brings life into the familiar technical terms of Gospel critics. His commitment to form- and redaction-criticism is plain, and well justified, though it would have been good to see some statement of the dangers inherent in redaction-criticism when allied with historical scepticism, and the brief statement of the limitations for form-criticism (pp. 134-136) could also have been expanded with profit. In fact this chapter should have been considerably longer, as this is an area where many students find themselves questioning the validity of now standard critical procedures, and need to be helped to view them both more sympathetically and more critically, rather than on the basis of inherited prejudice.

The inclusion of a 13-page introduction to textual criticism seems an unnecessary luxury in this volume. It is too short and concentrated to form an adequate or readable guide to such a complex subject, which needs a book to itself. Four lines is scarcely sufficient space to discuss the Latin versions!

Sections are then devoted to the four Gospels individually (111 pages in all), Mark is given the fullest treatment, and Dr. Martin's own published view of its purpose duly introduced. But on each Gospel he surveys all the most important contributions up to 1973, and sensibly designs each treatment to do justice to the main issues in current debate, rather than be bound by a rigid uniformity of approach. The emphasis falls, as current study demands, on the theology and purpose of the Gospels. The Gospel of John gets the least adequate treatment; indeed the whole book is rather an introduction to the Synoptic Gospels with passing references to John.

A final section presenting a brief exegesis of three selected passages, does not quite come off. It would have formed a useful appendix to a book on exegesis, but it has little direct relation to the contents of this book, and could well have been spared. (Another dispensable section is a 24-page mini-commentary or précis - actually about the same length as the Gospel itself! - on Mark, which is neither a systematic study of Mark's purpose and method, nor an adequate commentary.)

For the professional scholar, advanced student or leisured layman, who wants to catch up with recent trends in Gospel study, Dr. Martin's book will be most serviceable. For the beginner, I fear it may prove too demanding, requiring him to run before he can walk. But if he finds its detail overwhelming, he can hardly fail to be enthused by the fresh, thoughtful, life-related approach, and thus be provoked to further study. He may also be provoked by the author's willingness to contemplate a greater degree of freedom in the handling of the tradition by the evangelists than many conservative scholars would allow. Dr. Martin is never one to be bound by shibboleths, but neither is he irresponsible, and his commitment to a reverent approach to the Gospels is maintained throughout.

Taken altogether this is an enriching, if demanding, introduction to a fast changing area of study, and one which marks a decisive and much needed change of direction from the traditional syllabus.

R.T. FRANCE

Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *Grace and Truth*, SPCK, 1975, 134 pp. £2.50.

Spelling out the doctrine of the Incarnation has been a problem besetting theologians from patristic times until now. Stated in the terms employed by the Council of Chalcedon, Professor Hanson finds the doctrine no longer acceptable.

While it is true that Chalcedon laid down what has been regarded as the classical doctrine of the Incarnation, in Hanson's judgment it puts too much emphasis on the picture of Christ presented in the

Fourth Gospel — not that Hanson ignores John, but he regards the historicity of the Fourth Gospel to be too suspect for a definitive study of Jesus. It is the Gospel, he says, in which the humanity of Jesus is blurred and any acceptable Christology must start from the fundamental fact of the genuine humanity of Jesus Christ. The Greek Fathers possibly surrendered a clear adherence to this for the sake of the doctrine of the Two Natures inseparably united in one hypostasis.

In this book, therefore, Hanson affirms that it is necessary to set down a firm doctrine of the Word of God grounded in the Scriptures without paying too much attention to the niceties of patristic theology. The Johannine statement that "we beheld his glory full of grace and truth" goes back, according to the author, to the Old Testament theophany of Sinai, (Exod. 34) where, (following the RSV text) Yahweh reveals himself as "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" and Hanson sees the theme perpetuated throughout the rest of the OT. Thus, the lovingkindness of God is finally shown in Christ: "... grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Our Lord's divinity is revealed through his humanity, though "not directly his consubstantiality with the Father, but the self-giving nature of God" (p.76). With this, and other statements in the book the reader is not therefore very surprised to find that, in conclusion, Professor Hanson describes his exposition of the person of Christ in relation to the Father as "essentially Nestorian" (p.111). He has presented "an alternative account of the doctrine of the incarnation", though he doubts if it will outlast the present generation of Christians in the Western world. It may be asked, therefore, if Professor Hanson is in fact saying what the Greek Fathers were saying and *only* changing the language form.

The book is eminently readable, and the fact that it re-assesses the traditional Chalcedonian approach to the doctrine of the incarnation should be reason enough for many to want to read it and digest what the author has to say.

DAVID J. ELLIS

Don Cupitt, *The Leap of Reason*, Sheldon Press, 145pp
£4.50

This is the fourth in a series 'Studies in Philosophy and Religion' edited by P.R. Baelz. It consists of an essay on the nature of religious knowledge and language, and three previously published articles covering much the same ground as the essay. In its approach the book hovers rather uneasily in the area between philosophy and theology. It is suggestive rather than argumentative,

the main idea being that the plurality of religious, moral and political standpoints that is characteristic of the West at present points strongly in the direction of relativism. However, relativism can be avoided or transcended by the ability human beings have, by a leap of reason, to correct earlier ideas and to be genuinely innovative and creative. This ability marks us off as 'spirit'.

Religion is the outcome of the attempt by the human mind to relate itself practically to this idea of the transcendent which any account of human intelligence requires. And the believer appropriates the various elements of the idea of God — myth, doctrine, morals, ritual — as he learns to participate in the religious life. So the elements of the theology are symbolic and regulative rather than literal and cognitive.

The development of these ideas seems to me to involve several serious difficulties. Little attempt is made to prove or establish the claims about the nature of the relation between consciousness and religion, or to say what would establish them. Are they philosophical theses, or anthropological? It appears that Cupitt views religion and theology in a broadly Kantian framework, but little justification is given for this, or for favouring his version of post-Kantianism rather than the many others.

Again, take the central claim of the book, the argument about pluralism and the leap of reason. The argument seems to be: pluralism is *prima facie* relative, but the fact of the leap of reason is a proof of transcendence. But how? How does this conclusion follow? Is there no alternative explanation? And how do we know that we are capable, in the leap of reason, of understanding our own thought habits? If relativism is true, may we not be blinded to this very thing?

Cupitt rejects natural theology (p.108) but seems to misunderstand its programme, which is based not on assuming that 'God' has a definite universal meaning but on employing a definition of 'God' which, while not peculiarly Christian or Mohammedan, contains features that are necessary for any individual's being the God of Israel, or of Mohammed.

Theologically, Cupitt's position involves a kenotic view of Christ, and leads him to say curious things like 'The true religion is the religion which declares itself untrue, which asserts the relativity of its own symbolism and says that God is infinitely greater than our highest ideas of him' (p.96). The first part of this is pure nonsense. The second part seems to involve the invalid claim that because not everything that is true of something can be known, nothing that is true of that thing can be known.

PAUL HELM

L. Kalsbeek, *Contours of a Christian Philosophy*, Wedge Publishing Foundation, 229 Collège Street, Toronto, Canada, 1975, 300 pp., £4.

This book is a valuable and much-needed introduction to the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea developed by Herman Dooyeweerd. It is easier to read than J.M. Spier's *Introduction to a Christian Philosophy* and covers the background material in greater detail.

Dooyeweerd, as a young philosopher, sensed the inadequacy of existing philosophical systems as expressions of the Biblical view of man and the universe. He argued that philosophy, including philosophy developed by Christians, had always compromised itself by accepting non-Christian presuppositions as the starting-point of its analysis. Dooyeweerd himself summed up the Biblical view of man in the phrase "out of the *heart* come all the issues of life". In other words, the essential direction of a man's thought is determined by his religious orientation which is pre-theoretical in nature. Philosophy cannot prove Christian truth, it can only express Christian faith in terms appropriate to man's logical faculty. From this basic principle, Dooyeweerd went on to analyse all the many aspects of human life and explore the ways in which these aspects have been synthesized in reality. His philosophy reflects the views of the great Dutch statesman, Abraham Kuyper, particularly in its emphasis on "sphere-sovereignty", i.e. the idea that each sphere of reality operates according to its own inner laws and may not be subjected to outside control. For this reason his followers often claim that the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea, according to which the whole universe is governed by the law of God, is the direct continuation of the ideas and faith of Kuyper and of John Calvin himself.

Kalsbeek is writing mainly for the non-specialist who is interested in understanding the main lines of Dooyeweerd's thought before embarking on a detailed study of the philosopher's own writings. Particularly helpful is the way he sets Dooyeweerd in the wider context of Dutch Calvinism. As Bernard Zylstra points out in his introduction, this is a movement which as a whole has attracted little attention outside the Netherlands, largely because Holland is a small country and the Dutch language inaccessible to most foreigners. This new introduction goes some way to meet the criticism that Dooyeweerd's philosophy is imprisoned within a relatively obscure national culture, though probably not far enough to satisfy most English readers, for whom nineteenth-century Dutch politics is a closed book. A good encyclopedia article on the Netherlands, therefore, is still a prerequisite, even for reading Kalsbeek.

Contours deals mainly with Dooyeweerd's intellectual development and the philosophical system which grew out of it, but Kalsbeek is careful to remind his readers that not all Dutch Calvinists, by any means, are strict Dooyeweerdians. He claims that limitations of space have prevented him from studying the work of other philosophers connected with the movement, which is a pity, but at least the book serves to undermine the unfortunate impression which many Anglo-Saxons seem to have, that Dutch Calvinism is a static monolith built around Kuyper and Dooyeweerd. The book is divided into 38 short chapters which give a clear and informative description of the cosmomic idea and its application, both to abstract philosophical problems and to social and political matters. There is a welcome insistence on the practical application of philosophical principles to political affairs which should interest English-speaking readers, even though the solutions adopted in Holland may not always seem appropriate to our countries.

Kalsbeek's broadmindedness has enabled him to do justice both to Dooyeweerd and his critics, and this should make the book most welcome, especially in circles where this philosophy has been sharply criticized. Kalsbeek readily admits that although Dooyeweerd and his associates base themselves firmly on the Bible as the source of all knowledge, Biblical and theological studies have in fact been their greatest weakness, and one which is now being felt more and more in the Dutch churches.

This book has been translated from Dutch and bears the marks of its passage from one language to the other, although it must be said that the jargon which usually mars the English-language works of this school is refreshingly rare. Still, the publishers would be well-advised to hire a native speaker of English (preferably one with a good knowledge of style), to give books of this kind the final polish which we have come to expect in academic works.

Most valuable is the bibliography at the end of the volume compiled by Bernard Zylstra. It is limited to books and articles which have appeared in English, French and German and is well worth perusing. It should be remembered however that the most significant works, which include most of those cited in the text, are in Dutch, and a good knowledge of that language (with Afrikaans) remains an essential prerequisite for the serious student of this philosophy.

G. L. BRAY

Bob Goudzwaard, *Aid for the Overdeveloped West*, Wedge Publishing Foundation, Oshawa, Ontario, 1975, 91 pp, PB, \$3.50

A useful and stimulating collection of eight essays on various aspects of socio-economic life in the West (particularly written for the American scene but of general interest).

Dr Goudzwaard, Professor of Economics at the Free University of Amsterdam, writes from a background of active involvement in politics (four years in parliament), and has spent a lot of time seeking to relate the Christian Faith to the sphere of economics and politics. He writes from the point of view of one who believes that the Lordship of Christ expressed verbally through the Scriptures gives the true basis for an understanding of what we should be trying to achieve in all areas of life. He is also conversant enough with economics and politics to be on his guard against easy and unthought-out applications of Christianity.

He discusses the questions of over-development, degeneration in the Western economy, socio-economic life as a way of expressing our religious faith — and how we could make it express out Christian profession, freedom in business, stewardship of the creation, happiness in society, the work community, and income distribution.

The essays are all short and do little more than acquaint us with the problems, give a brief diagnosis, indicate a Christian understanding of the particular issue under discussion, and make a few suggestions of some practical ways we could begin to put our Christian understanding to work. I found the book dissatisfyingly brief for the ground it covers, but perhaps this is also its virtue. It succeeds in opening up a number of important issues and showing how a Christian life-view can point out a more helpful direction than is presently indicated by capitalism or socialism. The book provides a host of useful insights for anyone troubled by what attitude he ought to take as a Christian to the socio-economic order.

Of particular interest is his essay on the 'confessional' nature of socio-economic life. He shows how the Old Testament structure of society reflected its beliefs about God, man and the world. This is contrasted with the 'religious faith' expressed in the socio-economic life of our own society and finally the way is pointed to how we might express Christian Faith in our economic and social life.

One problem raised itself as I read this book: there is clearly a great difference between goals for socio-economic life which are in accord with Christian philosophy, and goals for a hypothetical society in which the general population is Christian; the two were not always clearly distinguished.

DAVID SECCOMBE

Robert E.D. Clark, *Does the Bible Teach Pacifism?* Foreword by Canon J. Stafford Wright, Fellowship of Reconciliation, 9 Coombe Rd., New Malden, Surrey KT3 4QA, 1976, 70 pp., £0.80

Why, on this crucial issue of pacifism, is there such a great difference of opinion, even among those who love and study their Bibles?

In this excellent little book Dr Clark examines the issue afresh and throws new light on the teaching of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, on the question of violence and war. Easily read, this book has the ring of authority, and will be stimulating and challenging to all who read it.

The author finds the underlying principle running right through the Bible that violence executed by man is condemned as contrary to the will of God. It is tolerated in the Old Testament "for the hardness of men's hearts" until they can learn the true and deeper will of God and are willing to obey, and is totally rejected in the New as incompatible with His will.

Dr Clark illuminates particularly those passages in the New Testament which have been used so often to justify war, "Render unto Caesar ..." and the driving of the money changers out of the temple, etc, and shows that not only are these out of keeping with the rest of Jesus' teaching, but under close scrutiny do not bear out the meaning commonly attached to them. Certainly they do not merit the prominence given to them on such a serious issue.

The various chapters deal (1) with the deadening of conscience; (2,3) with arguments used in the past in support of slavery and witch persecution which are shown to parallel arguments used by Christians for participating in war; (4) with the type of war that was allowed in the O.T. which is shown not to have been nationalistic; (5) with New Testament teaching in which it is shown *inter alia* that "love your enemy" cannot be explained away as applying only or even mainly to the personal enemy; (6,7) with the history of the attitude of Christians to war which is shown to be one of continually increasing compromise; (8) with the attitude that the Christian should adopt in situations of revolution and insurgency; and there is a final chapter (9) by way of conclusion. An Appendix deals with Romans 13:1-7. An index is included.

This book will be valued by all Christians. It will serve also as a documented reference book for those who wish to study the subject in greater detail.

F. T. FARMER

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M. J. NEWBY

Authority, Religion and
Education Today

In a religious context the word 'authority' is used in various ways. In this, the first of the papers read at the recent VI symposium ("Communicating the Christian Faith Today", 22 May, 1976 Mr Newby analyses its various meanings. He enquires in particular as to the place of authority in religious education, in which connection he discusses, in some detail, the views of Professor Ninian Smart.

Whilst the literature on the question of authority in religion is undoubtedly vast, I wonder if much has been said in the contemporary situation regarding the significance of 'authority' in religious education and communication. There is no doubt that the term has various uses in the context of religious faith and I intend to separate out some of these with a view to considering their importance in religion. I then intend to consider some of the ways in which the appeal to authority in religion has been defended, and conclude that such defences do not carry enough weight to warrant their use as a philosophical basis for christian education. This leads me to consider the phenomenological concept of religious education that has been largely influenced by the work of Professor Ninian Smart. His work reflects a radical change in christian attitudes to world faiths, for his main contention, that true dialogue between them is the only reasonable way ahead, would seem to be, at first sight, anti-christian and opposed also to commitment to any known form of religious expression. In other words, the 'dialogue' view¹, coupled with 'methodological agnosticism'² represents strong opposition to most popular concepts of the authority of Christ, or, indeed, the authority of the Koran or Buddha.

It is then, my task to consider the place of authority in religion, the rationale behind iconoclastic approaches to truth in religion which are epitomised by Smart's work, and the implications of my conclusions for teaching religion in school.

Throughout this paper I distinguish between developed religion and primary religion. Developed religions have a theological language and logic which is analysed in terms of various dimensions with which Smart has made us familiar.³ Primary religion refers to a basic awareness of the transcendent that lies behind developed religion and may not, in the individual, express itself through the latter. I think, for example, of Tillich's 'experience in depth', Otto's 'numinous' experience, or Maritain's 'intuition of being', all of which are instances of ultimate responses to life which may be distinguished from a variety of other ultimate responses, such as hedonism, egoism, humanism, or a sense of absurdity. Primary religious responses share a sense of 'significance-transcending-the-spatio-temporal'. The two most important of these appear to be the numinous and mystical experiences. Primary religion is, when considered in relation to developed religion, something of an abstraction in that it necessarily lies behind ritual and belief. It is the experience that is 'left' when interpretative elements have been abstracted. (Thus primary religion may be too analogous with Locke's 'unknowable somewhat' for comfort — an issue that does not directly concern us here.)

The concept of authority in religion

(1) 'Authority' is a term which can be used in the sense of 'the right to command or give an ultimate decision; the power or right to enforce obedience'.⁴ Such a usage includes both *de facto* and *de jure* authority within a social hierarchy. Closely connected with it is 'authorization' as delegated authority. Whilst this use is of sociological and historical importance in religion, it is not our primary concern.

(2) Secondly, there is 'influence'. Such authority may be within the sphere of personal relationships, academic activities or practical affairs. This usage likewise is of little interest to us since it is not specifically associated with religion. It is uncontroversial since it is rarely contrasted with 'having convincing reasons'. Such authority is earned usually by reference to these.

(3) Thirdly, and more relevant to our subject, is the idea of authority as a source of knowledge. Thus recent discussion has centred on the contrast between knowledge gained by reference to an authority and knowledge gained autonomously. Thus, those of us who are incapable of proving that " $1 + 1 = 2$ ", must accept the point on authority, that is, by the testimony of others.

(4) Fourthly, there are some activities that are defined by reference to authoritative sources, and therefore the appeal to authority is uncontroversial. Thus in legal studies most issues are settled in this way, and likewise in historical studies.

(5) However, a fifth use must be separated from this last one. Appeal to, for example, the Bible as an authority, is like it in that it is an instance of knowledge-claims that can, in principle, only be made by reference to a source held to be authoritative. For example, traditional Protestantism is defined by its appeal to the authority of the Bible, but in such a case the knowledge-claim is controversial. This is because religious truth-claims 'jump over the fence' in that they have implications for a number of activities in which the believer engages. They colour his whole outlook on life. Such appeals to authority are more the rule than the exception in developed religions, but we are observing a general tendency, certainly in educated believers, to reject these in return for a more defensible concept of authority. (I must, however, add at this point that certain philosophers of education appear to be unable to distinguish between religion and dogmatic appeals to a sacred written source⁵ and as a result call simply for teaching *about* religion.)

(6) Finally, there is a further use of 'authority' not covered by the other examples; one which lies at the heart of religious understanding and experience today. It can best be illustrated by reference to its appearance in the New Testament. Thus, at the end of the Sermon on the Mount we read that Jesus "spoke as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mt.7:29). The emphasis here is primarily on the conviction that the words of Jesus carried to the hearers. This was not only on account of their simplicity when contrasted with the complex system of laws taught by the scribes, but also on account of their existential appeal. They revealed a spiritual quality of living hitherto hardly imagined. It was an ethic not of outward observance to rules which must be learned and strenuously enforced by rigorous self-discipline, but an ethic springing spontaneously from one's love for God and vision of true happiness. The supreme emphasis in Jesus' teaching was a divine relationship of mutual self-giving necessarily manifesting itself in respect for, and service to, those made in God's image. This concept of authority is not simply a matter of words used, but also of an indescribable quality of the speaker. Whilst not explicit in the example given I think the passage quoted serves to distinguish this kind of authority from the second usage referred to above. This is a uniquely religious concept of authority, for the finality and sacredness of the speaker's words combine with an awareness of transcendence in the speaker. Such talk about the authority of Christ, or of any figure held to be divine or transcendent, is at the heart of religious experience. The Jesus of Galilee is the Christ of the Church.

An appeal to authority of this kind is less simply related to 'rationality' than is dogmatic insistence on the infallibility of a book or office, since it is in the final analysis type of intuited awareness or 'insight'. This intuition is not however 'blind' in the sense that one may intuit that there are twenty three matches in a box. It arises in the context of a religious tradition both historical and theological which prepares one for the awareness. It also arises in a cultural situation to which the teaching is particularly apposite. That is, it may not be entirely

an internal religious matter, for the authoritative power may be felt especially in connection with social, ethical and political teaching. Thus the teaching may be testable rationally and, to some extent, empirically.

The place of authority in developed religion

In developed religion there is always a metaphysical framework. In Eastern mystical religions the metaphysics may be concentrated on the subject of self-existence, the visible world, and transcendent states. To a varying extent there will be a metaphysics of the truly real whether as God or Soul. Even the pantheistic world-view *is* a world-view if it means anything at all. What then of religions that explicitly reject metaphysical speculations? Barthian Protestantism might be an example. If the veto on metaphysics entails also the non-existence of metaphysical implications, then the retreat into subjectivism is total, but even Kierkegaard could not talk of Christ without leaving a metaphysical trail. This feature of developed religion serves to distinguish it from primary religion, in that the latter involves no formulated truth-claims of an objective nature about the transcendent being, simply an awareness of "the spatio-temporal and more", to use Ramsey's term.

The presence of metaphysical truth-claims in developed religions renders the appeal to authority 'volatile', for not only do these truth-claims conflict with each other, they conflict with non-religious claims. Without such truth-claims, religions would lose their significance for the believers. The religious need is analysable partly as a need to orientate in the cosmos.

But is there not a degree of flexibility about the metaphysics each religious faith entails? Cannot the great traditions embrace each other as a result of dialogue and fresh interpretations? The difficulty is that Brahman, even the Brahman of the Gita, and the God of Christian Theism are conceptually different. Even if they were not, claims to ultimate validity on the part of the Judaeo-Christian revelation would surely be irreconcilable with the inscrutability of Brahman. The only possibility of reconciliation lies in a radical re-appraisal of the authoritativeness of the sacred books or historical experiences on which faith rest, in which case claims to exclusive revelation must be rejected. In that case, could any sense be made of revelation, and therefore of authority, at all? But perhaps the validity of elements in developed religions could be assessed by reference to criteria of a more objective and universal kind. This is the line along which Professor Smart's thought has travelled.

Rationality and christian authority

Education has come to be conceived of as necessarily (by definition) contributing to the increased rationality and autonomy of persons since it consists of "initiation into forms of thought and awareness which offer scope of reasoning and in which there is widely deemed to be good reason to engage"⁶. These forms of thought and awareness have been elucidated by Professor Hirst in his well known papers⁷ in which he lists the distinctive features of forms of knowledge. It would seem that religion is such a form since it has constitutive concepts such as 'god' 'soul' and 'salvation' which distinguish it from other forms of discourse; its logical structures and the functions of its language have patterns of their own; a unique blend of skills is required in developing religious understanding; and tests for truth are unique, that is, they cannot be applied to other forms of knowledge. Neither do those of other forms apply to religion. This is to say that religion is an autonomous subject. However, difficulty arises when *knowledge* in religion is claimed, as has been the case and still is the case in developed religions. For how could these claims to knowledge be justified except to those who have already accepted certain premises about authority which carry no weight with the unbeliever? This question cannot be dismissed as placing impossibly strict demands for justification of religious truth-claims, for such claims are overriding and universal in that they have implications metaphysically, ethically, aesthetically, and in most areas of living. The claim that God has a grand design in nature and human life must be reflected in the actual state of affairs in which Man finds himself; it must help him to make sense, not of God only, but of visible events. If religious claims were to speak only of "the wholly other", human interest would be totally lost. It is because the divine is by them related to the visible, to natural processes, to issues about values, that religious language arises in the first place. If religious claims were 'defused' by keeping them within logical bounds, that is, out of history, philosophy and ethics, controversy about their status would cease; but then who would think them worth discussing at all?

Whilst the issue of authority as between religions is important we do, then, consider the confrontation between religious claims and secularism to be equally crucial for education. The christian faith in particular has to justify its appeal to the authority of Christ so that accusations of irrationality can be opposed. (This is not, of course, the same thing as *establishing* truth by some sort of ontological argument.) A team of sportsmen value a victory gained in a foreign land far more than one gained at home. Attempts to gain such a victory, that is to justify the authority of Christ as by no means unreasonable, have been many:

(a) There is the approach that "all other ground is shifting sand". That is, faith in Christ is the only adequate alternative to rationalistic philosophy, mystic experience, existentialism, Marxism, etc. Thus one is left with no course but to "repent and believe the Gospel". Unfortunately this approach, taken no further than this, is its own undoing, for no more justification for faith in Christ is given than for faith in Marx's teachings. So why not just give way to total despair and a life of resignation to unbelief?

(b) Appeals to authority are often justified by reference to the argument that all our knowledge has a basis in authority. Therefore the search for truly autonomous knowledge is pointless. I am thinking of Karl Popper's claim that "quantitatively and qualitatively by far the most important source of our knowledge ... is tradition"⁸ and his argument that cognitive autonomy is no more than a grasp of the traditional methods of making and testing truth-claims, as well as the *awareness* that they are but traditional. A. M. Quinton, whose paper criticises Popper's view, also draws attention to the claim that "the instruments of criticism in whose possession cognitive autonomy consists are themselves provided by authority. We acquire from other people (i) the observation language which makes what might be called theoretically-usable perception possible, (ii) the logic with which bodies of beliefs are criticised and developed, and (iii) the methodology which specifies the degree of support given to theory by observation".⁹ Quinton shows that testimony as a source of knowledge must be reliable, and does so partly by reference to a transcendental deduction. My point in referring to his paper is that it serves to show how the term 'authority' can be broadened enough to become meaningless so that it overlaps and even becomes synonymous with autonomy. Thus to speak of belief in one's self-existence or in material objects as 'held on authority' becomes nonsense. Even if this were so, such 'authority' would be totally unlike the religious appeal to authority. It would not be a controversial concept, for one thing, since all who wish to seek rationality would have to bow to it.

(c) Thirdly, the authority of Christ is justified on grounds of the intrinsic 'glory' or presence of the divine in his teaching. Thus the authority of Christ is claimed to be immediately known in some way. This is roughly equatable with an existentialist defence of Christianity. The difficulty with this line of defence is that it requires some sort of 'leap of faith' or, if that is too active a metaphor, 'opening the door of the heart', for it is not communicable to the unbeliever since it requires unreasonable weakening of his demand for 'good reasons'. It would not be fair to say that

it is totally subjective since it is an experience shared by a group of people, and can be discussed meaningfully between them, but a man who has illusions about being Napoleon may have a meaningful discussion with a woman who thinks she is Josephine.

Attempts to class religious immediacy with that of sense-data, self and other selves fail because, as H. P. Open says, unlike these, "God is not a presupposition of rational discourse".¹⁰ His respect for intuitive awareness of God is not, however, diminished thereby, and his chapter on intuition serves to show the complexity of this subject. He argues that the christian believer relies on "intuitive insight" mediated by "signs" such as in the Bible. This does not give us the sort of rational basis that christian authority-claims need if they are to gain educational respectability, and by itself renders them no more worthy of respect (and no less worthy) than those of other religions.

At this stage, I conclude that the authority of Christ and his teaching can at best be demonstrated to be non-rationally held rather than irrationally held. It is in principle possible that the christian revelation is the Way for Man, but without willingness to reappraise biblical teaching about the *exclusiveness* of the revelation in Christ and the *sole sufficiency* of that way for salvation, it will not be possible objectively to relate Christianity to other faiths. The Christian who respects the search for good reasons will certainly believe in the demonstrability of the supremacy of his faith. He may not sacrifice this belief in order for dialogue to proceed, but is certain that, unless it does, the authority of Christ will certainly never carry weight in dialogue with the non-religious sceptic.

Religious education and religious authority

We have thus far seen the centrality of appeals to authority in developed religion and the problem of justifying them to the unbeliever, which we looked at chiefly in connection with the christian faith. We noted that this problem is bound up with that of relating the claims of Christianity to those of other religions, and that an impressive display in that dialogue would help alleviate the difficulties of displaying the relevance of Christianity, and of religion in general, to people in western society.

For dialogue between religions to proceed and the significance of religion for the believer to be understood an objective approach to the study of religion is necessary. Ninian Smart's work in this area is most important, especially as his methods form the basis for much current teaching of religion in schools.¹¹ His research team recommended a phenomenological approach on the grounds that it "transcends the (merely) informative" by using tools of scholarship "in order to enter into an empathic experience of the faith of

individuals and groups."^{12a} The learner views the nature of authority in faiths in an objective way by "imaginative self-transcendence"^{12b} This entails holding one's own beliefs, or lack of them, in suspension by endeavouring to be neutral and to see things from the inside. Smart calls this "bracketing" one's own beliefs. A major achievement of this approach, he claims, is that it avoids the extremes of reductionism on the one hand, and theologising on the other. That is, it neither treats religion as a human study nor does it assume the reality of the Divine objects. A consideration of the phenomena of religion includes their Foci (the divine) as an integral and supreme aspect. By employing such "methodological agnosticism"^{2b} we should, it is hoped, be able to understand and appreciate the significance of the competing authority-claims of religions, and even develop criteria by which to commend one more than another. If, however, these criteria turn out to be highly subjective and tentative the enterprise of restructuring our understanding of the authority of Christ will have suffered. We may find ourselves moving nearer to a more extreme radicalism. (Faith does not dread this possibility, even though it is acutely aware of it.)

The question at issue here is whether Smart *does* present us with adequate criteria. In his reflections on Rudolf Otto's thought in *Philosophers and Religions Truth*^{13a} he faces this daunting task. He writes:

If religious thinking is, so to speak, autonomous or independent, then we may find within it some guides as to how religious truth is to be arrived at. Of course it is clear that we shall not find any absolutely knock-down arguments which would persuade any perceptive and pious person of the truth of one set of beliefs rather than others. For since perceptive and pious persons can be found in different religions and denominations, such arguments would have to have the effect of converting them. But we see from experience that it is comparatively rare for people to change their faith. But this need not destroy the validity of the point we are making. For certainly we can discover tests of the truth of religion which would at least be recognised as relevant by adherents of other faiths. The fact that men argue about religion indicates this. And though we are not in a position to produce knock-down arguments, the arguments and considerations themselves may have a long-term effect, may weigh as time goes on in a social rather than a personal dialogue.^{13b}

The implications of this are that any criteria which Smart is positing are rather loose and tentative, hard to apply to particular traditions, and requiring extended development. What he seems to be saying is that here is an area of study which is at an embryonic stage.^{2c} Smart takes as the data for his study of authoritative

revelations not those religious experiences of the average Christian or Buddhist, but those of focal figures such as Jeremiah, Paul and Buddha. I emphasise this because it displays due respect for those great figures in religious experience from whom contemporary experiences derive their interpretation. Smart's criteria are as follows:-

(a) A tradition must do justice to the two basic elements in religion, the mystical and the numinous. In this connection, Smart argues that the theism of the Gita and of the Judaeo-Christian tradition are to be preferred, for unlike the two wings of Buddhism and the Monism of Shankara (with its intermediate theism), they succeed in retaining the distinction between the self and God, yet do justice to the mystical union between them.

(b) A tradition must do justice to the reality of the world. Otherworldliness is no virtue. I confess that this is even more loose an interpretation than the previous one, but it lies within Smart's point^{2d, 13c} that revelation must disclose the divine in history. Thus, in theism, God is Creator, and certain events in the natural world and human history are revealed to be His disclosures. Thus creativity in history, both human and divine, is upheld, lest religion become life-denying rather than life-affirming.

(c) A tradition will be less dubious and more convincing as it increases in coherence^{13d} and is able to cope clearly with the problem of evil and the nature of the transcendent. Special difficulties arise regarding faith in a personal God, and Smart sees these as tending to count against theism.

(d) A religious tradition must be able to incorporate and express high moral values. Smart sees theism as "well-adapted" for this due to the numinous component in the sense of guilt and its view of people as a reflection of the divine.^{13e}

(e) A religious tradition must relate history to human guilt, in its message of salvation. Smart argues that christian theism honours both these and the sole ability of God to save, in the person and work of Christ.^{13e}

What have these criteria achieved? Providing one is "playing the religious language-game" in the first place, they are certainly an important beginning. Whilst it would be naive to think of people as consciously choosing between competing revelations, it is certainly realistic to think of ourselves as endeavouring to evaluate Hindu Epics or Buddhology. The price of doing so objectively using the above (and other) criteria is, however, to surrender the insistence that ultimate truth is only to be found in Christianity, and surrendering the *a priori* belief that Christianity is the "best" revelation.

The picture we now have is of Smart's phenomenology as advancing our understanding of the truth *about* religion as opposed to *of* religion, which in turn has led to an informed search for criteria of truth, however "soft" they appear to be, for judging between authoritative traditions.

Residual doubts remain with us: (1) Firstly, studying religion phenomenologically can only be achieved in a simple way in school. Pupils would undoubtedly be incapable of grasping the methodology, since such procedures as "bracketing" and including the "focus" in the data^{2e} lie beyond the discriminatory powers of all but the most mature. (2) Secondly, Smart confesses to the presence of "reflexive" effects of an objective study of religions^{2f} in that it may quite naturally (but not justifiably) lead to agnosticism. I think this is a major criticism. It is not simply that the variety of religious traditions is bewildering, but even the accomplished student of this approach will see little case for a world-faith on the basis of the data and criteria as they stand. A cynicism about attempts to posit features of the transcendent can easily develop so that religion ceases to be respected at all except as a human phenomenon. For example, whilst the sort of loose criteria listed above may be of some value, they are of little value when we come down to specific issues such as the relative merits of Incarnation and Avatar. This is complicated by the need to see such doctrines in their total context, from which they cannot be separated. Thus in one sense we must consider each tradition as a whole system of belief, whilst retaining the urge to make specific comparisons. The upshot is that whilst most will agree that descriptive phenomenology and comparative study are interesting, many will doubt whether the whole business has much to do with personal commitment in religion. In other words the tentative nature of Smart's work militates against personal commitment because the latter is only made out of reverence for the authority of revelation (in some form). (3) This brings us to a third area of doubt: What has Smart to say about personal commitments? He has devoted some space to this in his *Science of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge*. He responds to Troelsch's charge that a neutral approach to the study of religion "has become identified with empathy for all other characters together with a relinquishing of empathy for oneself, with scepticism and playful intellectualism or with oversophistication and a lack of faith"^{2g}. He replies "we must distinguish between the common enterprise of the study of religion and the matter of individual and personal beliefs. For example, there is a joint venture known as Buddhist studies which is undertaken by a number of scholars of differing personal beliefs and cultural backgrounds. Buddhist studies are not defined by reference to these beliefs; how could they be? Rather they are defined in terms of the subject-matter and of the appropriate methods of scholarship and research. It in no way follows, though, that methodological neutralism entails any private neutrality."^{2g}

We thus see that a justifiable religious education must, as an academic activity, be objective and procedurally neutral. Elsewhere, Smart's ideas are put more practically:

It is quite feasible to study and teach objectively matters that are heavily charged with passions and interests. Such objectivity is not achieved by rising above the life of conviction into a realm of cool rational detachment. It is attained rather by the controlled deployment of one's own affective and conative life in the pursuit of sympathetic understanding of the life of other persons. This suggests that it is the persons with well-developed emotional and volitional capacities who can best identify with the deep concerns of other persons. Hence the growth of objectivity does not depend on the denial of personal commitment but on its strengthening, in order to provide the basis for awareness of commitments in others.^{12c}

Smart is asking for a clear recognition of the distinction between the *subject* in the sense of the person and his beliefs and the *objective* material to be studied. But can this distinction be made in reality so far as religious commitment is concerned? It is central to the christian tradition that the believer is redeemed from sin and has Christ indwelling him. Can we really expect the believer to "bracket" this even for methodological purposes? From his viewpoint "bracketing" will only cloud the issue: the revelation in Christ gives us the truth about religion. I am well aware that this characterises only one sort of christian attitude, and it is not simply that of the educated evangelical, for let us not forget the great influence of Karl Barth on theology and his concept of revelation and religion as mutually exclusive. Such a position is a reaction to the loss of dynamic in modern Christianity and to the increasingly heuristic and vague nature of christian theology.

The issue of evaluating the merits of Barthianism as opposed to methodological neutralism is too vast for us to pursue here, and I suspect that there are no criteria convincing to either side by which to judge it. However, it clearly reflects the tensions amongst christians today. If we wish to communicate the christian faith convincingly by appeal to rationality we must revise traditional concepts of the authority of Christ and trust that the truth will reveal itself as a result of objective study. On the other hand, some may consider communication less of a priority, and entrench themselves firmly on the natural man's inability to understand the things of the Spirit. In which case any initiation into the faith will not necessarily involve rationality except in the sparsest fashion, so that spiritual experience will be dominated by unconscious forces in the convert rather than by heightened consciousness. But this is not a knock-down argument for it may be that true encounter with God leaves one helpless, groping for words, wholly uncritical, and "Lost in wonder, love and praise." And it is hard to imagine such an experience in the life of the descriptive

phenomenologist of religion. The christian experience of the love of Christ is inadequately characterised simply as numinous feeling in the presence of the "mysterium tremendum et fascinans". I do not think there is any meeting of minds on this issue since the entrenched Barthian declares certain questions a 'foul'. His ultimate value is a specific expression of divine revelation. The critical method as instanced in Smart's work values integrity of approach and rational justification more than subjectively intense assurances. The latter refuses to divorce faith from reason and disowns a divine judge who demands without clear justification and condemns solely on the basis that one has not believed.

Religious belief in school

In conclusion I cannot avoid what should really be the subject of another paper. For since the status of the revelatory claims of developed religions, and especially Christianity, is in such a state of criticism, I do not think the phenomenological approach to religion as outlined by Schools Council Working Paper 36 is adequate. It has the side-effect of promoting personal agnosticism and hindering personal commitment to a religious tradition. We must wait for a change of cultural wind; this may not be such a long wait, since we glimpse, thanks to the work of Smart and others, a new religious concern in reaction to fashionable reductionism. Also the dialogue between religions gives us new hope for the development of a world-faith. The radical change from traditional concepts of authority to one of tentative expression of felt assurances is not entirely negative and motivates the dialogue.

However the complexity of the approach considered, and the relative uncertainty of its future developments, demands that we settle for a practical, relatively safe, and productive approach to religious belief in school. The urgent need is for teaching about, personal awareness of, and informed choosing between, ultimate responses to life. Whilst developed religion is autonomous as a form of knowledge, primary religion, in the form of numinous and mystical experiences, is but one possible ultimate response to life. Live alternatives are a positive nihilism, fatalism, materialism, determinism in various forms, and humanism. These all have developed cognitive aspects as has primary religion, and can be discussed rationally and critically. Unlike in developed religions, there is no unending controversy about ultimate status, for such responses are recognised as influential and dynamic even if made on subjective grounds. Even indifference to ultimacy must be considered as a negative response to life. Thus, in education, we shall be able to bring into the open ultimate stances that people make in life, and through this enable the student to make his own assessment of primary religion. By coincidence of timing it appears that these conclusions are in agreement with a report published by the Religious Education Council¹⁴ which has a concern for relevance, communication

and objectivity in religious education. The concentration on primary rather than developed religion has the advantage of avoiding logical and conceptual problems as well as the status-problems of developed religion, but it provides an important basis for a developing concern with the latter. Neither does the approach oppose taching *about* developed religion in its dimensions. One may even go so far as to say that, at the higher academic level of sixth-form work, issues on belief and authority in developed religions should form some part of the syllabus. In this secular age we must stimulate the human capacity for the transcendent with digestible food, and it is to be hoped that once an appetite for primary religion has been well-established, a well-prepared world-faith will likewise prove to be consumed with relish. Those who shout "pie-in-the-sky" must first ascertain that their own menu is readable, and its contents digestible.

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R. L. STURCH

The Problem of Talking about God

Religious language — how do we understand it? Literally; with God as grey-beard in the sky? ... Analogically? ... Symbolically? ... Poetically? ... or as a combination of these? ... In his inimitable way the author discusses the possibilities in this paper given at the recent VI Symposium ("Communicating the Christian Faith Today", 22 May, 1976)

The title of this paper will probably channel the thoughts of the philosophically inclined towards the prolonged debate about whether logical assertions can be 'cached' in terms of observable facts, and if not, what sort of assertions they are — if, indeed, they deserve that name at all. This debate has been going on in Britain for about forty years now. But it has been largely confined to professional and amateur philosophers. In this symposium on the communication of the faith it is probably unnecessary to raise the issue.

An equally important problem, and one more immediately relevant, is simply, "Why do people so rarely talk about God?" We are assured by the opinion polls that large numbers of our fellow-citizens profess belief in a God of one sort or another; and one might have thought that if anyone did have such a belief, the nature and purposes of this God would seem important to him. Yet this seems not to be so; and if we try to engage one of these supposed theists in conversation about God, there is a good chance that at some point he or she will say that talk of God, Christ, redemption or the like means little or nothing in his lives. This is plainly a problem for the Christian communicator; I hope to show that it is also one for the philosopher.

When someone says that talk about God and so on "doesn't really mean anything to me", this may just be a piece of autobiography. It is possible that he or she is simply unwilling to think deeply about anything, so that the defect is in the hearer, not in the message, nor in the one who is trying to communicate it. But it may be that we do have a problem in framing the message itself, that there is a difficulty in the very notion of talking about God at all.

How do people *think* of God? Do they learn the use of the word from the role it plays in Christian lives? Perhaps it might be better if they did, perhaps not; but most have instead a "definition" of associations and images which accompany and affect their use of it and (more important for us) their *hearing* of it when *we* use it.

There are those who tend to think of God, whether they believe in Him or not, as (in effect) The "Old Man in the Sky". Small blame to them. The image is scriptural, and has been used in thousands of paintings and stained-glass windows; we habitually speak of God as "above", and use "heaven" both for His dwelling-place and (when we are being literary) for the sky. Who can blame the man in the street if he supposes that we mean what we say? Yet obviously the image cries out to be rejected. God is not a man, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him.

There are others — far fewer, but they do exist — to whom the word "God" suggests, shall we say, a kind of golden blur. Whatever its exact nature and origin, the point of this image is that it is basically impersonal. God is an 'It', not a 'he', and even if It is thought of as corresponding to some reality, that reality is not one to which we can relate.

Now these images can be given greater logical precision. We can talk about God in anthropomorphic language. Not literally, that is, as the 'image' pictures Him; but we can and do speak of Him as loving, acting, judging, forgiving and so on — all terms which are normally used of human beings. And the philosopher will ask at once: "How is this possible? Surely God is no more a magnified human in His mental makeup (if one may use the phrase) than in His physical? If He exists at all, He is utterly unlike us, and we cannot use this crude man-centred language about Him. God is infinite, and these are limiting words."

What alternative is there? Can we speak about God in *non-anthropomorphic* language? Certainly philosophers and others have offered us a selection of possible ways. We can speak of the *Prime Mover*, or the *First Cause*, or the *Absolute*, or "something, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness", or of "Being-Itself". But all these obviously share the same sort of drawback as a golden blur. Can we really pray "O Absolute", or confess that we have sinned against Being-Itself? I do know of one fine hymn addressed to God as Prime Mover ("O Strength and Stay upholding all creation"), but even that I suspect really has the Father of lights, with Whom is no variability or shadow of turning, not the Prime Mover of Aristotelian physics, in mind. In general, we are faced with a dilemma: If God is described anthropomorphically, He is incredible, and if He is described otherwise, He is irrelevant. How are we to escape from this?

One possibility is to retain the anthropomorphisms and abandon the idea of an *infinite* God. Even God is Himself, so to speak, coping with a world not all of whose qualities are His work. Such a view has had distinguished supporters: Plato in the ancient world, Brightman in the modern, Madhva in India. And it has something to be said for it from a purely philosophical point of view. Are there not some truths that are in effect "given" even where God is concerned? The laws of logic and mathematics, for example. And the moral law; could even God have made it a duty to hate one's neighbour and a sin to love him? So also with certain connections and separations between concepts: redness surely implies inescapably, spatial extension, and Wednesday cannot possibly be in the key of F minor. And there may be other "given" elements which we do not recognise as such. Hence God is, on this view, to some extent limited, and one of the main objections to anthropomorphic language is removed.

Perhaps we may need to fall back on this; but not till we have looked for alternatives. It has difficulties. It runs counter to Christian tradition: but this might be got round, for "infinite" is not a Biblical term, and if later generations have been paying God what Whitehead called "metaphysical compliments", they may have gone wrong. But even if they did, there are difficulties. Firstly, suppose we grant these "given" elements in the world, does this make God enough like us for human-based language to apply to Him? The mere fact that He cannot set aside the laws of logic does not mean He is in any way like us in other respects. Secondly, from a practical point of view, is this limited personal God any more credible to the man in the street than the unlimited one we began with? Isn't He still the Old Man in the Sky? We must look for alternatives first.

The oldest and perhaps the best-known solution to our dilemma is the theory of *analogy*. The analogist maintains that we do not have a straight choice between using words of God and man in exactly the same sense and using them in quite different ones. There is a middle way. To take a secular example: if I say two shirts are the same colour, and that the Prime Minister and the First Lord of the Treasury are the same man, how am I using the word "same"? Differently in two cases; the two men are identical in every way, yet the two colours may be hundreds of miles apart. Yet there is an analogy between the two; the word "same" has, shall we say, one sort of appropriateness when used of universals (like colours) and another sort when used in particulars (like prime ministers).

So, it is argued, do words have different sorts of appropriateness when they are used of God and of human beings. They do not have different meanings in the way that (say) "plane" has when used of a carpenter's tool and of a kind of tree; nor do they have

identical meanings; but each meaning is analogous to the other. To call God "loving" is not to say that He feels, or even acts, in exactly the same way as a human who loved would. It *is* to say that He feels and acts in a way bearing the same relationship to His Divine Nature as our loving feelings and actions do to our humanity.

The trouble is that we do not in fact know what the Divine Nature is like. We have as it were an equation: Divine love is to Divinity as human love is to humanity; but we do not know the value of *either* term on the "divine" side. All we know is the relationship between them; it is like a map where the scale has been lost, so that we can tell it is twice as far from A to B as from C to D, but do not know how far either distance actually is. Moreover, has not the theory embarrassing consequences? When Abraham pleaded with the Lord for Sodom, he said "Far be it from Thee to kill good and bad together", presumably trusting in the Lord's justice. Fair enough if "justice" means the same as with humans, but if it does not, was not Abraham's confidence misplaced? Consequently, though analogy has able defenders, it may not be enough.

Perhaps we can reduce the difficulty by dividing our concepts into two parts. Many of the terms we have been looking at are so divisible; one part of, say, 'loving' refers to actions, another to a state of mind, and both must be present if the concept is to be applicable. The man in James 2:16 who says to the poor "Go in peace, be warmed and filled" may have had a loving mind, but not the actions; the one in Matthew 6:2 who gave alms to the sound of trumpets had the actions but not the state of mind. Now I think it could be argued that God's *actions* must be described univocally (i.e. in the full normal sense). Some, as a matter of fact, have gone further: Maimonides, for one, thought that all adjectives applied to God in Scripture referred *only* to His actions. But this seems to leave open the possibility of His being a kind of transcendent robot (or even hypocrite), with the wrong sort of mind or none at all. Perhaps we should believe that as far as the inner life of the Godhead is concerned we call the Lord "loving" or "just" analogically, but that as far as His deeds are concerned we call Him these things in the strictest sense of the words.

But analogy is not the only claimant for our attention. Another possible way out of our dilemma is to say that all our statements about God are *symbolic*. The trouble with this is that 'symbolic' is so vague. It might be used to mean that they are not statements about God at all (as Professors Braithwaite and van Buren would say); or that they are given to us in revelation by a God Whom we cannot hope to understand properly, but must believe when He says they are the best guides we can have to the truth (as Dean Mansel held). But the most lucid statement of a 'symbolic' theism I know of is that of Professor C. A. Campbell in "On Selfhood and Godhood" (which was

briefly described in this Journal for 1968 by Dr. Lewis Drummond). Campbell holds that concepts like Power, Goodness, Love and so on do *not*, strictly speaking, apply to God at all (whereas an analogist would say they do apply, but not in their usual sense). They symbolize something which *is* true of God, though we cannot grasp it. But they are justified, by Campbell, in two different ways.

Firstly, by religious experience, especially experience of the "numinous". Such experiences arouse in us certain emotions which are strikingly similar to those aroused by symbols. We admire and respect people who are good and wise. But, says Campbell, "anyone reflecting on a moment of deeply felt religious experience will, I think, confirm that his emotion of adoration felt *like* the natural emotions of admiration and love - that it pointed, as it were, in the same direction - while feeling not merely *unlike* but clean contrary to such natural emotions as contempt and hate - pointing, as it were, in the opposite direction". The very nature of the experience forces the mind to symbolize that which it has experienced - i.e. "God" - in this way and with these symbols; and this fact points, surely, to their being valid.

Secondly, Campbell seeks to justify the symbols on metaphysical grounds. He stands in the Idealist tradition, in which the world - the whole of reality - is seen as having a single ground, an ultimate reality which incorporates all the variety and differences we see in the world about us. Now the best model we have for this sort of incorporation of differences is the way our own minds incorporate all the various experiences, volitions, desires and so on that make up our mental lives, while themselves (the minds) remaining basically *unities*. It follows that mind or spirit is the best model we have (doubtless a very inadequate one) for symbolizing that ultimate reality which is God.

As it stands, Campbell's position is, I think, on the side of the "Golden Blur". It gives no ground for regarding God as Himself loving. He may well deserve our adoration for what He is in Himself, but not for anything He does for us. Neither the experience of the numinous nor Campbell's metaphysical proposals (even if we accept them) will yield a God who is actively concerned with His creation. This conclusion could possibly be avoided if we extended the range of experiences we are using to include ones which suggest an "I-Thou", person-to-person response, not just one of admiration and respect. But the more we do this, the more difficult it is to combine the religious-experience symbols with the unity-in-difference ones.

Another possibility, related, I think, to symbolism, is to draw a parallel between the language of religion and that of poetry. This is particularly relevant when it is 'revealed theology' that we are concerned with, for the Bible is of course a highly poetical book. It may be that poetry is able to convey truths that prose

cannot, and that this is what God has in fact done. An excellent statement of this position was made by C. S. Lewis in his posthumously published essay *The Language of Religion*. There he quotes Burns's description of one woman as "like a red, red rose" and Wordsworth's of another as "a violet by a mossy stone/ Half hidden from the eye". Literally, obviously neither of these is accurate. But they do in fact *describe*, and if we had known those concerned we could have judged whether the descriptions were true or false. But, Lewis goes on, poetic language can even express an experience neither we nor the poet have ever had— and he quotes Shelley's "My soul is an enchanted boat" and Pope's "die of a rose in aromatic pain". So short and simple an expression as the title "Son of God" can work in much the same way. The reality described by it is outside our experience; but it does describe that reality in much the same sort of way as Burns 'described' his love. This applies both to God when He seeks to reveal His truth to us and to us when we seek to express our own religious experiences to one another.

Professor R. W. Hepburn, in an able and not unsympathetic discussion of this sort of position, objected (in effect) that poetic language can *lie* or *mislead*. A poet may have insight which he expresses — can only express — in poetry; but we cannot tell whether that alleged insight is in fact a true one. Poets may describe the world differently: a Christian poet (Hepburn quotes from T. S. Eliot) may describe it in a way incompatible with the description given by a non-Christian (say a pessimist like A. E. Houseman). This is true; but it need not, I think, bother us in our present concern. We are only concerned to see how anthropomorphic language might be justified even when it is, taken literally, hard to believe — how it can symbolize, or rather express, a non-anthropomorphic truth. Which particular items of language are to be used, and what is the truth that we ought to express, are different matters. It does look as if we had a possible aid to communication here — provided always that the person we want to communicate with appreciates poetry. By no means everybody does; and we do not want Christianity to be infected with a kind of literary snobbery! Still, the line of approach looks a helpful one. It might even be combined (this is Lewis' suggestion again) with the theory of analogy, the latter being confined to attempts to express Christian truths in technical or prosaic language, as for instance when we try to give theological content to the idea of Christ as the Son of God, instead of remaining content with it as a vivid aid to, say, prayer and meditation. Obviously this approach needs detailed examination, which I am not sure it has yet received, but it does, as I said, look hopeful.

It may be felt that since God has, we believe, become incarnate as a man, objections to anthropomorphism are surely misguided. Christ revealed the Father, not only in His words, but in His person; "he who has seen me, has seen the Father". Hence God is wise or loving in the full sense of the words as we normally use them, for

He has been a human being. This has attractions; but on the whole I fear it will not do. Firstly, some of the most anthropomorphic language in the Bible comes in the *Old Testament*; God was apparently telling mankind about Himself in human terms before He became incarnate. Secondly, because surely in so far as Jesus is a revelation of God, it is because God already was like that in Himself. If Jesus is full of grace and truth, and in being full of grace and truth reveals the Father, that is because the Father was grace and truth from all eternity. Certainly we must agree that some things are now true of God which were not true before His Son came to us: that He has reconciled us to Himself, and made Himself a Church at the cost of His own blood. But these are not things Christ came to reveal; He came to *do* them. Anything that was true of God before the Word became flesh may be revealed in Christ, even for the first time, but was true before; anything that Christ Himself made to be true while He was in the flesh could not indeed have been said truly beforehand, but makes no difference to the rest of what we say about God.

Where have we got to after all this? It seems to me that we can sum up the discussion rather like this: There really is a dilemma or paradox about "God-talk" which shows itself both in the form of a technical philosophical problem and in that of a problem of communication: how can we speak of God in human terms and yet remember His superhumanity? Basically, there seemed to be two possible ways out. One is the rather technical doctrine of analogy. This has its own, technical difficulties which can perhaps be resolved; what is more of a nuisance to us with our present concerns, it is unlikely to be of much assistance to us in evangelism. It may reassure us when we are reflecting in private on the contents of our beliefs; it will not help us when we are trying to communicate those beliefs to the world for which Christ died.

The other way out was to draw the parallel between religious language and that of poetry. The one is absurd taken literally. So is the other; yet it can convey ideas which prose never could. Why not, then, admit the possibility that the first can do so too? Perhaps the moral for the Christian communicator is to make his or her language so obviously 'poetical' and figurative that no hearer will be misled into thinking that we do believe in a gigantic bearded figure floating about among the stars? But that is easier said than done, and I certainly have no wish to press the point.

If we cannot give an intellectually satisfactory account of what we are talking about, there is almost certainly something seriously wrong. It need not be a *complete* account, but at least it must be reasonably *coherent*. If no such coherent account can be given, our preaching will be incoherent too. The reverse does not necessarily follow. There are undoubtedly many scientific

theories of which intellectually satisfactory accounts could be given, yet which could never be communicated from a pulpit or a soap-box! But we believe that the Gospel can be preached to all; and this may give us some hope that once we have straightened out the confusions in our minds we may by God's mercy be enabled to make straight His paths among our fellows.

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ANTHONY C. THISELTON

The Semantics of Biblical Language
as an Aspect of Hermeneutics

To understand the Bible and to communicate its message we need to know the meanings of the words it uses in their respective contexts: for from this biblical interpretation follows. The relation between word-meaning and interpretation is discussed in this thoughtful study, given in lecture form at the recent VI Symposium ("Communicating the Christian Faith Today", 22 May 1976)

Although the subject assigned to me is "the semantics of Biblical language", I take it that I am to approach this subject specifically from the standpoint of the conference theme "Communicating the Christian Faith Today". In order to do this, I have taken the liberty of adding a short phrase to my original title. The semantics of Biblical language will be considered *as an aspect of hermeneutics*. For although Biblical scholars have produced a number of studies relating to semantics, concerns about the communication of the Biblical message to modern man fall more readily under the heading of hermeneutics. The point may be illustrated by comparing two recent books by Biblical scholars. John F. A. Sawyer's book entitled *Semantics in Biblical Research* is an excellent but highly technical study which is of most value to the specialist in Hebrew or at least Old Testament studies.¹ By contrast, Robert W. Funk's book *Language, Hermeneutics, and Word of God*, whilst also remaining a technical academic study, primarily concerns the impact of Biblical language on modern man, and the problem of Christian communication.²

Does this mean, then, that the semantics of Biblical language is irrelevant to questions about communicating the Christian faith today? The main thesis of this paper is that considerations about semantics do indeed contribute positively to questions about the communication of the Biblical message, provided that they are viewed as an aspect of the broader problem of hermeneutics. To attempt to solve too many problems, however, simply through a study of Biblical semantics is to invite unnecessary disillusion with the whole subject.

I

I am using the term *hermeneutics* in the way in which it has come to be employed mainly in German and American theology since the late nineteen-fifties. Prior to that time, hermeneutics was used mainly in the traditional sense of rules for the right interpretation of Biblical texts. Thus it was virtually synonymous with principles of exegesis. More recently, however, especially with the work of Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling, hermeneutics has come to be viewed as a two-sided problem.³ It is the problem of bringing together on the one side the horizons of the Biblical writer or the Biblical text, and on the other side the horizons of the modern reader or interpreter. To take up the model suggested by the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, the task of hermeneutics is performed when there takes place a fusion or merging of these two sets of horizons, (*Horizontverschmelzung*).⁴ Or, again, to take up the category of 'worldhood' from Heidegger and Gadamer, understanding is achieved when the Biblical word strikes home within the modern reader's own 'world', and when the modern reader, in turn, stands within the 'world' of the Biblical text.

Ernst Fuchs shows how Jesus communicates with men on this basis through the language of the parables.⁵ Language about farming, business affairs, housekeeping, playing games, and so on, is not merely to provide vivid everyday illustrations of otherwise abstract truths. Jesus takes account of the fact that his hearers already live in a 'world' shaped by interests of this kind. By telling stories about everyday life on this level, Jesus himself enters their own world, and stands within it. This principle operates in the incarnation itself, in which Jesus comes to stand alongside men at the place where they already are. In the parables, then, Jesus creates and stands within a world which is the world of his hearers. But now to the picture part of the parable (Jülicher's *Bildhafte*) is added the content-part (*Sachhafte*). Values and judgments are brought within this world which shatter its existing horizons, and turn it upside down. The hearer finds himself standing in Jesus's world.

This principle operates, for example, in the parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Mt. 20:1-16). Jesus first enters into the world of the hearer. Some workers are hired at the beginning of the day, and work through the long hours of heat and weariness. Others are hired later and do less. Finally, those who were only too grateful to get any kind of employment do only an hour's work in the cool of the evening. When the time comes to settle up, these last find to their amazement that they receive a whole day's wage. The audience enters into their feelings of good luck and everyone wonders how much the first will therefore receive. Abruptly we hear

that they, too, get the same. The audience is appalled and indignant. From the viewpoint of the world of the labourers and the audience, the employer had infringed every natural and conventional notion of decency and justice. But at this precise point, Jesus shatters the conventional horizons of this world. When the vineyard-owner exclaims, "Do you begrudge my generosity?" (i.e. to those who have worked only for an hour), the audience begins to perceive that what is really at stake is God's verdict of sovereign grace on sinners, irrespective of their religious or moral achievements.

This is an example of effective Christian communication. However, the method of Jesus is uncovered not by semantics, but by what goes under the heading of hermeneutics. We see that Jesus does more than explain the meaning of grace as a concept. Such an explanation might well fail to grasp the hearer because it might never engage with his own existing horizons. Love, Fuchs points out, communicates by meeting someone *where he is*.^{6a} In the parables, Jesus so effectively enters the world of his hearers and so effectively draws them into his, that as Fuchs expresses it, the hearer sees "with God's eyes".^{6b}

Two thousand years, however, have elapsed since the parables were first spoken. Hence the impact of the parables of Jesus on the hearer today is not necessarily what it would have been on the original audiences. We may illustrate the point from Luke 18:9-14, in which Jesus tells the parable of the pharisee and the publican. To the first hearers, the pharisee was a good man. There are parallels in the Qumran literature and other Jewish sources to the genuine prayer of gratitude that the pharisee was not like other men. He was grateful that it was easier for him to maintain a scrupulous obedience to the law than it was for those in dubious vocations. He was grateful that God had put it into his heart to go beyond the normal legal demands of fasting and tithing, and do extra deeds of righteousness beyond what the law required. But Jesus unexpectedly turns this familiar world of values upside down. With shock and indescribable consternation the audience hears him say that it is the taxcollector, not the pharisee, who is justified. Conventional assumptions are shattered.

The modern hearer today, however, has precisely the reverse expectations. He expects the pharisee to be condemned, because two thousand years of Christianizing tradition have taught him that as a matter of principle, pharisees are bad. Thus, far from shattering the hearer's values and conventions, far from challenging the structure of his 'world', the parable becomes a harmless and homely illustration of something he always knew, namely that pharisaism is a bad thing. It has become a Victorian moral tale about the need for humility. It is no longer a profoundly disturbing proclamation of the sovereign judgment and grace of God, which makes every man search his heart with the sense that he has suddenly lost his bearings.⁷

It is now time to make a statement about the relative functions of hermeneutics and semantics within the context of the problem of Christian communication today. Hermeneutics takes account of *two worlds* and of *two sets of horizons*, those of the text and those of the modern hearer. Semantics, at least as the term has come to be used in Biblical studies, concerns *only the world of the ancient text*. Put more technically in the language of hermeneutical studies, it ignores the problem of the hearer's pre-understanding (*Vorverständnis*).

We may illustrate the kind of expectations which can be met by semantic studies by considering the book to which I have already referred, namely John F. A. Sawyer's work *Semantics in Biblical Research*. It is impossible to summarize the whole book in a few short sentences, for the argument is detailed and sometimes technical. We may select, however, two principles for consideration, which Sawyer uses.

Firstly, following the work of James Barr and others, Sawyer takes up Ferdinand de Saussure's fundamental distinction between synchronic and diachronic investigations of language. Diachronic linguistics is concerned with the history of developments in language, with how and why meanings change over a period of time. Synchronic linguistics is concerned with the investigation of language at one specific point in time. The linguisticians of de Saussure's day were too dominated by the diachronic perspective. In particular they were concerned to formulate laws of development. For example, the third person singular present indicative of 'to be' was *asti* in Sanskrit, *esti* in Greek, and *est* in Latin and French. Could laws be formulated which explained this kind of development, and also allowed linguistics to speculate about primitive languages? As a corrective to a one-sided approach, Ferdinand de Saussure insisted, "The linguist who wishes to understand a state (*état de langue*) must discard all knowledge of everything that produced it and ignore diachrony. He can enter the mind of the speakers only by completely suppressing the past."^{8a}

No scholar has done more than James Barr in his excellent and important book *The Semantics of Biblical Language* to apply the fruits of F. de Saussure's warnings to the handling of the Biblical text. Barr gives numerous examples of how Biblical scholars have quite wrongly assigned meanings to particular words in the Bible which these words possessed only hundreds of years earlier. The root meaning of a word (i.e. root in the historical or etymological sense) is not their 'real' meaning at a later date. I should not wish to say that merely because the English word "nice" is derived from *nescius* meaning ignorant, by "nice doctor" I really mean "ignorant doctor". Barr rightly declares, "The main point is that the etymology of a word is not a statement about its meaning but about its history."⁹

John Sawyer is no less concerned than Barr about the disastrous consequences of this very common misunderstanding about semantics for Biblical exegesis. For this reason, he argues, it is wise to avoid speaking about "the meaning" of a word such as 'salvation' in the Bible, or even in the Old Testament. The meaning of such a word, he explains, has often varied down the years of Israel's history. Even in terms of a single passage, he insists, the meaning of a particular word used by the original author may differ from that understood by a later editor or when it is quoted by another Biblical writer at a still later date.^{10a} We are now in a position to see two things. Firstly, it is clear that Sawyer's work on semantics brings greater precision into exegesis, secondly, it is equally clear that his work remains within the world of particular texts. Thus he concludes on this point, "Semantic ambiguity can be avoided by substituting for the question 'What does it mean?' the questions 'What did it mean in its original context?' or 'What did it mean in Babylon in the sixth century B.C.?' or 'What did it mean in Alexandria in the third century B.C.?' and so on".^{10b} On the one hand, semantic enquiry is indispensable for understanding the Biblical text with accuracy, faithfulness, and precision. On the other hand, the theme of this conference is communication *today*, not communication in sixth century Babylon, and relates more properly to the problem of hermeneutics.

The second principle used by Sawyer illustrates the general point more strikingly. This is the approach known as field semantics or sometimes structural semantics. It has had an increasingly important application in Biblical studies, especially at the hands of Erhardt Gütgemann. Once again, the origins of the principle go back ultimately to Ferdinand de Saussure, although the immediate pioneer of field semantics is J. Trier.

To quote from de Saussure himself: "Language is a system of interdependent terms (French: *les termes sont solidaires* in which the value (*la valeur*) of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the others ... All words used to express related ideas limit each other reciprocally".^{8b} The words used to denote various colours provide a helpful example. Where is the cut-off point between *red* and *yellow*? The question cannot be answered unless it is known whether the word *orange* also belongs to the whole field. In a field of colour-words which includes *orange*, *red* will be defined more narrowly than in a field from which orange is absent. De Saussure himself illustrated the principle with reference to a field of French words relating to fear. The semantic value of *craindre*, to fear, and *avoir peur*, to be afraid, would be affected if *redouter*, to dread, ceased to contribute to the whole field.

John Sawyer examines the semantic field of words which relate to the concept of salvation. This is necessarily a study in Hebrew lexicography, since many of the individual terms possess nuances in

Hebrew which would not appear if the same study were carried out on the basis of an examination of English texts. Thus he compares the distinctive roles played within the same field by eight different Hebrew words connected with the idea of saving or salvation: *hosia*, *hissil*, *azar*, *hilles*, *millet*, *pillet*, *pasa*, and *paraq*. Some of these words have extended meanings which are immediately recognizable in English. For example, *azar* often means simply 'help', *pasa* often means 'open', and *paraq* can mean 'rescue'. But as soon as we try to bring out their distinctiveness in terms of translations into another language, the real significance of the field approach is lost from view. In an illuminating statement Sawyer asserts, "Instead of defining a word L in terms of another language, it can be defined as associated with A, B, C (in the same language), opposed to D, influenced semantically by G because of frequent collocation with it in idiom I, and so on. *This is the most reliable method of describing meaning, and must precede translation, not follow it.*"^{10c}

Clearly the same two principles that we have already noted emerge from this approach in terms of field semantics. On the one hand, we see the indispensibility of semantics as a tool of exegesis and precision in Biblical studies. On the other hand, we see that semantic considerations leave us entirely in the world of the text itself. In Sawyer's words, it must even precede translation into English. In terms of *what* is to be communicated, semantics provides an invaluable tool. In terms of *how* a given meaning is to be communicated, semantics has clear limitations, and remains subsidiary to hermeneutics.

II

Before we explore some of the more positive achievements which can be reached through semantics we must first make two further points about the limitations of semantics. The limitations in question occur when semantics is understood mainly as a theory of reference, and when the word, rather than broader stretches of language, is viewed as the key to questions about meaning.

Firstly, there is a widespread tendency to equate semantics with studies of meaning that view *meaning as reference*. In some circles it is an academic convention to divide the study of semantics, or semiotics, into three areas. The first area is called *syntax*, and concerns the inter-relationship between signs, symbols, or otherwise-named units of language. On this basis, field semantics is perhaps more strictly a study in syntax, although it is also more than this. The second area is termed *semantics* in the narrower sense of the term, and concerns relations between words and their objects of reference. Logically it is concerned with denoting.

The third area is known as *pragmatics*, and concerns the use of the linguistic unit in life. Semantics is identified specifically with this second area by A. Tarski, Charles Morris, and Rudolf Carnap.¹¹ Thus W.v.O. Quine writes, "'Semantics' would be a good name for the theory of meaning were it not for the fact that some of the best work in so-called semantics, notably Tarski's, belongs to the theory of reference".¹²

The limits of this paper do not allow me to demonstrate the weakness of referential theories of meaning in detail. I have tried to do this in the course of my short study *Language, Liturgy, and Meaning*.^{13a} We may note, however, that in his later writings the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein drew attention to two points of weakness, among others. Firstly, it is plausible to imagine that young children learn the meaning of words by associating the sound of the word with the object to which it refers. Thus a child learns the meaning of *spoon* when his mother points to the metal object by his plate. This is the method of ostensive definition. If this is indeed how a child learns language we might well expect this principle to be of fundamental importance for Christian communication, because, as Schleiermacher insisted, the model of how a child learns to understand language is of basic importance of hermeneutics.¹⁴ Wittgenstein has shown, however, that the value of ostensive definition as a starting-point in communication is highly dubious. For if I hold up a pencil and say "this is *tove*" the ostensive definition may itself be understood in various ways. It *may* mean "this is a pencil"; but it may equally mean "this is wood", or "this is hard" or "this is round", or "this is one".¹⁵ Wittgenstein drily comments in another of his writings, "Point to a piece of paper — And now point to its shape — now to its colour — now to its number ... How did you do it?"^{16b}

The second problem about both theories of reference and also ostensive definition is that it only works *when we are thinking of certain types of words*. Wittgenstein writes, "If you describe the learning of language in this way, you are, I believe, thinking primarily of nouns like 'table', 'chair', 'bread', and of people's names, and only secondarily of the names of certain actions and properties, and of the remaining kinds of word as something that will take care of itself."^{16c} The unbeliever does not learn the meaning of such words as 'God', 'love', or 'salvation', by being shown observable objects to which these words refer. They draw their meaning *in the first place* from the role which these words play in the lives of Christian believers, even if this does not completely exhaust their meaning for the believer himself. As Paul van Buren puts it, "To examine the word (i.e. 'God') in isolation from its context in the life of religious people is to pursue an abstraction".¹⁷ Or to cite a very different author, the theologian Edward Schillebeeckx, "In my opinion, the relationship

with *lived human experience* replaces the criterion of objective verification or falsification which is used by many linguistic analysts, including Paul van Buren himself".¹⁸ (Of course, Schillebeeckx refers to an earlier view of van Buren's, before he had once more "changed his mind"¹⁹).

Closely bound up with the problem of reference is the danger of viewing the problem of meaning, and hence also of communication, *in terms of words rather than speech-acts* or longer stretches of language. The problem of the intelligibility of Biblical language does not turn on the problem of word-recognition. This can be illustrated from the language of the Fourth Gospel. In John 3:4 Nicodemus shows that he has misunderstood the meaning of "birth" as it has been used by Jesus. His problem, however, is not that he is unfamiliar with the usual meaning of 'birth', but that its meaning in these verses is conditioned by a soteriological context. It is the relation between the word and its theological setting that needs to be explained. Similarly in John 4:10-12 the woman of Samaria misunderstands the meaning of "living water", which in a domestic setting simply means "running water" or water from a spring: "Sir, you have nothing to draw with ... Where do you get that running (living) water?" (v.11). Later on in the same chapter Jesus tells his disciples that he has food to eat of which they do not know. When the disciples betray their misunderstanding by asking, "Has anyone brought him food?" Jesus explains the situation by replying "My food is to do the will of him who sent me" (4:32-34). Large stretches of the sixth chapter turn on misunderstandings about the meanings of "bread", "blood", "drink", and "come down". The problem, however, is not caused by lack of word-recognition, but by the use of these words in an unusual logical setting.

It is important to notice, however, that it is the very multiplicity of images that allows the reader to cancel off irrelevant meanings and to discover the transcendent realities to which these terms point, by taking, as it were, cross-bearings from them. Jesus is the light, but he is the light-of-the-world; he is the bread, but he is also the door, the shepherd, the word, and the way. *Together* they contribute to the total Christological perspective of the Fourth Gospel. What needs to be investigated is not the semantic value of the individual words, but the total impact of the whole Christological universe of discourse. The variety of words and meanings inter-relate with one-another to indicate which areas of application are now correct, now incorrect, now relevant, now irrelevant. *Together* they point to applications, or areas of meaning, which otherwise lie beyond the edges of our day-to-day conceptual map.^{13b}

Both of these two sets of considerations, however, bring us back to hermeneutics. This becomes especially clear in an

interesting essay by the philosopher Paul Ricoeur entitled "The Problem of Double Meaning as Hermeneutic Problem and as Semantic Problem".^{20a} He writes, "The first achievement of modern hermeneutics was to posit as a rule that one proceed from the whole to the part and the details, to treat for example a Biblical pericope as a linking".^{20b} As Schleiermacher showed, there is a sense in which we can understand the individual parts of an utterance or writing only when we understand it as a whole, although of course it is also true that an understanding of the whole depends on an understanding of the parts. Ricoeur continues, "In hermeneutics there is no closed system of the universe of signs. While linguistics moves inside the enclosure of a self-sufficient universe ... hermeneutics is ruled by the open state of the universe of signs."^{20c} For example, semantics may clarify certain meanings in the narrative of the exodus, but hermeneutics "opens into a certain state of wandering which is lived existentially as a movement from captivity to deliverance."^{20d} Hermeneutics brings about an engagement between the horizons of the text and the horizons of the reader. To quote Ricoeur again, semantics brings more precision into the task of interpreting the language of the text, but "at the price of keeping the analysis within the enclosure of the linguistic universe."^{20e} Ricoeur concludes that what *constitutes* the language which is to be interpreted can be investigated by structural or semantic analysis, but what this language "attempts to say" is matter for hermeneutics rather than linguistics.^{20f}

III

In the last part of this paper I want to argue that semantics can serve the task of hermeneutics by providing two things: firstly, it safeguards the *particularity* of Biblical texts, and thereby performs the valuable service of 'distancing' them from the interpreter's pre-understanding; secondly, it can provide a fresh *angle of vision* from which to view certain texts.

On the subject of the particularity of Biblical texts, we turn naturally to James Barr's great book *The Semantics of Biblical Language*.¹ I have space only to illustrate one feature of Barr's approach, and I therefore select his warnings against what he calls the illegitimate totality transfer. This occurs when the semantic value of a word as it occurs in *one context* is *added* to its semantic value in another context. This process is continued until the sum total of these semantic values is illegitimately transferred into a particular text.

For example, in some Biblical passages the Greek word *ekklesia*, church, is described as the body of Christ. In others, it is regarded as the first instalment of the Kingdom of God. Yet again, in others,

it is viewed as the bride of Christ. In one sense, it might be legitimate to say that the church in the New Testament is all of these things. However, the illegitimate totality transfer occurs when the preacher who needs three points attempts to say that the meaning of church e.g. in Matthew 16:18 is (1) the body of Christ; (2) the bride of Christ; and (3) the first instalment of the kingdom of God. Barr successfully shows that this semantic error is committed not only by preachers but also by a number of Biblical scholars.^{9b}

Eugene Nida illustrates the principle as an axiom of semantics with reference to the two words 'green' and 'house'.²¹ 'Green' according to its context, may mean inexperienced, unripe, or the name of a colour. 'House' may mean dwelling, lineage, or business establishment. But when 'green' and 'house' occur next to each other in syntagmatic relationship, each conditions the semantic value of the other. 'Green house' cannot mean unripe business establishment. Yet, by analogy, we can imagine the preacher expounding the supposed 'riches' of each individual word of a Biblical text, ignoring the basic semantic principle that meaning is conditioned decisively by context. For the expositor and theologian this is a matter of honesty or sheer faithfulness to the particularity of the text.

We are now in a position to see how this serves the task of hermeneutics. We stated that the goal of hermeneutical endeavour was to secure a merging of horizons between the world of the text and the world of the interpreter. But the danger inherent in this process is that the interpreter will see the text only in terms of the categories and pre-judgments that he himself brings to it. We all know the Bible student who immediately interprets a text in terms of his own experience, very often with the result that the text says only what he wants it to say. The text, for this reason, needs also to be *distanced* from the interpreter.²² He needs to learn how to *distinguish* between his own horizons and those of the text, in such a way that *he respects the rights of the text to speak on its own terms*. Luther describes how the text may come as our *adversary*. It may attack our pre-conceptions, and thereby it speaks *afresh* to us. Semantics performs the invaluable role of providing an objective, even scientific, control which preserves the particularity of the meaning of the text, so that it may speak in its own right and on its own terms. It is not rendered innocuous by assimilation into some pre-packaged systematic theology of the reader, and thereby its challenge removed. Because it helps us to respect the rights of the text, semantics thereby serves hermeneutics.

Finally, the categories of semantics can illuminate Biblical texts by bringing their subject-matter to view from a *fresh angle of vision*. These categories include synonymy, opposition, types of vagueness, the analysis of metaphor, and the use of transformational techniques. I have discussed these in some detail elsewhere

in an essay entitled "Semantics and New Testament Interpretation" and I have also provided a more intensive examination of one particular passage in another article.²³

It is possible to distinguish, for example, between various types of semantic opposition. Paul uses the *opposition of complementarity* in his contrasts between grace and works. It entails a two-way exclusion, in which the assertion of one term involves the denial of the other, and *vice versa*. Erhardt Gütgemanns attempts to shed fresh light on Paul's contrast between "righteousness of God" and "wrath of God" in Romans I on the basis of this kind of semantic opposition.²⁴ However, there is also an *opposition of antonymy*, which involves only a *one-way* exclusion. Paul's language about the "good" man and the "righteous" man in Rom. 5:6-8 illustrates this. Might not the comparison between these two types of opposition bring Paul's language about flesh and Spirit into view from a fresh angle? Sometimes, the two modes of existence are described in terms of a two-way exclusion (Rom. 8:9, 12). At other times the relation is more complex (cf. I Cor. 2:6-16; 12:1-14, 40).

A third type of opposition is the *opposition of converseness*. 'Buy' and 'sell' stand in such a relation, for Smith *buys* a car from Jones, it may be said that Jones *sells* a car to Smith. However, 'buy' does not stand in this semantic relation to 'sell' when Paul says in I Cor. 6:19 that Christians are *bought* with a price. We cannot ask: who is doing the selling? The very inapplicability of this question in the light of the semantics of I Cor. 6:19 should warn us that Paul is using the word 'buy' in a sense different from that of everyday commerce. But if theologians had always been fully aware of this fact, they would not have asked concerning ransom theories of the atonement, "To whom was the price paid?"

We could go on to illustrate principles of synonymy in terms of interchangeability, and to explore other semantic categories. However, our purpose here is the limited one of indicating the role which semantics can play when it is used by the Biblical scholar in the over-all context of communicating the Christian faith today. I have tried to show that semantics does have important limitations, but that it can also serve as an invaluable tool when it operates within the broader context of hermeneutics. It achieves this firstly by providing a more precise tool for questions of exegesis and lexicography, secondly by distancing the interpreter from the text and allowing it to speak in its particularity, and thirdly, by enabling the interpreter to view the text from a fresh angle of vision. To take up Schleiermacher's statement about the hermeneutical circle, semantics helps the interpreter to understand the "parts" of the Biblical text in their particularity; hermeneutics helps him to grasp the subject-matter in its wholeness. Both are necessary for the task of communicating the Christian faith today.

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