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THE CHRISTOLOGY OF GEORGE TYRRELL

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In a brief book entitled *Modernism: Its Failure and Its Fruits*[1] Maude Petre summarised the unquestioned assumptions of the Catholic understanding of Christ with which she had grown up. At the head came "the historical fact of the Resurrection: . . . if we could not be sure that the dead body of Christ actually rose from the tomb, the very foundation of our faith was insecure. Secondly, we were taught that Christ definitely affirmed His own Divinity . . . Thirdly, in virtue of the Hypostatic Union, He possessed even as man a certain omniscience . . . if He spoke, in [the Gospel] records, as though He only possessed the knowledge of His own time, that was in no way because only such knowledge was present to His mind, but because He had to speak to men in their own language. Fourthly, the Church was His direct foundation; her hierarchy and her sacraments were His direct institution: every one of her definitions was explicitly or implicitly included in His teaching." She goes on to show, principally from the works of Loisy, how all these hitherto unshakable facts were questioned in the name of historical science by modernist writers. Although the historical strand was only one in a number that were interwoven in a loosely-knit movement, it was the one that threatened most vitally such traditional understanding. As George Tyrrell wrote,

> "It is the historical and not the philosophical difficulty that inspires the reconstructive effort of the Modernist pure and simple. It is the irresistible facts concerning the origin and composition of the Old and New Testaments; concerning the origin of the Christian Church, of its hierarchy, its institutions, its dogmas; concerning the gradual development of the Papacy; concerning the history of religion in general -that create a difficulty against which the synthesis of scholastic theology must be and is already shattered to pieces"[2].

Tyrrell was acutely aware of the vulnerability of neo-scholastic theology to historical criticism, and the way in which Catholic apologetic did not engage with the questions of the time. Moreover, since the whole neo-scholastic doctrinal synthesis was underwritten by the teaching authority of the Church all parts of it were considered equally important. Therefore, 'if Rome so much as cut her little finger she would bleed to death'. More than that, he was conscious as a spiritual counsellor and writer at Farm Street that people who had adopted the Roman synthesis were *already* bleeding to death from the cuts inflicted by a hundred years of historical scholarship.

From the earliest part of his teaching career he had tried to work with the theology of Aquinas, convinced that the Church had not developed, but had abandoned, his spirit.

> "The fact is that Aquinas represents a far less developed theology than that of the later schoolmen, and by going back to him one escapes from many of the superstructures of his more narrow-minded successors and thus gets liberty to unravel, and reconstruct on more sympathetic lines. Aquinas was essentially liberal-minded and synthetic . . . as unlike as possible in tone and temper to the scholastics."[3]

However, the attempt to return to pure Thomism did not work for at least three reasons: it was impossible to go back to medieval Aristotelianism in the face of historical questions that demanded historical answers; had it been possible the enterprise would have been unacceptable to Church theologians imbued with the categories of thought inherited from developed neo-scholasticism; had it been acceptable Tyrrell would not have had the patience to make it work. He could never have won over his critics for he had nothing but contempt for "that purely intellectual, theological curiosity and enquiry, which is often most active in the least reverent, which kindles a controversial ardour that is so falsely confounded with zeal for the truth, and which we may call the scholastic spirit."[4] Writing to the Abbe Dimnet about *The Faith of the Millions*, which contained twelve essays published between 1896 and 1900, he said:

> "Till about the date of my first essay I had, not a firm faith. But a firm hope in the sufficiency of the philosophy of St Thomas, studied in a critical and liberal spirit. The series represents roughly the crumbling array of that hope and the not very hopeful search

for a substitute."[5]

Scholasticism and historical study were to prove quite incompatible for Tyrrell, but it was not scholasticism *per se* to which he was initially opposed. He abhorred the elevation of any theological system above rational criticism as though it were the theology itself that had been revealed. Only gradually did he come to feel that scholasticism itself is hopelessly flawed, "that it really has no room for such conceptions as *spirit* and *life*, since it explains these higher things—thought, will, love, action—mechanically and artificially, in the terms of those that are lower. Hence it is too opaque a medium to admit the full light and beauty of Christianity."[6]

In an article written at the end of his life[7] Tyrrell contrasted the new Christology with the old, pinpointing two areas of confusion in the accepted interpretation of the Church's teaching about the Divine Sonship, and the practical difficulty in avoiding either monophysitism or Nestorianism. His criticism focussed on the use of the term 'person'[8] for the popular understanding of the term is of "a separate spiritual individual, a separate mind, will and energy . . . Hence, when our creed tells us that there is but one personality in Christ, we interpret it almost inevitably as meaning a union of natures, a mixture or confusion of divine and human attributes in a third hybrid nature that is a blend of both. We imagine a man whose mind is omniscient, whose energy is omnipotent. Our language is orthodox, but our mind is monophysite." Theologically, the term 'person' as applied to Jesus was "simply a word to express the solution of a difficulty that could not be solved; an x to symbolise a missing link by which Godhead and manhood might be united without confusion of natures". This came about because of the sheer impossibility of reconciling (1) that Jesus was an incarnation of God (2) that God is numerically one (3) that Jesus was a personality distinct from his Father. In terms of the normal use of language he accuses the orthodox formula of being simply incoherent. As we have seen, if we are too much influenced by contemporary usage of the term 'person' we shall be monophysite in our thinking; on the other hand, "if we accept scholastic dichotomy (soul and body = human person) it is almost impossible to escape Nestorianism or to show that in Christ there was not a human as well as a divine personality."[9]

Tyrrell was convinced that this linguistic confusion led to further misunderstanding. Practical monophysitism was expressed in the belief, which Maude Petre was taught, that Jesus' "human mind enjoyed uninterruptedly the face to face vision of God" and his human will was endowed with almost unlimited miraculous power over the whole realm of nature. As a consequence "according to theology, his ignorance was always feigned; his progress in wisdom was feigned; . . . his fear was feigned, for fear implies ignorance and weakness; his temptations were feigned, for where there is no possibility of yielding there is no temptation."[10] This Tyrrell repudiated absolutely.

In the first place, such teaching ruins a strong apologetic argument, for "When the apologist appeals to the veracity, the goodness, the noble moral elevation of Christ, he is weighing him in this very balance that theology pronounces false."[11] Unless there is a real overcoming of fear, temptation, ignorance or weakness there is no moral achievement to point to. "He shared all our groping and darkness and uncertainty and blameless ignorances—to me that were more than his sharing pain and weariness. The theological Christ lived in a blaze of absolute certainty about everything—like a Roman Cardinal."[12] Years later, William Barry wrote, "In a short but decisive correspondence I elicited from Tyrrell that Jesus of Nazareth need not have known himself to be the Eternal Son of God. That was too much for me."[13] Tyrrell was prepared to argue his case on historical grounds, well aware that "if [criticism] could prove that Jesus was unconscious of his Godhead; that he never laid claim to it; that his utterances implicitly deny it, this would be a scandal for the orthodox, who base their belief solely on his own claims to divinity,"[14] just as Maude Petre had been taught. Tyrrell was by 1909 fully prepared to defend the *messianic consciousness* of Jesus in the context of the apocalyptic understanding of Weiss and Schweitzer, but obviously this did not amount to the developed awareness of eternal Sonship Barry wanted. To the likes of Barry, Tyrrell made two logical points. The first was that the hypostatic union was beyond any kind of verification—by miracles or moral perfection. "We can conceive no facts or signs by which so transcendental a truth as the hypostatic union could become a matter of historical affirmation or denial."[15] It *could* not be threatened by

demonstration of fallibility or limitation in Christ, but, were it able to be, it *would* not, because, as Tyrrell argued to von Hugel, "There is natural and blameless passion whose absence were a defect, and there is a passion which is the fruit of past carelessness or sin, personal or ancestral. To deny the former to Christ is open to the same objection as docetan views as to his knowledge. Are not ignorance and passion the two roots of our temptations? and how is Christ tempted as we, how is his sinlessness conceivable, if he lacked either root?"[16] There is no inconsistency in maintaining the sinlessness of Jesus whilst admitting his liability to ignorance or error. Tyrrell's thinking on this developed under the influence of Weiss who maintained in *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*[17] that the imminence of the parousia was the dominant theme of Christ's teaching. The issue is put bluntly. "If Jesus shared the contemporary illusion as to the nearness of the event, what of His knowledge? If not, what of His sincerity."[18]

Tyrrell had little to offer in place of the traditional language for the hypostatic union. He once commented warmly on a suggestion of von Hugel's that a Christology could be worked out in terms of our psychological experience of the 'I' and the 'me', "If we accept trichotomy (body + soul + spirit or person = human person = me + I) then we can say that a Divine Spirit or Ego assumed a non-personal human nature (i.e. soul + body, which as related to the Divine Spirit becomes the *me* of that I.)" Then follows a characteristic rider. "Ignoramus et ignorabimus"[19]. All he is doing here is playing somewhat half-heartedly with von Hugel's idea. There is a more characteristic expression of his own not very clearly defined position in *Revelation as Experience*, a paper delivered at King's College, London, in 1909.

> "What we adore is the Power in Christ that Makes for Righteousness. That it is substituted for his human personality as distinct from his human spirit, mind and will has no intellectual but only practical meaning for us. It is a rule of speech and action, not of thought."[20]

Further than that he does not go.

If the facts did not in the end tell against the Christ of Catholicism, but only against the monophysite Christ, the same could not be said for the self-understanding of Catholicism itself. Inasmuch as the Church claimed both dominical authority and institution for its hierarchy and dogmas, the conclusion of historical study was that it was quite mistaken. Tyrrell took up the problem and its Christological implication, in *The Church and the Future*.

> "It is . . . probable that Christ, like his disciples, believed that the end of the world would come within the lifetime of his hearers, and before the extinction of the generation which he addressed. Hence, unlike other prophets and reformers, he made no provision for a future 'institutionalising' of his cause; but trusted that the 'inspirational' impetus would last 'unto the consummation of the world'."

The point is developed with characteristic polemical vigour.

> "Indeed to suppose that Christ foresaw the whole future history of his Church, all the conflicts that would arise from the paucity and obscurity of his utterances; all the doubts that a clear word of his would have solved; all the controversies that have split Christendom into fragments and cost the spiritual distraction of countless millions—and that, foreseeing all this clearly, he deliberately wrapped, or even left, the truth in obscurity is, from an apologetic standpoint, antecedently irreconcilable with a belief in his goodness, wisdom and piety."[21]

This 'institutionalising' of Christianity was simply a development that took place in conformity with normal and natural laws. It was not possible for the Church to remain in that charismatic phase which the protestant vainly tries to reproduce.

> "It is not then precisely as a creation of Christ that Catholicism can claim to be divinely instituted, but as the creation of that Spirit which created both Christ and the Church to be different and complementary organs of its own expression, adapted to different phases of the same movement."[22]

For Tyrrell 'the Spirit of Christ' is a central concept, of which "the 'Our Father' illustrated by the crucifix is perhaps the best epitomised utterance" and the "full explication and development is still in process in the life of the Christian community."[23] Here, not in exploration of the hypostatic union, is the heart of his Christology.

This must be understood in the context of Tyrrell's wider religious philosophy: he was never a speculative theologian, but a devotional writer of great depth and perception, and a theological journalist with a quicksilver pen. At the heart of his writings is a continual awareness of the mystery that surrounds man, and of which the believer speaks but haltingly. He scorned those "to whom everything is clear, and common-sense, and obvious; who can define a mystery but have never felt one." For him "the human words and ideas in which eternal truths are clad cannot, *even through divine skill*[24] convey to us more than a shadow of the realities they stand for" and they "cannot, like numbers, be added, subtracted, and multiplied together, so as to deduce new conclusions with arithmetical simplicity and accuracy."[25] This is a recurrent theme in all his writings. For Tyrrell a mystery was "a truth which can never be quite coherently thought or described, but which can be expressed more or less approximately by two or more complementary but partly inconsistent statements."[26] The Christological implications of this are obvious. Language, since it is developed within the world of sense-experience, will break down before a mystery, but in symbol, analogy and metaphor it can point beyond immediate referents in sense-experience to suggest "truths fringed with darkness" or mysteries. Both the world in which we live and the language we use have a sacramental dimension for, ultimately, both are expressions of the immanent spirit of God. "The words in which religious truth is clothed are sacramental; they belong to the world of sense and also to the world of spirit, to the apparent, the relative, the transitory, and also to the real, the absolute, the eternal."[27] Language is itself a mystery and words are, in the Coleridgean sense, symbolic. Despite his initial Thomism, the structure of Tyrrell's thought is markedly Platonic: the priority is with the world of the spirit, so "religion is not a dream, but an enacted self-expression of the spiritual world--a parable uttered, however haltingly in the language of fact."[28] Since the language of religion can never 'fit close' as can the language we apply to things we perceive by our senses, and since we therefore have to deal in symbols and analogy, the test of the accuracy or appropriateness of our religious language must be fruitfulness in life—though Tyrrell is always anxious to stress that symbolic language is not true because fruitful, but fruitful because true. It converges on the truth asymptotically.

Christology for Tyrrell could never be a purely intellectual or historical exercise, but must be linked to experience: life not logic is the context for the verification of religious discourse. In September 1899, he wrote to his friend Henri Bremond,

> "As for my faith, so far as it must necessarily be rooted in some kind of experience and not merely in propositions and principles accepted on hearsay, it rests upon the evidence of a Power in myself and in all men 'making for righteousness' in spite of all our downward tendencies.- that is the basis of my Theism, which a cumulus of other reasons and experiences only supplments: that is the solid core about which they are all gathered. My Christianism is based on the concrete and intuitive recognition of that said Power in the man Christ as known to us historically -so full, that I can trust Him and take Him as a teacher sent by God."[29]

The identification of the Power within and the Power without, incarnate in Christ and manifest in the world; of the interior conscience and conscience incarnate; of each manifestation of the one Spirit, remained the cornerstone of Tyrrell's Christology. Because of its affinities to liberal Protestantism, with its echoes of Matthew Arnold and Ritschl, it led to accusations of a sell-out, but the vehemence with which Tyrrell opposed the Christology of Harnack, welcoming Loisy's novel apologetic, clearly shows that it was never his intention to develop anything other than a renewed Catholic Christology. As Alec Vidler writes, "Tyrrell's modernism may be reasonably regarded as an attempt to meet Liberal Protestantism on its own ground, and to show that its premises led to a different conclusion."[30]

Tyrrell's first extended consideration of Christology was in a pamphlet entitled *The Civilizing of the Matafanus: An Essay in Religious Development*, which was actually published under the name of A.R. Waller, though Waller had done no more than tinker with Tyrrell's extended allegory. The story concerns an initially unsuccessful philanthropic attempt to bring "civilisation" to a primitive tribe. There is an extended discussion of the

difficulty of communication between the civilised philanthropists and the uncivilised tribesmen, and therefore the need for a mediator. "That which was plainly needed for the office of mediator was the double experience in one personality, and this could be practically effected by hypnotism in the control exercised by a civilised hypnotiser over a Matafanu subject."[31] The hypnotiser is to be someone with a comprehensive understanding of the values and nature of civilisation; the hypnotised an intelligent Matafanu, acceptable to his own people. Such a tribesman is found in Alpuca, who is duly hypnotised and thus imbued with the entire contents of the hypnotiser's intelligence, memory and imagination -all his experience plus "an imperative and irresistible impulse to communicate this great body of knowledge and light to the Matafanu tribe."[32]

In 1902, Tyrrell wrote to von Hugel, "the argument is rather closely knit and very little has been said without deliberate design."[33] Thus it is fair to see in it explicit allusion to a number of christological points -points on which Tyrrell never wavered. There is repeated reference to the difficulty of communication, and the inadequacy of the Matafanu language to contain the concepts which Alpuca -with his vision for "civilisation" -wishes to impart:

> "Alpuca had to endure the anguish of being forced by a passionate appetite for self-revelation to try to give utterance to a conception so wide, lofty and deep, in a medium so narrow as the language and imagery of a people but lately advanced beyond the lowest stage of ferocity and darkness . . . Surely this were apparently as hopeless as the endeavour to render a Beethoven sonata on the Jew's harp or to reproduce Raphael on a stable door with a lump of chalk."[34]

This is the context in which Tyrrell places a discussion of miracles. The unsuccessful attempt to communicate causes Alpuca intense suffering. In the attempt to explain his status as a denizen of two worlds, he is forced to use "miracles", not to show his power as thaumaturge and thus compel some sort of wondering belief in himself, but as an illustration of that "natural knowledge" in the "civilised world" of which he is struggling to speak. Thus Tyrrell attacked contemporary Roman apologetic, which still relied on demonstration by the miracles of Jesus and by fulfilled prophecy. He wrote in *The Church and The Future*: "the consensus of current criticism of even the more moderate sort makes the Bible an insufficient basis for the scientific establishment of a single indisputable miracle or of a single clear fulfilment of prophecy."[35] This position he later abandoned, for he came to see how much it depended on nineteenth century presuppositions.

So in the case of Alpuca, it was his moral preeminence and absolute integrity that won for him, in the eyes of those capable of appreciating it, an implicit belief in the reality of his claim to a knowledge or science of which they were not yet capable, owing to the unprepared state of their minds."[36] We are not surprised that Alpuca finds himself under immense internal strain because of his dual personality, and at odds with the priests of his tribe because he threatens their authority. He has to reconcile himself to the fact that it is only after his untimely death that the Matafanus who accept his teaching will grow into an understanding of its import.

> "The light of the mind is experience, digested and verified, and as the light intensifies, objects reveal themselves in even greater fulness . . . Were we to sum up in one word the whole *reality* which it was the mission of Alpuca to reveal, it would be 'civilisation', and the power of apprehending this perfect ideal . . would depend precisely upon the degree of imperfect civilisation attained by the people in question . . ."[37]

Thus Tyrrell discusses the developing understanding of Alpuca among the Matafanus after his death. He criticises this on two grounds. "The most tempting fallacy . . . was that of a sort of 'realism' ascribing the forms of language and thought to the reality represented; ascribing the qualities of the paint and canvas to the original of the portrait . . . The means were treated as an end." And then, "During this same period of declension it became more important to establish the claims of Alpuca to be the possessor of spiritual knowledge than to enter into the substance of that knowledge."[38]

None of this seems of novel import, yet it contains warnings that are not irrelevant to incarnationalists today. *The Civilizing of the Matafanus* is very much a work of Tyrrell's central period, before he had absorbed the eschatological insights of Weiss and Schweitzer.

It is a miniature life of Jesus, uncompromising in its incarnationalism, and yet sensitive to the psychological dilemmas that implies. The value it has for us is mainly as an illustration of Tyrrell's abiding concerns. In summarising the legacy of Alpuca, he had written:

> "Above all he tried to impress upon them the all-important fact that civilisation was not merely an idea or notion to be developed or defined, but a life to be lived. that life was the criterion by which the true development of the notion was to be criticised, and that those who strove most to live the life would be the most apt to apprehend the notion."[39]

In theory, the story turns on the "civilisation" that is brought, through Alpuca, to the Matafanus. In practice, the story is about Alpuca as the incarnation of that "civilisation". It should be said that Tyrrell shows no interest in the mechanics of hypnotism whatsoever!

The points that were expressed allegorically in *The Civilizing of the Matafanus* were expressed less pictorially, but not less forcefully, in a number of other books at this time. The most important was *Lex Orandi* where Tyrrell develops a metaphysic of spirit, but always from a practical standpoint. Under the influence of Blondel he explores the notion that we are basically wills, and that our existence centres on the Divine Will. He is as far from an immediate consideration of history in this book as in any. it is really a book about a renewed basis for faith –a not very satisfactory one –as the tide of criticism sweeps in "the spirit which acts and wills is alone felt to be 'real' in the full sense; and . . . the world given to our outward senses is shadowy and dreamy, except so far as we ascribe to it some of the characteristics of will and spirit."[40] In this world it is the function and aim of the human will to be conformed to the Divine Will, a process in which the teaching and expression of religion is of supreme importance and Jesus the exemplar. Although, as we have seen, the language of religion is but a language of analogy and symbol, Tyrrell, much influenced by William James, is confident that it is refined and verified according to its power to foster the Divine Life in the individual. A favourite analogy of his was that of the blind man groping his way towards a fire; so do we, by our continually modified expression, grope towards truth. In *Lex Orandi* Tyrrell discussed the Creed according to this criterion; in *Lex Credendi* the Lord's Prayer. In this period he could write, "The fatherhood of God; the brotherhood of man; the Kingdom of Heaven; the triumph of the Divine Will, Providence; Sin; Reconciliation; Deliverance; these and others are the ideas which beget, characterise and control the affection that utters itself in the Lord's Prayer, and of these ideas the Creed is the amplification and closer definition."[42] For practical Christianity the Incarnation is a similarly important idea.

At this time Tyrrell believed that what had been revealed to man was the Divine Spirit, recognised by man because spirit answered spirit, from within the life of man, and outside it. His most characteristic christological statements all turn upon the Christ within (often identified with conscience) and the Christ without expressions of the one Divine Spirit. This could be exemplified from almost the whole of his corpus, and provides one element of consistency in his theological work. Thus, it appears, fully-formed in *External Religion*, a series of conferences given to undergraduates at Oxford in the Lent Term of 1899:

> "It was [God's] Divine Will that from the very beginning had, under the abstract name of Conscience, been struggling against the selfish and sinful will of every child of Adam; so constantly and persistently, that man mistook that Divine pressure within them for part of themselves, for one of their natural springs of action . . . Therefore it was needful that this conscience of theirs, this indwelling will of God, this Power within making for Justice should go outside them, should become Incarnate and face them, and speak to them as man to man: that God should live visibly and outwardly upon earth that life of humiliation which He lives millions of times over in human souls, that our slow minds might apprehend, at least in figure, that tragedy, which is realised daily in the very core of our being."[42]

A decade later when his views of revelation and doctrine had changed totally, Tyrrell could still write of the "personality of Jesus" as that of "the Spirit which speaks to every man in the mysterious whisperings of conscience" and of Jesus as "simply the incarnation of conscience, the manifestation of that ideal humanity which conscience is striving to reveal to, and realise in, every human soul."[43]

Of course, the problems with this are mani-

fold. We are so aware today of the social formation—or deformation—of conscience, and the recognition of the transparent righteousness of Jesus, once we have decided that such records as we have are either trustworthy or compelling, is, in a world of pluriform culture, correspondingly a more precarious business. Experiential apologetic may be the proper reaction to excessive intellectualism, but in Tyrrell it threatens to dissolve the historical Jesus (already rendered somewhat anaemic by what Tyrrell took to be the consensus of scholarly opinion) in the immanent, spiritual Christ, and thereby to raise this spiritual Christ above intelligent criticism. He becomes a cipher, a contentless symbol, and doctrine a contentless choice to behave in this way or that. That is a crudely pragmatic position, one which, however much he protested, Tyrrell seemed at times to hold. We may ask whether in the following passage analogy has not been stretched to breaking point: "To believe a truth is to reckon with it as with a reality, whether welcome or unwelcome: it is to adapt our will to it as to a new factor of the world with which we have to deal. Here it means to speak of Christ, to feel and to act towards Him as towards a person who, being one and the same, possesses distinctly all the attributes of divinity and humanity; it means for us that the life and death of Christ are the life and death, not of the divinest of men or of the greatest of prophets, but of God."[44] Amazingly, by a mixture of subterfuge and threat, Tyrrell managed to obtain the Imprimatur for *Lex Orandi*, from which this is taken. He never obtained it again.

> Five years later, he wrote to von Hugel, "I feel that my past work has been dominated by the liberal-Protestant Christ, and doubt whether I am not bankrupt. Civilisation can do (and has done) all that the purely immanentist Christ of Matthew Arnold is credited with."[45]

In some senses, *Christianity at the Cross-Roads* is written to set the record straight, for it contains both a vigorous reassertion of the transcendence of God and a restatement of Tyrrell's belief in Christ as conscience incarnate. Here he set out his final 'modernist' position, distinguishing it explicitly from neo-scholasticism, from Newmanism and from liberal protestantism. For the first time, Tyrrell writes at length about the historical Jesus, leaning heavily upon the work of Weiss, Loisy and Schweitzer. Thus, for Jesus, his "messianic consciousness was the main determinant of His action and utterance, . . . his Christhood was the secret, the mystery of his life."[46] In his earthly state he probably regarded himself as the promised Son of David and the 'suffering servant' who was to be glorified eventually as the Son of Man. He was concerned not to preach his own glory, but to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom. Everything is coloured by immediate expectation of the end, which he himself intended to precipitate by his provocation of the powers of Evil to a final assault upon himself when he went up to Jerusalem. For the latter part of his life he actively sought the death that he predicted on the basis of his own resolve; on the basis of his messianic self-consciousness he expected the resurrection. The roots of Catholic doctrine lie in the apocalyptic vision of Christ—an uncompromisingly transcendent vision. As Tyrrell expounds the apocalyptic understanding of Jesus, he writes with a sense of real release, of release from the misunderstanding to which his adoption of liberal protestant methods had opened him; of release from the tentative nature of his own former conclusions, and the fear that the 'assured results of criticism' might produce a Jesus like the Jesus of Harnack. The key to Tyrrell's synthesis is "a frank admission of the principle of symbolism,"[47] but this is now made easier for two reasons: the imagery of apocalyptic is so much more patently imaginative, and therefore less likely to be taken as an attempt at literal expression; and the continuity that exists between the imagery accepted and used by Jesus, and that retained in Catholic doctrine, is demonstrable. This continuity of imagery links with continuity of experience (and of course development in understanding).

> "The Faith in his own Christhood that Jesus by the power of His personality, was able to plant in his Apostles, has been continually reinforced by the experience of those who have found Him, in effect, their Redeemer, the Lord and Master of their souls, their Hope, their Love, their Rest—in short, all that they mean by God. For them He has become the effectual symbol or sacrament of the transcendent, through which they can apprehend the inapprehensible—the Eternal Spirit in human form."[48]

Thus, if any brought up like Maude Petre had turned specifically to *Christianity at the Cross-*

roads for a fresh expression of the 'unquestioned assumptions' of their childish faith, they would have found more comfort than in many of Tyrrell's books, but in an entirely new mode. On the Resurrection, he writes that "there can be no doubt as to the appearances of Jesus to His Apostles after death"[49] but his wider attitude to the historical question is most succinctly expressed elsewhere:

> "Without ['the Resurrection phenomena'] Christianity could not have been; its success and endurance is their best proof . . . [The Apostles] believed and therefore they saw; they saw and therefore they believed; faith and vision were organically one and correlative, as the real object and its mirrored reflex or shadow."[50]

Now, on Jesus' attitude to his own divinity, Tyrrell writes of "messianic consciousness" and "messianic secret" though adding: "It would at least be hard to show that, whatever Catholic theology may mean by the doctrine of a hypostatic union from the very first of (the) two natures, that doctrine is excluded by the notion that Jesus was *made* the Christ only by his glorification after death. For Christhood may have meant the state of manifestation."[51] The omniscience of Jesus is, of course, rejected. he speaks in the apocalyptic language of his own time because he is a man and a prophet of his own time; but we have seen that in Tyrrell's estimate that did not detract from his divinity. The Church, if not his institution as such, was the continuation of the corporate life of that 'little flock' he gathered round him.

It is the last section of the book that is in many ways the most interesting and the most frustrating. Here Tyrrell sketches his convictions on the relationship between Christianity and other religions, turning his religious philosophy, as developed in *Lex Orandi*, to account with respect to *religion* in general. He seeks to depict Catholicism as a potentially universal religion on the basis of his 'Spirit' metaphysic and christology. With respect to Christology this is actually a step back, for the effect is to leave the apocalyptic Jesus of the first part of the book, who became, in the Church's developed understanding, the Catholic Christ, lying uneasily alongside the immanent, spiritual Christ in whom the yearnings of the world's religions are fulfilled. The tension is unreconciled, but prophetic of a question that faces us today.

In the *Autobiography and Life* of Tyrrell Maude Petre commends him because he faced the problem of Christology where others would not.[52] This is true up to a point. In personal terms, he suffered a great deal from his lonely excursions into critical study. After a Christmas of disbelief and anguish he wrote to Bremond: "I could have sent all the critics to hell if they had left me a hell to send them to."[53] He could see, and feel, the question, but he had not the training as a scripture scholar to explore the historical dimension as he wished. He was reliant on others, and his own contribution was to work out the implications for faith not so much of their specific conclusions—in the long run these would shift and change—but of the Church's commitment to responsible scientific enquiry. He was further hampered in the work by personal isolation and illness, so that the progress he made in absorbing the work of scholars as different as Blondel and Loisy, or von Hugel and Schweitzer was truly remarkable. Today his work looks more like an articulate restatement of faith than an articulated theological explication, largely because he continued to assert without question that the spirit within simply recognises in Jesus the incarnation of the same spirit, which is one with the immanent Divine Spirit. Clearer definition of the doctrine of the Trinity is often sorely missed. In the last analysis, he was not a theologian, but a man of courageous faith and a spiritual writer of genius. He would have appreciated the distinction.

NOTES

1 London 1918. See p 83 ff.
2 *Medievalism*, London 1908 p 108. Cf *The Church and the Future* London 1910 p 15.
3 To von Hugel. Dec. 6th 1897. BM Add Mss 44,927
4 *Essays on Faith and Immortality*, London, 1914 p 121.
5 *Autobiography and Life of George Tyrrell*, Vol 2, by M.D. Petre, London 1912 p 164.
6 A.L.1 p 248. Note that this is not a completely unbalanced judgment. Tyrrell grants that scholasticism "has become a sufficiently flexible medium of expression to suggest the main outlines and chief prominences of the world of spiritual and intelligible realities."
7 *The Point at Issue* in *Jesus or Christ?* Hibbert Journal Supplement 1909 p 5 ff.
8 See p 9. Compare the following in a letter to von Hugel, 21st April 1903. B.M. Add Mss 44,928: "The scholastic conception of person conveys nothing whatever to my mind and yet orthodoxy swears by it."

9 To Von Hugel, 21st April 1903. BM Add Mss 44,928
10 *The Church and the Future*, p 62.
11 Ibid. p 63.
12 To Maude Petre 21st June 1903. BM Add Mss 52,367.
13 *Memories and Opinions*. London 1926 p 266. Tyrrell would not have been surprised: he said of Barry that he knew "the man to be indiscreet and unbalanced and not really a liberal in any sense." to von Hugel 27th June 1903. BM Add Mss 44,928.
14 *The Point at Issue* p 12.
15 Ibid. p 11.
16 To von Hugel. 8th April 1903. BM Add Mss Von Hugel enthusiastically accepted this concept of "(innocent) concupiscence". Tyrrell developed the point in *Essays on Faith and Immortality* p 43 ff.
17 E.T. by Richard Hyde Hiers and David Larrimore Holland. London 1971.
18 *The Church and the Future* p 26.
19 To von Hugel. 21st April 1903. BM Add Mss 44,928.
20 B.M. Add Mss 52,369. Cf Heythrop Journal April, 1971, where it is published.
21 *The Church and the Future* pp 61-2.
22 Ibid. p 64.
23 Ibid. p 78.
24 My emphasis.
25 *External Religion*. London, 1899 p 119.
26 *Through Scylla and Charybdis* London, 1907 p 178.
27 *Lex Orandi*, London, 1904 p 3.
28 *Lex Orandi* p 168.
29 To Bremond. Sept. 20th 1899. See *Autobiography and Life*, Vol 2 p 73. This is Matthew Arnold's Christology, almost in Matthew Arnold's phraseology.
30 *The Modernist Movement in the Roman Church*, Cambridge, 1934, pp 161-2.
31 *The Civilizing of the Matafanus*. London, 1902 p 33.
32 Ibid. p 36.
33 To von Hugel 3rd January, 1902. BM Add Mss 44,928.
34 *The Civilizing of the Matafanus*, p 46.
35 *The Church and the Future* p 20.
36 *The Civilizing of the Matafanus* p 40.
37 Ibid. p 57.
38 Ibid. pp 61-2.
39 Ibid. p 58.
40 *Lex Orandi* p 9.
41 Ibid. p 61.
42 *External Religion* p 32.
43 *Christianity at the Crossroads*, Ed A.R. Vidler. London 1963, p 177.
44 *Lex Orandi* pp 150-151.
45 To von Hugel, 9th April 1909. BM Add Mss 44,930.
46 *Christianity at the Crossroads* p 50.
47 Ibid. p 81.
48 Ibid. p 126.
49 Ibid. p 51.
50 *Essays on Faith and Immortality* pp 58-59.
51 *Christianity at the Crossroads* p 69.
52 *Autobiography and Life* p 388f.
53 See M.D. Petre. *Von Hugel and Tyrrell*, London 1937 p 117 ff.

SEMANTICS AND NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

Martin Kitchen

It is surprising that Biblical Studies took such a long time to take note of linguistic science; that they should do so is a presupposition for the rest of what follows. The information here is available elsewhere[1], but readers of this *Review* might find an introduction to the subject of some value.

I Philology and Linguistics

Philology is rather an old-fashioned term, referring to a rather old-fashioned approach to language; the field it covered is now more commonly known as that of historical and comparative linguistics. Philological study in Europe in the modern era arose with the discovery by Sir William Jones in 1786 of the similarity between Sanskrit, on the one hand, and Greek, Latin and German, on the other. It was he who first conjectured the existence of a parent language for all of them, along with Gothic, Celtic and Old Persian. Franz Bopp systematised Jones's work early in the nineteenth century, and subsequent work led to the establishment of the hypothesis of Indo-European as a family of twelve groups of languages[2]. This has become the lasting monument to philological studies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, the approach of philology to language is based almost entirely upon its written form, and this leaves untouched a whole range of questions about the nature of language which require an altogether new science of language. The rise of linguistics as one of the human sciences has met this need. Writing, of course, is secondary to speech, it is the adding of a further set of symbols -visual symbols- to a prior set of symbols which are sounds. The science of linguistics sets out to study language primarily in this prior sense; naturally, however, it has wide