Volume X Number 2

Autumn 1987

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FACULTY NEWS Insert

ISSN 0143-5922

KING'S THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

The Journal of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, King's College London, Strand, London WC2R 2LS.

Published twice yearly, spring and autumn.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES (including postage), 1987

Individual subscribers	U.K.	£4.00
	Overseas	£5.00 ($11.00)
	Air Mail	£7.50 ($18.00)
Institutional subscribers	U.K.	£6.00
	Overseas	£8.00 ($16.00)
	Air Mail	£10.00 ($25.00)

Orders should be sent to The Business Manager, King's Theological Review, Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, King's College London, Strand, London WC2R 2LS.

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Articles are indexed in *Religion Index One: Periodicals*; book reviews are indexed in *Index to Book Reviews in Religion*. Both indexes are published by the American Theological Library Association, Chicago, and are available online through BRS Information Technologies (Latham, New York) and DIALOG Information Services (Palo Alto, California).

SYNOPTIC TRANSFIGURATIONS: MARK 9, 2-10 AND PARTNERS

STUART HALL

Patristic study reveals a great variety of interpretation of the transfiguration. The literature has been thoroughly analysed by J. A. McGuckin, who has published the outline of his findings in a short article ("The patristic exegesis of the transfiguration": *Studia patristica XVIII/1* [Kalamazoo 1985] 335-341). Of course we find various moralizings such as preachers produce in every age: The three disciples were rewarded with the vision of Christ's glory because they sustained a long fast like Moses and Elijah, according to Tertullian (*De jejunio 6*). Many fathers from Origen to Palamas see the climbing of the mountain as a symbol for the ascent of the soul in the practice of contemplation towards the vision of God. None of those McGuckin mentions includes that banal nonsense which I hear in almost every modern sermon on the subject, to the effect that the coming down to the plain below is more important than what happened on the mountain; a doctrine which says more about the practical atheism of modern British religion than about the Gospel of Christ or the texts of the New Testament.

The predominant patristic themes are three. For the first, let McGuckin speak: "The main concern of the fathers is unquestionably with the consideration of Thabor as a theophany: in which the godhead revealed is not so much that of the Father who speaks from the cloud, but that of the Son who is transfigured in light" (p. 336). The other two themes are resurrection, whereby the glorification of the Son anticipates the risen glory of the saints (not so much of the Lord himself); and Moses and Elijah as symbolizing the old covenant, witnessing to Christ both by their presence and by their departure (McGuckin 338-339). This present study shows that the fathers were in principle right in their exegesis about the first and third of these. I am of course not wishing to vindicate every detail of patristic exposition. Much of what the fathers write is dependent upon an established doctrinal synthesis of biblical material and dogmatic development of which Matthew, Mark and Luke were innocent. These developments had the effect, from which we are free, of suppressing the differences and thus destroying the literary and theological distinctiveness of the Synoptic writers.

First however a comment on 2 Peter 1,16-21 is desirable. Here in what I regard as proto-patristic exegesis two themes emerge. First, Peter's doctrinal bequest is not, says the writer. a human invention, but direct divine testimony which Peter received as an eyewitness, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am pleased," heard as the Father gives Christ honour and glory on "the holy mountain". This perhaps develops Matthew, where the words of God coincide most nearly (Mt. 17,5). One would expect the "holy mountain" to be Zion, where the temple stands, as in the Psalms (such as 42/43,3) and with strong eschatological overtones in Isaiah 65 (verses 9LXX.11.25). Perhaps a spiritual Zion lies behind this, where "the assembly of the firstborn" meets with "God the judge of all, and the spirits of the perfected righteous, and Jesus the mediator of a new covenant" (Heb. 12,22-24).

Secondly the Petrine author puts forward as his second vindication of the doctrinal bequest the prophetic scripture. Spiritually interpreted as it was spiritually written, it will serve as a beacon of illumination (2,19-21). He does not connect this with his reminiscences of the transfiguration, but the coincidence with the patristic perception of Moses and Elijah may not be accidental.

Now we turn to the Gospels, and first to Luke 9,28-36. His redaction has the clearest character, and may be the latest of the Synoptics. His variations from Mark and perhaps Matthew reveal his purposes.

Where the others say "after six days", Luke has, "It happened about eight days after these sayings (or, events)". In all three versions the reference is to the question of Jesus and Peter's confession and the teaching about the suffering of the Son of Man and his followers. Some fathers rationalized the apparent contradiction of six days and eight, but in many cases (beginning with Clement of Alexandria) speculated on the numerology of the Eight, the ogdoad. Luke either takes the six days to mean "about a week", or else deliberately relates what follows to the eschatological Lord's Day at the end of the world, which was commonly the "eighth day". If so, Peter's confession is symbolically on the first day, like the creation and (in one sense) Christ's resurrection. I doubt if Luke thought along these lines, or expected his readers to do so; he prefers demystification. It is perhaps worth noting that he adds a day's journey at the end of the story in 9,37 for coming down from the hill-country, a day not in Matthew or Mark, and he may do the same at the beginning.

The "mountain" of Luke's account is in fact a case of demystification. Mark has a "high" mountain, which Matthew follows; some scribes make it "very high" in manuscripts of Matthew, and 2 Peter makes it "holy". For Luke however it is the ordinary hill-country where Jesus habitually makes his prayers. Before appointing the 12 he "went out into the mountain to pray" (*exelthein auton eis to oros proseuxasthai* 6,12). Persistent prayer in the face of hardship and before important events is a Lucan characteristic, so Jesus prays at his baptism (3,21), before appointing disciples (6,12), before questioning Peter (9,18), before teaching about prayer (11,1). He thus sets an example of what he teaches (18,1) and the saints observe (1,10; 2,37; Acts 1,4 etc.). So the mountain is not exceptional, and the prayer is what all the faithful owe to God.

More demystification follows. Where Mark has, "and he was transfigured before them" (9,2), Luke elucidates, "the appearance of his face became different". Jesus' clothes, which he mentions next, presumably covered his whole body except the face, hands and feet. So if there is a visible transformation apart from the clothes, it must affect the face. It is fair to assume that those resurrection narratives, including one in Luke, which postulate Jesus unrecognized by his friends, presuppose a similar transformation (Mt. 28:17; Lk. 24,30-31; Jn. 20,15). Luke does not say *how* the appearance changed, but only that the face looked different. Matthew also introduces reference to the face, which may conceivably have affected Luke: "and his face shone like the sun" (Mt. 17,2). But unlike Luke, who has merely intrepreted Mark's "he was transfigured before

them", Matthew makes Jesus' face a model of resurrection light, or more: when the tares are burnt and the wheat gathered into barns, "then shall the righteous shine like the sun in their Father's kingdom" (Mt. 13,43).

Luke makes something more elegant of Mark's longwinded description of the clothes: "his clothing became sparkling white" (9,29). There is demystification here, where Mark has emphasized the unnatural: "his clothes became shining very white, such that no laundryman on earth can so whiten" (Mk. 9,3). Such apophatic laundering does not appeal to the practical Luke. He uses terms which recur in other contexts. The two men who confronted the women at the tomb in Lk. 24,4 did so "in sparkling apparel" (*en esthēti astraptousē*), and the two men who stood by the apostles when Jesus ascended did so "in white robes" (Acts 1,10). So Jesus' robes fit a Lucan pattern for glorious persons.

But so, remarkably, do Moses and Elijah. In Mark and Matthew these men simply appear to the disciples, and were seen conversing with Jesus. Luke says, "And behold, two men (*andres dyo*) were talking with Jesus, and they were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and were discussing his exodus, which he was going to complete in Jerusalem" (Luke 9,30-31). The appearance "in glory" strongly suggests that they were white-robed or sparkling-robed, and the superfluous expression "two men" assimilates it to the couples in Acts 1,10 and especially Lk. 24,4, where two men replace the one white-robed youth of Mk. 16,5 and the one brilliant white-robed angel of Mt. 28,2-3. Luke seems to suggest that it is Moses and Elijah who attest Christ's resurrection (and also the crucifixion) in 24,5-7 and his future return on the glory-cloud in Acts 1,11. It is no surprise that the subject of the conversation, with which Luke characteristically expects to satisfy the curiosity of his readers, is "the exodus which he was to complete at Jerusalem". Here those patristic interpreters are surely on the right lines, who see Moses and Elijah as symbols of Law and Prophets, whose testimony to the suffering and rising Messiah is so frequent a theme in Luke (as for instance 24,27). Their testimony lies behind the words of the other pairs of brightly clad witnesses, even if they are not to be taken as identical with Moses and Elijah. Here in 9,31 they speak of Jesus' coming "exodus". This may import some of the triumph of the Paschal victory, but its primary meaning is simply his death, his "departure". The first prophetic testimony is to the death. Theological interpreters of the transfiguration do well to remember that the subject of it is primarily the Crucified, which for all his demystification Luke knows as well as any other. We could know this, even without the elucidation in Luke, from the context in the gospels, surrounded as the transfiguration is by accounts of the suffering Son of Man.

In 9,33 Luke presents exactly, but with stylistic improvements, the words of Peter and Mark's explanation (Mk. 9,5): "Peter said to Jesus, 'It is good for us to be here, and let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah,' not knowing what he was saying". But he seems to consider it insufficient. First he makes it clear that the vision was a concrete historical one, not a vague dream or subjective vision. Just as he makes the Holy Spirit descend at Christ's baptism "in bodily form" as a pigeon (Lk. 3,22), so here Luke makes it clear that Peter and his colleagues were wide awake. The tenses of the verbs rule out any suggestion that they were drowsy, and kept awake with a struggle, as we do at afternoon lectures. *ēsan bebarēmenoi hypnō* is pluperfect: "they had been fast asleep"; *diagrēgorēsantes de* is aorist: "but having woken up". Luke then becomes repetitious, which (for one who suppressed Mark's laundryman) must be emphatic: "they saw his glory and the two men who stood beside him". Luke may have contributed here to the "eyewitness of his majesty" of 2 Peter 1,16. He is surely making the same point which that author spells out: "It was not in pursuit of fancy stories that we informed you of the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, but having become eyewitnesses of his majesty". It is perhaps for the same reason that Luke suppresses Mark's "suddenly they looked around" (Mk. 9,8), and is content with, "as the voice came, Jesus was found alone" (Lk. 9,46). Mark's words might imply waking from a dream or trance.

The second elucidation in Luke is to explain Peter's remark about tents, which is obscure in Mark. Luke may have done permanent damage at this point, since most modern exegetes I have consulted give the same explanation: Peter wanted to keep Moses and Elijah with them. So we read, "and it came about that as they (Moses and Elijah) were being separated from him (Jesus), Peter said to Jesus, . . ." (9,33a). At this point it is still a practical, Martha-like suggestion, made in a state of full consciousness. It brings about the genuinely supernatural rebuke: "As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were frightened as they entered the cloud" (9,34). Luke shifts the terror from Mark's place, where it explains Peter's error, to terror at the coming of the cloud. Clouds on mountains are terrifying, but this turns out to be the kind of cloud that enwrapped Moses' mountain-top of old (Ex. 24,15-18). God speaks from it. McGuckin found four patristic sources which took the departure of Moses and Elijah, leaving Jesus alone, to signify the abolition of the old law in the presence of the new (p. 339 at notes 36,37). Such a thought may be present in Luke himself, where Marcion found it. Luke changes one word in the divine saying, "chosen" (*eklelegmenos*) replacing "beloved/unique" (*agapētos*). Luke allowed *agapētos* to stand at the baptism (3,22), but not here. Perhaps what was fitting there, where Jesus learns that he is God's beloved, pleasing to him, fails in clarity here. Jesus must be unique, chosen out above all the prophets and sons of God. In this respect Luke is in tune with the interpretation I shall put on Mark.

For the rest we may ignore Luke. He softens Jesus' command to silence (9,36b/Mk. 9,9), suppresses some obscure material about Elijah (Mk. 9,9-13), which Matthew found it necessary to rewrite (17,9-13), and after allowing a decent interval of a day for the journey, follows Mark into the next episode (9,37/Mk. 9,14).

Turning to Mark, who is our chief concern, we should avoid "reading in" Matthew's or Luke's interpretations. First, some minor points may be noted. "After six days" (9,2) may indicate a sabbath. That would fit the presence of the three disciples "by themselves alone", a phrase reminiscent of the frustrated attempt at a retreat "by themselves to a desert place" in 6,31-32. The command to silence at 9,9 also reflects a Marcan idiom of secrecy still prevailing at 9.30.

In what follows I shall set aside consideration of the pre-Marcan tradition, because it is impalpable. Without doubt the formula "Elijah with Moses" in 9,4 and the enigmatic argument about Elijah in 9,9-13 suggest that an earlier version of the story had a meeting only with Elijah. Moses is indispensable to the story as Mark tells it, if only because of the three tents in 9,5. His presence rules out particular weight being given to the fact that Elijah did not die but was translated bodily to heaven.

We start with the central feature of the incident, which is the transfigured Jesus in conversation with Elijah and Moses. What have these two in common? Clearly they are both representative figures of the Old Testament, the Law and the Prophets. They provide models for the two miracle-working witnesses in Revelation 11,4-6. But here they are talking on a mountain, and the allusion must be plain. Both conversed with the Lord on Mount Horeb. The Moses tradition is extensive, but centres on Exodus chapters 19, 24 and 33-36. Elijah flees from Jezebel, and comes after a 40-day fast to Horeb the Mount of God, where he too receives direct instructions from the Lord (1 Kings 19). The patristic interpreters are in no doubt who it was that Moses met on Horeb/Sinai. Justin Martyr, for instance, goes to some length to prove that the one who appeared to Moses at the bush, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is also the one who was begotten at the beginning by God as a rational power, "who is called by the Holy Spirit 'Glory of God', and sometimes 'Son' and sometimes 'Wisdom', sometimes 'God', sometimes 'Lord' and 'Word' . . ." (*Dialogue* 61,1; cf. 60,5). Irenaeus in a more complicated argument (*Adv. haereses* 4,20,9) takes the statement of Exodus 33,11 in a special sense: "The Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend". He makes the subject unambiguously the Word, but deduces that Moses did not see the face of God at that time. He takes Exodus 33,20-22 as a promise for the future, "Stand in the high place of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand. But when my glory passes by, then you will see my back parts; but my face will not be seen by you, for no man sees God and will live." This indicates both that man cannot see God, and that Moses would see him in his human advent in the high place of the rock; the last was fulfilled when "face to face he (the Lord) conversed with him in his human advent on the mountain height, with Elijah also present, as the Gospel reports, finally fulfilling his ancient promise". I cite these patristic passages not for their specific arguments, but to illustrate how a century after Mark it was simply taken for granted that the Lord of Moses on Sinai was personally identical with Jesus Christ. The Marcan text as it stands suggests that Mark thought so too.

The obvious reason for this assertion stands in the divine word which is the climax of the vision, "This is my beloved (or unique) Son, hear him" (9,7), followed by the emphatic statement that they looked round (dare one suggest that Mark implies, "to see who was meant"?), "and they no longer saw anyone any more but Jesus alone with them" (9,8). Both Matthew and Luke in different ways strengthen the formula about the beloved Son, but to the patient reader of Mark it is hardly necessary. Already at the baptism John has (in the guise of Elijah) confessed himself unworthy to untie Jesus' sandal-thong (1,6-7), and Jesus was declared by God to be "my Son, my beloved, with you I am well pleased" (1,11). Now the same words are said to the disciples, but with a possible reminiscence of Dt. 18,15, where Moses says, "The Lord your God will raise up for you from your brothers a prophet like me; him you shall hear". Not a prophet like Moses, but a unique Son is now to be heard, whatever value was and is set upon Moses and Elijah. We are in the same complex of thought as when the popular views of Jesus are listed at 8,28: "(Some say) John the Baptist, other Elijah, others, one of the prophets," which the story contrasts with the apostolic confession, "You are the Christ," and with Jesus' own prediction of the sufferings of the Son of Man (8,29-31). This all suggests that as Son Jesus is of unique authority, superior to the prophets.

But my suggestion goes further. For Mark the Beloved Son was the one Moses and Elijah had known on Horeb as "the Lord". Here the argument begins with patristic sources like Justin and Irenaeus, and asks why this assumption of theirs should not be correct. There are some New Testament texts elsewhere which point the same way. I confine myself to a couple of examples, one certain but perhaps late, one less certain but early. At John 12,39-41 the evangelist explains the unbelief of the Jews by quoting the divine blinding and hardening predicted in Isaiah 6,9-10, concluding, "Isaiah said this because (or, when) he had seen his glory, and he spoke of him". This certainly alludes to Isaiah 6,1, "I saw the Lord, seated on a high and exalted throne, and the house was full of his glory". John thus identifies the *Kyrios* whom Isaiah saw with Jesus Christ. The less certain but early instance is 1 Cor. 10,4, where Paul alludes to the rabbinic legend of the rolling rock which supplied water to Israel in the desert. But Paul asserts that it was a spiritual drink from a spiritual rock, "and the rock was Christ". The uncertainty arises because this may be an allegorical interpretation of the Exodus story rather than an assertion that Christ personally was either the rock or the Lord who gave it. But it is clear enough to support the possibility that Mark believed that he was the Lord who met the prophets on Sinai. We might add one further text from Mark himself. At 12,35-37 Jesus answers his opponents with the unanswered question, "How can the scribes say that Messiah is David's son? David himself said by the Holy Spirit, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right, while I put your enemies under my feet'. David calls him Lord; so how is he his Son?" So the Christ who sits at the right hand of God's power (cf. Mk. 14,62) is David's Lord, superior to him. It is but a small step to demonstrating him superior to the angels with other Psalm verses like, "Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever," and, "You at the beginning, Lord, founded the earth," which we find in Heb. 1,8-13 (Ps. 44,7/44,6; 101,26/102,25). There is no reason to doubt that Mark would accept such reasoning, and allow that Christ is a pre-existent Lord and God, reigning beside the Father, and speaking to the prophets of old.

There is one feature of the Moses material in Mk. 9 which confirms this interpretation. Peter asks the silly, terrified question, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here, so should we make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah?". Now what would Moses be doing with a tent, in the proximity of a cloud of divine glory? The cloud already suits the mountain, as at

Exodus 24,15-16, "Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days, and on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud." But once the tent of witness, or tent of meeting, was finished, following the design given by the Lord on the mountain, it becomes the place where Moses regularly meets the Lord face to face: "When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the door of the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses. And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the door of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, every man at his tent door. Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (Exodus 33,9-11). In the remaining chapters of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers the cloud abides as God's presence in the midst of the camp, and Israel moves only when the cloud lifts and leads them. If we now apply the pattern to Mark's story, we find Peter suggesting that the right response is to do as Moses' assistants did, and make tents, one for each of the three visionaries. He did not know what to say, because they were terrified. There may be a reminiscence of Exodus 34,30, where Aaron and the elders are afraid to come near Moses as he descends from the mountain with his face shining. But the point is that Peter's suggestion equates Jesus with Moses and Elijah. He is in communion with God on a mountain; he is transfigured, like Moses, by the experience. The divine presence is to be restored to Israel threefold, with Jesus, Moses and Elijah. But the suggestion calls forth the rebuke of God himself from the glory-cloud: Jesus is not a prophet, but an only Son, and is to be uniquely heard. When the cloud clears, there is no speaker and no prophet, but only Jesus. Peter is thus informed (though naturally in Mark he remains confused even afterwards) that he has misinterpreted what he has seen. Conversation with Moses and Elijah on the mountain does not make Jesus like them; he is the Lord with whom they converse. The Lord of Sinai, and the Lord of glory in the tent, is the divine Son. And the divine Son is Jesus himself, the suffering Son of Man.

That is the core of the matter. One could look to Matthew for some confirmation, though he does not differ significantly from Mark. He makes Jesus' face shine like the sun (17,2); he relieves Peter of blame, and makes his suggestion more polite ("if you wish", 17,4); he moves the terror to follow the divine voice, when the disciples fall on their faces (17,6) like Ezekiel (Ezk. 1,28) and Daniel (Dn. 10,9), and they have to be raised by Jesus' voice and touch, like those prophetic visionaries (Mt. 17,7 with Ezk. 2,1-2; Dn. 10,10-11); and the divine voice is deliberately assimilated to that of 3,17 by the addition, "in whom I am pleased". The literary finish is more serene, lacking the force and angularity of Mark, and ironing out some of the clues to the meaning. But for Matthew as for Mark, any typology between Moses and Christ is one in which Christ is Moses' Lord, able to overthrow by his mere word the things laid down of old time. There is perhaps force in the very title "Lord", which Peter uses at 17,4 instead of Mark's "Rabbi".

Looking at the older books on the gospels on which I was brought up, I found little to help me. It does not help much to discuss whether the story was originally a resurrection appearance or not, even if there are some overtones of resurrection, especially in Matthew. Nor does it help to consider what "actually" happened. It certainly does not help to be told moralistically that the only purposes of religious experience is to make a person hotter on good works once he gets down from the mountain into the "real" world (falsely so-called). What has helped me both as student and preacher has been a glimpse, which Mark especially gives me, of Christ crucified as the Lord of glory, whose voice is the "I am" of the burning bush, and the thunder of Sinai, and the still small voice which Elijah hears in his despair. That is the meat of true theology.

NATURE AND GENDER: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

NANCY TAPPER

Women's studies and feminist politics have caused academics, among many others, to reconsider their views on questions of nature and gender. My aim here is to add a further dimension to such reflections and to look at the concepts nature and gender from an anthropological point of view. Among other things, this perspective has some moral and intellectual relevance for our understanding of feminism generally and the role of gender studies in our study of religion in particular.

As the current President of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Jean La Fontaine, has recently said,

> "Most anthropologists would agree that the study of social anthropology can be an antidote to prejudice. [It is fundamental to the subject] to learn to approach all social arrangements as equally valid ways of organizing communal life, and all customs are equally interesting . . . Comparison also calls into question the cultural certainties with which all societies equip their members. The comparative perspective puts one's society and its customary practices in a different light. Social anthropology, it is said, makes it possible to 'see ourselves as others see us'" (1986: 3).

In this light it is perhaps appropriate to consider briefly the meaning and use of the concept "nature" in our society, not least because many of our ideas about sex, as a physical distinction, and gender, as a social and cultural distinction, depend on our prior definition of "nature".

How natural is our concept of "nature"?

As David Pocock points out in his introductory anthropology textbook, it is a commonplace among social anthropologists that when people in our society speak about something as "natural", they are almost certainly being highly ethnocentric and making a statement of belief which cannot be tested empirically: "when a social anthropologist hears . . . the phrase, 'it's only natural' – that people should act, think or feel in a certain way – he will be much more disposed to question this alleged 'naturalness' than someone who accepts it as an irrefutable proof" (1975: viii).

Moreover, he suggests that we do not have to think very hard to see how much damage has been done through the abuse of the concepts "nature" and "natural". We are well aware how the idea of "race" as a "natural" category was used to justify Nazi efforts to "purify the blood" and how it continues to be used as the cornerstone of the South African defence of apartheid. We have become sensitive to the dogma of "nature" in such cases, but we are much less sensitive to the tyranny of the idea of what is "natural" when we speak of gender. Just think of how often our stereotypes of male and female are made to sound plausible by using the concept "nature" to lend them weight and authority. We have all heard, and probably ourselves used, phrases like: "women are natural mothers", "it's just like a man", "a woman's instinct", "boys just are more energetic than girls" and so on.

In such cases, what we regard as "natural" is in fact a cultural construct, a concept which relates not to some objective, or ultimate reality, but to our own society's way of dividing up and classifying experience. And, of course, one of the things which gives our notion of what is "natural" such clout, is its close association with our ideas about science as a highly-rated way of coping with the "natural world".

Nature, science and religion in Western thought

For us "science" implies a rigorous methodology and universal, comprehensive goals, and we accord it considerable authority, *not least* because "science" is our prime means of understanding and controlling "nature". In saying that, I have just produced a perfect example of the circularity of our concepts of science and nature. On the one hand, science is our prime means of understanding the natural world; on the other, "the natural world" is defined as those areas of experience that we can explore and control scientifically. The authority of both concepts is mutually reinforcing and the statements we make about "human nature" or the "nature of women and men" are that much more compelling and persuasive.

Our notions of "nature" and "science" are not really separate at all, but inextricably combined. And, of course, this association has a long history. As MacCormack has written in the introduction to the book *Nature, Culture and Gender*, "Our European ideas about nature and culture are fundamentally about our origins and evolution . . . Genesis, for example, sets humans in opposition to nature and promises us domination over nature. With Protestantism, we come to take individual responsibility for the rational understanding and harnessing of nature." Today, our ideas of dominating nature reflect "the faith of industrial society that society is produced by enterprising activity". Indeed, it has even been suggested that "'development' from a Hobbesian state of nature is the origin myth of Western capitalism" (1980: 6). She continues,

> "we allocate honour and prestige to people of science and industry who excel in understanding and controlling the powerful domain of nature. We also honour people who overcome animal urges, curbing these urges in accordance with moral codes. When women are defined as 'natural' a high prestige or even moral 'goodness' is attached to men's domination over women, analagous to the goodness of human domination of natural energy sources or the libidinal energy of individuals" (1980: 6).

In this light, the myths of primitive matriarchy fashionable with both Victorians and ourselves are perhaps explicable: myths of the rule of women offer a vision of a catastrophic alternative to contemporary social forms and a justification for male dominance.

And there are, of course, other important threads in the history of the notions of nature and culture in European thought. Block and Bloch have investigated what they have called the "dialectics of nature" in 18th century thought (1980). On the one hand, the changes and reforms which Rousseau sought were based on a

particular concept of human nature which was associated with a society based on notions of human rights and democratic forms. Here Rousseau's concept of nature was defined in terms of opposites, including a corrupted social hierarchy. However, Rousseau also set up a further dialectic between the idea of nature as a model for a new, purified society and nature as it was associated with female emotions and domestic roles. As McCormack says in her introduction to the Bloch's discussion, "18th-century ideas of social and political reform did not extend to women. Although they were more purely natural than men, women were socially defined as passive, dependent and politically inferior to men" (1980: 20-21). In this way nature meant both what is given and basic and is regarded as good, but also what is wild, savage and bad. Our present use of the concept "nature" contains this same ambiguity.

The development of the concepts "nature" and "culture" have a critical place in the development of European thought, and parallel the development of a dichotomy between concepts of "reason" and "faith", and the basic opposition we readily accept today between ideas of what is "secular" and what is "sacred". Pocock considers how such often taken-for-granted concepts qualify our understanding of "religion" both in our own society and cross-culturally. He also reminds us that Durkheim pointed out in his classic work, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, that people cannot develop a notion of the "supernatural" unless they have developed a prior notion of what is "natural" (1975: 155).

In a very complicated fashion our view of human history, culture, rationality and civilization depend on an idea of the domination of nature and such domination has been increasingly associated in European thought with the assertion of masculine ways over "irrational", "backward-looking" women.

Perhaps I have laboured my point unduly, but it is important to realize that in everyday life when we talk about the roles of women and men in our society, or the "nature" of male or female gender, the sense and impact of what we say derives from both the double-barrelled authority of science and religion and from the very circularity of our ideas of nature.

Assumptions about "nature" and "culture"

It is always hard to identify the assumptions we make to order and give meaning to our lives, and it is harder still to question and perhaps challenge the whole social and intellectual edifice which depends on those assumptions.

A good example of just how hard such an exercise is can be drawn from the recent history of anthropology itself. In the last two decades the structuralism of the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss has had a considerable impact on how we have viewed nature and culture and gender relations of all kinds. Structural analyses rest on an insistance that cultural classifications are always based on paired oppositions, and that by considering all the cultural items associated with a particular context, we may reveal patterns which are more than superficial. Clearly, the same principle should operate when we consider notions of gender: the way we define women and what is feminine depends on the way we define men and masculinity, and vice versa.

Following Lévi-Strauss, a series of paired oppositions was explored: between women, the domestic group and the natural environment on the one hand, and men, the world of public and political affairs, and culture on the other. A basic association of women with nature and men with culture, was, for a while, very influential. Thus Ortner, an excellent theorist writing in the early days of gender studies in anthropology, could herself use the idea of what is "natural" in exactly the way I've tried to warn against doing.

In *Women, Culture and Society*, Ortner wrote that "everywhere, in every known culture, women are considered in some degree inferior to men" (1974: 69). But, as McCormack has pointed out (1980: 17), what Ortner didn't say was – By whom they are considered so: by men? women? by how many? In making such an assertion, Ortner (like Levi-Strauss) took for granted an assumption from our own culture: that polarities between nature and culture and between men and women were basic to the way in which all human beings think. She also assumed, in the tradition of evolutionary thinking in our society, that there were simple hierarchical scales on which men and women could be ranged.

Ortner went on: "It all begins of course with the body and the natural procreative functions *specific to women alone*. And she maintained explicitly that the cultural concepts by which societies (and, by implication all societies) characterise women are determined by the facts of female physiology." (La Fontaine 1981: 334).

So very recently indeed we have a respected anthropologist, among many others, arguing that aspects of human biology, such as women's lactation or men's greater physical strength, are the prime determinants of gender classifications and that the cultural elaborations of these differences provide society's justification of male domination of women.

At this juncture, we need to remind ourselves of two separate but related points. First, that the division of women's and men's labour into domestic and public spheres *is* universal but the way the division is managed is determined by culture rather than biology. Indeed virtually all human behaviour, including even such "physical" activities as copulation and childbirth is learned behaviour. Such activities vary widely between different societies, while actual patterns of female and male behaviour accord with each society's beliefs about the reproductive functions of the sexes. This leads directly on to the second point, that the term "biology" itself requires examination, and we need to be quite clear about the objective role of human anatomy and physiology in our understanding of gender.

Biology and gender

Human anatomy is indeed used as the basis for classifying women and men, but the categories "women" and "men" per se *are not biological or anatomical at all*, but *cultural*. That is, anatomical differences between women and men are universal, and all societies

recognize them, but they use them to construct social ideas. In other words, what it is to be a "woman" – "women's nature", if you will, as gentle or emotional (to take stereotypes of our own society) – depends on a series of cultural definitions which are specific to a particular society at a particular time. And, again, what makes the cultural categories so convincing is the way they form part of a circular system: the particular attributes, of gentleness or the emotionality of women for instance, are deemed intrinsic by association with the anatomical features (the womb, the breasts, for example) which are actually represented as their cause (cf. La Fontaine 1981: 335).

Thus, the capacity to lactate is used to define womanhood, and the woman who nurses her infant is associated with a nurturing role which is itself associated with patience and gentleness thus leading to the self-fulfilling prophecy that the ideal woman is one who is a patient and gentle mother. A striking feature of such an ideological construct is that it places enormous emphasis on the exclusive role of the biological mother in nurturing children and this, in turn, is closely linked with the identification of women's place in the domestic sphere as wives and mothers.

However, it takes very little comparative study to see that these associations are culturally determined. For instance, the history of the "domestication" of women in our society, as it has been called, has been carefully examined by Rodgers (1980). It is the result of a process which has been traced back to the 11th century in Europe and, more importantly, to the industrial revolution; in the process of "domestication" women lost their economic autonomy as producers in their own right – as farmers, craft workers or traders – and became increasingly dependent on the wages of men and more confined to the home and house work.

Moreover, we are aware that the biologizing of gender has created stereotypes which are contradicted by actual practices. For instance, institutions of wet-nursing, artificial feeding and nannies, free mothers from any permanent association with their offspring after birth, while others, such as celibacy or contraception, actually preclude any necessary association between motherhood and womanhood at all.

Equally we are aware that in our society, as in others, gender stereotypes contain contradictions: images of mothers suggest they are gentle but wise, yet also liable to be irrationally domineering and weaker in both a physical and moral sense than a child's father. Gender concepts, and the symbols and metaphors on which they are based, have many varied implicit meanings; they and their associated stereotypes are constantly used in different ways to validate or justify a whole variety of contemporary social forms.

Before I attempt to develop this point further, let us return for a moment to the question of biology.

We are all aware of the way features of human anatomy are treated differently in different societies and in our own society over time. To see this, we have only to compare the fascination many peoples have with women's buttocks, with our own Page 3 kind of fascination with women's breasts. Or, we can look at the history of the artistic conventions in the portrayal of the female nude in European art and compare this with the treatment of human nakedness in non-European traditions, in the art of India, Africa or Japan. Or, consider how in many traditions the phallus is often symbolically associated with spears, arrows and other weapons, so that, as La Fontaine points out, "death-dealing activities appear to have a double appropriateness for men, being justified by the greater strength of male bodies and associated symbolically with the anatomical feature which defines masculinity" (1981: 335). Yet such associations are neither universal nor unchanging, otherwise I dare say codpieces would still be in fashion today!

Equally, if we consider sexuality *per se*, we find that, quite contrary to the Freudian view that all humans have an innate high level of sexual energy which must be expressed directly or indirectly, levels of sexual energy are themselves determined by cultural and social circumstances. Thus, in contrast with our own cultural preoccupation with sexuality, the society of the Dani of Indonesia is noteworthy for its extremely low level of sexual interest and activity. Especially striking is their rule of a five-year sexual abstinence after a birth, which is uniformly observed by both a wife and her husband and is not the subject of great concern or stress. This low level of sexuality appears to be a purely cultural phenomenon, not caused by any biological factors, but consistent with other aspects of Dani social organization and structure (Heider 1976).

Even from such brief examples, it is clear that the universal "facts" of human anatomy and sexuality are variably treated in different cultural contexts. And there is even more variation in the interpretation of human physiology, though it too is "objectively" universal. The physiology of each sex and the processes of human reproduction are also the subject of social constructions.

The question of virgin birth

For anthropologists the classic example of this fact is the variety of notions of paternity and virgin birth found in different societies. In some societies it is women, in others men, who are credited with primary reproductive powers. In this respect, the late Audrey Richards recorded the pithy observation of a Ngoni man of Central Africa who was commenting on the views of the neighbouring Bemba people who, unlike the Ngoni, were organized in according to ideas of matrilineal descent: "If I have a bag and put money in it, the money belongs to me. But the Bemba say that a man puts semen into a women and yet the children belong to the woman, not the man" (quoted in La Fontaine 1981: 336).

Such social constructions depend on which elements of the reproductive process a people choose to emphasize – perhaps the act of ejaculation, or alternatively the lengthy pregnancy, or childbirth itself, or even the process of socialization. Whichever emphasis we find, it also entails an elaboration of notions of gender, of what it means to be male or female, in a particular society.

For instance, as I have already suggested, when we think about reproducing the next generation of adults in

our own society, we place great emphasis on the so-called biological role of the mother and her role in socializing children and very little emphasis on either the father's procreative or parental role. If this were not the case, we would be hard-put to explain why, after a divorce, women almost always gain custody of the children of the marriage. Elsewhere, as among some groups of Australian Aborigines and among the Trobriand Islanders of Papua New Guinea, there is such a selective emphasis on pregnancy and parturition that these people have even been said to be ignorant of physiological paternity.

Nowadays anthropologists, following Sir Edmund Leach's discussion of virgin birth, would accept that such peoples were not ignorant of the male role in conception, but rather they simply deemed it irrelevant to their explanations of the mystery of creation. That is, "doctrines about the possibility of conception taking place without male insemination do not stem from innocence and ignorance: on the contrary they are consistent with theological argument of the greatest subtlety" (Leach 1969: 84-5). Leach suggests that "If we put the so-called primitive beliefs alongside the sophisticated ones and treat the whole lot with equal philosophical respect we shall see that they constitute a set of variations around a common problem, the metaphysical relationship between people and their gods" (p. 85).

As he explains, using the comparable Christian example, the idea of the "Virgin Birth does *not* imply ignorance of the facts of physiological paternity. On the contrary, it serves to reinforce the dogma that the Virgin's child is the son of God. Furthermore, the Christian doctrine of the physical-spiritual paternity of God the Father does not preclude a belief in the sociological paternity of St Joseph . . . The authors of the Gospels of St Matthew and St Luke combine their account of the Virgin Birth with a pedigree which places Jesus in the direct line of patrilineal descent from David *through Joseph*" (1969: 95-6); "a careful distinction is made between Jesus' legal status *as a man* and his essential nature *as a god*" (p. 97).

However, the same "distinction between legal status and substance appears also in the matrilineal Trobriand case in the reverse sense" (p. 96; cf. 106ff.). The impregnating ancestral spirits are members of the mother's lineage and the child's legal status derives from its mother's brother; the woman's husband (who alone has sexual access to his wife) is held to be neither *genitor* nor *pater* of the child, yet he is nonetheless understood to be the source of the child's physical substance and physiognomy. Clearly, whether we are considering Trobriand procreation beliefs or Christians who say they believe in the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, we can see that they are expressing a religious truth which does not relate to other everyday experience, except by contrast.

To take the example a bit further, Leach points out that anthropological efforts to make sense of the social implications of an idea like virgin birth require that the idea be treated alongside other ideas about supernatural births which one finds in a particular system of beliefs. In the Christian case, for example, one would want to consider the similarities and differences between the birth of Christ and the birth of Isaac which is also contrary to our experience since, after all, Isaac's mother, Sarah, was granted a child in her old age (1969: 98).

Notions of gender and procreation

The range of stories of miraculous births and other beliefs about procreation establish the parameters of fundamental social concepts like paternity or motherhood in any particular tradition. In a recent article which continues the anthropological debate about virgin birth, Delaney (1986) has suggested that in communities whose systems of religious beliefs and practices derive from the Semitic religious traditions, we find that paternity means begetting – that is, it has a primary, creative role. By contrast, maternity in such traditions is not an equivalent concept and does not relate to a creative potential in women but is consistently associated with nurturing and bearing. This difference is of course made explicit in Christianity and exemplified in the doctrine of Virgin Birth.

Delaney develops what she calls a monogenetic theory of procreation – that is, one in which the child is held to originate from one source only. She suggests that such a theory is consistent with theological concepts of monotheism in which God is the ultimate and only source of all creation. The corollary, of course, is that in so-called polytheistic systems of belief, in which ideas of human and divine creativity are not so single-minded but diverse and manifold, we might expect, as indeed is the case, that theories of procreation are also more complex and do not ascribe priority to a single creative source.

I have already mentioned that in all social systems, physical attributes take on moral qualities. As Leach remarked, the Christian idea of Virgin Birth is compatible with patriarchy. Delaney elaborates this idea and notes that, in the cultural milieux associated with the Semitic religions, men are regarded as having a creative power within them which is related to ideas of their autonomy, self-sufficiency, authority and their ability to lead and innovate. Women, by contrast, are understood to lack this power to create and to project and perpetuate themselves in their own right. And, by the same token, they are held to be more emotional and less direct than men. In other words, women receive men's seed, and they are also the passive receivers of cultural forms initiated by men.

Clearly the symbols and beliefs associated with ideas of procreation may provide the basic concepts and metaphors in terms of which ideas of the person, both male and female, are constructed and relations between them and with the non-human world are articulated. In this respect, it is of considerable interest that scientific data that women provide not only nutritive material but half the genetic constitution of a child have only been widely assimilated in the West in the past few decades. Clearly, as Delaney suggests, such new knowledge is bound to affect out ideas of gender, but, because of the association of the old ideas with many of the most important themes of Western culture, this process of change is likely to be very slow and, in everyday life, we continue to associate men with a creative potential which we implicitly deny women.

The social context of gender constructs

An anthropological treatment of an idea like virgin birth depends on understanding both a range of procreation beliefs and the wider social contexts in which the idea developed and is used. Warner's fascinating and anthropologically-informed book on the myth and the cult of the Virgin Mary (1976) provides a good example of the breadth of the issues which should be considered, among them the respective social roles of men and women. For example, Warner discusses how the idea of Mary, as a model for all women, has changed over time. Different emphases were associated historically with particular social dilemmas which confronted the Roman Catholic church: thus, the idea of the Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven developed in the early Middle Ages during the period when powerful monarchs were emerging in western Europe, while the later emphasis on Mary Madonna – the sweet, submissive "domesticated" woman – was associated both with changes in inheritance law which served to deprive women of the previous rights they had to own and control property and particularly land, and also with the development and spread of monastic institutions which served to deny women an active and independent role in the church ministry.

In the same vein, in my own work on Islam in contemporary Turkey, I have become interested in the transcendental role allocated to Emine, the mother of the Prophet Mohammad, in certain key ritual performances known as *mevlud* (Tapper & Tapper 1987). In these *mevlud* services, the Prophet's birth is treated as parthogenesis – as more or less a virgin birth, in spite of the importance, in Islamic theology, of Mohammad's human identity, his historical association with a particular tribal lineage and the routinization of charisma in his lineal descendants. But, in the *mevlud*, Mohammad's miraculous birth implicitly affords him a superhuman status which gives an additional force and plausibility to his prophetic message. The women's *mevlud* recitals differ from those of men in a number of specific details (for example, in the way women identify with the Prophet's mother and exalt childbirth and motherhood); for various reasons associated with recent changes in Turkish Islam, the women's recitals have become particularly important and women have, perhaps by default, assumed a primary role in expressing the religious truth of the salvation promise.

So far I have focused on conceptual systems, we should remember that not only particular beliefs, but also emotions and even physical reactions, can be influenced by cultural standards. There are many examples one could mention: particularly vivid is Christian's discussion of provoked religious weeping in later medieval Europe (1982). In that period controlled religious weeping was treated as clear evidence of heart-felt feeling and deeply held faith. The prayer manuals of the time instructed believers in such an expression of faith and both men and women learned to weep. Nowadays such displays of emotion are out of favour except in some Protestant sects, and to most of us it is inconceivable that sincerity or intensity of belief of women, let alone men, should be judged by such a criterion.

Gender, the self and the person

This brings me to my final point. Foucault in his *History of Sexuality* traces the development of a discourse on sexuality in Western Europe and its relation to the near total control of the individual by the modern state. As an observer trying to stand outside his own society, Foucault's perspective allows him to say that "Sexuality [and thus of course the gender constructs associated with it] must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which must be managed by society", but rather it is "an historical construct whose development can be documented" (1981: 105). His argument is complex and intriguing and it runs counter to many contemporary ideas about individualism and personal freedom which we both cherish and treat as axiomatic.

Other studies, like that of Dreitzel, draw on Foucault's ideas to show that in general in Western Europe we have moved, since the Middle Ages, towards an ever greater control of our emotions and physical behaviour from that which was immediate and spontaneous to that which is very formal and hedged round with etiquette. In this light Dreitzel looks at contemporary attitudes to emotions and bodily functions and tries to make connections "between such apparently different phenomena as the deritualization of everyday life, the changed attitudes towards nudity and sexuality, the ecological movements, the new emphasis on the political meaning of (so-called) "natural" categories such as race and region or gender and sex, the spread of experiential therapies, . . . the search for authentic experience" (1981: 221). He suggests that the common denominator of these diverse phenomena is a reflective and reflexive attitude towards our corporality and our environment.

Dreitzel argues that the emerging new attitude of self-reflectivity and reflexiveness is a further elaboration of contemporary interest in the self and the person. And he suggests that we treat ourselves and our experiences as the only legitimate source of material for understanding the world. Self-discovery has become an obsession in our culture. The anthropologists Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry (1982) have developed a comparable theme: that in the West the individual has been given a transcendental value and there is an ideological stress on our unique and unrepeatable biographies. The individual is conceived of in opposition to society, and, for instance, traditional management of concepts associated with fertility and the reproduction of society have lost their importance.

This combination, of the self-consciousness of our own culture about "culture" as opposed to "nature" and a self-consciousness about the category "woman" as opposed to "man" may account for the prominence of the feminist movement and gender studies in the late 20th century. But whatever the case, it would behove us to ask – Why are we asking questions about gender or feminism today? And how do these questions relate to the kind of society in which we live?

This paper was first presented at Salisbury and Wells Theological College in December, 1986; my thanks are due to the members of that college for the lively, critical way in which they received it.

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DOING SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

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Sometimes, when I am asked what I do for a job, I answer that I teach systematic theology. In most cases, I have to admit, this brings the conversation to a rather sudden end. But in some cases the people I talk to try to get beyond this cryptic answer. Knowing that academics, and especially those from my background, have an inclination to use abstract though somewhat incomprehensible concepts, they ask whether I could give an example of this strange activity from my work in recent years. I could answer that I have done some work on liberal theology at the turn of the century. "So you are really a church historian", my conversation partner could say. Well aware that church historians are not so favourably disposed towards systematic theologians trying their hand at historical research, I could answer: "No, not exactly. Apart from trying to understand a specific theological conception in its historical context, I have to relate it to the biblical message and have to find out how the biblical sources are used in presenting an adequate account of Christian faith today." "So your work is rather like that of a biblical scholar", might be the reply. This makes me feel slightly uneasy, since I know that biblical exegetes are sometimes tempted – and not without reason – to summarize the excursions of systematic theologians into their field under the heading "amateur's night". And I try to explain that I am not so much concerned with the biblical texts in their original historical situation, but with the present validity of the truth-claims they imply. This, however, would seem to be trespassing on the land of the philosophers. I do not want to spell out all the possible exchanges with my – by now wholly imaginary – conversation partner. The difficulty in giving a straightforward answer to the question what "doing systematic theology" means should already be sufficiently clear, namely, that systematic theology seems to be a strange mixture of all theological and some non-theological disciplines, borrowing bits and pieces here and there but never achieving a methodologically unambiguous coherent strategy. My main problem is therefore whether and how it is possible to give an account of doing systematic theology which presents it as an activity that is at least so coherent and intelligible that it would seem justified calling someone a lecturer in systematic theology.

My first suggestion is very simple and it accounts for my rather inelegant title "Doing Systematic Theology". Systematic theology should not primarily be understood as a system of theological doctrines or theories, but as an activity. And since this activity is dependent on working with certain materials and using certain tools, systematic theology has the character of a craft which in some rare cases achieves the quality of an art.[1] On this view, teaching systematic theology would not consist in presenting certain fixed doctrines, but in demonstrating and practising certain skills with the aim of enabling students to learn to practise this craft by themselves. The objective of studying systematic theology should be to acquire competence in doing systematic theology. And this would imply the ability to work with the materials of systematic theology in a way which is informed by certain criteria and methods. This view of systematic theology does not rule out that the activity of doing systematic theology results in a set of systematically ordered arguments and propositions which could be called *a* systematic theology. But this result is always dependent on the craftsmanship and expertise applied in the activity of doing systematic theology. I shall therefore try to show how the activity of doing systematic theology is related to the nature of Christian faith and which criteria would define competence in doing systematic theology. Nevertheless my account of this craft has more the character of leafing through the rule-book and sorting out the toolbag of systematic theologians. A more concrete description of doing systematic theology would mean analyzing or presenting a concrete example of this activity, and this would have to be much more specific than my general topic, "doing systematic theology".

I

One could define systematic theology as the self-explication of Christian faith with respect to the truth-claims and norms of action that are asserted, presupposed or implied by it. As Christian *dogmatics* systematic theology is the rational reconstruction of the forms and contents of Christian faith. As Christian *ethics* it is the reflection on the possibilities, aims and norms of action connected to the truth-claims of Christian faith. These truth-claims describe the situation of the agent in the world within the framework of the central Christian beliefs about the nature of reality and human destiny and thereby prescribe the basic orientation of human action in the world. The fact that our fundamental beliefs and convictions about the nature of reality determine our possibilities of action as well as the aims we try to achieve provides the essential connection between dogmatics and ethics which makes it possible to summarize both under the heading "systematic theology". In the rest of the paper I shall concentrate exclusively on systematic theology as dogmatics although this makes my account of doing systematic theology necessarily incomplete.

This view of systematic theology as the self-explication of Christian faith makes it dependent on Christian faith in its various expressions. Therefore, the work of the systematic theologian is never purely constructive. It is the rational *re*-construction of what is given in the manifold expressions of Christian faith as they are presented in prayer, confessions of faith and Christian proclamation.[2] The reconstructive character of systematic theology implies that the propositions of systematic theology are always dependent on the assertions of Christian faith, and that the truth-claims of the assertions of systematic theology are derived from the truth-claims of Christian faith.

The definition of systematic theology as the self-explication of Christian faith immediately raises the question what it is about the nature of Christian faith that makes the rational reconstruction of its contents possible and necessary. The possibility of systematic theology as the self-explication of Christian faith is given in the role of linguistic communication in the constitution of faith and in the linguistic character of its expressions.[3] In the Christian tradition faith is interpreted as a gift of the Spirit. The divine spirit authenticates the gospel of Jesus Christ as the revelation of the true relationship of the

creator to the whole of creation, and thereby makes possible the unconditional trust in God which determines the whole of the life of the Christian believer. On this trinitarian view of the constitution of Christian faith, which reflects the trinitarian structure of God's being and action, faith is constituted by divine action and passively received by the believer. Its character is the active acknowledgement of its divine constitution in all spheres of life.

It is one of the fundamental elements of this understanding of the constitution of faith that the divine action in creating faith is the authentification of the human proclamation of the *external word* of the gospel of Jesus Christ by the *internal word* of the witness of the Holy Spirit. Faith presupposes the proclamation of the gospel, the linguistic communication of the content of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. And in this sense Christian faith is *fides ex auditu*. The rhetorical puzzlement of Paul's question: "How could they have faith in one they have never heard of?" (Rom. 10,14) is an apt illustration of the strength of his conclusion: "We conclude that faith is awakened by the message, and the message that awakens it comes through the word of Christ". (v. 17)

It is the linguistic character of Christian faith-expression that makes its self-explication possible. Everything that can be expressed in a semiotic system (a system of signs like a musical score or a blueprint) can be explicated. But only what is expressed in a linguistic system is capable of *self*-explication. The reflexive character of language distinguishes it from most of the other semiotic systems and this is the reason why we normally have to use language in order to explicate non-linguistic semiotic systems. The fact that faith presupposes and implies the linguistic communication of the gospel makes the self-explication of faith in systematic theology possible.

The necessity of the self-explication of Christian faith is given in the fact that the act of faith presupposes certain truth-claims about the object of faith and its relation to reality which determine the character of faith as unconditional trust. The *fides qua creditur* implies the *fides quae creditur*: "belief in" implies "belief that".[5] The truth-claims implied in Christian faith are ontological in character, they concern the constitution and structure of reality. This makes it necessary for the Christian community to justify that the assertions of faith imply genuine truth-claims and that these truth-claims concern *what there is*, the nature of reality. And this necessitates the self-explication of Christian faith in systematic theology.

Furthermore, faith is claimed to be the basic orientation for the totality of human existence. This claim would be immediately falsified, if human rationality as an essential dimension of human existence would somehow be excluded from this existential orientation. And in order to show that faith does not exclude but includes rationality, the self-explication of faith as the rational reconstruction of the forms and content of Christian faith is required.[6]

Both the possibility as well as the necessity of the self-explication of Christian faith are implied in its character as a communal and a missionary faith. The existence of a Christian community of faith presupposes that the linguistic communication of the contents of faith is possible. The missionary character of Christian faith presupposes the claim to universal validity which is implied in the ontological character of the truth-claims of Christian faith. And it necessitates the self-explication of Christian faith for those belonging to the Christian community in order to justify its self-transcending character, and for those who are outside the Christian community and who are invited to accept the Christian Gospel as the truth for their lives.

Apart from these structural characteristics of Christian faith one can also point to the experiential situation in which the necessity of the self-explication of Christian faith arises. The Christian gospel claims that Jesus Christ is the revelation of God's reconciling love which overcomes the contradiction of human sin and enables justified humanity to live in community with God. This claim alone raises a host of philosophical problems about the relations of the eternal and the temporal, the necessity and the contingent and the universal and the particular. Existentially more important is that the world as we experience it seems to contradict this view of reality harshly. The existence of evil and suffering seem to call either the nature of God as love or his power into question. It is at this point that Christian faith has to become reflective faith, if it wants to remain faith.[7] And this is the existential anchorage for the rational reconstruction of the contents of Christian faith in order to explore ways how the apparent contradiction between the claims of Christian faith and our experience of the way things go in the world can be resolved.

II

After we have seen how the relationship between systematic theology and Christian faith can be characterized in such a way that systematic theology can be understood as the self-explication of Christian faith, we can now attempt to characterize the *task* of systematic theology. Although systematic theology is a theoretical activity, it is provoked by very practical problems and its final aim is a practical one.[8]

The need for the self-explication of Christian faith arises out of the concrete experience of dissensus in the Christian community concerning the interpretation of the forms and contents of Christian faith. There has never been a time in the history of the church when there was no conflict and disagreement about Christian faith. Usually these conflicts concern the foundations of the community of faith and its relationship to those outside the community. When both kinds of problems are taken together they raise the question of the identity of the Christian community.[9] The reasons for dissensus can take a variety of forms. They may be located in internal difficulties with the practice of Christian faith, they can result from the way Christian faith is presented to those outside the Christian community, and they can be the result of external pressures on the Christian community. Whatever its causes, the dissensus becomes the starting-point of systematic theology when it concerns the interpretation of the fundamental truth-claims of Christian faith. The task of systematic theology in this

situation of dissensus is to achieve a new consensus in the community of believers which reaffirms the foundations of that community in such a way that the difficulties which called the old consensus into question can be resolved. In trying to achieve this new consensus systematic theology has to suggest an adequate interpretation of Christian faith which can be acceptable within the Christian community, which defines its relationship to those outside the Christian community, and thereby affirms the identity of the Christian community.

If systematic theology is called to its task by the existence of dissensus in the Christian community and if its task consists in helping to achieve consensus, the task itself would seem to have a two-fold character. On the one hand, it can be seen to consist of the attempt to justify the present validity and relevance of Christian faith in our situation today. This could be dubbed the historical-hermeneutical task of systematic theology. On the other hand, the task of systematic theology can be seen to consist in giving reasons for validating the intelligibility and coherence of the truth-claims implied in Christian faith. This could be called the systematic-analytical task of systematic theology. This two-fold character of the task of systematic theology reflects two central characteristics of Christian faith: firstly, that it is grounded in a particular historical event and exists in a historical community which describes its identity by referring to this event; and secondly, that it implies a comprehensive view of reality which is claimed to be both coherent and universally valid.

Both aspects of the task of systematic theology are clearly interrelated and overlap constantly in the actual practice of doing systematic theology. Nevertheless they must be clearly distinguished, because the present relevance and acceptability of a given statement is not identical with its truth. If the distinction between these two tasks is blurred, this usually results in two common types of mistakes in systematic theology.

The first type is very often found in programmatically revisionary conceptions of systematic theology. It usualy amounts to asserting that the recent history of human self-interpretation in the West renders certain ways of expressing the Christian faith impossible. "After Feuerbach (Kant, Marx, Freud . . .) we cannot have a realistic (metaphysical, personal . . .) understanding of God anymore . . ." would be an example of this type of reasoning. It is based on the category mistake of conflating an alleged historical necessity with logical necessity. And taken seriously, the task of validating the alleged historical necessity would be more difficult than demonstrating the logical possibility or coherence of the statement which is said to have been rendered impossible.

The opposite mistake which can sometimes be found in the work of those who see their task in defending traditional Christian doctrines is to prove the logical possibility of a given statement without paying any attention to the question whether this statement is still an authentic and relevant expression of faith in the Christian community today.

III

After we tried to characterize the task of systematic theology we can now take a closer look at the *criteria*[10] which determine the actual practice of doing systematic theology and which make it possible to assess whether and to what extent systematic reflection has solved its task. I want to suggest that the criteria of doing systematic theology are grounded in the characteristics of Christian faith.

First of all, Christian faith refers to Jesus Christ as its historical ground and as its focus of belief. This inherent Christocentricity, which should not be confused with christocentrism as an organizing principle in presenting a systematic theology, is grounded in the confession of faith that Jesus is the Christ. This implies seeing Jesus Christ as the ultimate revelation of God in which the relationship between God the creator and sinful humanity is restored by God's reconciling love, so that human beings can live in accordance with their created destiny as far as they participate in the reality of salvation in Christ. Christian faith has always insisted on the particularity of God's revelation in the historical individual Jesus of Nazareth who is confessed as the Christ, as the one who is seen by Christians as the realization of God's righteousness which was expected in Israel and as the salvation for all mankind. This means, on the one hand, that God's revelation in Jesus Christ cannot be transformed into a transhistorical metaphysical or moral principle. On the other hand, this implies that all Christian beliefs are shaped by the fundamental role ascribed to Jesus Christ as the ultimate revelation of God.

This essential feature of Christian faith accounts for the crucial importance of Scripture for Christian faith. It is understood in the Christian community as the authentic record of God's revelation in Jesus as the Christ, as the witness of the response of faith to Jesus which is summarized in the title-term "the Christ" and as the fundamental interpretative framework of Old Testament narrative, law, prophecy and wisdom which provided the basic categories for the interpretation of God's action in Jesus Christ. The essentially christomorphic structure of Christian faith justifies the role of the Bible as the book of the Church, because it is the book of Christ.

Secondly, Christian faith is characterized by its historical and communal character. The historical character of Christian faith comprises two elements: on the one hand, Christian faith is constantly referred to its origin; on the other hand, it is historical in the sense that it perceives its historical ground and focus through the tradition which mediates its significance. The communal character of Christian faith is not only an implication of the linguistic character of its central expressions. It can be traced back to the social content of Jesus' message of the Kingdom as the community of God and reconciled humanity, which entails the restoration of the created sociality which is threatened by the disruptive effects of sin.

The historical and communal character of Christian faith are closely interrelated, since the Christian community understands itself as constituted by God's revelation in Jesus Christ and since it determines its

identity by referring to its historical origin. Nevertheless, Christian faith as a communal and historical faith exists in different Christian churches and these churches differ from each other precisely in the way how they construe the reference to Jesus Christ as the origin of the Christian community and how they understand the structure of the Christian community. Whatever the reasons for their separate existence, Christian communities usually state these reasons (which are implied in their construal of Christian identity) not in dogmatic treatises but in confessions of faith which function as the authoritative traditions for the practice of Christian faith. In the historical existence of Christianity the Christian community has its identity only in the form of a confessional and denominational identity. And through this specific confessional community and its authoritative traditions the community of faith is perceived and interpreted.

Thirdly, Christian faith is not only characterised by its reference to Jesus Christ and by its historical and communal character, but also claims to be relevant for the present situation. This claim finds its expression in various forms, ranging from relevance for the individual life-style to the issues discussed in society at large. Implied in this claim to relevance is the conviction that the beliefs implied in Christian faith provide the fundamental orientation for the questions and needs of our present situation. Again, this characteristic is not unconnected to the other two features mentioned above. The relevance of Christian faith is understood as the relevance of Jesus Christ, his message, deeds and suffering, as the revelation of the relationship of God the creator to humanity for our present situation. And it is one of the motives for the adaptation of the Christian community to the changing conditions of relevance in human history. On the strength of its claim to relevance the historical community of faith participates in historical change and becomes itself a major force of historical change.

The fourth characteristic of Christian faith is that it implies a view of reality which claims to be intelligible, meaningful and coherent. We have already mentioned that this is shown by the character of Christian faith as a missionary faith. The claim to intelligibility and coherence is a corollary of the role of linguistic communication in constituting and expressing Christian faith. Intelligibility and coherence is furthermore a necessary condition for the character of Christian faith as asserting genuine truth-claims. A given statement can only function as a truth-claim if it is logically and semantically correctly construed and if it has a propositional content which has not been falsified. The assertions of Christian faith are not exempt from this requirement.

The basic condition for intelligibility or coherence is that the law of non-contradiction – paradoxically known as *principum contradictionis* – is observed.[11] This principle is much more than a theorem in the propositional calculus. It states the fundamental condition for all linguistic, and indeed, semiotic, communication. In its most basic form it refers to the semiotic act of signifying something *as* something. The law of non-contradiction states that this is only possible if the same sign is not ascribed to the thing signified and denied at the same time and in the same respect. If this law is violated, communication becomes meaningless and, in fact, impossible. That Alice and Humpty Dumpty can continue their conversation after Humpty has announced "When I use a word . . . it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less" is only possible, because he remains fairly conventional in his choice of meanings and does not consistently violate the law of non-contradiction. (Long words, like "impenetrability" which he chooses to mean "that we've had enough of that subject, and it would do just as well if you'd mention what you mean to do next, as I suppose you don't mean to stop here all the rest of your life" are, of course, an exception.) The character of Christian faith as *fides ex auditu*, as being constituted by communication and as resulting in communication, implies the claim the Christian faith is internally coherent and intelligible at least in the minimal sense of not violating the law of non-contradiction.

The fifth characteristic of Christian faith is that its ontological truth-claims are not restricted to one aspect or sphere of reality but refer to reality as a whole. Their ontological character is the reason for their claims to universal validity. As ontological truth-claims the assertions of Christian faith must be compatible with all other true propositions. And this formal requirement is strongly emphasized by the comprehensiveness of Christian faith. Without this compatibility Christian faith could not be a form of life which determines the whole of the believer's existence, it would have to inhabit a special sphere without any connection to the other spheres of life. But precisely that is excluded by the ontological character of Christian truth-claims.

IV

My main contention is that these five characteristics of Christian faith determine the criteria of systematic theology as the self-explication of Christian faith. They enable us to assess whether systematic theology is done in a competent or in an incompetent way. One could divide the whole set of criteria into two groups. The first group – the criteria of adequacy – belong to the historical-hermeneutical aspect of the task of systematic theology. The second group – the criteria of coherence – concern the systematic-analytical task of systematic theology.

Let us first turn to the criteria of adequacy. The first criterion of this group is that the assertions of systematic theology should be in accordance with scripture.[12] It is the function of this criterion to make sure that systematic theology conforms to the fundamental structure of Christian faith as referring to Jesus Christ as its historical ground and thematic focus. Reference to Jesus as the Christ is only possible through the medium of scripture. This implies that the conformity of systematic theology to scripture cannot be understood as reference to a canon of infallible texts. This strategy and attitude would be more adequate within an Islamic framework where the Qur'an is indeed identified with the revelation. For Christian faith the authority of Scripture is "excentric" (*J. McIntyre*), in so far as it refers back to the authority of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Conformity with Scripture is a criterion for the adequacy of systematic theology, because God's action in Christ is not accessible in any other way than through the medium of scripture.

And this determines the way in which this criterion should be used in systematic theology. Scripture should be used in such a manner that the texts are explored with respect to the way in which they report, express and interpret the expectation and experience of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. And this perspective determines the way in which systematic theology solves the problem of the unity and diversity of the witness of scripture.

In using adequacy to the scriptures as a criterion for doing systematic theology, scripture is viewed in a two-fold perspective. On the one hand, the Bible is the book of the church and systematic theology has to refer to its use in the church today. On the other hand, it is a collection of texts which all have their own origins and which are shaped by the historical, cultural and sociological circumstances of their respective milieu. In combining both aspects in its use of scripture systematic theologians are heavily dependent on the work of their exegetical colleagues. Only if the original intention of the texts and their present use in the church can be combined in a unified perspective, can conformity with scripture function as a genuine criterion of doing systematic theology. But it should always be kept in mind that conformity with scripture is only the manner in which the conformity of systematic theology with God's revelation in Jesus Christ can be established. In this way this criterion functions as the criterion of *authenticity* for a Christian systematic theology.

The second criterion of this group is the conformity of systematic theology with the authoritative traditions of a given historical community of faith. The authoritative traditions to which the systematic theologian appeals safeguards the continuity of systematic theology with the history of the church and its connection to the community of faith. The authority of these traditions is usually implied in their own self-ascribed status. As confessions of faith they intend and claim to be in accordance with the fundamental witness of faith in scripture. Their authority is therefore derivative. If the authority of scripture is secondary to the primary authority of God's revelation in Christ, the authority of authoritative traditions is tertiary.[13]

The authoritative traditions of the Christian churches summarize and interpret the Christian gospel in order to present the consensus of a specific Christian community concering the understanding of God's revelation in Christ. On the path from dissensus to consensus they present the old consensus, and it has to be examined how far the interpretation of the old consensus can help in achieving a new consensus. If it is precisely the validity of the old consensus which is called into question it has to be asked how far the old consensus is really in accord with scripture or whether it has to be expanded and corrected. If this examination comes to a negative result a new consensus will have to be established in a new authoritative tradition. But this is a task for the church in which systematic theology can only lend a helping hand.

As a summary of the fundamental truths of scripture the authoritative traditions of the Christian churches provide a framework for interpreting scripture and can be used as the fundamental set of rules for the use of scripture in a given Christian community. It would, however, be disastrous if this grammatical use of the authoritative traditions would be played off against the ontological character of Christian truth-claims, because their regulative function is precisely that of determining what should be regarded as a genuine Christian truth-claim and how it should be interpreted.

Since the authoritative traditions guaranteeing the historical continuity of the Christian community are themselves historical documents, the systematic theologian has to depend on the help of the church historians for their interpretation. Only if the historical character of these traditions and their claim to authority for the present can be combined in a unified perspective, can the appeal to authoritative traditions function as a criterion for doing systematic theology. And since the historical continuity of the community of faith is only given in different churches and denominations, this criterion established the confessional identity of a systematic theology.

The third criterion of adequacy is that the self-explication of Christian faith must be adequate to the present situation. This criterion, which states the relevance of Christian faith for today, has frequently played a major role in modern theology – especially since modernity defined its self-understanding by its discontinuity with the preceding history of Christianity. Nevertheless, this criterion is highly problematical. Demanding an independent criterion to secure the adequacy to the present situation for the self-explication of Christian faith would imply that Christian faith does *not* in itself entail its validity and relevance for today. And this would be an implicit challenge to the claim to universal validity of Christian faith which is grounded in the ontological character of the Christian assertions about God's revelation in Jesus Christ. This would deprive the whole enterprise of systematic theology of its basis. Therefore it is necessary to interpret the present validity and relevance of Christian faith as an *implication* of the universality of the fundamental truth-claims of Christian faith.[14] If Christian faith claims to be valid for the whole of humanity at all times, it must also be valid for us today. This, in turn, implies that relevance cannot be treated as a criterion for the *content* of the self-explication of Christian faith, but rather as a criterion for the *presentation* and *exposition* of the self-explication of Christian faith which spells out its relevance for today.

The application of these criteria constitutes the historical-hermeneutical aspect of systematic theology. As criteria of adequacy they function as norms for doing systematic theology. Apart from that, they can also be used as descriptive tools for distinguishing certain types of systematic theology. The priority ascribed to one criterion and the virtual neglect of one or both of the others characterizes biblicism, traditionalism and modernism. While it is probably unavoidable that any given way of doing systematic theology displays tendencies towards one or the other of these types, this nevertheless implies the danger of neglecting the internal relatedness of these criteria and consequently misconstruing their respective status.

Furthermore, the status attached to these criteria differs from one Christian denomination to another. Therefore these criteria also function as instruments for

characterizing the distinctive denominational character of a given way of doing systematic theology.

We must now turn to the *criteria of coherence* which describe the systematic-analytical aspect of the task of systematic theology. The first criterion of this group is the interal coherence of the concepts, propositions and arguments of the self-explication of Christian faith. I have already tried to show that this criterion is presupposed in Christian faith in so far as the linguistic communication of the Christian gospel is a presupposition for the possibility of Christian faith, and in so far as intelligibility is a necessary condition for the truth-claims of Christian faith.

The necessity of operating with this criterion is given in the fact that Christian faith is presented in a wide variety of modes of expression which comprise almost all linguistic forms: narratives, parables, metaphors, analogies, etc. The task of the self-explication of Christian faith with regard to its internal coherence is to explore the relations between these sometimes *prima facie* contradictory or at least paradoxical modes of expression by determining their respective meaning. This implies the task of offering a *conceptual* reconstruction of the basic forms of linguistic expression in the church. The translation into conceptual language is inevitable, because only concepts can be sufficiently clarified with respect to their intension, their content of meaning, and their extension, their reference to what they signify. And this clarification has to go all the way from concepts to propositions and to the connections of propositions in arguments. Interpreting the use of this criterion as conceptual reconstruction implies that the self-explication of Christian faith does not aim at asserting anything different from the primary expression of Christian faith in prayer, confessions of faith and Christian proclamation, but it intends to say the same thing differently, namely in a conceptual way. The material identity should be preserved in the normal difference.[15] It can be that the difficulties of the conceptual reconstruction of the primary expressions of faith shows that these primary expressions seem to be inadequate in a certain respect. However, the criterion by which it could be decided that they have to be changed is not the fact that they do not fit the theoretical model employed in their conceptual reconstruction, but that they misrepresent the revelation of God in Jesus Christ which can be disclosed in the process of reconstruction.

It is this criterion of internal coherence which accounts for the systematic character of systematic theology and which justifies the rather pretentious name "systematic theology". Much of the heated debate about the "system" in systematic theology falls flat if the system is seen as the natural consequence of the claim to internal coherence implied in Christian faith.

The last criterion, the external coherence of systematic theology, which tries to validate the compatibility of the assertions of Christian faith with all other true propositions is the most problematical of all criteria of systematic theology. We have already seen that this criterion is logically necessary, because it is implied in the character of Christian claims as presenting genuine truth-claims which must be compatible with all other true propositions. The theological necessity of this criterion could be developed by pointing to the fact that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is the revelation of the creator and that it is the inherent rationality of his creative action which makes the rational structure of the world and of the human mind possible. External coherence is also an existential requirement, if Christians do not want to live with a divided mind which keeps their religious belief in intellectual quarantine isolated from the knowledge on which they rely in all other matter – a kind of holy, or rather unholy, schizophrenia which is totally incompatible with the character of Christian faith.

Although the necessity of this criterion is as evident as the fact that it does not subject the self-explication of Christian faith under an alien law but is required by the nature of Christian faith itself, it is nevertheless exceedingly difficult to operate with this criterion. The main difficulty is that we can never be entirely certain that what we believe and claim to be true is actually true. The fallibility of human beings forbids the rigid use of this criterion. The difficulty is not peculiar to systematic theology. Think how many scientific discoveries of recent times would have had to be rejected at the time when they were first introduced, because they openly contradicted what was believed to be true at that time.[16]

There is no easy way of resolving this dilemma. There are, however, a number of considerations which help to resolve at least some of its difficulties. First of all, if we do not look at the problem as the abstract relationship of different propositions but try to understand it as a kind of coherence that is required for our basic orientation in the world, we can see that this coherence can incorporate change (the acquisition of new knowledge and correction of former convictions) without the collapse of the whole belief-system. Secondly, we have to pay attention to the specific logical status of the propositions of systematic theology as the reconstruction of the propositional content of Christian faith. Because basic propositions of systematic theology assert, presuppose or imply ontological truth-claims, they do not have the same status as empirical or theoretical statements about particular entities, classes of entities or universal properties of classes of entities. Their respective logical status determines the rule for ascertaining the compatibility of the propositions of systematic theology with other truth-claims. The abortive controversy about "science *vs.* religion" in the second half of the 19th century is a striking example of the category mistakes that can occur if one does not pay attention to this distinction and to the self-misunderstanding of religion and science which it produces. Thirdly, it has to be kept in mind that even as a criterion of truth coherence is only a necessary and not a sufficient criterion.[17] This should make us careful to recognize the limitations of this criterion and not to collapse all the other criteria into this single criterion. And fourthly, our difficulty is a forceful reminder of the general fallibility of all human knowledge from which the self-explication of Christian faith cannot claim to be exempt. To keep this in mind would not have to be a disadvantage, if it makes us aware that even the most skilful use of these criteria must be accompanied by that humility which is appropriate to the subject-matter of theology and a necessary requirement for doing theology at all.[18]

V

The use of these five criteria constitutes the activity of doing systematic theology. In my view, each of these criteria represents a necessary element of doing systematic theology and jointly they provide a sufficient basis for characterizing the activity of doing systematic theology. These criteria can be used for different purposes in the actual process of doing systematic theology. They can function descriptively as a guideline for the conceptual description of the content of Christian faith. They can be used analytically in examining and evaluating historical and contemporary examples of systematic theology and for testing their relevance for the present task of systematic theology. The descriptive as well as the analytical use of these criteria serves as the basis for their normative use in proposing a rational reconstruction of the forms and contents of Christian faith which helps the Christian community to overcome its dissensus and achieve a new consensus.

It may well be possible that these criteria are incomplete or that they have to be interpreted in a different way. But this discussion is itself a task of systematic theology which thereby reflects its relationship to Christian faith which makes systematic theology possible as well as necessary, and whose characteristics determine the criteria of doing systematic theology. Any suggestion to introduce different criteria or to modify the proposed criteria necessarily involves construing the characteristics of Christian faith in another way and therefore belongs also to the self-explication of Christian faith.

These criteria also help to determine the methods used in systematic theology. Systematic theology does not have a special method of its own. Rather, the use of specific methods depends on whether they are adequate for applying the criteria of systematic theology. And since these criteria suggest certain methods, exegetical and historical methods for the criteria of scripture and tradition, philosophical methods for the criteria of coherence, systematic theology cannot do better than to apply these methods as they are developed in their respective disciplines. Nevertheless, these methods will be used for achieving a different aim, that of the self-explication of Christian faith as the rational reconstruction of its forms and contents with respect to the truth-claims it implies. If one talks about *the* method of systematic theology, one usually refers to the specific combination of methods borrowed from other theological disciplines for the task of systematic theology.

One question still remains to be answered. If the criteria and the methods of doing systematic theology can be described in this way, what are the criteria for assessing the result of doing systematic theology, namely, a conception of systematic theology? It follows from the account I have tried to develop that a conception of systematic theology must satisfy the same criteria as those of doing systematic theology *and* the additional criterion of giving reasons for the way it uses these criteria. The only additional criterion is a strictly methodological one.

This way of presenting the activity of doing systematic theology might provoke the question whether it is not unnecessarily complicated compared to the striking simplicity which characterizes the greatest examples of systematic theology. I could only answer by pointing out that even the simplest activities like tying one's shoe-laces seem to be extraordinarily complicated once we try to describe them. I am, however, wondering whether the next time I am asked what I do for a job I should not answer that I teach Christian Doctrine.

This paper was originally presented to the Senior Seminar at King's in October 1986. I am grateful to colleagues and students for the encouragement to publish it.

1. Cf. J. P. Clayton, "Tillich and the Art of Theology", in: J. L. Adams, W. Pauck, R. L. Shinn (eds.), *The Thought of Paul Tillich*, San Francisco 1985, pp. 278-289.
2. Cf. I. U. Dalferth, *Existenz Gottes und christlicher Glaube. Skizzen zu einer eschatologischen Ontologie*, Munich 1984, pp. 16-30.
3. Cf. W. Härle, "Widerspruchsfreiheit. Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Glauben und Denken", *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie*, 28 (1986), pp. 223-237, esp. p. 229ff.
4. For the view of divine agency presupposed here cf. my article "Divine Agency and Providence", *Modern Theology*, 3 (1987), pp. 225-244.
5. I have discussed this relationship in more detail in "Die Rede vom Handeln Gottes im christlichen Glauben. Beiträge zu einem systematisch-theologischen Rekonstruktionsversuch", in: W. Härle, R. Preul (eds.), *Vom Handeln Gottes*, Marburger Jahrbuch Theologie I, Marburg 1987, pp. 57-81, esp. pp. 61-64.
6. Cf. W. Härle, op. cit., p. 230.
7. Cf. C. H. Ratschow, "Das Christentum als denkende Religion", *Von den Wandlungen Gottes. Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*, Berlin 1986, pp. 3-23.
8. This is especially emphasized in E. Herms' exposition of the character and task of theology, cf. *Theologie – eine Erfahrungswissenschaft*, Munich 1978, and *Theorie für die Praxis – Beiträge zur Theologie*, Munich 1982.
9. Cf. S. Sykes, *The Identity of Christianity. Theologians and the Essence of Christianity from Schleiermacher to Barth*, London 1984; see especially pp. 11-34 about the relationship of conflict and identity.
10. In German-speaking theology the discussion about the criteria of Christian dogmatics was inaugurated by A. Jeffner, *Kriterien christlicher Glaubenslehre. Eine prinzipielle Untersuchung heutiger protestantischer Dogmatik im deutschen Sprachbereich*, Uppsala 1977.
11. For the following argument cf. W. Härle, *op. cit.*, pp. 227f.
12. Cf. W. Härle, "Lehre und Lehrbeanstandung", *Zeitschrift für evangelisches Kirchenrecht*, 30 (1985), pp. 283-317, pp. 301f. See also Jeffner, *op. cit.*, pp. 34ff. and D. H. Kelsey, *Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*, New Haven 1976.
13. Cf. W. Härle, *ibid.*, p. 303.
14. This has been demonstrated with exemplary precision in Härle, *ibid.*, pp. 304f.
15. Cf. I. U. Dalferth, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
16. Cf. W. Härle, *Systematische Philosophie*, Munich-Mainz 1982, pp. 180ff.
17. Cf. W. Härle, *ibid.*, p. 183 and my article "Wahrheit", *Taschenlexikon Religion und Theologie*, Göttingen ^{4}1983, pp. 283-289.
18. Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book I, chap. I, 2.

C. J. BLOMFIELD, BISHOP OF LONDON, 1828-1856

ANDREW TATHAM

Although it was not until 1846 that the Theological Department of King's College was established, the governance of the College and the hierarchy of the Church of England were closely intertwined from the first. Not only were there three Archbishops and seven Bishops at the famous meeting in the Freemason's Hall on 21st June, 1828, and not only did both the Provisional Committee and the Council include several eminent clergymen in addition to the Primate, but both the first and third Principals had to resign that office on being appointed Bishops. It was indeed, only four years after his appointment as Principal that the Rev John Lonsdale was appointed to Lichfield, and received the thanks of the Council for his period of service, conveyed to him by the Bishop of London, Charles James Blomfield.[1] Perhaps appropriately therefore, when the latter resigned his see in 1856, and therefore his *ex officio* membership of the College Council, it was the Bishop of Lichfield who was asked to compose a minute

> "expressive of the deep feelings of the Council in being deprived of Bishop Blomfield's very valuable advice and superintendence."[2]

The minute (see Appendix 1), mentioned the Bishop's

> "constant presence (so far as the other claims upon his time would allow) at their meetings."[3]

This was no idle remark. In the 25 years between the first meeting of the Council and the 13th October, 1854, which was the last occasion on which the Bishop attended a meeting, the Council held some 329 meetings, and Blomfield was present at 185 of these, almost always as Chairman. Even when unavoidably absent, his hand was firmly at the helm, and he was always the Council's intermediary with the Archbishop, with the Government, and the officers of State. Thus, for example, in February 1842, Council agreed that the Right Reverend the Chairman be requested to make application to the Lord's Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury to allow any vacant rooms in the East Wing of Somerset House to be rented by the College for the residence of students.[4] Over the next 145 years, it may be noted, similar requests from the College have been made to the Lords Commissioners and their successors on a number of occasions.

All this activity on behalf of the College would have been unremarkable had not Blomfield been equally active in many other committees, enquiries, and commissions, both in the House of Lords and as diocesan. Many of these concerns beyond the College had their echoes in the developments within the walls, and all overlapped to such an extent that they will have to be considered thematically rather than chronologically.

The National Society had been founded in 1811 to provide education to the children of the working classes. Blomfield was much involved in its work, and in the place of the Church in education. Indeed, he saw the foundation of King's College, at least in part, as an extension of the Church's work in education to the higher ranks of society. Concern with education became more acute as population growth rapidly outstripped provision. In 1838, Blomfield discovered that in Bethnal Green only one child in 20 attended school, and that the situation was not much better elsewhere in the Diocese.[5] In the following year, he founded the Diocesan Board of Education, but while he realised that the Church alone would not be able to solve the problem (the solution was governmental involvement, starting in 1867 with the Forster Act), he was concerned that religious principles – by which Blomfield meant the religious principles of the "Church by law established" – be involved in all education. It was this concern which had led to the founding of King's College, a fact to which Blomfield referred in his opening sermon.

> "Every system of education which does not embrace instruction in the doctrines and duties of our holy religion is defective in that which alone can impart to human knowledge the principle of salubrity and life."[6]

It was this concern too, which, shared by the Council, led to the scheme of "schools in union". Under this scheme, started in 1833, schools which adopted the Council's regulations concerning organisation and curriculum were accepted into union and were permitted to advertise this fact.[7] The scheme progressed slowly, and by 1847 there were only 15 schools in union,[8] perhaps because a prize of £1 per annum per school, and the use of the phrase "in Union with King's College" were insufficient incentives given the stringency of the Council's regulations.

Other educational initiatives of the College met with much greater success. It is certain that the opening of the Theological Department in 1846 can be counted as one of these. Blomfield had been an advocate of improving the quality of training given to ordinands from his time in Chester, and was a strong supporter of the College's plan. Until 1832, only those possessing a university, that is an Oxford or Cambridge, degree had been eligible for the ministry. In that year, however, Bishop Van Mildert obtained the consent of all the other Bishops save two that degrees from his newly-founded university at Durham would be acceptable.[9] Bishop Blomfield used a similar approach to promote the acceptance of the Associateship of King's College. In February 1846 he reported that all but four of the English and Welsh Bishops had agreed to accept King's men for ordination.[10] Later, agreement was forthcoming from two of the four, leaving only Bangor and Ely out on a limb. Those undertaking the course at King's were trained, from the first,

> "not only by a complete course of theological study, but by the exercise of some of the practical branches of those duties."[11]

Some eight years later, Blomfield was able to express his conviction that

> "the clergy have been the chief instruments in bettering the condition of the poor in this country . . ."[12]

More than any other man it was Blomfield who had created a clergy which was capable of bettering the condition of the poor. This was not only by his insistence on personal interviews, rather than leaving such matters to a chaplain – unlike a Bishop of Salisbury, John Douglas, whose chaplain had been known to interview a candidate while shaving[13] – but also of his belief in the nature and role of a clergyman, which was considerably more exalted than that held by many contemporaries".[14] It was indeed in defence of these ideals as well as of his ideals of the nature and role of the Church, that Blomfield entered the arena of church reform so soon after his translation to London.

Blomfield played a significant part in transferring the near complete opposition of the bench of Bishops to the Reform Bill of 1831 into their acquiescence to its successor of the following year. Once this had been enacted, the pressure for the reform of the Church which had already, in 1831, resulted in widespread riots and the burning of the Episcopal Palace in Bristol, grew still greater. There was no doubt in Blomfield's mind that reform was essential. From his own experience he knew both the lure and the toll that pluralism exacted. He had been a non-resident clergyman himself, and he knew that in the urban parts of his diocese (which included the present dioceses of London, St Alban's and Chelmsford) the lack of clergy was serious; four parishes, to give one instance, had a combined population of 166,000,[15] while even the tiny city centre parish of St Clement Danes with a population of 16,000 had no resident rector for 30 years.[16]

Blomfield's reaction to this crisis, for indeed it was an extremely critical moment for the Church of England, was typical. His foresight placed him well ahead of his brother Bishops, but he was able to persuade them of the necessity of a parliamentary Commission, and of one, moreover, on which the Church was represented. In 1832, Lord Grey appointed a Commission of Inquiry, of which Blomfield was a member, to survey the variation in Ecclesiastical incomes throughout the country. Although the Commission did not deter those who sought to reform the Church, it did provide its successor Commissions with a considerable amount of statistical information. Thus when Lord Melbourne set up a second Commission in 1834, it was able to proceed rapidly, meeting almost daily through 1835 and 1836. Blomfield was the driving force, to the extent that Archbishop Harcourt reported

> "till the Bishop of London comes, we nib our pens and talk about the weather."[17]

The work of the Commission was enacted by the Established Church Act (1836), the Pluralities Act (1838), and the Dean and Chapter Act (1840). The effect of these three Acts, which, inter alia, established an Ecclesiastical Commission responsible for administering church money and property, reduced the number of benefices that one man could hold to two, and paved the way for a reduction in the number of non-residentiary canonries, is widely known and need not be detailed here.[18] Contemporary opinion varied between those who believed that in permitting Parliamentary intervention, Blomfield had surrendered the independence of the Church, and those who held that the measures did not go nearly far enough. There was, however, general agreement that had nothing been done, the Church, and arguably the Crown, would have been destroyed.

The improvement of the quality of the clergy, and the administrative reform of the Church were, for Blomfield, only part of the answer. The lack of churches and the consequent large sizes of parishes had also to be tackled, and in 1836 he established the Metropolitan Churches Fund. During the remainder of his Episcopate, the fund provided 17 new churches in the metropolis, while seven more were built by private individuals (including one by Blomfield himself).[19]

Although there were five overseas Bishoprics in 1828 (Nova Scotia, Quebec, Calcutta, Jamaica and Barbados), the newly enthroned Bishop of London was, in effect, Bishop of the Empire. In this responsibility, his approach was comparable to that he took in the Diocese. The work of the Church could only go forward if there were more workers. During his Episcopate, 28 new sees were created (see Appendix 2), while in 1841 he founded the Colonial Bishoprics Fund.[20] In this development, as in others, the College was able to play a significant part. In 1842, for example, H. Binney was awarded the AKC, and after taking holy orders, he was consecrated fourth Bishop of Nova Scotia in 1851.[21] Even before this date, however, the interest of the Council had been drawn to the Church overseas by a bequest from General Worsley,

> "the proceeds of which are to be applied to the education at the College of one or more missionaries to the British possessions in the East."[22]

The first Worsley scholar was elected in 1835, and thereafter a succession of young men, benefitting from the Worsley scholarship, were prepared for the Church's service in India and beyond.

The Bishop of London was not only interested in men's souls. In his view, spiritual welfare was an essential pre-requisite for health and social welfare.

> "Take away their endowments from the clery and, he said, 'You will shut up, in many a village and hamlet of our land not only the parsonage, but the school, and the dispensary; the local centre and shrine of knowledge, and charity, and sympathy, and order.' "[23]

In medical science, as in education, and in the training of men for the priesthood, King's was able to make an outstanding contribution, both in its staff, and in their teaching. As Blomfield himself wrote in his reply to Bishop Lonsdale's minute,

> "It is universally acknowledged that a very great benefit has been conferred upon the Medical Profession, and upon the Country at large, by the Medical School of King's College; in which regard is paid, not only to the professional instruction of the Student, but to his religious principles and moral habits."[24]

While, as will be noted below, the Theological Department was born into a time of great controversy among churchmen, the medical department came into being at a time of great expansion in the understanding of medicine and of the medical profession. The very great benefit was none the less real for being timely. The rapid growth of urban centres brought to 19th century Britain many of the problems now associated with cities in the Third World. Overcrowding, lack of sanitation, and disease were rife. The existing systems of providing community work for the unemployed had collapsed in many areas.

In the larger villages, the clergy had taken the lead in providing allotments for the poor, thus enabling them at least to feed themselves. Blomfield himself established allotments at Ealing in 1832.[24] The Bishop realised, however, that such schemes could only provide a partial answer, and were in any case impractical in London and the other cities. He was appointed as Chairman of the Poor Law Commission of 1832-4, and supported Chadwick's report and the subsequent legislation, although he later reacted against

> "the administration of that law once Chadwick's influence had been eliminated".[26]

Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, there were recurrent outbreaks of cholera in London. The link with foul water was established in 1854 by Dr John Snow, after a pioneering use of cartography to demonstrate that the use of a particular water pump near Golden Square resulted in 500 fatal attacks in 10 days.[27] However, even before this it was widely understood that sanitation must be improved, and that medical treatment was more widely required. The establishment, not only of a medical school, but also, in 1839, of a hospital attached to that school in one of the more densely populated parts of London, was a major contribution to the health of the metropolis. Not that it was easily achieved. The Council minutes are full of "memorials" from the Medical Professors, and of minutes to be copied and sent to the Medical Professors. Many had that familiar cause – finance; on 4th May 1835, for example, Dr D'Oyley wrote to the Medical Professors on behalf of the Council in the following terms:

> "they (the Professors) shall have full power to regulate the expenses of the medical school in any manner that they please; but that if in any year ending October 1st the special expences of the school shall exceed the income derived from it a proportionate deduction shall be made from the sums payable to each Professor so as to prevent any loss accruing to the College from carrying on the medical schools."[28]

Eight days later, it was reported at the Council meeting that

> "The Medical Professors cheerfully accede to the regulation".[29]

The cheerful accession of the Medical Professors contrasts with the controversies that dogged much of Blomfield's episcopate, especially in theological matters. Of these the deepest was undoubtedly the struggle between the Tractarians and the Evangelicals. Blomfield knew that

> "both parties were capable of devoted and excellent work, if they could only lay aside their sterile controversies".[30]

His hope was not to be realised. Indeed his very attempts to find a middle way were thwarted by the extremism of both parties.

The split in the Church, which, it might be argued, is still not healed, was certainly greatly inflamed by the passions aroused in the Hampden and Gorham cases of 1846-7 and 1847-8, and by the "Papal Interference" of 1848-9. The Bishop of London was concerned in each case with the authority of the Church, and it was this concern which led to his active support for the move towards the restoration of Convocation. His dissenting judgement in the Gorham case was that

> "the point at issue was a question of Church doctrine, and any alteration in that doctrine can only be done by the Church itself, duly represented in Convocation."[31]

It was over a doctrine of the Church and over the question of authority that the case of F. D. Maurice finally erupted. The effect of the case on the College has been chronicled by Hearnshaw,[32] and Huelin.[33] Despite the subsequent tendency to rehabilitate Maurice, Hearnshaw's verdict that

> "In the unhappy and disastrous Maurice controversy both sides were right; that is to say, both sides were wrong"[34]

still has a considerable validity. Blomfield was certainly no stranger to controversy as this paper has suggested. It is also true that throughout his career, Blomfield does seem to have found it more difficult to deal with people than with organisations. However, it is hard to escape the conclusion that, while Blomfield could have taken no other course of action in 1853, had he been as fit then as in his hey-day the situation would not have developed into the major confrontation between Jelf and Maurice that caused the Council so much anxiety.

Almost exactly a year later, Blomfield attended the Council meeting which proved to be his last. Despite his failing health, he continued to serve the College that was in so many ways his creation. In July 1855, for example, his support was called on over a proposal to institute the degrees of Doctor, Bachelor and Licentiate of Divinity.[35] Blomfield died before the issue was ultimately settled, unsuccessfully for the College, and 47 years were to pass before London undergraduates could obtain a degree in Divinity.

As mentioned at the start of this paper, Blomfield resigned his see, by special Act of Parliament, in 1856, and his ex-officio membership of the College Council came to an end. At the Annual Court of April 1857, he was elected back on to the Council, but he was unable to attend any meetings, and he died on 5th August, aged 71.

This paper has only been able to scratch the surface of the contribution made by Blomfield to King's College; a much fuller study is needed to do justice to the man of whom Hearnshaw wrote:

"not only was he one of the most influential and devoted founders of King's College, . . . but he remained for the first quarter century of its existence its most faithful friend, the most eminent member of its Council, and one of the main controllers of its policy".[36]

Indeed it may well be said that just as it has been indicated that the Church Commissioners, the Welfare State, the Anglican Communion, and the General Synod all owe something to his energy and foresight, so King's College very largely owes its existence to Charles James Blomfield, Bishop of London.

Appendix 1

Copy of minute drawn up by the Bishop of Lichfield.[37]

The Council desire to express the very deep feeling of regret with which they regard the termination of their official connection with their late Chairman.

But they desire at the same time to record their unfeigned thankfulness for the invaluable services which, during a period of 28 years Bishop Blomfield has been enabled to render to the College; for the lively interest which he has taken in all the proceedings of the Council; for his constant presence (so far as the other claims upon his time would allow) at their meetings; for the kindness, and the wisdom, with which he has guided their deliberations.

Their affectionate sympathy will be with him in his retirement; and they pray God to bless it with comfort and peace.

Appendix 2

Bishoprics founded during Blomfield's Episcopate.

1835 – Madras; 1836 – Australia (Sydney); 1837 – Bombay; 1839 – Newfoundland; 1839 – Toronto; 1841 – Jerusalem; 1841 – New Zealand (Auckland); 1842 – Antigua; 1842 – Gibraltar; 1842 – Guiana; 1842 – Tasmania; 1845 – Colombo; 1845 – Fredericton; 1847 – Adelaide; 1847 – Cape Town; 1847 – Melbourne; 1847 – Newcastle; 1849 – Rupertsland; 1849 – Victoria, Hong Kong; 1850 – Montreal; 1852 – Sierra Leone; 1853 – Grahamstown; 1853 – Natal; 1854 – Mauritius; 1855 – Labuan and Sarawak; 1856 – Christchurch; 1856 – Nelson; 1856 – Perth.

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KANT AND JOB'S COMFORTERS: A REVIEW ARTICLE

CHARLES BIGGER

If Ann Loades' *Kant and Job's Comforters* (Avero, 1985) is rather picaresque in its historical approach to Kant's theodicy, the attempt to articulate the compatibility between the God of theistic faith and the problem of radical evil, it is perhaps because there is today no direct route from the 18th century through our darkening time to orthodox faith. The reason for this lies in Kant.

Dr Loades tells us that Kant, who has as much to do as any with the shape of our contemporary culture, "offered his 'authentic theodicy' to put a stop, once and for all, to activities of that kind". In understanding the last journey for us, he uprooted all the outer, orienting signs which might point out the justifying prevalence of goodness that had been set out for us in sacrament and ecclesiastical polity, in scripture and reason, in historic faith and mystical transcendence. Nothing remains that might manifest God's presence and his redemptive love. Instead, Kant taught us that only in the autonomous and sovereign privacy of inner sense, as readers of the figurations of the transcendent in acting for the sake of duty, could we hope to be cartographers of the spiritual landscape. "I have therefore," he said, "found it necessary to deny *knowledge* in order to make room for *faith*" (Bxxx).

This is all very well and good, for faith has always been a concern of the inner man, except that now by Kant's own critical doctrine the introspective self is never in anything like a certain and immediate presence to itself (B68; B133). The Aristotelian moral agent had always been a part of the "visible" world; but now what makes an action is its motive: did I really act out of respect for the law, or did I conform to the law on other, heteronomous grounds? One's moral motives are always stripped away and self-respect undermined by the explanatory and reductive levelings of an empirical psychology; self-scrutiny is reduced to the Skinnerian dimensions of a blatantly mechanistic materialism. The inner life is ordered, neither by wisdom, the pursuit of a communal goodness and beauty, nor by the love of God, but rather by illusions of autonomy come to grief among fictions of matter (B274-79). This geographer of the horizons of human experience (A758/B786-A760/B788), as he styled himself, is a sure guide to the abyss.

Now that public world seems almost a wasteland, as if the forces of a new and altogether maniacal subjectivity, first summoned by Kant's call to freedom in the pursuit of moral purity, had unleashed instead the licences of a hundred years' war. Of course this good little man would have cared, but who besides Kierkegaard in *Either/Or* seems to have noticed and seen the point? Who today really bothers much about evil, much less about its origin? What else can one expect; after Feuerbach, who is really very much interested in God? The Eucharistic sacrifice is all but forgotten by the crowd celebrating life. The common effort to speak sensibly of God, the final fruit of philosophy, the loving striving to be wise that is expressed in those saints who have tried to live God's own life of mind (*Nous*) and speak his word, Aquinas, Augustine, Origen, Scotus, Leibniz, Hegel, and our own Austin Farrer, the purest and most unsullied accomplishment of our civilization, is almost totally abandoned. The priests, having mastered the hedonics of our folk religion, have become psychologists.

The shape of Dr Loades' text reflects our condition; one finds as in life a series of tableaux, each intensely interesting, but what do they come to? First there is a wealth of historical detail chronicling the political, educational and religious history of Kant and his family, Königsberg (now Kaliningrad), and then East Prussia. Kant's ancestors, like everyone else in a Baltic buffer city then and now, seem to have been among the many sober and industrious people cast there by deep and ill-defined historical movements. Most were victims of religious and dynastic warfare, refugees from religious and political persecution, denied again and again a sheltering place by history. Nothing about Kant in English tells us so much that we might want to know about this past that brought him into our presence. Why would we expect this first among the displaced to delineate an historical and public landscape? He sought to show us a way to self-respect and to dignity within the labyrinth of the self – and delivered us over to nihilism and other physical monstrosities.

Though from his very beginnings his country was almost always at war and for a time, as now, occupied by Russian troops, Kant was concerned with an optimistic theodicy in the grand manner of a Leibniz. In such conditions one might well be prompted to look beyond Königsberg to the cosmos and its origins in a wise and beneficent (and more or less deistic) God. With this sublime and yet vaguely personal image of order and unity before one, could one not follow the downward way Diotema laid out for Socrates from God through the "science of order everywhere" to the dream of a time when men would "step from the lawless condition of savages into a league of nations"? Dr Loades does well to remind us that even in the great *Universal Natural History* which set out his nebular hypothesis on "Newtonian principles", Kant seemed rather more concerned with God than with physics. Dr Loades is on target when she suggests that his pre-critical physico-theology was on the whole a continuation of Leibniz's theodicy.

A stunning account of the birth of an optimistic, ecumenical, and morally and intellectually robust Christianity in the *Theodicy* of Leibniz that survived until early in this century opens the third of Dr Loades' tableaux. Kant may have dreamed of a League of Nations. Leibniz dreamed of irenic ecumenism at every level of institutional and intellectual life – and acted. He said he never read anything he thought was totally nonsense. He respected reason and its unifying power, and lived to the end of philosophical, religious, and political reconciliation. It is hard to imagine that this sublime human self-confidence and socially responsible vision was an issue of the late, high German Gothic, of Luther, and of the 100 Years War. With Leibniz our modern Christian era reached its apogee. Dr Loades sent me back to Leibniz and his *Theodicy*, and while as I reread it I experienced again a profound and immeasurable loss, I still cannot believe any of it. Given August 1914, the death of out liberal eschatology, and its aftermath, what else can one expect?

If the *Theodicy* was a popular success, Voltaire and the wits surrounding him took Leibniz for a fool. Rousseau resisted. He was sustained by the optimism "in his own sufferings and griefs" and, Dr Loades tells us, "Voltaire shattered his hope and thereby reduced him to despair".

We all know the deep attachment Kant felt for Rousseau through *Emile*, while with his *Savoyard Vicar* Kant "pondered the fate of mortals, adrift on a sea of human opinions without compass or rudder, and abandoned to their stormy passions with no guide but an inexperienced pilot". Kant responded by giving us a world in which we could navigate with confidence, the world of possible experience. Its map lay, not in reason as God's equitable distribution of good sense that enables us to distinguish the true from the false, but rather in a rule of reason that unconditionally commanded what all could understand, be truthful. Was the Critique, like Hume's *Treatise*, written to establish a moral point of view? Just as Hume was required to eliminate the mechanisms of self-interest by an epistemology founded on feelings, i.e. lively ideas accompanying present impressions, equally the basis of the moral life, so Kant may have been concerned to eliminate the metaphysical order grounding human knowledge in eternal presences to leave room for the moral self-experience required by faith. Faith can proclaim the goodness of God. Theodicy had failed to make that reasonable. Isn't this in effect what Kant said he was up to? Dr Loades suggests by her treatment that we should take him seriously.

There is no great mystery surrounding Kant's elimination of theodicy. In order to have a theodicy, one first has to have a cosmos and then be able to discover why among its possible arrangements its good, wise, and powerful author brought this one to be and saw that it was good. How is this God related to the cosmos? Even if he is a being who created the cosmos, is he a being distinguishable from other beings, e.g. by a variety of exemplary predicates? To have a totality, we must have a being or beings to whom and for whom it is a totality. Eliade reminds us that all archaic myth is cosmogonic, where god(s) are distinctions within the world. Gods and worlds are correlatives. With the failure of that relation, Kant made the structural possibilities of any knowable world the correlative of the self. Quite simply and for all the wrong reasons, Kant eliminated that concept of God as correlative with world.

The Copernican Revolution in philosophy was concerned to cut Leibniz and his actual infinites down to size by means of a finitistic constructivism. As early as 1761 Kant had expressed doubt in the validity of the ontological argument and long before 1781 had decided that "existence is not a real predicate". The consequences were slow to dawn; and yet without access to God, there could be no physico-theology, and no theodicy. Possible experience had to replace possible worlds. By these synthetic methods of original presencing, one had to generate space and time (A143/B182) as the condition for the self-affective experience of objects (B68), objects of our own making (Bxvii). The possibility put to Herz on 21st February, 1772, of an "intuition that should itself be the ground of things" became the synthetic method of the first Critique. So baldly stated, isn't it clear that this new world of possible experience that turns out to be explicable only in a mechanistic materialism has no place for either good or evil? Since the transcendental self to whom this world is given as its correlative transcends any complete determination by this empirical manifold, then it can imagine its self-determination by laws entailing its freedom that it obeys through respect. These laws express the freedom of the divine will in the form of obligations for a community of the blessed who in the disinterested pursuit of universal duty may have made themselves worthy of happiness, etc. Evil lies in evil wills. This is not exactly the terrain for a theodicy, is it? Dr Loades is content to let matters rest with Kant's moral insights. I should like to add a more speculative conclusion.

By preventing inferences to a constitutively transcendent being as ground, Kant eliminated the possibility of our traditional metaphysics. These inferences presumed the classical status of God as a being among beings, even if creator and incommensurable with them. But this confused our God with Aristotle's. Philosophers, if not theologians, have continued to treat God as if he were a (infinite) being and to justify the apparent incongruities entailed in predicating a same, e.g. good, of both an infinite and finite term. What analogy has been able to cover over with its "attributions", "inequalities", and "proper proportions" was what was unique to our theistic faith, first clearly captured and expressed by what St Anselm said must exist in the understanding, a being greater than which none greater may be conceived. Whether or not the ontological argument is valid – and until help came from the modal logicians I felt rather stupid in arguing that it was – did we bother to listen to what it had to say? In the most important of recent theological studies, Fr Robert Sokolowski's *The God of Faith and Reason* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), we have been made to stop and listen. God, than whom nothing greater can be conceived, is not greater by the addition of a world, even by the addition of you and me. God and the world is not greater than God alone. God is not a feature in being, however pre-eminent. The old comparisons do not work. The goodness of God, who is wholly God before anything was, is not the goodness of a distinction between good and evil in the world. It is the goodness that gives being as a gift, not a neo-Platonic goodness that overflows in its sheer fecundity. It is by God that such distinctions are disclosed as possible. To borrow a theme from Kant's Paralogisms, that which is the condition for every condition and the origin of every conditioned is not among the conditioned or conditions. By him all things are. God is also truth and light, that whereby there is being to stand forth in distinction and unconcealment, *alētheia*. What Plato discerned of the good, that is beyond Being and Truth and yet is their cause, is close to the Christian understanding. But this cause is not wholly apart from the world. Not so for our God. Theodicy promises to be possible again on these new and satisfying foundations.

Kant, after all, taught us to be oblivious to landscapes. He did admire the design in wallpaper. Did he not forsake the deistic theme of an integrated and ordered universe for that of the interior journey, the labyrinth that after two centuries still awaits its Theseus, if not its Socrates. Be sure that none will step forward to demolish the beast at its centre. Nothing can so domesticate the labyrinth of subjectivity as to enable us safely to play hide and seek among its passages. It is better to avoid such artefacts of metaphysics. But in all this playing about we have been learning to back away; and in the process of what is by now a retreat from Cartesianism, have we not been able to recover – and not without Kant's perhaps unintended assistance – through the new interpretative possibilities of hermeneutics the glory of our tradition? Landscapes can be fashionable again. We can walk in the sun. Theodicy is possible. Those desiring to undertake it would do well to read Ann Loades' stimulating and informative *Kant and Job's Comforters*.

BOOK REVIEWS

1 and 2 Kings

G. H. Jones. The New Century Bible Commentary (two volumes). Marshall, Morgan & Scott. np.

Dr Jones, the Reader in Biblical Studies in the University College of North Wales at Bangor, is to be congratulated on this substantial commentary. It is a major piece of scholarship that must have involved years of careful and detailed work. It is printed in two separate volumes, though it is one book. Volume 1 contains the Introduction and the commentary on 1 Kings, 1-16. The second volume completes the commentary, 1 Kings 17-2 Kings 25. The two volumes thus need to be used together.

The introduction concentrates on five aspects of the Book of Kings. First, the textual tradition of the Hebrew and Greek is surveyed. Then the complex and difficult subject of chronology is reviewed. Kings contains seemingly careful statements of the length of the reigns of each of the Kings of Israel and Judah. It ought to be relatively easy therefore, to date all the reigns. Unfortunately the numbers of years do not add up correctly so as to fit together. Just why the numbers do not agree, what this means for our estimation of the writer or editor of Kings as a historian are questions that have received very different answers from scholars. Next, there follows a discussion of the Deuteronomists and their part in the creation of Kings. Appropriately this is followed by a description of the sources that have been used in the writing of the book. The Introduction ends with a summary of the theology of Kings.

The commentary is based on the text of the RSV, though frequently reference is made to the different translations of other versions, principally with NEB and NIV. In the commentary a great range of subjects is dealt with; matters of geography and the identification of place names, the administration of the Hebrew kingdoms, relevant material from the Aramaean kingdoms and the Assyrian empire, and the relatively more domestic concerns of the differences between Kings and Chronicles. On this latter issue probably the most important point is that Dr Jones agrees with Chronicles against Kings that Josiah's reform was a two-stage movement. The first stage began early in the reign as part of a general policy of reviving nationalism. This was followed some years later by a second reform that followed the finding of the law book.

In general Dr Jones' commentary concentrates, as does the introduction, on the process of the creation of the book of Kings. Less attention is paid to the final product. So, in the discussion on many parts of the book more attention is paid to identifying the sources that underlie the present text than with dealing with the narrative as it stands. This means that the reader who is aiming to study intensively some part of the text of the book of Kings will find all that he or she requires in this commentary. The student wishing to read Kings as a whole and looking for guidance through the whole book may well feel that the great concentration on individual trees has obscured the sense of the wood. Different commentaries serve different purposes and this is very much a commentary for those interested in detail.

Joseph Robinson

Johannine Christianity

D. Moody Smith. T. & T. Clark, 1987. Pp. xix + 233. £12.95 (hb)

Even for those deeply immersed in the task, still more for newcomers or occasional visitors, the paths of modern scholarship in the study of the Gospel and Epistles of John may present a bewildering maze. Few of those who are close to the ground have the ability both to see and to present a coherent map of the whole. Professor Moody Smith is one of those few; himself long active in the field he here, in ten essays spanning nearly 20 years, maps the past trends in scholarship. Yet he also has the gift of seeing within the map signposts pointing to a common destination. His initial essay on Johannine Christianity, first published over ten years ago, drew from the complex mass of Johannine study a coherent profile which can now be recognised as the point to which we have come. Other essays on the sources of the Gospel, including its relationship with the Synoptic Gospels, have an equally familiar ring about them – thus the author largely affirms the existence of a miracle or "signs" source and questions John's knowledge and use of the Synoptics although the Gospel "did not take shape in complete isolation of them".

Although references to German works are not lacking, the topics covered represent the concerns of English and French speaking scholarship, with, for example, little discussion of recent German redactional studies. Those familiar with "history of the community" approaches to John will not find themselves on strange territory here, but neither will they meet alternative views of the development of Christology and ecclesiology in the Johannine communities based on theories of layers of subsequent redaction of the Gospel. The names which dominate the index are those of Barrett, Brown, Lindars and Martyn rather than Becker, Richter, Thyen or de Jonge (who is not mentioned).

Yet *Johannine Christianity* is not merely a review of scholarship, useful as that would be. Even outside the two overtly "theological" (and more popular) essays, theological concerns are important. Whether John intended to correct one or more of the Synoptics or whether its highly individual picture of Jesus was largely misunderstood by those who included it in the Canon are not just literary and historical questions but have important theological consequences for an understanding of the Canon. Now within the Canon, "whatever may have been the case in antiquity, the riddle of the Fourth Gospel can finally be answered adequately only by those who know the other three" (196). Despite having given so much of his scholarly career to John, Moody Smith is fully aware of the distortions of the Christian faith potential within the Gospel if it is taken on its own: "it represents a very narrow view, theologically and existentially . . . It may, and I think it does, contain its moment of eternal truth – but it does not provide a complete or adequate perspective for all seasons" (208-9).

Moody Smith reflects the tendencies of the period covered by these essays in his fundamental assumption

that a book entitled "Johannine Christianity" can focus almost exclusively on the Gospel. References to the Epistles are few (the omission of a Biblical index beyond Colossians, presumably by printing error, prohibits a statement of how few), although their separate authorship and subsequent date to the Gospel are assumed. New tracks are now being made in Johannine scholarship which give greater place to the Epistles as a source for discovering Johannine Christianity, and the map is likely to change. Yet because of the moderation and the clarity of exposition, even of detailed and complex positions, this is a valuable presentation of the current map in Johannine study for the expert and non-expert alike.

Judith Lieu

Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles. A sociological appoach

Francis Watson. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 56, CUP, 1986. Pp. xii + 246. £22.50 (hb)

Even within the era of historical-critical studies the standing of the apostle Paul as one of the great theologians of the New Testament period has rarely been disputed. This view of Paul is confronted head-on in this succinct and challenging monograph which originated in an Oxford doctorate under the late Prof. Caird.

Building on the work of E. P. Sanders and others on Judaism and the law, and on Graham Shaw's non-specialist study of Paul (*The Cost of Authority*, London, 1983), Paul is understood as an opportunistic missionary worker, willing to make strategic theological concessions so long as his law-free Gentile mission prospers. His goal is to bring about a complete separation of the Christian community from Judaism, thus turning the former from being a "reform movement" within Judaism into an independent sect. This strategy reflects Paul's own experience in which he first preached to the Jews, but turned to the Gentiles when he was rejected by his former co-religionists. To ensure that the Gentile mission was not a similar failure, the demand to accept unpalatable parts of the law was consciously abandoned, and thus the Gentile mission involved the deliberate separation of the church from the synagogue. On the basis of this reconstruction it is argued that it is a mistake to understand Paul's writings as those of a theologian (the Lutheran view of Paul comes under particularly sharp and constant criticism); rather, Paul's thought is only coherent in terms of his missionary strategy.

The history of the issue of the law in the Pauline mission in Galatia, Philippi and Corinth is reconstructed, and the apostle is seen wheeling and dealing for the survival of his law-free Gentile mission. The major test for this interpretation is, of course, Romans. The key is found in the relationship between the "weak" and the "strong" of 14:1-15:13. These groupings are not factions within one church but separate congregations, divided over the question of the law. The Jewish Christian group still regard themselves as a "reform movement" within Judaism and Paul now tries to persuade them to make the final break from Judaism and become a "Paulinist" sect. The two congregations are to be brought together – in common worship (15:6) – on Paul's terms. The principle of freedom from the law must be accepted, and so the letter as a whole is primarily aimed at Roman Jewish Christians, the remnants of the original Jewish Christian community in the city. Chs. 1-11 is not a sustained theological argument but a theoretical legitimation for the social reorientation called for in 14:1ff. Thus 1:16, often taken as a theological summary of the letter, acknowledges the priority and pre-eminence of the Jewish Christian congregation ("for the Jew first") and affirms the legitimacy of the Gentile Christian community ("and also for the Greek").

The main sections of the letter are then expounded under the headings, drawn from the sociological analysis of sectarian mentality, of denunciation, antithesis and reinterpretation. Thus, in ch. 2 Jewish leaders are denounced for the belief that they are saved by virtue of the covenant without regard for their moral failure. (Paul does not "misunderstand" Judaism as a legalistic religion but attacks it is as it actually was, a strong point in this reconstruction.) Ch. 3 focuses on the antithesis between "works of the law", the Jewish way of life, and "faith", the principle which unites Jewish and Gentile Christians in sectarian separation from the Jewish community. In ch. 4 Jewish history is reinterpreted in favour of the new sect. In ch. 7 Paul attempts to wean his readers from Judaism by demonstrating the dire consequences of the law in practice, while making some concessions concerning its theoretical goodness. In chs. 9-11 he answers the two-fold charge of Roman Jewish Christians that he is indifferent to the fate of his own people, and that God acts inconsistently by transferring his affections to Gentile Christians. Paul's argumentation is not consistent here, particularly in ch. 11, but as long as the Jewish Christians are willing to accept Paul's call to join with Gentile Christians, concessions can be made. (Chs. 12-13 are not discussed, presumably because they were not felt to be relevant to the line of enquiry. However they might also provide evidence of a letter with a more general character than is argued here. It is at least curious that Paul chose to separate his concrete appeal for one Pauline sect in 14:1ff. from his argumentation in chs. 1-11).

This monograph presents a brilliant and highly plausible historical reconstruction of the Pauline mission with regard to the law. Refreshingly it makes full use of the scraps of historical knowledge available from secular sources, and its application of sociological models is generally not doctrinaire. It has many interesting hypotheses on individual cruces (though at times one feels as if one is on a tour of celebrated Pauline problems) and its polemic is often to the point (nb. the critiques of *sola gratia* and *sola fide* as summaries of Paul's thought).

Less satisfactory is the constant implication that to have demonstrated the social function of the Pauline text is to have interpreted it adequately. While the theoretical possibility of theological interpretation is left open, it is not pursued. Paul's only motivation in his argumentation is said to be the furthering of his sect; his theological language and argument are merely code for his missionary strategy. Thus "faith" has no content other than adherence to the view that Jews and Gentiles

should join in one law-free community, and, to return to 1:16 again, "God's righteousness" and the gospel play no part in the current argument. In order to interpret Paul adequately the historical and sociological approach taken here needs to be supplemented by questioning from the point of view of the sociology of knowledge, the enquiry into Paul's symbolic world. The final result here is a view of Paul as merely a pragmatist, whose mission is fired solely by his own desire to succeed. Nevertheless, despite this onesidedness, born of a desire to maximize the attention to the social context of Paul's letters, this is a most important contribution to the current re-evaluation of Paul's thought.

D. V. Way

Gehorsam and Unabhängigkeit. Eine sozialpsychologische Studie zu Paulus

Walter Rebell. Chr. Kaiser, 1986. Pp. 180. n/p

There is currently an increasing sense among Pauline scholars that the older, theologically-motivated approaches to the apostle have serious shortcomings. They emphasize those aspects of Paul's proclamation which seem to be most readily translatable into contemporary terms, and in doing so they turn him into a supra-historical figure whose links with his first-century context are ultimately merely superficial. Understandable though this may be, the result is that Paul ceases to be a being of flesh-and-blood, belonging to a particular, unique social context. It is not only in christology that docetism is an ever-present threat.

Walter Rebell's social-psychological study of "obedience and independence" in Paul's relations with others is one among a number of recent attempts to redress this particular balance. The author explains that in contrast to the older, more or less worthless attempts to describe the psychological character traits of the apostle, a social-psychological approach concentrates on his relationships with others. Thus, the three main sections of the book are devoted to Paul's relations with the Jerusalem church, with his fellow-workers, and with his congregations. The author's method is first to give a brief and clear explanation of the social-psychological theory to be employed, and then to show how it can shed light on the Pauline texts. A few examples will illustrate how this works in practice, although brief summaries will hardly do them justice.

One of the main theories employed distinguishes between "symmetrical" and "complementary" types of interpersonal relationship. The former is characterized by equality between the partners; the latter, by a distinction between superior and inferior partners. The latter can of course be transformed into the former (for example, in the parent-child relationship when the child becomes an adult). Rebell makes use of this essentially very simple contrast in a variety of contexts. He argues that Paul's relationship with the Jerusalem church was dominated by Paul's desire for "symmetry" rather than "complementarity", and by Jerusalem's reluctance to concede this. In other cases, however, it is Paul who is the dominant partner in complementary relationships. His reference to a father-son relationship with Timothy shows that the latter never attained (or was never allowed to attain) spiritual independence and maturity – unlike Titus. The same contrast between complementarity and symmetry is also to be found in Paul's relationship with the Corinthian congregation. At first this was characterized by complementarity, and this is still assumed in I Corinthians. However, II Corinthians suggests that the congregation demanded greater independence (the transformation of complementarity into symmetry), while Paul wished to maintain the relationship in its old form. One should therefore not take Paul's own view of the controversy in terms of "obedience" and "disobedience" at face value. In Romans, too, Paul attempts to establish a complementary relationship between himself and the Roman church. The initial suggestion of symmetry in 1.12 (". . . that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith") gives way to complementarity in 15.29 ("I know that when I come to you I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ"), although Paul knows that he is being somewhat audacious ("very bold", 15.15) in writing to the Romans in this vein.

One of the merits of this approach is its ability to find significance in unlikely places. Thus, Paul's characteristic thanksgivings for the faith of his congregations are typically seen as a mere conventional politeness. But Rebell undertakes a careful social-psychological analysis of "power" (which is to be understood in a neutral, non-pejorative sense), and one form which this may take is the power to bestow rewards – including praise. The thanksgivings indirectly praise the respective congregations, and thus serve to express and reinforce Paul's authority over them. This illustrates the point, far too little noted by commentators, that one must explore the implicit function of a text within Paul's relationship to the relevant congregation, as well as its explicit content.

Rebell covers a great deal of ground and draws on a wide range of social psychological insights. Many of his conclusions are, in a sense, experimental in nature, and hardly constitute definitive and complete explanations of the phenomena in question. Sometimes one feels that the generally simple theoretical models are too crude to do justice to the complexity of the issues. For example, Rebell is no doubt right to claim that there are sound psychological reasons why Barnabas might have become jealous of Paul and so opposed him at Antioch (Gal.2.13) – but the interpretation of this event is beset with so many problems that one wonders whether a simple explanation in terms of jealousy is really of much help. Sometimes the alleged psychological laws themselves seem highly questionable: is it really true, as we are told on p. 144, that changes of outlook (i.e. conversions) do not normally last long, or is this dependent on a complex set of variables?

However, the real significance of Rebell's book lies not in the plausibility or otherwise of its detailed conclusions, but in the range of new avenues it opens up for future research.

Francis Watson

The Second and Third Epistles of John

Judith Lieu. T. & T. Clarke, 1986. Pp. x + 264. £13.95 (hb)

One of the most prominent trends in recent New Testament studies has been the identification of the character and situation of the Christian communities lying behind the various writings which have come down to us. There is no denying that when this approach is used in relation to the Gospels, hypothesis and speculation easily take over the field. There has been a number of works on this subject which excite the imagination but must fail, for lack of hard evidence, wholly to satisfy the intellect. It is not even certain that works like the Gospels have the potentiality of revealing such information. It is not foolish to suggest that where matters of social status or conflicts of power appear in the story of Jesus, these reflect realities in the author's church; but it is unwarrantable to dismiss other possible explanations of this material.

With regard to none of the Gospels has there been more resolute and attractive work along these lines than that of John. J. L. Martyn, O. Cullmann, and, best known, R. E. Brown have all written influentially in this area. Moreover, the Gospel of John offers one ground for the appropriateness of its treatment in this way which is not available to the others: the fact that, as a witness to the life and beliefs of its community it does not stand alone but is accompanied by the three Johannine Epistles, two if not all of which are, more plainly than any Gospel, close to the realities of church life. There is then the thought, perhaps surprising to many, that the neglected, brief, almost scrappy letters called II and III John may well deserve high status when it comes to the task of trying to establish the nature of the Johannine church. They might serve as the key unlocking the door of such an investigation, not the appendix attended to when the main work is, supposedly, done.

Judith Lieu has undertaken a study of the Johannine situation from this angle; that is, by way of a thorough and many-sided enquiry into the two letters, both in themselves and in relation to the Johannine corpus as a whole. She has conducted it with extreme academic scrupulosity, in some contrast with the works referred to above, which, for all their strengths, are inclined to paint with bold strokes, pressing hypotheses almost to the limits. What chiefly emerges is first the necessity of caution in making almost any firm judgment about the precise circumstances and history of the Johannine community; then, second, the suggestion that the explanation of the clear differences between the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles lies not so much in their respective places in the Johannine story but in their difference of focus. From one point of view after another, in all the tensions in its teaching and the variety of its concerns, the Gospel finds its resolution and its centre, time and time again, in christology. The figure of Jesus is its chief interest, its key point of reference. For the Epistles, however, attention centres on the community itself, the criteria for membership, the ins and the outs, who is more acceptable than whom. Even when, as in the First Epistle particularly, these matters are expressed in sublime language (and certainly in established Johannine vocabulary), they have in effect taken over. Theologically, the secondary has come to dominate the primary. In the Second and Third Epistles, with their overt interest in hospitality and power, this is plainly so.

It may be said that it is absurd to imply that there is something regrettable, even reprehensible, here. Everyone operates at different levels of seriousness and has to deal with a range of issues, not all of them momentous. The objection is, however, scarcely to the point. The interest lies in observing the different phases (or aspects – for the temporal succession of Epistles to Gospel, however probable, cannot be proved) of this early Christian community's expression of itself "with pen and ink", and in noting the difficulty of maintaining a certain doctrinal purity or clarity as institutional pressures supervene. The carefulness and freedom from both dogmatism and fancy of Judith Lieu's book make its perceptive analysis and conclusions all the more impressive.

Leslie Houlden

Connections: The Integration of Theology and Faith

J. L. Houlden. SCM 1986. Pp. viii + 200. £5.95

Those who have cut their theological teeth on modern biblical criticism will be thankful for this book. Amongst the increasingly disparate elements on the agenda of modern theological education it is the historical-critical study of the New Testament which has been predominant in the "disintegration of theology" and the "alienation of theology from religion". It is, therefore, precisely here that Leslie Houlden begins to put things back together. Diversity of expression is, as it were, canonised on the pages of the New Testament and can be embraced by contemporary Christians without fear.

The book falls into two parts. Part One consists, first of all, of an account of the present crisis. Houlden shows here how the separate subjects within theology have developed increasingly high levels of sophistication at the expense of a coherent and unified whole. The present state of affairs is, of course, the result of developments which have taken place since the era of the Enlightenment. The impact of historical consciousness has been accelerated by a growth in the bearing of secular academic disciplines upon the entire theological enterprise. These, linked with the decline of a centrally acknowledged intellectual and religious authority, have had a shattering effect upon the subject. The supposed continuity frequently paraded by religious institutions and formulae is merely a mask for a deeper discontinuity. Sensitivity to anachronism has, furthermore, checked the tendency to merge the past together into a happy whole. The development of the critical mind has in many cases enabled us to "see behind the scenes" in relation to the emergence of doctrines and beliefs and there has been a resulting "loss of innocence" which creates a disparity between theological study and religious commitment.

Following Schillebeeckx, Houlden proceeds to suggest that we are concerned with two main poles in hermeneutics. Rejecting a thorough-going relativism he

maintains that we must first of all "listen" to the writings of the New Testament thoroughly rooted as they are in their first-century milieu, and to the intentions of their authors, before we can allow them to speak authentically to our own time.

From his reading of the New Testament Houlden gleans "four key stages", which can also be seen to be in operation in subsequent Christian life down the ages. These four are: the impact of Jesus; experience of him; expression and formulation. The root concept here, *à la* Schleiermacher, is experience, and the mood in expression is one of "provisionality", "tentativeness" and "suggestion". The process of integration which is the book's main concern will be essentially individual, personal and subjective. The author warns that the central impact of Jesus is "unlikely to yield ordered and propositional belief of a traditional kind."

In Part Two, Houlden examines a number of specific issues in relation to both the problems and the principles which he has outlined in the earlier part of the book. So, in relation to tradition, christology, the Resurrection and making ethical decisions the method is carried out using its New Testament base. By contrast with a good deal of traditional thinking, which can now slip away, exercises in these fields will be much more relaxed and varied. The final chapter of the book is in many ways central. It consists of an exegetical exposure of a poem by William Plomer: A Church in Bavaria. The poem clinches the style of hermeneutics which has been in play throughout the book: "Everything bends to re-enact the poem lived." Bending as it does on the page, the poem symbolizes the way in which religious discourse and formulation weaves in and out down the ages bearing witness to the "sunrise of love, enlarged."

Connections is a stimulating book with many constructive and illuminating insights, but not everyone will find Houlden's reading of the situation satisfactory. The main problems lie in areas which are not explicitly discussed and with assumptions which need addressing in detail. Three areas are worthy of mention: epistemology, method and hermeneutics. Although sometimes lacking the degree of critical awareness exhibited in the present book, developments in philosophy and systematic theology indicate strongly that Enlightenment epistemology cannot simply pass unchallenged. There is in some quarters a call for a critique of critical reason. Is it, after all, possible to achieve the degree of detached observance in relation to history and texts which Houlden suggests? Also, in relation to method, more justification needs to be given for beginning with the New Testament and clear criteria need to be established for assessing whether apparent unity and continuity in fact mask deeper diversity and change, as Houlden maintains, or *vice versa*. It is interesting that throughout the book there is the sense that a more rigorous historical-critical method has given way to a hermeneutics in which poetic discourse plays a crucial role. The tension here between past and present, however, needs more focus. Whatever one might conclude concerning these issues one thing is abundantly clear. In the broad debate concerning matters like the Enlightenment, relativism, the subject-object dichotomy or the relation between past and present, what is most needed is the clear definition of terms by those who use them, whoever they may be.

Finally, whichever reading of the situation one follows, one connection hinted at in this book, and which needs developing, should be observed. In the worlds of both Systematic Theology and New Testament Studies, there are moves to understand biblical texts as literature, narrative, metaphor and story, although neither side seems fully to have followed up the implications of its labours in these areas for Christian belief and life. The great value of the present book is that it begins to do precisely this. Furthermore, for practitioners in both worlds the role of the imagination in these areas is crucial and this is a word which Houlden uses more than once. Could it be that once again scholars of the New Testament and scholars of Christian Doctrine have an opportunity for lively and mutually enriching debate? If so, this will be a much needed bonus arising out of what is in any case an extremely valuable contribution to a much neglected area.

Stephen W. Need

On The Thirty Nine Articles. A Conversation with Tudor Christianity

Oliver O'Donovan. Paternoster, 1986. Pp. 160. £5.95

The subtitle of this book (by the Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Oxford) reveals its peculiar genius. The aim is neither to bury the Articles, nor to set them on a pedestal, but to discuss the themes they discuss, and to engage them as a conversation partner. Teaching in Canada before returning to Oxford, Prof. O'Donovan explains, made him realise that the ecumenical endeavour will be better served not by denial of denominational traditions, but only by the "critical appropriation and sharing" of them. Hence this elegant and – for all its disclaimers – erudite little book. Its simple lucidity makes it enjoyable to read, while belying the breadth of its theological scope, in which both the Tudor period and our own are set clearly in the context of the theological and philosophical movements of their respective times. It is both generous in its praise – particularly of Cranmer himself, who is not infrequently compared advantageously with his successors – and stern in its criticisms, for instance of the failure to articulate a proper doctrine of the goodness of creation.

The book follows the outline of the Articles (which are printed, quaintly, in their original spelling in an Appendix), except that those on the sacraments (nos. 25-31) are treated last, in order to set them in the context of the concept of authority (nos. 32-39) and of ministry in particular (nos. 20-24). The central emphasis lies in the discernment of the fundamental importance, for the reformers, of Christology and eschatology. Behind the controversies over eucharist or scripture, they were "striving to achieve a Christocentric idea of history" and to defend "an eschatological conception of the work of Christ", thus achieving a lasting significance for us "for whom the battle between Kierkegaard and Hegel has shaped, and still shapes, our theological era" (p. 33). From this standpoint, Prof. O'Donovan can applaud Cranmer and his followers for, *inter alia*, a Christology

which resolutely blocks the way to the modern doctrine of divine passibility, which is (he claims) rooted in 19th century romantic idealism, and criticize them for the steps they took towards allowing "any non-Christological title-deeds for the recognition of a church". I can imagine the second of these finding more ready acceptance than the first. He can distinguish between the doctrine of predestination in Article 17 and that of Calvin and the Westminster Confession: it is not only at this point that the book reminds one, in style as well as content, of certain bits of Barth. In particular, in the longest single chapter, he can expound the English Reformers' view of scripture in a refreshing light, confronting the modern questions of diversity and unity in the Bible from unfamiliar, and to my mind helpful, angles.

He suggests that the Reformers could have taken, and that we should take, a different approach to the sacraments, while defending Cranmer in his (thoroughly non-Zwinglian) attempt to speak of the eucharist both objectively and subjectively. One of the book's most provocative suggestions is that we should think of *four* sacraments – baptism, the eucharist, the Lord's Day and the laying on of hands. Here, and frequently, the reader's appetite is aroused for fuller treatments of crucial and controversial issues. Prof O'Donovan manages to revive one's interest in what many have felt is a very dead document, while teasing one into fresh thought in the present context. Perhaps the book's special merit is that it offers a new sort of answer to what one should *do* with the Articles, and indeed the English Reformation as a whole. They are neither for the mantelpiece, nor for the waste-paper basket. Modern Anglican theology, if it is truly to come of age, could do a lot worse than follow this example of respectful, and at the same time courteously critical, conversation with its predecessors.

N. T. Wright

God's Action in the World. The Bampton Lectures for 1986

Maurice Wiles. SCM, 1986. Pp. viii + 118. £5.95

It is perhaps a sign of the times that an extended account of God's action in the world should merit scarcely more than a 100 sides of text, even when it appears under the prestigious title of the Bampton Lectures. Within this modest compass Professor Wiles will not disappoint those readers accustomed to his restrained style, which presupposes very considerable learning embodied in judicious and compact argument purged of every superfluous word. The lectures are published almost exactly as delivered in a form "that must seek to carry conviction both intellectually and religiously" and, moreover, they do not aspire to be a comprehensive review of the issues that arise, but are "designed rather to encourage a particular way of viewing those issues" (vii). Indeed, Professor Wiles' lectures are more an exercise in "perspectival" rather than "expressivist" or, in more traditional terms, "foundationalist" theological thought.

Professor Wiles starts out with a brief conceptual and moral appraisal of the public discussion that followed the destruction by fire of part of York Minster three days after the consecration of the present Bishop of Durham: "the form in which this question of God's action was brought into the public forum on each of these occasions was a source of profound embarrassment to many a reflective Christian" (1). Repudiating the "naivety" that attributes a morally questionable partisanship to God, Wiles recognises in the "notion of God acting in the world" (2) both its necessity and its problematic nature. Consequently, the issues raised are not new but traceable to the remotest Christian origins and experienced in different ways throughout the history of the tradition. A brief historical survey culminates in a review of the immediate post-war discussion of the idea of "God's act" in the context of "biblical theology" and its clarificatory and critical counterpoise in the analytical philosophy of religion of the 1960s. Wiles concludes that a "shift of paradigm" may be required which would affect not only our understanding of how God acts in the world in the context of historical contingency but also, beyond this, he is unable to rule out the possibility that "what is called for may prove to be some even bigger shift in conceptuality in relation to the underlying notion of divine agency itself" (13). On this basis Wiles examines with deft precision the conceptualisation of God's action in Creation and providence in relation to the "problem of evil", "public history", "personal life", and then directs his attention to Christ and, finally, God's action "in us". The position towards which Wiles is working is summarised as follows:

> God's fundamental act, the intentional fruit of the divine initiative, is the bringing into existence of the world. That is a continuous process, and every part of it is therefore in the broadest sense an expression of divine activity. Differences within that process, leading us to regard some happenings as more properly to be spoken of in such terms than others, are dependent not on differing divine initiatives but on differing degrees of human responsiveness (107–8).

The position put forward by Professor Wiles could, not to put too fine a point on it, be summed up thus: as Deism extended through a passing encounter with process thought, which is then tinged with a residual Christian perspectivism that introduces particular differentiation into the "broad" sense of divine activity. It is thus those who express the divine "intention" rather than those who might claim to have received some "special information or advice" who are the most authentic "players in the improvised drama of the world's creation" (108). The ultimate sanction for Professor Wiles' argument lies in the personal conviction that:

> God is no dead God. He is the living God, the source of all life and the source of that authentic life which his worshippers seek to realize in grateful awareness of his all-pervasive and sustaining presence (108).

This brand of "conviction theology" makes for certain difficulties in the generation of a critical response; it would be hard to avoid an *ad hominem* approach. The relation between the intentional and constative aspects of

Professor Wiles' argument is so intimate that to disturb it would be to intrude upon what amounts to a personal reflective meditation upon the inner consistency of statements that purport to convey meaning about the notion of "God's action in the World". This reviewer found in Professor Wiles' Bampton Lectures neither the stimulus nor the substance of his other contributions to the "making" and "remaking" of Christian theology and to the history of patristics. In comparison, say, with the late G. W. H. Lampe's 1976 Bamptons, *God as Spirit*, the reader is perhaps bound to draw conclusions as to the advisability of Professor Wiles' attempt to convey "conviction" on the basis of immediacy of communication rather than generate conclusions (however negative) through argument which preserved the integrity of both sense and reference. The reader's response to the 1986 Bampton Lectures will therefore depend upon what "performance indicators" are deemed most appropriate under the circumstances.

R. H. Roberts

Redeeming Time. Atonement Through Education

Timothy Gorringe. Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986. Pp. xvi + 239. £6.95

To say that the cross is central to the Christian understanding of salvation is a truism. But if the cross is the centre, presumably there is also a circumference and, moreover, an area within that perimeter over which God is active in his grace. How then do the unique, "once for all" event of Jesus Christ and the "all the time" activity of God in history relate to each other? A mighty theme, and worthily wrestled with here.

Gorringe (an Anglican who wrote this book while teaching at a theological seminary in India) bids us re-examine, as one of the metaphors or models to describe atonement, the practice of a divine "education" of humankind at work in history. It was a model employed as long ago as Origen and, in the Enlightenment, by Lessing. Gorringe is well aware that much depends on just how "education" is conceived. Compared with the colourful imagery of "redemption from slavery" or "acquittal" or "victory over the evil powers", a process of inculcating "moral truths" to humankind would be pretty sterile. But Gorringe has in mind the interpersonal activity whereby people are changed and led to new levels of awareness of themselves, their possibilities and responsibilities. His mentor here is Paulo Freire with his "pedagogy of the oppressed". But neither are we then presented with a programme of conscientization or political liberation thinly coated with biblical phraseology. The analogical relation is kept clearly in view. The "divine pedagogy" takes place through the *presence* of the Educator and, as always in such education, central to the process is the establishment of I-Thou relationships with the learners. The term solidarity then assumes central importance. It is at this point that sparks of mutual illumination fly between theological doctrine and the pedagogy of liberation: "A liberating pedagogy cannot be conducted from a safe distance beyond the struggle. In fact it can only be conducted from a position of complete solidarity with those who are oppressed . . . those who take up 'people's struggle' from a safe distance evoke nothing but cynicism." The incarnation and cross are therefore redemptive as the most concrete way in which God manifests his solidarity with his suffering creation. Here we are back with the great incarnational fathers, Justin and Irenaeus and Athanasius, and no less with Luther, Barth and Bonhoeffer (and Schleiermacher!). Indeed one of the strengths of this book is the way it witnesses to an on-going pedagogy within theology itself, as the great figures of the distant and recent past and present are brought into dialogue not just with each other but with the desperate struggles of humanity today.

In arguing for God's persistence with history, Gorringe has to outface that prominent stream of modern biblical theology which so stresses the eschatological nature of the kingdom of God as the end of history that history itself tends to be evacuated of significance. Important therefore are the central chapters arguing that in both Old and New Testaments "Spirit" is closely related to "kingdom", denoting God's patient, ceaseless striving through historical events to evoke his people's response, and that, far from simply calling for an existential decision about "himself", Jesus gave concrete content to the "kingdom of God" in terms of commitment to justice and righteousness in line with the law and the prophets.

The theme is obviously relevant to inter-faith relationships. But in the light of Barth's and Bonhoeffer's critiques of "religion" Gorringe refuses to allow faith in Christ simply to become another religion competing against the rest, or to lose its own particularity. Rather, christocentric faith asks what the God who reigns by his gracious, liberating powerlessness is doing in and with all people in the totality of their cultural existences – of which "religion" is but a part.

Barth used to say that we should read the Bible in one hand with the newspaper in the other. If so, this would be a good book to have balanced on one's knee. I closed it with a – positive – sense of dissatisfaction. Gorringe concludes with an exposition of the style of church consistent with this theology, and very much along the lines of Bonhoeffer's combination of *disciplina arcana* with servant praxis. I warm to that. But my attention had been so caught by the possibilities of a genuinely "worldly" theology – in Bonhoeffer's christocentric sense – that I was left itching to be taken beyond the church to an account not of history in general, but of our particular history this century, as a story in which the crucified God has involved himself.

Keith W. Clements

The Power of Symbols

F. W. Dillistone. SCM, 1986. Pp. vi + 246. £7.50

This book, written with Canon Dillistone's characteristic lucidity, contains chapters on the nature of symbols; the distinction between literal and symbolic; examples of symbolic forms (both visual and dramatic,

written and spoken); theories of symbolism (as found in anthropology, philosophy and theology); biblical symbolism; symbols and culture; and the life and death of symbols.

Canon Dillistone has a well-deserved reputation in the field of (Christian) symbology. In this book he sets out to vindicate the thesis that "symbolic expression is the way to creative freedom". The book contains many insights and is the obvious product of much learning ("lightly worn", as they say). It is, however, problematic in at least two respects. Firstly, the question of the *actual* social and economic mediations of "creation freedom" needs to be accorded a centrality which is not found in this book. An unemployed individual subsisting on supplementary benefit in Toxteth is ("notionally") free, in Mrs Thatcher's Britain, to buy shares in British Gas, to take out private health insurance. But of course he or she is unlikely to have the *money* to do this. The exercise of freedom, let alone "creative freedom", in our society is constrained overwhelmingly by an individual's purchasing power, and this power in turn is determined by existing social and economic configurations. It is hard to avoid the suspicion that Canon Dillistone tends, like his mentor Tillich, to use the notion of freedom in its "notional" sense. Secondly, every instance of the symbolic mode is legitimated by a theology, even if this theology is a "secular" one of an unlimited semiosis. But this theology – in the context of this book, a Christian theology – is itself legitimated by the symbolic mode in question. So here we have the problem of the hermeneutical circle. To have any hope of resolving this problem we have to deal with the practical issue of how discourses and texts are constructed, how their authoritative readers make them *speak*. Here the matter of canonicity must be broached. On this and related matters Dillistone has very little to say, let alone any guidance to offer. An author cannot be blamed for not writing the kind of book that a churlish reviewer wants him/her to write. But the theologian who has sought to come to grips with the legacy of Saussure and Peirce will him/herself be asking questions which this book cannot even begin to answer. And it may be that an adequate (Christian) symbology demands that an attempt be made to address just such "semiotic" questions.

Kenneth Surin

China and the Christian Impact. A Conflict of Cultures

Jacques Gernet. CUP, 1985. Pp. vi + 310. £12.50

Sooner or later all Christians missionaries, whether at home or overseas, have considered the means by which they could best achieve the conversions which were their goal. Their answers to the problem have varied, influenced by both denomination and theological fashion as well as the nature of the society within which they worked, and the historical record of successes and failures in many different missionary fields. Under the impetus of millennial enthusiasms some have hoped by wide-ranging peripatetic evangelism to maximise numbers of conversions in the shortest possible time. Others have adopted the strategy of building isolated Christian communities, often out of those either with little to hope for, or altogether cut off, from established societies – criminals, slaves, or refugees. Perhaps rather more common has been the patient work of missionaries within particular communities, hoping by their teaching and example to attract a following and to build up the institutions which would in time permeate the whole. Finally there are those missionaries who have aimed primarily to convert those with power and influence – kings, chiefs, intellectual and religious leaders such as the Hindu brahmin or Muslim ulama – in the expectation that whole societies would eventually follow suit. This was the principal method of the Jesuit missionaries, Matteo Ricci and his 17th century successors, in China.

Jacques Gernet's stimulating book in effect provides a picture of the failure and collapse of this strategy during the period between Ricci's arrival in 1583 and the 1660s. This is not, however, a conventional narrative account of Roman Catholic missionary activities. Gernet has examined the story chiefly from the Chinese side, studying the growth of anti-Christian literature in China, and analysing the arguments marshalled against Jesuit teaching and apologetics by the Chinese scholars among the literate elite whom they hoped to win over to Christianity.

Confronted with a technically advanced and highly-developed literate culture in a strongly hierarchical society still almost entirely isolated from the West, the Jesuits had few alternative modes of operation from which to choose, even had their own training and religious organization not predisposed them to focus their attention on the emperor, his court, and the scholarly class. In order to win the intellectual debate, a cautious, oblique approach to the transmission of the Christian message was adopted. This also reflected both Ricci's sense of the Jesuits' vulnerability, and his assumption that indigenous Confucianism showed traces of either "a 'natural religion' or . . . an ancient transmission of the message of the Bible to the Chinese" (p. 193). As a result, the search for analogies was vital to Ricci. He proceeded from an equation of the Chinese heaven and Sovereign on High with the Biblical paradise and God as Creator, and drew parallels between Christian and Chinese moralities.

It slowly became apparent that this was an approach to the missionary task which created serious difficulties. Gernet shows how initially Chinese enthusiasm arose from both a long tradition of syncretism and assimilation where other systems of belief were concerned, and the immediate conditions of Chinese society. In Jesuit hands Christian ethical teaching seemed to provide a much-needed reinforcement of traditional morality, "and so, in a particularly rigorous reactionary period, they were made welcome" (p. 142). For a time Ricci's caution hid from the Chinese the essentially dogmatic and exclusive nature of Christian beliefs, but gradually this accommodation broke down. After Ricci's death in 1610, not only did some missionaries voice reservations but, as their understanding of the "Barbarians" (westerners) grew, the Chinese themselves began to question the analogies. Increasingly the Chinese came to realise that the Jesuits did not relish debate and reciprocity – "What they detest above all is that people

should think" wrote Xu Dashou in the 1630s (p. 82). Instead they were interested in imposing a set of beliefs which ran counter to the fundamentals of Chinese thought and social organization. In the political sphere, for example, once it was realised that God was above the emperor and that all men were equal in his sight, Christianity began to be condemned as profoundly subversive. Understanding brought Chinese accusations that missionaries were spies, their teaching a prolonged and subtle exercise in deception, and that Christianity itself was to be compared with indigenous religious deviancy.

Gernet examines the developing conflicts over creation and its dating, the status of saints, views on women, and the Incarnation. He argues that examples of Chinese sympathy for aspects of Christian belief or ritual reflected no indigenous change of *mentalité* but a conviction that they reinforced Chinese thinking and custom. Two distinct civilizations and sets of mental categories were in conflict, to a degree the profundity of which slowly became apparent to both sides, and in a manner which many Chinese found deeply offensive.

For practical reasons Jesuits were still favoured at the imperial court in the late 17th century. However, it would be unwise to see in the subsequent controversy over the "Chinese rites" no more than a heavy-handed Catholic authority finally combining with jealous political rivals in the 1740s to abort a sensitive and successful missionary endeavour. The implication of Gernet's book is that the papal pronouncements against adaptation to Asian practices were no more than a symbolic *coup de grace* for a missionary strategy which had already foundered on the rocks of incompatibility and Chinese self-confidence. Gernet is at his best when discussing the Chinese texts and the philosophical conflicts involved in this confrontation between Chinese and Christian beliefs. The thread of historical development and the sense of context is far less easy to grasp. Nevertheless this is an absorbing book from which not only those with a professional interest in China but theologians, students of missions and comparative religion, and historians of western expansion will all derive pleasure and profit.

Andrew Porter

Letters on the Sūfī Path

Ibn ʿAbbād of Ronda. Translation and introduction by John Renard, S. J. Preface by Annemarie B. Schimmel. Paulist Press, 1986. Pp. xviii + 238. $9.95

This selection of letters has as its subject Islam's main mystical tradition, Sufism. The author, Ibn ʿAbbād (1332-90), was born at Ronda in Spain, but spent his adult life in Morocco. Annemarie Schimmel says of his works in her preface: "There is no poem, and one looks in vain for ecstatic utterances, for descriptions of the different states and stations of the Sufis, for ravishing hymns about the Beloved whose eternal beauty is overwhelming and for whom one wants to suffer and die [. . .]. We rather find in Ibn ʿAbbad a quiet friend in whom we can trust, a man who does not dazzle us with flashes of glorious ideas [. . .]."

After reading such words in a preface, one naturally suspects that the author is a bore. Indeed he is: a repetitious moralist entirely devoid of inspiration, a man so fanatical in his unoriginality as to view any new idea as the work of the Devil, and a preacher so monotonous in his exhortations to virtue as to drive anyone to vice. At the beginning of the 20th century a western Islamicist could have said so without hestitation; nowadays he would be deterred by the dead weight of eirenic diplomacy that has dominated the field for the last 70 years. It is typical of contemporary Christian students of Islam, and their preoccupation with "dialogue", that they should devote their efforts to texts of this kind. Given the vast riches of Islamic literature, one feels that a translator of such admirable competence might have found some more worthy materials.

There are a few points of interest in Ibn ʿAbbād's letters, in spite of his personality. We hear of the faults that afflict the teacher: he may 'err by seating himself in a place elevated above his companions without sufficiently cogent reason; [. . .] or by favouring the wealthy and the children of this world with places nearest him, to the exclusion of the poor and indigent." Ibn ʿAbbād thinks that the pilgrimage to Mecca is more likely to be acceptable "if one is from the more educated classes". He gives advice on what to do when, in the course of reading a book, one encounters disagreement between Muslim thinkers: "When one who is studying this book comes across one of these sections he should simply move on to another, and give the author the benefit of the doubt about what the seeker knows not [. . .]. The seeker will thus combine the advantages of reading the book with a deferential attitude toward the religious scholars who understand these things".

It is difficult to avoid the feeling that if this man has commanded great respect and had much influence in Morocco, then this unadventurous frame of mind is not unconnected with that country's failure to achieve progress in other fields. It would be entirely wrong, however, to imagine that the whole of Islam was like this: whereas in the Muslim West, from the 14th century onwards, philosophical and theological speculation is at an end, in Iran it has continued to flourish up to our own time. Moreover, Islam in Morocco is a fascinating subject for the anthropologist, with its rich profusion of archaic customs and uninhibited dubious practices. It seems to be only "the more educated classes" who have been tame and pedestrian.

What is most worthy of remark in the letters is the extent of worry and psychological disorientation in Ibn ʿAbbād's chief correspondent. Given the limitations of his spiritual director, this is hardly surprising. The pupil complains that he is not notably moved when chanting the Qur'ān, and would very much like to cry but cannot. He is plagued incessantly by scruples. He spends his time "reading a very broad selection of books, but without a single focus or principle of discrimination." He is beset with perplexity regarding his work (teaching children). This, he fears, will make him lose eternal salvation. Moreover, he is "hesitant and doubtful about the propriety of the sources of stipends". His doubts lead him to feel that he should leave his family.

The translator uses the word "jurists" to render the Arabic phrase *ahl al-zāhir* (literally, "people of the exterior"). This is misleading, since it has often been common for a Muslim to be both a jurist (*faqīh*, in effect a rabbi), and a Sufi mystic with a concern for inner meanings as well. Thus the mistranslation, which presents Ibn ʿAbbād as hostile to jurists in general, perpetuates the common misconception that Islam has always been divided into opposing camps: lawyers on the one hand, esotericists on the other.

It is odd that a volume which contains few new materials should begin with a bizarre statement by Professor Schimmel: "Mystical concerts and whirling dance are basically meant to provide the Sufi with some relaxation after his unceasing, hard spiritual exercises". Whatever more convincing explanations may be offered for such activities, this, to be sure, is a remark of unexpected novelty.

Julian Baldick

A Companion to the Alternative Service Book

R. C. D. Jasper & Paul F. Bradshaw. SPCK, 1986. Pp. 500. £19.95

This book is unquestionably an essential tool for anyone engaged in the study of liturgy within the Church of England. On the whole it is most competently presented, the writing is clear and straightforward, and the historical background of the Alternative Service Book is lucidly and concisely set out.

The greater part of this companion volume to the ASB consists of first a history and second a commentary on each of the services it contains. This at first sight attractive and rational structure in fact suffers from a certain amount of unnecessary duplication; for instance, on the development of the use of the Kyries, Eucharist section A History (p. 155) has a brief and accurate outline of its origins – but in Eucharist section B Rite A Commentary (p. 190) a more detailed account appears, and there is no cross-referencing. Can it be that Bradshaw in the States wrote the history sections while Jasper in the UK dealt independently with the commentaries? Certainly their material should have been assembled more carefully. A further disadvantage of the book's structure is apparent in the fact that the history sections describe, of intention, the history of the particular service as it now appears in the ASB. The unintended consequence of this is that Morning and Evening Prayer of the ASB are presented as the culmination of the whole thrust of the development of the Daily Office in the Western Church: one feels for the sake of balance and proportion at least some cognisance should have been taken of the alternative development which produced the Liturgy of the Hours of the current Roman use.

Particularly where some of the liturgical quirks of ASB are concerned, a note of self-justification, perhaps inevitably, creeps in. Consider, for example, their treatment of the rubric of section 36 of the Eucharist Rite A: "The president takes the bread and the cup into his hands and replaces then on the holy table". The headings to Rite A make it clear that Dix's Four-Action Shape is understood here in its developed form – elements taken *in order to* be blessed, bread broken *in order to* be given. The identification of the first of these actions with the Offertory/ Presentation of the gifts has rightly been abandoned; offertory processions of solemn presentation of gifts carry their own justification, for which incorporation into the Four-Action Shape is unnecessary. Therefore the Taking in order to Bless must be an accompaniment of the Eucharistic Prayer which accomplishes that blessing, and traditional Western practice ties this action to the Institution Narrative. Jasper and Bradshaw however present us with the novel concept in this section 36 of Taking, not in order to Bless, but in order to Put Down Again, and attempt to justify this by telling us that this indicates that "these are the elements over which thanks are to be given". We would never have guessed. Moreover, their appeal to Jewish table custom is not convincing.

Consider also what one finds when seeking a rationale for ASB's retention of the extremely weak epiclesis of Eucharistic Prayers IV of Rite A and I of Rite B. The commentary section on the Epiclesis on p. 213 seems to indicate that the authors would justify it by reference to the epiclesis of the Eucharistic Prayer of the Apostolic Tradition, since they describe it as "essentially a prayer for a good communion", despite its wording "send your Spirit upon the offering of your holy Church". But contrast this with the history section of p. 152 concerning the epiclesis, which explicitly states that Hippolytus's Eucharistic Prayer contains "a petition for the descent of the Spirit . . . on the oblation of the Church *and* for the fruits of communion".

There is one quite unforgiveable error on p. 199 in the section on the Nicene Creed where, with regard to the inclusion of the *filioque*, the astonishing assertion is made that "the problem of the phrase is not its truth but its authority". Compare this with the statement by Bishop Kallistos Ware in his book *The Orthodox Church*, p. 59: "Orthodox believe the filioque to be theologically untrue." Can both Jasper and Bradshaw really be unaware of this? Other minor criticisms could be made; the deliberate refusal to discuss the question of liturgical language at all, which for many is the way in which the impact of ASB has been felt most immediately, is to be regretted. But there are good things too: the extensive bibliographies are extremely helpful, even though here too there are perhaps inevitable omissions, such as the recent works of, for instance Taft on the Liturgy of the Hours and Talley on the Liturgical year.

Nonetheless, this book is to be recommended. In these days of flexible liturgy, it is essential for those responsible for leading the Church's worship to know what they are doing and why; what choices they should make among the great resources which ASB provides, and how to make best use of its material. For this purpose, Jasper and Bradshaw's Companion is invaluable: its commentaries should however be regarded with a critical eye.

Jill Pinnock

So Near and Yet So Far. Rome, Canterbury and ARCIC

Hugh Montefiore. SCM, 1986. Pp. 154. £5.95

The ARCIC texts have had a mixed reception in both Communions, and the present reviewer (an Anglican, and an enthusiastic follower of the ARCIC route) admits the need for the kind of cautious airing of anxieties, shared by many Anglicans, which Bishop Montefiore offers in this book. It is not, however, a commentary on the ARCIC texts, but rather a bishop's eye view of the present relations between the Churches; moreover, this episcopal perspective, though rich in perceptive detail, nonetheless fails to engage in serious reflection upon the reasons for seeking unity between Rome and Canterbury at all.

It is true that the title of the opening chapter affirms what none would deny – the "Miracle of Convergence"; and in it, the Bishop describes well the remarkable rapprochement of the two Churches within the last 30 years. At the same time, however, this chapter reveals the shallow ecclesiological soil in which the book is rooted; for there is no attempt to say what Anglicanism *is* – or Roman Catholicism either. Thus we are told that the growth of parish councils, *inter alia,* in the Roman Church is a sign of that Church becoming more "Anglican"; and, conversely, that what the Bishop calls the "formal recognition of the episcopal college" in Anglican synodical government is a sign of *that* Church becoming more "Catholic". But the "miracle" here seems to be no more than a convergence of secondary things, almost of superficialities; and though the Bishop declares that the two Churches have more in common than what divides them, this common ground is summarized in no more than seven lines (on p. 2).

The result, inevitably, is that the "So Far" of the book's title looms much larger than the "So Near"; and the bulk of the book is devoted to exploring, and emphasizing, the outstanding differences. There is no doubt that upon many specific matters, the Bishop is illuminating and persuasive: especially, and predictably, in the chapters on "Traditions of Ethical Thinking" and "The Church and Sexual Ethics". These chapters, perhaps the most valuable of the book, not only illustrate the problem of differing pastoral styles likely to arise from a closer union of the two churches; but form an important contribution to the kind of discussion which will be the only means of resolving such difficulties.

It is when the Bishop leaves the pastoral for the more directly ecclesial that his handling of the issues is less happy; and the reason is that he fails to dig deep enough into ecclesiology – that is, into *history* – to uncover the precise nature of the division between Rome and Canterbury, and therefore the theological impulse in this piece of ecumenical adventure. It is not enough to begin with two Christian communions, floating in the midst of time, and showing signs of approximation to each other; and then to weigh up the advantages or otherwise of a merger. It is not even enough to take note of four centuries of separation, and the bitter wounds they have inflicted on both sides. A thorough ecclesiological dig must get us right down to the roots of *Ecclesia Anglicana,* the millennium in which Canterbury and Rome were united. No sense can be made of the Reformation unless we grasp the Reformers' own conviction that they were but cleansing what was already there; the particular manner in which they picked and chose which continuities with the past to preserve and which to discard; and the way in which Anglicanism still bears the marks of its papal past. Anglican self-understanding depends upon a claim to continuity with the untorn fabric of Latin Christendom; and therefore Anglican ecclesiology has the question of the Roman See still lying unresolved at its very heart.

It is true that here and there, Bishop Montefiore remembers that Rome and Canterbury were once united; but it seems to play no real part in his thinking. Thus there is no sense of urgency, or of ecumenical imperative, in his book, for there is no sense of *schism,* no shame and horror at the tearing of the fabric.

Yet are we not often told that this is the ARCIC method – to leave on one side the bloodstained polemics of the past, and to find a fresh and eirenic vocabulary to unite us for the future? Yes, indeed; but new words can still only describe and define what we *are,* and what we are is what the past has made us. Certainly no ARCIC text suggests that the past should simply be discarded. Rome and England's pasts are united – and divided – in a particularly painful, intimate and unforgettable way. When Roman Catholics and Anglicans can try to do their history together, and sensitively tell one story of their past, then the broken limbs of Latin Christendom will at last be healing, and so many of the matters discussed in this book will begin to fall into place.

P. G. Atkinson

The Future of Christian Ethics

Ronald H. Preston. SCM, 1987. Pp. vi + 280. £12.50

Professor Preston has collected in this volume many of the essays which he wrote between 1980-1986. It is thus a sequel to the last volume of collected essays, *Explorations in Theology Volume 9,* which came out in 1981, and covered the years 1970-1980. The current volume is therefore less of a piece than his Scott Holland lectures which appeared in 1983 as *Church and Society in the Late Twentieth Century.*

Professor Preston has grouped these essays around three themes, which are those of ecumenism, economics and politics. He has always been keenly aware of the WCC and three of the articles in *Explorations* were on the World Council. So he includes a paper on English Anglican Social Ethics which he gave at an Anglican/German Lutheran consultation; looks at the future of Protestant ethics, which builds on an unpublished paper given to Scandinavian Lutherans in Denmark; examines the 1979 WCC conference on science and faith, with particular attention being given to the environment which was a theme of the 1982 Vancouver Assembly of the WCC; and finally offers another review of the significance of William Temple. Again there was an earlier review in *Explorations* of Temple's place in Anglican social ethics.

When we pass to the area of economics, the continuity with *Explorations* is also evident. There he included two articles on "the right to work" and on transnational corporations. Now the target has shifted to the new right. This movement occupied only a few pages in Preston's 1977 Maurice Lectures published in 1979 as *Religion and the Persistence of Capitalism,* but had a whole chapter in the Holland Lectures. However the two articles in his latest collection are valuable because they examine the New Right in British political life, and especially the divisions within the Conservative party on economics between the old patriarchal thinkers and the new economic liberals or advocates of the free-market. Brian Griffiths in particular is examined in detail. A different style is adopted in a chapter on the rise in unemployment, entitled "The End of the Protestant Work Ethic?", where he advocates paying a social wage to every adult citizen.

The third area concerns the political order. It is the most wide-ranging, and it is not easy to find a common theme even as general as "the political order". Professor Preston has long been a critic of Liberation Theology. Most of the references in *Explorations* are critical, and in the Holland Lectures (p. 92) he says "In detail I do not think liberation theology can be of much help to us". The critical tone is maintained in this volume as well. However he does distinguish between political theology and liberation theology. Political theology he defines by the writings of the German theologians J. B. Metz and D. Solle, one Roman Catholic, one Lutheran. The value of political theology is the light it throws on the role of the Church as a structure of power, and on the need for all theology to be aware of its sociological conditioning. Liberation theology is too uncritical of Marxism which it takes to be a science, and is over-conservative in its biblical exegesis. Above all it does not translate from South America to Western Europe, where the poor are a minority and alienated from the churches. Equally Professor Preston is critical of the theology of hope, while accepting that it can be a useful reminder of the need for Christian openness. Much of his criticism is drawn from insights which he has taken from the new right: "the politics of imperfection" stresses human ignorance, irrationality, and conflicts of interest. In general he finds the politics of hope unrealistic, even if he ultimately will not accept conservatism.

Finally there are a number of articles which stand on their own. A chapter on penal theory examines the biblical view of punishment and its place in Christian tradition. He then relates penal theory to theories of the state, and the contribution which the Christian faith can make. Another article examines Bryan Wilson's theory of the decline of religious belief in modern society. A final chapter examines the relationship of the academic theologian to the church which he belongs to, discussing the need to relate to other disciplines and the ability of local parishes to reflect theologically.

My feelings as I finished this volume were that Professor Preston's defence of his own position was as sharp as ever, but the tone has shifted more to criticism and consolidation. Certainly the new right and liberation theology need the acute and sometimes astringent treatment which they are given. Perhaps however the reviews of past Anglican work could have been shortened or omitted, and a greater emphasis paid to the WCC and environmental ethics. Here he is at his best, and the book would have been far more concise if the attacks on the far right and far left had been balanced by an exploration of substantive issues such as penal theory and environmentalism. Is it too much to ask for a further volumn which could encompass our world after Chernobyl and the enterprise culture which our politicians have presented us with?

Peter Sedgwick

Reinhold Niebuhr and the Issues of Our Times

Richard Harris (ed.). Mowbray. Pp. x + 205. £6.95

In the realm of public affairs Reinhold Niebuhr has been the most influential theologian of our century. A generation of distinguished American politicians, including Adlai Stevenson, Arthur Schlesinger and Hubert Humphrey, acknowledged him not only as a prime influence on their own lives, but on the whole American approach to politics. "Niebuhr is the father of us all," said George Kennan. Dennis Healey and Tony Benn are just two of the many British men of affairs who gladly acknowledge his influence on their thought. As the late Richard Crossman said *"Moral Man and Immoral Society"* was one of the books which changed my life. It was the most exciting shock intellectually that I had as a young man and I'm still recovering from it". In his book of essays, which is an attempt to bring Niebuhrian thought back into the mainstream of contemporary debate, a distinguished range of academic writers discuss the issues of our time, both intellectual and practical. They cover war and peace, revolution, nuclear weapons, intervention and monetarism and ask what light Niebuhr shed on them; they are not primarily concerned with what Niebuhr said in his own historical context. This is not the place for the eager student to enquire within about the "essential" Niebuhr – his life and thought – although it does highlight the urgent need for such a publication.

Some of the essayists have interpreted their brief with a large degree of freedom. Daphne Hampson writing a critique of Reinhold Niebuhr on sin and Keith Ward on Niebuhr and the Christian Hope pay little more than lip service to Niebuhr and his thought before striking out on a path unaccompanied by much reference to the man who has supposedly inspired their contributions. Having told us that her criticism of Niebuhr is that he equates male with human, Daphne Hampson in a brilliantly stimulating essay maps out the reasons why for many people, not all of them feminists, talk of God in terms of power, isolation and hierarchy – essentially male conceptions – has led to God becoming stranded high and dry, or at best being rendered irrelevant. By indicating what she sees as fatal flaws in Niebuhr's conception of God and sin – sin as pride, God as male – Hampson presents in detail her own stark and persuasive analysis of what is wrong with a male dominated theology and a male God.

Keith Ward departs even further from Niebuhr's supposed inspiration and presents his own by now familiar approach to a Christian eschatology. This "requires us to measure our political acts by standards and norms higher than those of expediency and practicality; but none-the-less to seek to realise those standards as far as possible within the conditions and constraints of our own time". For those who are already familiar with Ward's writings they will find here a usefully concise summary but little that is new, and even less on Niebuhr.

The other essayists are more successful in striking a balance between a presentation of Niebuhr's views on a particular subject and the light this sheds on a contemporary issue. James Childress discussing Niebuhr's realistic-pragmatic approach to war and the nuclear dilemma gets closest to the heart of Niebuhr's thought in quoting from *Love and Justice:*

> "It is not possible to defeat a foe without causing innocent people to suffer with the guilty . . . It is not possible to move in history without becoming tainted with guilt. Once bombing has been developed as an instrument of warfare, it is not possible to *disavow* its use without capitulating to the foe who refuses to *disavow* it."

It is significant that in discussing the dilemma that nuclear weapons present to the realistic-pragmatic christian (of whom Niebuhr is an example *par excellence*) Childress has to resort to references from a wide range of Niebuhr's works, as if this issue revealed the full scope of his thinking. It also brings out most clearly another key aspect of Niebuhr's thought: his repeated appeal to the doctrine of justification by faith to overcome the moral paralysis that might otherwise result from an emphasis on moral ambiguity, guilt and tragedy. Too many christians who comment on political matters, nearly all of whom do so from the irresponsible safety of the "opposition" benches, seem to suffer from this moral paralysis. It was Niebuhr's recognition of this anomaly that is so sadly lacking today. At best such people insist that there is no clear christian solution to a particular issue (say the Falklands War or Nuclear Weapons); consequently they prevaricate between an appeal to an impossible ideal and bland generalisations. At worst they assume a tone of righteous indignation over the inevitable "guilt" associated with any "movement in sinful history" and oppose all such action with misguided zeal. These people fail to recognise the extent to which on assumption to a position of power, where one has to be responsible for the execution and outcome of policies previously advocated from the "opposition benches", the holders of power are forced to modify and amend their original manifesto. This invariably involves a compromise with the ideal, greater caution and realistic pragmatism, as well as acceptance of the fact that clearing up a messy situation in the real world involves getting dirty.

It was Niebuhr's genius to recognise and to speak to this dilemma and to forge a theology that made working sense to men and women in positions of power, giving them hope that despite all the compromises, and all the attendant guilt associated with *any* action in the real world, right action was not impossible for them. It is to the shame of today's church that no one seems to have taken up Niebuhr's torch. In bringing a Niebuhrian light to bear on the issues of our time this book of essays is a timely warning of the predicament facing men and women of goodwill in positions of power, and it points a way forward. It will serve as a useful source book of current christian thinking in fields ethical, political, cultural and doctrinal. Most important of all it will drive us back to its inspirational source – the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr.

Christopher Brice

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