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SUB-CHRISTIAN PRAYER: PELAGIAN DIDACTICISM IN ALTERNATIVE SERVICE BOOK 1980

Stuart Hall

One of the chief faults of the *Book of Common Prayer* is a tendency to nag the congregation. Such features are the long exhortations to repentance at the beginning of both Morning and Evening Prayer (omitted for many years past in almost all churches where the daily office persisted) and at the Holy Communion (which I have never heard read at all except by myself). More particularly one finds the use of prayer itself as a vehicle of instruction or exhortation: the long collect at the end of the Solemnization of Matrimony beginning "O God, who by thy mighty power . . ." is the worst example, but the one at the end of the Burial of the Dead, "O merciful God . . ." is nearly as bad, and some of Cranmer's writings or rewritings of Collects for the Day err in the didactic direction (see especially St Thomas' Day, St Stephen's Day and Advent 2). Needless to say, these are exceptions, and most of Cranmer's translations are theologically sound and rhetorically beautiful.

As far as the exhortations are concerned, ASB 1980 has followed the Church in omitting them or reducing them to optional invitations to worship or confession. As far as the prayers are concerned, the example of Cranmer has been followed in both its aspects. Where the old material seemed clear, orthodox and unexceptionable, it has been translated, usually well, into rhythmic modern English. But where new material has been introduced, it has often exposed surprising weaknesses of spirituality or theology, or finds the compilers nagging the people when they should be praying to God in the Spirit. There are exceptions: moralising or didactic intrusions in old prayers, and splendid expressions of the Church's prayer in Christ among the new ones. Perhaps the good predominates. But the defenders of ASB 1980 against its critics, and of the Gospel against its debasers, have their work made more difficult by the faulty texts.

The faults, generally expressed, are those which one constantly hears where clergy and laity compose prayers for public use. God is told that he has "taught us" something, or is asked to "teach us that" something is so, or asked to make people "know" something. The prayer-leader already knows these things, or intends to do them; he wants the people to share his insight or his concern. So intercession becomes self-concern, the work of the prayer-desk and altar is replaced by the work of the pulpit. Often in what purports to be a prayer for faith or penitence or good works or witness, the congregation is urged to have faith, to repent, to do good and to bear witness. I do not mean that these things do not come from God, quite the reverse. I am protesting against forms of prayer which throw the first responsibility back on the people, and call in God at second place. Here the supremely dangerous formula is "help us to", but there are others such as "may we". True prayer in Christ already believes ("Lord I believe; help my unbelief"). It already repents ("Lord be merciful to me a sinner"). It is already justified and adorned with the good works of Christ ("Give judgment for me O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity"). And as for witness, it is for God to choose how he will manifest the sons of God as the light of the world, and reveal his glory over all the earth. The test of a prayer should be: Does Christ pray this in us? And if we are in doubt about that, we

may look at the classic prayers which Christ uses in the Psalms and the New Testament, and in the expression of prayers in his Spirit in ancient Israel and the early Church.

Judged by such criteria, the prayers of ASB 1980 are often weak and jejune, not only because they are Pelagian or didactic, but because they fail to make the confident, robust demands upon God which the biblical and early Christian writers were prepared to make. The religious and moral experience of the people praying and those they pray for displace the majesty, wrath and mercy of God from the centre of the picture.

We shall consider examples of moralism, didacticism, undue subjectivity, and bad exegesis. The categories often overlap.

1. *Moralism.* "Heavenly Father, whose children suffered at the hands of Herod, though they had done no wrong; give us grace neither to act cruelly nor to stand indifferently by, but to defend the weak from the tyranny of the strong; in the name of Jesus Christ who suffered for us, but is alive and reigns etc." (Holy Innocents/ 822).

This prayer is plainly intended to generate the thought in the congregation, "Am I cruel? Am I indifferent? Do I do all I can to defend the weak?" These are worthy thoughts, but to think them is not prayer, and to think them will not do what only God can do, that is, put down the mighty and exalt the humble. We should, in Christ's name, urge upon God the claims of the afflicted, not try to urge them first on each other. The central petition might say: "Let the cries of the innocent and the affliction of the bereaved prevail with you to save us all from tyranny and wrong."

"Almighty and heavenly Father, we thank you that in this wonderful sacrament you have given us the memorial of the passion of your Son Jesus Christ. Grant us so to reverence the sacred mysteries of his body and blood, that we may know within ourselves and show forth in our lives the fruits of his redemption; who is alive etc." (Maundy Thursday/ 552 and Thanksgiving for Holy Communion/920).

The addition to the traditional prayer "and show forth in our lives" undoes the spirituality as well as the style of the medieval prayer. Christ apprehends us as we reverently use his gifts; the quest for good works at this point distracts us from him, and is aimed to improve the congregation. A further though incidental point: the old prayer was addressed to the Lord Jesus Christ, and as in all similar cases the collects of ASB 1980 have been changed to fit the regular theological order of prayer addressed to the Father. While the principle is sound, particularly for the central eucharistic and intercessory prayers, there was surely no need scrupulously to avoid invoking Christ directly in Collects. Like the "Christ have mercy", a Collect is an invocation of aid, not least for the liturgical work in hand. But to return to moralism.

"Lord God Almighty, whose Son Jesus Christ has taught us that it is more blessed to give than to receive: help us by the example of your apostle Barnabas to be generous in our judgments and unselfish in our service; through Jesus Christ our Lord."
(St Barnabas/775).

The saying of Jesus from Acts 20, 35 is a warning against covetousness among the clergy, and is irrelevant to the rest of the prayer; that it is moral and intended to instruct the people is exposed by the "taught us" formula. The remainder fixes on the generous judgments of Barnabas, alluding to his support for Paul (Acts 9, 25-27), the gentile converts (11, 22-23) and John Mark (15, 36-69). The BCP preferred to fix on the "singular gifts of the Holy Ghost" praised in Acts 11,24. That is surely better, since it recognizes the source of his various virtues. We could say: "God, who filled Barnabas the Apostle with spiritual gifts for preaching the Gospel, building up the Church, and supplying the wants of your people: renew among us the gifts of your Holy Spirit, that our common service and mutual love may bind us into one in the fellowship of your saints; through . . ."

"Heavenly Father, give us grace in all our sufferings for the truth to follow the example of your first martyr Saint Stephen : that we also may look to him who was crucified and pray for those who persecute us; through etc." (St Stephen/817).

This is an improvement on the sermonising of the BCP, but persists in drawing from the first martyr of Christ no more than a moral example. Cannot a truly biblical martyr-prayer be composed, that recalls the blood of Abel (Genesis 4,9; Matthew 23,25) and echoes the plea of the souls of the martyrs (Revelation 6,9-11)? "God our Judge, let the blood of St Stephen and all your martyrs cry to you from the ground, speedily to vindicate your elect, and mercifully to convert our persecutors; through him who shed his blood for us, Jesus Christ our Lord."

> "Heavenly Father, who sent your apostle Paul to preach the Gospel, and gave him Timothy and Titus to be his companions in the faith: grant that our fellowship in the Holy Spirit may bear witness to the name of Jesus; who is alive etc."
> (Timothy and Titus/828)

The saints are taken as an example of friendship, and we are urged to show such spiritual fellowship that we witness to Jesus. But there is no such message in Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus. Those letters rather call for reference to the stabilising of the Gospel in formal and traditional ecclesiastical patterns. We could more scripturally say: "King of the Ages, Immortal God, by Timothy and Titus and others like them you secured the Gospel for us against corruption, falsehood and disorder: Preserve among us the tradition of sound words and sober good order, which you have given us in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord . . ."

Two of the more attractive regular prayers are unfortunately infected with moralism:

> "Eternal God and Father, you create us by your power and redeem us by your love: guide and strengthen us by your Spirit, that we may give ourselves in love and service to one another and to you; through . . ."
> (Morning Prayer/60)

The older collect, printed as alternative to this, prays to be spared danger and guided into doing right; that follows the pattern of the Lord's own prayer, "lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil". The new one sets goodness above salvation. Worse, by suggesting that the congregation still needs to give itself to God it undermines the status of those who pray in the Holy Spirit, already elect and justified in Christ. We might base some such petition as this upon our creation and redemption: ". . . guide and strengthen us by your Spirit, that the love which you have poured into our hearts may overflow in obedience to you and service to each other, through . . ."

> ". . May we who share Christ's body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world. . . . (Holy Communion A/144).

At the end of the eucharist the moral exhortation is almost naked. The alternative which follows is more Christian. ". . we offer . . . Send us out . . ." In the longer prayer we could properly ask for the eucharistic gifts to be realized in some such way as this: ". . . Feed with eternal life those who share the body of the Lord; hold us faithful to this covenant in his blood; refresh us and our neighbours with the rich gifts of your Spirit." The rest of the prayer might stand.

> "Almighty God, whose Holy Spirit equips the Church with a rich variety of gifts; grant that we may use them to bear witness to Christ by lives built on faith and love. Make us ready to live his gospel and eager to do his will, that we may share with all your Church in the joys of eternal life . . ."
> (Baptism and Confirmation/237; also 258 and 277)

This clumsy exhortation to good works and proselytism mars the new confirmation rite and the renewal of baptismal vows. Instead of yielding ourselves to God's purposes, we invoke his gifts for our own. Something like this might be better: "Father, you give your Holy Spirit to those who ask: ever renew in us and all your people his rich and varied gifts, that your light may shine in the world and all men give you glory; through . . ."

> "Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, let there be pardon; etc,"
> (Baptism and Confirmation/237; also 277)

Whether this is a more original form of the Franciscan prayer than that in F.B. Macnutt's *Prayer Manual* (London 1951, No. 32) I do not know. But inevitably the ASB compilers prefer "let us sow love . . . let there be pardon" to a direct petition "give love, . . . pardon, . . .

faith etc." Pelagius prevails.

2. *Didacticism.* There are places where the prayer is used not only for moral exhortation, but to convey information, usually about Christian duties.

> "Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: help us so to hear them, to read, mark learn and inwardly digest them that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Advent 2/426)

Seduced by the beauty and popularity of Cranmer's collect, the compilers have made little change. They have changed "grant that we may" into "help us so to", putting the initiative firmly with the people. But the compilers should have rejected an unsuitable explanatory and didactic prayer. If we are to pray about the Scriptures, we might say: "Lord, you gave us holy Scriptures as a perpetual witness to your eternal Word: so graft that Word in our hearts that we may glorify you on earth and praise you in heaven . . ."

> "Almighty Father, whose son Jesus Christ has taught us that what we do for the least of our brethren we do also for him: give us the will to be the servant of others as he was the servant of all, who gave up his life and died for us, etc." (Maundy Thursday/552; Pentecost 11/628)

Here is classic didactic moralism: "Christ taught us this and that; give us the will to do this and that." Having listened, the congregation is expected to change its ways. We could more briefly and more reverently pray: "Father, your Son became our servant for love of us, and called us to share his service: make us faithful servants to you and to all our fellow creatures, etc." (Scrupulous students of Matthew 25,30 will observe that Christ speaks not of "the least of *our* brethren" but the least of *his*; the exegesis of ASB 1980 is popular, moral and false.)

> "Almighty Father, whose Son Jesus Christ was presented in the Temple and acclaimed the glory of Israel and the light of the nations: grant that in him we may be presented to you and in the world may reflect his glory; etc." (Presentation of Christ/757)

The long explanation of the subject of the celebration is both didactic and confusing. The petition also is feeble and pointless, except to exhort to good works. The BCP prays that our self-offering may be pure, which is far better. Or we might say: "Father, your Son Jesus Christ was presented in the Temple for our salvation: let his self-offering sanctify our own, that our whole body may be full of light."

> "Eternal God, you have declared in Christ the completion of your purpose of love. May we live by faith, walk in hope, and be renewed in love, until the world reflects your glory, and you are all in all. Even so; come, Lord Jesus. Amen." (Baptism and Confirmation/238)

An enterprising prayer is marred by the moral didacticism which urges the convert to live by faith, hope and love, and by the obscurity of its sentiments, being unsure whether God's purpose is historically complete or not, and unsure whether the coming of the Lord is complete in the disciples' faith and the world's conversion, or supervenes upon it. At a confirmation, the believer stands already in the fellowship of faith, and should pray more resolutely: ". . . you have declared in Christ your saving purpose, and filled us with your faith and hope and love: keep us always steadfast in your grace, till he appears as our judge and great redeemer. Even so; come, Lord Jesus. Amen."

> "Eternal God, true and loving Father, in holy marriage you make your servants one. May their life together witness to your love in this troubled world; may unity overcome division, forgiveness heal injury, and joy triumph over sorrow; through . . ." (Marriage/298)

This prayer is at least briefer than Cranmer's long lecture, a modernised version of which follows in ASB on page 299. But it is still didactic, explaining the duties of man and wife, which is what the sermon should have done already. We need a prayer which builds upon the grace in which the couple now stand by entrusting their future to God himself: "Father, you make man and wife to be one flesh. So unite N and N that together they

may endure the trials and temptations of this life, and together praise you for your endless mercy."

"Heavenly Father, in your Son Jesus Christ you have given us a true faith and a sure hope. Strengthen this faith and hope in us all our days, that we may live as those who believe in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection to eternal life; etc." (Funeral Service/308; cf. 936).

The unfortunate mourners are urged to "live as those who believe", and must be reminded of the relevant clauses of the Creed. It would be better simply to say the Creed; or to say "you have given us a true faith and a sure hope in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection to eternal life; hold us fast in that communion, forgive us our sins as we forgive each other, and raise us to new life together in Jesus Christ our Lord."

"Grant us, Lord, the wisdom and the grace to use aright the time that is left to us here on earth. Lead us to repent of our sins, the evil we have done and the good we have not done; and strengthen us to follow the steps of your Son, in the way that leads to the fullness of eternal life; through . . ." (Funeral Service/314)

This prayer seems to be directed at the inattentive Christian who might be "got at" successfully at a funeral and made to change his ways. But if death is an occasion to number our days and turn from sin to righteousness, then that is what we should do before God, not ask to be enabled to do it. Mourners often do have a sense of guilt, and it is psychologically good for them to express it; under God they may come to a sense of absolution, too. Why not say. "Father, we have sinned against you, and none of us is pure in your sight; pity us, cleanse us and restore us in your love; let the suffering of your dear Son prevail against all our faults and failings; and show us the path of righteousness that leads to everlasting life . . ."

On page 322-323 are seven "Prayers after the Birth of a still-born Child or the Death of a newly-born Child". The first five (nos. 34-38) all teach, in the guise of prayer, that the parent ought to have faith in God's love, or to "know" it. But is such faith and knowledge what we should be praying for at a time of bitter disappointment and loss? Is it how Job, or Jeremiah, or the Psalmist prays? Is it how Jesus prays? It resembles rather the pious mouthings of Job's comforters, whom God rejects. Our praying should express the pain, and call God to remember his greatness, his pity and his promises. "God, you have turned away your face from us, and taken away our darling and our treasure. Pity us and comfort us in our bitter loss; heal our wounded hearts; and in your wisdom bring good out of our present sorrow . . ."

3. *Subjectivity.* The last example of didacticism already illustrates the vice of subjectivity. Instead of making concrete demands upon our Creator and Saviour, modern piety seeks instead only for internal change in the person praying. It is as though in a scientific world we can no longer expect God actually to respond, and so we must confine our praying to a religious exercise for ourselves.

"Almighty God, you have created the heavens and the earth and made man in your own image. Teach us to discern your hand in all your works, and to serve you with reverence and thanksgiving through . . ." (9 Sunday before Christmas/398)

This starts well, but ends up exhorting the people to interpret the universe religiously. Christ prays that God's kingdom may come; not that we may have a heightened religious awareness, but that the Creator's design may be fulfilled. Instead of the "Teach us . . ." clauses we might say: "Make your judgments known in all the world, and perfect your chosen servants in the likeness of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

"Almighty Father, whose Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon the cross: give us the faith to perceive his glory, that we may be strengthened to suffer with him and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory; who is alive etc." (Lent 4/517)

Again, a prayer for religious experience stands in place of the given grace and the concrete prayer. After the colon we might say: "grant that we who have seen his glory may be strengthened to suffer with him etc."

"Almighty Father, who in your great mercy made glad the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord: give us such knowledge of his presence with us, that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life and serve you continually in righteousness and truth; etc." (Easter 1/602)

But why should we pray for *knowledge* of Christ's presence? It is not the knowledge, but the presence itself, whether God makes us aware of it or not, which saves us. A shorter petition after the colon would be more effective. "strengthen and sustain us by his risen life, that we may serve you continually in righteousness and truth; etc."

As in the case of those mourning an infant death, the prayers for the sick on p.929 are both partly or wholly subjective in their petitions "comfort and restore those who are sick, that they may be strengthened in their weakness and have confidence in your unfailing love . . ." "Bless them, and those who serve their needs, that they may put their whole trust in you and be filled with your peace; . . ." Sin, divine reproof, and the unpredictable mystery of God's wrath, all of which appear in the biblical prayers and protests about the sick, have all disappeared. Something radically different is needed. We might try: "Spare them, Lord, and in your wrath remember mercy. Grant them true sorrow for their sins, and integrity of heart in the face of pain, and touch them with your healing hand; through Christ our Saviour."

4. *Bad exegesis.* The worst example is the collect for the new feast of St Joseph of Nazareth, Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

"Almighty God, who called Joseph to be the husband of the Virgin Mary, and the guardian of your only Son: open our eyes and our ears to the messages of your holy will, and give us the courage to act upon them; through . . ." (St Joseph/760)

It was probably a mistake to include in the Calendar a figure marginal to the Gospel about whom little can be said and probably nothing at all historical. But if one tries to identify the function of Joseph in relation to the central truth of Jesus Christ, it will not be in his functions as husband or guardian, and certainly not in his virtue of courage, here introduced on standard moralist principles. There is something in his visions and dreams, inasmuch as in Matthew's Gospel he bears witness to the miraculous Davidic and virginal conception and birth of Jesus as King and Saviour. We could say: "Merciful God, you speak to us through St Joseph of the wonderful conception and birth of Jesus our King and Saviour: raise up among us seers and prophets to proclaim among us all your marvellous works; through . . ."

"Heavenly Father, who chose the Virgin Mary, full of grace, to be the mother of our Lord and Saviour: fill us with your grace, that in all things we may accept your holy will and with her rejoice in your salvation; through . . ." (Advent 4/437)

It is a grave matter to base a collect on the old mistranslation "full of grace", and sub-Christian to suggest that the church at prayer is not already praying in the fulness of the divine favour. Try: "Heavenly Father, who in your grace chose and called Saint Mary, and by your Spirit conceived in her the manhood of your only Son: by the same Spirit so form Christ in our hearts that we may humbly hear your call and cheerfully do your will; through . . ."

"Almighty God, whose blessed Son was circumcised in obedience to the law for man's sake and given the Name that is above every Name: give us grace faithfully to bear his name, to worship him in the freedom of the Spirit, and to proclaim him as the Saviour of mankind, who etc." (Naming of Jesus/752)

This errs by complication. It apparently says (1) that Christ's circumcision signifies "obedience to the law" (Lk. 2,22) which gives "freedom" to "worship" in "the Spirit" (Phil. 3,3), (2) that we celebrate the naming of Jesus (Lk. 2,21) with "the Name above every name" at which all creatures bow the knee in "worship" (Phil. 2, 9-11); (3) the "Name" of Jesus designates him "Saviour of mankind" (Mt. 1,21); (4) we ought to "proclaim him" and "faithfully bear his name". There is material for several sermons here, not all good ones. The name "Jesus" is rightly interpreted "Saviour". But the "name above every name" in Phil. 2,9-11 is not "Jesus" but *Kyrios*, "Lord", at least in the view of many competent exponents. Further, when one asks what is the "name" which the believer is called

upon to "bear", it is neither Jesus nor Lord, but could plausibly be construed as Christ, since he is a *Christ*-ian. The prayer should plainly concentrate on (1) circumcision or (3) the name Jesus, and the misleading complications of (2) and (4) should be dropped. In the Liturgical Commission's own *Commentary* p.54 the source of this collect is given as "1662". The Prayer Book in fact wisely confines the collect to the theme of circumcision, and ASB 1980 would have done well to copy it.

Finally, as examples of bad exegesis we may take two of the places—not the only two—where the duty of "witness" is urged upon the people in collects:

> "Almighty God, who gave such grace to your apostle Saint Andrew that he readily obeyed the call of your Son and brought his brother with him: give us, who are called by your holy Word, grace to follow without delay and to tell the good news of your kingdom; through . . ." (St Andrew/815)
>
> "Almighty God, who caused the light of the gospel to shine throughout the world through the preaching of your servant Saint Paul. grant that we who celebrate his wonderful conversion may follow him in bearing witness to your truth; through . . ." (Conversion of St Paul/754)

In 1662 the ready obedience of St Andrew is the theme, and obedience to God is sought in petition. Here we have an intrusive reference to "and brought his brother with him" with a corresponding addition about "tell the good news of your kingdom". The Marcan narrative of the sudden call (Mk. 1,16-18) is fudged with the Johannine account of Andrew bringing Simon Peter (Joh. 1,40-42), which is bad exegesis. But worse, the moral is drawn that we should all "tell the good news of your kingdom" as if all God's people were apostles and evangelists. This runs clean contrary to the scriptural picture of the body of Christ articulated so that each has his special function (e.g. 1 Cor. 12,27-30). In the New Testament, those called to evangelise are a small, specially chosen group, and for them we should pray that they may be bold in speaking for the mystery of the gospel (Eph. 6,19). The same misguided notion has corrupted the old collect about St Paul. Instead of showing our gratitude for his conversion by following the holy doctrines which he taught, we are now to follow him in bearing witness to God's truth. If "witness" means evangelism, we have no right to ask that God should choose us. If it means martyrdom, we should pray to be spared it (like "lead us not into temptation"). The notion that every Christian should go in for "personal evangelism" or "personal witness" is a falsehood without scriptural warrant it would certainly be better to pray that we may follow St Paul's holy doctrine.

Conclusion. We have criticised comparatively few of the prayers. Some others are poor, but many are good and some very good. We cannot expect a rapid overhaul of ASB 1980. But when the time comes, we must hope the revisers will think again about the content of the prayers, and try to ensure that the prayers are worthy instruments for teaching the people to pray, and above all worthy expressions of the great intercession which the Lord himself makes before his Father for us.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON INDIAN SPIRITUALITY

Friedhelm Hardy

III *COMMUTING WITHIN ONE WORLD*

It is difficult to envisage in what sort of cultural or psychological circumstances one would decide that the *totality* of one's experiences is worthless. But unlike his European existentialist counterpart, the Indian can fall back on 'extraordinary experiences' to avoid

the despair that we would expect to overwhelm him on the ordinary plane of existence. Another question follows from the first one: what happens when this type of world-view is 'exported', that means, introduced to areas which have nothing to do with those cultural or psychological circumstances that originally gave rise to it? One such transfer is well documented and deserves to be mentioned here[1]. Towards the close of the last millennium B.C., the Tamil-speaking people of the extreme South of India developed an indigenous, highly sophisticated civilization. Hardly influenced by what was going on much further noth, it concerned itself with the down-to-earth affairs of man, like stealing a neighbouring chieftain's cattle, displaying strength and bravery in battle, and falling in love with an attractive girl. Then, from about the 3rd century A.D. onwards, Jainism and Buddhism imposed their world-negating views on such concerns, introducing in Tamil minds the *samsara : moksha* dichotomy and a totally new concept of transcendence to people who till then had considered survival after death to be no more (and no less) than the perpetuation of one's fame for marvellous exploits in the songs of later generations. It seems to have taken the Tamils about three hundred years to free themselves partially from this ascetic control; by the 6th century A.D. they move rather enthusiastically towards less restrictive facets of Hinduism, choosing what, or placing new emphases where, they felt an affinity to be. Thus the Hindu god Krishna became known to them not only in the many temple sculptures, beautifully decorated and

worshipped daily with sensuous rituals, but also through northern myths about him. There many stories were told about him, but the one closest to the Tamils' hearts was the story about his love affairs with the girls and wives of the cowherds among whom he had grown up. But these Tamils by now were unable to recapture the full-blooded down-to-earthness of their ancestors: the awareness of *samsara* was haunting their minds. The theology within which Krishna was presented to them reinforced this sense of 'alienation': essentially he is the transcendental absolute who, by taking on human form (in myth) or descending into the temple image, lures man away from the allurements of *samsara*. The poets who document for us this early stage of Tamil devotion to Krishna, concentrate precisely on this 'alluring' aspect of Krishna, pushing the pursuit of yogic meditational exercises into the background, and thus they allow residues of the old Tamil sentiment—man as an emotional and sensuous being—to play a new role. They opened themselves to the beauty of the temple images and rituals and to the eros of the myths and tried to communicate them in turn through their sensual poetry. But the more they took in from this sense- and emotion-filling nature of Krishna, the closer they thereby came to him and the more they thus fulfilled themselves as human beings—the more they suffered. This peculiar experience of suffering in one way could only be explained as due to Krishna's very presence in their hearts, and in another way they saw this as the reflection of human incapability to contain or encompass the transcendental. This complex emotion is labelled 'separation', and their poetry resorts to the agonies of a woman separated from her lover (along the lines of the earlier secular Tamil love poetry) to express and communicate it by means of these images. They express this experiential dilemma through fits of weeping, choking voices, sleeplessness, trembling limbs, etc. And when the tension between being so close emotionally to Krishna and the suffering of 'separation' this produces become unbearable, they break down—in ecstasy.

The 'agony of ecstasy' is a well-known phenomenon from many religions of the world, and recourse to this comparative context would considerably assist us in illuminating what surely must be a puzzling phenomenon, the 'mysticism of separation' as outlined above[2]. However, in referring to this expression of Krishna devotion in South India I have a different context in mind; in fact, what the previous observations have been concerned with: the *samsara : moksha* dichotomy. The peculiar emotional-'mystical' constellation styled 'separation' is important, first of all, because it has historically infiltrated into the texture of Indian spirituality as a whole. It succeeded in breaking the linguistic and cultural barriers of the Tamil South and making itself available, through Sanskrit and many vernaculars, to the rest of India, giving rise to many movements and individual mystics who displayed and cultivated all the symptoms of ecstatic Krishna religion. But precisely because it entered the pan-Indian scene, it had to get involved in the more general undercurrents of Indian spirituality. In this context 'separation' had to appear as a particular mode of bridging the gap between human nature and the transcendental, and of 'containing' as it were the dialectical tension between a world-negating drive towards *moksha* and a 'return to the world', the blueprint for which has been established in the *Bhagavad-Gita* and in the Bodhisattva ideal, and which was backed up, in the original Tamil context, by a 'holding on to the world'.

The observations of the previous Parts I and II brought us no further than to the realization of two currents in Indian spirituality. Both of these offer numerous points of contact with the Occidental religious awareness, although traditionally the first has been overemphasized in our image of India as a country filled with ascetics, and relatively little credit has been given to the Indian 'return to the world'. But my brief sketch of a 'mysticism of separation' has indicated that our observations have not yet come to an end—other areas remain to be explored, areas in which the two trends appear within a dialectical synthesis. It is here that our conventional image is forced into radical modification, away from mere ignorance or from wilful distortions and misunderstandings. It is in these areas that 'Indian spirituality' has achieved its most typical and sophisticated expressions.

As we have seen, 'separation' can be regarded as a—primarily psychological—means of bringing together the two realms of *samsara* and *moksha*, of containing the move away from, and the return to, the world. In it is implied that *samsara* and *moksha* are not separate, irreducibly independent realms and that a 'unity of being' is accepted. From this we may derive an abstract general characterization of the material which the present Part III concerns itself with: a variety of modes of envisaging a fundamental unity of being which nevertheless is dialectically differentiated. Besides a psychological or emotional starting point, individual varieties may focus on ritual or meditational aspects, and besides straightforward theistic and more elusive quasi-theistic varieties we find definite non-theistic conceptions. A few examples will have to suffice here to illustrate this enormous richness of the concrete solutions to the abstract dialectical pattern.

* * * *

The mysticism of separation reinforces a deeply ingrained acceptance of man's empirical being—his emotions, senses and desires—through the belief in the world as Krishna's place of 'work' and manifestation and as man's place of achieving his perfection through sharing in this work of Krishna. But quite unconsciously a choice is made of only certain aspects that reveal Krishna: beauty, eros, ecstasy. Such a restriction is unknown in other quarters. Here a similar 'throwing oneself' into empirical reality is suggested, but as becoming open to the totality of life, and that means, by overcoming all forms of making a choice. Here the beauty of a woman is consciously set in the context of the cremation ground where the fire devours mortal flesh. The transcendental is envisaged as Woman—dancing on her prostrate corpse-like lover, with a cut-off head in one hand, its blood dripping into a skull held in another hand, and decorated with a 'necklace' of children's heads. Devotion here consists in the containment of such divergent images of a personal absolute, and at the same time in the total surrender to the incomprehensible dialectic of beauty and terror, joy and suffering pervading the contingent world which manifests Kali's own nature. In the words of the famous Bengali poet Ramprasad Sen (18th century):

> You bear in the world the name of
> 'mother all-compassionate',
> yet there is no trace of pity in you.
> You cut off the heads of others' children
> to adorn your neck with a garland of skulls.
> My words are the cry 'mother! mother!'—
> is it to hear me say this
> that you don't seem to listen?
> Prasad is like that:
> kicked about, he still
> cries out: 'Kali!'[3]

The 'unity of being' spoken about above appears here coded as the total dependence of a child on its mother, and the 'differentiation', 'separation' as that of the beatings and suffering imposed through her 'cruelty'. The poet's crying out in surrender reenacts his unity with Her, just as She is the cause of the cries (both as causing suffering and as wanting to hear him). In passing we may notice—to return to this point later—that here the awareness of a rift emerges which runs vertically through reality: Kali's nature as much as the poet's world of experiences, and in turn their relationship, are seen as dialectically differentiated.

From the religion of Kali we can move to the world of the Tantras—those texts that have recently attracted attention in certain quarters. To the extent that these texts contain anything like a typical conception, this might be presented as follows. Reality is one, held together in a mysterious unity of being. Yet it appears differentiated, 'bipolarity'[4] being its characteristic from that angle of observation. A fragrant rose is obviously one whole unity, and yet its fragrance could suggest a description in terms of 'rose endowed with power of emitting fragrance'. Thus a 'bipolarity' emerges: a (passive) rose and an (active) power of fragrance. Some texts, but by no means all, will phrase this bipolarity as Shiva endowed with his *shakti* ('power'). The latter may then 'solidify' further, personified for instance as Kali, or envisaged as creative energy and the world of phenomena as such. Moreover, Shiva perceives himself in *shakti* as a pure mirror, relates to her, and the reflected radiance gives rise to the world. Man, a spark in this radiance, thus shares in his own nature the differentiation of Shiva and *shakti*; his

fulfilment lies in realizing through ritual and meditational means the other facet, the fundamental unity of Shiva and his *shakti*.

Let us add one further variety to our list before stepping back and trying to make some sense of this. Partly drawing indirectly on such 'tantric' ideas, and partly using directly the psychological heritage of Krishna devotion, a Krishnaite theology evolved in Bengal in the 16th century through the inspiration of the mystic Caitanya[5]. Krishna and his favourite milkmaid Radha figure here as the concrete Absolute and his *shakti*. They unite as lovers—the ultimate unity of being—and yet remain 'separated' (a confluence of mythical models with the mysticism of 'separation'). The phenomenal world is as it were the solidified emotions of Krishna and Radha, their concretised 'separation'. By cultivating the mysticism of separation, the devotee throws himself into the mysterious love of Krishna and Radha and thereby rejoins his transcendental origin, but paradoxically only through 'separation', and only to the extent that Krishna and Radha themselves are undifferentiated, one.

* * * *

No doubt this kind of language will have taxed the reader's patience. Our modes of thinking are bound to find this weird and exotic confusion of the 'ontological' with what would to us be 'psychological', confusing and puzzling. Yet a closer look soon reveals that the difference is by no means one of premises—'mystical thought of the East'—but of appearance. Traditionally our 'realistic' ontology was acquired for the price of a 'creatio ex nihilo'—a most weird and puzzling conception in view of the Indian realistic concept of causality (any real product must have a real cause, including material cause). Modern Occidental thought is quite prepared to operate with the concept of 'quantum'—a 'real' which may take on the form of an energy wave or that of a (material) particle. Thus when in the previous pages the phenomenal world was said to be the 'solidified radiance' or 'concretized emotion', this is less irreconcileable with the notion of a quantum or of the world as materialized thought of God. The difference between Occidental and Indian thought here is thus not due to different premises; what is different here is the point of emphasis. Now this emphasis is placed not on any 'objective', neutral aspect of the phenomenal world 'an sich', but on those aspects which were felt to be directly connected with man's spiritual pursuit. This is best explained in a more general context, when we have looked at some further conceptions; but for the moment the following metaphor may be helpful. There are many different ways possible for a reflection on 'woman'; in a context in which 'desires' are a problem area, it is bound to happen that 'woman as stimulating man's desires' will be the aspect most pronounced, and from here it is only a small step to an 'objective', 'ontological' definition of 'woman as embodied evil desire' or even 'as wicked' . . .

The different conceptions we have been looking at so far have one feature in common which distinguishes them from others in our spectrum. Whether involving Krishna, Kali or Shiva, they all imply a 'substantialist' understanding of the Absolute. Such an understanding goes traditionally against the very grain of Buddhism which, after all, evolved the Bodhisattva ideal as its 'return to the world'. In early Buddhism (where *moksha* appears styled also 'nirvana') any conceptual determination of the liberating experience and its possible ontological status is rejected. Only 'negative' labels are possible, like the following:

> Because it is attainable by means of the special cognition perfected by unfailing effort, . . . because it has existence in the ultimate meaning, *nirvana* is not non-existent. So this was said: 'there is, monks, an unborn, not become, not made, uncompounded, and were it not for this unborn (etc.) no escape could be shown here for what is born, has become, is made, is compounded.'[6]

The Bodhisattva ideal of Mahayana Buddhism implied a commuting between the 'unborn' and 'what is born', and thus really substituted it for the one-directional 'escape' implied in the above passage. It seems logical that the spiritual union between 'wisdom' and 'compassion' postulated for the Bodhisattva demanded some kind of metaphysical framework within which it could be envisaged. This evolved, for instance, in

the school of Nagarjuna, naturally in typical Buddhist, non-substantialist manner. Indeed, it is argued here, *samsara* and *nirvana* are interrelated, held together by a 'unity of being': it is their very 'essencelessness' which underlies both. What is done here is that a far-reaching conclusion is drawn from the traditional assumption that everything on the plane of *samsara* lacks an 'essence'—a non-transient centre of self-identity and of distinctiveness. The conclusion was that in such a case even *samsara* would not permit an ontological definition in terms of 'is', 'is not', etc.—it is 'empty'—just as traditionally *nirvana* had been regarded beyond any such definitions. This produced stunning statements like this:

> There is no difference between *samsara* and *nirvana*, and there is no difference between *nirvana* and *samsara*. The borders of the one are also the borders of the other. There is nothing at all which separates the two from each other.[7]

Both are 'empty', and it is thus 'emptiness' (*shunyata*) which unites them; the Bodhisattva commutes in one reality, by realizing this 'emptiness' through the perfection of his wisdom and by taking the phenomena seriously through his compassion. The phenomenal world of our ordinary experience 'is there'; it ceases to be there in *nirvana*[8]; and the ultimate insight of 'wisdom. . . . reveals both to be 'empty', neither there nor not there: final truth experientially available to the Bodhisattva.

Nagarjuna's thought appears far removed from the world of Caitanya or Ramprasad Sen. Yet a brief glance at two further spiritual models will reveal, I hope, that we are dealing here indeed with a spectrum. We may conveniently begin by looking once again at one area of human experience which has provided such an important focal point of Indian spirituality: the 'altered states of consciousness' achieved through the meditational exercises of *yoga*. Just as Arjuna meets through it Krishna and is then pushed back into the world, the Bodhisattva achieves by the same means his perfection of wisdom. At a time when *moksha* could simply be identified with these exalted states, *samsara* as the phenomenal plane was simply envisaged as its opposite: final insight logically contrasted with 'ignorance', and in turn this ignorance is envisaged as the primary cause for man's continued existence in *samsara*. As long as the radically anti-substantialist attitude implied in the notion 'emptiness' was adhered to, little could change in those conceptions of ignorance and wisdom. We know however of certain trends within Mahayana Buddhism—certainly contemporary with, if not earlier than, Nagarjuna—which followed a somewhat different line. A 'self-luminous mind', as it were the locus of enlightenment, acquires more positive, transcendental characteristics and begins to play the role of a unifying factor containing both *samsara* and *nirvana*. Inadvertently it usurps the position of 'emptiness'. The phenomena of ordinary experience obscure this 'mind'—they *are* ignorance; yet as 'empty' phenomena they become transparent and permit the experience of 'enlightenment'. The Buddhists still try to avoid a further substantialist inroad by maintaining that such a Mind is 'empty', that enlightenment is no more than perceiving the one reality 'such as it is'. But this line of development is taken over by the Hindus, particularly by Shankara (7th century A.D.), and turned into a very prestigious 'Hindu system' by identifying this 'self-luminous mind' with the Upanishadic *brahman*. In a sense, this turned the whole Buddhist approach upside down: traditionally, and also in Shankara, *brahman* is regarded as the *one real*—a concept specifically rejected in Buddhism. The phenomenal differentiation of the world is explained as 'illusion', 'unreal', or 'ignorance', and its relationship with *brahman* is defined in a rather nebulous manner as *advaita*—'non-dual'[9]. *Moksha* is envisaged as the elimination of this ignorance, which *is samsara*. We seem to have returned in a full circle to our initial starting point.[10]

* * * *

This may be the right moment to survey the material which we have collected so far and attempt a more general description. The situation encountered in Part I can be formalized in this way:

(A) *moksha* (realized through
↑ destruction of *karma*)
samsara (caused by *karma*)

Karma (lit. 'action'), a kind of residue of all one's activities, whether positive or negative, is already at an early stage explained as due to 'ignorance' and 'desires'. From here we moved to a more complicated situation:

(B) *moksha*

samsara = earthly existence due to Krishna's will / to compassion

Here the crucial point is the continued existence on earth which cannot be described in terms of *samsara*; or in different words, *samsara* by itself ceases to denote 'earthly existence' as such. In the present Part III we looked at various ways in which (B) was developed and placed on a more satisfactory conceptual basis. The 'spectrum' which I have assumed to exist may be represented as follows:

(C) absolute — unity of being = emptiness / Krishna/Kali/Shiva / Mind

phenomena

samsara = unliberated aspect due to ignorance/desires/emotions

moksha = liberated aspect due to wisdom/surrender/'separation'

Common here is that besides a fundamental unity of being a differentiation of an 'absolute' and a 'relative' or phenomenal realm or aspect is assumed, and that *samsara* and *moksha* are now strictly two facets of the phenomenal plane. How precisely this 'unity of being' is defined is interconnected with the kind of factor envisaged as decisive for the phenomenal alternative *samsara : moksha*. Thus for example, when the unity is seen as Mind, it is perfectly logical to assume not only a 'mental' nature for the phenomena, but also a 'mental' (=meditational) factor as decisive for *samsara : moksha*. When it is envisaged as the love between Krishna and Radha, it is perfectly logical not only to regard the phenomena as 'solidified love', but also make the 'right' kind of love the cause for liberation. Our dichotomy thus appears here to distinguish whether or not the individual has made himself available—in devotion, surrender, wisdom, etc.—to the whole, the 'unity of being', and whether or not the phenomena are cutting him off from it[11]. What remains important here is the fact that my 'absolute' is not substantial (like Nagarjuna's *emptiness* or Shiva in the Tantras). Once it becomes identified with the 'one real' (as Shankara's *brahman*), it also becomes easier to read the pattern differently: *samsara-moksha* rotate by ninety degrees and denote directly *brahman : avidya* (ignorance).

(D) *brahman* (real) *moksha* knowledge

advaita

illusory phenomena *samsara* ignorance

Somewhat rashly—but haven't I been rash all the way through?—I am tempted to say that the tension between (C) and (D) describes the inner tension of major expressions of Indian spirituality over a long period in time. I use 'spiritual' intentionally here, for however precisely an individual school or system tried to spell out its metaphysical structures—the pattern—, this has never prevented individuals or groups from evolving their own *spiritual* reading of this pattern, and it is here that (C) and (D) circumscribe the major area of choice.

* * * *

However, even the briefest and most superficial exploration of Indian spirituality must not forget to make reference to yet another strand in this complex tradition. It is represented by a whole range of courageous individuals such as Basavanna, Kabir and Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion[12]—and the Buddha himself may well be included here—who felt that not only rituals and spiritual exercises but also theologies and philosophies, names and labels interfered with unimpeded, unobstructed pure spirituality. They heaped scorn and

ridicule on everything that appeared to them as 'established' religion, appealed in their vernacular poems to the masses not to get carried away by externals (including concepts and systems), but to open up to—the indescribable mystery. Just *be*! There is nothing to *do*, no goal to be reached! Wait, and it will *happen*! A spiritual freedom devoid of mythical images and conceptual structures, spiritual disciplines and institutional frames is advocated which by its very nature cannot spell out its own content—language is understood to achieve no more than shock, assist in the breaking down of the obscuring walls and thereby in the 'happening'. Whilst I cannot possible hope to do any justice to these poets, we must take notice of them as an integral part of Indian spirituality: over a period of two and a half millennia they appeared time and again, trying to demolish what they felt were obstacles to spirituality, getting 'institutionalised' themselves by later generations, while others carried on with their task.

Some concluding remarks

What have we been doing in the previous pages? Anybody familiar with the Indian traditions must have noticed the absence of any overall historical frame of reference and a certain cavalier attitude towards conventional labels, systems and categories of classification. It has almost appeared as if I regarded Indian spirituality as a whole. Obviously the present last few remarks cannot provide a justification, specification, detailed modification or whatever of this impression, and instead I can only state blandly that it may well be possible to regard the millennium between say 500 and 1500 AD as a culturally evolved and socially perpetuated era of common discourse. That means, it seems to me, that behind the fixed labels, the 'systems' and 'schools' of the text-books, an underlying discussion can be recognised. In spite of my using expressions like 'pattern', and diagrams, I don't regard this discussion itself as thereby fixed. What I am really trying to get at is the general frame within which this discussion takes place, and its inner rhythm or lines of movement. This I have attempted to describe, for instance, as spiritual 'readings' of metaphysical systems. Relatively simple patterns [like my (A) and (B)] can be regarded as building blocks for the more complex ones, first in a historical sense, but secondly also in a logical one—note the re-emergence of (A) in (D).

One last question may be asked here: what about the *content* of Indian spirituality? We began with a quotation from Radhakrishnan, in which something like a content description was attempted. I wonder whether 'spiritual tendencies' really encompasses the oscillation between the divergent views concerning the phenomena; and yet, in view of occidental consumerism, the oscillating spectrum as a whole might well appear in stark contrast. Whether or not we decide to envisage the dynamism of the 'inner discussion' underlying the systems and schools as a content, one point emerges with all clarity: it seems a dubious enterprise to pick bits and pieces from the 'surface' and use them for any comparative purpose—or judgment.

Footnotes

1. See my forthcoming *Viraha-bhakti: The early history of Krishna devotion in South India*, OUP, Delhi, 1981? (=Oxford University South Asian Studies Series, vol. 3).
2. A wide variety of material will be found in I.M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion* (Pelican Books, 1971). Unlike Krishna ecstasy, however, most of the examples referred to by Lewis are understood by the respective devotees as 'possession'.
3. Translated from M. Lupsa, *Chants a Kali de Ramprasad*, Pondicherry, 1967, (PIFI, No. 30), p. 98 (song 79).
4. Goudriaan, pp. 54ff in: *Hindu Tantrism*, by S. Gupta et al., Leiden, 1979.
5. The main theologians here are Jiva and Rupa Gosvami, whose works have been summarised by S.K. De in his *Early history of the Vaisnava faith and movement in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1961, pp.166-223; 254-419.
6. Quoted from E. Conze, *Buddhist texts through the ages*, New York, 1964, pp. 102, 95. The text is Buddhaghosha's *Visuddhimagga* 509, and the passage quoted by him is *Udana* 81.
7. Nagarjuna's *Madhyamaka-karikas*, XXV, 19f.
8. When the Mahayana contrasts *samsara* with *nirvana*, its understanding of the latter term differs from that of earliest Buddhism or Buddhaghosha in that it denotes merely a 'nothing', a stopping of the *real* continuity of *samsara* (compare the notion of *nirvana* found in the Sarvastivada or Sautrantika).
9. One of the stereotyped metaphors used to explain this relationship is that of the snake and the rope: in the dim light of evening, a man mistakes a piece of rope for a snake (= through ignorance the one real, *brahman*, is mistaken for the differentiated world of

the phenomena.) However, even if there *is* no more than a rope, one still would have to regard the *concept* of a snake as 'real' in some sense, which in turn must have been acquired from some *real* snake. All this is rather mysteriously expressed by means of 'non-dual'.

10. In a sense, this is not surprising, since Shankara purports to do no more than systematise the Vedanta, viz. the Upanishads. But since the conceptual structure he uses for this system is ultimately derived from Mahayana Buddhism, a fluctuation in the 'reading' of his conception (to be discussed below) arises from this.

11. This 'being cut off' becomes conceptually clear particularly in the notion of *anavam* which the South Indian Shaiva-Siddhanta evolved. It denotes a 'framentation', 'isolation' of the individual (from *anu*, 'atom, fragment'), in relation to the all-pervasive Shiva. Compare also *Bhagavad-Gita* VII, 14: 'this is my *maya* consisting of material components; they will transcend it who take refuge with me.'

12. See for examples A. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Shiva*, Penguin Classics; C. Vaudeville, *Kabir*, Oxford, 1974; W. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, Oxford, 1968.

THE 'INDISPENSABILITY' OF THE INCARNATION

J. Astley

I

Professor Stephen Sykes's essay, 'The Incarnation as the foundation of the Church', is one of the most interesting papers from the critics of the 'mythographers' printed in the recent collection *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued*. [1] In it he argues that 'the place of the incarnation in catholic orthodoxy is, in the first instance, in the form of a story' (p.115)—a 'true' story (p.117)—albeit a story with 'doctrinal implications'. Sykes argues that 'the language of the story is irreplaceable and necessarily temporal and sequential; but it is not, for that reason, as a whole mythological or poetic or metaphorical . . .' (p.116). He rejects Maurice Wiles's view[2] that understanding such a story (Wiles says 'myth') is a matter of finding some corresponding ontological truth, for 'in this case the myth becomes disposable'. More precisely he avers that:

> The incarnation is, in the first instance, an event in a story which renders who God is in concrete form. It is not a story which illustrates something which we otherwise already know, nor is it a story which is archetypal in the human consciousness. Rather it is a story whose meaning cannot be rendered otherwise than by the narrative. It is, literally, indispensable. (p.122)

Later he adds that, 'It is indispensable because it is in the end by means of stories that human identity is patterned' (p.123), and 'that it is by means of this, and no other story, that God desires that he shall be identified' (p.125). The incarnation, therefore, is a story—or an event in a story; incarnational theology, on the other hand, consists of 'a variety of different articulations of the incarnation, whose primary form is the story of God's self-identification with the human condition' (*loc.cit.*).

Now this is at first sight a most illuminating and fruitful position, and the importance of story in Christian theology has been stressed by a number of recent writers[3]. My concern in this paper, however, is to attempt to analyse and discuss the senses in which the incarnation story, or 'drama'[4], might be viewed as indispensable. Before embarking on that exercise, however, I should say that I fully accept the notion that the incarnation theme exists primarily in the form of a story or narrative[5], expressed best perhaps in some Christmas hymns, and that incarnational theology—*doctrines* of the incarnation—are secondary, more or less inadequate, articulations and explications of that story[6]. If this is true, it is as true of the 'two-nature model' in Christology as it is of the less orthodox 'revelation' or other models[7]. So the 'story ploy' can not be regarded as a straightforward defence of Chalcedonian

orthodoxy.

II

There are a number of ways in which the story of the incarnation may be regarded as indispensable, although some of them do tend to merge into others.

(a) It may have an indispensable evocative function. Thus the story of the incarnation may evoke for us a religious intuition, either in the sense of an experience of God (or Christ), or in the sense of a revelation of theological truth. Ian Ramsey argued at great length for the evocative power of all sorts of religious language. For him theology was largely a matter of telling stories until 'the penny dropped'[8]. Although Ramsey attempted to hold together the evocative and representative functions of religious discourse[9], there is no reason why we cannot claim that certain stories have the capacity of engineering a religious disclosure without arguing that the story must then serve to represent that which is discerned[10]. Perhaps the incarnation story functions like a mystic's mantra, inducing in us a religious experience by linguistic means. In this case its use is justifiable on pragmatic grounds,'if it works'[11]; incarnational *theology*, however, is only justified if it adequately articulates and represents what is disclosed in the experience which is evoked by meditation on the incarnation *story*. But there is no reason why the two should be related in any other way[12].

However, the relationship between the incarnation story and incarnational theology is usually regarded as being less 'accidental' than this.

(b) It might be argued that the incarnation story

has a rather different evocative function, in that it can give rise to a commitment quite beyond the power of much incarnational theology. John Hick[13] has spoken of the truth of a myth—a mythic concept or image as well as a narrative myth—in terms of its capacity to give rise to an 'appropriate' commitment. Certainly the concrete language of the incarnation story is most at home among the 'first order' religious language of hymns, prayers and confessions in which people make strong existential religious commitments. By contrast, incarnational theology seems too abstract and recondite to give rise effectively to real commitment. We can 'believe in' the story; but our faith is only of the 'belief that' variety with regard to the doctrines.

(c) The latter distinction is clearly closely related to the notion that a story has, or evokes, an affective component that is more than, and cannot be reduced to, its cognitive meaning. Stories arouse emotions, doctrines rarely do[14].

(d) It is not always clear how far such views are separable from the claim that the story has an irreducible *cognitive* content. The notion of irreducible (religious) metaphors has been much discussed, and the incarnation story may be regarded as at least in part metaphorical[15]. On Max Black's 'interaction view' of metaphors our thoughts about the metaphor and the literal expression interact producing a new meaning that is the resultant of that interaction[16]. A metaphor, therefore, is no decorative substitute for a literal expression; nor is it a condensed or elliptical simile[17]. Interaction metaphors, according to Black, are 'not expendable'; for any literal 'equivalent' expression will fail 'to give the insight that the metaphor did' and there will be 'a loss of cognitive content'[18].

Earl MacCormac is one of those who argue that both religious language and scientific language contain metaphors that are not reducible to literal paraphrases. However,

> if by 'irreducible', one means that no way exists to understand the metaphor by analogy to ordinary experience, then irreducible metaphors are not even metaphors but are unintelligible gibberish. If, however, by 'irreducible', one means that no exact paraphrase exists, then it becomes quite possible for irreducible metaphors to play a legitimate role in language, for this second delineation allows for the analogous interpretation of a metaphor in ordinary terms even though such an interpretation may not capture the full meaning of the metaphor. Critics of language have acted as if irreducible religious metaphors were entirely beyond the possibility of understanding, forgetting that 'irreducibility' might prohibit an exact paraphrase, but not necessarily prevent a partial interpretation by analogy.[19]

Thus the cognitive irreducibility thesis should not be regarded as implying complete inability to reduce, but rather inability to completely reduce, the metaphor. In theology, as in many other areas of knowledge (e.g. science, metaphysics), metaphorical/analogical language is essential. For literal language is an inadequate medium for the representation of the meta-empirical objects of religious and scientific language games and the key ideas of metaphysical explanations of reality as a whole[20]. But the claims of coherence and clarity, and the need for inferential argument, demand some sort of partial specification of the metaphor (that does not reduce it to, or replace it by, a univocal term)[21].

We may note here that the theological drama in which God appears among the *dramatis personae* would be regarded by many as couched in a mythological form more readily reducible than the irreducible core of metaphorical/analogical language about God that it encloses. For to say that the 'living' and 'loving' God *'descends from heaven to earth'*, is to use both irreducible religious analogy and reducible and avoidable *myth*.

(e) Another argument why the incarnation story cannot be translated without remainder into any other form lies in its character as a story. Sykes argues that the abstract nouns applied to God, e.g. righteousness, holiness, loving-kindness 'are not identifiable apart from stories which exemplify or illustrate what is being referred to'. Thus

> To speak of who God is with the precision required for the ordering of human response to him entails telling a story or stories in

which who he is is exemplified or illustrated. (p. 122)[22]

Perhaps Sykes is touching on an epistemological issue here. A person's character dispositions are only known to others through their expression in particular forms of observable behaviour[23]. Similarly, we can only know God's character through his acts, and these are spoken of in authoritative stories. Such *narratives* cannot be replaced by *descriptions* of God's character; for the latter are no more than second-order conclusions from the former, first-order, data. Their status is derivative and parasitic.

However, we should not fail to note the disanalogy between knowledge of God and knowledge of a man through their acts. For the expressions of the activity of God are not strictly comparable with pieces of human behaviour. In particular, God's creative activity results in the bringing into being, and sustaining in being, of the whole Universe. Unlike a human being's activity, it is not expressed in an observable change within the Universe. Human behaviour can be represented by stories; but how can this 'behaviour' of the transcendent, creator God be adequately 'storied'? Stories about God can only take the form of myths; they are necessarily anthropomorphic.

There is a sense, then, in which we may regard the parables of Jesus, and the parable that was Jesus, as indispensable for our understanding of the character of God. We need some authoritative stories. But we must recognise (a) that *the parables Jesus told* were *parables*: that was their particular status as stories, taken literally they were often untrue; and (b) that although some such stories were necessary, these particular parables could have been replaced by other similar ones. Surely more than this is meant by the claim that the incarnation story is indispensable?

(f) There is another form of irreducibility. a story, like a parable, often comes without any interpretative commentary. Like a good sermon it has holes in it to be filled in by the listener. He is the one who has to construe the story: drawing his own implications from it, applying it to himself and understanding it for himself. Then, and only then, does it become his story too—if he has the ears to hear and the wit to discern the character of the God whose actions are being narrated. There is here another, very real, sense in which the story cannot be translated without loss into another form (a set of assertions). For the hearer would then have lost his chance to participate. He would be receiving his theology second-hand, and would thus be denied the opportunity of drawing out for himself the theological implications of the story. He would not be doing theology, only learning somebody else's.

III

Now I do not know how many of these senses of indispensability Professor Sykes would recognise. He concentrates on analysis (e), but might well be willing to adopt some of the others in addition.

One of the difficulties in commenting on the claim that the incarnation story is indispensable is that the 'story of the incarnation' is not spelled out in sufficient detail. Only when this has happened can we sensibly comment on the status of its language and the sense(s) in which we might claim it to be 'true'. Certainly many of the 'mythographers' agree that the incarnation is a story, but go on to ascribe to it the status of a myth (a 'mythic narrative' employing 'mythic concepts'), treating it as 'a broad imaginative conception' ('motif') which should be understood 'as a basic metaphor' (J.H. Hick, *I M*, p. 48). It is this story, they argue, that has been variously interpreted in the history of Christian doctrine and needs reinterpreting today. Maurice Wiles's interesting attempt to translate the story into an equivalent ontological truth[24] is an attempt to construct such a doctrine for today. It fails largely because as a Christology it is not specific enough. It says a lot about Man in general, but not enough about Jesus in particular. The supposed parallel between the doctrine of incarnation—redemption and the doctrines of creation and fall is not close enough[25] Creation and fall relate the relationship between God and Man in general. But the incarnation at least is primarily about the relationship between

Yet if the Christologies of Hick and Wiles seem to be reductions of the story of the incarnation, this is because they are deliberately *designed* as such. Their reductionism is intentional, rather than (just?) inevitable. For their authors wish to reject a number of implications of the story of the incarnation. Some of these implications derive from its supposed mythological form (e.g. the problem of the pre-existence of Christ). Others, however, are unrelated to the inadequacy of mythology (e.g. the issue of the uniqueness of Christian revelation and salvation). Hick and Wiles are deliberately attempting critical, corrective theologies.

Perhaps we might examine with profit the stories of the creation and fall as interpreted in much current Christian theology. Are they being 'reduced in content' compared with their classical narrative forms? Do they 'lose something in translation'? Of course, such phrases are not value neutral. What we should really be asking is whether anything *of value* is being lost in their contemporary interpretations. When the Genesis myths are interpreted in terms of the ontological dependence of the cosmos on God, there is clearly a loss of evocative and affective power, of dramatic form, etc. The notion of ontological dependence is abstract, prosaic, non-pictorial; it does not stimulate the imagination as readily as a creation story[27]. All this is loss. But there is gain as well; indeed that very loss may be viewed as a gain. For the mythological elements of the story have been pruned away, and with them the grounds for many misleading implications about the relationship between God and the world[28]. In the act of replacing the story by its 'equivalent' doctrine has the theologian not—to resurrect the often scorned analogy—sloughed off the husk to reveal the true kernel? The story of creation can do and say a lot of valuable things that the doctrine cannot, but it can do and say a lot of harmful or irrelevant things as well. This argument applies even more clearly to the fall, for today's received doctrinal understanding of the fall is even more reductionist[29] when compared with the orthodox story—and needs to be so.

IV

In conclusion we should note that there is yet another motive at work in the attempts of mythographers to dispense with (or reduce, or interpret) the incarnation story. And this motive arises from their view of the enterprise of systematic theology itself. For it is clear that many contemporary Christian theologians regard the theme of creation, rather than that of incarnation, as the key to the interpretation of Christian theology—and therefore as the foundation of theology, and indeed 'the foundation of the Church' (contrast Sykes, *I M*, p. 127). They wish, therefore, to interpret incarnation in terms of creation, recognizing that in the relationship of creation we already have a most intimate link between God and his world (including Man). Thus Christology is construed on the revelation model, the God thus revealed being the one who is already very close to his creation. We may note further how the motifs of the fall and the atonement are also fitted into a creation-dominated theology[30]. The 'moral and religious value of the incarnation'[31] is claimed by many to be identical with the moral and religious value of creation. Thus Geoffrey Lampe writes of 'creation and salvation as one continuous process'[32], for:

> Salvation is that part, or aspect, of the divine creative activity by which man comes to be informed by God's presence, made in his image and likeness, and led to respond with trust and willing obedience to the love and graciousness of his Creator.[33]

Such a creation-dominated theology has been criticised as a 'form of deism, according to which God never does anything at any one time that is genuinely different from what he does at any other time'[34]. For it views God as working primarily through the order of creation (general providence) rather than intervening in his universe by miracle, judgment or incarnation. However, such a position is surely not deistic[35]; it is, rather, radically theistic. Indeed it could be argued that it is the interventionist account of God that is more deistic. For if God is occasionally, ('specifically') present at space-time co-ordinates XX' YY' more than he is at AA' BB', then he is more

often then not 'specifically' (relatively) absent from his world. But the self-giving God of Christian theism is surely always as intimately present to his creation as he can be, although some parts of his creation—e.g. sacraments, agapeistic people, and supremely Jesus Christ—reveal him more clearly or respond to him more fully than others[36].

Such a theology, focusing as it does on the Creator-Father rather than the Saviour-Son, commends itself to many precisely because it is is non-interventionist and, in that regard, 'reductive'[37]. The Christian stories are, inevitably, interventionist in form, because of the logic of the unsophisticated concepts of God and the world that they contain. Many theologians are therefore willing to accept the 'reduction' that the translation of the orthodox dramas into their own doctrinal interpretations necessitates. Indeed they welcome it.

NOTES

1. Edited by M. Goulder, S.C.M. (1979). Hereinafter referred to as *I M*.
2. In J. Hick (ed.), *The Myth of God Incarnate (M G I)*, S.C.M. (1977), ch. 8.
3. Cf. R.H. King, *The Meaning of God*, S.C.M. (1974), ch.5; S.M. TeSelle, *Speaking in Parables*, S.C.M. (1975), ch.6.
4. Cf. the analysis in J. Knox, *The Humanity and Divinity of Christ*, C.U.P. (1967), ch. 1. For a recent popular account of the 'traditional' cosmic drama of Christian orthordoxy and its limitations, as viewed by one of the mythographers, see D. Cupitt, *The Debate about Christ*, S.C.M. (1979), especially pp. 30ff.
5. Ninian Smart has described a *myth* in a happy phrase as relating to a 'moving picture of the sacred'—i.e. as a 'form of *story*' (*The Phenomenon of Religion*, Macmillan (1973), pp. 79f.)
6. And therefore, presumably, reductions of it and replacements for it.
7. Cf. J. McIntyre, *The Shape of Christology*, S.C.M. (1966).
8. Cf. "The Challenge of the Philosophy of Language", *London Quarterly & Holborn Review*, CLXXXVI (1961), p. 249, "Persons and Funerals", *Hibbert Journal*, LIV, 4 (1956), p. 338.
9. Cf. "Letter to the Editor...", *Theology*, LXXIV, 609 (1971); *Christian Discourse*, O.U.P. (1965), pp. 69-71.
10. Cf. J. Astley, 'A Critical Analysis of the Religious Epistemology of Ian Ramsey', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Durham (1978), pp. 275ff. & 296f.
11. This may lead to an 'anything goes' attitude to religious language, of which Ramsey has been accused. Cf. *Religious Language*, S.C.M. (1957), p. 80; see N. Smart, "Paradox in Religion II", *Aristotelian Society Supp. Vol. XXXIII* (1959), pp. 221-225.
12. Ramsey's analysis of the evocative, engineering function of religious language has some similarities to the more recent views of Don Cupitt: Cf. *Jesus & the Gospel of God*, Lutterworth (1979) *passim* and *The Debate about Christ*, pp. 137f.
13. *God and the Universe of Faiths*, Macmillan (1973), pp. 166f, 175.
14. Cf. Hick, *I M*, pp. 47f.
15. Cf. Hick *M G I*, p. 177; *I M*, p.49. Both verbs and nouns may be used metaphorically: the 'descent' motif in the story of the incarnation is as metaphorical as the 'Light of Light' imagery.
16. M. Black, *Models and Metaphors*, Cornell U.P. (1962), pp. 38ff; Cf. I.A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, O.U.P. (1936), chs. V and VI.
17. Black, *op.cit.*, pp. 31ff.
18. *Ibid*, p. 46, Cf. M. Beardsley "Metaphor", in P. Edwards (ed. *The Encyclopædia of Philosophy*, Macmillan (1967), Vol. 5.
19. E.R. MacCormac, 'Scientific and Religious Metaphors', *Religious Studies*, 11. 4 (1975), p. 405.
20. Cf. R.J. Kearney, 'Analogical Predication', unpublished D. Phil. thesis, University of Oxford (1974), pp. 179ff; S. Pepper, 'The Root Metaphor Theory of Metaphysics', *Journal of Philosophy* XXXII, 14 (1935).
21. Cf. P.C. Hayner, 'Analogical Predication', *Journal of Philosophy*, LV, 20 (1958), p. 861; R.J. Kearney, 'Analogy and Inference', *The New Scholasticism*, 51, 2 (1977).
22. Cf. R.H. King, *op.cit.*
23. Cf. G. Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, Penguin (1963), ch. V etc.
24. Cf. M.F. Wiles, 'Does Christology rest on a Mistake?', in S.W. Sykes & J.P. Clayton (eds.), *Christ, Faith & History*, C.U.P. (1972); *M G I*, pp. 161ff.
25. *Christ, Faith & History*, pp. 7ff; *M G I*, pp. 159ff.
26. Hick avoids the danger of over generalisation, cf. *M G I*, p. 184.
27. It can only be made to do so by means of pictorial, metaphorical expressions: 'the world hangs upon God', 'beneath are the everlasting arms' etc.
28. E.g. the belief that creation necessarily refers, or only refers, to the beginning of the Universe; the belief that creation and evolution are incompatible.
29. It could be claimed that systematic theology has not yet come to terms with the radical reductionism of liberal theology's treatment of the fall.
30. As, e.g., in the theodicy of John Hick, Cf. *I M* pp. 80f; *Evil and the God of Love*, Collins (1968), part IV; *God and the Universe of Faiths*, chs. 4 & 5.
31. Cf. Brian Hebblethwaite's essay of this title in *I M*.
32. G.W.H. Lampe, *God as Spirit*, O.U.P. (1977), p. 180.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 17; cf. pp. 45, 114, 222f.
34. E.L. Mascall, *Theology and the Gospel of Christ*, S.P.C.K. (1977), p. 203. The criticism is directed against Maurice Wiles.

35. Cf. M. Wiles, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine*, S.C.M. (1974), p. 38.

36. The point is well made in a comment on the rejection of the doctrine of *avatar* (descent, incarnation) in Sikh theism:

> 'Belief in avatar would suggest to Sikhs not a caring God, who restores order when the need arises but a casual one who lets things slide and then is compelled reluctantly to intervene' (W.O. Cole and P.S. Sambhi, *The Sikhs*, R.K.P. (1978), p.95)

37. It is less 'supernaturalistic' than the alternative and therefore arguably more Protestant than Catholic —cf. Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, S.C.M. (1968), pp. 192f. A similar interventionist/non-interventionist contrast arises in our understanding of revelation. This can be analysed in an 'interventionist' manner, with God deciding to reveal himself to Moses in this particular way, at this particular time. Alternatively, we may speak of Moses's 'discovery of', 'experience of' or 'response to', the God who is always and everywhere revealing as much of himself as he can (in so far as we can speak of divine 'revelation' in abstraction from the human appropriation of it). On both analyses, we should note, the initiative remains with God's self-disclosure.

CHURCH, EUCHARIST AND VATICAN II

Nicholas Paxton

> "One of the results of recent developments in theology and in the understanding of the Church is that almost all those who are concerned with these matters agree in the view that worship is the centre of the Church's life. There is a sound theological basis for this view, as a result both of the findings of New Testament scholars and also of the careful re-consideration of the nature of worship"[1]

These words of the Lutheran theologian Wilhelm Hahn, written in 1959, may have been an accurate description of the Lutheran Church's view of itself at that time; but they can hardly be said to have described most of the ecclesiology found in Roman Catholicism in the preceding century. On the contrary, the main thrust of the First Vatican Council's idea of the Church was to emphasise the teaching authority and hierarchical importance of the body of Bishops, with the Pope at their head; and, when R.C. Canon Law was finally codified into a book of 2414 canons (promulgated in 1917), the prevailing vision of the Church was very much a juridical one, of an ecclesial institution governed along lines based ultimately on Roman Law. Typical of this was its division into clerics, Religious and lay persons—the last-named being very negatively defined as those who were not clerics or members of Religious Orders. This view led, not only to the heavily clerically-orientated outlook found in Roman Catholicism between the Vatican Councils, but also to a very passive view of the eucharist as something which the president celebrated while everyone else just looked on and, if they wished, said their private prayers. Such a position led in turn to an idea of receiving Communion as an almost exclusively self-and-Christ encounter, to the great detriment of any awareness in most people of the communitarian aspects of the Church's life and worship.

It is from this situation that one is, thankfully, (i) able to trace the new vision which has emerged over the past half-century, and especially at Vatican II, of the Church as (ii) the New People of God, (iii) the sacramental body of believers, of whose activity (iv) the eucharist is the summit, and which is (v) animated by the Holy Spirit. Lastly I propose to offer some reflections on how the local Church may best be made aware of itself through the eucharist and on where the future may lead us—where Christ, the Head, may lead his ecclesial Body.

Developments before Vatican II

So first we would do well to see how it was that the juridical ecclesiology of "the Church as authority-structure" of the preceding century came by stages to be developed into the more open ecclesiology of "the Church as communion of the faithful" of Vatican II. For the Church is not just an organisational institution but a

dynamic society (hence the New Testament metaphors, such as "Body of Christ" and "Bride" which refer to it as a living entity); and the realisation of the real place of the eucharist in its life, as the sharing in that banquet of Christ's self-emptying (from which the Church draws its life by participation) is naturally central to this view of its nature and task.

In the first half of the present century the Belgian theologian Emile Mersch was at pains to emphasise the Mystical Body of Christ as the basic model for any meaningful theology of the Church; while the eucharist moved somewhat nearer to the centre of ecclesial life as a result of the work of Pope Pius X, who encouraged a degree of participation by the assembly in restoring the chant and (more particularly) by encouraging the baptised to receive Communion frequently. The latter was important in that it helped to re-associate the eucharistic celebration and the reception of Communion in the minds of most Roman Catholics; for the mediaeval decline in the frequency of receiving Communion plus the later abuse of distributing it from pre-consecrated species outside the eucharistic celebration had produced a very remote view of Christ's eucharistic presence in most people's lives, with a consequent emphasis on personal devotion to the sacramental presence in the species without receiving it. This meant that the Church's corporate awareness of itself as the company of believers gave way in practice to a near-exclusive emphasis on the primacy of the religious experience of the individual, as interpreted in a "verticalist" self-and-God sense such as to minimise any realisation of the Church as other than institutional.

The major pre-Vatican II advance, however, came in Pius XII's papacy, with the promulgation of two important documents—the "ecclesiological encyclical" *Mystici Corporis* of 1943, and the "liturgical encyclical" *Mediator Dei* of 1947. In the former, Pius was careful to emphasise that "in the true assembly of Christian believers there is only one Body, one Spirit, one Lord and one Baptism"—in fine, a unity in the Church, with the Holy Spirit as its soul; while in the latter he stressed Christ's presence in the mysteries of the Church and so stated clearly that the liturgy is a public event, "the whole public worship of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, namely of its Head and of its members". Hence the participation of all the baptised in the priesthood of Christ is such that the eucharist is offered by the ministerial priest together with the people, who by their baptism are appointed to the worship of God and so spiritually unite themselves with the president at the eucharist.

This theme of the Church as a sacramental communion was taken up by such well-known theologians as Rahner, de Lubac and Yves Congar; and the implications of the Church's unity with and in Christ were drawn out carefully and systematically by the French theologian Jerome Hamer in his important (if undeservedly little-known) book, published in the same year as Vatican II opened, and titled "The Church is a Communion". (While this statement has since become a theological platitude, it was not so in most R.C. circles in 1962). Hamer was careful to stress both the vertical and the horizontal elements in the idea of Church-as-communion. Whereas the horizontal dimension would simply denote friendship within a body of individuals (and so, with reference to the eucharist, mere table-fellowship), it is the vertical aspect which is special to the Church—namely, Christ's life given to us by means of the Holy Spirit, who in turn shows himself through grace-infused personal relationships of charity within the Christian community. It is within this framework that we can go on to consider how the Second Vatican Council preached the Church as the New People, the New Israel, of God.

The Church as People of God

Although the idea of the Church as "People of God" may at first sight appear exclusivist as regards those who have not been baptised into Christ's death and resurrection, yet we have always to remember that the Biblical plan of salvation has always been set in the context of a people. God the Father chose the People of Israel, made them his own, and showered his loving-kindness upon them. So, too, Christ as Messiah has called people to make up the New People of God, the Church, of which the purpose is to share in his life and so, in presenting him to mankind, to be the sign and instrument

of the bearing of the Good News to humanity in all generations; for everyone is called to belong to this New People, or New Israel, of God[2]. As a result the Church must both pray and work to bring all people to Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, through whose ever-continuing action God makes us holy, not just as individuals but by bringing us into that single People of God which recognises and serves him in truth and holiness—and, in the communal eucharist, the Holy Spirit is poured out in abundance upon God's people as the sign of that love for us which made Christ obedient even to death. It is thus through the eucharist, as well as through the other sacraments and through our personal experience of God, that we receive (together, as one People) what the Council's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)* terms "the Call of the whole Church to Holiness". For, in virtue of having received baptism, it is evident that "all the faithful of Christ, of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and the perfection of charity"[3]. The Council's *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)* was equally emphatic about this vocation when it affirmed, with regard to the eucharist, that the congregation should be "instructed by God's word and refreshed at the table of the Lord's body . . . through Christ the Mediator, they should be drawn daily into ever closer union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all"[4]. Thus each eucharistic assembly is a local convocation of that People of God which is not just called to be holy but which is enabled to grow in holiness by its sharing in the eucharist. The New People of God was initially called to holiness by the salvific events of Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection, which have inaugurated the Kingdom of God which will be consummated in glory at the end of time. In between these two termini, the progress of man's redemption is going on, and the purpose of the Church on earth is to be the sign of God's kingdom and of its future glorious completion. Therefore the Church must clearly be a true and dynamic sign, which is why the Church is called to make up a holy community which accomplishes the fullness of its purpose in the eucharist and which, as sign of the grace of salvation, can be said to possess sacramentality of itself.

The Church as Sacrament

The Church can truly be called a sacrament insofar as a sacrament is described by the Council of Trent as "a symbol of a sacred thing and a visible form of an invisible grace"[5]. This theme of the Church's sacramentality was taken up at Vatican II in the opening paragraph of *Lumen Gentium*, which states that "by her relationship with Christ, the Church is a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind. She is also an instrument for the achievement of such union and unity". More emphatically, article 9 of the same Constitution describes how "God has gathered together as one all those who in faith look upon Jesus as the author of salvation and the source of unity and peace, and has established them as the Church, that for each and all she may be the visible sacrament of this saving unity". So, just as the Risen Christ (the primordial sacrament) is the sacrament of the Father, the Church is the sacrament of Christ as means of salvation offered to all. The outward sign of the Kingdom is formed by the visible body of believers, and the invisible grace is, of course, the inheritance of the saving Kingdom itself. The Church is enabled to preach and transmit the Good News of salvation through the baptismal sharing of its members in Christ's messianic task—for it is our common incorporation into Christ which is the great principle of unity, and we are the living parts of the Church as Christ's Body. In the words of Augustine, Christ "wished to prefigure us, his Body, in that Body in which he died, rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven; so that, where the Head has gone before, the members might hope to follow"[6]. The Church is thus the complement of Christ, since he is the Head and the Church the mystical Body (of which the soul is the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the love between the Father and the Son, animating the mystical Body by indwelling, and uniting us in the communion of saints with each other and with Christ). As the Body of Christ, the Church on earth is bound to seek the things of heaven—as *Lumen Gentium* (art. 6) puts it: "The Church on earth . . . seeks and experiences those things which are above . . . where the life of the Church is hidden with Christ in God". And it is especially in the liturgy that Christ is present in the Church[7]; for, in the Christian faith, true worship is only possible through God's self-revelation in Christ resulting in the believer's transformation in Christ. Within the different forms of liturgy, it is supremely in the eucharist that the Church as Body of Christ is cohered and made aware of its nature and mission, for (as art. 7 of *Lumen Gentium* notes), "truly partaking of the Body of the Lord in the breaking of the eucharistic Bread, we are taken up into communion with him and with one another". So it is clearly the liturgy, and especially the eucharist, which holds primacy among the different activities of the Church.

The Liturgy as Summit of the Church's Activity

Hence "the liturgy is the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed"[8] because it demonstrates the unity in Christ of the gathered assembly. Within the liturgy it is the eucharist which should have pride of place; because, when the bread is broken and given to the communicants, their unity in Christ is not just demonstrated by their receiving it together, but also effected by their receiving the sacramental presence of Christ. It is primarily in the eucharist that we also become aware both of the presence of God's Kingdom of salvation and of its progress towards the Last Days, and of the diversity of vocations and ministries in the one ecclesial Body; for the celebration is the action both of Christ and of the Kingdom People of God assembled each according to his own proper standing within that People, so that everyone fulfils his own function within the celebration and so benefits spiritually by it. In the present Roman Rite we have (at least in principle) a return to the practice of the early Roman Church, in which the involvement of different ministers in the eucharist was increased by dividing up the eucharistic functions among a large number of people—the president (when possible, the Bishop), concelebrants, deacons and then the other orders and ministries acolytes, lectors, doorkeepers etc.). In that type of assembly there was therefore a hierarchical unity and everyone had a ministry, for even those who did not hold any specific office had their share in the offering of the gifts and in the sign of peace. The R.C. Church needs to be seen to return to the practice of this principle, so that it can be emphasised to the people that, "taking

part in the eucharistic sacrifice, which is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life, they offer the divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with It"[9]. For a contribution to the proper and active participation of the whole assembly is the right and duty of every Christian in consequence of his baptism; and such participation in turn shows and strengthens the faith of the Church. As *Sacrosanctum Concilium* stresses in art. 26, "liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church, which is 'the sacrament of unity' — namely, a holy people"—a people of which the holiness is most fully demonstrated at the eucharist, in which the sealing of the New Covenant in Christ's Body and Blood is made present to the Church and thus unites us in communion with Christ and with each other. It is in the eucharist that we reach the highest earthly fulfilment of our call to be "like living stones built into a spiritual house" (cf. 1 Pet. 2, 5). For the eucharist is not just the re-presentation of Christ's actions at the Last Supper; it is also the renewal of the Church's incorporation into Christ as it approaches him in faith and charity and in the hope of heaven, regarding which the eucharist is the foretaste of the messianic banquet; and the Church is made holy by being filled with the Spirit of Christ as it enters into sacramental communion with him.

Eucharist and Holy Spirit

We therefore need to consider briefly the aspect of the eucharist as gathering of the faithful under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the eucharist we make of ourselves the "living sacrifice" of Rom. 12, 1. Yet this would be just a human, commemorative act without the action of the Holy Spirit, who makes worship the divine action animating the community and enables us to "speak the word of God with boldness" as the apostles did in Acts 4, 31. The apostolic Church was deeply aware of the Spirit's presence in its liturgical assemblies; and this awareness was taken up at Vatican II, when *Lumen Gentium* declared that "the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that he might forever sanctify the Church, and thus all believers would have access to the Father through Christ in the one Spirit" (art. 4). It went on to say that "such is especially the case in the sacred liturgy, where the power of the Holy Spirit acts upon us through sacramental signs" (art. 50). In the eucharist, the Church (endowed with the Holy Spirit) demonstrates the Spirit's presence and potentially carries through the consequences of that presence in its work for the world. Thus the eucharist contains not only the re-presentation of Christ's *kenosis* and hence the source of our redemption, but also the gift of the Holy Spirit which is the result of that *kenosis* and the effect of that redemption. So, every time the eucharist is celebrated, the Spirit is present to the assembly and received by it, if its members will but be open to him. What else are the epicleses of the eucharistic prayers for, if not to ask for the sending of the Holy Spirit to sanctify both the eucharistic elements and the eucharistic assembly? Moreover, where there is communion with Christ in the sacramental species there is also *koinonia*, inspired by the Holy Spirit, among the congregation.

Local Church and Eucharistic Assembly

But what do we mean by "congregation"? Do we use the word to refer to the local Church or only to those present at an individual eucharist? In this connection we need to note that there are two concepts of "congregation": either we use the word to refer to the local Christian brotherhood as the body of believers in a particular place, or else we use it to denote the particular worshipping assembly as actualising the ecclesial Body of Christ in that place. The difference between the two ideas is the same as that between the concepts of *Gesellschaft* (company, society) and *Gemeinschaft* (community, group), and should be borne in mind. The parish community can be defined as the number of church members living in a particular territorial area. While, by that token, it does "represent the visible Church as it is established throughout the world"[10], we also have to remember that it may well fall into a number of different groups with very little in common (though it must be admitted that the parish structure will normally provide a stable, if disparate, local assembly for the eucharist). So in many large parishes it may be necessary to subdivide the parish community into several

smaller eucharistic assemblies in order to allow people to become properly aware of their common role as sharers in the eucharist. When this has to happen (if, for any reason, it is impossible to establish a worshipping bond between all the parishioners) then the relationship of the members within the different groups should be emphasised as representing, for them, their relationship to the whole local Church, just as the entire parish community represents the local Church's relationship to the universal one.

In one way, the eucharistic assembly is a much more "open" entity than the parish: for all baptised and communicant church members, irrespective of whether or not they belong to the territorial parish, can be made welcome at the eucharistic celebration. Therefore the liturgical assembly is well placed to actualise itself as the Body of Christ in a particular time and place; and, in view of this, we can see that the ongoing process of the liturgy's renewal must constantly be directed at cohering the Christian community (and hence the local Church in every parish) into a Body aware of itself as proclaiming its faith and witness and as translating these into action. It is with this in mind that we can finally assess how we can best bring people from now on to an awareness of the eucharist as central to ecclesial life.

Into the Future

The 1980 Report *The Easter People*, issued by the R.C. Bishops of this country after the National Pastoral Congress, has reaffirmed that "the liturgy is not private but to be shared, not the worship of individuals but the united prayer of a whole people . . . it follows therefore that the Mass is the supreme expression of what the Church is and the source of all that the Church does"[11]. For the liturgy must not be an end but a beginning to the Church's appreciation of itself as a communion, both on the local and on the universal levels; its sharing in its eucharistic Lord must, if it is to be authentic sharing, lead to a new response to the call to Christian witness and mission, not merely by those who feel particularly attracted to putting these into some particular form of practice but by all those who are partakers in the eucharist. But what form will the body of partakers in the eucharist take? The problem for all Christian communities in the modern Western world is the lack of cohesion in urban societies—and, with the decline in the number of clergy as full-time upbuilders of the Christian fellowship, the repercussions of this problem for the Church are going to get worse. Therefore the priest will have to cater for several smaller groups, each of which will be able of itself to engender a *koinonia* among its members. However, this will place an obvious strain on an already depleted clergy, so that further consideration will have to be given to the idea of more "part-time" priests, who will maintain their work in other occupations while ministering to the sacramental and pastoral needs of the rest of the People of God. Vatican II, far from excluding this, clearly maintained the possibility of such ministry together with an obvious emphasis on the primacy of the ministerial vocation in every priest: for "all priests are sent forth as co-workers . . . whether they are engaged in a parochial or supra-parochial ministry, whether by manual labour they share the lot of the workers themselves . . . all indeed are united in the single goal of building up Christ's Body, a work requiring manifold roles and new adjustments, especially nowadays"[12]. The growth of priests working in other occupations and simultaneously joining in building up the Kingdom of God clearly requires more consideration.

This decline in full-time ministers also means that all communicant Christians will have to be aware of the vital importance of evangelising others by giving the example of the true living-out of the Christian faith in all its aspects; so that, just as the liturgy is the summit of the Church's life, all other forms of Christian activity may be seen to flow from it. If the Church's worship is to have any credibility to the rest of the world, this must happen. Just as merely passive presence at the eucharist with no involvement is intolerable, so is an unwillingness to allow our participation in the Body of Christ to lead us to do the works of Christ. For it is from the fact of our redemption in Christ that all else flows, and it is the eucharistic re-presentation of the work of our redemption which is distinctive to the followers of Christ. To put it another way: the three elements of

the theologico-spiritual life correspond, as Gabriel Hebert has pointed out[13], to von Hugel's distinction between the historical-institutional, the intellectual and the mystical elements in religion and its practice. But, whereas the glory of religious experience is found, in one form or another, in all world religions, the core of the Christian faith lies in the raising of mankind to the highest possible level in the salvific sacrifice of Jesus; and it is in the liturgy that we are brought to our closest awareness of sharing in that redemption with our fellow-Christians.

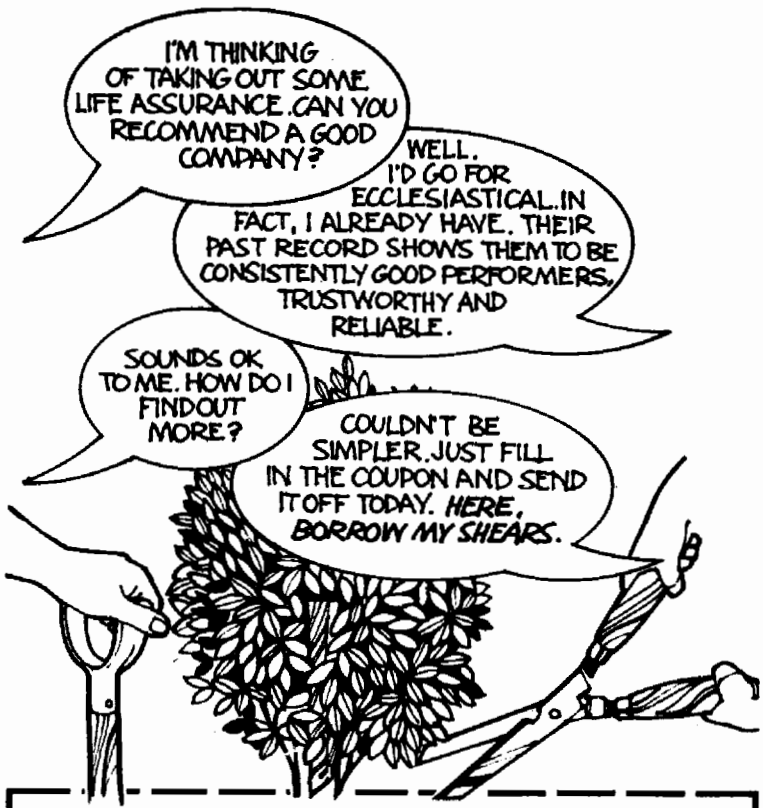
The realisation of this fact is far from being a distinctively Roman Catholic phenomenon, for John Wesley, writing in 1765, was quite clear in stating: "I advise you to lose no opportunity of attending the services of the Church, of receiving the Lord's Supper"[14]; and Pusey, representing another school of thought, also exhorted his congregation that "were this gift of God in his Sacrament better loved, and so better understood.. people would desire weekly, and they who had weekly would... desire daily"[15] and in doing so would become more aware of their unity in Christ, with each other, and with the Church in that Heaven of which the eucharist is the foretaste.

It is towards Heaven, the fullness of the Kingdom, that the ecclesial Body of Christ must forever press, especially through its sharing in his eucharistic Body. What will the Church do in the future, especially with regard to the eucharist? What it must do is continually to develop in itself the quality which Augustine called "walking onward" towards the glory of the heavenly Kingdom. "There is praise to God there, and there is praise to God here; but here it is offered by the anxious, there by the secure. . here on the way, there in the homeland... Sing and walk onward. What is it, 'to walk'? Advance, go on in virtue. For there are those, according to the Apostle [i.e. Paul] who progress to what is worse. So you, if you progress, walk onward; but go onward in virtue, go onward in noble faith. go onward in good ways; Sing—and walk onward"[16]. In every activity of the Church on earth, and most of all in every eucharist, the heart of its life in Christ, let us make that our unwavering hope and our constant prayer.

NOTES

1. Wilhelm Hahn, *Worship and Congregation* (English edn, London, Lutterworth Press, 1963), p.60.
2. cf. Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium* , hereafter L.G.) article 13.
3. ibid., art. 40.
4. Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *(Sacrosanctum Concilium*, hereafter S.C.), art. 48.
5. Trent, *Decree on the Most Holy Eucharist*, art. 3.
6. Augustine, *Enarr.* on Ps. 51, 2.
7. cf. L.G., art. 7; ibid., art. 11.
8. S.C., art. 10.
9. L.G., art. 11.
10. S.C., art. 42.
11. Report *The Easter People* (Slough, St Paul Publications, 1980), art. 59, pp.23-4.
12. Vatican II, *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (Presbyterorum Ordinis)*, art. 8.
13. cf. A.G. Hebert, *Liturgy and Society* (London, Faber & Faber, 1961 edn.), p. 112.
14. John Wesley, *Letters*, IV, 303 (to Alexander Knox).
15. E.B. Pusey, P.S. III, 345, Sermon XV.
16. Augustine, *Sermo* 256.

Some useful advice about Life.



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BOOK REVIEWS

A CENTURY OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY by W.D. Hudson. London: Lutterworth Press, 1980. pp.iii + 180. £6.95 Pbk.

This book contains a history of moral philosophy over the last one hundred years that is selective and narrowly focussed. It says nothing about moral philosophy in continental Europe. It treats of American writers only in so far as they have contributed to the two debates in British moral philosophy which are almost its sole topic.

One of these debates concerns the nature of moral judgements and expresses itself in questions like 'Do moral judgements state facts, or are they more expressions of taste?'. The second debate concerns the adequacy of utilitarianism as an account of how we distinguish between right and wrong actions. Dr Hudson is not unjustified in focussing on these two debates, in so far as they have provided the chief subject matter for British moral philosophy from the middle of the last century until recent years. So he is enabled to comment with characteristic lucidity on a succession of authors who have been important in shaping modern moral philosophy in this country.

In other respects the handling of these two debates gives me grounds for dissatisfaction. To begin with, one cannot feel absolutely confident about the way Hudson links them. He insinuates (especially in his use of the label 'intuitionism' in the last chapter) that those who are objectivists about moral judgements will be anti-utilitarians and those who are utilitarians will be anti-objectivists. This is also implicit in the parallel he draws connecting the debate between W. Whewell and J.S. Mill which opens the book and that between R.M. Hare and his critics which closes it. But it is not clear whether this link is inevitable, nor whether a 19th century utilitarian like Mill can be fitted into it. It seems to me to be very difficult to present utilitarianism as a serious answer to our moral dilemmas and at the same time to deny that its leading principles can properly be said to be true. This leads on to another worry: Hudson never really confronts the oddity of abandoning the notion of truth in morality. His discussion of R.M. Hare's prescriptivism in Ch. 6 outlines difficulties, but fails to press home the real problem that without a notion of truth in morality, all moral opinions will be alike arbitrary. If the notion of truth is this important, then a good deal of British moral philosophy before and after the last War looks like an aberration. One thing is clear: if we are to give this notion some substance in moral thought, we shall have to go beyond the trivialities of intuitionism and reforge a connection between moral philosophy and metaphysics. The Idealist writers Bradley, Bosanquet and Green, whom Hudson rather dismisses on pp. 46-57, might then seem somewhat more important than their treatment in this book suggests.

Hudson, then, tends to take post-War moral philosophy on its own terms. This is shown in numerous ways, starting with the characterisation of moral philosophy as 'meta-ethics' on the second page of the Introduction. But many contemporary writers see the immediate past of the subject in our country as the depressing story of rather trivial debates on ill-thought-out issues. There is little in this book to indicate that such opinions have been forcefully expressed in recent years (students should see M. Warnock's book below and R. Wertheimer's difficult study *The Significance of Sense* Cornell U.P., 1972).

Histories of philosophy are usually good or bad according to the adequacy of the philosophical comment they contain. Before the student spends £7 on this one, I would recommend that he looks at a few other books that cover some of the same ground, in particular: A. MacIntyre *A Short History of Ethics*, Routledge, 1967; G.J. Warnock *Contemporary Moral Philosophy*, Macmillan, 1967; and M. Warnock *Ethics since 1900*, Oxford U.P., 1960.

Peter Byrne

A CENTURY OF PROTESTANT THEOLOGY by Alasdair I.C. Heron. Lutterworth Press, 1980. ix 229pp. £6.95.

Despite the bewildering many-sidedness of recent theology, there are few guides for those who are perplexed by it. This book will improve matters, for it achieves the nearly impossible in showing in brief compass the main people, questions and trends that have dominated the Christian intellectual scene over the last century or so. Two things are shown with accuracy and clarity, and with touches of irony and wit which reveal unobtrusively the author's own view of the developments. The first is the way in which cultural and intellectual trends stemming from the Enlightenment dominate the various developments. The second, and more impressive, is that although much contemporary theology may appear to be the reaction of weakness, even panic, in the face of Christian institutional decline, the overall picture is of an astonishing variety of intellectual creativity. If Christianity in the West is due for a revival, it will owe something to the talents of those theologians of real ability and sometimes genius who have devoted themselves to the discipline—and devoted themselves despite its apparent lack of respectability in the modern world.

Some criticisms need to be made of the book's balance and detail, but they are few. Two are worth mentioning because they concern the giants of the nineteenth century and the way they have affected later theology. Recent scholarship has suggested that the doctrine of the Trinity is more important for Schleiermacher than Dr Heron allows, while his account of Hegel in this book wrongly calls him an 'absolute idealist'. It is true that the contemporary loss of the trinitarian centre of theology and the decline of theology into idealism *do* owe much to Schleiermacher and Hegel. But they must be given the credit for being far greater and more comprehensive minds than their colourless successors.

But the review must end with praise for the overall comprehensiveness of the book, and for some memorable dicta, with one of which we must close. It is easy to be impatient, sometimes, with political and liberation theologies, especially in their more fashionable and oversimplified manifestations. But, as Dr Heron reminds us at the end of his treatment of them, we should do well to remember that in Christian theology we have to do with 'the gospel of the Christ who was not crucified on an altar between two candles, but on Golgotha between two thieves.'

Colin Gunton

Simone Weil LECTURE ON PHILOSOPHY trans. H. Price, introduced by Peter Winch. C.U.P., 1978. £8.95.

Simone Weil was a remarkable Frenchwoman, known as much to the general public for the manner of her death encouraged by her own self-sacrifice, as for her philosophical and religious writings. Gradually the latter have become available in good translations, and here at last we can see something of the 'hard and systematic philosophical thinking out of which grew the characteristic ideas of her later writings which have justly attracted so much attention'.

These lectures, or rather lecture notes, are in themselves quite remarkable, for they are as taken down by one of Simone Weil's *lycee pupils in 1933-4.*

pupils in 1933-4. If ever the French system of teaching philosophy in schools were in need of vindication, the evidence lies here.

The introduction by Peter Winch, Professor of Philosophy at KCL is exceptionally good. He helps English-speaking readers to enter into the arguments taking place in these lectures, by a series of comparisons with the issues being discussed at that same time (1933-4), and later, by Wittgenstein.

The main sections of the book assemble the various notes under the general topics of Materialism, the philosophy of mind, politics and social theory, and Ethics and Aesthetics. The final section consists of a series of notes on a wide varity of topics ranging from 'the love of truth', through 'time', to 'justice and charity'.

The book is firmly and unapologetically a work of philosophy, but there is much in it that foreshadows and helps to clarify the depths of

religious insight which characterize the Simone Weil of 'Waiting on God', and 'Science, Necessity and the Love of God'. For example her respective treatments of the will (pp.203-4) and of the notion of Attention (pp.205-6) which are included amongst the outlines of prospective essay topics towards the end of the book, are full of suggestions and insights. In her subsequent development she came to regard the concept of attention, the total absorption in the presence of the other, as the key to both truth and goodness. For example in the later *Need for Roots*, she developed a concept of obligation as defined by the *needs* of others. (Much different from the current fascination with the now almost empty notion of the *rights* of others). The needs of others, however, are only revealed to those who attend without any distraction to the situation of others. In comparable fashion, she believed that science, properly so called, can only develop, where attention to nature is its basis. Where this is practised,

> "The mind does not choose the thoughts it wants to have, but shuts out the thoughts it wants to shut out." (p.205)

Only by so-doing is the mind then open to the way things are, and to be open in this way is not to be engaged in imposing patterns upon the way things are.

Stewart R. Sutherland

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE HUMAN MIND by E.L. Mascall. SPCK, 1975 pp., stiffened cover, £3.95.

Twenty years or so ago I had written at the close of a review of one of Dr Mascall's more determinedly scholastic works, 'This really will not do'. C.S. Dessain, the Oratorian censor, refused to allow the phrase. 'You can't say that about a man of Dr Mascall's distinction'. Well, I am now to review another work of Dr Mascall, and, with no censor to hinder me, what do I want to say?

Dr Mascall opens his present collection of essays with a 'defence of the intellectual principle'. The mind, *'mens, intellectus, Geist*, or spirit', complex and mysterious, is 'a very special kind of spirit, whose normal situation is to be involved with a material body', and, despite Descartes' *malin genie*, Hume's extreme 'mentalism', Kant's 'intimidatingly elaborate transcendental method', the 'heroic paradox' of British empiricists, 'the endemic vice of the Victorian theoretical physicist', and 'the brief and tragic career of the Vienna Circle', Dr Mascall is happy to declare still that 'the human mind can actually apprehend external reality'. Those who wonder that it matters whether we apprehend reality or an unfailingly consistent mirage have not yet experienced the human thirst for Truth.

The recognition of that Truth which children are taught to tell, 'and even liars hope they will be thought to be telling', differentiates man from the brutes. And, Dr Mascall suggests, it is a liveliest exercise of mind which allows us to appreciate the mysterious 'union of manhood with God in the Incarnate Son'. His essay on Chalcedonian orthodoxy reaches to the affirmation that 'it is the literal assumption of a complete human nature by an unchanged Son of God that makes Christology genuinely intelligible, while the various deviant attempts, from Apollinarius onwards, to produce a more easily acceptable figure by minimising one or other of the terms inevitably end up in increased obscurity and reduced efficacy'. Christology may, perhaps, rejoice in the luminosity of Chalcedon, but what of soteriology? 'The eternal Word's investiture of himself with manhood in the womb of Mary produced not just a transitory repercussion throughout the human race but a real and permanent change in humanity itself'. Such sartorian language clumps Dr Mascall nicely with Luther and Therese of Lisieux, and he may welcome this as another sign of that unity of mankind 'which cannot be adequately systematized in the terms of any secular thought system', but which, in its theological express, may yet contribute to our sociology and our political understanding. And to that of those South American liberationists whose Christology is open to serious theological criticism, 'unless it receives and responds to this criticism its future as a movement of *Christian* renewal seems extremely hazardous'. There is a nice turning of tables with that sentence. It is, at any rate, Dr Mascall's belief that the formula of Chalcedon 'may have greater possibilities of achievement awaiting it in our modern age'. Dr Mascall is here led first to write a four-page piece expanding a previous paragraph on the shroud in Turin, and last to consider 'sexuality and God'. I am not to be interested in that shroud which, with or against all evidence, I take to be a cere-cloth that covered some liturgically reposed figure of the sepulchred Christ. Dr Mascall's final topic is a shade more exciting: he passes from some pages about our sex-chromosomes, through a demonstration that the Second Person of the Trinity is 'intrinsically male', and, further, Persons being differentiated by relations and not by properties, 'can we say that the Second Person is intrinsically male without attributing maleness to the other two?', to the ingenious declaration, with Pere Bouyer, that 'there is a real sense in which men are inferior to women, in that a man can exercise fatherhood only, as it were by proxy, since unqualified fatherhood is the prerogative of the Father in heaven, while a woman can exercise motherhood, as it were, in her own right', and the happy conclusion that 'the actual mechanism of conception and gestation confirms this'. Will this do? Whether it will or not, it is all presented as prefatory to a consideration of the presbyteral ordination of women. Dr Mascall does not provide an extended discussion of this matter but it is more than a fair guess that he has concluded against such ordainings. I am at a disadvantage in assessing these prolegomena since it has long seemed to me that Christians should not be talking of how to facilitate the ordination of women but of how to prevent the ordination of men.

Between Chalcedon and chromosome Dr Mascall sets a re-working of his 'Journal of Theological Studies' review of the late Professor Lampe's 1976 Bampton Lectures, *God as Spirit*. These were, like a great deal else of modern Christology, 'inspired by a mainly unconfessed and certainly uncriticized mixture of unitarianism and adoptionism'. Dr Mascall is not at all surprised 'that these two heresies (for that is how Christian tradition in both East and West would describe them) should go together', but he is a little surprised that an Anglican clergyman, and a Regius Professor to boot, should be so little careful to conceal his heresies. Dr Mascall's surprise is, by the way, doubled at his reading a recent essay by Professor Wiles. Admitting that he is 'in no position to question Dr Lampe's knowledge of the New Testament and of the early Fathers', Dr Mascall does question the interpretation Lampe offered of the patristic enterprise, particularly his view that talk of God the Son 'almost inevitably tends to suggest either that deity revealed in human terms is somehow other than God whom we conceive of as Father, or that God whom we acknowledge in Jesus was united in him with something less than a fully human personality'.

Lampe's soteriology can happily accommodate the cry 'Jesus saves', but he thinks it 'not enough' thence to conclude 'Jesus is God'. Dr Mascall hints darkly at 'some evasiveness and ambiguity' in that 'not enough', and sees plainly that, though occasional inconsistencies exhibit his 'earlier and more scriptural faith', Lampe in 1976 'did not believe that Jesus is God'. It is rather a pity that Dr Mascall does not think it a necessary justice to quote Lampe's affirmation of what Bampton's directives meant for him: 'I believe in the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in the sense that the one God, the Creator and Saviour Spirit, revealed himself and acted decisively for us in Jesus'. Clearly there will be some to complain that such a formulation does not satisfy the demands of traditional Christology, especially when Lampe is so unconcerned with talk of pre-existence or resurrection. But clearly, also, some will complain, as Lampe himself remarked, 'that I have been more conservative than the present state of critical, historical, sociological, and religious studies warrants, particularly in my emphasis on the centrality and decisiveness of the action of God in Jesus'. It is less important that a theologian should manage old words like 'adoptionist', or new words like that 'model' to which Dr Mascall so repetitively objects, than that he should, with sensitivity and intelligence, elucidate the demands of Truth in his experience. Dr Mascall, in undertaking the duty of indicating heresy, does not, of course, share Gwendolen Fairfax' positive pleasure in speaking her mind. He writes in the lively assurance that conciliar orthodoxy offers us an enriching language for the future. That orthodox language has indeed seemed to many Christians, to most at some periods, the happiest for their experience. That is what, in historical terms, 'orthodoxy' means. But no one sensible of the wonder of divine revelation, certainly not Dr Mascall, would wish us to suppose that the propositions of established orthodoxy are the eschatological word. An essay in this very volume is, after all, entitled 'On from Chalcedon'. As that title suggests, Dr Mascall thinks it only proper to begin our meditations from the achieved positions of orthodoxy. But it does not seem impossible that, at another period, Christians may think the language of John Bampton or of the Fathers of Nicaea offers a less vital expression of the divine than the language of the sometime heterodox. Geoffrey Lampe was so manifestly obedient in his vocation to speak of God according to the demands of his experience, that hearing his work described in terms of 'heresy' is less painful than the recognition that Dr Mascall is content to employ such terms.

He is content, also, to remark dispiritingly that, in the discipline of theology, 'outings, however, are outings and work is work, and it is very important not to confuse them with each other'. He said this first in that other book, twenty years ago, and it still won't do.

Hamish F.G. Swanston

TAKING LEAVE OF GOD by Don Cupitt. London, SCM Press Ltd. 1980. Pp. xiii + 174. £4.95.

Within what limits and on what principles may Christian doctrine develop and still retain its identity? This has a very good claim to be the most pressing and perplexing theological question of our day, and Don Cupitt's book makes a major contribution to its consideration. In his characteristically direct and candid way, he forces the issue by presenting it in an uncompromising form. For, on the face of it, what could be a more daring and suicidal development for Christian doctrine than the abandonment of belief in God's objective (or in Cupitt's term, 'realistic') existence? So the book is liable to be dismissed by the faithful without being read: clearly the man has gone outside the bounds of recognizably Christian conviction. Dismissed too by the unbelieving. a leading theologian has come to see sense at last.

But if they do that, both will be making a serious mistake. For on every page, they may see the deepest religious beliefs explored, understood and endorsed. Then, they will find themselves invited to follow up with great honesty the implications of those beliefs. Thus: how is that disinterested integrity, which every religious person knows to be the heart of true spirituality, to be reconciled with our being over against any conceivable objective deity? Does not his existence make nonsense of our

genuinely moral freedom and our truly free decision to commit ourselves to the 'new life' which is the religious way? Are not the theological arguments alleged to support the existence of God well short of effective, and can any arguments reasonably tie together a beneficent God and the monstrously evil world of his creating?

So no God, only spiritual values and 'the religious requirement'. It sounds an austere recipe for living and hardly has the makings of religious revival (but then, what has?). But it is recommended as the truly disinterested way—and so as the route to joy. Religion belongs inside us, it is our response to reality, and the best response of all; and we can achieve, by devout attentiveness, the death of self which will inevitably bring that joy. Christian doctrines and liturgies, with their symbolic, picturesque presentation of the insights of religion, will help us—but only so long as we do not objectify them or fight for them as descriptive truths. They are our heritage, if we are in the Christian tradition, and, in historical terms, all that is being recommended is the next logical development of that tradition. This is the turn which, in our western scientific culture, it must now take to stay alive and vigorous (and, alas, it shows so many signs of accepting the death-warrant of mere traditionalism).

Cupitt claims distinguished predecessors. The truly religious have always known these things in their bones: the prophets, Jesus of course, St John of the Cross, Kierkegaard—and Meister Eckhart who gave the book its title. So implicitly he raises the question: what is this business of knowing in the bones what the lips would undoubtedly deny? When I give my exegesis of Jesus or Kierkegaard, what is the force of my claim that when X was said, what was really meant was (the to me more meaningful) Y? We all interpret others in this way, but with what safeguards may we do it? Cupitt also claims contemporaries: the theologically unspoiled believer has already in his heart reached something like the position taken here. It is a claim of considerable pastoral significance, and, if admitted, might lead the clergy either to redouble their orthodox efforts or to ponder anew where faith really lies.

But has Cupitt satisfactorily relegated the objective God to the realm of myth in the interests of true religion? God has after all survived numerous attempts in the past hundred years to spread the rumour of his death. Will he now lie down quietly at last?

What Cupitt has done is to show how little the western God of the philosophers has to do with true religion. Proving or disproving his existence never seemed to say very much to anyone concerned with religious commitment. But in commending the alternative of the purely interior, subjective God ('the religious requirement'), utterly demanding though he is (for this is not at all the subjectivism of sloppy self-pleasing), he has fallen into a trap which has bedevilled much Christian talk about God, classically in the dispute between Augustine and Pelagius.

How shall we model the relations between God and man? Are they to be seen as essentially disjunctive or conjunctive? That is, is the image to be that of master to servant, king to subject, teacher to pupil, wherein man can retain his independence and freedom only by steering clear, finding a corner of his own to retire to? Or is it to be that of lover to beloved, friend to friend, wherein attraction, trust and mutual involvement are the very conditions of freedom and new life? If it is to be the former, clearly all the problems of heteronomy which Cupitt so well identifies, enter in and are insoluble, once man finds himself determined to be autonomous. We moderns decide on our own authorities, everything impels us to do so, and God himself, we now feel, would not have it otherwise; so the master-God, who inevitably threatens our freedom, must go—he cannot be true and I cannot believe in him. So Cupitt. And the case has force.

But what of the lover-God? Will he not survive, and with all the greater vigour for being disentangled from the master-God with whom he has been so long confused? Just as Augustine would have done well to stick to that lover-God and follow up relentlessly the implications of belief in him (for he made his case outrageous morally only when he deserted him for the master-God), so Cupitt might have seen how things looked when the lover-God takes the field. May not that God (and was he not the God of St John of the Cross at least

among Cupitt's heroes?) master us and in the very act re-make us, be cruel to us and yet retain our love, bring authority and liberation into a paradoxical harmony which shatters all analogies but that of love itself? In his reality I can rejoice, retaining integrity, freedom and true religion. But Cupitt is right, no other God is worth believing in at all. No other analogy can do the work required.

For present credibility, much depends on two things: first, whether the cruelty of love is an analogy which can carry force. From Job and Paul onwards, we have long experience to draw on. And second, whether the disinterestedness which is a vital aspect of the deepest love, must properly extend to persisting in allegiance to God as if he were not there. But I suspect Cupitt will not persuade us all that religion can stand if no lover is there at all.

J.L. Houlden

ST FRANCIS AND THE SONG OF BROTHERHOOD by Eric Doyle OFM. Published by George Allen & Unwin 1980, 207 pp. (no price given)

In these pessimistic and problematical times any book which can enlarge our vision and renew our hopes is doubly welcome. Fr Doyle's book is one of these.

It draws on the life of St Francis of Assisi and on his *Canticle of Brother Sun* to remind us of how important it is for men to live in a a harmonious relationship with the created order, with its Creator and their own inner selves. To Fr Doyle it is clear that recovery of hope depends on right decisions with regard to the ecological crisis and our standard of living, since these are proportionately related.

But how to make right decisions? Here he points to Francis' approach which includes "an awareness of the basic unity of reality, a sense of wonder and mystery, and a recognition of the fraternal character of creation" (p.5).

Now more than ever, says Fr Doyle, it is time for Christians to show that they really love the world, value it, take it seriously in itself and not just "consider it the backdrop to being tested for worthiness to enter heaven" (p.62). Particularly thought-provoking here is the challenging agenda for theologians that Fr Doyle draws up on pp. 70-71, about the need for what might be called a theology of the environment.

Among the tasks that he calls on theologians to undertake is the formulation of "a theology of creation which includes aesthetic categories in its essential structure". Furthermore, "the religious roots of the ecological crisis are tied up as much with our idea of God as they are with our concept of nature. This will involve Christian theology in a much more serious and intensive dialogue with Hinduism and the philosophies of India." (p.70)

Inter alia Eric Doyle gives a fresh and compelling look at the life of Francis. But surely it is inadequate to say that Francis did not criticise either Church or State? (p.16). Implicit criticism can be found in Francis' life at several points. A 19th century biographer, Paul Sabatier, reminds us that in Assisi as in almost every Italian town there were the established rich and the powerless poor, *populo grasso* and *populo minuto*, and, says Sabatier, Francis "resolutely placed himself among the latter. This political side of his apostolate needs to be clearly apprehended if we would understand its amazing success . . ."

However, my main worry about Fr Doyle's book is that its cover and title will mislead people into thinking it is a study in arcane Franciscanism and of interest to lovers of St Francis only. In fact it speaks to the social, political and economic conditions of our times. And part of its charm is the width (and depth) of the reading that has gone into it. Who else but Fr Doyle could quote in the same book from *The Wind in the Willows*, the French Marxist Roger Garaudy, Schumacher, Jung, von Rad, de Chardin, John XXIII and D.H. Lawrence?

Terry Cyprian SSF

S.W. Sykes (ed.): KARL BARTH—STUDIES OF HIS THEOLOGICAL METHOD. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1979, 204 pages. £10.00.

The book may be a mere 200 pages but it represents the distillation of a massive amount of critical reading by four contemporary British theologians. They are S.W. Sykes of the University of Durham; D.F. Ford of the University of Birmingham; R.H. Roberts also of the University of Durham; and R.D. Williams of Westcott House, Cambridge. Besides the four essays by these writers there is also an introduction on The Study of Barth by Sykes, and a 'Conclusion: Assessing Barth', by Ford.

The book is not designed to be, nor would it be suitable as an introduction to Barth's theology. On the whole the book is for those who have already grappled with Barth for themselves. The writers do not line themselves up with Barth, but they do make a serious attempt to understand and evaluate his work. However, they cannot be read uncritically because inevitably they bring their own preferences and presuppositions to bear on their interpretation. Thus, for example, each of the writers wishes to preserve some form of 'natural theology', and as a result they all come to fairly predictable objections to Barth.

There is a real difficulty in theological debate when premises are not agreed. And when these are not agreed any benefits flowing from the debate tend to be selective. What is not valid is the attack on conclusions that Barth draws when these are fully consistent with the premises he has explicitly laid down.

The last two sentences in the book, written by Ford, are important in this connection:

> So it is perhaps his latest work that shows Barth at his best, summing up the main elements in his thinking and replying to well-informed critics. Yet he recants practically nothing, and leaves his *magnum opus* standing like a massive, unfinished, but formally simple and consistent sculpture—a spiral round and round the self-expression of God in time (p.201).

Barth would concur with that last phrase. That self-expression took place in Jesus Christ, and for that reason Barth spoke of Christology as 'the touchstone of all knowledge of God in the Christian sense', and quotes, 'Tell me how it stands with your Christology, and I shall tell you who you are' (*Dogmatics in Outline*, SCM p.66). Williams is aware of what is involved here, and concludes his essay with these words. 'If we object to a Barthian Trinitarian or Christological model and its implications for the doctrines of man and grace, we are obliged to examine the roots and norms of our own understanding . . . (p.192).

Another book appearing at about the same time as the one under review was Geoffrey Bromiley's *Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth*. While its contents are essentially an excellent summary of the Church Dogmatics, it also contains important and very perceptive criticisms at certain points. These criticisms are telling and valid for the reason that Bromiley shares Barth's Christological and Biblical premises. Thus he will criticise Barth's use of the Bible in relation, for example, to universalism, Judas and demonology.

While these four writers set out to work *through* Barth—and not round him, or even against him—they do not appear to have taken adequate account of the principle that if we cannot share his assumptions we ought not to expect to share his conclusions. A theological debate with Barth is a little frustrating because his death closed the 'canon' of his writings in a way that he never wished to. To him, theological work should be seen as a starter, a finger pointing towards Jesus. It is not without significance that he always had in front of him in his study Grünewald's picture of the crucifixion.

The introductory essay by Sykes on 'The Study of Barth' is a useful summary of the principal literature about Barth, and it outlines a range of opinions expressed, for example, by H.R. Mackintosh, the Baillies, T.F. Torrance and Alan Richardson. The conclusion of the essay is important 'It is, we believe . . . by working through Barth and not by going round him that a pathway exists to constructive contemporary theological endeavour; working through him, moreover, in a direction in which he endeavoured to point' (p.16). It is important to bear this chosen perspective in mind in reading the essays, and to judge for ourselves after reading them whether it has been consistently kept in view.

The first essay on Barth's theological method is one by S.W. Sykes: 'Barth on the Centre of Theology'. His approach is positive and is clearly stated: 'In this essay Barth's fundamental theological method is being taken at face value, placed in context, analysed, and criticised as though Barth himself had identified this method with complete accuracy' (p.17). Barth speaks often of a centre to theology and it is this that leads Sykes to raise the theme. He shows first that the New Testament treats various things as 'fundamental' in a variety of contexts. He then looks for the concept of a centre to theology in the works of Thomas Aquinas, Luther and Calvin. Without lingering over his analyses, which are of necessity very compact, he arrives at the method common to both Calvin and Melancthon of selecting certain *loci*, and dealing with them independently. It is a method that Barth is shown to endorse strongly as 'the only truly scholarly method in dogmatics'. The conclusion to this investigation is that while there *is* a centre to Barth's theology, there is no central *doctrine*, concept or idea, and this indicates why Barth resisted so strongly the whole concept of seeking the 'essence of Christianity'. In Calvin we see an emphasis that is fundamental to Barth's epistemology, when he spoke of faith as a 'firm and sure knowledge of God's benevolence to us . . . revealed to our minds by the Holy Spirit' (p.26). This is what Torrance refers to as 'the epistemological relevance of the Holy Spirit', our real knowledge of God comes through God himself.

Sykes then proceeds to outline the development of the central elements in Barth's theology by way of a summmary of his debate with Harnack and his life-long encounter with Schleiermacher.

At first sight Harnack and Barth would appear to be saying the same thing: namely, that Jesus Christ is at the centre of Christianity. But it soon begins to emerge that they mean very different things. To Harnack, Jesus is the great teacher and example. To Barth, he is God Incarnate. To the former it is the historical Jesus; to the latter it is the risen Christ. And the knowledge of Jesus Christ for Barth is not by way of Harnack's historical studies but through a God-awakened faith.

At first sight Schleiermacher and Barth would appear to be saying opposite things, and for this reason some might be puzzled as to why Barth kept returning to him throughout his life. It seems on the surface that Schleiermacher is placing man and his subjective 'feeling experiences' at the centre of theology, while Barth is placing God and his revelation there. But Sykes shows how that the centre in Schleiermacher is not as simple as that, in that a secondary motif is always present: the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. For this reason Barth seemed to feel that there was a real possibility in Schleiermacher of a theology centred in the Holy Spirit.

For Barth there is a real centre, which is different from a systematic centre, and that is God's act of atonement in Jesus Christ. Sykes will contend that this does in fact come very close to having a Christology, Barth's own, as the centre. In arguing this he takes issue with Barth's choice of John 1:14 as the key statement on Jesus Christ in the New Testament, and suggests that there are many other statements (e.g. Acts 2.22) that could equally legitimately be chosen. It is doubtful whether Sykes has a point here. The reason why Barth selects John 1:14 is not that it accords with his own Christology, but that it seems to encapsulate very succinctly the general teaching of the New Testament about Christ.

Arising from this line of argument Sykes makes a plea for a plurality of theological systems which 'would emerge slowly . . . under the safeguard of the prayer of the church'. Here Sykes suggests that in a tradition where preaching is dominant, changes in theological thinking can disperse through the church very rapidly. In a church where the liturgy is dominant, changes take place very slowly. This he regards as a safe-guard. On the other hand, the safeguard of the Biblical criterion that Barth would propose, regulated constantly by prayer would seem to be preferable on the grounds that theology always progresses by way of dialogue within the church anyway.

Sykes concludes his essay with the statement that he seeks two adjustments in Barth's theological method, one radical and the other minor.

The radical adjustment relates to Barth's epistemology. Sykes has shown that any and every Christology has its own corresponding

epistemology. Post-Enlightenment theology, for example, made man the measure of all things, the knowledge of God included. Yet the noetic necessity on which Barth would insist is that God can only be known through God and God's act of revelation.

Yet is an 'adjustment' to Barth's epistemology possible at this point? For Barth, God is the source and ground of all human rationality, and we can only think and respond as rational beings because God has addressed us. Because God can only be known through God, the Incarnation can only be understood in terms of this necessity. No mere 'adjustment' is possible here, since the only alternative is to hold that man *does* have an independent capacity to know God. Barth had to say 'Nein' to that. Sykes asks why different scholars studying the same New Testament documents nevertheless arrive at different Christologies—witness, for example, Schleiermacher, Harnack and Barth. This *is* undoubtedly a subjective matter, in that we tend to hear what we are predisposed to hear. And yet does God not sometimes break through our predispositions with a fresh disclosure of himself? Isn't that exactly what happened to Barth as he was sitting under the apple tree in Safenwil, reading the letter to the Romans?

The argument nevertheless indicates precisely why it will never be possible to formulate a doctrine of Christ that would be universally acceptable as 'the centre' of Christian theology. And this is the merit of Barth's steadfast refusal to concede this point, even at the risk of being accused of keeping his own Christology at the centre. All Christians are agreed that at the heart of the Christian faith is God's act of atonement in Christ. The formulation and interpretation of that event follows, but the interpretation is always tentative and provisional. Barth offers his own interpretation, and he would not claim finality for himself and his views. Yet having said that, is Barth's Christology really all that unique, or different? This is an aspect of his theology that in fact commands the widest imaginable respect. Of course it is non-Docetic, non-Ebionite, non-Arian, but is that not widely true in the church today? Sykes himself does not quarrel with Barth's christology. The problem may be that Barth is disturbing because he takes his Christology too seriously, too far. Christ is too sufficient.

And yet, in view of the Pauline Christology, especially in Colossians and Ephesians, is it actually possible to take our Christology too far? If Christ really is 'all and in all', then our striving after an autonomous corner in the created order is misguided and irrelevant. In view of this, the 'minor adjustment' that Sykes asks for—that we should realistically accept a doctrinal centre to theology—ceases to be very important.

The next essay is by D.F. Ford of the University of Birmingham, under the title, 'Barth's Interpretation of the Bible'. Ford makes a valid claim for his essay when at the beginning he says of it: 'It does have the advantage of engaging Barth over the one documentary authority which he accepted as a primary source and criterion of theology' (p.56). This is also the reason why it is a satisfying essay and has the feel of fairness about it. It is also the reason why Ford's critical questions have substantial force.

His main argument is that the actual practical way in which Barth uses Scripture is of greater value in understanding his hermeneutics than his Doctrine of the Word of God in Volume 1. What this implies is that God can only be investigated and to that extent understood in the light of his actions. These are described in the biblical stories, which disclose God and this gives to them an 'all-embracing world of meaning' (p.62). 'What Barth offers in his doctrine of God can be seen . . . as a thoroughgoing attempt to understand the eternal God through a temporal history' (p.63). 'God's acts are the context in which all other events are understood' (p.64). As a result there can be no fear that God might have any side to his nature which conflicts with what can be seen in Jesus Christ. The reason why such absolute significance can be given to Jesus Christ is the resurrection. It is the pivotal character of the crucifixion and resurrection for our understanding of God that makes any natural theology irrelevant, and indeed, false.

Ford then proceeds to illustrate how Barth uses the biblical narratives as the basis for his doctrines of God, creation and reconciliation.

Central to Barth's doctrine of God is the doctrine of election, inasmuch as in election Jesus Christ is held to be identified with the God who elects and rejects, and simultaneously with men who are elected or rejected by God. In other words 'God has disclosed himself fully and frankly in Jesus Christ'. Barth's method is then to trace, through the medium of the bible stories, the interweaving of good and evil which is finally defined in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Ford will argue, and here he will have Bromiley's support, that the implications of this interpretation are pushed to their limit in Barth's application of them to Judas (p.66).

Ford then turns to the doctrine of creation in which he shows that Barth is far more concerned with the God who is revealed in the sagas than any question of their scientific or historical accuracy. In our attempt to understand them Ford recalls Barth's appeal for 'imagination'—which is often so 'chronically lacking' in the 'middle class habit of the Western mind' (p.69). However, the meaning of creation also is only fully understood through Jesus Christ, through whom the 'beginning' of all things is relocated firmly in God's will.

In the doctrine of reconciliation Ford turns to Barth's treatment of the gospel stories. For Barth their historical factuality is of fundamental importance. It is important that this turning of God to us men happened 'in this way', and 'is not simply imagined and presented as a true teaching of pious and thoughtful people' (p.70). With regard to the stories of the crucifixion and resurrection, Ford shows that Barth acknowledges that the resurrection cannot be historically demonstrated in the normal way. There is only one way in which that resurrection can be verified, and that is by the simple referent that Jesus Christ is alive now. It is the resurrection that takes the gospel stories out of the realm of novels and fictional short stories. This resurrected man, 'participating in and uniting time and eternity' is our only guide to the relationship between the two.

Ford is correct when he declares. 'We are here facing the fundamental challenge of Barth's theology, his assertion that there is this extraordinary reality, the risen Christ, whose presence is endlessly rich and fruitful for understanding, and for all of life' (p.84).

Having acknowledged all this Ford nevertheless enters a plea for a certain recognition of a natural theology, asking whether Barth has not too dogmatically limited God's freedom to speak in various ways. One is sympathetic to the problem, and yet Barth has been wise in this matter too. He does not limit God's ability and freedom to speak in other ways. What he does question is our ability to discern what God is saying. We only know *who* it is that is speaking in creation through the Revealed Word. Paul in Romans chapter one is quite clear about what men do when they think they have found God in nature, and when they think they have heard him speaking to them through natural phenomena.

Ford asks whether Jesus Christ is not overloaded by this theology, and especially questions the idea that Christ's resurrection encompasses all history. However, the question we have to ask is whether Ford or Barth is correct in the understanding of the biblical data. What does Paul mean when he says, 'As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive'? Or again, 'Because we thus judge, that if one died for all then were all dead . . .'? Or all those passages in Ephesians and Colossians?

The challenge of history after the resurrection is surely the challenge of faithful obedience to the living Christ. Man's striving after an autonomous history, independent of God, in which he will achieve his own self-authentication is, in biblical terms, impossible. And, one feels that Ford is sensitive to this, for he ends with an imaginary question from Barth: 'Might it not be that one event, one person, is so astonishingly rich that the significance of all subsequent history might consist in becoming more and more thankful for it in thought, speech and action?' (p.87).

It is the essay on 'Karl Barth's Doctrine of Time', by R.H. Roberts, that raises the most questions. He seems to adopt an open attitude when he says at the end of the essay that 'to accept or reject Barth would be merely to succumb to the demands of his own theological error' (p.146). But then he adds, 'His work lies before us, the stricken, glorious hulk of some great Dreadnought . . .', a sentence that hardly commends itself as a neutral metaphor. Roberts does in fact reject Barth because he repudiates

everything that is essential to Barth's theology.

Roberts's meaning is frequently not helped by a degree of opacity of language and style. The intention finally becomes apparent, but the process of reaching it is tortuous. Consider this sentence that occurs in the first paragraph: 'The so-called "inner logic" of the Church Dogmatics is the axis of eternity and time unfolded through the motif of the "analogy of faith" ' (p.88). An 'axis' being 'unfolded' through a 'motif' is difficult to conceptualize. Or this one: 'In what follows the doctrine of time Barth provides has both function theologically and also to provide a concrete account of time as it is experienced and understood outside the purlieu of theology' (p.104). Is a line missing? Or a word? Or where do we put the commas? Or this one. 'So it is that the pattern of antecedence and consequence and the corresponding method of *analogia fidei* informing the Church Dogmatics take on an urgent importance in the context of the doctrine of time' (p.107). Or this sentence. 'This means that the vast and complex temporal system that emerges in the Church Dogmatics must never co-incide with non-theological categories in identity, only in the so-called dialectic of transcendence' (p.113). It might be too much to say that it is impossible to understand his meaning; but it is exceedingly difficult, and the essay abounds in further examples of tortured English. What is 'mutual actualism'? And in which English dictionary did he discover the word 'instantiation'? One might also observe in passing that for such an expensive hard-cover book of so few pages the number of typographical errors is excessive.

The problem with Roberts's essay is not that he misrepresents Barth. That he does not do. He knows and understands Barth thoroughly, but repudiates what is fundamental and essential to Barth's theology. He makes comments such as these. '... the doctrine of creation becomes deeply *enmeshed*' (my emphasis) 'in Christology ...' (p.132); and 'Both creation and creature rest *under the shadow* of Christology' (p.133). (Again my emphasis). In contrast, those who follow Barth's Christological approach would say that 'creation is *opened up* by Christology', or derives its meaning from, and is *illuminated* by Christology; and that we *understand* humanity through Jesus Christ, the Real Man. The emphasized words suggest a specific prejudice against Barth.

Barth does of course use complementary and contrasting expressions to bring out his meaning, and this is inevitable in theology, since God and man, time and eternity, life and death, good and evil, the seen and the unseen, etc. *are* polarities, and in a certain sense, antitheses. Yet it is precisely the joy of the good news that in Jesus Christ the whole of reality is preserved and only the 'impossible possibility' of evil is 'behind God's back', and is where he is not. To reject these complementarities as 'ambiguous', 'contradictory', and 'equivocation' is possible only if one rejects the wholeness of Jesus Christ.

What Barth has done is to begin quite simply with the historical origins of the Christian faith, in Jesus Christ, and, accepting the Biblical witness that he is the 'Word of God' made flesh, has proceeded to allow this accepted truth to throw light on the whole of reality. Barth's view *is* holistic, and this does not negate the natural and created. It simply places it where it belongs: within the mind and will of the Creator. The only danger of such a totally holistic view is that it might be inclined to include what God has actually excluded. It tends towards a universalism which Bromiley rightly criticises as going beyond the Biblical view—e.g. with regard to the demonic, or 'Judas', and all that he represents.

In arguing his case against Barth Roberts appears to force him to say what he does not say. Roberts draws a distinction between 'reality as the purveyor of revelation and all reality apart from revelation' (p.123), the latter being 'the texture of reality as normally experienced'. He then concludes: 'Nature as such becomes wholly problematic in the face of this revelation' (p.124). That conclusion does not follow. Jesus Christ is the reality through whom the revelation of God comes to mankind, but this does not in the least negate the historical, natural context in which that revelation takes place. As the 'theatre of his glory' creation is entirely real but is subordinate to God and not a reality alongside of him. Any reality that creation has is given it by the Creator, yet not in the Deistic sense. Rather the whole course of its history flows from this givenness. When Barth says 'Let God

be God', this *is* a faith that makes 'totalitarian demands'. If God really is God, then on the day when all theological ships are tested on the great sea of eternity, then one suspects that it will be Roberts's theology that will sink unnoticed like some unknown rowing boat in which he valiantly but hopelessly tried to rescue Barth from himself.

The essay by R.D. Williams, 'Barth on the Triune God', is the most difficult to summarise and comment on, because the essay is already tightly compressed in its 47 pages. The subject is present at every point in the 13 part volumes of the Church Dogmatics. The essay underlines the perennial problem that all our thinking about God must strain our intellectual capacities to their limits, and still remain incomplete because by definition the infinite God cannot be contained within even the greatest human minds. Williams is right when he observes, 'Trinitarian theology, in so far as it is concerned with the "kind" of God Christians worship, is far from being a luxury indulged in solely by remote and ineffectual dons; it is of cardinal importance for spirituality and liturgy, for ethics, for the whole of Christian self-understanding' (p.191). But we must also recognise that we will not complete the enquiry.

The essay by Williams should be read in conjunction with Jungel's excellent monograph, somewhat longer (107 pages), published by the Scottish Academic Press under the title *The Doctrine of the Trinity. God's Being is in Becoming* (Tubingen, 1964).

Williams shows that Barth constructs his Trinitarian theology from his analysis of God's act of revelation. The question at issue is 'Who is this self-revealing God?' Like the other writers, Williams recognises that Barth does not identify revelation with history, but rather with 'particularised interruptions of the worldly story'. But this opens up the problem of identifying which might be the 'revelatory events'. Williams sees difficulties here, and there is one—and Williams does not resolve it. Is there any infallible guide to selecting those historical events that reveal God? Or, on the other hand, if there is, how are they to be read and interpreted? And by whom?

Barth safeguards himself from arbitrariness by focussing his attention on those events which present the actuality of God's speaking and being heard, and especially on Easter, Good Friday, and Pentecost.

It is with Barth's understanding of the Holy Spirit that Williams raises the most significant questions. 'The relative clarity of the treatment of Father and Son is itself put in question by the apparent failure of the same method to produce an adequate theology of the Spirit' (p.171). He argues that the model Barth chooses requires that in the Spirit God reveals himself to himself—something 'distinctly odd'. He suggests that the 'revelation model' for arriving at a doctrine of the Trinity in fact breaks down at this point, and Barth moves from an emphasis on revelation to one of communion. The difficulty seems to be exaggerated, however. Barth speaks of the Spirit as 'the subjective possibility of revelation', enabling us to grasp the revelation that we see in Christ. There does not seem to be any real objection to God being both object and subject in this way. It is comparable with the concept of the Spirit being the acting subject in our worship of God ('They that worship him must worship him in Spirit').

In pursuing his objection to the central place that Barth gives to revelation in his theology, Williams takes up the criticism that Wingren makes of Barth in his little book *Theology in Conflict* (1958). Wingren argues strongly that Barth's emphasis is all in the realm of knowledge—that man's problem is a lack of knowledge, and he will be saved by having that deficiency rectified. Yet this has always seemed to me to be a weak argument, for revelation is not a mere impartation of information but an interpretation of God's mighty acts. It is to overlook the vitality of Barth's understanding of Act and Being, in Jesus Christ, and the relationship between Word and Act.

As he comes to his conclusion Williams asks, 'What is wrong with Barth?' He suggests 'a certain lack of concern with human growth, human diversity, and human freedom of response . . .' He suggests that a 'glib Barthian defence' would say that these are not the primary interest of theology. I am not interested in a Barthian defence, but would suggest that Barth is very close to the God who seized hold

of Paul on the Damascus road, and the Christ who commanded 'Follow me', and the Spirit who 'came mightily' on the prophets and apostles. I do not find the 'lack of concern' to which Williams refers. To be grasped by God's revelation is to be involved in the world for him, and Barth's protest, for example, against National Socialism was completely of a piece with his theology.

In the Conclusion Ford makes some suggestions about reading Barth. I would conclude with a slightly different suggestion, although agreeing in general with what Ford proposes. The best compact introduction to Barth's thinking must be his *Dogmatics in Outline*. A reading and re-reading of that before attempting anything else will create the correct frame of reference within which all else can be fitted. I would suggests next Bromiley's *Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth*, because unlike other introductions it deals with the actual substance of the *Church Dogmatics*. Then Volume IV part 1, paragraphs 57 and 58, and so on! But parallel to this Volume III in all its parts deals with many of the issues raised by these four writers.

The important service rendered by these writers is to remind us that, regardless of our own preferences and preconceived theological notions, Barth is well worth reading, and indeed cannot be ignored. To do this would be to pretend that the mountain in the front garden is not there. He demands attention, and these four men gave eighteen months to a sustained engagement with the Church Dogmatics. This alone would be sufficient testimony to their estimate of Barth's importance.

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