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# Faith and Thought

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

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## FOREWORD

The *Journal of Transactions of the Victoria Institute* is not a new periodical; eighty-nine annual volumes have appeared thus far. Even the practice of publishing the *Journal* three times a year is not a complete innovation; the first thirty-one volumes were issued in quarterly parts. But the new form in which the *Journal* is henceforth to appear will not only serve the greater convenience of readers who are interested in the subjects with which it deals; it may also be taken as an external token of the resolve to promote the basic aims of the Victoria Institute in a manner as relevant as possible to the requirements of the second half of the twentieth century.

The Victoria Institute or Philosophical Society of Great Britain was founded in 1865 in order to investigate those areas of knowledge where philosophy and science bore most directly upon the Christian faith. The publication of such works as Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Lyell's *Antiquity of Man*, and the symposium *Essays and Reviews*, in the years immediately preceding, had wakened many people from their dogmatic slumbers and fostered a spirit of healthy inquiry. The Victoria Institute was an avowedly Christian society, but its founders were not of that company who trembled in case the ark of God might be taken by the Philistines, and were haunted by the fear that some new discovery might undermine the biblical revelation. Our founders had a robust conviction that all truth was God's truth, and they had no anxiety lest their investigations should lead to the discovery of inconvenient or unpalatable facts. Throughout its existence the Institute has been able to attract the interest and support of men who were free from obscurantism and devoted to the unprejudiced pursuit of

truth; its roll of former Presidents includes the names of men eminent in politics, law, divinity, science and letters, such as the great Lord Shaftesbury, Lord Chancellor Halsbury, Dean Wace of Canterbury, Sir Ambrose Fleming and Sir Frederic Kenyon.

In its earlier years the Institute paid keen attention to the subjects which were engaging public interest at the time. 'Genesis and Geology' was, of course, a prime favourite, and such subjects as the antiquity of man, the origin of species, utilitarianism, Bishop Colenso's views on the Pentateuchal narratives and so forth, were close runners-up. Biblical archaeology also excited great interest from the start; one of the early volumes of *Transactions* deals with the Moabite Stone, discovered in 1868. The interests of the Institute have kept pace with the times, and today they cover a wide field. In recent years such varied subjects as psychology, parapsychology, the natural sciences, geography, biblical interpretation, textual criticism, religious instruction in schools, linguistic theory, archaeology, the philosophy of religion, continuous creation, the theology of Karl Barth, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, have been treated in our *Transactions*—all being considered in their bearing on the Christian faith.

The change in the mode of publishing the *Journal* is part of a general reorganisation of the Institute's activities. Those who are charged today with guiding these activities share the conviction of our founders that all truth is one, and that there can be no inconsistency between the facts of the Christian revelation and those brought to light by scientific research. They are encouraged by the knowledge that Christian scholars and scientists throughout the world have drawn and continue to draw upon the vast fund of valuable material published in the annual volumes of our *Transactions*; they hope that in this new form the *Journal* may prove more useful than ever to all who are concerned with Christian apologetics and with the area of alleged conflict between science and religion; and they invite the support of all who share their interests and aims.

F. F. BRUCE,  
*President*

## EDITORIAL

This volume is the first one of its kind in the new format which the Victoria Institute has now adopted. As was announced in the last *Journal of Transactions* we include in the following pages some of the discussions of papers published in Volume LXXXIX 1957 of the *Transactions*. In this number we are publishing the contributions which were made after the paper read by Mr Michael Foster on Contemporary British Philosophy and Christian Belief. The other contributors include the Rev. J. Stafford Wright, Principal of Tyndale Hall, Bristol, and the Rev. J. I. Packer. An article is also included which was written by our late Honorary Secretary, Mr E. J. G. Titterington. It is our intention to have a number of reviews of current literature, and the first of these has been kindly written for us by Dr D. Stafford-Clark. We trust that this new venture may encourage still more written contributions, particularly in discussion of the articles which are published from time to time. Such contributions should be addressed to the Editorial Secretary, The Victoria Institute, 22, Dingwall Road, Croydon, Surrey. We wish also to express our thanks to Mr J. S. Linnell of The Aberdeen University Press Ltd. for his help and encouragement in the production of this *Journal*.

REV. J. STAFFORD WRIGHT, M.A.

## An Examination of Evidence for Religious Beliefs of Palaeolithic Man

Known facts about palaeolithic man are examined and interpreted. Those that might be given a religious interpretation are: (1) Special Treatment of the Dead, e.g. Cannibalism and Burial; (2) Cultic Figures; (3) Cave Art and other Art. None of these show any real evidence for religion in any fair sense of the term.

*Note:* In this paper it will be clear that the term MAN is used in a biological sense as the most convenient single term for the tool-using beings from the earliest times.

In the approximate dates I have not always followed Zeuner (*Dating the Past*, 1952), since present indications are that the radio-carbon method will bring about considerable revision of his datings. I have tried to obtain the best information about modern views of the dates.

When the Bible speaks of man, it regards him as a being who stands in a personal relationship to God; that is, to put it at its lowest estimate, as a religious animal. From the moment when, in Genesis ii, it introduces us to a specific man and woman, it gives us a picture of a race of beings who may know the true God, who may obey or disobey Him, or who may turn their devotion to other beings or other ideals which commonly make lower moral and lower spiritual demands upon them. The approximate date from which the Bible begins its record of full man is still a matter of legitimate research. We know that manlike beings existed in many parts of the world for hundreds of thousands of years. In features and in brain capacity many of these beings approximated to modern man; they mastered the use of tools, weapons, and fire; they buried their dead; they left behind them sculptures, carvings, and paintings. The purpose of this paper is to examine possible evidence which might indicate whether they showed any sort of religious response, such as we expect to find in Biblical man.

### *Treatment of the Dead*

So far as is known, man is the only animal that, either deliberately or instinctively, cares for his own dead. Burial beetles and hunting

wasps dispose of dead (or paralysed) bodies underground so that their larvae may feed on them. Mammals and birds are distressed when their mate or young are killed, and for a short time may attempt to treat them as still living, but they have no special way of disposing of the body.

### *Cannibalism*

The earliest evidence for special treatment of the dead comes from skulls and bones found in China. These were fully described, but were lost during the last war; they were apparently on board a ship that was sunk. These relics of *Sinanthropus pekinensis* are now recognised as similar to the Java remains of *Pithecanthropus erectus*. Further finds of this type are now being made in Algeria. No anthropologist at present will seriously attempt to fix a date for these ape-men, and the most that we can say is that they are earlier than 100,000 B.C.

*Pithecanthropus* used crude tools and made fires. The evidence of the position of the skulls and bones in China suggests that the bodies were decapitated after death, and the skulls broken open deliberately. Professor E. O. James in his *Prehistoric Religion* (p. 18) suggests that the skulls may be those of victims whose crania had been broken open to extract the brain for sacramental consumption; if so, he continues, organised cannibalism may have been an established feature of the cult of the dead, 'in which the cutting off and preservation of the head, skull or scalp was a prominent feature during or after the sacred meal either to extract its soul-substance or as a trophy'. One cannot help feeling that one small fact, namely, the deliberate breaking open of the skull, has been used to carry the argument a very long way, even to the introduction of such significant words as *sacramental*, *cult*, *sacred meal*, and *soul*.

A Neanderthal skull from Monte Circeo not only has the marks of a wound above the right eye, but the *foramen magnum*, which connects with the spinal cord, has been enlarged after death, probably to extract the brain. It should be noted how much later this is than Pekin man. We are now within the period for which the radio-carbon method of dating can be applied, and, although the method has not been applied to this skull, no Neanderthal skull with such extreme features is known to fall outside the period 50,000 to 30,000 B.C. In a rather earlier deposit at Krapina, in Croatia, some human and animal bones have been split open, presumably to extract the marrow.

This scanty evidence certainly suggests that two groups of early hominids, separated in time by something over 50,000 years, ate their fellows, as indeed they ate the animals that they hunted. The Monte Circeo skull was found in a cave that was heaped with the bones of all kinds of animals, though it was placed in the centre of the cave. To say, however, that such cannibalism was in any sense a ritual or sacramental act would be to run far beyond the evidence. Cannibalism may occur at any time among flesh-eating peoples, and it need not be part of a religious ceremony. Cannibals have rationalised their practice in every sort of way, as can be seen from the article in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* and in Funk and Wagnall's *Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*.

Perhaps at this point we should note the relationship that Professor James makes between the brain and soul-force. To us this connection seems obvious; but it was not obvious in early times. Heart and liver were the vital centres. As philosophers, Democritus and Plato thought that the brain was the seat of higher thought. Aristotle emphatically repudiated this idea. Galen traced the nerve system to the brain, but the real function of the brain was not understood until the seventeenth century. Shakespeare is apparently writing of a novel idea when he speaks of 'His pure brain, Which some suppose the soul's frail dwelling-house' (*King John*, v. vii. 3). It is likely that primitive man ate the brain because it was tasty, and likewise the marrow. There is no need to bring in metaphysics.

### *Burial*

If we except the possibly deliberate preservation of skulls by *Pithecanthropus*, the first formal burials occur amongst Neanderthal men. These burials are found in several places, notably at Le Moustier, La Ferrassie, La Chapelle-aux-Saints, and on Mount Carmel (if these last are truly Neanderthal). The burials at La Ferrassie are particularly interesting, since they are probably those of a complete family, the man in a natural recess in the rock-shelter, the woman in an artificially deepened cavity, and the four children in graves in the floor under flat stones with hollowed cup-marks on the underside. The bodies are in the attitude of sleep, except that the man at La Ferrassie has had his head cut off after death, and is in a constricted position. Neanderthal graves contain flints and bones, the latter being of considerable quantity, i.e. more than would have been consumed at a single funeral feast.



There is some evidence that food was buried with the body. At La Chappelle the leg of a bison was apparently buried with the flesh still on it, and one of the Mount Carmel skeletons clasped the jaw of a boar.

Burials of the Upper Palaeolithic period, commencing at about 30,000 B.C., are of various types. We now encounter races whom anthropologists definitely classify as *Homo sapiens*. Burials still occur in caves or rock shelters. The bodies are either in a straight position, or slightly curved, or tightly flexed; in the last instance it is believed that the body was bandaged in position before *rigor mortis* had set in. Sometimes slabs of stone are used at the sides and above to form a rough tomb. Ornaments are worn by men, women, and children, made of shells, or of beads cut from tusks and teeth of animals. Weapons and tools are buried with the bodies, and shells in large numbers are often strewn in the grave. The skeletons are almost always intact, not decapitated. A striking feature is the frequent use of red ochre, covering the body, and placed in lumps in the grave. Probably the earliest recognised discovery of a burial of this type was in a cave on the Gower Coast in Wales, where Dean Buckland in 1822 found the 'Red Lady of Paviland'.

There is no need to come further down in time, since henceforth the custom of burial is well known. How are we to interpret these early burial customs? As with cannibalism, it is possible to make several suggestions. First of all, however, we may wonder what happened to the vast proportion of those who died. These cave shelters were inhabited for many generations, yet only rarely, as at Grimaldi, does it appear that a grave was reopened to receive another body. At La Ferrassie a whole family may well be buried, but otherwise the burials are of individual bodies or of a small group, who may or may not have constituted a family or unit. The vast majority of these people have vanished completely. This means, either that they were buried away from the cave in shallow graves or that they were simply placed outside. In either case they would soon be eaten by animals. This absence of any serious attempt to preserve the bodies is as important as the deliberate preservation of a very few, when we come to assess any religious significance in the burials.

Does burial involve a belief in the after-life? And is belief in the after-life necessarily a religious concept? If the answer to the first question is yes, then certain of the Palaeolithic men selected a very, very few of their number for immortality. Although I myself do not

favour this interpretation, it is not as absurd as it might sound. It would be possible, if Palaeolithic man had not yet discovered the art of language. No one knows when language first appeared, as distinct from a variety of cries to indicate emotions and needs. Professor Le Gros Clark in *The Fossil Evidence for Human Evolution* (p. 89) discounts attempts to deduce functions, such as speech, from endocranial casts, pointing out that in hominids and the larger anthropoid apes the folds of the brain do not impress themselves clearly on the endocranial aspect of the skull except near the frontal and occipital poles of the brain and in the lower temporal region. If, then, language had not yet been discovered, it might be possible for men here and there to have an idea of the after-life, and to insist on preserving the body in a way that might fit it for a further existence. Yet, without language, these individuals could not communicate to their fellows what they felt and what they were doing when they buried the body. The most that they could convey would be an invitation to a funeral feast, and there was no reason why others should follow their example and bury their dead every time a member of the group died.

A reader of this paper has rightly pointed out that this argument must not be overpressed. We cannot conceive of the caves being inhabited all the time by static groups. Families and groups would travel about in pursuit of game, following the herds as they moved. Thus they would be living in open sites for much of the time, and, if they buried their dead in the open, the bones would not survive since they would not become fossilised. However, one imagines that, as further open sites are excavated, stone slabs could reveal the presence of graves. Meanwhile I do not think that we need to postulate continuous travelling after game. Hunting tribes today may go out from one centre and bring back the game. Extensive travelling would only be necessary when the game became rare. Meanwhile it remains a fact that, although the caves were often visited, if not lived in continuously, only occasional burials were made in the caves. These must have been made while the caves continued to be lived in, since otherwise the bodies would have been dug up by animals.

Such burial among one's own people suggests something other than belief in an after-life. It would seem to express a clinging affection, which manifested itself in this way sporadically. The purpose behind the burial would then be to maintain the link with the dead person as long as possible. The body was therefore placed in the floor of the home, with the possessions that belonged to it, and covered with red

ochre to try to replace the pallor of death with the redness of life. Large stones might be placed on top to thwart the attacks of scavenging animals when the owners of the cave were temporarily absent. Such a situation appals us, but doubtless the stench of rotten animal flesh was already bad enough in these shelters.

This seems a reasonable alternative to the after-life theory, even though it does not explain, any more than does the after-life theory, the constriction of some of the bodies and the cup-marks on some of the covering stones. Yet, if the after-life theory is felt to be more reasonable, we are still not entitled to classify this belief as religious. Even today there are some spiritualists who believe in survival without believing in God; and if dreams, ghosts, or imagination led to the idea that the dead continued to live, this is no more religious than the belief that the living who have gone to visit a neighbour still continue to exist.

### *Venuses and Mother Goddesses*

From about 30,000 B.C. there appear small sculptured figures and rock carvings of female figures that anthropologists call *Venuses*. The term in itself is not intended to have any religious significance, but denotes nude figures with prominent indications of pregnancy and motherhood. One of the most famous is the Venus of Willendorf, whose face, like almost all these figures, is scarcely delineated, though her hair is coiled round and round in an unending plait. Fallen from the wall of a rock shelter at Laussel there is a depiction of a female figure holding (probably) a bison horn in her right hand, while another figure from the same site is less clear, and has been variously interpreted either as a man and a woman clasped together, or as a woman giving birth to a child, though it is equally possible to see the figure as simply that of a woman alone, as depicted by G. R. Levy in *The Gate of Horn*, page 60 and Plate 7. From the same cave also comes the figure of a headless man with a girdle, often regarded as a hunter.

These Venus figures are associated with the Gravettian culture, and have not so far been found in the Solutrean and Magdalenian cultures that succeeded the Gravettian. A strange series of small stylised figures, carved from coal, come from Petersfels, and belong to the Magdalenian culture. Maringer and Bandi describe them as seated female figures, and indeed they appear to be nothing else except 'seat', no other portion of the anatomy being depicted or shaped at all. They are

pierced at the top, presumably for wearing as ornaments, but it would be hard to say that they were religious emblems in any sense of the word.

It is not until Neolithic times that exaggerated female figures appear again. Roughly speaking, there is a gap of perhaps 15,000 years during which figures of women are depicted without exaggerated sexual features. It is easy to overlook this gap, and thus to read back ideas of a mother goddess into palaeolithic times, whereas there is simply no evidence at all for continuity of development. Once the mother goddess figures appear from about 3000 B.C. in centres of civilisation like Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Indus Valley, erotic cults become associated with them. Yet there is nothing that can fairly be adduced as evidence for eroticism, or deliberate exploitation of sex, in the Palaeolithic carvings. The figures suggest that these people were 'naked and unashamed'; they did not worship sex nor any mother goddess; but they depicted motherhood as the supreme element in the mystery of life.

Those who have not seen a picture of the woman from Laussel might jump to the conclusion that the bison's horn which she is holding is a phallic symbol, but the shape and the direction make this impossible. Levy in *The Gate of Horn*, page 59, speaks of it as 'the horn through whose point, in later religious cults, the creative force of the beast was thought to be expelled'; but later religious cults are not a safe guide here. If only we can rid our minds of the need to search for some deep symbolism, the carving resolves itself into a straightforward picture of a woman just about to drink from a curved horn; she is, in fact, in the act of raising it to her lips.

Although we shall be considering cave paintings in the next section, it is worth mentioning here the so-called 'fertility dance' painted in a rock shelter at Cogul in Spain. Professor James reproduces it on page 149 of *Prehistoric Religion*. In this scene nine women are said to be dancing round a little man. It is a pity that James reproduces only the grouped human figures, and not the whole picture, which may be found in Levy's book opposite page 17. So far from dancing round the man, the women on the left appear to be watching a group of animals, one of which is threatening them with its horns. Two small animals actually appear in the group of women, which would be rather demoralising for ritual dancers! To clinch the matter, Professor James admits on page 150 that the little man was added subsequently to the picture of the women. Levy (p. 81) is emphatic that this is no ritual dance, and we may well agree with her.

*Cave Art and Other Art*

Few people are ignorant today of the great wealth of cave paintings and carvings that have come to light, especially in France and Spain. The wonder of the caves must not blind us to the fact that very many examples of similar art have been found on bone and ivory, and in shelters that do not run far back into the rock. This must be taken into account in building up interpretations of secret magic and mystery in the depths of Mother Earth. Was there intended to be a greater sense of the numinous, and of dark religious mystery, in the recesses of the caves?

Several of the more important caves have today been made easily accessible to the public. Others are still difficult to penetrate, and necessitate crawling through tight passages and descending difficult holes before reaching the chambers where the pictures are found. Those of us who have done some caving, and who have crawled through wet and narrow passages and up and down steep climbs lighting our way with lamps on our helmets, must be amazed at the caving exploits of these Palaeolithic men who made their way along, holding their little clay lamps, probably primed with moss and fat, until they came to the place where they drew and painted huge pictures of beasts on the walls and roof, sometimes lying on a shelf with the roof low over their head, sometimes standing on the shoulders of one of their fellows or using long poles to reach higher up the walls. And what pictures they produced! In vivid action, grace, and movement, they rival any art that has ever been produced. It would be incredible if it were not true. Admittedly there may be a few forgeries, but there are pictures that have been coated with stalagmite deposits since they were drawn, and beasts are depicted that have been long extinct.

Yet we must not read our own feelings back too much into this early period. Claustrophobia in tight passages, and fear of descending and climbing tricky holes, were probably non-existent. The ability to sense obstacles and to remember the way even in complete darkness was probably highly developed. Today we find caves cold; but the bodies of these men were probably capable of standing considerable ranges of heat and cold and, indeed, in winter time they could well enjoy the higher temperatures of these caves, which remain fairly constant throughout the year. The air temperature of a cave is somewhat less than the mean annual surface temperature for the region

in which the cave lies. Today the temperature of Yorkshire caves between 600 and 1400 feet above sea level is between 48° and 50° Fahrenheit. (See e.g. *British Caving*, ed. C. H. D. Cullingford, p. 146.)

The cave art in France and Spain extended over a considerable period of time, though it is impossible to speak definitely about the actual dates. There are technical difficulties in the way of obtaining radio-carbon readings for the paintings themselves, and an early attempt to date the Lascaux paintings by this method is not now regarded as reliable. We may regard them as falling between 20,000 and 10,000 B.C., and in some places overpainting indicates a succession of artists.

Most of the great animals of the day were depicted, including the mammoth, woolly rhinoceros, bison, reindeer, lion, and bear. They are shown in various positions. A few have what may be arrows or boomerangs upon them or beside them, while an occasional superimposed object may be a trap. In the cave of Montespan there are clay models of wounded animals, including a model of a headless bear with the skull of a real bear between its paws. Only occasionally are the animals depicted as pregnant and, to the best of my knowledge, there is only one scene which can be interpreted as the mating of two animals; this is the model of the two bisons in Tuc d'Audoubert, where the male stands behind the female.

The depiction of the human figure is rare in the pictures that occur in the depths of the caves. There are only three known ones that are of any consequence. At Lascaux a man, drawn as a child of five might draw him, is apparently being killed by a charging bison, which is magnificently drawn. From Les Trois Frères comes the famous picture that is commonly called 'The Sorcerer'. It is the figure of a man, with his body slightly leaning forward, and his arms bent at the elbow so that his hands come together in front. His round eyes peer out through a bearded mask, and he has a pair of antlers on his head. There is another human figure in the same cave, wearing a different disguise consisting of the skin and horns of *bos primigenius*, or a bison. There is a mysterious object like a slender bow with the 'bowstring' towards the man; the top point is against the nostrils of the skin-disguise, while the lower end is laid across the man's arm, which is draped with the leg and hoof of the skin. He is standing behind a *bos primigenius* or a young bison, which is looking back at him over its shoulder, while in front again a stag is running away at speed.

It is obvious that the interpretation of these last two human figures is important for any religious significance that cave art may have. Margaret Murray, in *The God of the Witches*, boldly declares on page 23, 'The earliest known representation of a deity is in the Caverne des Trois Frères in Ariège. . . . It seems evident from the relative positions of all the figures that the man is dominant and that he is in the act of performing some ceremony in which the animals are concerned.' The reference here is to the position of the 'Sorcerer' high up in the roof, and not to the second figure behind the animals. Margaret Murray's book is an attempt to trace this horned deity from Palaeolithic times to the witch cult of the Devil in the Christian era. There is, however, a big gulf in time between this Palaeolithic representation and the horned deities of Egypt and Mesopotamia.

The more usual interpretation is that the 'Sorcerer' represents the high priest of the caves, who exercised his magic arts in order to bring success in the chase. The pictures and the pierced models are examples of sympathetic magic. On occasions he may have led ritual dances; for example, in Tuc d'Audoubert, where the two clay bison occur, there are still heel prints on the floor, curiously enough of very small feet, perhaps children's, and the pattern has been interpreted as the marks of a dance. This interpretation of the 'Sorcerer' may well be true, and it would be in line with sacred animal dances among primitives in recent times. The sense of kinship with all life is acute among many primitives, as Levy, Bruhl and others have shown, and it is difficult for us to realise it. Yet it is possible to accept this explanation without taking it as an example of religion. Everything depends upon one's definition of religion and one's belief about its origin. Did religion develop from magic or by way of magic? At times the two may be mingled, but the steps from a sense of oneness with all creation to a belief in devotion to a Creator have not been traced. If sympathetic magic to draw the animals to the hunter's arrows is religion, then in the cave art we may have the beginnings of religion.

There is, however, yet another possibility. The cave art may be celebrations of past victories rather than magic for the future. The two 'sorcerer' figures in this case are hunters disguised in animal skins. This is a fair interpretation of the figure disguised in an ox skin. The object like a bow is not some musical instrument to lead a sacred dance or to charm the depicted beasts, as some suggest, but is an actual bow, which the artist has had some difficulty in depicting in a natural position owing to the skin disguise. Even the single 'sorcerer' may be

a man disguised for hunting, this time in the skin of a stag. We know that such disguises were adopted, and an engraving on a reindeer horn from Laugerie-Basse shows a hunter, wearing horns, crawling after a bison. Thus we may surmise that in the cold winter days or nights Palaeolithic men gathered in these painted halls and lived over again the triumphs of the chase. The spectators grunted and shouted approval of the beasts that they knew so well, as the flickering lamps moved from scene to scene in the portrait gallery. Every so often an artist added a new scene, painted over an old one, or strove to outdo previous painters by reaching up to fresh heights. Where there were clay models, some mimed over again the attacks on the beasts, or if at this date they had the gift of coherent speech, they related the stories of their mighty deeds.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to show that there is no evidence of religion, in any fair sense of the word, nor of the beginnings of religion, in Palaeolithic times, say down to 10,000 B.C. Indeed it would be safe to come down several more thousand years.

Expressed in Biblical terms, this can mean one of two things. Either these men had the knowledge of the true God, and worshipped Him without any image, picture, or visible means; in which case they are 'Adamic' men. Or they had no awareness at all of the spiritual world and spiritual claims. They may have had a sense of kinship with other animal life, but the concept of God was beyond them, and they had no revelation of God; in which case they are 'pre-Adamic', and do not have the status of men in the Biblical sense.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

The fullest reproductions of early art will be found in *Art in the Ice Age*, by J. MARINGER and H. G. BANDI (Allen & Unwin, 1953), a sumptuous volume costing 45s.

There have been a number of other books in recent years, describing and interpreting this early art. The following are the chief ones consulted for this paper:

- R. R. SCHMIDT. *The Dawn of the Human Mind*. Sidgwick & Jackson, 1936.  
G. R. LEVY. *The Gate of Horn*. Faber, 1948.  
HERBERT KÜHN. *The Rock Pictures of Europe*. Sidgwick & Jackson, 1956.



E. O. JAMES. *Prehistoric Religion*. Thames & Hudson, 1957.

E. O. JAMES. *History of Religions*. English Universities Press; Teach Yourself Series, 1956.

MARGARET MURRAY. *The God of the Witches*. Faber, 1931.

GEORGE EVERY. *Lamb to the Slaughter*. James Clarke, 1956.

This is an attempt to link the ideas of palaeolithic man with the sacrifice of Christ; but the author accepts uncritically such ideas as the palaeolithic mother-goddess.

To get the feeling of penetrating some of the harder caves, there is no book to surpass *Ten Years under the Earth*, by the greatest living caver, NORBERT CASTERET who, among other things, describes his discovery of Montespan, referred to in this paper. The book has been available in a Penguin edition since 1952.

Unfortunately I only came across LESLIE PAUL's new book when this paper was completed. In *Nature into History* (Faber, 1957) he includes an interpretation of the cave art in terms of the developing religious sense of man. It is a dynamic book, but some of the criticisms made in this paper would be valid to a considerable extent.

MICHAEL FOSTER, M.A.

## Contemporary British Philosophy and Christian Belief

At the Town Hall, Oxford, on 31 January 1957, Mr Michael Foster read a paper on the relationships of Christian Belief with contemporary British Philosophy. In this he defended the idea of a Philosophy based on revelation, after he had considered the two-way connection which might be argued between current philosophy and Christian belief. The idea of a two-way relationship leads to the question whether the belief in the mystery of Christianity is contrary to the demands for clarity by philosophers. 'Revelation is of a mystery. A question which specifies the terms in which an answer is to be given, determines in advance that it shall not be mysterious, because mystery, when revealed, exceeds what we could have anticipated.'

The discussion then opened with a reply from Mr Nowell-Smith who said:

First of all I should like to thank Mr Foster for not doing what so many people do, that is talking in vague terms about 'modern philosophers'. Instead he identifies the philosophers with whom he is concerned by name. He says that the philosophers concerned deny that they form a school or movement. This denial has, in my view, been overdone. It was an over-emphatic way of giving a very necessary warning, a warning to those who expect to find a rigid orthodoxy, a party line in the works of the philosophers concerned. There is no party line, no agreed doctrine, no sacred book. It is more like the vague allegiance people had to political parties—for example the Radicals—before there were any whips.

In his printed paper Mr Foster wanted to call us 'positivists'. I am sure this is quite wrong since, historically, this word was first used to describe the anti-metaphysical position of Comte; later it was taken over by the Viennese philosophers to show that they too repudiated metaphysics. But the philosophers Foster speaks of are not necessarily anti-metaphysical. In his talk he withdrew this and used the label 'contemporary'. This is a word I detest as much when applied to philosophy as when applied to furniture. New College (Collegium Novum) was so called because it was supposed to be a quite new departure in education; it is now a very old college and if the name were not just a name it would be very misleading. In the same way if you

call our philosophy contemporary you imply that it will soon vanish altogether; for the name will look very odd if it survives, which I think it will. Foster uses this name to emphasise the revolutionary character of the movement. But I would remind you that most great philosophers have been revolutionaries. Plato starts the Republic by dismissing all traditional morality in order to build on new foundations. Descartes did the same; so did Locke and, in a way, Kant. They saw themselves as clearing the ground of the rubble of previous philosophies so that they or others could erect a permanent building on secure foundations. All such buildings collapse in fifty years or so. So there is nothing new about being revolutionary; this is not a peculiarity of 'contemporary' philosophers. The main difference is that the current revolution is the work of many hands; we have something more like Collective Leadership. With one possible exception, I don't think any of these philosophers will survive as 'great philosophers' in the way that Plato or Kant have survived.

As I said, there is no agreed doctrine; you can't call any of these philosophers Idealists or Realists, Platonists, Thomists or Kantians. But there is an agreed method; and if we must have a label, let it be 'analysts'. But analysis has been employed in defence of many different philosophical positions. What we have in common is (a) the pursuit of clarity, illumination, understanding, and (b) the method of paying close attention to the meanings of ordinary words. There is nothing new in the first of these points. In what he said about the revelatory character of Greek philosophy and its contrast with the post-Baconian outlook, Foster hinted that earlier philosophers were not in pursuit of clarity. But I think that Philosophers have always tried to get things clear and that this is as true of Plato and Spinoza as of any contemporary philosopher. It marks off the people called 'philosophers' from some others, for example poets and mystics. There have been philosophers who were obviously drawn in both directions, even torn by the conflict. Plato's intense hatred of poetry can only be explained on the grounds that he was a poet as well as a philosopher and, to be a philosopher, he had to turn his back on poetry.

I should like to say something about the attitude of contemporary philosophers to metaphysics. Fundamentally metaphysics is the attempt to answer the question 'What is the world ultimately made of?' But you can ask and answer this question in two different ways. You may think that you are giving the right answer, from which it follows that all other answers are wrong. Most of the great metaphysicians

took it in this way. We can look at it in a different way and be more eclectic. We can read Plato and try to see the world as Plato saw it, read Spinoza and try to see the world as Spinoza saw it, without raising the question 'Which of them was right?' We don't usually ask whether Dante's vision or Milton's view was the right one, Michelangelo's or Rembrandt's. Can't we do this with metaphysicians? I should like to put it to Mr Foster like this; if you ask a question, you obviously don't know the answer—or you wouldn't ask. But you must already have in mind the criteria for judging the answer right or wrong. I mean, if you asked how much this match-box weighed and somebody said 'five inches', you would know that this was not the right answer. But the metaphysician is trying to be fundamental, to give a complete answer to everything from the start. He won't allow any ground outside his system from which we can look at it and ask if it is the right system or not. This doesn't mean that metaphysics is useless; I can look at a metaphysical system in a different way, a more aesthetic way, in the way that I look at pictures or literature.

The fathers of the analytic movement, Russell and Moore, were in fact metaphysicians; Russell obviously so; Moore less obviously, and it would take me too long to defend the statement that Moore was a metaphysician. What about more recent analytical philosophers? I have five comments to make: (1) Some, like myself, went through a definitely anti-metaphysical phase which has probably left its traces. *Language, Truth and Logic* was published when I was an undergraduate; I had about two terms in which to forget everything I had learned and, when it came to schools, I just had to pray that the examiners had read the book. I swallowed it whole; but most of the philosophers Foster mentions were, at that time, either too old to swallow Positivism (or anything else) whole, or too young. For the younger philosophers, positivism is part of the history of philosophy, not a phase in their own development. So, for different reasons, few of those Foster mentions are as anti-metaphysical as I am. (2) Although we have no doctrine and no Bible, I think it is fair to say that, if we had a Bible, it would be Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, which is a very metaphysical book. So also is another very influential book, Professor Ryle's *Concept of Mind*. This book is not, as some people think, a *dissolution* of the metaphysical problem of mind and body, in the way in which the Positivists talked about dissolving problems, that is to say showing them to be pseudo-problems or muddles. Ryle gives an answer to the

mind-body problem, a different answer from Descartes', but an answer all the same. His treatment is not like Ayer's in the last chapter of *Language, Truth and Logic* where all metaphysical problems are dissolved. (3) Contemporary philosophers, particularly the younger ones, think and write about the traditional problems of metaphysics, namely Substance, Time, Mind and Body, Essence and Existence. They sometimes call these problems 'logical'; but the word 'logic' in Oxford has always included metaphysics and the theory of knowledge as well as logic in the narrower sense. (4) The actual title 'metaphysician' is no longer a term of abuse. Mr Strawson once said to me that philosophy just *is* metaphysics, implying that the other branches, like ethics and logic, are only subsidiary, peripheral or propaedeutic. The real game, what philosophers do when they get down to it, is metaphysics. I am not sure whether Foster would agree about this or not; I hope he will discuss it. (5) Philosophy, as taught in Oxford, is still based on what C. S. Lewis called, in an apt metaphor, 'the right and the left lung of humanism', Plato's Republic and Aristotle's ethics. Of the ten Oxford philosophers Foster mentioned by name, eight are Greats men.

Before turning to the second part of Foster's paper, I want to say something about the last paragraph in Section 4. 'Analysis, according to this view, is what philosophers in the past always have been doing, without realising it, except in so far as their performance of their task has been distorted by their own misconceptions of what the task of philosophy is.' I think this a half-truth. I should say that philosophers in the past have done many things, of which analysis is only one. They tried to tell us how to live, and to support their advice with arguments, even metaphysical proofs. Then again, particularly in the seventeenth century, the philosophers whose names come to mind, Hobbes, Descartes, Leibniz, were engaged in bringing natural science to birth, among other things. (Descartes made the new science respectable in the eyes of the Catholic Church, his metaphysics enabled you to be both a good scientist and a good Catholic, which was very difficult before.) But all these philosophers failed to distinguish adequately between the different things they were doing. I am not criticising them for this; it takes a great philosopher to get these differences clear; and I am not boasting when I say that we are clearer about them and know better what we are doing. After all, we stand on their shoulders.

At this point I should like to say something about Foster's Section 5, the issue between logical analysis and introspection. It is perhaps the

crucial issue; but it is a vast subject and I can only be dogmatic about it. When I wrote, as I did in my book, about the meaning of the word 'ought', I claim to have been writing about *the same* subject that would, in an earlier idiom, have been called 'the Idea of Obligation' or 'the Nature of Obligation'. And I think that our 'New Way of Words' is a better idiom than Locke's 'New Way of Ideas'. For the appeal to what Foster calls the 'inner oracle' seems to me unduly subjective. Contemporary philosophers appeal, not to this inner light, but to what 'we' mean by such and such a word. I know that this 'we' is very vague; but it does give us something publicly ascertainable, some objective standard of criticism. If taken *seriously* the inner oracle seems to make everything subjective; and if we are not to take the metaphor seriously, how are we to take it?

I come now to the second part of Foster's paper, the part about contemporary philosophy and Christian Faith. I am not really the right person to talk about this. Briefly, I would say that it was certainly not impossible for a contemporary philosopher to be friendly towards metaphysics—I think I have shown that—and perhaps not impossible for a contemporary philosopher to be religious, even to believe some kind of Theology. But I do think it impossible for an analyst to be a *Christian*. I know that there are philosophers who claim to be both; but I think they are in an impossible and untenable position. I am quite open to conviction on this; it is not a matter to which I have given much thought, as my own position in each issue is quite clear. But I should say that an analyst must make a sharp distinction between historical and theological statements and that this would undermine the essential and peculiar Christian claim that at least some of his assertions are both historical and theological.

Foster drew attention in his script (though not in his talk) to Mr Mitchell's line that predicates must be understood to change their meaning when applied to God. I think this would have to be extended to saying that 'true' changes its meaning when applied to theological statements. Perhaps not; I will suggest a possible way out. We could say that 'true' means 'worthy of being believed' and that it retained this meaning when applied to theological statements; only the grounds of believing something, what make it worthy of belief, change. But there is still the difficulty that historical and theological grounds would have to be kept distinct. I have studied the historical evidence for the life of Christ in an amateurish way and I find it hard to make up my mind as to whether there was, in an historical sense, a *man* answering

to the description of Christ in the New Testament. There may have been, but the evidence is extremely flimsy. Anyhow this is not the main point. The main point is whether that man, if there was one, was God; and I do not see how this could be an historical question at all. If you take Archbishop Ussher's date for the creation historically, it seems to me just false; for it entails that every statement about something happening before 4004 B.C. is false.

In the last part of Foster's paper I do find some very baffling things, which I should like him to clarify. I think he agrees with my view that contemporary philosophy (of the kind he is concerned with) is really incompatible with the Christian Faith. He says on page 49 that the conclusion that there is no conflict is baffling to a Christian, who feels obscurely that there ought to be a point of conflict but can't locate it. I think his instinct is right here. Then he does try to locate the point of conflict and finds it in the fact that contemporary philosophers insist on clarity, that they avoid and condemn mystery; and mystery is an essential ingredient in the Christian Faith. He thinks that we believe that everything is explicable, that we can, with human powers of understanding, unravel everything; and no Christian can accept this. But this is an ambiguous question. How could one settle it? How could one decide whether or not there are some things that no one can ever understand? Obviously there are many things that we don't understand now; so if we were all to be destroyed by an atomic explosion now, there would remain many unsolved problems. But the question is whether there are problems which are *in principle* insoluble. Equally, we can't explain things that just haven't got an explanation, such as why all Mrs Jones's children were born on a Friday. This is not an insoluble mystery, not a genuine question that we unfortunately can't answer. Are there any *genuine* questions which men are *necessarily* unable to answer? Before answering that I should like to be shown one. Offhand I should say that I couldn't understand such a question, and therefore couldn't even ask it.

I am puzzled to understand Foster's contrast between a philosophy that excludes mystery and one that doesn't. This is connected with a contrast that is much clearer, that between the Baconian spirit of 'putting nature to the question' and the pre-Baconian spirit of wondering, without prevenient questioning. But historically I think he is wrong about the Greeks. I have always thought that what distinguished Greek from all earlier thought was precisely its unremitting scepticism and curiosity. I am reminded of what Collingwood—no

friend either to positivism or to analysis—says about Herodotus. He thought Herodotus a great historian because he didn't just listen to stories and write them down; he questioned with witnesses. He was not a clerk typing out depositions; he was a judge examining the witnesses on their depositions. Of course we do often learn things without framing previous questions. For example, when I read novels by writers like Tolstoy or E. N. Forster, things are revealed to me which are not answers to questions I asked in advance. If this is what Foster means by having things revealed without prevenient questioning, of course it happens. But I don't see how an essential mystery can remain; for if something is revealed to me, it is no longer a mystery.

In his written script Foster condemns what he calls 'armchair' revelation; but this seems to me to destroy the contrast between the two spirits in which philosophy can be done. To get out of one's armchair is presumably to become a Baconian, to start asking one's own question. So, on this criterion, *all* revelation is armchair revelation. I can't quite get the conception of something lying between the Baconian rejection of mystery and armchair revelation; and this is evidently what Foster wants to introduce into philosophy. He wants to introduce a new spirit or reintroduce an old spirit into philosophy, the spirit of wonder or passive acceptance of revealed truth. But, without wishing to dispute about names (in this case the proper application of the title 'philosopher') I should say that anything called 'philosophy' would have to be a *rational* inquiry, an inquiry into something that, however difficult or obscure, was not *essentially* mysterious. To say things like 'credo quia impossibile' is not to do philosophy. But I feel that I may simply have misunderstood the programme for philosophy which Foster sketches in his last pages; and, if this is so, I must, being a philosopher, ask him to clarify it.

#### PROFESSOR COULSON

Before I open the meeting for public discussion, there are two brief comments that I wish to make. The first concerns the attitude of mind shown by our two speakers, to both of whom we are all of us deeply grateful for exceptionally clear and interesting statements of position. It seemed to me that whereas Mr Foster was friendly toward philosophy, and wished to explore the extent to which it would be accommodated within the Christian Faith, Mr Nowell-Smith was anxious that there should be no accommodation. I suspect—as is usually the case in situations of this sort—that *a priori* feelings of this kind have



influenced both speakers in the material which they have used: and it suggests that, whatever claims may or may not be made about this matter, you can no more keep the personal element out of philosophy that you can keep it out of science.

My second comment is related to Mr Foster's interesting reference to mystery. It is true that, from one point of view, the object of science is to answer questions, and so to remove mystery. But that object is never achieved, because the answers must be given in terms which are ultimately just as mysterious as the phenomena which prompt the original questions. Isaac Newton could—on a first glance—be thought to have removed all mystery from the mechanical behaviour of matter, when forces of various sorts act upon it to cause its motion; but—on closer inspection—these very laws of motion for which he is so justly famous, do not remove the mystery. They tell us that if matter were composed of hard, impenetrable, solid spheres, then it would respond in such and such a way to outside influences. But they tell us nothing whatever about these massive impenetrable particles, nor indeed do they force us to believe that such particles really exist. Newton said that 'God in the beginning formed matter' in these particles: we may, with equal accuracy, point out that they were Newton's creation, as much as God's. So the mystery remains, changed in appearance but deepened in character. Is it surprising that the Dutch physicist Stevinus, himself the writer of an early textbook on mechanics, could give it the sub-title: 'A wonder and no wonder'? All this is not to say that I disagree with Mr Foster's remarks, but perhaps it is to warn us against accepting the glib view that in giving man control over his environment, science denies him any sense of mystery.

And now I throw open for discussion both Mr Foster's paper and Mr Nowell-Smith's reply.

MR J. J. EYRE, Balliol College

Mr Nowell-Smith stated he thought that the historical grounds for the life of Christ are flimsy. Would he include the Resurrection in this? Would he comment on this if he thinks this very flimsy.

MR NOWELL-SMITH

Yes; I think the evidence for the Resurrection far flimsier than the evidence for a great many things said to have been done by people in whose existence nobody believes now.

REV. Y. NOLET, Merton College

It has been suggested that metaphysical questions can be dealt with in two different ways. Most metaphysicians think it possible, at least in principle and in some cases, to find answers that are true to the exclusion of any other, and they are interested in actually finding them. Mr Nowell-Smith prefers a more eclectic or aesthetic approach, and of course he has every right to: there is no *need* to raise the question of truth about any metaphysical issue. But whatever approach one adopts, an object either is black or it is not; and in the same way, if two metaphysical theses are mutually contradictory one must be true and the other false—and the question naturally arises which is the true one. Admittedly as a particular thesis is part and parcel of a metaphysical system, we must be allowed to examine the latter in any way we like.

A more important point regards the alleged impossibility for an analyst to be a Christian: one reason given is that Christian doctrine includes some assertions that are both historical and theological. I am not sure that this is the case. But even if Christian doctrine does include such assertions, I do not see what is wrong with them, for presumably they can be analysed, and their two aspects clearly distinguished. It is further suggested, I think, that a statement of one kind (e.g. a statement concerning the life of Jesus) cannot offer a good ground for the truth of a statement of another kind (e.g. a statement concerning the divinity of Jesus). But this is far from obvious. Why should not the life of Christ be good evidence for the truth of his doctrine? Of course I am presuming that his doctrine is intrinsically credible, i.e. is a conceivable object of belief.

My third point I should like to address to Mr Foster. When he says that divine revelation can be the object of rational thought and analysis I could not agree more; for if God cares to reveal himself he clearly means us to understand him, and the human mind must endeavour to open itself to his message. This, Mr Foster rightly says, is theology. But I should like to add that, being theology, it should not be described as philosophy, for we need a word to cover the purely rational effort of man when he comes to grips with the ultimate questions about the world and about himself. This is a view prevalent in an important part of Christendom. For example, all the philosophers of Louvain, though they may differ from each other considerably in other respects, are at one in insisting that philosophy must on no

account be based upon divine revelation. They point out that philosophy has a value of its own, as the crowning-piece of the edifice of science, and that unless it enjoys a full autonomy it loses this value without any benefit to theology: while, by remaining independent, it gives considerable help to theological speculation.

MR J. A. ROWE, Christ Church

I should like to ask Mr Foster a question about his motives. Mr Chairman said that he had set out to reconcile contemporary philosophy with the Christian faith; I was under the impression that on the contrary he had shown them to be irreconcilable. Was he, in fact, attempting a reconciliation or not?

REV. DR T. H. CROXALL

I should like to make four remarks:

(1) With regard to the question how history can be used as a basis for a metaphysical position, I should like to draw attention to Kierkegaard's doctrine of Contemporaneity (see his *Philosophical Fragments*). That seems to me to be the most adequate solution of the difficulty.

(2) As to whether Christianity can be reconciled with philosophy, I am on Mr Nowell-Smith's side in saying that ultimately it cannot: though my reactions to this would be different from his no doubt. *Credo quia absurdum* does not mean that belief, in the sense of Christian belief, is contrary to reason and therefore silly, but that it is above reason, and therefore sublime. The term *absurdum* is only used because Reason alone is unable to arrive at the whole of Truth. The best thing the Understanding can do is to understand that it cannot understand everything. They, says Christianity, abide in partial error.

(3) All turns on the meaning of the word Truth. There are of course many kinds of Truth. Christianity arrives at its conception of truth by an act of faith which some philosophers and philosophies refuse to make.

(4) Why do we need to transcend the intellect in order to arrive at Truth? We may answer this by asking Why do we philosophise at all? If we do it for fun, for the joy of battling with paradoxes, so far so good. But does this help us to live? Life to be at its best requires a good deal else than thinking. Christianity says it requires worship, which is the prerogative of Man as opposed to the animals. And there is much else besides which cannot be called strictly intellectual. The

Christian is sure that the Christian way, in its fullness, brings a man far nearer to truth than philosophy only, and his assurance does not rest on objective proof but on subjective experience.

MR I. PETER FLETCHER, Christ Church

What is Mr Nowell-Smith's attitude to Christians who, in all sincerity, say they have made a personal contact with the risen Christ? If what they say is true it is a singularly subjective matter. But it is also objective insofar as they have made a contact with a person outside themselves—another person—in terms of personal relationship or friendship. Since this is both a subjective and an objective matter can one treat this kind of statement in an empirical manner? The only person who can verify this statement is the one who made it.

MR NOWELL-SMITH

If I thought that this person meant what he said quite literally, my attitude towards him would be much the same as my attitude towards someone who claimed to be Napoleon. But, just as it is cruel and dangerous to say to people who claim to be Napoleon exactly what you think of them, so I think it would be cruel and dangerous to say what I think to this person. That is why I don't go about telling people what I think of that sort of claim. I don't quite understand the part about objective and subjective; but the claim literally to have made contact with someone, if it is 'objective', would be an empirical claim and I would treat it as such.

MR J. N. ROBINSON, Keble College

Mr Nowell-Smith has stated that there is a difference between historical and theological statements. Can he give his views on the different logic of the two?

MR NOWELL-SMITH

It would take far too long to do this adequately. I can only say that I would want to apply ordinary canons of historical criticism to the evidence about Christ. I am not a theologian and so I don't know much about the logic of theological statements; but I have written an article about Miracles in the *Hibbert Journal* in which a similar problem is discussed. Even if the historical claims were vindicated, you couldn't derive theological statements from them, and this is what Christians sometimes try to do.

MR R. J. JEANS, Wadham College

Surely you would say to the man who said he had met Napoleon, 'What you say can be demonstrated to be untrue by consultation of records and so on', while to the man who said he had personally had the experience of meeting Christ you would say, 'I don't understand what you mean'. Whether or not one derives comfort from sentences whose meaning one does not understand depends entirely on one's personality.

MR NOWELL-SMITH

Certainly it depends on one's personality; but I have always taken the Christian claim to be something much stronger than that—to be the claim to derive comfort from something which both makes sense and is true. And this has nothing to do with one's personality.

I should agree that if the man who claimed to have made contact with the risen Christ added that he did not mean this literally, my reply would not be like my reply to the man who claimed to be Napoleon. It would be what you say: 'I don't understand you.' The difficulty I have with some Christian assertions is that they seem to oscillate between being straightforward historical assertions, to which I would give one sort of reply, and being theological assertions, to which I would give another. When I take them literally and say they are false, some Christians begin to hedge and tell me that is not quite what they mean; so I have to tackle them differently. If they oscillate very rapidly, my replies have to oscillate rapidly too.

MR T. C. G. THORNTON, Christ Church

I should like to ask the following question: how much does philosophy, and perhaps theology too, have some kind of limitation set upon itself because it deals only with *statements*? I am well aware that I am liable to correction, but it does seem to me that there is some inherent difficulty in attempting to regard certain matters as being necessarily *statable*. If I have a singular individual experience, how can I necessarily describe it to you in the general terms of our common language so that through these general terms you may be able to understand fully the singular individual experience which I have at this moment? Our common language in which we make our statements does not necessarily deal adequately with all our experiences. Christianity is far more than a series of theological statements.

I would like to illustrate this 'limitation of the scope of statements' from Plato. It is notorious that Plato's dialogues are far from being a systematic exposition of Plato's beliefs, and often their rambling, inconsistent and inconsecutive course of argument is infuriating to some readers. But it would seem from the dialogues that perhaps the main point that Plato is trying to convey to his readers is something not expressible in statements at all. The vision of the Good attained by the rulers in the Republic<sup>1</sup> is surely not attained merely by a process of question-and-answer together with the application of elenchus. (If it was thus attainable, would not Plato have described it for us?) No, the Good can only be apprehended by some kind of illumination or revelation that comes out of living together with others and a long period of joint enquiry into the matter. Such matters cannot be expressed in statements as the other objects of learning can.<sup>2</sup>

All this is merely an illustration. The point I should like to raise is this: How far may we perhaps say that philosophy and theology are in some sense each limited in scope, because they have to deal entirely with accounts in the form of statements?

MR R. J. A. SHARP, Brasenose College

Mr Nowell-Smith asserted that Christians try to derive theological statements from historical statements and that this procedure is impossible. I should like to ask him how he justifies this assertion. Surely it is not from 'common usage' since vast numbers of Christians do this very thing. If not 'common usage' then the assertion is a metaphysical one. Mr Nowell-Smith is taking up a position which involves just as much 'faith' or 'leaping in the dark' as the Christian position. In that case logical argument will be of no use with him—only 'conversion' could bring him over to the Christian point of view.

MR NOWELL-SMITH

I don't think I have got a general rule by which I can prevent people passing from one kind of statement to another. You have to examine the kinds of statements concerned in each case to see whether or not such steps are valid. This means examining the 'common usage' of historical and theological words; but the question of the validity of

<sup>1</sup> Rep. 540 a.

<sup>2</sup> Epistle vii. 341 c. Cf. Phædrus 276 c.

such a step has nothing to do with whether it is commonly taken; a fallacy doesn't cease to be a fallacy because many people make it. Historians who interpret history as the working out of God's plan are really making theological statements from the start; and that is logically impeccable.

I would agree that the issue is a metaphysical one and that, in the end, these are not matters of logical argument but of conversion. But if you take that line you can't talk about converting people by logical arguments. In any case my reasons for rejecting Christianity were not mainly metaphysical, but moral.

PROFESSOR COULSON

One conclusion seems to me to be quite evident from our discussions here today. Since the grounds for accepting the Christian faith are not to be restricted to any one type of argument, be it scientific or philosophical or historical, it is rather unlikely that a man will be led to the faith by a mere consideration of one aspect, or element, of his total activity. Only a minority of Christians would claim that on the basis of pure reason a man ought to be led to an effective acceptance of Christianity. For the Christian sees life as a whole, and the pattern of understanding and response that he considers leaps well beyond what most contemporary philosophers would allow. It is evident from the remarks both of Mr Foster and of Mr Nowell-Smith that by limiting itself so much more than in earlier decades, philosophy has abandoned for the time being any serious attempt to understand the business of living. In former times the pulpit and the soap-box were sometimes confused together and both may have been too much in evidence. It seems to a person like myself, with only a relatively second-hand knowledge of these matters, that contemporary philosophy is in grave danger of abandoning both pulpit and soap-box and even any species of involvement in the relationship of people and of things. The Christian insists on this involvement—hence Mr Foster's emphasis on doubt and mystery where it is most deeply experienced—and hence also the infuriating aspect that the Christian appears to possess to the philosopher. When Albert Schweitzer closed his book *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, he spoke of how God revealed Himself to those who followed (or 'committed' themselves): 'they will know in their own experience who He is. . . .' It is hard to avoid the conclusion tonight that the Christian is the man with his eyes wide open.

For some purposes, such as acting like a human being, this is a tremendous advantage. But for others, such as explaining what you believe and why you are acting as you are, it may be a disadvantage. What seems essential here is that both parties shall have the humility to see the limitations of their account as it appears to the other party. (A Christian permanently tied to an armchair is nearly as peculiar an idea as a philosopher rising out of it!) And because of the help to this end which both our speakers tonight have given us, we are profoundly grateful.

## MR FOSTER

With regard to 'reconciliation', I am grateful to Mr Rowe for saying what he did, and I accept his account of my position. Without ruling out the possibility of an ultimate reconciliation, I think the need is not to reconcile too quickly, but to point out the conflicts.

To the Chairman about mystery in nature, I cannot say anything which will not be hopelessly inadequate. Our Chairman being who he is, it is almost impertinent for me to question what he says. I had in mind the concept of nature which lies at the root of the 'classical' physics, and am not competent to judge developments in contemporary physics.

The attitude of classical physics seems to me to have required the banishment of mystery from nature. This is also a Christian attitude; compare, for example, the words attributed to a medieval churchman by Colin Wilson in his book *The Outsider*: 'We should marvel at nothing in nature except the redeeming work of Christ.' To remove mystery from nature is not necessarily to remove it from the universe.

Between myself and Father Yves Nolet, I must confess the existence of a domestic difference. In addition to revealed theology, he believes in the competence of rational philosophy to establish truths in the realm which we are discussing, and I know that the whole of what I have said seems to deny or ignore this. I have not quite a good conscience in this, and cannot quite deny the existence of the rational philosophy which he describes, but it is not anything real to me. I think I am working from a basis of revealed truth, and what I am doing is therefore what he could class as theology.

I must now try to say something in reply to Mr Nowell-Smith. First, he insisted that the pursuit of clarity has been common to all philosophers, and that it is not therefore distinctive of contemporary



philosophy. This is true. But there are different ways of pursuing it, and the pursuit of it can be based upon different assumptions. Illumination, understanding, clarity—these are things which *theologians* also pursue. There are different ways of pursuing these things. What I attribute to contemporary philosophy is the pursuit of these things in a certain way which repudiates revelation and trusts in the power of human reason.

Secondly, as to the point of conflict between contemporary philosophy and Christian belief, which in my paper I tried to locate—a certain confusion, or danger of confusion, has been introduced into the discussion by the fact that Mr Nowell-Smith, while agreeing that there is a conflict, has located it at a different point. For him the conflict arises from the fact that Christianity is in a special sense an *historical* religion. I do not minimise the importance of this point of conflict also. It is worthy of an evening to itself. But it is a difficult point, and I do not think I have anything worth saying on it tonight.

The point of conflict which I concentrated on arises from the contemporary conception of metaphysics as something which, although it is allowed to be meaningful, is not capable of being true. I quoted Warnock<sup>1</sup> as holding that metaphysics is a perfectly healthy exercise

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to a passage of Mr Foster's address which is not included in the printed version, but was inserted in the talk as given, in which a quotation was made from Mr G. J. Warnock's essay 'Analysis and Imagination' in the volume *The Revolution in Philosophy*. The gist of this passage was as follows:

Mr Warnock holds that there is such a thing as metaphysics, and that this is, even for the present-day philosopher, a legitimate exercise of the philosophical imagination. The metaphysician, according to him, constructs a schema in which he uses words in queer ways, as a means of jerking us into a new way of looking at the world of our experience; and furthermore, this is what metaphysicians in the past have really been doing. Where they have gone wrong, he thinks, has been in thinking that their way of looking is not only *a way*, but is *the true way*; i.e. that what they are achieving is not only an imaginative construction, but a vision of the truth.

Thus, Mr Warnock says of Berkeley: 'He saw the same world that all of us see, but saw it from a rather different angle.' [This he did by means of his metaphysical construction, and this was a legitimate exercise of metaphysics; but now . . .].

'It ought, of course, to be remembered that this is not all that Berkeley himself would have claimed. He did not think of himself as inventing simply a *new* way of looking at the world, but rather as expounding the *right* way, the only way in which one sees things as they really are. But this, I think, is only to say that he, like other metaphysicians, had his illusions. The builders of

as long as you don't say it is true. I am not quite clear how far Mr Nowell-Smith accepts or how far he repudiates Warnock's view of metaphysics.

MR NOWELL-SMITH

I am roughly in agreement with it.

MR FOSTER

That there is a special sense of truth here, I accept. The Christian revelation is true, but this is not exactly the way in which factual statements are true. Certainly Mr Nowell-Smith is right in saying that Christians have the onus of showing *how* the truth of revelation differs from that of factual statements. This task is an obligation which Christian philosophers should accept. What they must affirm is that Christianity is true in a sense which is exclusive—i.e. in a sense which involves the rejection of other beliefs.

How can I assent to things which I do not know or understand? To do this is the essence of faith; and although my understanding of what I believe may increase indefinitely, it will never achieve the kind of clarity which contemporary philosophers require, but I shall still be in a position of assenting to what I do not understand.

PROFESSOR COULSON

On your behalf and on my own I should like to say thank you to both the major speakers. It is an extremely healthy sign that we are able to have a discussion of this kind without the fur flying. My thanks also to those who have organised this meeting.

such imaginative systems have always been prone to claim, not that they were inventing something new, but that they were discovering something real, penetrating the disguises of Reality. But such claims are fatal as well as unfounded' (p. 122).

This, surely, is the point of conflict. It is true that the Christian revelation is not a metaphysic; but it does contain a way of looking at the world, a way of seeing things, and it must claim that this is not only *a* way of seeing things but that it is the true way, that to see things in this light is to see them as they really are.

There is a lot which requires further explication at this point. For example: What does it *mean* to claim for a revelation that it is true, when you do not mean that the propositions in which it is expressed are true in the way in which factual propositions are true?

But I will venture to maintain that *this* is a point at which a Christian is bound to affirm something which contemporary philosophy as a whole denies.

*Written Communication**From MR C. W. HUME*

I should like to challenge Mr Michael Foster's statement (p. 48) that 'a statement of faith is something different from an historical statement or a scientific one' in logical form. Obviously the statement 'God exists' and the statement 'You exist' are poles apart in content, but I submit that in logical form they fall into the same class. A philosophy can be judged by the way it faces or shirks the problem of solipsism, which is closely analogous to agnosticism. If I say that you, Sir, the author, exist, I am using my own mind as a symbol of yours ; for I cannot see your mind, I can only see my own, and the latter is a very imperfect symbol, for the greater part of your mind is not only unknown to but inconceivable by me. Thus the meaning of the proposition 'You exist' is analogous to anthropomorphism in theology.

Turning from the logical form of the statement to its truth, one may ask why confidence is felt that the proposition 'You exist' is true? The feeling of certainty is a function of habit far more than of evidence, and the evidence for the existence of persons other than oneself turns out, on examination, to be slender, for similar evidence would prove the reality of persons one converses with in dreams; but habit masks the weakness of the evidence so effectively that many people are incapable of recognising that weakness. It is the same with belief in any given law of nature, which, as I have pointed out elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> entails at least three acts of faith in series.

The point of these remarks is that we are not in a position to evaluate the logical form and credibility of theological propositions until we have applied an equally rigorous scepticism to the deliverances of common sense, and recognised the common characteristics of these two classes of propositions.

*MR FOSTER writes in reply:*

I don't think that I can controvert Mr Hume's contention that the statement 'God exists' has an identical logical form with 'You exist', and I appreciate the force of his argument. What I doubt is whether it has any application to the distinction which I drew between empirical (i.e. historical or scientific) statements and statements of faith, because I cannot recognise 'You exist' as a typical example of the

<sup>1</sup> *The Status of Animals in the Christian Religion*, p. 86.

former class. It is indeed difficult to imagine a context outside a philosophical discussion in which 'You exist' would naturally be said. If we substitute for it a more ordinary example of empirical statement, I think that the distinction which I have drawn still stands. The empirical statement, e.g., 'There is someone in my room at the present moment' (I am not dreaming nor suffering from hallucination) may be verified or falsified by tests which would be accepted by any sane man as conclusive (Mr Humè might indeed argue that an act of faith is involved in this, but it is a faith in which all sane men share); whereas statements of faith in the proper sense, such as 'God created the world', are not of such a kind that they can be proved by evidence which any sane man would accept. If they were, where would be the *commitment* in believing?

It is true that a difference in respect of evidence might be admitted without conceding my contention that there is a logical difference between the two kinds of statement. The difference could be held to be wholly in the adequacy or lack of adequacy of the available evidence to the proof of the statement made. Scientific statements would be those which the evidence sufficed to prove, statements of faith would be statements which the available evidence did not suffice to prove but at best to render probable (in the way in which the strongest evidence of comparative form may render it probable but will never render it certain that a given horse will win), leaving a gap which has to be leaped by faith.

I suspect that the difference between the two kinds of statement has sometimes been presented in this way in the past, but I am arguing that we should discard this way of thinking. The act of believing itself, the *credal* act of faith, is a different act from the acceptance of a scientific conclusion, whether this is proved or only made probable. The statement expressing the belief must indeed be held to be 'factual' if 'factual' means 'capable of being true or false', but not if 'factual' means 'empirically verifiable or falsifiable'. Contemporary philosophy helps, or perhaps forces, Christians to realise the distinctive character of statements of faith, but they need to realise it for Christianity's sake.

[Further problems are raised by the fact that some articles of the Christian creed are themselves historical in character. I have not considered the implications of this fact and do not know how to relate it to my argument.]

REV. J. I. PACKER, M.A., D.PHIL.

## The Fundamentalism Controversy : Retrospect and Prospect

For some years now a movement denominated 'fundamentalism' has been the whipping-boy of English Protestantism. It has been damned, like Socrates, for corrupting the youth; it has been pictured as a sworn foe of scholarship; its spirit has been likened to that of political totalitarianism, and its published utterances to political propaganda; it has been described as the great barrier to ecumenical progress and, indeed, as holding within itself a threat of fresh schism. A sequence of public utterance by leaders in the Churches and in education have rung the changes on these themes in tones varying from cool patronage to mild hysteria. Today, anti-fundamentalism has become a fashion, almost a craze.

There has not been much doubt at any stage as to the persons against whom this flow of denunciation was directed; but the matter is finally settled by Dr Gabriel Hebert, who tells us at the beginning of his recently published *Fundamentalism and the Church of God* (a book which has won general, if indiscriminating, acclaim in anti-fundamentalist circles): 'It is with conservative evangelicals in the Church of England and other churches, and with the Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions, that this book is to be specially concerned.'<sup>1</sup> It is, perhaps, in order to comment here that, seeing these are the persons under review, it is a pity that the words 'fundamentalism' and 'fundamentalist' were ever introduced into the discussion at all. For on English lips these terms, like 'Manichean' in the Middle Ages, 'Puritan' in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and 'Methodist' in the eighteenth, are little more than ecclesiastical Billingsgate, 'odious names' used to express and evoke emotional attitudes towards those one dislikes rather than to convey any exact information about them. Moreover, 'fundamentalist' is an epithet which is commonly applied to such groups as Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists—both 'fundamentalists in the strict sense' (whatever they may be) according to Hebert (p. 22)—and one which is also linked in British minds with real or imagined oddities

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. p. 10.

on the other side of the Atlantic; and British evangelicals have no desire to saddle themselves with such associations as these. In fact, they have repeatedly declined the word 'fundamentalist' as a description for themselves. Hebert notes this, and comments: 'It will be therefore only common courtesy on my part to refrain from calling them by a name which they dislike and repudiate' (p. 10). One could wish that others had seen fit to show the same courtesy. As it is, the readiness of some to make capital out of the prejudicial associations of the word reflects badly on both their Christian charity and their intellectual integrity. It suggests also that they have failed to learn Bacon's lesson: 'words are the counters of wise men, the coinage of fools.' This debate is not about words. A rose by any other name would smell as sweet; and the conservative evangelical viewpoint remains the same, whatever it may be called. And it is that viewpoint which is in question at present. Moreover, the criticisms brought against it are so serious that they cannot with a good conscience be ignored. Evangelical Christians must be ready to examine themselves afresh, with a willingness to admit their mistakes and to correct them if Scripture sustains the anti-fundamentalist indictment; otherwise, they will stand self-condemned. Let us, then, look at this debate more closely.

The controversy has proved illuminating in three respects. In the first place, it bears indirect witness to the resurgent vitality of evangelicalism in this country today. The debate is in essence, as we shall see, the re-opening of a conflict which raged during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth. For almost a generation it lapsed; not because the contending parties had reached agreement, but because evangelicalism had become so weak—as far as ability to sustain a theological debate was concerned, anyway—that its opponents were able simply to ignore it, and left it, as they thought, to die of its own accord. Now, however, so far from expiring, evangelicalism in Britain has begun to revive. It would not be sober or realistic to say more than that; but it seems certain that the evangelical cause is now stronger, both numerically and theologically, than it has been for some time, and that it is among men and women of the younger age-groups that its new strength is found. Some of the anti-fundamentalists, at any rate, are in no doubt on the point. Alarm at this trend seems to have prompted the first denunciatory salvos which re-opened the debate; and alarm, as much as anything else, seems to be the reason for the surprising violence of some of the things that have been said. The impression given by these utterances

is of the bluster of nervousness, in face of the spectacle of a supposedly dying evangelicalism becoming once more a force to be reckoned with.

In the second place, these criticisms show what kind of views evangelicals are thought to hold by those outside their own circles. It is instructive, if startling, to see what these are. And it would be wrong for evangelicals just to laugh, or snort, according to temperament, at the sometimes ludicrous inaccuracy of their critics' ideas about them, and leave the matter there. The picture is often ludicrous enough, in all conscience; but whose fault is that? It seems undeniable that evangelicals themselves are partly to blame. If ever there was a breakdown in communication, it is here. We find evangelicals accused of holding the 'dictation theory' (so-called) of the mode of inspiration, which turns the Biblical authors into mere automata; of being 'literalists' in interpretation, in the sense that we read all Biblical records of fact as if they were modern newspaper reports, prosaic descriptions of what we should have seen had we been there, and exclude on principle the possibility that metaphors and symbols enter into the telling of the story; we are described as opposing all Biblical criticism, in the sense of enquiry into the human origins of the Biblical books; as maintaining that the Bible speaks with final authority on questions of natural science; as believing that the 'true' church is an altogether invisible church which does not become visible in any sense, and that the time has come to abandon the historic denominations as being apostate; we are accused of a pietistic insistence that only those who have successfully passed through a standard conversion-experience can be accepted as real Christians; of regarding all concern about the world as 'wordly', and of extolling unconcern about the social, political, economic and cultural implications of the faith as a positive virtue; and so forth. As statements of evangelical principles, such charges are sufficiently wide of the mark; but where are the representative evangelical treatments of these matters, which may be quoted to refute them? Where are the positive evangelical contributions to the discussion of these topics, stating the Biblical position and offering an informed critique of other views in the light of it? They are conspicuous by their absence. And if evangelicalism during the past generation could not, or would not, make known its mind on these themes at the level of scholarly enquiry, it is no wonder that so many have drawn their ideas of what evangelicals stand for from the sometimes unguarded remarks of such individual evangelicals as they have happened to meet.

These persons may have been quite unrepresentative; but how was the enquirer to know? The currency of such misconceptions as we have mentioned should bring home to us that for some decades evangelicals have skimmed their theological homework; our service of God has been negligent on the intellectual level; we have failed to see the need for, and to produce, a scholarly literature; and, by and large, the only areas of Christian concern on which we are equipped to speak are those covered in books written by evangelical scholars of the pre-first world war period. On other matters, we are often silent perforce, and our silence is taken, not unnaturally, as showing lack of interest as well as lack of knowledge.

It is probably true to say that between the wars the attitude of evangelicals towards academic Biblical studies, theology, and natural science, was on the whole one of suspicion and hostility. It is not hard to see why. Biblical science was built exclusively on the methods and conclusions of old-fashioned higher criticism; in theology it was liberals of one sort or another who made the running; natural science was evolutionary in outlook and anti-Christian in temper. It was as natural as it was regrettable that evangelicals should have reacted to this situation by concluding that the best course was to keep clear of such studies altogether, lest their faith should be contaminated. Hence, instead of scientific exegesis and theological argument, they turned to the cultivation of a type of 'Bible teaching' and Bible study which was concerned more with analysing the form of the books than with elucidating their contents, and paid more attention to the prophecies of Christ's second coming than to the meaning of his first; and instead of developing a genuinely Christian philosophy of natural science, they indulged themselves in truculent belittling of all scientific views which seemed to conflict with what they supposed that Scripture taught on scientific subjects. (Would that they had taken their cue here from the ideals of the Victorian Institute!) It seems both unfair and untrue to regard present-day evangelicals as avowed obscurantists; but equally it seems undeniable that there is more than a dash of obscurantism, real, if unconscious, in the legacy which they inherit from the immediate past. Evangelicals in the last half-century have not thought as hard, nor studied as deeply, nor written and spoken as fully, as the situation demanded, and we are now reaping the fruits of this neglect. If the present controversy brings home to us the extent of our failure to communicate our mind to those outside our own circles, and the need for a more vigorous intellectual life within them,



it will have contributed a great deal towards a strengthening of the evangelical cause.

In the third place, we learn from the line followed by some anti-fundamentalists—notably Hebert, and Philip Lee-Woolf, general secretary of the Student Christian Movement, in an article confessedly based on Hebert's book<sup>1</sup>—the shape of things to come; for these writers tackle 'fundamentalism' from a distinctively ecumenical standpoint, and their remarks are no doubt typical of much that will be said to evangelicals by ecumenical spokesmen during the next few years. Before reviewing what these writers say, we must indicate what the ecumenical standpoint is. The ecumenical movement is concerned above all to promote the re-integration of Christendom, and to that end has developed an approach to theology that is distinctive to itself; one which is concerned above all to secure the maximum of agreement between the various Christian bodies. It starts by taking for granted that every conviction which any Christian group holds strongly is at least part of the truth on the point with which it deals; and its method in discussing the apparently conflicting convictions of Christendom is to seek a common formula in terms of which they can all be reconciled, or at least accommodated. Inevitably, this approach breeds unhealthy aspirations after ambiguity, and an incautious and really irresponsible readiness to hail the discovery of equivocal forms of words, to which all can subscribe in their own sense, as evidence of real agreement; which, of course, it is not. This approach to theology has at least three basic weaknesses. Because it takes theological systems piecemeal, examining their various tenets in connection with the parallel tenets of other systems, but in isolation from the total views of which they each form part, it fails to appreciate that every theological outlook is in fact a systematic whole, and cannot be fruitfully discussed except as such. Because this approach treats all strongly held views as valid 'insights', facets and fragments of truth, it fails to reckon with the depth of theological differences and the reality of theological errors.<sup>2</sup> Because it seeks merely agreement between the various 'traditions', it overlooks the necessity of subjecting all views and opinions, even those on which the Church is unanimous, to the corrective judgment of the written Word of 'fundamentalism', as we shall now see.

This approach involves two stages of argument. Its exponents begin by affirming that there are really no substantial theological differences

<sup>1</sup> 'Fundamentalism', *Christian News-Letter*, July 1957, pp. 31 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

dividing evangelicals from other Protestants today. 'Both sides hold the orthodox faith', affirms Hebert. 'The doctrinal fundamentals are not in dispute', says Lee-Woolf.<sup>1</sup> The things that are distinctive in evangelicalism, it is suggested, are due to the influence of non-theological factors, and have no theological significance. A sociological explanation of evangelicalism is offered. Thus, the evangelical insistence on the factual inerrancy of the Bible is attributed to the materialistic conception of the truth which evangelicals make for submission to the authority of the Bible as an attempt to 'cash in' on the widely felt need of our restless age for stable authority and in particular to entrap the adolescent, who longs for shelter from his intellectual storms and is only too glad to be saved from the need to think for himself. Again, the peculiarly warm and close fellowship which evangelicals cultivate among themselves is mere escapism, an attempt to get away from the loneliness of suburbia, the frustrations of middle-class life and the general drabness of the everyday world. Discount the effect of these sociological factors, it is said, and we shall find there is nothing essential to differentiate evangelicals from other Protestants. This leads on to the second stage of argument, in the presentation of positive reasons to show why evangelicals and others—I.V.F. and S.C.M., for instance—ought to come together. Each, it is said, has much to give the other, and each is necessarily incomplete without the other. Combination is particularly necessary in evangelism, for the spectacle of Christians unable to co-operate puts a serious stumbling-block in the unbeliever's way. The conclusion is that evangelicals ought not to hold themselves aloof from other Protestants in any way, and that it betokens a schismatic spirit if they do.

We find this sociological interpretation of evangelicalism altogether unimpressive. Indeed, it is tempting to invoke the principle that sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, and to offer in reply a sociological interpretation of the ecumenical movement. We might point out that this is pre-eminently an age of international organisations and combines, of enforced monopolies, of large firms putting pressure on small ones in order to buy them up, or squeeze them out of business, and that this mentality seems to be largely responsible for ideals of the ecumenical movement. Probably there would be as much truth in such an interpretation of ecumenism as there is in the ecumenical interpretation of evangelicalism. But, of course, such considerations do not get to grips with the positive convictions of either side. Nothing

<sup>1</sup> Hebert, *op. cit.* p. 12; Lee-Woolf, *op. cit.* p. 32.

can be deduced about the truth or falsehood of anyone's convictions from the mere fact that without certain conditioning he would probably not have held it in the same way, that by pointing out the conditioning factor one refutes the conviction itself. To suppose that by pointing out the conditioning factor one refutes the conviction itself is the sophistry which C. S. Lewis called Bulverism; it is probably the oldest and commonest *non sequitur* known to man. Suppose it is true (we are not concerned to deny it) that this is an age which is pre-occupied about the truths of fact, which feels acutely unsettled and insecure and which longs for some experience of fellowship to enliven the impersonal routine of big city life. What of it? Does it follow that to believe in Biblical inerrancy is to fall into the snare of an unbiblical bibliolatry,<sup>1</sup> or that the demand for submission to the authority of Scripture is a summons to deface the image of God in oneself by 'abdicating the use of your mind',<sup>2</sup> or that which links like-minded evangelicals in worship and Christian service is 'human fellowship, not the divine bond spoken of in the New Testament'?<sup>3</sup> of course not; and it does little credit to anti-fundamentalists when they lay weight on considerations of this sort. The truth is that evangelicalism, like ecumenicalism, is a theological movement, and must be taken seriously as such. To refuse to do so is as discourteous as it is inept. Bulverism is not good enough, on either side.

What account, then, does evangelicalism give of itself? It claims to be no mere assortment of insights, but an integrated outlook stemming from a single regulative principle: that of submission to Scripture. Because this principle is itself scriptural, evangelicalism corresponds to the Biblical pattern of Christianity; and this sets it apart from all forms of Christianity which have lapsed from this principle. Evangelicalism is not a sectarian movement, which with the Bible in its hand would turn its back on the Church's history and tradition of teaching and start again from scratch. That is anabaptism, not evangelicalism. Evangelicalism knows from Scripture that the Spirit of Christ has indwelt His Church since it began, and that therefore its heritage of thought and achievement is of prime value. The evangelical insistence is simply that Christ rules His Church by Scripture, and not another way; and that He has commanded the Church to

<sup>1</sup> Hebert, *op. cit.* p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> The Archbishop of York, *The Bishopric* (Durham Diocesan Gazette, February 1956, p. 25.)

<sup>3</sup> Lee-Woolf, *op. cit.* 35.

sustain its life by expounding Scripture and subjecting itself to Scripture in faith and obedience. When evangelicals have separated from existing churches, their reason—the only reason that could ever justify such a course—has been that these churches compelled them to leave, in that they refuse to recognise their need of reformation, so that evangelicals within them lacked liberty to be subject to Scripture. In that case, it is the evangelical who is the catholic churchman, and those who refused to be subject to the authority of the Bible are the schismatics. Schism is a matter, not of numbers, but of theology. All this was made clear at the Reformation. And evangelicalism stands in the direct line of descent from the Reformers. It is sometimes supposed that, because 'fundamentalism' is a new word, that which it denotes must be a new thing; but in fact it is a very old thing, much older than the liberal Protestantism which opposes it. The paradoxical truth is that that which is really old is so unfamiliar today that it seems newer than that which is really new. And the first step for evangelicals in the present controversy must be to insist that this, their own account of themselves, must be taken seriously and examined on its merits by those who find fault with them.

It is helpful at this point to remind ourselves of the situation which gave birth to the word 'fundamentalist'. This was a name given to a group of American evangelicals who met together in 1920 'to re-state, re-affirm and re-emphasise the fundamentals of our New Testament faith' in the face of liberal denials. A religious weekly called them 'fundamentalists', and the name stuck. Indeed, those who bore it regarded it as a title of honour. Ten years before, representatives of the same view-point had published *The Fundamentals*, a series of small volumes expounding and defending the evangelical faith; these may fairly be read as the manifesto of original fundamentalism. The movement was essentially one of protest against liberalism of the old-fashioned sort which had itself grown out of the nineteenth-century attitude to history and philosophy. 'Scientific' history, to the nineteenth-century mind, meant, among other things, explaining events without reference to the supernatural; 'scientific' philosophy, whether idealist or empiricist, pantheist, deist or atheistic, sought to conceive of all that happened as part of one uniform evolutionary process, and to show that it was needless to suppose that the regularity of this process was ever interrupted. Liberalism advocated a non-miraculous and, indeed, non-Christian Christianity constructed in accordance with this anti-supernatural outlook. As the fundamentalists saw,

liberalism was not hereby rehabilitating Christianity, but destroying it; and they opposed liberalism by a vigorous stress on the supernatural 'fundamentals' of the faith: notably creation, miracles, the virgin birth of Christ, His substitutionary atonement and physical resurrection and the inspiration of Scripture. Regrettably, the movement was diverted from its original concern for the defence of Christian supernaturalism as a whole into the narrow channels of squabbles about evolution; the fundamentalists discredited themselves by mistakes in theology, science and the tactics of debate, and in the late twenties the movement largely fizzled out, at any rate in its original form. But its stand for the supernatural outlook of the Bible was necessary and timely, and continues to be so as long as liberalism lasts.

It is true that Hebert tells us that old-fashioned liberalism is dead, and the 'biblical theology' movement has taken its place. The latter, however, is recognisably the child of the former. It is a brave attempt to eat one's cake and have it: to maintain the necessity of believing the teaching of Scripture, bowing to the authority of Scripture, and putting faith in the truth of Scripture, while clinging to the unscriptural methods and conclusions of liberal criticism of Scripture in the last century. 'We must at all costs be biblical,' it says; 'but we must on no account abandon the unbiblical biblical criticism of our fathers'. Such a programme is patently self-contradictory. Liberal criticism proceeded on the assumption that the Biblical claim that Scripture is the utterance of God, so that the truth of all its assertions is guaranteed by His veracity, may be discounted, and that the question as to whether Biblical statements are true is an open question to be settled by historical scholarship. But if we are to be consistently Biblical, we must abandon this approach altogether. For the question is not open; God himself has closed it; and our study of the Scripture ought to be such as to express faith in its entire truth. 'Biblical theology', however, is unwilling to go so far. But until we have come to regard Scripture as absolutely trustworthy, we shall not submit ourselves unreservedly to it as an authority for faith and life. 'Biblical theology', therefore, for all its fair speaking, cannot—and its exponents demonstrably do not—stand in relation to the Bible as evangelicals stand. Why is 'biblical theology' so hesitant here? It boggles, apparently, at the robust supernaturalism of the Biblical account of Scripture—word for word God-given, verbally inspired, having the unshakable stability of truth. But if 'biblical theology' is unbelieving here, how genuine can its acceptance of the rest of Biblical supernaturalism be? Its

Biblicism seems to be more apparent than real; it is certainly arbitrary and selective, and the subjection to Scripture to which it leads is very far from being consistent and unreserved. 'Biblical theology' has still to show the sincerity of its own alleged Biblicism; and evangelicals cannot regard it as other than a refurbished liberalism till its attitude to Scripture changes considerably.

It seems, therefore, that what the present situation requires of evangelicals is a sturdy maintenance of the doctrine of Biblical authority and of the thorough-going supernaturalism of the Biblical world-view. The current misunderstandings which we have noted show that a good deal of explaining needs to be done. It must, for instance, be explained that the Biblical authority is not to the evangelical mind the theoretical problem which the spokesmen of 'biblical theology' (not unnaturally) find it to be, but a practical principle with clearly-defined existential implications: the principle, namely, that the statements of Scripture are to be received and regarded as the authoritative utterances of the speaking God, and believed and obeyed as such. It must be shown further that this view expresses, not obscurantism in face of modern knowledge, but faith responding to God's own testimony to Scripture within its own pages; and that the common evangelical exposition of this article of faith is intended, not to foster a superstitious bibliolatry, but to define and safeguard the attitude of approach to Scripture which God Himself requires. Thus, if we call Scripture *infallible*, we mean, not that we suppose it will answer any question we like to ask it, but that we are resolved to trust its guidance absolutely on all subjects with which it deals, and that we have no right to question anything that it lays down; for that would be doubting God. Again, if we call Scripture *inerrant*, we mean, not that we think we can demonstrate its accuracy in stating facts, but that we receive its statements as true on the credit of its divine Author, and deny that we have any right to doubt them; for that would be making God a liar. Again if we speak of Scripture (as many good theologians have done before us) as *divinely dictated*, we are not propounding a curious psychological theory of the mode of inspiration, but using a theological metaphor to express the fact that God caused to be written precisely what He wished, and His words were in no way altered or corrupted by the human agent through whom they were written down; so that we have no right to say of anything in Scripture that it is merely a human idea and no part of God's word. Again, if we say that Scripture should be interpreted *literally*, we do not mean that we

know in advance that there are no metaphors or symbols in the Bible, but that we must allow Scripture to explain itself to us in its own natural, intended sense; and that we have no right to spiritualise it after our fancy, nor to impose on it literary categories (allegory, for instance, or myth) which it does not itself warrant, but must let it fix its own sense by its own standards.

We are not, or course, tied to any of these much-abused terms; the evangelical position can be stated without them, and they are misunderstood so persistently that it might make for clarity to drop them all. What matters is not the words, but the truth which they express and the attitude of faith which they enshrine. It is this that must be preserved, and for this that we must contend. And we need to be watchful, in this matter or any other that comes into this debate, lest we mistake the use of compromise formulae (of which there are many; Hebert's book, for instance, contains a number—'the authority of the gospel', 'the truth of the Bible', etc.) for real endorsement of the evangelical position. Compromise formulae, which dissolve the clear edge of precise theological conceptions into a cloudy blur, are dangerously popular at present, due to the prevalence of the ecumenical approach to theology; and these are made the more specious by being presented in isolation from the total outlook of which they are part. It is necessary to ask in each case what this total outlook is before the meaning of such formulae can be rightly assessed. Hebert's formulae quoted above, for instance, mean something quite different on his lips from what an evangelical would mean by them, because his total outlook is different. It is strange that compromise formulae should be in such vogue, for they breed only confusion. Is it not evident that only a sham unity can come from blurring real differences? Or may it be that ecumenical theology is more concerned to reach agreement than to find truth?

To maintain evangelical truth today is no doubt a sufficiently exacting task. It requires patience, charity, flexibility of mind—and, above all, a firm grasp of Biblical outlook as a whole, and a fixed resolution only to discuss parts in the context of wholes. But we need not fear for the ark of God. Only let evangelicalism be faithful to God by being true to itself, and we may look to Him with confidence to use this controversy as the catalyst and crucible of His truth.

REV. A. GARFIELD CURNOW

# A Consideration of the Teaching of the Bible on Human Freedom

(Gunning Prize Essay 1957)

## THE FREEDOM OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN MODERN SOCIETY

*Prologue.* In early Old Testament times the individual was submerged in the tribe, but gradually the idea of personal worth and responsibility and freedom emerged, and in the New Testament is dominant.

(1) *Freedom as a Philosophical Concept.* The two extreme views (absolute freedom and complete determinism) are negated by the facts of experience. The true view is that man is free within limits. In the Bible freewill is not discussed but presupposed.

(2) *Freedom and Authority.* Authority is essential to a stable society, but anything short of an objective and absolute (i.e. divine) authority cuts at the root of human freedom.

(3) *Freedom and the Welfare State.* The enactments of recent legislation, however beneficial, are fraught with danger to personal initiative and responsibility, and are thus a menace to freedom. Many recent writers are alive to this danger, but in as far as they ignore religion have no remedy for it.

(4) *The Root of the Matter.* According to the Bible human freedom is dependent on God's supremacy—i.e. on man's submission to God. Emancipation from God results not in freedom but slavery. The great principle is *Deo servire libertas.*

*Envoi.* The Bible must be read intelligently if its unique spiritual insight is to be made available for our day. In this way its relevance to modern needs and problems is demonstrated, and in particular the adequacy of its teaching on human freedom.

Except where other writers are definitely referred to and cited, the Essay is wholly original work.

## THE BIBLE AND HUMAN FREEDOM

### *Prologue*

At the entrance to one of our English harbours there is a breakwater, at either end of which is a lighthouse. The breakwater guards the safety of the haven, and the two beacon lights illuminate it for the guidance of approaching vessels.



The breakwater may be likened to the Bible as the great safeguard of the doctrine of human freedom, the bulwark of the liberty of mankind. The Sacred Book is a breakwater against the stormy seas of modern life, and its firm resistance to subversive ideas, ideas which menace the freedom and therefore the well-being of the human individual and of human society, was never more necessary than today. In the course of this Essay we shall be considering some of these ideas; but here, at the outset, let us complete the application of our analogy before discarding it.

At either end of the Bible there are two great passages which light up the whole of its teaching on this vital subject. The first of these two 'lighthouse' passages is the profound and pregnant statement which meets us on the very opening page of the Bible, that 'God made man in His own image'.<sup>1</sup> Here is the foundation truth on which the Biblical concept of human freedom rests. 'Man was made in the image of God', writes Dr R. W. Dale, 'because he is a free, intelligent, self-conscious and moral Personality'.<sup>2</sup> Free, intelligent, self-conscious, and moral; and it is eminently right that 'free' should come first of the four adjectives, for, as the same author goes on to say, 'the crowning glory of his [man's] nature is his moral freedom'.<sup>3</sup>

The thoroughgoing materialist holds that there is no essential difference between man and the rest of creation. If that is so, then there is no such thing as human freedom. Man is no more free than the animals, or, for the matter of that, than stocks and stones. A modern writer who is a prominent representative of this school, after saying that 'a star is not necessarily more important than a man, or vice versa', roundly declares that 'star and man . . . are both expressions of the same inner laws'.<sup>4</sup> If this is true, then to speak of human freedom is of course ridiculous. It cannot be too much stressed that the freedom of man is bound up with that in him which differentiates him from the rest of creation; and this *differentium* is precisely what is specified in the passage from Genesis: that man was made in the image of God.

At the other end of the Bible, in its last book, we have a passage which, ever since Holman Hunt interpreted its meaning in a famous picture, has caught the imagination of all who think of the relations between God and man: 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in.'<sup>5</sup> Here

<sup>1</sup> Gen. i. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 179.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. iii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Christian Doctrine*, p. 178.

<sup>4</sup> Fred Hoyle, *Man and Materialism*, p. vii.

we see God's respect for the freedom which, by His primal act of creation, He made an integral and essential element of human personality. Since 'His purpose in the creation of man was that there should be free persons, who would freely return the love which He gave to them', to quote the words of a recent writer, 'therefore He invites, He does not compel. He persuades; He does not condition.'<sup>1</sup>

Too much emphasis cannot be laid on these two luminous passages. The first is the Magna Carta of the Old Testament. It is the *fons et origo* of human freedom. All that rightly pertains to the liberty of man is derivative from it. The second is its New Testament complement. The knocking, waiting Christ signifies that there is no coercion in the divine education of the race: that God will never override the human will, never infringe the prerogative of personal choice; that in His love for His human children He will never take away from them the dignity or the danger involved in possessing freedom.

'God sent His Son,' wrote the author of the Epistle to Diognetus in the long ago, 'not in sovereignty and fear and terror, but in gentleness and meekness. . . . He was saving and persuading when He sent Him, not compelling, for compulsion is not an attribute of God.'<sup>2</sup> Compulsion is not an attribute of God: that is the inscription on one side of the medal which bears on its other side the motto of the inalienable freedom of man.

Between these two classic passages stretches the vast range of Bible teaching on the freedom of man. But though vast, the main line of development can be easily discerned. It runs parallel with a development in social outlook and conditions. In the early days of the Israelites the individual man was submerged in his tribal relationships. 'The centre of worth lay not in persons who conferred worth on the group, but in the group, which gave to persons any significance they might possess.'<sup>3</sup>

This, of course, is a characteristic emphasis—indeed, it may be said to be the basis—of what we know today as totalitarianism, and it is a curious and noteworthy fact that this modern ideology, which is regarded by many in our time as the political *dernier cri*, should have been discarded in the early stages of Biblical thought and practice.

By the time of Ezekiel, the great prophet of Individualism, who rebuked his countrymen for attributing their sufferings not to their

<sup>1</sup> Alan Richardson, *Science, History and Faith*, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> *Ep. Diag.*, vii. 3, 4 (Loeb Classical Library trans.)

<sup>3</sup> Fosdick, *Guide to Understanding the Bible*, p. 55.

own sins but to the sins of their fathers<sup>1</sup>—or, as we might put it nowadays, for being too group-conscious and not sufficiently individually-minded—the danger of Israel's early conception of social solidarity, in enfeebling the sense of personal responsibility and the significance of the individual unit, was practically over as far as the Old Testament is concerned.

Just as the Old Testament starts with social solidarity so complete that the individual has practically no rights, and moves on to a firm grasp of the meaning and worth and possibilities of personal life, so the New Testament begins with personalities as in themselves supremely valuable. Our Lord's teaching is shot through and through with His sense of the infinite worth of each individual soul, and the early Christian Church was organised on the basis of the free co-operation of free individuals. 'St Paul, though insisting on the corporate life of Christians, lays equal stress on the individual. . . . The Body of Christ is to be a fellowship of free spirits.'<sup>2</sup>

### I *Freedom as a Philosophical Concept*

The question of human free will, which has played such a large part in the course of philosophical thought, is not discussed in the Bible. But it will be helpful to take a brief glance at the history of the idea in extra-Biblical thinking, in order that the position taken up in the Bible may be appreciated.

There are two extreme views. Some philosophers, of whom Fichte may be cited as an example, have contended that man is absolutely free. This view has received very little support from the great thinkers of the ages. It has recently been revived in the so-called 'existentialism' of the French writer Jean Paul Sartre,<sup>3</sup> but it is more than doubtful if this latest assertion of complete human freedom is destined to win any large degree of acceptance from modern philosophers. The belief that man is absolutely free is negated by the ineluctable facts of experience.

At the other extreme is the view that man has no freedom at all. This view—generally known as Determinism, or the doctrine of Necessity—is by far the commoner one, and has a great following in our time. In book after book—novels, plays, as well as more serious

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Dean W. R. Matthews, *Daily Telegraph*, 12 January 1957.

<sup>3</sup> *Being and Nothingness*, English translation, 1957, *passim*.

writings—it is taken for granted that we cannot help being what we are, and that we are not to blame for any of our actions or their consequences. In fact, according to the determinist position, words like blame and merit, vice and virtue, right and wrong, good and evil, are without meaning—except the arbitrary and variable meanings which human societies choose to place on them for their own protection. Determinism asserts that human beings only do what they cannot help doing, since they are mere puppets in the hands of an inscrutable Fate.

But though as a theory Determinism looms large, practically it does not play a great role. The determinist lives almost always as if he was not a determinist, and in his relations with other people takes it for granted that they are not 'determined'. It must be so if social life is to be possible. That human communities cannot be organised along the lines of determinism (that is, of irresponsibility) is sufficient evidence of the falsity of this view.

The true view, with which the Biblical conception of human freedom links up, is a mid-way one between the two extremes of absolute freedom and complete determinism. That *within limits* man is free, self-determined, has been the general conviction of the human race in all countries and in all times, and no philosophical demonstration of the theory of Necessity has ever seriously shaken this conviction, just as no attempt to prove man's absolute and untrammelled freedom has ever been successful.

The limits within which man is free may not be capable of precise definition, but we instinctively recognise them in practice, just as we instinctively recognise and act upon the overall fact of freedom. Here comes in—to mention one point only in this connection—the question of motive. At any given period in our experience motives have to be accepted as existing. *How* they came into existence—whether they are an outcome of our personal behaviour in the past, or an inheritance from former generations, as we inherit many of our physical and mental characteristics—need not detain us for purposes of our present argument. They exist; and they certainly limit our freedom. But as certainly they do not annul it.

Freedom, as Bishop Gore says, 'never means independence of motives but only the mysterious faculty for choosing the motive we will act upon'.<sup>1</sup> It is in this faculty of being able to choose between our motives that the reality of human freedom consists. To quote to the same

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophy of the Good Life*, Everyman Edition, p. 235.

effect a writer of former days who made this field his special study, and whose work is far from superseded: 'The freedom of the will does not mean the ability to act without a motive, as some of its opponents still stupidly seem to suppose. But it does mean the ability to create or co-operate in creating our own motives, or to choose our motive, or to transform a weaker motive into a stronger by adding weights to the scale of our own accord, and thus to determine our conduct by our reason; whence it is now usually called the power of self-determination.'<sup>1</sup> And this power of self-determination is a more basic and elemental feature of human personality than any pressure of motives.

But it must be reiterated that, as has already been pointed out, the Biblical writers are not concerned with free will as a philosophical problem. In the Bible the freedom of man is presupposed as a matter of course because it is taken for granted that man is always responsible to God. It may be difficult to reduce this mid-way view between the two opposite extremes to clear-cut logical terms, or to solve all the problems it presents to abstract thinking. We are here at the entrance to a region where logic and prose are not adequate vehicles for the expression of reality. Only the language of poetry and a disciplined imagination suffices, and even this is not sufficient, for there is always a residuum of mystery. It is our wisdom to trust that instinct within us which assures us that all the ramifications of argument and all the profundities of speculation and all the clash of divergent points of view, concerning such antinomies as God's foreknowledge and man's free will, God's power and man's volition, and so on, are all ultimately resolvable into the essential truth of things as it exists in the Being of God:

He lives and reigns, throned above space and time; And, in that realm, freedom and law are one; Fore-knowledge and all-knowledge and free-will Make everlasting music.<sup>2</sup>

## 2 *Freedom and Authority*

The course of history makes it abundantly plain that human society cannot exist without authority holding it together. The chaos produced by an unrestrained individualism is illustrated by the state of affairs portrayed in the Book of Judges, as a result of the fact that 'In

<sup>1</sup> Illingworth, *Personality Human and Divine*, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Noyes, *The Torch Bearers*, 2, p. 374.

those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes'.<sup>1</sup> A significant if amusing modern instance is afforded by a story of the Russian revolution of 1917, as related by Mr A. G. Gardiner:

'A stout old lady was walking with her basket down the middle of a street in Petrograd, to the great confusion of the traffic and with no small peril to herself. It was pointed out to her that the pavement was the place for foot-passengers, but she replied: "I'm going to walk where I like. We've got liberty now." It did not occur to the dear old lady', comments Mr Gardiner, 'that if liberty entitled the foot-passenger to walk down the middle of the road, it also entitled the cab-driver to drive on the pavement, and that the end of such liberty would be universal chaos'.<sup>2</sup>

When liberty is thus equated with a do-as-I-like attitude on the part of the individual, when there is no cohesive principle of authority, whether in ancient Israel or in modern Europe, anarchy is the inevitable result, and anything worth calling freedom goes by the board.

But where is true authority to be found, and what is its nature? The more this question is pondered, the more clearly it will be seen that, to be adequate for the needs of man, authority must be absolute. That is, it must derive from an ultimate standard, something independent of human vagaries and unaffected by human distractions; like the pole-star in questions of navigation. In other words, it must be the authority of God.

Wordsworth's well known lines point in the right direction:

All true glory rests,  
All praise, all safety, and all happiness,  
Upon the moral law.<sup>3</sup>

But this, though abundantly true, does not go far enough. Moral law, unless it is the law of an eternal law-giver, is not sufficient for the human situation. William Penn goes to the heart of the matter when he says that 'Man must be governed either by God or by tyrants'.<sup>4</sup> And the entire course of world history is a commentary on the truth of Penn's words.

When there is no authority of a spiritual nature the door is open

<sup>1</sup> Judges xvii. 6 and xxi. 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Leaves in the Wind*, p. 223.

<sup>3</sup> *Excursion*, Book 8.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted Arnold Lunn, *Memory to Memory*, p. 235.

to dictatorship of one sort or another; and to speak of spiritual authority must mean, ultimately, the authority of God. All other forms of 'spiritual' authority—public opinion, ethical idealism, humanitarian principles, etc.—are subjective, and therefore unstable and evanescent. Just as they are man-made so they can be man-destroyed. What is needed is something outside the human scene and independent of it, something unaltering and unalterable, something 'the same yesterday, today, and for ever'. Nothing else answers this description except the Will of God. And so it comes about that in practical affairs—in life as we have to live it—there is no mid-way course between an acceptance of the authority of God on the one hand, and the anarchy of individualism or the anarchy of dictatorship on the other. And as each of these two forms of chaos is the antithesis of freedom, we reach again the same conclusion: the condition of human freedom is acceptance of the authority of God.

In one of John Galsworthy's novels<sup>1</sup> a young woman who professes to be an atheist remarks: 'I am decent because decency is the decent thing.' Whereupon her mother says to her, 'If there is no God, why is decency the decent thing?' And to that question there is of course no answer, for, as H. J. Massingham writes, 'if God is left out, words like responsibility, independence, and indeed any valuation whatever, are totally devoid of meaning'.<sup>2</sup>

It is astonishing to note how blind some eminent writers seem to be to this fundamental truth of Biblical revelation, so underlined and emphasised as it is by the tragic human story on this terrestrial globe. Here for instance is Mr Bertrand Russell: 'To the extent to which a man has freedom, he needs a personal morality to guide his conduct.'<sup>3</sup>

Which is much like saying that a traveller on an unfamiliar road, not knowing the direction he should take, needs to be guided by a personal sense of direction. But his personal sense of direction is as likely to lead him astray as in the right road unless he checks it up against the stars in the heavens, the eternal landmarks, objective and unchanging.

And here is Dr Julian Huxley: 'Man as scientist can provide practical control of phenomena. It is for man as man to control that control.'<sup>4</sup> But it is as certain as anything can be that he can only control that control as he himself is controlled by a higher control—by the control of God. In other words, 'man as man' is insufficient for the task. All

<sup>1</sup> *Maid in Waiting*.

<sup>3</sup> *Authority and the Individual*, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> *This Plot of Earth*, p. 93.

<sup>4</sup> *What Dare I Think?* p. 73.

these assertions of human omniscience, so frequent in our day, of which Dr Huxley's is one, are mere rationalisations of a need beyond man's power to fulfil. And they are sternly rebuked by the facts of experience in all generations, and never more so than in this mid-twentieth century.

To take one other example, Mr Charles Morgan speaks of 'the humane individualism that is the philosophic root of democracy'.<sup>1</sup> Individualism, in the best sense of the word, is a good thing; humane individualism is still better; but the root of any democracy which is to survive must be quite different from any form of individualism. Indeed, no mere 'philosophic root' is adequate at all. Democracy must grow from and be sustained by a religious root or its fate will be that of Jonah's gourd.

But not all eminent writers are thus blind to the teachings of Scripture and human experience. Dostoevsky, the famous Russian novelist, writing nearly a hundred years ago, predicted with uncanny insight the despotism which we witness in his native land today. (Incidentally, it may be noted, as a word of hope in the present situation, he also predicted that this despotism, which he describes as being 'possessed by devils', would be followed by a spiritual reformation.) The lessons Dostoevsky so powerfully enforces in his books—that those who give up God soon come no longer to believe in man, and that once a nation loses the foundation of the divine law, chaos descends upon it—are all summed up in the great principle which he states in these memorable words: 'If there is no God, then all things are allowable.'<sup>2</sup>

This is the calamity which has befallen the world in our day. When the authority of a transcendent divine Power becomes uncertain, the idea of authority among men tends to disappear altogether. For a time the authority of the State may be substituted for the authority of God, but this cannot last, and while it does last two inevitable results follow: there is no respect for the individual, and no minority is to be tolerated. The individual must be blindly obedient, and any sign of disobedience, whether on the part of individual or minority, is at once crushed. And when we consider that practically all reforms and all progress, during the entire course of human history, have sprung from minorities, the seriousness of this predicament is realised.

<sup>1</sup> *The Empty Room*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Fulton Sheen, *Thinking Things Through*, p. 151.



### 3 *Freedom and the Welfare State*

John Stuart Mill, in his celebrated book *On Liberty*, published in 1859, expressed his fears that the provision of State machinery would dwarf the individual. His fears have proved to be well founded. This is not to minimise the beneficent outcome of much parliamentary legislation from his day to ours, and particularly in recent years. A contemporary writer is certainly going too far in stigmatising the Welfare State as 'a cradle-to-grave policy of mollycoddle',<sup>1</sup> but there is a degree of truth in his contention that it 'stifles initiative, enterprise, and the spirit of adventure'.<sup>2</sup> We may recognise to the full, and with gratitude and rejoicing, the improvement in the lot of the less privileged sections of the community which has resulted from many of its enactments and innovations, while still lamenting some of their ill-effects in lessening that sturdy self-reliance which has been such a feature of the British character in former generations. The danger of the Welfare State is that it may promote the rise of a generation that is insistent on its rights but careless of its responsibilities; that is eager to receive but not to give; and that is prepared to hand over its mind and body to the State provided material needs are satisfied.

'State action', it has been well said, 'may eliminate social injustice and remove the terrible insecurity which preys upon so many of the poor; but it carries with it a threat to individual life and tends to abolish the feeling of personal responsibility. Pressed to its extreme, it may claim not only to provide for and control the bodies of the people, but to regulate their thoughts and beliefs as well. It then becomes a menace to religious as well as to political and economic freedom.'<sup>3</sup>

This is the position in which we find ourselves at present, not only in totalitarian countries, but also, though of course to a lesser extent, in democratic lands. And it is not only a matter of State action as such. Modern techniques have made possible a new intensity of bureaucratic control. Mass suggestion, ceaselessly conveyed through radio, television, cinema, press headline, and the vast apparatus of high-pressure advertising and salesmanship—all these features of the life of our day contribute to an insidious process of standardisation. The result of it all is the creation of the mass mind, and the freedom of the human individual is steadily and increasingly sapped.

<sup>1</sup> *Punch*, 29 May 1957, p. 683.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Elliott Binns, *Religion in the Victorian Era*, p. 408.

The rapid advance of scientific research and discovery in recent years presents an obvious and alarming menace in the same direction. What is known as automation is likely to reduce the number of merely mechanical jobs, for purely mechanical repetitive jobs are those that can best be done by automatic means. The tremendous emphasis now being laid on technology is another sign of the times. The trend seems to be for education to become more and more a matter of training people to earn their living, rather than training them to become full personalities.

The contemporary situation may be stated in the words of two recent writers who, whatever their limitations, are keen observers of the human scene. 'I find individual liberty being everywhere lessened by regimentation', says Bertrand Russell in his latest book.<sup>1</sup> And Fred Hoyle, in a book published during the current year (1957), says this: 'Each one of us I think is coming to feel that all individuality is being hammered out of our lives. More and more as each year passes, we are being required to live as automatons, not as humans. Individual freedom is being lost and it is being lost rapidly.'<sup>2</sup>

But where writers like Russell and Hoyle come short is that, while they can diagnose, they have no remedy. They can point out the perilous possibilities of the predicament in which humanity finds itself, but do not tell us how those possibilities can be averted. Russell, in an earlier book than the one just quoted, declares impressively, and with utter truth, after a review of the tendencies of the times, that 'emphasis upon the value of the individual is even more necessary now than at any former time'.<sup>3</sup> But that is just like telling a man in the grip of critical illness that he never needed health so much before. What is the way out of our present mounting dangers? How can we arrive at a more adequate sense of the value of the individual? What form or forms should the emphasis on such value take? Here we are left helpless by such writers as the two just quoted; and it is just here that we need to get back to the teaching of the Bible—so definite, so unequivocal, and so dynamic.

#### 4 *The Root of the Matter*

The great thing to be noted, in expounding the teaching of the Bible on human freedom, is that the idea of freedom is not at the

<sup>1</sup> *Portraits from Memory*, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> *Man and Materialism*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Authority and the Individual*, p. 44.

centre of Biblical revelation. The central thing, from which freedom is derivative, is God's supremacy, and man's acceptance of it. 'Freedom, rightly understood, is not the first, but a second word. The first word is dependence on God, God's lordship.'<sup>1</sup>

This is a vital point. The truth that man's freedom is identical with his dependence on God, or in other words consists in his fellowship with God, or in still other words follows from his recognition and acceptance of the authority of God, is all-important. It is the crux of the whole matter. Here we are at the very heart of what the Bible has to say concerning the freedom of man. The essence of Bible teaching on this subject may be expressed in a single sentence which conveys a characteristic emphasis of Archbishop William Temple: the condition of human freedom is submission to God.<sup>2</sup> And this sentence, it is not too much to say, may be described as a summary of the wisdom of the ages, a résumé of all the long experience of the race.

But needless to say, this is the opposite of the usual point of view, which insists that man is free only so far as he is independent. The Bible, on the other hand, emphatically and consistently declares that he is free only so far as he is dependent—dependent on God. Incidentally, we have here the gist of the meaning of the doctrine of the Fall. Our first parents aimed at being independent of God, and fell into slavery—'brought sin into the world, and all our woe', as Milton puts it. 'The primal sin and the root of all sins', says Dr Denney, 'is the desire and determination to be independent of God.'<sup>3</sup> Here is the doctrine of the Fall in miniature. And this desire and determination to be independent of God, because it is the root of all sins, so it is the root of all forms of spiritual bondage. The principle of the whole matter is *DEO SERVIRE LIBERTAS*, a principle which is the diametric contradiction of that self-sufficiency which man in his blindness regards as the *sine qua non* of freedom.

The tragic blunder of humanity in all generations, and of modern humanity in particular, has been to seek a freedom outside of and apart from God. All the trouble that has come upon us stems from that root. Man has developed his life on the lines of emancipation from God, and now learns from bitter experience, what he could have known from the Bible, that such emancipation is not freedom but direst slavery, whether slavery to the 'world, the flesh and the

<sup>1</sup> Brunner, *Christianity and Civilisation*, I, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Nature, Man and God*, p. 381.

<sup>3</sup> *Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, p. 62.

devil', or slavery under the domination of tyrants and dictators. And whether it is the one or the other, in both cases it endangers his present well-being and his prospects and possibilities as a spiritual personality.

The ancient fable of the kite is a mirror of universal human experience and is eminently relevant to the happenings of our own day. 'Let me break this cord which holds me in', said the kite as it swayed to and fro in the sky, 'and I shall soar upward in unimpeded flight'. So it snapped the cord—and plunged headlong to the ground. Modern man, in breaking away from God, brings upon himself the same fate: plunges himself into abject bondage.

The summary of Bible teaching on this subject is that there is a freedom which is perfect bondage and a bondage which is perfect freedom. The former is the outcome of the pride of self-sufficiency, and the latter is conditioned by dependence on God. This is the two-fold truth—so simple and yet so profound—revealed in the Bible. And this is the truth that the world of our day needs to face up to, if it is to avert the perils which seem imminent, and to enter upon the upward road of true progress and real prosperity. 'No man in this world', wrote Bishop Phillips Brooks, 'attains to freedom from any slavery except by entrance into some higher servitude'.<sup>1</sup> And when he enters into the highest servitude of all he finds the completest freedom. *Deo servire libertas.*

### Envoi

Lord Acton, we are told, gathered between sixty and seventy thousand volumes 'to be the material for a history of liberty, the emancipation of conscience from power, and the gradual substitution of freedom for force in the government of man'.<sup>2</sup> Not one page of his projected history was ever written, and his huge collection of books is now preserved at Cambridge, awaiting some future historian.

But the future historian of human liberty need not go to Cambridge and wade through Lord Acton's enormous library in order to grasp the basal principles of human freedom. In the Bible—itsself the record of a thousand years of human experience and divine education, of man's thought and God's revelation—he has all he needs for this purpose.

<sup>1</sup> *Candle of the Lord*, p. 363.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Drew, *Acton, Gladstone and Others*, p. 8.

And if the question is asked, as it often is in one way and another—Why go to such ancient sources as we have in the Bible for guidance on this pressing modern problem?—the answer is plain, and may be stated in the words of Professor Basil Willey: ‘The assumption behind the use of the phrase “modern culture” and “the modern mind” is that whatever is modern, enlightened, scientific, etc., is superior to what is primitive. . . . This may be true of sanitation, communication and the like, but it is not necessarily true of spiritual insight.’<sup>1</sup>

It is the spiritual insight of the Bible that is the basis of its abiding worth. On all the great questions affecting human well-being its insight is unsurpassed among all the literature of the world. It has never been equalled, never been approached, and, we may confidently say, never will be.

But if this spiritual insight is to be made available for our day, the Bible must be used intelligently. To regard it as a fetish, as not a few present-day cults regard their sacred books—the Koran among Mohammedans, for instance—is stultifying.

In one of Mr A. S. M. Hutchinson’s novels there is a reference to a hunting enthusiast who says that she has arranged in her will that she is to be buried with a Bible under her head. ‘It’s the Bible that stands by my bed every night of my life and that I stuff in my hunting kit-bag every day I go into another county. I don’t read it, my dear, haven’t opened it in a score of years, but it was my mother’s Bible and she read it and I just keep it there to have a nod at night and morning just to remind me that the straight game is the right game’.<sup>2</sup>

Even this, it may be said, as a mode of using the Bible, is better than nothing. But it is very little better than nothing. The Bible was not meant to be used as a talisman, a mascot. It is meant to be *read*, and read intelligently; and to read it intelligently means to study it in the light of its contemporary background. The circumstances which led its various writers to affirm their ‘Thus saith the Lord’ must be, as far as possible, appraised. Only in this way can a fruitful application of the principles they discerned as a result of the revelation of God, and which the Bible enshrines for the guidance of succeeding generations, be made to the problems of the twentieth century.

This is particularly true in reference to the subject with which this Essay is concerned. The outward circumstances of the lot of mankind vary so much from age to age, and the question of human freedom

<sup>1</sup> *Christianity Past and Present*, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> *The Uncertain Trumpet*, p. 290.

is so wrapped up nowadays with distracting considerations—economic, political, scientific, industrial, as well as moral and religious—that unless we get behind the letter of what has been written, and dig out the principles which the letter is meant to state and convey, we are not likely to profit by our use of the Bible. And certainly we shall not avail ourselves, to anything like the degree we otherwise should, of its wonderful insight into all the problems that perplex and distress us in these anxious modern days.

‘Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free’,<sup>1</sup> said ‘One who saw more clearly and deeply into the human dilemma, whether ancient or modern, than any other of whom we have a record’.<sup>2</sup> And that freedom-making truth is recorded and enshrined in the pages of the sacred Volume which is well described in our British coronation service as ‘the most valuable thing that this world affords’.

A Czech student of English who recently fled from his own country was asked why he had done so. He replied: ‘I was asked to sign a repressive cultural manifesto—I, who have read Milton and Wordsworth and J. S. Mill.’<sup>3</sup> That is, having fed his soul from these apostles of liberty, how could he lend himself to an act infringing the freedom of others? And what applies to Milton and Wordsworth and J. S. Mill applies with infinitely more force to the Bible. Anyone who has learned from its wisdom, and imbibed its spirit, is inwardly fortified against anything and everything which would rob himself or his fellows of their God-intended liberty. And he is strengthened for service to the cause of human freedom in these critical present days, and in the still more critical days which, it would appear, are ahead of us.

In many an English town and village may be seen, high up on a wall and beside a window, a weather-worn plaque bearing the legend ‘Ancient Lights’. These two words, being interpreted, mean something like this: ‘This window was ours for receiving the blessing of the sun, for opening wide to the winds of the world, and we will not have it obscured. This light we had, this light we will keep.’<sup>4</sup> The two words may be taken as the motto of the liberties of mankind in relation to the Bible. ‘This Book was granted us as “a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path”’, to guide us through the crooked and dangerous

<sup>1</sup> John viii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Macmurray, *Freedom in the Modern World*, p. 68.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 12 July 1957, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from Beverley Nichols, *A Village in a Valley*, p. 66.

ways of life. This Book we will hold, this Book we will keep. We will allow nothing to rob us of the light imparted by its teaching, that so we may preserve for ourselves, and for our posterity, "the glorious liberty of the children of God".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 21.

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## The Gift of Tongues

The Scriptures relating to speaking in tongues are examined. The tongues of Acts 2 actual languages; and similarly at Caesarea, Ephesus and Corinth, though in the last instance the circumstances of their exercise were different.

The threefold purpose of the gift: for worship and self-edification as a sign to unbelievers; and when coupled with the gift of interpretation, for the edification of the Church.

The testimony of the early Fathers cited.

The present-day exercise of the gift examined, and found to conform to the Scriptural pattern both in its nature and in its use.

The nature of the gift—not ecstatic, nor emotional.

Modern views examined, with special reference to the psychological school.

The possibility of simulating tongues.

The Scriptures a sufficient guide to the subject.

‘THE whole question of speaking in tongues urgently needs at this time unbiassed, scholarly, historical and exegetical reinvestigation by capable, trained men, and by our larger Protestant groups corporately.’

This quotation is taken from the *Moody Monthly* (December 1955). If such a task is to be undertaken, the first step must be to establish some foundation of fact, and to remove some of the strange and often fantastic misconceptions which have clustered around the subject. It is the aim of the present article to assist towards this end. It is not that there is not already a vast literature concerning it. But the widespread recurrence of the phenomenon in our day, and the attempts by some writers to apply to it the criteria of the new psychology, together combine to demand a revaluation.

We begin, as we must begin, by examining what the Scriptures have recorded of speaking in tongues.

### *The Evidence of Scripture—Acts*

There are three instances of speaking in tongues recorded in Acts, and two others may be inferred. There was, firstly, the speaking in tongues by the assembled company when the Holy Spirit was first poured out on the Day of Pentecost (chap. ii), then in the house of Cornelius (chap. x), and at Ephesus (chap. xix). Then it is clear that there was audible or visible manifestation when the Spirit was bestowed at Samaria (chap. viii): ‘When Simon saw that through the laying on of the Apostle’s hands the Holy Ghost was given . . .’—What did he



see? As the only such manifestation which is mentioned elsewhere is the speaking in tongues, it is reasonable to infer that this was the case here; indeed, Augustine plainly says that it was so.<sup>1</sup> Finally, there is the case of Paul (chap. ix). We know that in later days he spoke with tongues (1 Cor. xiv. 18), and it is natural to infer that he first did so when Ananias laid hands on him—‘that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost’ (Acts ix. 17).

That the speaking in tongues in the house of Cornelius was of exactly the same character as on the Day of Pentecost is expressly stated by Peter: ‘The Holy Ghost fell on them, *as on us* at the beginning’ (xi. 15). The instances of speaking in tongues in Acts give a single consistent picture.

Of what then, did this speaking in tongues consist? According to the narrative in Chapter ii, it was the utterance by those on whom the Spirit fell of languages which they did not know and had never learned, but which were understood by those that heard them; and that in these languages they were declaring ‘the wonderful works of God’. It is strange that this should ever have been questioned. The ancient writers, whatever their views on other points, were united in this (Irenaeus, Origen, Gregory Nazianzen, Augustine, Chrysostom, Jerome, etc.). The only question that ever arose in their minds was whether the miracle consisted in the *speaking* by the Apostles and those with them, or the *hearing* by the audience in their own languages what was being said in the native tongue—a view attributed by Alford to Cyprian and Gregory of Nyssa. According to Gregory Nazianzen,<sup>2</sup> the point turns on the punctuation of ii. 11, as though it were made to read, ‘we do hear them in our own tongues, as they are speaking’. But he does not accept this interpretation on the ground that it transfers the miracle from those who were filled with the Spirit to the unconverted multitude. Such an interpretation also overlooks verse 4, which states that the speaking in tongues began before there was any audience at all. We need not deny the possibility of such a miracle of hearing—it is said to have occurred with St Vincent Ferrer, and two modern instances have been reported during the recent revival in the Congo;<sup>3</sup> but this is not what happened on the Day of Pentecost.

Dean Alford, after considering all the alternative explanations which had been suggested of the nature of the gift, will have none of them: ‘There can be no question in any unprejudiced mind that

<sup>1</sup> *Enarratio in Psalmum CXXX.*

<sup>2</sup> *Orat. XLI, x, In Pentecosten.*

<sup>3</sup> *This is That* (Christian Literature Crusade), p. 49.

the fact which this narrative sets before us is, *that the disciples began to speak various languages, viz. the languages of the nations enumerated below, and perhaps others.* All attempts to evade this are connected with some forcing of the text, or some far-fetched and indefensible exegesis.<sup>1</sup> These words are as valid today as when they were written. Dean Alford is followed in this, with equal emphasis, by the Speaker's Commentary (Canon F. C. Cook) and the Pulpit Commentary (The Rt Rev. Bishop Hervey).

But what were the languages spoken? Some commentators, fastening on the word *dialektos* in verses 7 and 8, and the fact that, with few exceptions, the hearers were all Jews, and presumably spoke or could speak the current Aramaic, have contended that they were simply local dialects, or variations of the same language. But can we believe seriously that if this were all, it would have excited such wonderment, and that these dialects were 'our own tongues wherein we were born'? The whole tenor of the passage forbids it. And, chapter ii apart, the whole explanation falls to the ground as applied to chapters 10 and 19. The word *dialektos*, moreover, was not limited to the present meaning of 'dialect'. Luke himself uses it (Acts xxi. 40) of the Hebrew language. It has been attempted to support this interpretation by reference to the question 'Are not all these which speak Galileans?' from the known fact that Galileans have a dialect of their own; but the point may be that, being Galileans, that is, provincials, they could not be expected to have acquired that knowledge of foreign languages that might be found in a more cosmopolitan centre.

The view that *glossa* is used in the sense of *glossema*, 'unusual, archaic, figurative speech', put forward by Bleek, Ernestin and Baur, is no more satisfactory, nor yet Meyer's suggestion that the tongues were a new spiritual language, of which the *glossai* were merely the varieties. These explanations do not fit the narrative. Paul's rhetorical mention of 'tongues of angels' in 1 Corinthians xiii. 1 is no evidence that any such tongue was ever in fact spoken.

It is admitted by most commentators that Luke intended to show that the tongues spoken were actual languages, and that they included those languages of the peoples represented in the audience, whether or no they are willing to admit that this really took place.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on Acts* (ii).

<sup>2</sup> See Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church* (T. and T. Clark, 1854), vol. i, p. 238: 'That this is clear, indisputable, literal sense of the narrative is admitted even by rationalist interpreters.'

*The Evidence of Scripture—I Corinthians*

From Acts we turn to I Corinthians, where, in chapters xii to xiv, a gift of speaking in tongues is included among other *charismata*, and detailed regulations are given for its public exercise. The first question is: are the tongues at Corinth of the same nature as those recorded in Acts, that is, were they actual languages? If not, wherein does the difference lie?

Many, if not most modern writers, profess to find a difference, and speak often as if Corinthian tongues were not respectable. It has become fashionable to speak of Paul as 'depreciating' the gift, and that, in spite of the fact that he attributes it to the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 10, 11), he regards it as conducing to profit (verse 7), wishes that all spoke with tongues (xiv. 5), and thanks God that he himself possesses the gift (xiv. 18), and finally says (verse 39), 'Forbid not to speak with tongues'. Brumback<sup>1</sup> lists fifteen statements in these chapters commendatory of tongues. Theodoret's comment on xiv. 5 is, 'I do not, he says, belittle the gift; but I seek its proper use'.<sup>2</sup>

This attempt to make a difference between the tongues of Corinthians and those of Acts is wholly artificial. There is a distinction in the circumstances and mode of operation, but not a difference in kind. As Robertson says, 'There is no possible doubt that the phenomena of the Church of Corinth are homogeneous with those that meet us at Caesarea (Acts x. 46) and at Ephesus (xix. 5). These two passages are linked together by the reference to baptism, and the close relation of tongues to prophecy connects the latter passage with the phenomena of Corinth.'<sup>3</sup> Alford supports this view that the Corinthian tongues are actual languages, though here the Speaker's Commentary (Canon Evans), and the Pulpit Commentary (Archdeacon Farrar) do not. These Corinthian chapters are, as we shall see, vital for the understanding of the nature and purposes of the gift.

We said, however, that there was a distinction between the gift of tongues in Acts and the exercise of the gift at Corinth. The chief difference was that in Acts ii those upon whom the Spirit fell 'began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance', and the occurrences recorded in chapters x and xix are similar; whilst in Corinth the exercise of the gift was under the control of the person possessing it. A further distinction is that in Acts ii at least, the tongues

<sup>1</sup> *What meaneth This?*

<sup>2</sup> *Commentary on 1 Cor.*, xiv. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, 'The Gift of Tongues'.

spoken were understood by the hearers, without an interpreter, which was not the case at Corinth.

On the Day of Pentecost, the utterance was wholly due to the operation of the Spirit, but it would seem that the speakers were wholly conscious of what they were doing. How far they continued to speak in tongues on subsequent occasions we have no means of knowing, but analogy would suggest that many, if not most, would do so. It is also implied that the hearers could also participate in this experience (verses 38 f.) and this is admitted by Augustine.<sup>1</sup> But at Corinth we have not the account of an initial experience, but of a continuing 'gift' or faculty of speaking in tongues, largely at the will of the speaker, who could speak or keep silence as he would. It is this only to which the term the 'gift' of tongues properly applies.

We must recognise the difficulty of understanding how such a gift could be exercised in such a way; for it is inconceivable that a man should be able to command the operation of the Holy Spirit. Alford points out the difficulty, but he suggests no answer; he says, 'I would not conceal the difficulty which our minds find in conceiving a person supernaturally endued with the power of speaking, *ordinarily and consciously*, a language which he has never learned. I believe that difficulty to be insuperable. . . . But there is no such contradiction, and to my mind *no such difficulty*, in conceiving a man to be moved to utterance of sounds *dictated by the Holy Spirit*.'<sup>2</sup> If, however, we recognise, as we shall see later, that the primary purpose of the bestowal of the gift is for use in worship, the difficulty 'largely disappears.

But there is another use of the gift, in the Church, where, with the help of the gift of interpretation, it is equivalent to prophecy. Paul says in 1 Corinthians xiv. 29, 'Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge', or, as in the R. V. 'let the others discern'. Whatever it is that is to be judged—whether the message is inspired, whether it conforms to the truth of Scripture, or as to its present application—it is clear that the utterance is not infallible. Inspired it may be, but the inspiration is of an entirely different order to that of the Scriptures. On this Donald Gee well says, 'It is a pleasant dream held by some people that all exercise of the gifts of the Spirit is necessarily perfect, and beyond abuse or mistake. Such an idea can only come from a

<sup>1</sup> *Sermo CCLXVII*: 'Whosoever received the Holy Spirit, suddenly, when filled with the Spirit, began to speak in the tongues of all men, not only the hundred and twenty.'

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*

very careless reading of the New Testament. . . . Paul's treatment of the subject in I Corinthians xii, xiii and xiv arises solely out of the Corinthian assembly using certain gifts wrongly . . . the imperfections in them arise from the "earthen vessels" through whom the manifestation flows.<sup>1</sup> We shall return to this when we consider the present-day exercise of the gift.

### *The Purpose of the Gift*

The purposes of the gift as enumerated in I Corinthians xiv are threefold. The primary purpose is its use in private worship: 'He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God, for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries' (verse 2)—'He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself' (verse 4). It was so on the Day of Pentecost, for there the gift was not used for preaching to the people, though the people who were present heard them; but they were declaring the 'wonderful works of God'.

Then there is the use of the gift in the capacity of a sign: 'tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not'—as again they were undoubtedly used on the Day of Pentecost.

And, finally, there is the use of the gift on the Church, when accompanied by the gift of interpretation; it is then equivalent to prophecy. That this use was intended is shown by the very fact that the gift of interpretation was added, so that the utterance could serve to the edification of the assembly.

### *Testimony of the Fathers*

Both Chrysostom<sup>2</sup> and Gregory Nazianzen<sup>3</sup> saw in the tongues of the Day of Pentecost a counterpart to the curse of Babel, whilst Augustine saw it as symbolising the unity of the Church.<sup>4</sup> There is doubtless truth in both these conceptions, but not the whole truth. Origen regarded the gift as having been bestowed for the preaching of the Gospel,<sup>5</sup> and so did Chrysostom,<sup>6</sup> though there is no instance

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Brumback, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *De Sancto Pentecoste, Homil. II.*

<sup>3</sup> *Orat. XLVI.*

<sup>4</sup> *De Civitate Dei XLIX; Sermones CXLXXV, CCLXVII, CXLVIII, CCLXIX, XXI, LXXXVII, Enarratio in Psalmum CXLVII.*

<sup>5</sup> *Comment. in Epist. Ad Rom.*

<sup>6</sup> *Homil. XXV, Cor. xiv*

recorded of the gift ever having been used for such a purpose, and indeed, it has been pointed out that never in the history of the world would it have been less necessary than in the first century of the Christian era. Bishop Wordsworth<sup>1</sup> also supports the idea, but Alford says that it only originated after the gift ceased.

Some curious reasons have been advanced for the cessation of the gift. Chrysostom<sup>2</sup> regarded it as having been bestowed in the first instance because the heathen converts had need of some tangible sign as an aid to their faith, which was no longer necessary. Augustine refers frequently to the question, and his explanation is always the same; that the tongues were an expression of the unity of the Church, which was to proclaim the gospel in all languages. But at the beginning there was only a small company of believers, all of one nation and one tongue; so that in order that the gospel could be expressed in all languages, they had to be distributed among this small company. But later, with the spread of the Gospel, the praises of God were being sounded forth in all languages, and the special gift was no longer needed. 'I venture to say that I speak in the tongue of all men. I am in the body of Christ; I am in the Church of Christ; if the body of Christ now speaks in the tongues of all men, then I too have the tongues of all men. I have Greek, I have Syriac, I have Hebrew, I have the tongues of all nations, because I am in the unity of all nations.'<sup>3</sup>

It is perhaps curious that these early writers took the disappearance of the gifts for granted; they never seem to have asked themselves whether they were intended to cease, or whether perchance they were missing something they should have possessed. The Scriptures say that the gifts should cease (not the gift of tongues only) 'when that which is perfect is come'; and so long as the word of knowledge and the word of wisdom are in evidence, we should expect the gift of tongues to be in evidence also.

### *Tongues in Later Times*

Whilst the early Fathers with few exceptions speak of the gift as one which has ceased in their days, the phenomenon has recurred all down the ages, particularly in times of revival. Justin Martyr<sup>4</sup> mentions the gifts in general as in operation, but does not specifically refer to

<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on Acts ii.*

<sup>2</sup> *De Sancto Pentecoste, Homil. I.*

<sup>3</sup> *Enarratio in Psalmum CLXVII.* (See also note 5, p. 64.)

<sup>4</sup> *Dial. c. Tryph. 88.*

tongues. Irenaeus speaks of tongues as something which he has known,<sup>1</sup> and Eusebius<sup>2</sup> quotes the evidence of Irenaeus. Then comes a long silence, unless we are at liberty to include the Montanists, which for reasons already mentioned is somewhat doubtful. But it is said to have occurred among the Franciscans of the thirteenth century, and among the 'little prophets of the Cevennes' in the seventeenth, amongst the early Quakers, during the Methodist revival, and in the well-known Irvingite revival in the nineteenth century. More recently, it occurred sporadically during the Welsh revival of 1904, though it attracted little attention. How far these occurrences conformed to the Scripture pattern may at times be difficult to determine; some of the records read rather strangely, persons speaking in tongues behaving in strange ways, and appearing exhausted afterwards; John Wesley on one occasion witnessed the prophetic utterance of one of the 'French prophets', without being able to arrive at any conclusions; but the probability is that for the most part the phenomena were genuine, but perhaps with a certain admixture.

At the present moment the phenomenon has become very widespread in the various branches of the Pentecostal movement, but it is by no means confined to them, and has appeared spontaneously in other communities, as the revivals in Korea and the Congo show. Individual persons too have testified that they have spoken in tongues without ever having heard of others doing so, and often without recognising it for what it was. Thus Pastor Pethrus of Stockholm has told how he spoke in tongues in 1902, and as he quaintly puts it, 'I felt it was not right to be speaking in a language I did not know, and especially when speaking to God'. It was only four years later that he heard of others having the same experience.

The question has now to be put, Are these modern 'tongues' the same as those recorded in Scripture? For the period between the Apostolic age and the recent past we have no direct evidence, and can only reason by inference and analogy, but for the present time there is abundant material. We have to ask ourselves:

1. Are the tongues actual languages?
2. Are they under the control of the speakers?
3. Are their uses the same as those described in Scripture?  
and perhaps
4. Are they susceptible of the same misuse as at Corinth?

<sup>1</sup> *Contra Haereses*, V. vi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, V. vii.

First, are they languages? There is abundant evidence that they are. They possess all the characteristics of language. They are not formless, but have a homogeneous structure, with a definite system of syllabification and accentuation, generally quite different from those of the speakers' native tongue. Occasions when actual languages have been recognised are relatively few, but this is not surprising when we remember how many languages there are (1,200 in New Guinea alone); the chance of any person being present who would recognise a remote or obscure language is very small. Nevertheless, a large number of cases have been recorded where the languages spoken have been recognised. In some instances a person has heard the secrets of his own heart revealed in his own tongue, or in some other with which he was familiar. (Cf. 1 Cor. xiv. 25.) T. B. Barratt<sup>1</sup> recounts many instances where the language was recognised. Mr W. F. P. Burton, co-founder of the Congo Evangelistic Mission, says, 'I have heard ignorant natives again and again, speak in tongues which they did not know, but with which I myself was familiar, the wonderful works of God'.<sup>2</sup> Barratt tells of two Telugu women who were able to speak to Moslems in Hindustani, which they did not otherwise know.<sup>3</sup> An American missionary was once cornered in a cannibal village in Africa where he had gone in an attempt to rescue one of his bearers who had been seized by the tribe, and was in imminent danger of sharing his fate, when the Spirit fell on him, and for an hour he addressed the people in their own tongue, at the end of which both he and the bearer were allowed to go free. Subsequently a Christian church was established there. Thulin gives a circumstantial account of the way by which a gentleman with the gift of tongues was able to assist some refugees passing through Sweden, who were in difficulties because they did not know the language; but such an instance is altogether exceptional, and perhaps unique.<sup>4</sup>

But even if we admit that actual languages are spoken on occasions, this is not sufficient to prove that languages are in question. Thulin quotes Andrae as distinguishing between glossolalia and xenolalia, the latter consisting of actual languages and the other not; but there seems no ground for any such assumption. To quote Alford again, 'On the question whether the speaking was *always* in a foreign tongue we have no data to guide us; it would seem that it *was*; but the conditions

<sup>1</sup> *In the Days of the Latter Rain* (Elim Publishing Co.).

<sup>2</sup> Tract, 'My Personal Experience of Receiving the Holy Spirit'.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit. pp. 87, 166.

<sup>4</sup> *Den Kristne*, June 1923, p. 176.



would not *absolutely* exclude rhapsodical or unintelligible utterance. Only there is this objection to it; *clearly languages were spoken on this occasion* (the Day of Pentecost), and we have no reason to believe that there were two distinct kinds of the gift.<sup>1</sup> Alford is, of course, referring to the tongues spoken of in Scripture, but the argument is equally applicable to the tongues of today. And the idea of two different kinds of the gift is contrary to the accepted principle of avoiding the unnecessary multiplication of hypotheses.

Is the tongue always under the control of the speaker? Here it will make for clarity if we distinguish between the initial speaking with tongues and the continued exercise of the gift. When a person first receives the gift he may to a large extent be oblivious of his surroundings, but not always so. He is wholly occupied with the worship of God, and it may not be easy to say how far he is conscious of what he is doing, or whether there is an element of ecstasy. Many who thus speak may never speak in tongues again, but many, perhaps most, will continue to do so. Some may only be able to do so on special occasions, particularly during prayer, but others will be able to speak in tongues as and when they will. In all circumstances they are fully conscious of what they are doing, and have complete control of the gift. They can speak or be silent at will.

The circumstances in which the gift is employed are precisely the same as at Corinth. First and foremost comes the use in private worship. Many use the gift in private devotions who never exercise it in public; and it is when a person is engaged in worship, especially when this takes the form of praise or adoration, that the gift seems to come most naturally and spontaneously into action. St Paul says, 'He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself' (I Cor. xiv. 4). It is perhaps difficult, perhaps impossible, to put into words exactly how this comes about; but none who have ever experienced it can ever doubt it. It seems to lift the soul into the presence of God, whilst the conscious mind, for the time being at rest, falls into a state of tranquillity where it becomes receptive to the promptings of the Spirit. It can thus pave the way for real and intelligent worship and prayer. Lewi Pethrus says, 'I would like to say that during the last seventeen years this gift has brought me more blessing than I can express in words. This gift Paul depicts primarily as a means by which one edifies himself. It is, so far as I am concerned, a palpable and living experience, and I would not lose it for any price. By speaking in tongues, even though

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit.

one does not understand what he is saying, *the human spirit comes into a secret place of fellowship with God*, and one experiences in truth what Paul says, 'He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself.' Another has expressed it more briefly, 'It is a way of touching God'.

We may not be able to say how and why such a gift should be given for this purpose; but it may be perhaps that the conscious mind is apt to interpose its own limitations which the spirit desires to transcend, and so a mode of communication is provided whereby the conscious mind is bypassed. But it need not always end there. Paul also says, 'Let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful' (1 Cor. xiv. 14). Thus by interpretation that which has been spoken in the tongue may be imparted to the mind, which is able consciously to participate.

Some instances have already been cited to show that the tongue can be used as a sign to unbelievers. But there is a third use, and that is for the edification of the Church. But the tongue cannot do this alone, for it is unintelligible to those who hear it. Another gift is provided, the gift of interpretation, so that the meaning of the message may be conveyed, and then it becomes equivalent to prophecy. According to 1 Corinthians xiv, prophecy is to be preferred, but the very fact that there is a gift of interpretation at all is a proof that this use of the gift of tongues is intended. It is necessary to observe the regulations laid down by the Apostle, both for prophecy and tongues, lest the exercise of these gifts should run away with the meeting, or confusion follow rather than edification.

There is no need to doubt that the interpretations are, for the most part, real, that is, apart from the instances that occasionally occur when a person mistakenly thinks he has the interpretation. Apart from those instances, which from the nature of the case are rare, where the real language spoken is recognised, it often happens that two or more persons receive an identical interpretation, though only one gives it out.

Utterances of this kind are usually in the form of exhortation, containing warning or encouragement, and most often with an application to the present circumstances. Occasionally there is an exposition of some Scripture, and sometimes the message takes the form of a parable. Prediction of events is rare but not unknown.

Why this strange method of conveying a message should be employed when there is also a gift of prophecy it is not easy to say. But apart from the fact that prophecy demands a much deeper spiritual

insight, it may be that the double witness of tongues and interpretation may provide some safeguard against the very real possibility of the intervention of the human mind into a prophetic message.

### *The Nature of the Gift*

From the circumstances that the gift was under the control of the speaker, it follows that the experience was *not ecstatic*. This does not mean that an utterance in tongues can never take place in a state of ecstasy; the Day of Pentecost may well have shown some degree of ecstatic movement; but this was not inherent in the gift. The important thing on the Day of Pentecost was not that the assembled company spoke in tongues, but that they were filled with the Holy Ghost, of which the speaking in tongues was only one of the consequences. Another consequence was that the onlookers said, 'These men are full of new wine'—a remark which is easy to comprehend if we remember the testimonies of men such as Finney, Wesley, and Moody; but this had nothing to do with the fact that they *were* speaking in tongues.

But the normal exercise of the gift of tongues, as at Corinth, was fully conscious. This point is seized upon by Jerome in his criticism of the Montanists, who claimed to possess the gift: 'The apostle commands that if, whilst some are prophesying, others receive a revelation, then those who were previously prophesying should hold their peace. And further: "For God is not", he says, "the author of confusion, but of peace"'. Whence it follows that when anyone lapses into silence and gives place to another to speak, he is able both to speak and be silent when he wishes. But he who speaks involuntarily, that is, in an ecstasy, has it in his power neither to speak nor to be silent.' Chrysostom remarks of the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost that 'they were not in an ecstasy, like the soothsayers, for they were not under the compulsion of any restraint' (Hom. iv in Acta Apost.). The gift is not ecstatic. Neither is it emotional. An emotional person speaking in tongues will show emotion, and a nervous person exhibit nervousness. The result may be an utterance in a strained or unnatural voice, perhaps rapid and high-pitched; or there may be other signs of emotion.

*The normal utterance of tongues is perfectly spontaneous, easy and natural.* It can be subdued to a whisper; indeed, it is not absolutely necessary that there should be any audible utterance at all. Thulin says, 'The

habitual glossolalia is not the result of a subjective attempt to produce it. For him who has the gift of speaking in tongues it is just as easy and natural to pass from Swedish to glossolalia when the Spirit comes, as it is to pass from Swedish to a foreign tongue that one may possess.<sup>1</sup> It is quite normal for a person engaged in worship to alternate between a tongue and his own language.

The gift operates most powerfully in a state of tranquillity.

If the gift really belongs to the realm of 'pneumatika', where Paul places it, we should not expect it to be susceptible to psychological investigation. The persons using the gift may be, that is another matter.

Pastor Lewi Pethrus, than whom none is in a better position to judge, says that after forty years of experience he has come to the conclusion that lack of control is no evidence of a person being filled with the Spirit, but rather a sign of inner conflict and lack of surrender, and that persons showing such lack of control are not those whose subsequent Christian experience is such as to commend them.<sup>2</sup> This accords with the views of John Wesley regarding certain physical manifestations in his day.

From Paul's words, 'The spirits of the prophets are subject unto the prophets', and 'Let the other judge', we infer that the utterance is not necessarily and at all times inspired. Mr Stafford Wright cites an instance he heard: 'the tongues were weird to listen to, and the interpretation that followed was pious, but innocuous.'<sup>3</sup>

It must be sadly admitted that this is no isolated case; utterances can be trivial and platitudinous. Not that the utterances are unscriptural or false, but they seem devoid of any valuable content. Mrs Oliphant cites some instances of this from the Irvingites; they do not impress, yet she is constrained to admit that 'there was a real something in the movement'.<sup>4</sup> But when a real message is given, there is no doubt of its power and effect. One is conscious of the moving of the Spirit even before the interpretation is given, and the mind is alerted to wait for the interpretation.

### *Modern Views Regarding Tongues*

The early Fathers, as we have seen, were unanimous in regarding the tongues as being languages. This consensus of opinion seems to us

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. May 1953.

<sup>2</sup> *Speaking with Tongues, Historically and Psychologically considered*, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> *What is Man?* (Paternoster Press), p. 171.

<sup>4</sup> *Life of Edward Irving*, vol. ii, p. 188.

important, and not lightly to be disregarded. Being closer to the time of the Apostolic age, they are likely to have preserved some tradition; and even if they had not, they at least show how they understood the meaning to be attached to the Scriptures.

But modern writers have been loth to accept this evidence. A stream of conjectures has flowed forth, mostly emanating from the German school of the nineteenth century. More recently, attempts have been made to apply the criteria of psychology; Cutten is an example of this. What we may call for convenience the 'German' view has been very trenchantly criticised by Alford, and by A. Robertson.<sup>1</sup>

In dealing with these various views, we shall assume that, as we have been maintaining, the phenomena of the present day are identical in kind, both with those of Acts and 1 Corinthians, so that the same criteria will apply to all. But this view is by no means universally, or even commonly, accepted. There is a strange reluctance to accept the plain and natural meaning of the Scriptures. This one can perhaps understand, but not the extreme language in which this reluctance is sometimes expressed. There is a statement attributed by Cassels to Neander, but by Cutten to Meyer, 'The instantaneous bestowal of facility in a foreign language is neither logically possible nor psychologically and morally conceivable'; thus placing *a priori* arguments above actual evidence. Cutten himself says, 'it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find a more useless gift'—strange language indeed concerning a gift for which St Paul thanks God, and which he attributes to the operation of the Spirit.

There are first those who are ready to admit that language is in question, but not that actual foreign languages are involved. But the prevailing view of modern commentators, generally advanced without a shred of evidence or any attempt at proof, is that tongues were inarticulate; a sort of meaningless gibberish, sometimes intermingled with a few real words. Thus the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines tongues as 'a faculty of abnormal and inarticulate utterance, under stress of religious excitement', and other national Encyclopaedias follow the same line. Thouless defines them as 'a stream of meaningless syllables, sometimes mixed with a few real words, poured out under the influence of intensive emotion'.<sup>2</sup> But Alford defines the word *aphonon* in 1 Corinthians xiv. 10 (A. V. 'without signification') as meaning 'inarticulate', so that in his view the tongues are not inarticulate.

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>2</sup> *Introduction to the Psychology of Religion.*

Those who hold this view have sometimes described how they imagine the sounds to be produced. Thus Eichhorn, Wiesscher, Meyer and others take the word *glossa* (tongue) in its literal sense of the physical organ, which is moved to produce involuntary sounds. This makes nonsense of the term *heterais glossais* (other tongues); a man cannot use a tongue other than his own. An attempt to get over this by suggesting that the 'other tongues' were the tongues of fire, makes no better sense.

J. B. Pratt attributes the phenomenon to 'the presence of an overpowering emotion in excess of ideas'.<sup>1</sup> He says, 'Under pressure of great excitement, one or more individuals begin to express their emotions by pouring out a broth of meaningless syllables, which they and those around them take to belong to some unknown language. This gibberish of syllables and new-made sounds is of course not invented on the spur of the moment. Try to talk nonsense for five minutes and you will see why. Some real words will now and then come out. Especially will this be the case with those who think they are speaking some language not their own, who happen to know a few words of another tongue. In the volley of meaningless sounds, they will be pretty sure to include specimens of whatever foreign tongue they know, and then a word of their own language. This being the case, it naturally happens that bystanders, who are thoroughly convinced that this collection of sounds really means something, and is inspired by the Holy Ghost, will recognise a word occasionally and interpret the meaning of the whole accordingly; and the interpretation is of course still more due to intonation, gestures and the general expression of emotion, and the conventional ideas uppermost in the meeting. All this is very ingenious; but the fact is that whilst a person consciously attempting to talk nonsense will almost certainly include some real words, the speaker in tongues never does; and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, there are no gestures either. In over forty years the writer has never heard anything in the least degree resembling what is here described. If it has ever occurred anywhere—which one may beg leave to doubt—it has nothing whatever to do with the gift of tongues. Wright well says "the simple emotions are expressed by sounds which can be comprehended. Laughter, crying, sobs, sighs, huzzas, the shrieks of frenzy and the groans of despair, are either identical in all languages, or at least require no interpretation."'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Religious Consciousness*, chap. lx, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> *Some New Testament Problems*, p. 283.

Pratt further says of the events of the Day of Pentecost, 'It was a time of intense religious excitement and suggestibility'. There had been days of oppressive strain and waiting, and at last the floodgates of emotion were opened and a great revival occurred. Under the influence of this intense emotion, some of the individuals started expressing their new found joy, either in some real language which they knew, but which was not their own, or else in the same sort of meaningless syllables that are used by their imitators today. Jerusalem, it must be remembered, was a decidedly polyglot community, and nearly every individual in this first Christian revival knew a great many words of languages not his own. This seems a very inadequate explanation of the narrative, and overlooks the fact that those who first spoke in tongues were not a very polyglot community, being Galileans. Thulin remarks that when the Pentecostal movement first began to spread in Sweden, the cosmopolitan centres were relatively little affected compared with the rural areas where no one knew any language but his own.<sup>1</sup> Cutten's view is the same as Pratt's.<sup>2</sup>

Probably the most exhaustive study on the gift from a psychological standpoint is that of Cutten. It is impossible in the compass of the present paper to deal adequately with his arguments, but his general view can be made clear by a few quotations. He seeks to explain the whole phenomena on psychological grounds. 'As far as I know there is no case of speaking in strange tongues which has been strictly and scientifically investigated that cannot be explained by recognised psychological laws.'<sup>3</sup> (It would be interesting to know something of these investigations, and the conditions in which they were undertaken). Again, 'When . . . speech continues after thought is exhausted, a series of meaningless syllables results'<sup>4</sup>—'The emotional energy generated by excitement tends to inhibit thought and to facilitate some primitive reaction which the circumstances suggest'—'A state of personal disintegration, in which the verbo-motor centres of the subject are obedient to semi-conscious impulses.'<sup>5</sup> 'The phenomenon was ecstatic, and the result of the dominance of the lower brain centres under great excitement, which cause lack of self-control.'<sup>6</sup>

Cutten lists various steps in the production of tongues: (1) inarticulate sounds, (2) sounds which simulate words, (3) fabricated or

<sup>1</sup> *Den Kristne*, May 1953.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* and *Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*, chap. v, 'Glossolalia'.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 181.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 160.

<sup>6</sup> *Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*, chap. v.

coined words, and (4) actual speaking of some words in a foreign tongue; 'but the tongue is always one with which the subject has come in contact, even if he can consciously speak no words in that language'.<sup>1</sup>

Here he is touching on something to which he devotes some attention, which calls for a little more notice. After considering a theory of inherited memory, which he dismisses, 'because this explanation leads us into more difficulties than the original problem causes', he quotes Wright as saying, 'That whilst the explanation of inherited memory is not necessary, that of greatly exalted memory is, for the Apostles would have to remember the language heard incidentally on the market place or in the street, and reconstruct it into a message'.<sup>2</sup> But of this theory Cutten says very truly, that it seems 'beyond the range of probability, if not possibility, that exalted memory to such an extraordinary degree could become so common. The cases of exalted memory approaching this which have been carefully and scientifically examined so as to preclude imposture have been isolated cases, and very few in number.'

One can understand exalted memory, or hyperamnesia, resulting in the repetition of passages which had been overheard, or of a series of disjointed fragments; but it is impossible to conceive of the language being built up into something entirely new, such as 'declaring the wonderful works of God'.

Rust, quoted by Thulin,<sup>3</sup> divides tongues into various categories and sub-categories, from explanations like 'Praise the Lord' and 'Amen' to actual languages, with intermediate stages. His grouping is: actual languages; tongues simulating languages, including artificial language, and the language of fantasy; and stammering tongues, either in the form of words or syllables.

The commentators almost without exception are handicapped by their lack of any first-hand knowledge, and are left to draw on their own imaginations. In doing this, they are often, unconsciously to themselves, arguing in circles. If their views are coloured by psychological presuppositions, they are apt to find it easy to discover a psychological explanation. They mostly agree that the phenomena arise in some way from the subconscious (they may be right), but they can give no adequate explanation of how they got there.

<sup>1</sup> *Speaking with Tongues*, p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> *Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*.

<sup>3</sup> Hans Rust, *Das Zungenreden, eine Studie zur Kritischen Religionspsychologie*.



Another and more serious objection, already quoted, is that these theories involve the rejection in whole or in part of the Lucan narrative. Thus Cutten says, 'There seems to be no better solution than to follow Paul and exclude Luke's Pentecostal narrative';<sup>1</sup> whilst the writer in *Hastings' Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (Art. 'Charismata') goes further: 'The author of Acts could never have witnessed the phenomenon himself. It seems a very poor and far from scientific solution to offer an explanation which depends for its validity on a rejection of an essential part of the evidence, when the acceptance of all the evidence at its face value is sufficient to account for all the facts.'

In conformity with his view of the nature of tongues, it is not surprising that Cutten should say, 'Those who speak with tongues are almost without exception devout, but ignorant and illiterate people'.<sup>2</sup> Clark likewise: 'The congregation is composed of men and women from the lower walks of life.'<sup>3</sup> This is fantastically wide of the mark: among those who speak in tongues are to be found men and women who have attained eminence in every sphere.

Equally untrue is Clark's statement that the gift is 'never a gift in solitude—the crowd is necessary'. There are far more who enjoy the gift in solitude than ever exercise it in public.

### *Simulated Tongues*

Thus far, we have been considering only the actual speaking in tongues as recorded in Scripture, or as found amongst certain evangelical circles at the present day. But it would be foolish to contend that all that passes for tongues really is so in fact, though the exceptions may be, and almost certainly are, much less common than one might believe. It is impossible to deny the possibility that a sort of 'tongues' can be induced by suggestion or unconscious imitation; or even a process of auto-suggestion. We are not aware that this has ever been proved to have happened in any particular case, but we cannot altogether exclude the possibility.

Then there is the view of Olshausen, quoted by Alford,<sup>4</sup> which we have not mentioned hitherto, that there is a sort of magnetic 'rapport' between speakers and hearers: something in the nature of thought transference. In rare instances something like this may have occurred,

<sup>1</sup> *Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*.

<sup>2</sup> *Speaking with Tongues*, p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> Elmer T. Clark, *Small Sects in America* (1937), p. 119.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*

but it cannot possibly apply as a general explanation, even if we consider such a theory as a deep level at which all minds are in contact.

Apart from what we may call simulated tongues, one occasionally finds a person whose 'tongue' consists of a repetition of a single sentence or phrase. How are we to account for this? Probably it is a fragment of what was originally a genuine tongue, that has remained in the sub-conscious memory, so that it comes readily to the surface again. It need not be regarded as at all spurious. This may occur more frequently than we recognise.

We were once informed that the Lestadians of Lapland, at their preaching meetings, often indulge in something resembling tongues. Our informant, a Lutheran priest, suggested that it was probably genuine in the first instance, but degenerated into an artificial imitation.

With similar phenomena said to occur among some pagans, Spiritists, Mormons and so forth this paper is not concerned: we have no information to enable us to decide whether, and how far, they are similar to the gift of tongues described in Scripture.

### *Conclusion*

There are many questions connected with the gift of tongues still unsolved, and perhaps insoluble. Any approach to the question demands careful and prolonged observation, and hasty deductions should be avoided. But we would suggest that the normal and spontaneous or, if we dare use the term, inspirational use of the gift arises from a deep level, where the spirit of man is in touch with, or interpermeated by, the Spirit of God. It does not seem to be subject to the brain centre of speech control. A person who was temporarily deprived of the power of ordinary speech through concussion was still able to speak in tongues. Also, sounds can be uttered which the speaker cannot normally produce. Two missionaries who had had some linguistic training recently heard a tongue containing glottal stops and click sounds that were quite foreign to the speaker; and a person who had a congenital difficulty in sounding the letter 'l' had no such difficulty when speaking in tongues.

But the fact that the tongue can be used consciously and at will must also be taken into account. It would appear as though the conscious mind were able to plunge into the sub-conscious; but beyond that perhaps we cannot go.

In the writer's view, the Scriptures contain, either directly or by inference, all that is known or can be known about the gift; all beyond is speculation. But full weight must be given to the Scriptures and everything in them taken into account. Human theories and speculations that can only be maintained by rejecting or modifying some part of Scripture stand self-condemned.

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## REVIEW

*Battle for the Mind.* By WILLIAM SARGANT. Heinemann.

The idea of brain-washing, or indeed of any kind of imposed control over the mind, is naturally repugnant to human beings generally, and particularly repugnant to Christians. The Christian holds firmly to a belief in the sanctity of individual personality, as something created by God in His image, and therefore of infinite worth. When one adds to this the concept of the sanctity of Christian belief itself, one has two overwhelming values which are apparently fundamentally challenged by the possibility of brain-washing or forcible conversion.

What exactly is implied by these two expressions? If one starts by excluding methods of persuasion based on reasoned argument or emotional exhortation, which share at least the essential characteristic that the subject remains free to choose whether or not he will finally accept them, one is left with two possible techniques, both detestable but historically existent. The first is the extortion of information, confession, or ostensible agreement under the duress of physical or mental torture; the second, the introduction of ideas and convictions originally resisted by the subject, contrary to his existing beliefs, and entirely against his will, but in such a way that he eventually comes to accept them as his own, and may indeed finally and fervently so proclaim them.

The first of these two methods in its crudest forms suffers from the purely political disadvantage of inexpediency; while still used to obtain information from people regarded as politically insignificant and therefore expendable, it is without propaganda value. Physically shattered prisoners do not look well in the dock. What is required is an apparently whole man or woman who will testify with evident sincerity, after whatever process has been necessary to secure their spectacular conversion.

That this effect can be produced is undeniable. The purpose of this book is to suggest how it may be done. In it, an eminent psychiatrist examines the mechanistic and physiological aspects of sudden and spectacular political and religious conversion, and links them to two ominous and disagreeable explanations. The first is that they are manifestations of a form of mental conditioning which differs in no essential way from the processes of conditioned reflexes studied by Professor Pavlov in dogs; the second, that this conditioning in human beings depends ultimately upon a degree of stress being applied to the brain of the individual concerned which exceeds that brain's capacity for endurance, and thereby breaks down existing patterns of thought, to replace them by what are in effect their opposites.

Pavlov's work with dogs is probably sufficiently well known to require little more than the briefest expository reference here, but a grasp of the basic principles is essential in the context of the argument of this book. Pavlov found that when a simple reflex response, such as the secretion of saliva in response to the stimulus of food, was regularly linked to some other and normally quite unrelated stimulus such as ringing a bell, there came a time when ringing the bell alone would cause the dog's mouth to water, in the absence of food altogether. He called this latter response a conditioned reflex

and spent years of brilliant and fruitful research discovering how conditioning may take place and be modified under all kinds of circumstances. In the course of these researches he also discovered that fatigue, fear, and overwhelming or contradictory stimuli could break down the conditioned response to a point where something very much like its opposite would appear, following an intermediate period of collapse on the part of the dog concerned.

This in essence is what Dr Sargant suggests can happen in the process of brain-washing a political prisoner, or converting a hitherto unregenerate sinner to a religious belief. Exhaust the prisoner sufficiently by breaking up his sleep rhythm, terrify him with threats and then confuse him with promises, all the while suggesting to him that he knows the error of his ways and has only to accept this knowledge in order to be saved, and you may in time not simply extort a confession, but impose upon him a pattern of thought dictated by yourself, and in direct opposition to his former convictions. A similar process, aided by overwhelming stimuli such as rhythmic singing or dancing of the kind sometimes associated with revivalist meetings, whipped into a final pitch of climatic emotion by threats of hell fire alternating with promises of heavenly glory, may lead to the dramatic conversions which have attended spectacular religious revivals from Roman times, through Wesley's day, to our own most recent experiences of Billy Graham.

To the Christian's initial revulsion at the implications of brain-washing is now added the additional distaste for so mechanistic and apparently degrading a concept of religious conversion. It is not surprising, therefore, that this book, which is certainly not proof against detached criticism on its own merits, has also been subjected to sincere but somewhat wild emotional denunciations from religious and romantic readers of all kinds. But this is just where the Christian owes it to himself and his faith to do some hard thinking, and to come up with an honest, courageous, and objective answer.

Of his two fundamental objections, his belief in the sanctity of the individual, and his belief in the sanctity of religious faith, it is only the former which is threatened by the techniques which this book sets out to examine; while neither of the two is threatened at all by the basis of the examination, which is carefully defined as an enquiry limited to the mechanism and physiology of what is examined.

The fact that people have on occasion been converted to evangelistic Christianity, or to other forms of religious belief, on grounds which may have been spiritually spurious, and under circumstances in which nervous exhaustion and physical depletion have played an important part, in no way undermines the essence of religious faith itself. To fear or conclude that it does is simply to make confusion worse confounded. This is in fact the same kind of error as that which has led unbelievers to proclaim that religion is a form of neurosis or of insanity, simply because religious ideas are frequently included in the delusions of people who are mentally ill.

While few Christians would subscribe to that idea when expressed in this form, they are apt to embrace its other and equally fallacious aspect, which is implicit in much of the opposition to a mechanistic explanation of any form of religious conversion. For just as deluded patients can sincerely believe that they themselves are Christ, without Christ's ultimate reality being compromised

by this delusion, so can people undergo conversion experiences as part of a response to overwhelming stress, without prejudice to the ultimate validity of the beliefs to which they have been converted. It remains true that this kind of conversion may well bear no relation to what the Christian can accept as a valid spiritual experience. But neither may the religious ecstasies and apocalyptic visions of the schizophrenic patient bear any relation to the revelations of the true mystic.

What has to be grasped is that it is the *importance* of ideas to people, and not their objective validity, which determines their involvement in the disordered thinking of mental illness. Delusions of wealth or poverty, of conjugal infidelity or world wide adoration, of grandeur or persecution, are all encountered, and reflect man's constant preoccupation with money, sex, and power, respectively.

It is in fact the business of the brainwasher to foster what amounts to a limited form of delusional mental illness, whose content is politically expedient. Whatever the original nature of the ideas involved, they are bound to be damaged and distorted by the process of indoctrination, which itself remains essentially base and vile. In a different way it may seem to the snake-handling evangelist, or to the Voodoo drummer, to be his business to win converts to his own version of religious belief; but in so far as the methods are comparable, so are the objections. True conversion must be the outcome of humility and contemplation; not of hysteria.

Political prisoners who have been successfully brain-washed, converts who profess sincerely a spurious conviction, tend to have in common a total lack of insight; and in this they resemble the patient with a mental illness. For them, as for him, recovery is possible. But there is certainly sufficient evidence in the world today to suggest that the mind of man is not invulnerable to stress, any more than it is to disease. The truly religious concept of man's nature has never identified spirit wholly with mind, nor mind wholly with brain; nor is a man with a damaged or exhausted brain deprived thereby of the existence of his soul, or of his importance to God, and therefore his worth as an individual.

The ultimate lesson of studies of this kind is that dreadful things can certainly be done by human beings to each other, and these can include ruthlessly effective onslaughts on the mental as well as the physical aspects of human life. But man's value to God is not diminished by what can be done to distort his mind; nor can his soul, that ultimate essence of him which is immortal, and which reflects the supernatural element in his being, be permanently enchained or enslaved by forces, no matter how evil or destructive, whose power is limited to disorganising and disintegrating the work of his brain.

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