

KING'S THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

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KING'S THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

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KING'S THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

Volume I Number 1

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EDITORIAL

For the past twenty years *The Kingsman* has been a valuable source of information and ideas for past and present members of King's College, and especially of its Theological Department. For various reasons, some of them set out by Graham Stanton elsewhere in this journal, we are unable to continue the periodical in its traditional form. But despite changes in name and format, we hope to preserve a measure of continuity with the past and to continue to provide a news service for former members of the Department. This will take the form of an inset in the centre pages, which can easily be discarded by those for whom it is irrelevant.

Our policy is to include among our reviews assessments of the works of present and former members of the Faculty of Theology, especially those of wide interest and significance. We hope, also, to publish examples of the best original work that is being done in the Faculty, by members of staff and research students. The articles by Stewart Sutherland, Melvyn Thompson and Terry Smith in this issue provide evidence of our contention that the spread of interests and talents represented at King's makes us uniquely placed to fill a need that exists in theological journalism: for a journal that will specialise in providing surveys of the work that is being done in different areas of theological and religious studies.

Modern specialisation and the volume

of literature is such that sixth form teachers and the clergy, for example, find it increasingly difficult to keep pace with what is happening. This journal intends to fulfil some of their needs by providing non-technical summaries of current work, and is already actively seeking such surveys from those working in different fields. We also plan to print articles, again of a non-technical nature, outlining recent research work chiefly, but not exclusively, in this Faculty. The editors will welcome offers of articles and of suggestions for articles in the areas we are hoping to cover.

The policy is therefore to produce a journal in which the emphasis is on providing a high quality of information rather than being a forum for debate. Within this general policy there will be room for other articles of general interest, depending largely upon the availability of space and the type of material received. The editors welcome, and plan actively to seek, contributions from authors outside the Faculty, and in future to limit the practice of reviewing of books written by close colleagues. Volume 1, Number 1 of the King's Theological Review is exploratory and traditional. The response to it by readers, subscribers and potential contributors will influence the form the publication will take, and, indeed, whether the journal continues at all. At present, the plan is for two issues a year, in spring and autumn.

ATHEISM, HATRED AND THE LOVE OF GOD IN *THE END OF THE AFFAIR*
Stewart R. Sutherland

What is the difference between atheism and belief? As philosophical questions go, this one seems to be remarkably straightforward. Anyone who has even a passing acquaintance with classical Greek surely knows that the term 'atheism' is derived from the Greek negative prefix 'a' and the Greek word for God—'theos'. Obviously an atheist is one who does not believe in God, as opposed to a 'believer', which in this context means 'one who does believe in God'.

My argument will be that although this may well be for some what the difference between atheism and belief amounts to, it is by no means the whole story: nor perhaps is it the philosophically most interesting story, nor even the most religiously significant story. The nature of the argument offered in support of this claim is derived from a principle suggested by Cook Wilson:

'One's first thought when trying to prove anything about God or morality should be - did I really get this conviction myself in this way?'

Rather than follow out the letter of Cook Wilson's remark and write a paper which could run the severe risk of becoming self-indulgent reminiscence, the intention is rather to honour the spirit of the injunction by focusing the discussion upon Graham Greene's novel, *The End of the Affair*. The discussion which follows will, I hope, justify the move from autobiography to fiction. My argument will be that in this novel we are given an account of one form which the difference between atheism and belief might take. The central features of this account, as we shall see, have little to do with the simple affirmation or denial of the proposition 'God exists'. Nor, again as we shall see, is the difference between Bendrix and Sarah, a difference over whether a series of 'coincidences' is to count as evidence for the existence of a God who intervenes in human affairs. This is how Bendrix tries to construe the situation for most of the novel, but in doing so he fails abysmally to understand

what separates Sarah from himself. What Greene brings out, which is very much in accord with the spirit of Cook Wilson's injunction, is what led to belief in the case of Sarah, and to the re-affirmation of the rejection of the belief in the case of Bendrix. As one might expect of a talented and skilled novelist, Greene does succeed in penetrating, in the case of his two central characters, to the ways in which some people can actually come to accept or reject belief.

The affair which has ended is between Bendrix, a writer, who narrates most of the story, and Sarah the wife of Henry, a rather drab and almost pathetic civil servant. Bendrix's initial assumption is that the affair has ended because Sarah has tired of him, or because she has found someone else. Two years or so later, he comes into possession of a journal which Sarah had been keeping at the time, and in the interim period. From an entry for June 17, 1944, it became clear that the end of the affair was not as Bendrix had imagined it. On June 16 they had been making love in his flat. An air-raid had started and Bendrix had gone downstairs to check whether they could discreetly take shelter in his landlady's cellar. A bomb landed in the street outside as he was passing the front door and he was partially buried in the debris of the explosion. Sarah rushed out to the landing, and seeing him lying there she feared the worst. She touched the hand protruding from underneath the door and believed it to be the hand of a dead man. She described her reaction as follows:

'I knelt down on the floor. I was mad to do such a thing: I never even had to do it as a child - my parents never believed in prayer, any more than I do. I hadn't any idea what to say. Maurice was dead. Extinct. There wasn't such a thing as a soul. Even the half-happiness I gave him was drained out of him like blood. He would never have the chance to be happy again. With anybody I thought: somebody else could have loved him and made him happier than I could, but now we won't have that choice. I knelt down and put my hand on the bed and

wished I could believe. Dear God, I said-- why dear? make me believe. I can't believe. Make me. I said, I'm a bitch and a fake and I hate myself. I can't do anything of myself. *Make* me believe. I shut my eyes tight, and I pressed my nails into the palms of my hands until I could feel nothing but the pain, and I said, I will believe. Let him be alive and I *will* believe. Give him a chance. Let him have his happiness. Do this and I'll believe. But that wasn't enough. It doesn't hurt to believe. So I said, I love him and I'll give him up forever, only let him be alive with a chance, and I pressed and pressed and I could feel the skin break, and I said: People can love without seeing each other, can't they, they love You all their lives without seeing You, and then he came in at the door and he was alive, and I thought how the agony of being without him starts, and I wished he was safely back dead again under the door'.

Sarah believed herself to have made a vow to give up Bendrix should he be alive, and although she certainly wanted to, she did not feel herself able to break that vow. Thus the affair ended.

It would, of course, be easy to characterise the difference between Sarah's 'belief' here and Bendrix's refusal to see any sense in it, as the difference between hysteria and sanity, and that was, as we saw above, a characterisation of her belief which Sarah had already considered. Even if this is to be our final evaluation of the situation, it would be both precipitate and superficial to arrive at it quite as quickly as that.

Bendrix, as the narrator, reveals much about himself and not a great deal of it shows him in an attractive light. He tells us at the outset that his record is a 'record of hate far more than of love'. The love which he knows, is both egotistic and jealous. His capacity for suspicion and jealousy is such that any ambiguities in Sarah's speech and action are understood in their worst possible light. For example, the look of horror on Sarah's face as she realised that in the light of her vow she must now begin to live without Bendrix, is mis-read as the disappointment of not being rid of him as she had hoped, on seeing him buried in the bomb-blast. Sarah's surreptitious visits to church and to the

home of Smythe an antitheistic soap-box preacher, were each read as another rendezvous with a new lover. The sense in which the former was true did eventually strike Bendrix as he came to see God, or at least Sarah's belief in God, as his rival for her love. The irony of seeing the visits to Smythe in that light escaped him. The point of these visits, of course, was largely the hope that Smythe might persuade her that the whole idea of a God and of a vow to him, was utter nonsense, so that she might then return to Bendrix. Perhaps the remark that signifies the depths of Bendrix's suspicion and jealousy, is his 'Distrust grows with a lover's success'. If she is so competent at deceiving her husband, if she is so ready to throw him over for me, how secure am I? The picture is not wholly black, however and he does have moments of compassion and tenderness, though these are the exception rather than the rule.

Sarah, on the other hand, is not a victim of jealousy. Even in her extreme reaction to the belief that Bendrix is dead she can consider the possibility that *someone else* might have made him happier. In general she has a strong sense of compassion: for example, she first took Smythe's card largely because she felt sorry for the way in which others were ignoring him. But, of course, she was deceitful, and although she felt the need to protect her husband, to support him, she seemed to have few scruples about being unfaithful to him. One other factor which will be relevant to later discussion is that she seemed at times acutely aware of the nature of the situations in which she found herself, and she did not seem over-disposed to self-deception. Her journal shows at times a passionate love for Bendrix side by side with a firm grasp of the dangers which the relationship seemed to hold for both of them.

Bendrix, even when he discovers about Sarah's vow, can make nothing of it, nor of her seeming religious belief. He simply cannot understand how this sort of thing could ever be strong enough to keep two lovers apart. Of course, he utterly rejects Sarah's God and her belief, and in his attempt to make intelligible what has happened, he tries to characterise the difference between his own rejection of belief and Sarah's acceptance of it in one way rather than in another. He wants to see the difference between Sarah and himself, between belief and unbelief as the difference over the interpretation

of 'coincidences'. On this view, the rational attitude, his attitude, is to view the various 'coincidences' as coincidences and no more: the emotional or superstitious attitude, Sarah's attitude, is to see some magical or superstitious force at work. If this is the truth of the matter, then he can be secure in his anger at Sarah, and in his contempt for her weakness.

These apparent but striking 'coincidences' are strewn throughout the second half of the novel. Their appearances in an almost *deus-ex-machina* air of abruptness and finality, could lead one, on a superficial reading, to view the novel as a rather badly written apologetic tract. It would seem as if Greene's finesse and judgment have left him as these inert lead-based 'pointers to God' weigh the novel down like so much unwanted ballast in a racing yacht. But to make that judgment is to presuppose that Greene's conception of the difference between belief and unbelief is the same as that of Bendrix.

The 'coincidences', however, are numerous and purposively deployed. The most obvious and striking one we have already encountered -- Sarah's prayer and the appearance of Bendrix in the doorway. Again there is the fact that, as her mother reveals, Sarah was as a small child baptised as a Catholic. Did this make it inevitable that she, who was at a time which she could not recall, baptised, should unwittingly return to the fold. Does baptism 'take' in that way, like a vaccination, as her mother had already hoped? Her final prayer to God that she should no longer be kept alive is . . . should we say 'granted'?

Two further instances strike Bendrix as the sort of nonsense which people might quote as 'evidence': one concerns Bendrix directly. On the way to the crematorium for Sarah's funeral he had picked up an acquaintance's girl-friend. All the signs and intentions were that he would begin an affair with her:

'I implored Sarah, Get me out of it. I don't want to begin it all over again and injure her'.

Whatever sort of forgetfulness sparked off this wish, he mused on it later in the following terms:

'Last month in the crematorium I asked you to save that girl from me and you pushed your mother between us—or so they might say. But if I start believing that,

then I have to believe in your God. I'd rather love the men you slept with'.

The second concerns the illness of the son of the private detective Parkis whom Bendrix had employed to report on Sarah's movements. In a raging fever the boy had two dreams in which Sarah, who was by then dead, had visited him, promised to give him a book, and had taken the pain away. All this took place in a background of the sceptical but desperate prayers of Parkis, and of his successful attempt to get hold of a book which had belonged to Sarah in her childhood to give to his son. As it turned out, inside the book there was an inscription written years before by Sarah which led Bendrix to ask Henry, Sarah's husband:

' "Did you read what Sarah had written in it before you gave it to Parkis?"

"No. Why?"

"A coincidence, that's all. But it seems you don't need to belong to Father Crompton's persuasion to be superstitious".'

Always the rather crude emphasis seems to be seeing the options as being, either mesmerised by coincidence or persuaded rationally.

If this is the view one takes of the novel, one will find the last example of 'coincidence' one self-indulgent, melodramatic chord too many. In the final pages it turns out that the rationalist propagandist, Smythe, has undergone what looked like some sort of miraculous cure for a deforming facial birth mark. He had first lied to Bendrix and had pretended that some new form of treatment had been the cause, but later he had told him 'Nobody had treated my face. It cleared up suddenly in the night'. Whether the supposed supernatural agency was the kiss which Sarah had once given it in a moment of symbolic passion, or the lock of hair which at his request she had given him, is left unanswered by Smythe.

As these events recur throughout the second half of the novel Bendrix becomes more strident than ever in what he comes to call his 'faith in coincidences', for he sees this as his protection against all the nonsense which led to the end of the affair. He tells Sarah's husband:

' "During the last year, Henry, I've been so bored I've even collected car numbers.

That teaches you about coincidences. Ten thousand possible numbers and God knows how many combinations, and yet over and over again I've seen two cars with the same figures side by side in a traffic block".

Yet as his protest becomes more strident, it seems to lose something of the unemotional rationality which at first characterises it. His unbelief seems initially to be of the sort which equates 'I don't believe in God', with 'I don't believe that God exists, for reason tells me that all the so-called evidence can be explained as a combination of coincidence and psychological vulnerability'. And, of course, as the coincidences have been structured by Greene, this is true. Such effect as they might have in life, as in the novel, depends on their being juxtaposed as part of a pattern, and that is something far more easily arranged in a work of fiction than in the fragmented and perhaps dispassionate view which many of us have of our lives. On the other hand, clearly there is a kind of belief which depends, primarily, perhaps even exclusively, upon the believer's capacity to construct just such a pattern out of his experience. That kind of belief is the opposite of the atheism which equates 'I believe in God' with 'I believe that God exists', and which sees the stockpiling of 'evidence' as providing security against the chilling draughts of unbelief. In the end, however, to see the difference between belief and unbelief presented in the novel to be of this sort, is to mis-read it completely.

It is true that Greene seems to allow this to be part of, or a version of, the difference between belief and unbelief as we encounter it in the various characters - Smythe, Parkis, Father Crompton. The lengths to which the latter will go to open the gates of belief comes out in the following comic exchange:

"I'm afraid I've never been able to pray much," Henry said, "since I was a boy. I used to pray to get into the second XV."
"And did you?"

"I got into the third. I'm afraid that kind of prayer isn't much good, is it, father?"
"Any sort's better than none. It is a recognition of God's power anyway, and that's a kind of praise, I suppose." I hadn't heard him talk so much since dinner had started.

"I should have thought", I said, "it was more like touching wood or avoiding the lines on the pavement. At that age anyway."

"Oh well," he said, "I'm not against a bit of superstition. It gives people the idea that this world is not everything." He scowled at me down his nose. "It could be the beginning of wisdom."

The irony of this is not missed, of course. They talk of prayers to get into the second XV, whilst the woman who had brought them together had through prayer brought much unhappiness and eventually death upon herself. Surely we cannot be talking about the same kind of religious belief? Greene's response to that question is not in the novel unambiguous, though there are pointers, for example the fact that Sarah never actually took mass, never actually made the implied public confession of belief. Here, however, as in other of his novels, he does raise the question of whether this man 'ugly, haggard, graceless with the Torquemada nose' could in some sense be the representative of God on earth.

There is, nonetheless, in the novel an implied account of the difference between belief and unbelief which can be considered quite independently of the question of its relation to the form of belief which is the shortest of steps from superstition. It is this which denies that the second half of the novel is clumsy with the caricature of propaganda tracts. As a counterpoint to the melodramatic attention-begging coincidences Greene has been developing a different theme. In the culminating few pages of the novel Greene gives this alternative theme the dominant role, and brings out well what underlies the later stridency of Bendrix's insistences upon 'coincidence'. In so doing, an account of the difference between atheism and belief is offered which suggests the irrelevance of this seeming weighing of the evidences which has been going on, and which implies the comparative unimportance of the statement 'God exists' in characterising the difference between belief and unbelief.

In the end Bendrix's rejection of God is a refusal to have anything to do with a God who divided him from the woman he loved. To question, 'Are you saying then that he

believed that God existed?', is to miss the point. The important difference between Sarah who embraced religious belief and Bendrix who repudiated it, is not a difference over whether or not the coincidences are acts of God, nor of whether there is a God by reference to whom an odd pattern of events could be explained in terms other than those of coincidence. The difference is between someone who could accept the possibility of two lovers being kept apart in this way, and one who cannot accept such a possibility. To talk in these terms is to raise the question of the nature of the attachment between Bendrix and Sarah: it is to introduce the question of how each saw 'the affair'. There is no doubt of the strength and intensity of the bond between them. For each there was an emotional involvement in the other of depth to the point of extremity. Yet there was a difference between them. For Bendrix the only conceivable end to an affair such as theirs was that one should tire of the love of the other, or that a new lover should be found. Not so, it seems, for Sarah. Behind this lies their differing concepts of love. In rejecting Sarah's God, in the end Bendrix was rejecting Sarah's conception of love, and what it could lead to. He admits as much in his closing, 'I'm too tired and old to learn to love'.

For Sarah, the possibility of belief in God is bound up with the possibility of belief in the love which, the Christian would claim, God shows towards men. The underlying emphasis is Christological, and the love in question, the Christian might claim, definitively exemplified in the self-giving of the incarnation and crucifixion. Bendrix, however, sees the possibility of belief in God in a different light:

'When we get to the end of human beings we have to delude ourselves into belief in God'.

It was this capacity for self-deception which could explain the irrationality of belief. But in Sarah was no such naivety. For her, psychological need was not a sufficient condition of the existence of belief. There were other barriers to be surmounted:

'If I loved God, then I would believe in his love for me. It's not enough to need it. We have to love first, and I don't know how'.

Throughout the novel there is very considerable play on the parallel between love for God and love between man and woman. It is Bendrix indeed, who first introduces the connection when he compares the language of the lover to the language of the religious mystic. An alternative account of religious belief to that of regarding coincidences as evidence for the existence of God is being offered. In this account, to believe in God is to see certain possibilities of divine love and that in turn is connected to seeing certain possibilities of the form which human love may take. Sarah cannot believe in God because she cannot believe in God's love for her, and she cannot do that because she cannot love God: she does not, she says, know how. My argument is that, in fact, what is at issue here is not initially a question about the object of love, it is a question of the nature of love. It is not that Sarah finds it difficult to extend her love to include God as one of its objects: it is a question of whether an alternative kind or form of love is possible.

In the end Sarah at least saw what such an alternative form of love could amount to, and saw it as something to strive after. As such she saw the possibility of what God's love for her could be. Bendrix, in so far as he saw what such a love might be like, rejected it. Initially and most importantly he rejected it in Sarah as he had rejected its antecedents in her, because of the implications it had for his hold over her. In the end, as we have seen, he also rejected in himself any sense of its value, its desirability. The roots of this divergence of response are to be seen long before the end of the affair. Even in their relationship to one another there were to be discerned two quite different conceptions of love.

Sarah's love for Bendrix was, in a sense, totally self-giving, and self-forgetful. We see this, be it in her cry of abandonment as they make love, or in the comment,

'He thinks I still sleep with other men, and if I did, would it matter so much? If sometimes he had a woman, do I complain? I wouldn't rob him of some small companionship in the middle of the desert if we can't have each other here'.

For Bendrix such would be inconceivable. He

cannot see or understand the possibility of such a love, and they often quarrel about this. His love is quite different from that of Sarah. Already we have seen, it is a suspicious and jealous love. Indeed 'anyone who loves is jealous'. It was too, a love based on power and possession. Consider, for example, the one moment at which his hatred of Sarah's God subsides—when he believes he has won her back:

'I hadn't during that period any hatred of her God, for hadn't I in the end proved stronger?'

Further, it was a love which was self-pitying and egotistic. He remarks:

'We had begun to look beyond love but it was only I who was aware of the way we were being driven.'

As has already been noticed, Sarah also was well aware of the dangers which the relationship held for each of them. She too was asking, 'What are we doing to each other?'

The final egotism, and most complete, and the most crucial, was Bendrix's insistence,

'I refused to believe that love could take any other form than mine.'

Sarah's love, of course, did take a different form and this is what lay behind Bendrix's inability to understand her before or after the end of the affair. He refused to believe in the kind of self-giving love which Sarah professed, and in his own love, even when he spoke of 'losing one's identity' when 'happiness annihilates us', this was, at most, momentary. By contrast, Sarah's love was neither jealous nor suspicious, nor rooted in power and possession. Most crucially she did see and came increasingly to see the possibility of other sorts and dimensions of love.

In her struggles to reject the validity of the vow by which she had bound herself, Sarah brooded unceasingly upon the nature of the God to whom she had made this vow. She could, she tells us, believe in a God who was 'a vapour', but as for a God who was supposed to have become man, and who was worshipped through images of stone, iron, and plaster, that seemed to be incredible. What images pointed to, however,

was precisely the difference between what could not be loved, 'a vapour', and what could be loved, a God who was, or had been a 'body like that'. The crucial question was still for her not 'Does God exist?', but, 'Does God exist in such a way that he can be loved or hated?'. The philosophical point here has been stated in more formal terms by Cook Wilson:

'That the conception of God can only be realized by us with certain emotions, is not only a very interesting fact but it is an essential characteristic of the conception'.

The importance of the 'materialism' here, of which Sarah speaks, can, however, be developed in two different ways. One would be to emphasise as Smythe, Henry, and Bendrix would, the connections between the use of material objects as focuses of worship, on the one hand, and totemism, and the various forms of magic outlined in J.G. Fraser's *Golden Bough* on the other. The other way is to connect the notion of the love of God with that of the love of man. Greene does not separate these two possibilities explicitly, but in the end Sarah comes to tolerate the former only insofar as it leads to the latter.

Philosophically the interest here is in the latter as providing some account of what in Cook Wilson's terms it means 'to realize the conception of God'. Sarah does learn how to love God, which as we have already seen, was a precondition to her coming to believe that God loved her, and so of coming to believe in God. How then does she learn to love God, to see the possibility of God's love for her?

I have argued that her conception of love was quite different from that of Bendrix. It was a self-giving, self-emptying love which she felt for him. This, in a sense, mirrors or reflects the Christian conception of the love of God for men shown in the crucifixion. What then, did Sarah still have to learn in order to know what the love of God amounted to? There were still two aspects of love to be discovered and assimilated. One was stumbled over, when she realized that the love of God cannot be love of 'a vapour', any more than the love of Maurice could be. It was then that she began seriously to confront the possibility that the love of God must in some sense take the form of love of what has flesh and blood.

'Suppose God did exist, suppose he was a body like that (a bowler-hatted man nearby), what's wrong in believing that his body existed as much as mine? Could anyone love him or hate him if he hadn't got a body?

The importance of the 'like that' there, might be seen as a means of giving one an image of what or who it is one loves in loving God, and this point is partially developed. But the greater significance of the 'like that', is that it gives Sarah the possibility of seeing those around her in a different light.

Sarah's love for Bendrix had the divine quality of self-giving to a marked and unusual degree. Bendrix was right when he argued that for most, love is jealous love. Where he was wrong was in implying that love *could not* take any other form. If he is right in that, then the whole idea of the love of God is empty, as therefore is Sarah's belief. What left Sarah still asking 'teach me to love', was the fact that this self-giving love was essentially directed towards and consumed by one individual. It was love for *this* man, particular love for him because of who or what *he* was. What she did not know was what is meant by the command 'love thy neighbour'. Kierkegaard drew the distinction in this way.

'One's neighbour is one's equal. One's neighbour is not the beloved for whom you have a passionate preference Your neighbour is every man . . . He is your neighbour on the basis of equality with you before God'⁴

The important point in believing that God could have a body 'like that' could be in providing an image for the focus of worship. Alternatively, and this is my point here, it could be in transforming one's conception of the worth, or worthiness to be loved, of human beings *qua* human beings - to see them, in Kierkegaard's sense, as 'one's neighbour'.

That this was the significance for Sarah can be seen in the following passage:

'I wish I knew a prayer that wasn't me, me, me. Help me. Let *me* die soon. Me, me, me. Let me think of the strawberry-mark

on Richard's cheek. Let me see Henry's face with the tears falling. Let me forget me. Dear God I've tried to love and I've made such a hash of it . . . Teach me to love . . . I don't mind my pain. It's their pain I can't stand. Let my pain go on and on, but stop theirs. Dear God, if only you could come down from your Cross for a while and let me get up there instead. If I could suffer like you, I could heal like you.'

What Sarah had come to here was an extension of that self-giving love beyond one man. This in the end, was what finally kept her and Bendrix apart. It follows precisely Sarah's attempt to return to Bendrix, and finally leave Henry. She found that confronted by Henry and the pain which such a move would cause him, she could not leave him. It is the expression of that sort of love which leads her finally to attach significance to the idea that God might love her. It is this kind of love which is denied by the exclusive particularity of the love which is essentially a jealous love. This is the core of the difference between Sarah and Bendrix.

The second feature which her love up to that point had lacked, is brought out also in the above passage: the connection between love and suffering. The connection is two-fold. What Sarah cannot stand is the pain of others. Further than this, however, she seems to believe in the end that to love others, to shield them from suffering, is to take their suffering upon oneself. This is, of course, a central feature of most theological accounts of the Atonement, though that in itself does not make the notion any easier to grasp. My purpose here, however, is neither to defend, nor to commend Sarah's beliefs. The point of this analysis is initially to bring out the differences between Sarah, the believer, and Bendrix the atheist who rejects her God. In the end he rejects such a conception of love as the one which comes between himself and Sarah.

It might be interposed at this point, that surely the affair had ended long before the kind of love which has been outlined had formulated itself in Sarah's thoughts and deeds, and that what comes after is irrelevant to Bendrix's judgment that Sarah's belief had begun in hysteria. My reply at this point would

have to take the form of another paper raising the question of just what it is that distinguishes hysteria from sanity. The implications of the present paper are that that question is not to be settled solely by a study of the extract from Sarah's diary which described the circumstances in which she made her rather strange vow. It was not hysteria which prevented her finally leaving Henry. What she was and what she became are central to this question. Nor is the difference between hysteria and sanity, between belief and unbelief, to be settled by appeal to the difference between superstition and belief in coincidences. Greene develops a counterpoint to that account of the difference between Sarah and Bendrix. Bendrix in the end cannot understand Sarah because

'I refuse to believe that love could take any other form than mine'.

AN INTRODUCTION TO NAG HAMMADI STUDIES

T.V. Smith

Despite the appearance of several books and articles dealing with the subject (1), personal experience reveals that mention of the Nag Hammadi discovery is often met with a shrug of the shoulders and a quizzical frown. It is not difficult to point out several reasons why the Nag Hammadi find has failed to attract the same public and scholarly attention, particularly in Britain, as that which surrounded the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. For one thing, the gnostic texts belong to the Christian era, and in several cases are clearly influenced by Christianity, whilst the Dead Sea Scrolls relate to the period of Christian origins and uncover the scriptures of a hitherto unknown Jewish sect. In addition, fewer scholars are able to deal at first-hand with Coptic texts than with Hebrew, and the publication of the Nag Hammadi library has been plagued with far more problems and delays than attended the publication of the Scrolls (2). Recent months, however, have witnessed three significant events in Nag

If this analysis is at least partially adequate as an account of *one* form which the difference between belief and unbelief can take, then to that extent it questions the adequacy of the definition of atheism as the belief that God does not exist.

FOOTNOTES

1. *Historical Selections in the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. R.N. Smart, S.C.M., 1962, p. 452.
2. Published by Heinemann. All references to the Uniform Edition 1955.
3. *op.cit.*, p. 459.
4. *Works of Love*, Collins, 1962, p. 72. See also D.Z. Phillips, *The Christian Concept of Love*, in *Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy*, ed. I.T. Ramsey, S.C.M. Press, 1966.

Hammadi Studies: the publication of the final volume of the facsimile edition of the texts; the appearance of a one-volume English translation; and an International Conference on Gnosticism, held at Yale University, at which over two hundred and fifty scholars met to discuss some of the issues raised by the Nag Hammadi documents. In view of these developments, but bearing in mind the feeling of unfamiliarity, it seems appropriate to introduce the discovery and study of the Nag Hammadi texts (3).

The town of Nag Hammadi is situated on the southern bank of the River Nile, about six hundred kilometres south of Cairo. A few miles east of the town lies the ancient site of Chenoboskion, where Pachomius established the first Christian monastery at the beginning of the fourth century. The area around Nag Hammadi was in fact one of the major centres of Christian monasticism from the fourth century onwards. The gnostic texts were not discovered in the

town of Nag Hammadi itself, but at the foot of a mountain range, the Gebel et-Tarif, which lies a few miles to the north - east. Here, in December 1945, at an unknown location, a local peasant camel-driver named Mohammed Ali discovered the texts, hidden inside a jar, while searching for *sebach*, a rich soil used as a fertilizer in the Nile Valley. After changing hands several times, the texts, found in the form of papyrus pages bound together in thirteen leather-covered codices, seem to have arrived at Cairo in three different groups(4). Codex III was acquired by Togo Mina, curator of Cairo's Coptic museum, in October 1946, and a year later was examined by Jean Doresse, a young French scholar who had come to Egypt to search for Christian monastic remains. Doresse identified the five gnostic writings contained in Codex III, and, along with his teacher Henri-Charles Puech, made the first announcement of the discovery to the scholarly world in February 1948. Codex I, meanwhile, disappeared from Egypt in mysterious circumstances, and, after being offered for sale in the United States, was eventually acquired by Zurich's Jung Institute in May 1952, henceforth becoming known as the Jung Codex(5). The third group of codices consisted of nine more or less complete ones (II, IV-XI) along with parts of three others (I, XII, XIII). This group also came to the notice of Togo Mina at the Coptic Museum, and after a long legal dispute over their rightful ownership, a court-order made them national property in 1956. With the return of the Jung Codex to Cairo in 1975, all the Nag Hammadi texts are now housed in the Coptic Museum.

The publication of the texts has been plagued with numerous problems and long delays. The delicate political situation in Egypt in the 1950's, for example, meant that the texts in the Coptic Museum were almost completely inaccessible from 1949 to 1956. An International Committee consisting of Egyptian and Western scholars was formed in 1956 for the purpose of initiating publication plans, but the outbreak of the Suez Crisis meant that the Committee met for only one month, and the resultant rupture in Egyptian-Western relations dismissed any chance of the Committee re-convening. The committee did succeed in collating the *Gospel of Thomas* (CG.II.2), which was subsequently published

in 1959(6), and which led to a period of intensive scholarly study of the document. Publication of the texts contained in the Jung Codex had begun in 1956 with the appearance of the *Gospel of Truth* (CG.I.3), and has continued since then, though with long delays(7). The preservation of the Cairo texts was entrusted in the early 1960's to a German scholar, Martin Krause, working at Cairo's German Archaeological Institute. He was able to publish an edition of the three versions of the *Apocryphon of John* (CG.II.1; III.1; IV.1), which appeared in 1963(8). A project to photograph the entire collection of papyrus pages was begun in 1961, financed by UNESCO, but by the time of the Messina colloquium on gnostic origins in 1966, less than seventy percent of the material had been photographed. In addition, by this time, twenty years after the discovery, only a quarter of the fifty-two documents had been published and only one tenth were available in English translation(9). At Messina, a three-man committee, chaired by the American New Testament scholar James Robinson, sent a long cable to UNESCO urging completion of the photographic project as soon as possible(10), and after the conference Robinson went to the Paris offices of UNESCO where, thanks to his persistent questionings, he was able to copy out many of the papyrus pages from their photographic reproductions. In 1970, another international committee was established, with Robinson as the permanent secretary, and it was at this point that the delays which had beset the publication of the texts finally came to a welcome end.

The facsimile edition of the texts, containing photographs of the papyrus pages and the leather covers, began appearing in 1972 and has recently been completed (11). Projects are in progress for the translation of the texts into French, German, and English. French translations, along with brief introductions and commentaries, are prepared by a group of scholars working at Laval University, Quebec. Established in 1974, publication of the translations began last year (12). The Berliner Arbeitskreis für Koptisch Gnostische Schriften, based in East Berlin, regularly publishes German translations and brief introductions, in the journal *Theologische Literaturzeitung*

(13). English translations are produced by members of the Coptic Gnostic Library Project at the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, Claremont, California, and appear in the *Nag Hammadi Studies* monograph series. Detailed introductions and commentaries accompany the Coptic texts and English translations (14). The monograph series contains books which are invaluable for the study of the Nag Hammadi collection—festschriften for scholars involved in the publication of the texts (15), collections of papers read at conferences dealing with Gnosticism (16), studies of individual texts (17), and a bibliographical guide to Nag Hammadi Studies (18). In addition to these various publication projects, two other projects are of considerable importance, the establishment of the Nag Hammadi Archive at Claremont, and the archaeological investigation of the area around Nag Hammadi. The archaeologists have not only uncovered the remains of possibly the largest ancient church in the Middle East, at Faw Qibli, eighteen kilometres north-east of Nag Hammadi, but have also established that the hitherto unknown find-spot of the Bodmer Papyri was in the very same area as that of the Nag Hammadi library. (19)

Although some of the texts were known before the Nag Hammadi discovery, and some are duplicated (20) within the collection, there are nevertheless forty previously unknown documents, of which thirty are in a well preserved state and the other ten in a rather fragmentary condition. All the texts are written in Coptic but are in fact translations of Greek originals. Archaeological and palaeographic evidence indicates that the texts in their present form date from the fourth century. Attempts have been made to classify the codices in a variety of ways, in terms of their different Coptic dialects, different scribal hands (21), different leather covers (22), and different branches of Gnosticism (23). In view of the difficulties inherent in these methods of classification, it might be better to use a more general criterion, such as a distinction between Christian and non-Christian texts. A marked feature of the Nag Hammadi library is its variety, not only amongst the library as a whole but also within individual documents, several of which defy any attempt to place

them within a particular school of gnostic thought. This diversity can be seen quite clearly in the way in which many issues are understood in a wide variety of ways within the collection. In the course of a short article, we can only hope to sketch out this diversity as a means of introducing some of the less well-known documents and indicating some of the more recent work produced in Nag Hammadi Studies.

1. *The Crucifixion of Jesus*

On the one hand, there is evidence from the Nag Hammadi library which supports the view that gnostics understood the death of Jesus docetically, that is, they maintained that although Jesus seemed to suffer, in reality he did not do so (24). In the *Apocalypse of Peter* (CG.VII.3) we find the crucifixion explained in terms of two Jesus figures. Peter's question about the identity of the two figures is explained in the following way: "he whom you saw on the tree, glad and laughing, this is the living Jesus. But this one into whose hands and feet they drive the nails is his fleshly part, which is the substitute being put to shame, the one who came into being in his likeness." (81:15 - 24). A distinction is made between the bodily Jesus who suffered and the living Jesus who did not suffer: the fleshly part (sarkikon) of Jesus is crucified while the incorporeal body of the living Jesus is released (83:6 - 8) and stands by and laughs at the crucifixion scene, unaffected by it. This gnostic version of Jesus' crucifixion is clearly docetic, and occurs in the *Apocalypse of Peter* in the context of a polemical attack upon a group which "cleave to the name of a dead man, thinking that they will become pure" (74:13 - 15), a reference to the orthodox theology of the cross based on Jesus' physical and real death (25). Such an understanding of the crucifixion is vigorously attacked, and the crucified one is described as "the first-born, and the home of demons" (82:21 - 23) in an allusion to the widespread Hellenistic belief that the body is controlled by evil powers. Similar criticisms of the orthodox crucifixion doctrine are found in the *First Apocalypse of James* (CG.V.3), in which Jesus states that he has "never suffered in any way" (31:18 - 19), and in the *Letter of Peter to Philip* (CG.VIII.2), where Peter summarises the

orthodox position only to dismiss it: "Jesus came down and was crucified. And he bore a crown of thorns. And he put on a purple garment. And he was crucified on a tree and he was buried in a tomb. And he rose from the dead. My brothers, Jesus is a stranger to this suffering"(139:15 - 22)(26). A docetic view of Jesus' crucifixion is also found in the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (CG.VII.2), where we find a somewhat similar view to that of the *Apocalypse of Peter*: "It was another, their father, who drank the gall and the vinegar; it was not I. They struck me with the reed; it was another, Simon, who bore the cross on his shoulder. It was another upon whom they placed the crown of thorns ... And I was laughing at their ignorance."(56:6 - 13, 18 - 19). The idea of a laughing Jesus at the crucifixion is a prominent feature of the teaching of the gnostic Basilides who, according to Irenaeus(27), believed that Jesus stood by and laughed while Simon of Cyrene suffered and died on the cross in his place.

This is *not* the same idea as is found in the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, where Simon's function is limited to carrying the cross (a tradition derived from Mark 15:21) and does not extend to being crucified. The document is still, however, a further witness to a gnostic denial of Jesus' suffering made in terms of a docetic separation of the bodily Jesus from the spiritual Jesus (28).

On the other hand, some evidence reveals that certain gnostic groups insisted on the *reality* of Jesus' suffering and death. There seems to be an anti-docetic tendency in the *Gospel of Truth* (29), but such a tendency is most clear in *Melchizedek* (CG.IX.1). In a description of a group of opponents, the author first gives their views and then counters them with his own: "they will say of him that he is unbegotten though he has been begotten, that he does not eat even though he does eat, that he does not drink even though he drinks, that he is uncircumcised though he has been circumcised, that he is unfleshly though he has come in the flesh, that he did not come to suffering though he did come to suffering, that he did not rise from the dead though he arose from the dead"(5:2 - 11)(30). Whilst it is not possible to identify the opponents

from such a general description of their views - they could be orthodox Christians or another gnostic group - it may be possible to identify the precise branch of gnosticism within which the document arose. Several of the anti-gnostic writers give an account of a gnostic sect called Melchizedekians (31), who affirmed the true humanity of Jesus, believing him to be a mere man in contrast to the heavenly power Melchisedek, whose image Christ is. Although *Melchisedek* does not subordinate Christ to Melchisedek, as Epiphanius attributes to the Melchisedekians, it is highly likely that the document was written by members of the sect which Epiphanius describes. (32)

A belief in the soteriological importance of the cross is clearly present in the *Apocryphon of James* (CG.I.2) where Jesus is represented as saying "none will be saved unless they believe in my cross. But those who have believed in my cross, theirs is the Kingdom of God. Therefore become seekers for death ... none of those who fear death will be saved; for the kingdom of death belongs to those who put themselves to death"(6:3 - 8, 15 - 19). An interesting feature of this passage is the connection between the death of Christ and the death of the Christian: a stress on the reality of Christ's suffering serves as a model for the death of his followers. Belief in the cross is correlated with a strong belief in the validity of martyrdom as a response to persecution(33). The gnostic view of martyrdom was far from uniform, however, since in other texts it is opposed as foolish.

The *Testimony of Truth* (CG.IX.3) for example, contains a polemic against the acceptance of martyrdom: "But when they are perfected with a martyr's death, this is the thought that they have written them: 'If we deliver ourselves over to death for the sake of the Name we will be saved.' These matters are not settled in this way."(34:1 - 7). The identity of those attacked in the *Testimony of Truth* is unclear, although in a very fragmentary passage (55 - 59) the author names several gnostic leaders, such as Valentinus, Isidore, and Basilides, as "heretics"(59:4)! That a gnostic author can attack other gnostics as well as orthodox groups raises the question of the relationship *between* different gnostic

sects as well as the wider problem of the relationship between gnosticism and early Christianity.

2 *The Apostles*

Gnostics held two contrasting opinions about the apostles: either they claim to be the heirs of a secret gnostic apostolic tradition(34) stretching back to Jesus himself, or they consider their own teaching to be far superior to that of the apostles, whose words are meant only for the 'psychic' church, and not for the pneumatic gnostics.

Some groups appear to have laid claim to traditions associated with a *particular* apostle. The Nag Hammadi library contains two documents written in the name of the apostle Thomas, the *Gospel of Thomas* (CG.II.2) and the *Book of Thomas the Contender* (CG.II.7), (35) which, along with the *Acts of Thomas*, provide material for the study of "Thomas Christianity", a type of ascetic Christianity associated particularly with the Edessa area (36). Another group of texts contains traditions associated with the name of James, the brother of Jesus, a figure of considerable importance in several Jewish-Christian traditions. The favourable position assigned to James in these documents is particularly clear in the *Second Apocalypse of James* (CG.V.4) where he "seems to function practically as a gnostic redeemer"!(37). The Nag Hammadi texts are also making an important contribution to our understanding of the place of Paul in gnostic thought. A recent study of Valentinian gnostic use of the Pauline letters (38) reveals that the Valentinians looked upon Paul's ideas as the source for their own theological doctrines. The *Treatise on the Resurrection* (CG.I.4), for example, quotes Paul in support of the view that the resurrection has already taken place(39), a view *combated* by a supposedly 'Pauline' author in 2 Timothy 2:18! The *Interpretation of Knowledge* (CG.XI.1) also takes up and develops several ecclesiological statements from Paul's epistles in order to show (in a very Pauline fashion) that the church is the body of Christ, and the *Gospel of Truth* 16:31 - 23:2 has been interpreted as a kind of gnostic commentary on Romans 1:14 - 3:31(40). The Nag Hammadi texts are therefore making it

increasingly clear why Paul was looked upon by second century writers as the "apostle of the heretics", and was therefore shunned by many ecclesiastical writers (41).

Finally, a word about the controversial issue of the relationship of John's Gospel to gnostic thought. In the controversies which raged in the early part of this century over the suggestion that there existed a pre-Christian gnosticism, the fourth gospel assumed a position of major importance. On the basis of parallels between John and the writings of the Mandaeans, a gnostic community which survives in Iraq, Bultmann attempted to show that John's Gospel was originally a non-Christian document composed by members of John the Baptist's community. He explained the Johannine Prologue on the hypothesis of a gnostic origin, a theory which became a cornerstone in his supposed pre-Christian gnosticism but which was attacked largely on account of the unlikelihood that the Mandaean texts were of pre-Christian date. It appears, however, that the discussion of pre-Christian gnosticism is once again about to envelop the Johannine prologue, for some scholars believe that the third section of the *Trimorphic Protennoia* (CG.XIII.1) provides the closest parallel to the Prologue to be found in any text of antiquity. These scholars also believe that the study of the parallels between the two texts indicates that the Prologue is dependent upon the gnostic work(42). This view is not proven, however(43), and it seems best at present to limit ourselves to the observation that the *Trimorphic Protennoia* provides further evidence of the popularity of John's Gospel among gnostics(44).

NOTES

1 J. Doresse *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics: An Introduction to the Gnostic Coptic Manuscripts discovered at Chenoboskion* (London, 1960); W.C. Van Unnik, *Newly Discovered Gnostic Writings. A preliminary survey of the Nag Hammadi find* (London, 1960); A.K. Helmbold, *The Nag Hammadi Gnostic Texts and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, 1967); J.M. Robinson, 'The Coptic Gnostic Library Today', *New Testament Studies*, Vol. 14 (1968) pp. 356-401; J. Dart, *The Laughing Savior. The Discovery and Significance of the Nag Hammadi Gnostic Library* (New York, 1976).

- 2 R. Wilson *Gnosis and the New Testament* (Oxford, 1968) p.86.
- 3 For a recent survey see R. Wilson 'Nag Hammadi: a Progress Report' *Expository Times* Vol.85 (1974) pp.196-201. The one-volume English translation is edited by J.M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (Leiden, 1977) and is an invaluable tool in the study of the texts.
- 4 For details of the discovery and subsequent transmission of the texts, see Doresse, *op. cit.* pp.116-136; Van Unnik, *op. cit.* pp.7-15; Dart, *op. cit.* pp.3-52. J.M. Robinson (ed.), *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices. Introduction* (Leiden, 1972).
- 5 The history and character of the Jung codex is discussed in F.L. Cross (ed.) *The Jung Codex. A Newly Recovered Gnostic Papyrus* (London, 1955). Several missing pages in the Jung Codex were subsequently discovered amongst the codices in Cairo. An agreement was reached whereby the missing pages were incorporated into the edition of the Jung Codex in exchange for the return of the Codex to Cairo. For a detailed history of the Jung Codex, see now J.M. Robinson, 'The Jung Codex. The Rise and Fall of a Monopoly', *Religious Studies Review* Vol. 3 (1977) pp.17-30.
- 6 A Guilaumont *et al.* *The Gospel According to Thomas* (Leiden, 1959).
- 7 M. Malinine *et al.* *Evangelium Veritatis* (Studien aus dem C.G. Jung Institut VI, Zurich, 1956). A supplementum containing the pages found in Cairo was published in 1961, and the other documents appeared in 1963 (*De Resurrectione*), 1969 (*Apocryphon Jacobi*), 1973 (*Tractatus Tripartitus, Pars I*), and 1975 (*Tractatus Tripartitus, Pars II and III*).
- 8 M. Krause and P. Labib, *Die Drei Versionen des Apokryphon des Johannes im Koptischen Museum zu Alt-Kairo* (Wiesbaden, 1962). The abbreviation CG used in this paper stands for *Cairensis Gnosticus*, and is the official designation of the Nag Hammadi texts. Roman numerals refer to the codex, Arabic numerals to the treatise. Thus, the *Apocryphon of John* is the first treatise of codices two, three, and four.
- 9 See the survey by M. Krause 'Der Stand der Veröffentlichung der Nag Hammadi Texte' in U. Bianchi (ed.) *Le Origini dello gnosticismo. Colloquio di Messina, 13-18 aprile 1966* (Leiden, 1967) pp.61-88.
- 10 On the Messina colloquium, see U. Bianchi, *op. cit.*, which contains all the papers read, and c.f. G. MacRae, 'Gnosis in Messina', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* Vol.28 (1966) pp. 322-333; U. Bianchi, *Le Colloque international sur les origines du gnosticisme* (Messina, avril 1966), *Numen* Vol. 13 (1966), pp. 151-160; S. Petrement, 'Le Colloque du Messine et le problème du gnosticisme', *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* Vol. 72 (1967), pp. 344-373.
- 11 J.M. Robinson (ed.) *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices* Codex VI (1972), Codex VII (1972), Codices XI, XII, XIII (1973), Codex II (1974), Codex V (1975), Codex IV (1975), Codex III (1976), Codex VIII (1976), Codex I (1977), Codices IX, X (1977).
- 12 J. Ménard (ed.) *La Lettre de Pierre à Philippe. Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi. Section Textes I* (Quebec 1977).
- 13 See the article by the Berlin group, 'Die Bedeutung der Texte von Nag Hammadi für die moderne Gnosisforschung' in K. Tröger (ed.), *Gnosis und Neues Testament* (Berlin, 1973), pp. 13-76, which contains comments on all the texts.
- 14 See A. Böhlig and F. Wisse 'Nag Hammadi Codices III.2 and IV.2. The Gospel of the Egyptians (The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit)'. *Nag Hammadi Studies IV* (Leiden 1975).
- 15 See M. Krause (ed.) 'Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in honour of Pahor Labib' *Nag Hammadi Studies III* (Leiden, 1975).
- 16 J. Ménard (ed.), 'Les Textes de Nag Hammadi. Colloque du Centre d'Histoire des Religions (Strasbourg 25 octobre 1974) *Nag Hammadi Studies VII* (Leiden, 1975); M. Krause (ed.) *Gnosis and Gnosticism. Papers read at the Seventh International Conference on Patristic Studies. (Oxford, September 8th-13th 1975) Nag Hammadi Studies VIII* (Leiden 1977).
- 17 For example, K. Koschorke, 'Die Polemik der Gnostiker gegen das kirchliche Christentum. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Nag-Hammadi-Traktate Apokalypse des Petrus und Testimonium Veritatis' *Nag Hammadi Studies XII* (Leiden, 1978)
- 18 D.M. Scholer 'Nag Hammadi Bibliography 1948-1969' *Nag Hammadi Studies I* (Leiden 1971) updated annually in *Novum Testamentum*.
- 19 For reports on the archaeological excavations, see *Göttingen Miscellen* Vol. 22 (1976) 71-79, Vol. 24 (1977) 57-73.
- 20 The Apocryphon of John is found in three versions, and the Gospel of Truth, Gospel of the Egyptians, Eugnostos the Blessed and On the Origin of the World twice each.
- 21 See M. Krause 'Zum Koptischen Handschriftenfund bei Nag Hammadi' *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* Vol. 19 (1963) pp. 110-111 for a tentative analysis.
- 22 See J.M. Robinson, 'The Construction of the Nag Hammadi Codices' in *Nag Hammadi Studies VI* (1975) pp. 170-190.
- 23 F. Wisse 'The Nag Hammadi Library and the Heresiologists' *Vigiliae Christianae* Vol. 25 (1971). p. 209 gives a very tentative classification.
- 24 On this see K.W. Tröger 'Doketistische Christologie in Nag-Hammadi Texten. Ein Beitrag zum Dokerismus in frühchristlicher Zeit *Kairos* Vol. 19 (1977), pp. 45-52, A. Orbe 'La Pasion segun los gnosticos' *Gregorianum* Vol. 56 (1975), pp. 5-43.
- 25 On the polemic contained in the Apocalypse of Peter see K. Koschorke, *op. cit.* pp. 11 ff.
- 26 See K. Koschorke 'Eine gnostische Pfingspredigt. Zur Auseinandersetzung zwischen gnostischem und kirchlichem Christentum am Beispiel der "Epistula Petri ad Philippum"' *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* Vol. 74 (1977) pp. 323-343 for a detailed discussion of the Letter of Peter to Philip.

- 27 *Ad.Haer.* I.24.4.
- 28 The Christology of this document is discussed in K.W. Tröger 'Der zweite Logos des grossen Seth-Gedanken zur Christologie in der zweiten Schrift des Codex VII Nag Hammadi' *Studies VI* (1975) pp. 268-276.
- 29 See S. Arai *Die Christologie des Evangelium Veritatis* (Leiden 1964) especially pp. 100-105.
- 30 This passage is discussed in B. Pearson, 'Anti-Heretical Warnings in Codex IX from Nag Hammadi' *Nag Hammadi Studies VI* (1975) pp. 145-154.
- 31 For example, Epiphanius *Panarion* 55.9.1f; Hippolytus *Refutatio* 7.36.
- 32 See B. Pearson, 'The figure of Melchizedek in the first Tractate of the Unpublished Coptic-Gnostic Codex IX from Nag Hammadi' in C.J. Bleeker (ed.), *Proceedings of the XIIth International Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions* (Leiden 1975) pp.200-208.
- 33 That this correlation is found in a number of Nag Hammadi texts, as well as in the anti-gnostic writers, was convincingly demonstrated by Elaine Pagels, 'Gnostic and Orthodox views of Christ's passion: Paradigms for the Christian's response to persecution?' a paper read at the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale University, March 1978.
- 34 c.f. Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* VII.106, where Basilides is said to claim an apostolic tradition going back through Glaucias to Peter, while Valentinus claims one deriving from Paul.
- 35 See J.D. Turner, 'The Book of Thomas the Contender from Codex II of the Cairo Gnostic Library from Nag Hammadi', *Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 23* (Missoula 1975).
- 36 See the discussion of this type of Christianity by H. Köster in J.M. Robinson and H. Köster, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia 1971, pp.126-143.
- 37 C.W. Hedrick in Robinson (ed.) *The Nag Hammadi Library* in English, p. 249.
- 38 E. Pagels *The Gnostic Paul. Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters* (Philadelphia 1975).
- 39 On this document, see M. Peel, *The Epistle to Rheginos; A Valentinian Letter on the Resurrection* (London, 1969); L. Martin, 'The Anti-Philosophical Polemic and Gnostic Soteriology in The Treatise on the Resurrection', *Numen*, Vol. 20 (1973) pp. 20-37; J. Ménard, 'La notion de "résurrection" dans l'Épître à Rheginos', *Nag Hammadi Studies VI* (1975) pp. 110-124.
- 40 So L. Cerfaux, 'De Saint Paul à L'Évangile de la Vérité', *New Testament Studies*, Vol. 5 (1958/9), pp. 103-112.
- 41 See H. Schneemelcher, 'Paulus in der griechischen Kirche des zweiten Jahrhunderts', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* Vol. 75 (1964) pp. 1-20. (K. Barrett, 'Pauline Controversies in the Post-Pauline Period', *New Testament Studies* Vol. 20 (1973/4), pp. 229-245.
- 42 G. Schenke, ' "Die dreigestaltige Protennoia" Eine gnostische Offenbarungsrede in koptischer Sprache aus dem Fund von Nag Hammadi', *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, Vol. 99 (1974) pp. 731-746. c.f. also Y. Janssens, *Le Codex XIII de Nag Hammadi, Le Museon* Vol. 87 (1974) pp. 341-413, especially pp. 409-410.
- 43 See the brief discussion by R. Wilson, 'The Trimorphic Protennoia', *Nag Hammadi Studies VIII* (1977) pp. 50-54.
- 44 The gnostic Heracleon wrote the first commentary on John's Gospel: see E. Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis* (Nashville 1973). On the use of John's Gospel in gnosticism, see. W. Von Loewenich, *Das Johannes-Verständnis im zweiten Jahrhundert* (Giessen 1932) pp. 60-115; J.N. Sanders, *The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (Cambridge, 1943) pp. 47-66 M.F. Wiles, *The Spiritual Gospel* (Cambridge, 1960) pp. 96-111.

ANXIETY AND THE FUTURE IN TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

Melvyn Thompson

A first reading of *The Phenomenon of Man* would suggest that Teilhard's view of the future is straightforward, although couched in unfamiliar language. A summary of it might run as follows:

The world is evolving, and produces more and more complex beings with correspondingly greater degrees of consciousness. This may

be traced from the atom through the living cell up to man. Yet evolution does not stop with man. It continues in terms of his development, particularly in his social relationships, until the noosphere (the thinking layer on our planet made up of all the human minds and relationships) reaches a point where it forms a single personal whole - the completion of the human evolution - a point Omega. Since man is the lead-

ing shoot in evolution on this planet, this is also the culmination of the whole evolutionary process. But Omega is more than that - for a Christian it represents the point which fulfils the expectations of the coming of the Cosmic Christ. Following Ephesians, he sees this Omega point as the moment when the whole cosmos will be subject to Christ, prepared and unified for that moment through the whole evolutionary process.

Since the natural completion of the earth at Omega corresponds to the moment of the Parousia, we must work for the development of man as a preparation for Christ. Such a view is optimistic. We cannot die out as a species, or blow or pollute ourselves out of existence, nor can resources fail us, for we are assured that man must reach Omega, and total fulfilment.

I want to suggest that this almost universally held view of Teilhard's work is indefensible on both scientific and theological grounds. More than that - the literary style in which it is presented is both confused and confusing, and it does not reflect the personal origins of Teilhard's thought - which are of a very different order from those of our outline.¹

From the scientific side, criticisms of Teilhard can come from two angles. The first concerns his use of orthogenesis - that is, the idea that there is definite evolutionary direction and impetus which dictates the way in which a species will evolve. The debate on this originated in the Darwinian and Lamarckian views of evolution in the last century, and is really of historical interest only. The theory of orthogenesis has been almost universally rejected since the earlier part of this century - and yet, because it seemed necessary to support his general view of things, Teilhard continued to advocate it right up until 1955, and the suggestion could be made that he does not follow the scientific process of moulding his views to fit the evidence, but seeks to accept only evidence that suits his views.²

The second line of attack, and one that is more obvious to the non-specialist in the field, is that Teilhard refuses to accept that the earth could fail man. In other words, he is prepared to dismiss natural accidents, failure of resources or pollution. We see even more obviously since Teilhard's day that these are factors that cannot be dismissed in speaking of

the future. And it cannot be inevitable that man is the one species that is not going to be replaced in the dominant position by some other.

We know that scientific thought suggests only degrees of probability. What Teilhard claims - and needs in order to justify his religious affirmations - is a degree of certainty that science just does not possess.

The general criticism from science - well illustrated by Medawar's critical review of *The Phenomenon of Man* in *Mind* - is that Teilhard has inspiring musings and a style of writing which cover over a lack of proper scientific method. In other words, his theology has spoiled his science when he speaks of the future.

From the theological point of view there are many criticisms that could be raised, and some were given in an article accompanying the official condemnation of his views by Rome in 1962.³ But for our purposes let us simply note two features of what he says about the future.

1. The Parousia comes at the end of the evolutionary process, at the point where the whole world comes to its fulfilment at point Omega. We have millions of years to go before this can come about, and thus any sense of urgency and immediate challenge is removed from his eschatology. Where is the element of unexpected crisis and judgement? Where is there a sense that the existing world order is to be shaken? Even if the statements he makes about the universal Christ at Omega are exactly the same as those in the New Testament, surely the very fact that all the events are placed at an infinite distance in the future must change their theological significance.

2. The second point really follows from the first. Because his eschatology is wedded to his evolutionary scheme of thought, the judgment that comes with the universal Christ is automatically bound to endorse the validity of his evolutionary orthogenesis. In other words, the universal Christ must approve what makes for evolutionary success. However Teilhard himself might wish to avoid this conclusion, it is clearly implied in the whole structure of his thought. Since Christ only finds completion at Omega, and Omega depends upon a certain evolutionary scheme, then the content of the Christian proclamation must clearly endorse that scheme.

In a sense then, one could say that his science has spoiled his theology. Thus if he is forming a natural theology, based on an evolutionary form of thought, then clearly his structure has come to *dominate* over his content of Christian revelation.⁴

If we are not to dismiss his work, it is essential that it be taken away from the confines of either the scientific or the theological parameters, and be studied in the context of Teilhard's own life and disposition.

In his basic spiritual orientation, Teilhard was a mystic. This is clear from his earlier works, and especially in *Christ in the World of Matter*. There he looks at a picture of the heart of Jesus, the host in the monstrance, and the pyx round his neck bearing the sacrament, and sees the influence of each of them as expanding outwards to make the whole universe vibrant and illuminated from within, and then withdrawing back into themselves. Perhaps the best known of his visionary expressions is *Tha Mass on the World* which starts:

Since once again Lord . . . I have neither bread, nor wine, nor altar, I will raise myself beyond these symbols, up to the pure majesty of the real itself, I, your priest, will make the whole earth my altar and on it will offer you all the labours and sufferings of the world.

Written on a scientific expedition in the Ordos Desert in Asia, this illustrates two main themes in his spirituality. One is the unity of all things in the religious vision; but the other is the offering to God of the whole of human life with its effort and suffering. This expresses the tensions which he had experienced since his first personal crisis of 1902 concerning the scientific and the religious sides of his personality and their apparently conflicting claims. His spirituality, as well as wanting to see a convergence of all things upon Christ, sought also a synthesis of love of the world and love of God. This is most clearly seen in what many hold to be his greatest work - *Le Milieu Divin*.

Towards the end of his life, Teilhard was to look back and be quite surprised to find that by the time of *Le Milieu Divin* the basis of his spirituality had already been formed (that is, by 1926). That was before his evolutionary

cosmology had taken on its specific form.⁵ Therefore, in terms of chronology, as well as literary form, what we have in the later Teilhard is a spiritual visionary *Gestalt*, which is then couched and expressed in scientific terms - his theology and his science coming *second* to his spiritual intuition and personal needs.

One detailed study of the development and formation of Teilhard's personality as a contributory factor in his style of writing has come up with the suggestion that he should be regarded as writing *Christian Science Fiction*⁶ - since this might be the nearest literary form what we have in his main body of work. He uses the language of science to express basic insights about the future that are derived from sources other than science itself - which I see as the basic difference between the work of science fiction and that of future studies. This case could be argued convincingly, especially since Teilhard was an avid reader of H.G.Wells, and felt that he had more in common with him than with the Roman theologians!

Look, for example, at the impetus behind that superb story *The Time Machine*, where the time traveller returns to the Present and tries by his stories of the future to explore with his friends the implications of what is happening now on Earth. Then turn to the last part of *The Phenomenon of Man* where Teilhard speaks to the future - there we have the same impetus although the style is quite different. With Wells it is the future of a collective humanity, for Teilhard it is the spiritual unification of mankind, but many parallels are to be found.

Yet one should not take this similarity too far, mainly because the most significant book by Wells for Teilhard was *First and Last Things*, which is quite unlike his early scientific romances, but is a statement of personal faith in the future unification of man and the need for a single goal for humanity. Several passages from this could be passed off as the work of Teilhard with little danger of discovery.

Yet the matter is rather more complex, since Teilhard's work appears on three levels, of which only the first is generally used in presenting his work.

The first is that of his books and essays. This is the systematic presentation of his thought for his friends, and sometimes for his

Jesuit superiors in order to show the orthodox nature of his writing.

The second is his letters. Some of these are of general interest, such as the *Letters from a Traveller*, but more interesting for our purpose are the more recently published letters to some of his Jesuit colleagues in *Lettres Intimes* which show the background to some of his struggles with the hierarchy.

Thirdly, we have the daily *Journal* which he wrote since 1915. It was his habit to spend some time each morning writing down his thoughts and intuitions as they came to him - and they thus represent the deepest and most interesting of the levels. We see the actual workings of Teilhard's mind before systematisation, and also the sketches for what are later to be turned into essays. The content of these *Journals* reveals quite a different Teilhard from that of his more public works - much more daring in his thought and quite unorthodox.⁷

Another curious feature, which is almost unknown, is that there appears to have been a certain amount of censorship of Teilhard's work. This has been done partly by those Catholic scholars who have sought to show that his thought is orthodox - I would like to give two brief examples of this:

In 'A Note on Progress' in *The Future of Man* Teilhard seems to contrast two groups of people. On the one hand there are those who see that the world is moving, and anxiously look towards the future; and on the other you have those who deny any movement, and insist on defending the past. What is curious is that the membership of the two groups appears to be nowhere stated. *But* there is a passage omitted from the published versions, part of which reads:

'Humanly speaking, I am incomparably nearer to W. James, to Bergson, to Wells than to the Masters of Rome. The spiritual connection between the latter and myself is only established very far away - at the limit - in Christ: with the former my sympathy is immediate, radical and profound. That is the brutal truth.'⁸

Once that is reinserted the whole essay becomes clearer, as do many other factors concerning

Teilhard's spiritual identity.

Another important example is the essay called "The Eternal Feminine" in which de Lubac claims to show the true meaning of the essay of the same name by Teilhard through a consideration of the *Journal* material underlying it. In fact he is highly selective in what he considers and leaves out all the more controversial material - in particular, all references to *Batzac's* novels and spiritualisation of sexuality (which provides such an important starting point in Teilhard's thought on the place of the feminine) are omitted. Taken as a whole, the essay by de Lubac, in the absence of a translation of the original *Journal*, can only be seen as an attempt to cover up the truth, rather than reveal it.⁹

Yet this is hardly surprising when you consider the stated criteria of truth that de Lubac takes in his interpretation of Teilhard. Speaking of Teilhard's Christological titles,¹⁰ he said:

'If these are to be correctly understood, by which I mean both in an acceptable sense and in the sense the author intended . . .'

By "acceptable" de Lubac clearly means acceptable to orthodoxy, and he is not prepared to consider an interpretation which is true to the author but not orthodox.

This sort of Catholic interpretation, which dominates the whole of Teilhardian studies, makes a strong natural/supernatural division, and allows Teilhard's scientific cosmology and his religious statements to stand apart - and as such, we have seen that they rightly come under criticism from both science and theology.

To understand the basis of Teilhard's language, especially about the future, it is necessary to take into consideration the whole of his work and his attitude, noting especially what is known of the most personal stages in the development of his thought.

As a clue, let us look again at the outline of *The Phenomenon of Man*. As we trace its description of evolution, it appears at first sight to form a unified whole. We start with the formation of the atom, then up to the molecule, then the megamolecule, cell and simple life

forms. Within the tree of life we mount up through more and more complex forms until we reach man. And then with the increase in complexity and consciousness, the future is seen in terms of a complexification of the social bonds between men, leading to a perfection of the process of personalisation as we come together, converging upon this single whole - Omega.

With this first glance (and Teilhard does everything he can to encourage us) we start to see the process of social development as following the same laws that combined atoms into molecules - the whole thing from the first gathering up of the formless multitude to Omega being one single outworking of a law of complexity consciousness.

But there is one great exception to this progress, and it occurs as Teilhard describes the present moment for man. It is termed "The Problem of Action". In *The Phenomenon of Man* this comes at the end of Book Three where man's present dilemma and anxiety is caused by his confrontation with the incredibly enlarged dimensions of time and space revealed to him by modern science.

Here only, at this turning point where the future substitutes itself for the present and the observations of science should give way to the anticipation of a faith, do our perplexities legitimately and indeed inevitably begin. Tomorrow? But who can guarantee us a tomorrow anyway? And without the assurance that this tomorrow exists, can we really go on living, we to whom has been given - perhaps for the first time in the whole story of the universe - the terrible gift of foresight?

Sickness of the dead end, the anguish of feeling shut in . . . This time we have at last put our finger on the tender spot.

What makes the world in which we live specifically modern is our discovery in it and around it of evolution. And I can now add that what disconcerts the modern world at its very roots is not being sure, and not seeing how it could ever be sure, that there is

an outcome - a suitable outcome - to that evolution. (p. 229)

And this theme can be traced through many (indeed, most) of his works. What it amounts to in terms of the whole book is this - up to the point of the present moment evolution seems to have been dominated by the law of complexity consciousness, and if man is willing to cooperate with that law, then evolution will continue to move in the direction that leads to Omega. But with his ability to reflect upon his situation, man is tempted to go on strike against the whole enterprise unless he has some assurance that his efforts will not be wasted,

When Teilhard says that the observations of science should give way to the anticipation of a faith, he is really saying that the whole of what he describes concerning the future is *dependent* upon man overcoming his anxiety. It is the minimum assurance required if man is to continue to live and develop. For he has to accept that, without man's conscious cooperation, this whole evolutionary scheme cannot continue.

However much the convergence of man in the future may appear to be a scientific hypothesis, we can see that (as he presents it) it is in fact a *metaphysical prescription of tranquilisers and stimulants*. It has tranquilisers sufficient to stop us being paralysed by anxiety at the thought that evolution is going nowhere and that the human species will simply die out without reaching its ultimate goal. It also has stimulants sufficient to keep alive our interest in the future and the value of our part in forging it.

The erratic boulder in the uniform soils of phenomenological description is *man's anxiety* and the effect that it has upon his willingness to cooperate with his own evolution.

Thus "the problem of action" can be taken as the *axial point* around which Teilhard's writing pivots. All that belongs to the past is used to show the significance of the human dilemma, and all that is suggested of the future is what is needed to overcome it.

Thus instead of seeing the *future* as Teilhard's main concern, it might be more accurate to say that *anxiety* is his main concern, and that his preoccupation with the future is his way of overcoming it.

Why should Teilhard have posed the question of the future in this way? Well, the

answer to that is being revealed the more we find of the second and third levels of his material - his private letters and *Journals*. What is very clear is that from childhood Teilhard had suffered bouts of intense *anxiety*. Even as a young academic working for his PhD in Paris, he wrote to his parents that long walks in the streets were good for his nerves.¹¹ And as a child, his craving for the permanence of rocks and metals was contrasted with his sense of loss of his own impermanence.¹² There is evidence for this, and for the depressions which accompanied it later on in life, throughout the period of his writings. As one example, let me quote from a letter (written in English) in 1940:

To be true I do not know (nor did any doctor understand exactly) what was the matter with me. A kind of mental dizziness and anxiety ('Psychasthenia', told me with a smile the best clinician in Peking): in fact an old acquaintance of mine, since I had touches of it since I was a boy. Very unpleasant. But the best remedy, I was told and I had already found out myself, is to go on as if nothing happened. To have my book to write was the best cure. Now I feel much better.¹³

In another letter of 1948 we find him saying that he had been assured by the doctors that his depression was fundamentally of organic origin, but aggravated by his anxiety; and in one of 1950 he calls nervous anxiety his birthright.

The other element in his disposition which goes with this is his claustrophobia and need to breathe freely. Even the thought that the world could be a closed system brought on this horror of being shut in.¹⁴ What is more, if we examine the "problem of action" passages, both in *The Phenomenon of Man* and in his other works, we find that he often speaks of disgust, nausea, claustrophobia and the inability to breathe - as characterising man's present situation when faced with the unknown and closed in future.¹⁵

It seems to me, now, that there is no way in which a full interpretation of Teilhard's works can possibly escape from the fact of his personal disposition. As we noted right at the

start, what he says about the future cannot be understood in the parameters of either science or theology, and the reason for this is now clear: what he says needs to express his own situation, and he is using the two main elements in his life - religion and science - in order to do so. *His conviction is that if others reflect upon their own situation they will see the dilemma in the same terms as himself.* And it is because of this that he can claim as universally true what he first and foremost experienced within himself.

He found that there were for him two sources of comfort. The one was a joining of the religious and the human vectors of activity. This is best expressed in the essay *The Heart of the Problem* where he feels that man's transcendent-religious impulse needs to be joined to the neo-humanist (seen in embryo in Marxism) commitment to the future of man's development. Without this he claims that the religious element will not be seen as relevant to man's deepest hopes, and the neo-humanist element will be in danger of being a depersonalising force - making men work together rather as insects (termites, etc.). This corresponds exactly to the double vocation of his own life: his religious side, with its ultimate assurances, giving to his scientific side an ultimate goal which in itself it could not claim.

His other comfort was the sense of convergence. This came originally from his mystical intuitions - his feeling that all things were being gathered together in Christ. Originally his pantheistic tendency led him to seek to lose himself in the multiplicity of beings, but he saw in the evolutionary process the sense of everything holding together from above (or ahead) in the single point which drew all things onwards. It is such a gathering into Christ which lies behind the 'scientific' language of evolutionary convergence.

Another aspect of this experience is his understanding of the feminine, and of the role of sexuality generally. This is little appreciated in works on Teilhard, mainly because the scope of it is only seen in his *Journal* material. Briefly, following the ideas of Balzac, the sexual convergence of men and women is the means of producing - not simply physical offspring but spiritual growth. It is love therefore which unites - and the release of spirit in sexual union provides him with the image he

needs for expressing how the union of the whole of mankind can preserve, and even enhance, the individual person. The union of all things comes through the Feminine.¹⁶

The important point here is that it was his double vocation, affirmed over and over again, to love God and to love the world, along with the inspiration of the feminine, that triggered off his creativity and provided an answer on the personal level to his anxiety and depression. *And yet in his writings these two things form the answer to man's anxiety and are the basis of the hope of Omega.*

What I want to suggest therefore is that Teilhard's whole scheme of thought - however much it may be related to science or theology - is basically a work of autobiography; it can only be understood in its entirety in the context of his life and its emotional and spiritual needs. *What he says about the future is dominated by anxiety, and his optimism is affirmed only in the face of his own despair.*

So the basic question is this: does man act, and then upon reflection discover what his commitment to the future means? Or, does he sit paralysed with anxiety until the future is guaranteed and he is able to act with confidence of the result?

I cannot but feel that the former is as true as the latter. If it were not so, how could one ever give an account of *heroism*? What would self-sacrifice mean if its ultimate guarantees were given? What is challenge, if the future holds no ultimate risk for us? And what is crucifixion if resurrection is already guaranteed?

The scientists say that Teilhard is wrong in assuming that he can know what the future holds for the species, and that he denies the very real possibilities that things on this planet may turn out differently. He claims it as a matter of *faith* that his future must lead to an Omega. *I would suggest that it is an essential part of the Christian challenge that the future is a matter of risk.*

It may well be that Teilhard's view of the future is important, and I would not want to challenge it. What I do challenge is the certainty that he claimed for it, which I believe to be necessitated by his anxiety rather than by the facts upon which he seems to base his views.

NOTES

1. I do not intend to deny that this is a valid interpretation of *The Phenomenon of Man*, but that work does not show the many levels of his thought if taken in isolation from his other essays and notes.
2. His main defence of orthogenesis was made in 1951 and 1955. For its significance in his thought see two articles in *Harvard Theological Review* - G.B.Murray "Teilhard and Orthogenetic Evolution" 60:281-295 (1967) and R.B.Smith "Orthogenesis and God Omega" 62:397-410(1968).
Teilhard seeks to show that cerebral growth is the central axis of evolution, and thus that man is the leading shoot.
3. *L'Observatore Romano* accompanied the 'Monitum' of the Holy Office with an article listing errors in the following -
The concept of creation; the relation between the Cosmos and God, the relation between creation, incarnation and redemption; the lack of distinction between matter and spirit; evil and sin.
4. This is an example of a general problem with systematic Theology. The language and structures of thought in which theology is expressed will always colour the content of the Christian proclamation - but when does such colouring reach the point of distortion?
5. This comment is from his essay "The Heart of Matter". In very general terms, one can see his mysticism and spirituality developing prior to 1926, and then through the 30's the more structured evolutionary cosmology.
6. This is one of the ideas put forward by Hugh Cairns in his thesis on "The Identity and Originality of Teilhard de Chardin". He tests Teilhard's writings against the Journal material and other personal information, and is able to show the inadequacy of many other widely accepted interpretations.
One introduction to his thought least open to such criticism is that by N.M.Wildiers (Collins, Fontana 1968) which accurately reflects the personal elements.
7. Mostly unpublished, but 1915-1919 available in French (Fayard 1975).
8. Cited in Cairns thesis (as above Note 6), Edinburgh 1971, from a typescript in the Paris *Fondation*.
9. Lubac's essay is in the book of the same title (Collins) and Teilhard's is in *The Prayer of the Universe* (Collins, Fontana 1973).
10. *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin* p.188.
11. *Letters from Paris* p.37 (October 1912).
12. In "The Heart of Matter" (1950) - a translation of which is to be published by Collins early in 1978.

13. *Letters to Two Friends* p.148 (written by Teilhard in English).
14. This is most vividly expressed in "The Death Barrier" (1955) in *Activation of Energy* p.403, but is found throughout his works.
15. In "Zest for Life" (1950) in *Human Energy* p.237 he describes man as being revolted by life, like a sick man faced with a banquet.
16. See "The Eternal Feminine" in *Prayer of the Universe*.

A DECADE OF THEOLOGY AT KING'S: A PERSONAL VIEW

Graham Stanton

First impressions are always interesting, even if they turn out later to have been mistaken. When I first came to King's in 1970, I knew that a number of very distinguished scholars taught in the Faculty of Theology and that the College was well-known for excellence in many disciplines, but I knew very little else. I was struck immediately by the concern of the teaching staff for the academic and general welfare of every individual student. The friendliness of my colleagues was sometimes embarrassing: it was often difficult to slip away from conversations over coffee with distinguished senior colleagues in order to give a lecture or take a tutorial!

The ability of the students turned out to be almost as varied as their backgrounds. I have always enjoyed teaching gifted students, but also less able students who are keen to learn and are not afraid of hard work. I quickly found that a number of my students fell into the latter category. Many students who began the first of their three years at King's without outstanding qualifications made very considerable progress. This often surprised me—and it still does! As a team of teachers my colleagues were able to mix assistance, encouragement and stimulus in the right proportions in order to produce growth in understanding and maturity of judgment. And this is what University teaching is all about. The University teacher does not supply all the answers on a plate, nor even all the questions. But he or she should assist students to know how to go about finding and evaluating for themselves possible answers to the right questions.

Eight years later these first impressions do not need to be modified at all: they still stand to the

credit of the Faculty today. But two further first impressions have been modified to a certain extent over the years. At first I liked the B.D. degree very much. Perhaps this was partly because it is so similar to the B.D. degree I had taken myself in New Zealand. In both cases the degree was demanding and required competence in all the main branches of Theology. I still like the general ethos of the present London B.D., but there are good reasons for introducing a new degree, about which I shall say a little more below.

When I first came to King's I was confused by the complexities of the history and the constitutional position of the Faculty of Theology within the College. In 1958 the University established several teaching posts in Theology which were grafted into the Theological Department at King's which had been engaged primarily in training Anglican ordinands. By 1970 almost half of the students were not Anglican ordinands and were studying Theology for a wide variety of reasons. So in some ways the Faculty was engaged in two related but different tasks at the same time.

In earlier years students who were not Anglican ordinands sometimes said that they felt that they were second class citizens within the Faculty, but with the one exception of the Chapel services this was not my own experience. It has always seemed a little odd that ordained non-Anglicans should be able to share in the ministry of the Word in the College chapel but not in the ministry of the Sacraments. I know that I am touching on sensitive and complex issues and that changes cannot easily be made. And I am bound to add that as a staunch Free

Churchman I have come to appreciate more and more the Anglican Chapel services.

While I have been at King's there have certainly been some very curious anomalies within the Faculty but with good will on all sides they have rarely been frustrating and most students have hardly been aware of the rather odd constitutional position of the Faculty. However, the Faculty did wear two faces: at times one felt that one was in an Anglican theological College and at times in a 'secular' University Faculty. In this respect and in others, there have been very considerable changes recently.

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The Faculty has lost by retirement five distinguished scholars who all enjoy international reputations, Professors C.W. Dugmore, C.F. Evans, H.D. Lewis, E.L. Mascall and E.G. Parrinder. These scholars all spent a substantial part of their academic careers at King's College. Our former Dean, Canon Sydney Evans, has become Dean of Salisbury: it is to him more than to any other individual, that the Faculty owes its existence in its present form within the University. The sudden death of Professor James Cargill-Thompson earlier this year was a severe blow; his wisdom and astute leadership as Dean of the Faculty were invaluable during the most crucial of all the phases of change. The learning, experience and many other gifts of these outstanding scholars cannot easily be replaced.

This special role of King's College in the training of Anglican ordinands is now almost at an end. However, the Faculty hopes that Anglican ordinands (as well as students from other denominations) will continue to come to King's to take a degree in Theology before going to theological Colleges to complete their training. I regret the disappearance of Anglican ordination training from King's, as well as the closure of Richmond College (which trained Methodist ministers) and New College (United Reformed Church). Richmond and New College both played an influential role as Schools within the University. London offers not only good facilities for a solid grounding in Christian Theology at King's, but also unrivalled opportunities for pastoral training. Ordination training should not

be cut off either from the rigour of study of Theology in a University setting or from the cultural life and social currents of our time. So I very much hope that the departure of denominational ordination training from central London will not prove to be permanent.

Theology in the University has been strengthened considerably by the move of Heythrop College from Oxfordshire to London. Through the University's Board of Studies in Theology, Heythrop shares with members of the Faculty at King's responsibility for the B.D. syllabus and examinations. Although Heythrop is not much more than ten minutes away from King's by cycle, the journey by public transport often takes half an hour or more, so unfortunately it has not proved possible to share teaching resources to any great extent.

In recent years the number of mature students studying Theology at King's has declined. Ten years ago half a dozen or more mature students entered the Faculty each year, sometimes after retiring from professions as varied as medicine and the Navy. Each year several graduates in other subjects entered the second year of the B.D. course. These students all contributed a good deal to the general life of the Faculty and their presence was always welcomed and appreciated by students who had come straight from school. The steep rise in tuition fees (as a result of Government policy) means that it is now very difficult to take a degree course without a local authority grant. And Local authorities are usually reluctant to give grants for second undergraduate degrees or courses. This is a short-sighted policy. The importance and necessity of re-training is often mentioned nowadays and surely the Universities have a special role to play in this area. I hope that it will become less difficult for mature students to take a degree in Theology; maturity and breadth of experience are both sorely needed within the teaching profession and the ordained ministry.

Changes in Government policy have also led to a decline in the number of full-time post-graduate students. The enormous rise in tuition fees means that a grant or a scholarship is essential for full-time study. While grants are available for well-qualified United Kingdom students, students from overseas often find it difficult to obtain financial support in their own

countries for 'minority' subjects like Theology. Over the years there has been a steady stream of overseas students coming to the Faculty; we shall all be the poorer if financial constraints continue to restrict the number of students from other countries.

Many of our part-time postgraduates produce quite outstanding work under difficult circumstances. Postgraduate work is inevitably lonely but part-time students do miss opportunities for regular contact with other postgraduates and ready access to library facilities. For some years now a seminar for postgraduates in the Faculty has provided stimulus and has helped to overcome the isolation of postgraduate work.

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So much for a personal view of some of the recent changes in the Faculty. But what of the future? For several years the College has offered a B.A. in Religious Studies within the Faculty of Arts. From the beginning of the 1979-80 academic year the B.A. in Religious Studies and the B.D. in Theology will be brought together in the new Faculty which will be renamed as the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies. This is an important and exciting development which is far more than a matter of administrative convenience. The two degrees will each have their own distinctive character, but there will be more opportunities for co-operation in teaching. Students studying for both degrees will benefit from closer contact with one another.

Preliminary planning is under way for a possible degree in Biblical Studies. Such a degree would allow a greater concentration on Biblical Studies than the B.D. and would require a substantial amount of work on Hebrew and Greek texts.

Under its new constitution the Faculty will come into line with other Faculties within the College. There will be three Departments: Biblical Studies; Christian History and Doctrine; The History and Philosophy of Religion. While the new departmental structure will bring many advantages, the Faculty's strong conviction that Theology is not a bundle of separate subjects but a single discipline with several branches will not be allowed to fade away.

Within the next two or three years a new degree in Theology will be introduced to replace

the B.D. degree. The new degree will retain many of the characteristics of the present B.D.: it will be a degree primarily in Christian Theology and it will demand competence in all the main theological disciplines. Although the details have not yet been finalised, it is possible to sketch out the main ways in which the new course-unit degree will differ from the present degree. Instead of nine final examination papers, nearly all of which are taken at the end of the third year, students will take approximately eighteen courses (or half units), six each year. Each course will be self-contained, but in some cases pre-requisites will be laid down.

The new degree will be much more flexible. Although students will be required to take a certain number of courses in Biblical Studies, Church History, Christian Doctrine and Philosophy of Religion, the compulsory part of the degree will be much less rigid than the present B.D. There will be more scope for specialisation, but it will also be possible to include a wider range of optional subjects than in the present B.D. There will be two compulsory third year courses designed to encourage students to integrate their theological studies. These courses, (one of which will be primarily doctrinal and the other Biblical) will concentrate on important questions of theological method and interpretation which are often not tackled in traditional courses in Theology.

The new degree will retain the strengths of the B.D., but it promises to be a bold and imaginative step in new directions. As it will be taken only by internal students of the University, it will be possible to make modifications from time to time in the light of the special research interests of members of staff. In the present degree there are few opportunities to link research and teaching; this is especially so in the work for the six compulsory papers. But effective and stimulating teaching at University level is often a by-product of the teacher's own research or writing projects.

During the last few years the pace of change in the Faculty has quickened steadily. Although many of the changes are matters for regret, the future is full of promise. The new appointments to the Faculty have brought new strength. We now have a strong and well-balanced range of specialists which few if any other Faculties or Departments of Theology or Religious Studies in

the United Kingdom can match. Members of the Faculty are involved in several new published ventures and in important research work.

Many of our graduates will go on to theological Colleges of the various denominations to complete their training; many will enter the teaching profession where there is an acute shortage of well-qualified R.E. teachers. The

new degree should prove to be particularly attractive to ordinands and to prospective teachers, but it will be flexible and broad enough to cater for the interests and needs of many others, including those students who want to study Theology simply because it is an interesting subject which provides a rigorous academic training.

THE GOSPEL IN A SECULAR CULTURE: CHRISTIANITY AND THE MODERN UNIVERSITY¹

Colin Gunton

The word *crisis* is at present trivialised and over-used. It is best restricted to areas of thought and action where there is a serious breakdown of confidence or coherence. But it may be that in the two aspects of human activity that this talk seeks to relate the word is employed justifiably. In each area there exists a crisis of confidence; in each the crisis has something to do with modern culture's view of truth and the values of the intellect generally.

If theology has a contribution to make to modern culture, especially as it is represented in higher education, a large part of it will lie in its ability to evoke reflection on the nature of truth and its relation to life. That is not to say that truth is theology's or the university's sole concern, but that it is there that the interests of the two overlap most obviously. And if the much-quoted dictum that the most effective way to destroy civilisation would be to destroy its universities has in it any grain of truth, the topic may be of greater importance than may appear to those with no direct concern for, or interest in, those institutions.

To begin very generally, it must be recalled that the modern university is a secular institution, in the neutral sense that it is a part of what is now - to use the unavoidable cliché - a post-Christian society; one whose fundamental drives, aims and mythology owe little consciously to the institutionalised religion of the past. As part of the educational system of that society, the modern university can be said to

have two aims that live side by side in what has become a rather uncomfortable marriage of convenience: on the one hand, academic excellence for its own sake; and on the other, the training of personnel, within the atmosphere generated by the pursuit of excellence, for running government, the law, the economy, industry, administration and the rest. What has Christianity to contribute to all this? First should be said something that is scarcely problematical, but should be mentioned because it is sometimes suggested that it is the only contribution: the work and attitudes of all the individual Christians who work and/or study in the different parts of a university.

But when we think of Christianity as a collective—as a community possessing a modicum of coherence of thought and action—the question becomes complicated by two factors. The first is what might be called the social, cultural and political dimension. Over the past few centuries, and perhaps over the last one hundred years, Christianity's role in British society has been radically changed. It has, no doubt, played a large role in the development of those institutions which now attempt to do without it, such as our democracy and schools. But now it is only in the most tenuous relationship to institutions like universities. Such is the impression gained by a chaplain from overseas, who has written of his impression of the almost complete indifference of British students to the Christian faith. What does Christianity have to

say to students -- and to administrators and staff -- in that kind of atmosphere?

The second factor that has to be taken into account is that of belief. Christianity is not a system or a ready-made philosophy that can be set out and its implications read off for this and that, like a repair manual for a car. It has to do, with the action and demand of God now, with particular people at a particular time. Christianity is not a system but a gospel about the reality of a God who is present to his world in ever unpredictable, because gracious, ways. Therefore to ask someone to speak on this topic is to ask him to be a prophet. But the two factors I have mentioned make prophecy even more precarious an activity than usual. We have moved from a society in which Christians were too confident that they knew the answers to one in which they are not sure whether they have any answers at all. So, we have to go back to the basics, to the fundamentals. But what are they?

Christianity has to contribute to the university the same as it has to contribute to anyone at any time: good news. That news takes a double form. First, it is about God in his action in Jesus Christ, action that has past, present and future forms. The aspiring prophet is above all concerned with the second of those three tenses, to discern and declare what the risen Christ is doing at the heart of the life of the university. Second, the news is not just about God in Jesus Christ. It is about this divine action directed as it is to the chaos of human life that tries to organise itself apart from God, that will admit neither its need nor the grace that outweighs human need and sin. That is to say, it is action directed to man as he is, religious or secular, Jew or Greek. The act is one of grace and judgement. That is not to say that God is gracious to some and judges others, but that his grace is a radical grace, restoring men to himself but only at the cost of laying bare their shortcomings and refusal of grace. Or, to put the matter more positively, it is grace that shows up individuals and institutions not only in their shortcomings but also in their possibilities, their capacities and openings. God meets us all, where we are, with his gift and enabling.

Alongside that general account of the action of God, let us look again at the situation of the modern secular university. The first thing to realise is that the much discussed secularity is

important, but not necessarily dispiriting. The God who comes in Jesus is concerned not just with religion, but with all of human life, as the best of the so-called 'secular' theology has taught us. And that includes the ordinary academic life of a secular university.

However, at the present time ordinary academic life, as it was once known, is not easy to realise. On the one hand, there is shortage of money. It is often said that an institution must either grow or decline. Universities have for years expected to grow, in numbers, funds and areas of study. There is now, in many areas, and with catastrophic suddenness, an active cutting back, with the almost inevitable loss of morale and confidence. What has the gospel to say to that? On the other hand, there does seem to be in academic circles a loss of interest in the primacy of truth and the priority of excellence. This is not to suggest that universities should rise loftily above the needs of society. But when usefulness is the only criterion for an activity; when academics become cynical about the possibility of truth or of right political action, and subordinate all to the needs of the moment; or when students are encouraged, if they are, to study for the larger meal ticket that results; when all this is so, or even suggested, what hope is there for our society? Of course this is not the whole story. But as our society becomes more complex and organised, the dangers of cynicism and relativism, of amorality and the quest for expansion whatever the cost become the greater. What has the Christian gospel to say to all of this? At least five things can be suggested.

1. Such a message as we have will concentrate on the notion of truth. This is not to claim that Christians are certain of the truth, or even that they possess it in a way that others do not. We have already seen that that approach is an improper one. Rather it is that the concept of truth is important for the Christian. Because this is God's world, which he has created and saved, the attainment of a measure of truth is possible, and not only that, but useful as well. Truth for the Bible is not simply an abstract conception, and enables us to see that there need be no separation of academic excellence from human usefulness and need. Divine truth, real truth, is truth that saves, and this means that he who seeks for truth for its own sake may also be the

one who best serves human need and interest. This is the reverse of the modern tendency, which is to suspect that only the useful is true. But because Jesus is God's true word to us, we can confidently remind ourselves that truth is useful because it is true and not the other way round.

2. Another way of saying the same thing is that we may have excellence without that bogey of the modern liberal, elitism. Truth is given to the humble, those who follow it rather than grasp to exploit. If the university merely serves man's assessment of himself, it may pander to all that is wrong with modern life, and in particular humanity's self-destructive attempt to lord it over the creation and treat the cosmos merely as a source for the satisfaction of human needs (or supposed human needs. Who really *needs* ever greater wealth, mobility, etc?). One who serves rather than exploits the truth should not be afraid to tell it, to dissent from some of society's most cherished demands and beliefs in the name of a wider view of things. Of course, this is dangerous and easily confused with the kind of naive radicalism sometimes preached by the disciples of violent dissent. The Christian in the university may have to join the protests, if not their form. But his can only be the protest of the forgiven, of the one who confesses a share in the exploitation and the greed and the oppression. Truth is not given finally and completely, but only to the humble and the penitent, to those who listen again and again. A university will never achieve its end, not because there are limits to the possibilities of its expansion, but because it will never have the truth under its control.

3. Truth as the Christian sees it is that which enables mankind to separate appearance from reality. I have already made an allusion to the discernment of true and false needs, but this understanding of the truth is also important when we are faced with the need to cut back financially. To lose some of our dearest programmes and plans is not in itself a sign of failure and decline. Daniel Jenkins has recently argued that we should not be afraid to claim and develop a proper sense of success. There is nothing wrong with success, for God gives us

maturity and the proper success which goes with it. But one of the gifts of maturity is that which enables us to distinguish not only between truth and falsehood, but also between true success and mere worldly acclaim. The cross tells us that what seems like failure is often success. There is no direct correlation between financial resources and official approval, on the one hand, and true success on the other. Our morale and activity should not depend solely -- though it must in part -- on the framework within which the work is carried on. Financial restraint may be an enabler of a proper choice of priorities.

4. The general point is this: the truth claimed for the gospel is a truth which saves, because it meets men where they really are, yet without either attempting to bring them into line by compulsion or accepting their own valuation of their need. God is for man, but not on our own terms. So it is that the university serves the needs of men -- for education, training for life, including jobs, economics and other utilitarian matters -- but never at the cost of failing to tell the truth about the wider context of human life, that without which it is no longer truly human. The very breadth of university studies should be a reproach to those who would see human life too narrowly, but also and especially an enabling of those who would see further than the ends of their noses. This is a paradigm case of truth that does not impose itself from the outside, but comes alongside people where they are. Christianity can remind the university of what is its own discovery and most precious possession, its traditional vision of the breadth of truth.

5. But the chief point is still to be made, and that without which the others are mere rhetoric. Christianity does not have to offer the university a lot of advice -- though there seems to be a terrible lot of it in the past few pages -- but rather to point to the Lord who is there in the midst, whatever Christians may or may not do about making him known. Let me conclude with some words preached by Professor Gordon Rupp in a Presentation Day service in the University of London. His theme: 'My Son, seek wisdom's discipline while you are young, And when your hair is white, you will

find her still...' (Eccles.6:18). 'But this is a church, and we cannot leave this matter of wisdom even with the sublimest thoughts of Solomon. A greater than Solomon is here, and Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed in robes like those for whom the divine wisdom was made flesh in him who is the living word. The connection between Christ and a university is not a matter of explicit creeds or confessions, or dogmatic tests or liberty of thought, still less a matter of counting Christian votes or heads. In Him who is the Word of God, the whole life of a university consists, is held together. If men study poetry or the songs of man, the mysteries of speech and the diversities of tongues, these words are the echo of the one Word always speaking, always creating; if they handle the material fabric of the physical universe, measure

it in the round or in the infinitely small, they are coming closer to Him in whom was life, and the life of men. What is in history and nature and in the hearts and minds of men comes from Him and moves towards Him... giver of all gifts, king and lord of all.'

NOTES

1. A version of a talk given to a chaplaincy consultation in the University of London, November 1977.
2. B.K. Tettey, 'Reflections on a Ministry among Students', *International Review of Mission* LXVI, April 1977, pp. 146-9.
3. Daniel Jenkins, *Christian Maturity and the Theology of Success*, London: S.C.M. Press, 1976.
4. E.G. Rupp. 'Apprenticeship to Wisdom', *The Kingsman: the Magazine of the Theological Department of King's College London*, 1972-3, p. 26.

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BOOK REVIEWS

BECOMING AND BEING: THE DOCTRINE OF GOD IN CHARLES HARTSHORNE AND KARL BARTH

By C.E.Gunton. O.U.P..1978. ppX+236. £10.

For anyone who is depressed by the present state of philosophical theology this book may act as a lifesaver. Instead of offering resounding platitudes for answers to questions (such as 'briefly, what do you think of the universe?') Dr Gunton takes the reader to the heart of all problems, as the title itself indicates. Fortunately we have at least one down-to-earth empirical stance in what is necessarily a highly abstract and technical discussion: we also seem to 'exist', both in the sense of continual change and in that of (some) abiding entity or even identity. Yet we are not God. However, we *talk* of and about God, or, if Marxist, against God. The fact that we have and use words, and that in a thousand different ways, not only enables us to transcend our immediate environment but also to postulate necessary existence. But as soon as we become conscious of this linguistic achievement a host of contradictory perspectives opens up. Is the polarity of Becoming and Being a contradiction? If so, can it be resolved in God talk? And if satisfactory clues can be taken up do they, in a sort of cluster, argue for, or against, the existence of the God of the Christian faith? Hartshorne (American, still alive, known as a guest lecturer to some students at King's) and Barth (d.1968, lectured at King's in the thirties), though in many respects diametrically opposed, serve, under the author's aegis, as explorers and guides in this old maze of right and false spors and exits.

Yet this is not a replay of the old game. Not only is the vocabulary of a kind which the ancient authors would not have recognised, but the whole subject matter must be different from that of the past. Both Hartshorne and Barth live in our age, and Dr.Gunton is the last person to take refuge in tradition for tradition's sake. Augustine and Anselm, as well as Plato and Aristotle, it is true, still figure even in the modern debate, which, to me at least, never ceases to be a matter of amazement, seeing how our world-view has changed, not to mention our science and technology. But their axioms are not accepted as authoritative or valid. On the contrary, Hartshorne is shown to pursue a goal which is neither classical theism nor atheism. His *Neoclassicism* 'bases its concept of God on the metaphysical insight that certain categories or characteristics are attributable both to the whole of reality and to all of its component parts' (p.80). There is the rub, for if this is not another version of pantheism 'it is difficult to conceive of this God being able to take the initiative on behalf of any of his creatures, precisely because they are not his creatures. On the

contrary, he is theirs.'(p81). Before Dr.Gunton reaches his final statement of the 'neoclassical dilemma' he works through the material with the finest comb, and I should spoil the fun (for it is intellectual fun) if I tried to summarise the neat distillation of possibilities and probabilities. One is left, as usual, with endless questions converging on the ontological argument.

Is becoming to be associated with God at all? The very question reminds me of one of my favourite little quotes in Proust's *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu*, when St.Loup says that 'the war does not get away from the laws of the old Hegel. It is in a state of perpetual becoming.' (La guerre n'échappe pas aux lois de notre viel Hegel. Elle est en etat de perpetuel devenir'). I insert this little piece to remind my reader what a linguistic nettle 'Becoming' itself is. Latin makes do with *fieri* ; the German *werden* is not identical with *become* or *devenir* . More important, from a theological point of view, the Hebrew HAYAH (from which, in some measure, YHWH = Lord) simply cannot be forced into linguistic analysis, for it, and its Semite cognates, does not move in the world of logic. The Greek complications (n.b. *gignomai*, *eimi*) are even more far-reaching, not to mention African and Asian families of language. Is it not, therefore, perilous to build a neo-classical model of Godhead, or attempt natural theology, on so-called linguistic grounds?

These matters are complicated indeed; but their real complexity is often hidden when we confine language to words only. What would be the case if we were to include, as we legitimately may, the communications in music and visual images? Add mathematical equations and proofs, and even our little human mental activities take on a truly cosmic range. Hence I should be inclined to show less patience to Hartshorne's rationalism than Colin Gunton.

You can see by now that we are not engaged in a technical discussion only, but in something that concerns us all. Is God, and therefore truth itself, a cultural or sociological product, to be understood and judged in these political and economic terms? Colin Gunton most appropriately passes on to Part II to examine Karl Barth's theological norms and presuppositions. It is not as simple a matter as changing gear and direction completely. A superficial knowledge of Barth may put him down as a *Biblicist tout court*. Gunton shows that Barth's exposition of Anselm (*credo ut intellegam*) is central, a focus of the later Church Dogmatics. Hence we are still concerned with Being and with the whole problem of existence in becoming.

Revelation, and not a concept of revelation, but the concrete God-in-Christ act, answers the quest in its own unique manner. Gunton shows in a masterly fashion

what it means when Barth is interpreted by Jungel: 'Where revelation conquers language, a *Word of God* takes place. The word of God *brings* the language to its true being' (better than 'to its proper expression', as Gunton notes). This God also becomes *essentially*, and Barth's Trinitarianism shows how and why. The flow of the argument is dense but also very clear. It deals with aspects of time, analogy, personality in order to manifest the nature of the revelation, of 'being in becoming', not of substance, but of the 'Thou', God himself. Why do we never hear of, and profit from, the 'eternal repetition', of God in self-revelation, in our contemporary plight of lamentable reductionism, where God's 'eminent temporality' is equated with ourselves?

Barth has been accused of neglecting the historical events of Jesus's existence and the eschatological dimension of the Holy Spirit. Gunton deals at length with this supposed Gnostic tendency, always comparing Barth with Hartshorne and classical conceptions of absolute Being. Instead of abstract concepts Barth looks at the concrete instance of God's freedom in love, namely the Cross. But how different is his theology of the Cross from Hartshorne's symbol of divine suffering, which, as Gunton has it, does not spell out that death is conquered, but has the last word. The neoclassical theism is finally condemned for what it is, Process theology - with an 'ineffectual weakling' at the centre who, as it were, divinises the world after the event. This is idolatry, and Gunton rightly closes the discussion with the question why some modern theologians should want to employ this philosophy in defence of their faith. This book deserves the most careful attention.

Ulrich Simon

FAITH IN CHRIST. By Robin Gill. Mowbrays. 1978. 90pp.80p.

As the figure of Jesus Christ stands at the centre of the Christian Faith it is only to be expected that Christology should be at the centre of Christian theology. But not since the fourth century has there been such a vigorous attempt on the part of theologians to probe the mysteries of the Messiah's being as there has been in our own century; and not since the disputes of that early century have controversial issues about his person and work seemed so divisive, and differing positions so staunchly held and argued. But contemporary thinkers and writers differ from their forbears in their obsession with the concept (created partly by the rise of historical and sociological disciplines) of 'relevance'. It seems that all aspects of the church's life: its forms of worship and prayer, its moral attitudes, and, above all, its doctrinal formularies have to be tried at the bar of contemporary

culture. So it is hardly surprising that a man who is both a priest and a sociologist, Robin Gill, should add his contribution to the spate of books on the relevance of the Christian claims in the modern world that has been flowing from the publishing houses during the last twenty years.

In his preface Mr. Gill says that he has been trying to write this book for twelve years. I cannot help remarking that the result of twelve years effort does not strike me as impressive. It is not a book intended for theological specialists, it deliberately eschews technical language as far as possible and aims at popular appeal. But a book need not lack distinction on that account, and it is as much a question of style and language as anything else. Some of C.S. Lewis's most popular books have great distinction, and what gives them their distinction is not only the perception of their thought but the vividness and precision of the language. Mr. Gill's arguments are clear enough, but they are flatly, and often too generally, presented to make a real impact on the reader.

The author sets out the problem he intends to answer in the opening paragraph of the first chapter.

Certain traditional claims about the specialness or uniqueness of Christ seem increasingly incredible. If it abandons these claims, it may cease to exist as a distinct religion. If it continues to maintain them, it may look more and more peculiar and become the property of isolated groups of people with no real place in Western society.

And in the following chapters he covers ground that has been covered many times by scholars before, in particular the vexed question of the seeming inability of the modern mind to grasp the relationship of divine and human in Jesus and the meaning of the attempts of the ancient definitions to express this relationship. Along the way he does have some interesting points to make about the nature of our society and the position of Christianity in it, and he dispels some popular misconceptions about religion in the modern world.

For most Westerners there is little serious temptation to become Muslims, Buddhists or Hindus... Their main option is still between Christianity and irreligion, not between Christianity and one of the other world religions.

He examines the traditional approach to the understanding of Jesus "from above" (he calls it 'the Word made Flesh' approach) and some modern attempts to destroy this with an approach "from below". All well and good, but it is in his last chapter where he purports to offer an alternative that he is at his most disappointing.

My point has not been to support a persistence instead of a decline, theory of religion, but rather to demonstrate that the evidence of religious change in the West is thoroughly confused - too confused, anyway, to bear the weight of the radical proposals suggested.

I certainly think this is true, but I do not think I needed Mr. Gill to tell me so. He is, after all, a sociologist and yet he offers no sociological reason why the approach "from above" (or "from below") is unacceptable to modern man. But that is not the main burden of my complaint. It is this: In the end what Mr. Gill is pleading for is the holding of the two "approaches" in balance.

The suggestion, then, that we continue to use both approaches to express our convictions about the uniqueness of Christ, may not appear so impossible. Once we admit that both approaches

use human language obliquely and that both contain inherent weaknesses when used separately, the continued use of both seems appropriate. But this balance, this dual approach, is, I believe, what orthodox Christianity, however it may have been misinterpreted down the ages, has been expressing ever since the first great ecumenical council of the church in the year 325.

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