God's Quarrel with Religion

A study in world religion as it affects the Christian Church

By

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Introduction

The technological revolution of our age is increasingly pressing towards a global society. Never before has man moved with such speed in such numbers such distances. Political upheavals dislodged vast numbers of people and scattered them among alien populations. The result is a mixing of races, cultures and creeds. The effect of the multicultural encounter works in two opposite directions: on the one hand there is a movement towards separatism for fear of loss of identity, on the other hand there is ever-increasing pressure towards assimilation. Narrow nationalism and global universalism are in fierce contest for supremacy and only history will show which trend will prevail.

The present treatise is not an effort in sociology or the history of culture, its concern is purely theological. It intends to investigate the implications of the contemporary ideological climate for the Christian church. The key issue centres upon the uniqueness of the Christian message in a world where relativism is the underlying assumption of twentieth century ideology. Because truth has lost its traditional quality of the absolute there is an almost irresistible movement towards syncretism. This is a technical term and indicates the desire to level down differences in philosophy or religion for the sake of greater comprehensiveness. The Greek term *syn-krisis* means to put together, to compound and is used in the New Testament in the sense of mixing, blending, uniting or combining (1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Cor. 10:12; Heb. 4:2). Plutarch uses the noun *syncretismos* to indicate a united political front. In later patristic literature *syncresis* is used to describe comparison or contrast.[1]

Georg Calixtus (1586-1656) introduced a nuance to the meaning of syncretism in his effort to heal the division between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Because he realized the difficulty of finding a consensus on the question of doctrine he put every emphasis upon Christian living. For this purpose he proposed that the two parties be content with the essential minimum of dogma which lay down the principles of the Christian faith as deposited in the first five centuries of the Church. It was he who introduced the concept of the consensus *quinquesaecularis* - "the agreement of the five centuries."[2]

Calixtus's intentions were entirely eirenic but it gave rise to a protracted controversy with the result that the term syncretism acquired a pejorative meaning. It now stands for a "superficial amalgamation of religious ideas and traditions which are in reality incompatible with one another."[3] It is in this latter sense that the term is used in the present treatise. Calixtus lived at a time of bitter controversy. His critics viewed his effort as a futile attempt to reconcile irreconcilable theological positions. He was accused of lack of conviction and of indifference to truth. His effort was dubbed "religion-mongering" (*Religions-mengerei*).[4] There was some truth to the accusation as he stood in the humanist tradition like Erasmus before him.

The 17th c. Church was deeply divided, not only between Rome and the Protestants but also within the Protestant camp itself. Lutherans resisted union with Calvinists on questions of doctrine and Church order. Protestants looked upon Roman catholics as idol worshippers. For Roman catholics the protestants were not just heretics but inventors of a totally new religion.[5] The suggestion therefore of retracing one's steps out of the labyrinth of acrimony and misunderstanding to the time of the undivided Church of the early centuries was a reasonable suggestion and had little to do with syncretism in the negative sense. But in the context of the present situation the movement towards syncretism presents a totally different picture both in scope and intention. It stands for a deliberate effort to breach the boundaries of the Christian faith for the sake of unity not between the divided Church but between all

world-religions. There is a readiness on the part of some Christian scholars to compromise by overlooking disparities for the sake of conformity. This is aided and abetted by cynics who distrust any affirmations of truth in the name of broadmindedness. The father of the Reform Synagogue in Great Britain, the late C. G. Montefiore, once suggested that modern religious tolerance may be nothing more than disguised indifference: "We may be tolerant to all religious opinions because we are indifferent equally to them all." Though a liberal, and quite ready to allow that "God lets his truth shine through many windows," Montefiore knew that there is a kind of false tolerance which results in hypocrisy, and corruption.[6]

The syncretistic climate of our age, especially in the West has something to do with the levelling of society on the principles of democracy apart from the philosophical suppositions which keep it alive. As every one is equal in status and before the law, so are his views of equal validity with those of other views. This is an inference only natural in an egalitarian society. This uniformist trend engendered by democracy makes for standardization not only of goods but of ideas as well. The assimilatory principle which pervades culture pervades religion also. Given the fact of standardization and mass-production the uniformist trend in a multicultural society is propelled by its own logic. Religious differences are experienced as divisive factors in a world bent upon mass-culture. It is felt that religious differences obstruct progress towards a scientific world view. While science unites, religions divide. A compromise between the religions is therefore seen as the logical answer to the problem.

Here are some of the arguments for a syncretistic stance:

1. Religions must acquire a more rational perspective to fit into a scientifically orientated world. The religion of the future will be informed by science and will be based upon reason. What truth there is in religion must be separated from the dross that inheres all traditional religions.

2. Religious differences are survivals of the past. They are the result of varying social and political conditions. As these conditions change so the differences are nullified. The acculturation of ethnic groups in society, especially in the U.S.A., makes religious differences redundant. Will Herberg and Martin E. Marty have shown that the differences between Protestants, Jews and Roman Catholics are only external. In reality they all share the same outlook and espouse the same values.

3. Religions differ only on the surface. At their depth they say the same thing and stand for the same values. Their divisions are the result of geography and history. This goes back to a time when the continents were disconnected. With the modern intermingling of the races the old traditions have become untenable and standing the way of a unified humanity. For this reason the more recent cults work on a syncretistic principle like the Unification Church and the Baha'i movement.[7]

4. Indicative of the new spirit as far as Christianity is concerned is the radical change in missionary strategy on the part of the historic churches. The missionary zeal of the past is increasingly replaced by syncretistic accommodation in relation to non-Christians. Apart from political and social reasons an additional factor in this development are the pronouncements of Vatican II in respect to non-Christian religions. The very meaning of the term "ecumenical" has undergone a radical change since 1965. Whereas in the past the term was meant to describe the conciliatory movement within Christendom it now extends to all religions irrespectively.

Normal Goodall in 1961 still operates within the traditional use of ecumenicity as the inter-denominational effort to unite the Christian Church (cf. The Ecumenical Movement, 1961). In respect to the non-Christian religions his concern is entirely missionary (cf. pp 32-35). But in much of the

literature after Vatican II ecumenism connotes the outreach towards the non-Christian religions not in the spirit of mission but of accommodation. This is especially noticeable in the literature of the WCC.

While the language of Vatican II in respect to the non-Christian religions is still tentative and cautious, Roman and Protestant writers after Vatican II[8] know no such caution.

The Roman catholic church has a long history of accommodation to non-Christian religions. The controversies surrounding the missionaries of an earlier age were connected with this very question. A classical case was that of Robert de Nobili (1577-1656), a Jesuit missionary who went to India in 1604. In his attempt to conform to indigenous custom he went so far as to avoid any relationship with the Pariah outcasts. He did this for strategic reasons in order to find acceptance with the Brahmin caste. For this purpose "he assumed the saffron robe of the monk, observed Brahmin rites and fasts, and tried to be as much Brahmin as possible." The Jesuits in China adopted a similar method in order to win acceptance into Chinese society. This "scientific apostolate," a phrase coined by Jesuit missionaries, created much disquiet within the home Church and gave rise to a protracted controversy. Critics objected to the strategy on the grounds that it transformed the Christian faith into an oriental rite. Pope Benedict XIV by the bull *Amnium Sollicitudinem* of 1744 brought an end to the controversy by pronouncing against accommodation.[9] But the Pope's pronouncement had little effect upon a Church steeped in mysticism and addicted to absorbing pagan rites. The concepts of general revelation, natural law and universal religion, militate against the absolute uniqueness of biblical revelation.

The language of Vatican II is ambivalent: guarding against syncretism it advocates accommodation "to the genius and dispositions of each culture," leaving out reference to religion. But culture and religion are so inextricably intertwined in the structure of non Christian religions that accommodation to one inevitably means accommodation to the other. It is futile to warn against syncretism and particularism at the same time though it is "false particularism" that is meant.[10] What is false and what is true particularism is left for the individual to decide. Whatever the definition in theory, in practice the legitimation of culture means legitimizing the religion which nourish them. That this is what happened can be seen from the subsequent literature inspired by Vatican II. The Document advocates the assimilation of the ascetic and contemplative traditions of the non-Christian religions because these are seeds already planted by God in these ancient cultures prior to the preaching of the Gospel.[11]

Non-Roman theologians, chiefly Anglicans, were quick to seize the opportunity of extending with traditional Western chivalry a full measure of equality to the Oriental religions. But they did it in a left-handed way by declaring them already Christians without their knowing it. American liberals soon followed. suit. Thus the ecumenical movement which began as inter-Church dialogue shifted to embrace the world religions. Evidence for the shift is amply supplied by the more recent literary output of the WCC in Geneva. This literature under the guise of religious dialogue has abandoned the missionary strategy of the past for the propagation of closer understanding and cooperation among the various religions. The scholarly articles in the ecumenical journals are orientated in the same direction. Their main concern is religion in general rather than the Christian faith.

The purpose of this treatise is to investigate the relationship between the religious phenomenon in respect to the Gospel message and rising from it the implication of the rise of syncretistic thinking for the Christian Church.

Notes to Introduction

[1] For the meaning and use of the term see Eric F. F. Bishop, “Syncretism & the Monotheistic Faith," Anglican Theological Review, June 1960; also Rosemary R. Ruether, Gregory of Nazianzus, 1969, 106, 113, 121, 123.

[2] A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948, ed. by Ruth Rouse & S. C. Neill, 1954, 77.

[3] ibid. 796 (Glossary)

[4] Cf. RGG. art: “Synkretistischer Streit”; for details see Johannes van Walter, Geschichte des Christentums, 4/2, 1938, 463.

[5] See Julien Goudy, Huguenot Wars, 1969.

[6] C. G. Montefiore, Truth in Religion & Other Sermons, 1906, 3l, 273-4.

[7] Cf. “Baha’i World Faith," by J. J. Keene, Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion, Fall, 1967; D. Hofman, Renewal of Civilization Baha’i Faith, 1946; Ninian Smart, The Religious Experience of Mankind, 1969.

[8] An indication of Vatican II language on non-Christian religions is provided by G. C. Berkouwer who pronounced the changed attitude toward outsiders as betraying no “weakness for relativism or syncretism” (The second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism), E.T. 1965, 186.

[9] On Roberto de Nobili, see V. Cronin, A Pearl of India, 1959. On the two outstanding Jesuit missionaries in China who were in the centre of the “Chinese rite” controversy, Matteo Ricci and Alessandro Valignano, see New Cath. Encyc1., s.v. see also the article by Charles Bolton, “Beyond the Ecumenical: Pan-Deism?” Christianity Today, Oct 23, 1964, 20ff.

[10] The Documents of Vatican II, 1966, 612f; see also Joseph J. Spae, “Christ & the Religions," S. E. Asia Journal of Theol., Jan 1967. “The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions” (Declaration of the Church, 2). These values are regarded as “preparation for the acceptance of the message of the Gospel.”

[11] The Documents of Vatican II, 607. Von Balthasar has an interesting passage on the question of syncretism: because in Christ God speaks human language the religions are the necessary background for the Gospel, the Word of God must be accommodated to the culture but at the same time there must be no compromise; “Aber in Der Anpassung gift es keinen Kompromiss," Hans Urs von Balthasar, Verbum Dei, 1960, 94-97.

Chapter I - The Religious Phenomenon

The approach to the fact of religion is fraught with difficulties.[1] It is a subject which does not allow detached objective investigation. Either we are for it or against it depending upon our predilections. For the Christian writer the difficulty is even more complex. Either he falls into the trap of undifferentiated acceptance of all religious phenomena as divine manifestations, or else he denies the validity of all religious experience except his own.

It is usual to distinguish religion from the religions. Traditionally, religion is vested with a special aura as an implanted faculty by divine fiat, while the religions are regarded as aberrations of the original *sensus divinitatis*. This poses a special problem for the Christian theologian: has God revealed Himself only to a small minority and left the rest of humanity in utter darkness? If we refuse to accept such a conclusion then another problem raises its head: how does the unique claim of Jesus Christ fit into the general phenomenon of universal religion?

There is here a conflict between God's providence as the God of all nations and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. This conflict can be resolved in a number of ways and it is the purpose of this writer to attempt a consistent Christian answer to the dilemma. For this purpose we have to pose the question first and foremost: what is religion?

Anthropologists, proceeding on the principle of progressive evolution, regard the so-called higher religions as the result of a long process of development. Beginning with animism and totemism they proceed to trace the slow but steady process of refinement until they arrive at a monotheistic faith. This raises the initial principle behind the religious process. To this there are a number of answers depending upon the philosophical presuppositions of scholars. The most common and the most ancient view is that religion is the result of fear.[2] But fear by itself is too negative an emotion to account for the religious experience, no matter how primitive. Some therefore hold that to understand the religious impulse we must allow for more positive emotions than naked fear. Waterhouse suggests the element of awe as an additional ingredient.[3] That man reacts with awe and wonder to the powers of nature in his religious response was already stressed by Lucretius.[4] The importance Rudolf Otto attaches to the numinous experience is therefore no new discovery. The *mysterium tremendum* which underlies the religious phenomenon is, according to Otto, of a composite nature consisting of fear, awe and fascination. Such a response to the mystery of existence Otto regards as the root of man's experience of the Holy. It springs from a discovery of one's own creaturely helplessness.[5] Freudian psychology has further complicated the religious impulse by introducing the fear of sex as a dominating element. Caillois rejects the Freudian position regarding the religious taboo and prefers a combination of positive and negative reactions constituting the religious experience. According to him "the abiding truth of the sacred resides simultaneously in the fascination of the flame and the horror of putrefaction."[6] By this he means that religion is rooted in a complex of emotions which cover the widest range of man's experience. The whole aspect of life from birth to death involves man in experiences which result in religion. Such experiences create a sense of the sacred which "stimulates respect, fear and trust."[7]

William James is one of a group of psychologists who assign to religion a more positive meaning.[8] But they are all agreed as to the primitive nature of the religious experience and the evolutionary process which lies behind it. There is for them an ascending line of development from the most primitive

instincts of the savage to the most refined perceptions of civilized man. At the most pristine stage of religion, magic, superstition and animistic dread are the predominant factors. But they are reluctant to allow that the same elemental instincts are at rock-bottom the forces behind the religious experience of civilized man. On this issue, to our mind, hinges the validity of the religious experience under discussion.

1. The Structure of Religion

Psychologists trace the practice of magic to the subconscious with its innate tendency towards the performance of compulsive acts. This is especially the case under neurotic conditions which affect mind and body and expresses itself in tactile and imitative attitudes. Such compulsive acts convey the impression to the observer that the person thus affected is under an alien power which he cannot resist.[9]This interpretation of magic links its practice to a neurotic state whereas from anthropological data and personal experience we know that it is frequently indulged in by quite "normal" people. It would seem therefore that behind the practice of magic there is more complex a pattern than suggested above. To explain the meaning of magic we would have to add the sense of human helplessness "to turn aside the normal operation of the forces of the external world." With the help of spells and ritual primitive man attempted to "bend" the forces of nature to his will.[10]

Sir James Frazer collected a large assortment of material to show both the extent of magical practice on the part of primitive society and its pervading influence upon religion. Frazer in search of a clue to explain this phenomenon suggested the following reasons: first, primitive man from observation and experience arrived at the conclusion that "like produces like," or to put it differently, "that an effect resembles its cause"; second, he extended the process in space so "that things continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed." Frazer reduced these presuppositions to two formulae: the Law of Similarity and the Law of Contact or Contagion. The process whereby primitive man reached these conclusions was not by an effort of conscious and analytical reasoning or careful experimentation but rather by intuitive response and mistaken inference. Frazer therefore concludes: "magic is always an art, never a science."[11]

The art of magic, it would seem, is employed to counteract man's helplessness. What cannot be achieved by ordinary means he tries to bring about by homeopathic manipulation guided by a deceptive association of ideas. Behind the practice are the "theoretical" assumptions which rest upon a "false science" resulting from ignorance about the real causes of natural phenomena.[12] Frazer even suggests a certain analogy between magic and science in that both operate on the principle of cause and effect. The magician has to conform to the strict rules of his art to achieve the desired effect. The slightest deviation voids the whole effort.[13]

The question of the relation between religion and magic is not a simple one. Frazer quotes a number of scholars in support of his contention that religion and magic cannot be equated.[14] For this he gives the following reason: magic, like science, presupposes impersonal, mechanistic powers in control of the universe; religion, on the other hand, depends upon conscious superhuman beings. But Frazer is only too aware of the fact that religion and magic frequently work hand in glove, exist side by side, and cooperate in interdependence.

It would therefore seem that the division between personal and impersonal aspects of the universe cannot be strictly maintained. Frazer is unable to solve the problem, except to suggest that the alliance

between religion and magic is a later development.[15] He himself admits that man "performed the religious and magical rites simultaneously; he uttered prayers and incantations almost in the same breath." This seems to be a more accurate assessment.

It is important to note that magic is by no means peculiar to primitive man. It frequently breaks out in superstitious practices in highly sophisticated society and even among scientific men; the scientist himself is not entirely immune. Once we make this admission, magic becomes something more than a primitive form of science and appears to be a psychological bent which has something to do with the instinctual life of man. Creaturely helplessness and our defenceless exposure to the forces of nature call forth attitudes which go beyond reasoned reflection. The powerful instinct of self-preservation will resort to remedies for which the intellect can provide no support. For this, if for no other reason, it will prove impossible to keep religion and magic separated as if these belonged to two different spheres. It would rather seem that magic and religion are motivated by the same drives and are only two different aspects of man's reaction to the outside world.

More recent writers have no hesitation to treat religion and magic as of one piece. John B. Moss refuses to make a distinction between the inanimate objects of fetishism and the spirit which indwells these objects. Apparently primitive man knew nothing of the fine distinction Frazer attempts to make between a personal and an impersonal universe. Both in fetishism and shamanism, spirit-possession and spirit-power are prominent features, yet in both these two cult-forms magic plays a leading role. The same seems to apply to animism, yet magic is at the very core of this most primitive cult.[16]

Once we take all the facts into consideration it becomes next to impossible to keep religion and magic separate; or even to suggest that these phenomena are expressions of a naive and primitive world-view. Jung sees no problem in regarding religion and magic as correlatives.[17] Both still play an important part in human life and some writers are inclined to regard them as indications of inward conflict.[18] Such conflict is perhaps more characteristic for civilized man than the uneducated savage.

We are thus led to the conclusion that religion and magic are closely related manifestations and that both stem from the same sense of insecurity and fear.[19] Religious cults heavily depend upon magic for effectiveness though some religions are more openly committed to it than others. The Lotus Sutra contains a passage which offers a first-class selection of magical spells.[20] Once we accept the definition of superstition as a form of magic, which undoubtedly it is, we will have to admit that neither magic nor religion is very far removed from man, no matter in which culture he lives. In spite of the dominance of science in our age and the stress upon reason, religion in the form of magic is still an attractive alternative to many.[21]

Gilbert Murray suggests that originally θεός or θεσός referred to the medicine man who was, as it were, the hypostatic manifestation of the cosmic powers. He personified and controlled the powers of nature by means of the indwelling *mana*. That the medicine man was assigned this position, Murray suggests, was entirely due to the deepest need within the primitive community. He thus concludes that pristine religion can be defined as the "collective desire personified."[22] As evidence he quotes the part animals played in primitive cults: sows were regarded as sacred because of their fertility; bulls because of their strength. To eat the sow in a sacred meal, to drink the blood of the bull in a cultic ritual was tantamount to acquiring the properties associated with these animals. Murray even goes so far as to suggest that prior to the worship of an anthropomorphic god, man was worshipping the sacred animal.[23]

There is always the danger of over-simplification and much of anthropological theory is based on nothing more than surmise and guesswork. But we must not treat lightly the accumulation of data as a

result of painstaking research. Of no less importance is the psychological investigation in the field of religion though here, as elsewhere, personal predilections make objective assessment difficult. It is in the field of psychology that the division between primitive and civilized man breaks down. Lucretius, like so many after him, made the mistake in thinking that man can be freed from superstition and fear once he has understood "the inner workings of nature." Reason is only a surface solution, deep down in the very recesses of his being man feels threatened by the elemental forces and seeks to placate them. Religion, whatever form it may take, is his response to the challenge of the inevitable in his effort at self-assertion. The religious response need not take the conventional form; it may express itself in a great variety of ways. But whatever form it takes it always has one characteristic: it helps the individual to come to terms with existence and thus with himself. Religion therefore is primarily man's response to the mystery of the universe of which he is a part.

Religion is an experience all men undergo. Waterhouse says: "If a race destitute of religion were discovered it would be almost as great a marvel as if the unicorn of mythology were found in the flesh."[24] But religious expression varies from age to age and civilization to civilization. It is an acknowledged fact that the more primitive the society, the more materialistically concrete is the imagery. On the other side, the higher the civilization the more abstract are the forms of religious expression. Primitive man personifies hypostatically the forces of nature, even to the point of his own activities. Thus chance, fate, joy, sorrow and many of his other experiences are expressed as personalized and separate beings. This primitive "materialism" is in essence a disguised form of spiritualization. Waterhouse wisely observes that no savage lives by bread alone, on the contrary, to him "the spirit world is intensely real and omnipotent."[25] Only that for primitive man "spirit" is in fact *mana* or potency, i.e. the inherent force which pervades all existence. It is this *mana* which manifests itself in all its physical objects. This primitive "supernaturalism"[26] must not be understood as a personal and conscious intelligence but rather as the mysterious life-force which sustains all that exists. Primitive man does not attempt to understand *mana* but to control it.

Civilized man has the advantage of operating with abstract ideas. All the sciences and arts are the result of conceptualization. To conceptualize means to generalize, i.e. to move from the particular to the universal.[27] In the process of abstract thinking, language plays a decisive part. The ability to express concepts and ideas depends upon the refinement and versatility of language. Civilized man builds up his world with verbal expressions. When this stage is reached religion and magic begin to separate formally,[28] though on the more intimate personal level a residue of both always remains. When civilization reaches a certain height cultic devotion becomes translated into cultural activities which in turn acquire quasi-religious significance. The cult itself becomes part of the cultural pattern and is reinterpreted so as to suit a given age.

Because every civilization inevitably moves towards secularization the religious instinct becomes suppressed and puts man in search of new and less conventional ways of expression. Moralism, aestheticism, scientism become endowed with pseudo-religious significance and serve as substitutes for cultic worship. In this way the religious needs are being satisfied in a fashion more in keeping with the symbols of a given age. These disguised religious forms help to deceive secularized society by providing the illusion of absolute autonomy. But in fact no man manages to escape the uncertainties of life which means that no one is ever free from the religious experience. Tillich has seen this with greater clarity than any other contemporary writer: "everyone who participates in being and is threatened by non-being inevitably reacts in a religious manner."[29] But Tillich is not prepared to accept a purely negative

experience as sufficient ground to account for the religious phenomenon; he therefore attempts a more positive formulation: “religion is the state of being grasped by the power of being itself.” The definition is obviously important to Tillich for he frequently repeats it.[30]

It is not clear what Tillich means by “being itself”. Sometimes the phrase is used as a circumlocution for God. But Tillich’s God is not always identifiable with the God of revelation. The streak of pantheism in Tillichian theology makes it difficult to decide how impersonal Being and a personal God can possibly coincide.[31] For Tillich religion is grounded in ontology, which means that it is inextricably tied to universal existence. Man experiences religion as a means of transcendence from the particular being to universal being. Religion belongs to a complex of experiences of which morality and culture are inseparable elements.[32] In Tillich’s own words: “religion stands for the self transcendence of life under the dimension of the spirit.” Does this mean self-salvation? Tillich deprecates the idea and recommends instead self-transcendence. He warns against *falsa religio* which is characterized by autonomy whereas true religion is theonomous.[33] But it is a strange theonomy he advocates, for Tillich refuses to allow the radical difference the Bible presupposes between Creator and creature. The result is a theory of salvation centred upon man: religion means transcending one’s own being, moving towards union, falling into ecstasy and “breaking through the fixed form of our own being.”[34] This Promethean attempt at self-transcendence he describes as “cultural self-creation” and thus reveals with remarkable accuracy the true meaning of religion: man's effort to storm heaven.

It is obvious that religion is a very complex phenomenon and can express itself in a great variety of forms. It appears that the word religion can cover a multitude of sins: pride and arrogance, self-deification and self-transcendence.[35] It may also be an expression of humility, submission and faith. It frequently is a mixture of all these and much more. Nietzsche with all his defiance of God has been described as “a highly religious and reverent personality but one whose intellectual rigour and passionate honesty cannot let him worship in any of the traditional ways . . .”[36] Julian Huxley, a leading exponent of “scientific humanism,”[37] is the advocate of a religious naturalism based upon the experience of mystical union with the universe. For Huxley there appears to be no conflict between his positivist creed and his religious bent, for religion is nothing else than the “reaction of the personality as a whole to its experience of the Universe as a whole.”[38] He refers to an earlier essay in which he explained religion as the result of an effort to organize “our experiences of the universe in relation with the driving forces of our soul or mental being, so that the two are united and harmonized.”[39] Huxley admits to a sense of satisfaction from the fact that Dean Inge hailed his definition as the best he had ever seen. It must be admitted that both as an existential and as a psychological description of religion Huxley’s definition can hardly be bettered.

Like Rudolf Otto, Huxley associates religion with the sense of the sacred. The ability to experience the sacred he regards as a “fundamental capacity of man.”[40] This fact however has nothing to do with a supernatural god. It is a purely psychological reaction and stems from man’s need to relate himself positively to the universe around him.[41] The source and inspiration of religion resides in the wonder of life.[42] Because religion serves a useful end it ought to be encouraged and cultivated as long as it is enlightened and rational and not hitched to theology.[43]

There is much in Huxley’s reasoning which would be difficult to contradict. Especially his contention that religion expresses itself in a wide range of human experience and cannot be tied to the conventional forms of cultic worship. The underlying cosmic emotion and the human need of coming to terms with the universe is a natural experience and requires no further theological explanation.

Profoundly religious men like Nietzsche and Shelley were atheists with a strongly developed sense of nature worship. Theologians have tried to come to terms with the fact and have attempted to make use of it for their own ends. Thus Edward Caird, long before Huxley, writing in a theological context, said: "a man's religion is the expression of his ultimate attitude to the universe, the summed up meaning and purport of his whole consciousness of things." Again, forestalling Tillich, Caird defined religion as the expression of' man's inner life: "the highest form of his consciousness of himself in his relation to all other things and beings."[44] God, for Caird, is to be found nowhere else except with man.[45] But what difference is there between the God within and man's consciousness of himself?

On Caird's premise there can only be one answer and it was already supplied by Ludwig Feuerbach: all theology is anthropology.[46] It is difficult to escape any other conclusion.

Religion founded on the atheistic premise must be acknowledged as a viable option. This attitude to religion has become the practice among many atheists. A case in point is the New York group of atheistic Jews led by Emil Weitzner. This group assembles for "worship" on the Sabbath day and uses an expurgated version of the Psalter in which God's name is never mentioned. Weitzner explains: "there are many who cannot pray to a personified deity because they do not 'believe' in one. They are religious in their sense of mystery and wonder and of man's limitations, insignificance and oneness."

The liturgy which makes sense to them is centred upon the impersonal universe and not a personal God.[47] At the same time it would be difficult to deny that their experience is genuinely religious, though entirely devoid of the supernatural. Something similar is happening in many churches and synagogues though never as clearly articulated. The new theology of the Death of God is a feeble effort to catch up with the new religion of our modern age. Huxley has the advantage over the new theologians by reason of his uninhibited and positivist approach. His language is simple and close to nature: he assures us that "the fading out of God" is by no means the end of religion. Religion will prosper the better in a world in which God has become redundant.[48]

The present writer, quite independently and long before he had occasion to familiarize himself with Huxley's position, arrived at conclusions similar to his own. In a lecture delivered to the Victoria Institute in London on "Religion and the Gospel" he stressed the fact that true religious experience is the result of an effort on the part of the individual to assert himself in confrontation with the crushing weight of the universe. It appeared to this writer that "the ultimate aim of religion is personal triumph over the world outside."[49] Huxley spells this out in greater detail by pointing to the irrational forces with which man has to come to terms in order to live: "some cosmic, some social, some personal."[50] We would point out however that these needs are in the last resort human needs and that it is by means of the religious experience that man strives to maintain his equilibrium in relation to the world outside. This need for harmony is deeply rooted in the psychological make-up and is prompted by the instinct of self-preservation. Religion however does more than re-assure, it effects a sense of superiority and transcendence; it helps man to surmount the obstacles in daily life and declare himself superior to the irrational and blind forces which otherwise would overwhelm him. In this sense religion is not only the quest for harmony but also triumph. It is for this reason that Feuerbach's shrewd observations are so appealing; in religion man bares his inner self: his needs, his hopes, his yearnings.[51] "God" is only the symbol for man's highest ideal, the ideal is of his own making and God is its verbal expression: "God is the nature of man regarded as absolute truth."[52]

Barth has shown that Feuerbach's "man" is idealistically conceived in keeping with the fashion of the 19th century. Feuerbach is strangely blind to the more sinister side of human nature where evil and

corruption hold their sway.[53] But in view of the psychological factors regarding religion Barth's correction in no way affects Feuerbach's main contention that religion is the mirror of the human soul. Feuerbach only exaggerates when he declares that in religion man unveils his "hidden treasure," whereas in fact he unveils much besides. Feuerbach's great achievement was to have uncovered the closely guarded secret, namely that in religion man worships himself. This is his thesis: "the beginning, middle and end of religion is man."[54] Jung is here in complete harmony with Feuerbach's conclusion only that his language is more elaborate and technical. Jung identifies religion with the unconscious; this he describes as "the basic religious phenomenon." By extending the unconscious to the collective soul of humanity and by endowing it with a metaphysical significance he manages to mystify the reader.[55] But the result is the same: God is not outside but identical with man. He regards it an unfortunate prejudice to speak of God as apart from man; the mystics are right, God and man are the same.[56]

We are now able to summarize the results of our investigation. Religion appears to be the responsive mood into which man falls when confronted with the universe. Such confrontation with the mystery of existence has a disturbing effect which demands an inward adjustment. The weight of the outside world with all its threats and dangers demands a response which we signify as religious when the result is positive. A negative result issues in defeat and must be described as irreligious. It is only when the individual and the group assert themselves by coming to terms with existence that a religious response is achieved. It means that religion indicates an inward psychological process whereby balance is restored and threats are overcome. This primal affirmation of self is at the root of all religion. Religion is always under the sign of a plus: it expresses the triumph of the ego in the face of opposing forces. This is even so when accompanied by acts of humility and surrender. Unless the numinous, the sacred, the mysterious loses its "crazy and bewildering note"[57] and is transformed from a hostile into a friendly power, religion has not achieved its end. This is one, if not the most important, reason why propitiatory acts are of such importance in cultic worship.

There is an important social aspect to religion which must not be left out. Personal religion is incomplete unless related to the religion of the group. Group religion is a great humanizing and civilizing force. No historian can overlook the connection between religion and civilization. This applies as much to primitive societies as it does to those of a more advanced stage. As a social phenomenon religion is a binding force which serves to preserve the coherence of the group Emile Lurkheim has shown how the family, the clan, the tribe, found a binding unity in the totemic ceremonies of initiation. Such an experience knits the members of the clan to each other and provides the sense of collective destiny by finding themselves under the protection of the same totem.[58] In primitive society such a totem would serve as the rallying point of scattered individuals to a common centre. The custom of exogamic union which prevailed in such societies would further advance the cause of unity in that children were born of different clans to that of the father. This was especially the case when polygamy was the practice. Thus representatives of various clans had to form a single family. In order to unify such a family a binding symbol would be required to annul the differences. In Lurkheim's view clans were founded by the "reunion of individuals who bear the same name and rally around the same sign."[59] In such a situation the importance of religion can hardly be exaggerated: it becomes the foundation for evolving society with the clan as its essential nucleus.[60] Whatever the criticism of Durkheim's general theory,[61] there can be little doubt as to the function of religion for the cementing and unification of the group.

Religion does more than create a sense of unity. It also lends sanction to social customs and institutions and thus serves as a moral force by inducing the individual to conform to the group. Without such conformity the group could not endure. It is therefore in the interests of society to endow customs with religious import in order to curb the violence of the individual and help him to adjust to the rest of the community.[62] The aims and values of a society are best observed in a religious context. In this sense religion may be described as "the consciousness of the highest social values."[63] Both Huxley and Szczesny readily admit the importance of religion for social stability.[64]

Before we go deeper into the subject let us cast one more glance at the results of psychological investigation. Here religion is increasingly recognized as a valuable asset. Psychologists are discovering the therapeutic quality of true religious experience. Against Freud who deprecated religion and described it as neurosis,[65] Jung recommended it for its medicinal effects. He acknowledged it to be an important factor in psychic health.[66] "Worship," according to Paul E. Johnson, "is a therapeutic experience" by reason of its purifying an elevating effect upon the individual.[67] Even Feuerbach was quick to recognize the importance of religion for moral life. Religion, he tells us, though the result of self-delusion, is not of a wicked or insidious design; on the contrary; its aim is to establish morality and right. Like Huxley after him, Feuerbach's quarrel was with theology which perverts the purpose of religion, namely the free exaltation of man.[68] It would appear that religion is a good thing if properly understood and carefully applied. This is exactly what Jung was aiming at: a substitute for the immediacy of experience that would provide a coordinating and unifying force in the chaotic and bewildering life of the individual and of society.[69]

Religion thus serves many purposes. It is part and parcel of the psychic make-up in man's equipment to cope with the challenges, frustrations and mysteries of life. The inevitable question which must be raised is this: what is its ultimate validity? Is it only an illusion as Feuerbach and Freud suggest, or has it a revelatory significance transcending the human realm? There are protagonists for both these views. We will have to suspend judgement until we have looked into the more conventional forms of religion in their historic setting. But this much we can already say: when measured against the biblical norms of historicity, uniqueness and finality, religion, whether as psychological reaction or cultic institution, does not easily pair with the Christian faith. We seem to be moving in two different worlds and are speaking two different languages: the language of religion and the language of historic faith. It may be that our assumptions are wrong and that the norms we ascribe to the Christian faith are no norms at all. But such a conclusion runs so violently against Christian tradition that we cannot accept it as valid. On the other hand, there is this solid fact that religion seen as psychological reaction to the challenges of life stands in opposition to the norms we will seek to establish: it is ahistorical, of universal application, and open-ended. Only at one point does it fit the Christian believer, namely at the point of his humanity. As man, his reactions to the challenges of life are exactly the same: he too is *homo religiosus*.[70] His psychic make-up is no different from that of others; the universe presses upon him as much as upon the non-Christian. His need for self-assertion is as great as that of everyone else. For him too religion is a lively option and he is as much engrossed in it as his contemporaries. In fact the problem of religion is more acute for Christian than for the non-believer for he faces the challenge in a more radical way by reason of his difficulty to compromise.

2. The Impulse Behind Religion

Anthropologists speak of two kinds of religion: primitive and advanced. The distinction derives from the evolutionary principle with the assumption that progress is the inevitable rule of history. It is believed therefore that in the course of time primitive faiths acquire cultural and moral traits which make for refinement and a higher intellectual *niveau*. While at the primitive level religious ideas remain undifferentiated even among widely scattered tribes, at an advanced level considerable differences appear.[71] It is held that the characteristic mark of the higher religions is their institutionalization. Each separate cult evolves its own theogony, priesthood, sacrifices, temples and ceremonies. Sociologists explain this tendency towards organization as an effort to control society, to resist change, and to sacralize authority.[72] Thus organized religion serves as an important factor in the stabilization of the group. But from the observer's point of view, can the organized religions be rightly regarded as of higher quality? This is a question worth raising since it is usually taken for granted that the historic religions present a "higher" form of development. May it not be that we are making an epistemological error by identifying organizational development with spiritual progress? Our contention is that another point of view is equally valid, namely that all religions, no matter how refined are in essence motivated by the same primitive instincts we already encounter in most primitive societies.

The difference between primitive and the more civilized man seems to consist in his greater control of impulses and appetites. Yet the primitive drives of the subconscious, if we are to believe the psychologists, are never truly overcome but are only pushed into the background. The savagery of the Id and the dark compulsions of the soul are more successfully camouflaged by civilized man but not eliminated. Man is always both a reasonable and an unreasonable creature: he is rational and irrational at the same time.[73] Irrationality is not insanity, but rather the deep-rooted instinctual drive which largely dominates the subconscious. It is Jung's special merit to have brought this fact to the surface and has thus provided a wider background for human behaviour than is the case with the Freudian libido.[74] The discovery helps us to understand the strange intermixture of reason and unreason both in the individual and in society. Religion, which touches man at a very deep level, lives by reason and unreason simultaneously. Because according to our definition religion is man's inward response to the outside world, the rational and the irrational constantly overlap in all his responses. This applies to man at all levels of civilization. His view of the universe may have changed from primitive astrology to modern astronomy but his irrational drives persist. Fear of the unknown, the threat of the void, puzzlement in respect to his destiny, the sense of helplessness before the immensity of the universe, still evoke reactions not unlike those of his more savage ancestors. Superstition and religion are still closely related attitudes. The historic religions have institutionalized these most primitive emotions both by regulating their effects and by keeping them alive. The religions therefore and religion are so related as is form to substance: the religions are the vehicles of religion in a formalized and organized manner. The point we are trying to make is that religion is always the same, only the forms change. If this is the case it is difficult to speak of higher and lower religions.

For an example to prove our contention we would turn to Buddhism, universally acclaimed as one of the most lofty and highly developed philosophical religions. It would be natural to expect from such a system a highly rational perspective devoid of all superstition. But without the irrational, religion falls flat for it fails to answer man's deepest need, namely reassurance in the face of cosmic threat. Buddhism therefore as a mass religion lives by the irrational adherence to astrology. Divination based upon

astrological lore dominates the life of all Buddhist nations. Ceylon, one of the strongholds of Buddhism, has been described as the "Isle of Astrologers." From the President of the State to the humblest street-sweeper, everyone depends upon astrological prediction. No important step is ever taken without making sure that the stars are propitious. Life and happiness is made to depend upon the signs of the zodiac.[75] Thus primitive fears are kept alive in order to be allayed by the experts.

Lest Christians should feel superior, let it be said at once that astrology has fascinated the minds of outstanding churchmen from age to age. What was known as the *scientia divina* held in its grip men in every walk of life. The popes Julius II, Paul III, Leo X, were deeply committed to astrological prediction. Frederick II kept his own court astrologer in the person of Michael Scotus. Especially in the 16th c. astrology became a very popular science and was widely practised in Europe both by Catholics and Protestants. Luther frequently complained about Philip Melanchthon's addiction to this pseudo-science.[76] The great men at the dawn of the scientific age were all affected by it: Tycho, Brahe, Galileo, Johannes Kepler, Francis Bacon. Even a man of the intellect of Goethe was not entirely free of this superstition.[77]

Our own Western culture, secularized and scientifically orientated, has not been able to free men's mind from irrational fears. Astrology has come to life again and is affecting ever larger circles of the population as are other occult practices.[78] Primitive attitudes survive even in a highly sophisticated society like our own. In fact, the more rationalized and mechanized life becomes the greater seems to be the need for the irrational. The revival of sorcery and witchcraft in our scientific age ought to serve as a warning against too facile an interpretation of man's psychic life. It is in this area that Jung's insights become remarkably relevant.

From all this it would appear that a rigid division between higher and lower religion is ill-conceived. There is enough of the savage in civilized man to keep him close to his more primitive cousin. It may well be asked whether the voodoo cult so graphically described by Francis Huxley does not in fact uncover the drives, fears and inhibitions common to all men of all ages and all cultures, including our own?[79] Jung has suggested that the symptoms of neurosis in modern man are due to a willful suppression of deep-seated instincts which in many ways relate to the area of religion. He deplores the "urban neurosis" of atheism which inhibits our inner life and drains the resources of our souls.[80] We quote the opinion of an expert like Jung as additional evidence for man's fundamental need to express himself religiously, no matter what form it may take.

But the historic religions are not just moods expressing the inarticulate needs of the human psyche; they are also world-views, ideologies, philosophies of life, coherently constructed and dogmatically defined. Such dogmata are the result of conglomerations of philosophical insights, mystical experiences, superstitious practices and magical rites which have accumulated during the centuries. The religions represent a mixture of ethnic custom, moral injunctions and religious taboos in institutionalized form. In view of such complex structures it is next to impossible to decide on the demarcation line between the primitive and the more civilized. In our addiction to rationalize religion we are in danger of forgetting that religion lives by the irrational.

Mircea Eliade rightly protests against rationalizing efforts. He says: "It would be useless, because ineffectual, to appeal to some reductionist principle and to demystify the behaviour and ideologies of *homo religiosus* by showing, for example, that it is a matter of the projections of the unconscious, or of screens raised for social, economic, political, or other reasons."[81] Religion is a much more complex phenomenon. The irrational aspect of the great religions must therefore never be lost sight of.

Again, a good example of the importance of the irrational in religion is illustrated by the form of Buddhism as it evolved in Tibet. Heinrich Harrer who spent seven years in that remote and mysterious land provides a first-hand description of the customs and rites of Lamaism. He is not a critical observer and is rather fascinated with the Dalai Lama cult; in his report therefore there is no trace of antagonism. Even in what appears to us as downright superstition he tries to present with a sense of appreciation. But even to him the net result is a curious system of cultic magic in which Shamanism and Buddhism have been strangely wedded.[82] There is probably no other cult to equal the odd concoction of rites in which fears, superstitions and plain magic so predominate. All those who had opportunity to study Lamaism were bewildered by the depth of superstition which prevailed both in the monasteries and in the councils of state.[83] J. E. Ellam describes Tibet as "a land of demons and of sorcery, of oracles and wizards, of necromancy and of soothsaying."[84] Tibet is a land in which the whole population lives in dire fear of evil spirits and the priests practice black magic "of the deepest dye." Soothsaying is not a pastime but a way of life: "no man would ever think of concluding any weighty business, or marriage, without first obtaining advice from that source."[85]

To have managed to pair Buddhism and Shamanism is an exceptional achievement which could only have come about because of the persistent need to give expression to the irrational impulses in man.[86] Though there is a more enlightened form of Lamaism among the educated, the ignorant populous is caught in a system in which the prayer-wheel is the outstanding symbol of religious devotion.[87] Migot attributes the domination of Tantrism with all its magic rites in the religion of Tibet to the nature of the country and the mental state of the population. According to him "Tibet is like no other country in the world." For this reason, he holds, Buddhism could not develop here along the same lines as in the benign and warm climate of Ceylon. But by doing so he overlooks the superstitious practices of Buddhism dominating the life of Ceylon and particularly its utter subservience to astrology.

It would therefore seem that his explanation does not quite fit the deeper aspects of the case. Heinrich Harrer provides us with a vivid description of the search and discovery of a future Dalai Lama in the person of an infant boy.[88] A similar custom is practiced in Nepal: only that here the "divinity" is incarnate in a female child. With Nepal we have left the austere climate and the mountainous regions of Tibet and find ourselves in more friendly territory. But the tantric character of Nepal's Hinduism is hardly different from that of Lamaism except for the name. It is in addition more grossly sensual with its five 'M's.[89] The eight-year old goddess of Kumari Devi with her blackened eyelashes, in a red cardigan and a yellow cotton dress receiving pennies from devotees is a sorry sight, of religion gone awry.[90] But such is the irrational force of the religious instinct that it can only be satisfied by the unusual and the grotesque. A cow becomes especially holy when it is a freak of nature and is born with three legs.

It would be utterly unjust to occupy ourselves with the crudities of exotic religions without casting an eye nearer home. The need of irrational expression is as prominent in Christianity as in any other faith.

The Bible is not a rational book in the strict sense of the word, though there is plenty of good reason in it. The most rational parts of the Old Testament are the moral laws in the Pentateuch, the stories about the Patriarchs and the teaching of the Prophets. When we come to the cultic sections of the *torah* we encounter the usual taboos we meet elsewhere in religious practice and custom.

In the case of the New Testament the situation is more complex. As far as the cult is concerned it is passed over in silence. There is hardly any cultic interest in the Gospel and what there is, is negative. Demon-possession occurs mainly in connection with the healing miracles of Jesus. Here the situation is

ambiguous: we can either say that our Lord accepted the current vocabulary of his time, or else, as a child of his environment he believed in the power of evil spirits. In either case we touch upon a numinous element which we must not try to explain away. It would appear from these and other incidents that Jesus's presence evoked religious reaction. This is perhaps best illustrated in the miraculous draught of fishes peculiar to Luke (5:1ff) and in the story of the Transfiguration told by all the Synoptics (Mark 9:2ff and paral.). There is here a definite religious element which expresses itself in fear, awe and reverence. Luke describes the reaction on the part of the bystanders who saw the healing of the paralytic with the Greek word paradox - "we have seen strange things (*paradoxa*) today" (Luke 5:26). Paradox here means the unusual, the uncommon, what is contrary to nature. These mighty acts evoked amazement in the bystanders (cf. Mark 2:12; 5:42; etc.). In the presence of Jesus people were moved to do obeisance, to pay homage, to worship (cf. Mark 1:40; etc.). These two verbs ἐξίστημι and προσκυνέω (*existēmi* and *proskyneō* - to amaze, to do obeisance) are characteristic expressions in the Synoptic Gospels in relation to Jesus. Men and women reacted in a religious manner when they discovered the otherness of this Man. The religious element is thus built into the Gospel and pervades the rest of the New Testament. Man has no other way to express himself when confronted with what is beyond him, except religiously.

But religion takes strange and unusual byways. Christian religiosity can be as corrupt, superstitious and tantric as the worst kind of Lamaism. The highly erudite essay on "The Survival of Magic Arts" by A. A. Earb serves as an important document to illustrate our point. In Christendom opposition to the practice of magic was motivated not by reason of its sinister character and its association with idolatry. As far as the early Christian Emperors were concerned their harsh suppression of magicians and their practices was dictated by fear of the dark powers rather than by concern for the purity of the faith. Dr. Earb concludes from the proceedings of the Council of Laodicea (2nd half 4th c.) that a specifically Christian form of magic evolved, with the clergy both major and minor, as chief perpetrators. The Council thus takes pains to forbid the clerics to practice as magicians, charmers, soothsayers, astrologers, as also in the engagement in the manufacture of amulets. They are also warned against exaggerating the cult of angels which was apparently connected with the practice of magic.[91] But no conciliar decree could possibly eradicate a tendency so deeply imbedded in the human soul. Thus the magic arts persisted but in a superficially Christianized form. The Christian saints, or the angel Gabriel, or Jesus Christ, were substituted for the pagan gods to make it more acceptable.[92] Dr. Barb tells us: "All the Christian theologians believed in the existence of the magic arts; not to do so would mean disbelieving the stories of the Old and New Testaments, from the witch of Endor to that of Simon Magus."[93] Orthodox Christians dedicated to the suppression of heresy, like Firmicus Maternus, the author of De erroribus profanarum religionum, (c. 346) saw nothing wrong in producing a handbook on astrology.[94] Bishop Marbod of Rennes (12th c.) turned into Latin hexameter a "dull and stupid" magical text of an early age produced supposedly by an Alexandrian Jew.[95]

Magic entered the Church not only by way of the dedicated specialists of the art. It was part of the general culture of the time and was believed in as much by highly educated pagans as by pious Christians. In fact, it has been suggested that to this day "the majority of popular incantations are the product of highly educated people."[96] Earb quotes G. L. Kitteredge to the effect that spells against enemies were in use in the 16th and 17th centuries and resorted to by well-educated Englishmen.[97] John Dee (1527-1608) was the official astrologer, magician and alchemist attached to the court of Queen Elizabeth where he practiced divination and crystal gazing. He is credited with having averted an evil

spell which was meant to harm the Queen. Faith in witchcraft, fear of evil spirits, the practice of white and black magic, went hand in hand with the rest of medieval piety. The adoration of the saints, the veneration of relics, the miraculous power of images, the worship of the Virgin Mother, the skill of the priest to turn bread into the body of Christ, are all part and parcel of an attitude which makes full allowance for the irrational.[98]

This is how religion works and any attempt to purge it of the irrational must be counted a failure. We find it difficult to accent Dr. Barb's theory that religion and magic are unrelated and that only at a later stage when religion "becomes tainted by human frailty," does it deteriorate into magic.[99] At the end of his essay he confesses to having over-simplified the matter and that "magic is a rather more complicated business than it appears to be and contains a variety of ingredients."

We would suggest that "religion" is its chief ingredient; or to reverse the order, magic is the ingredient of religion. The connection is by way of the irrational. As already said, the irrational is not the insane, but the subconscious knowledge of "being thrown," to use a Heideggerian expression, into a world which is beyond reason.

It is, of course, possible to argue that the irrational element expressing itself in religion and magic points to a beyondness and not to the void; that it is an indication of man's need of God, and of God's response to this need. In this case all religions stand under the same sign and express the same fact: "whether it is in Lhasa or Rome," writes Heinrich Harrer, "all are united by one wish: to find God and to serve Him." Harrer relates how in a Tibetan temple he closed his eyes and listened to the murmured prayers of the solemn music and the sweet incense rising to the evening sky.[100] 'This was his personal religious response to an otherwise superstitious and tantric rite.

But we are faced here with the irreducible fact: it is man who murmurs the prayers and it is man who reacts to them: "the beginning and the middle and the end is man." There seems to be no escape from this egocentrism which we must take seriously if we want to understand the religions in their native setting. We will therefore have to ask in all earnestness: what is the meaning of all the rites, symbols, incantations and practices of organized religion?[101] In other words how does religion relate to the truth about God?

Lactantius very wisely suggested that the issue is not how one worships but whom one worships.[102] It has become fashionable to take the view that all religions serve the same purpose and worship the same God. This view, which has a long history behind it, acquired special prominence at the time of the Renaissance[103] and is now widely held. The distinction made by Lactantius between *vera religio* and *falsa religio* is thus annulled. If we accept John Macquarrie's view that "God" stands for the notion of reality or of being and that Tillich's "ultimate concern" is the most adequate description of what is meant by religion,[104] then it is difficult to differentiate between the religions. All the religions express "ultimate concern" and they are all dedicated to the exploration of value and being.[105] In this case superstition becomes an empty word. Lactantius's definition of religion as "the worship of Him who is true and superstition of that which is false"[106] falls to the ground. Prof. Wilfred Cantwell Smith denies that there can be true or false religions: truth is not a matter of religious tenets but of personal response.[107] For this reason he holds there can be no absolute claim on the part of any religion. They all speak "out of the depths of ultimacy" although they do so in different tongues and in varied ways. The variety however is not to be deplored or resisted, on the contrary, it makes for enrichment.[108]

Religious pluralism is only possible on the assumption that religion is in essence not a creed but an emotion where mystical experience is given free course.[109] But in history religions have always

expressed themselves in philosophies of life which have greatly varied in form and content. Non-belief claims as a religious attitude is largely a modern invention and has something to do with the scepticism and relativism of our age.[110] Traditionally, all religions have views which they propagate and hold to be essential. This applies even to Hinduism and Buddhism. Without such views religion is incommunicable. We must however differentiate between the form it assumes and the hidden motive. Every religious form is related to art,[111] but the impulse behind religion touches upon the very essence of man. Because man is at rock-bottom irrational, his religion cannot be reduced to rational dimensions without ceasing to be religion.

Cicero, long before Huxley, was striving to "tear out superstition by its roots" in the interests of "true religion which is closely associated with the knowledge of nature."[112] More recently Sir Alister Hardy was pleading for a religion which would fit in more "naturally into a culture based upon a scientific outlook."[113] But such a rationalized religion seems to us a contradiction in terms. A religion which excludes the irrational ceases to be religion. For it is at man's deepest level, where religion does not operate, that religion comes alive. In this regard Tillich is the better guide. He was clearly aware of the contradictory nature from which all religion suffers. Inherent in the religious experience is the two-fold ambiguity: on the one hand religion strives for self-transcendence and in doing so it profanes its own function as religion; on the other hand, by trying to overcome the conditional and reach the unconditional dimension, it reveals itself as demonic.[114] This is a profound insight on the part of Tillich which applies to Hebrew religion equally well: it is possible to reduce YHWH to the status of an idol.[115] The subtlety lies in the curious fact that not only atheistic religion but theistic religion can turn out to be a "studied evasion of God and his claims."[116]

If the above statements have any validity at all, the religious impulse, whether theistic or otherwise, whether it is God or the universe we worship, carries the suspicion of *hybris*, self elevation, or as Hobbes put it, *gloriatio*.

3. The Shaping of Religion

Religions are shaped by national characteristics. The interaction between religion and a given civilization produces a national posture peculiar to each nation. Even the same religion in different lands varies to a marked degree. Imported religions have to be adapted, sometimes drastically, to suit the temper of a given people. A classical example is the arrival of Buddhism in China, and later, via Korea, in Japan. In neither of these lands was Buddhism able to retain its original Indian character.[117] This is due to an interplay between national traits, history and cult which makes up the process of religious adaptation. Religious loyalties are frequently inspired by ethnic and cultural traditions. The "religious" wars are therefore always more than ideological conflicts; behind such wars is usually the struggle for supremacy. But the religious motif adds zest and determination to the conflict.

Flinders Petrie in his study of Religion & Conscience in Ancient Egypt regards intolerance as the most characteristic feature of most religions. The reason for this is to be sought in human character where intolerance is one of man's strongest instincts. This murderous drive will shun no sacrifice in its craving for satisfaction. Man finds it almost impossible to tolerate those who hold opposite or even different views. This display of intolerance, Petrie suggests is largely prompted by fear and not just malevolence.[118] In the clash of opinions the survival of the community as a unified body is always at

stake. This is especially the case in times of national danger when division within the group may spell disaster.[119]

The differences in the religions Petrie attributes to racial ideosyncracies. In the ancient world every petty capital clung to its own particular god in order to stress its separateness from others. This, apparently, is the opinion of most Egyptologists.[120] Such differences were important for self preservation and for internal unity. It is a matter of discussion whether the differences were artificially introduced or derive from "diversities of origin" as Petrie suggests.[121] Only by a gradual mixture of race and tradition was it possible to work out a synthesis. The acculturation of foreign gods by assimilation and adaptation brought warring groups into national unity. For this Prof. Petrie provides numerous instances.[122]

As a rule, the pagan divinities are more amenable to the assimilatory process than is the case with monotheistic faiths. The reason lies in the logic of polytheism: once a plurality of gods is allowed the differences between them become relative.[123] More often than not the process of acculturation was by means of reinterpretation. The new god was given a native name or allowed a place in the coterie of gods by way of enlarging the circle. In either case, it was taken for granted that other gods existed in their own right though they did not command the same reverence as native divinities.

Assimilation of gods was largely a matter of linguistic manipulation. The Greek Zeus became the Roman Jupiter; Artemis was identified with Liana, etc.[124] Petrie draws attention to the speed wherewith immigrants to ancient Egypt were able to adjust their religious ideas to those of the host country. The result was quick acculturation to foreign religion. Conquerors who brought with them their native cult, as a rule succumbed to the religious traditions of the indigenous population, mainly by inter-marriage. As the population mixed so the religions fused.

Another reason for the easy fusion of different religions in the ancient world has something to do with the mythological character of paganism. Mythology is a highly pliable vehicle and lends itself to easy elaboration. It is open to expansion and provides wide opportunities for the flight of fancy. Unhampered by dogmatic restrictions and the limiting effect of history mythology lends itself to translation into new idioms, especially where there is an affinity of ideas. Mythological "events" are not tied to geography and are a-historical by nature. Thus the mythological gods can be made to fit into any new situation and adjusted to new backgrounds. Mythology as a hypostatic dramatization of concepts operates with universal ideas and is therefore easily appropriated.

The case with monotheistic faiths is different. Monotheism is never the result of the mythological method. Its proper soil is theological reflection. Once theology makes its appearance dogma inevitably follows. By its very nature faith rooted in dogma cannot be tolerant, for at this point it becomes a matter of truth and falsehood. It is no accident that the Bible is being accused of originating the crusading spirit. It is even suggested that the idea of a holy war could have arisen nowhere else except among the Hebrews.[125]

The exclusiveness demanded by the Bible, especially the Old Testament, has to be considered carefully. The struggle against foreign religion is here chiefly an internal struggle. The prophets' war against idolatry is carried on within the nation. The uniqueness of YHWH demanded absolute renunciation of any compromise with the gods of the Gentiles. The surrounding cults were a constant danger to Israel's faith: "they will turn away your sons from following me to serve other gods . . ." This Deuteronomic prophecy is obviously *ex post eventu*. In accordance with the mores of the times the penalty for enticement to idolatry was ruthless extermination: "you shall break their altars, and smash to pieces their pillars, and hew down their asherim, and burn their graven images with fire" (Deut.7:4f).

Deut.13 goes beyond the destruction of the implements of idolatrous worship; the worshippers themselves are to be exterminated. It is however important to bear in mind that Deuteronomistic legislation is not "law" in the technical sense. The "laws" against idolatry are in fact sermons warning against apostasy from the God of Israel.[126] The writer is concerned with the sin of idolatry to which the nation was yielding in increasing numbers. This position, as that of the prophets, is uncompromising: there can be no other God beside YHWH.

The uniqueness of YHWH is the *sine qua non* of biblical faith. The God of Israel is a jealous God (theos zēlotēs); it means that there can be no other gods beside Him (Ex. 20:5). In Greek mythology Zeus has for his constant, companion Zēlos, the son of Pallas and Styx, and the brother of Nike at his side, together with Kratos and Bia. Zelos is here obviously a personification of zeal and strife symbolizing the will to reign and conquer.[127] Frequently Zelos becomes simply *zelotypia* or plain unadulterated jealousy which is something different from the 'El Kannah (אֵל קַנָּא) of the Old Testament.[128]

Oehler rightly associates YHWH's jealousy with His holiness: He is the Holy One of Israel.[129] The Holiness of YHWH is absolute: there can be no other gods in His Presence. Whether we interpret the Old Testament faith in terms of monotheism or monolatry makes no difference: "As the jealous God, Yahweh is the exclusive God who does not tolerate any opposing power alongside him. . ." Stamm adds: "From the very beginning, the faith of Israel was directed to this conclusion . . ."[130] This kind of exclusiveness was utterly unknown outside the Old Testament.[131] In Greek mythology the gods engaged in conflict with each other and there was plenty of jealousy among them, but none of them was more divine that the other. Von Rad describes this absolute exclusiveness on the part of YHWH as an "essential characteristic of the O.T. belief in God."[132]

The exclusive character of biblical faith is expressed in the "laws of extermination" in Num 31:21f; Deut. 7:16; 13:17; 20:10 ff (cf. Joshua 10:40). But as already mentioned these are not "laws" in the strict sense of the word. Pedersen, whose considered opinion must be respected, does not regard these "laws" as fixed rules but rather as "an expression of a certain tendency." The facts of history point to this conclusion: the Hebrew tribes on conquest of the land soon fraternized with the indigenous population and adopted their religious customs. The whole weight of prophetic witness bears this out. As to the rules of war there seemed to be a fluid situation, sometimes leniency and at other times severity was applied, depending upon the degree of resistance. Pedersen thinks that the governing principle was reduction and not extermination of the enemy.[133] It is possible that Benzen's suggestion is even more applicable. He thinks that the rules as laid down in the Pentateuch in respect to Israel's enemies belong to a literary genre of "war poetry" and was seldom, if ever, applied in practice.[134] At the same time it must be admitted that the Old Testament exerted a baneful influence whenever it was interpreted literally and was used as licence for religious warfare. Bainton's apt remark is borne out by history: "war is more humane when God is left out of it."[135]

Man resolves his differences by shedding of blood. It is an odd fact that Cain's murder of his brother had a religious motive behind it. "The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard, so Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell." (Gen 4:5) The purpose of the saga is difficult to disentangle but the act of murder corresponds to human behaviour through history: fratricide committed in the name of religion.

Religious intolerance is not peculiar to Hebrew tradition, it is a deeply rooted trait in human nature. Man finds it difficult to accept his brother's heterodoxy. Any difference to his own position he regards as

a challenge which must be resolved, and if necessary, by violence. E. R. Dodds is puzzled by the violent opposition to Socrates on the part of Athenian society. The only explanation he can suggest is religious bigotry. Here are his words: "We seem driven to assume the existence among the masses of an exasperated religious bigotry on which the politicians could play for their own purposes."[136] Dodds explains the persecution mania as a result of war hysteria and points to the fact that it coincided with the longest and most disastrous war in Greek history. This is certainly an important factor but not the only one. Conformity was the basis of ancient society and religion was the binding tie. Nonconformity therefore met with violent reaction on the part of the group. Fear is at the bottom of religious intolerance; the persecutor may be prompted by noble, though mistaken motives, sincerely believing that he is serving God and mankind by exterminating the evil (cf. John 16:2).[137] Religious zeal may be the expression of high idealism and dedication as in the case of the "non-military" crusades. Peter Hermit and Stephen of Cloyes, who is supposed to have lead the Children's Crusade in 1212, were undoubtedly prompted by noble motives.[138] Even the "military" crusades attracted many devout and dedicated men who were prepared to lay down their lives for what they regarded as a worthy cause. No one can read the memoirs of the Crusades by Villehardoun and by Joinville without being impressed by the sincerity of many of those dedicated men, especially by St. Lewis, the King of France. Joinville records a remarkable prayer uttered by the Lord of Brancion, a gallant knight, who had fought in thirty-six battles and skirmishes. After a particularly fierce struggle, he knelt before the altar in prayer: "Lord, I pray thee to have mercy upon me, and to take me out of these wars among Christians, in which l have lived a great while; and grant that I may die in Thy service, and so come to possess Thy Kingdom of Paradise."[139]

Many crusaders were fighting for personal gain and political advantage.[140] But others joined the Crusades from deep conviction of the rightness of the cause. Their zeal was misdirected by the mistaken assumption that differences can only be resolved by the edge of the sword. True to the inconsistency of human nature they managed to combine devotion to the Virgin Mary, whose name was "mercy personified" with the ruthless use of weapons without compunction or sense of contradiction. Joinville relates a story told by the saintly King Lewis about a disputation arranged at the monastery of Cluny between clergy and Jews. This was abruptly brought to a close by a zealous knight who struck with his crutch the spokesman for the Jewish group on the ear. The king fully approved the act on the grounds that the only way to defend the "Christian law" was by the sword: "pierce the mis-sayer in the midriff, so far as the sword will enter." were the *ipsissima verba* uttered by the Christian saint.[141] Such are the contradictions when fanaticism lays hold upon the human mind.

Resort to physical violence is a deeply ingrained trait in man; when religious or pseudo-religious motives are added, his passion becomes uncontrollable. Historians know much about man's delight in conflict. Gibbon tells us that "war and exercise were the reigning passions of the Franks or Latins; they were enjoined, as a penance to gratify those passions, to visit distant lands, and to draw their swords against the nations of the East."[142] The tragedy lies in the fact that they did it under the sign of the Cross and for the cause of the Gospel.

In this respect the Muslims were by far the more consistent. For them a holy war was no contradiction to their faith, but part of it. Their prophet laid it down as a guiding rule for the faithful that resistance is to be met with resistance and sword with sword: "and one who attacks you, attack him in like manner as he attacked you. Observe your duty to Allah, and know that Allah is with those who ward off (evil)" (Sarah II, 194). Unlike Jesus of Nazareth, Muhammad had no hesitation about war: "warfare is ordained for you, though it is hateful unto you; but it may happen that you hate a thing which is good

for you, and it may happen that you love a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows, you know not" (ib. II, 216).

Muhammad promised special rewards for those who fight for Allah (ib. IV, 74ff). He exhorts the faithful: "relent not in pursuit of the enemy" (ib. lV, 14) and his advice is "slay the idolaters wherever you find them" (ib. IX, 5). Among such idolaters Muhammad reckoned both Christians and Jews (ib. 1X, 30f).[143] Yet in spite of the encouragement to war and revenge by the Kuran the Muslims frequently showed greater forbearance than was the case with Christians. Christian eye-witnesses of the Crusades record many instances of courtesy and compassion on the part of the Saracenes towards them.[144] But on the question of tolerance there was little to choose between Muslim and Christian: "wilt thou abjure thy faith?" was the question put to each prisoner on either side. On the answer he gave hung his life: "those who would not abjure were set on one side, and their heads were cut off; and those who abjured were set on the other side."[145] A very simple way of solving religious differences.

Persecution to the point of annihilation of the heterodox as a theological proposition was not the invention of historic Christianity. Christians were persecuted for their faith before they resorted to the persecution of others. The Zoroastrian persecution of nonconformists such as Christians, Jews and others shows that the method is common to the human race.[146] But to our knowledge, no other religion produced a reasoned theological argument for dealing with those of differing views. The fear of heresy became an obsession in Christian Europe and dominated the Church for centuries. There may be some truth in H. H. Milman's remark: "Intolerance lies in the very nature of a religion which, dividing the whole world into the realm of two conflicting principles, raises one part of mankind into a privileged order . . . and condemns the other half as the irreclaimable slaves of the Evil One."[147] Though Milman's remark is directed mainly to Zoroastrianism it has equal application to Christianity. The blame for this is not upon the Master of Nazareth who taught us to love our enemies but upon the perversity of human nature whereby man manages to distort and pervert even the most noble teaching into the opposite.

There is however a historical reason for the heresy-consciousness of the Church which we must not overlook. The moment the Christian Church entered upon the world-arena it found itself fighting on a double front. On the one side were the pagan religions which held the field; on the other side were the semi-religious, semi-philosophical sects which lived by compromise and had no difficulty in assimilating certain features peculiar to the Christian faith. These gnostic sects constituted the greatest danger to the Church by reason of their ambivalent position: they were neither fully Christian, nor were they entirely non-Christian. The apocryphal Gospels, and some other literature like the Pistis Sophia, but above all the many treatises Against Heresies by the Ante-Nicene Fathers, testify to the complexity of the problem. By the time of St. Augustine it was possible to identify as many as eighty-eight heresies which in one way or another incorporated some Christian features into their systems.[148] In comparison with paganism the gnostic sects were more difficult to combat in that they frequently used similar language and operated with Christian concepts but to a different purpose. "The essential mark of Gnosticism is fundamentally syncretistic, welding into a new synthesis elements from diverse cultures."[149] This luxury the Church could not afford if it wanted to retain its essential nature.

Non-gnostic heresies were even more obnoxious in that they were more closely related to the Catholic Church. These heresies moved within the same area of faith, claimed the same authority as the Church, inspired the same confidence in the faithful and and made their stand upon the historic Christian documents. Their deviation lay in their departure from historic tradition both in matters of doctrine and

order. Identification was no easy matter, for even the Gnostics "believed themselves to represent a secret tradition as primitive as and no less authentic than that of the Great Church."[150]

The many sects, gnostic and non-gnostic, appealed to Scripture and regarded themselves as genuinely Christian. In fact, by their appeal to occult traditions and by their fervour they impressed the simple-minded as more genuine than the Catholic Church. To stem the tide of heresy the Church was forced into a position of defining in precise language the contents of the Christian faith. The task of the Great Four Councils was precisely this: a careful Christological deposition as central to Christian belief.

The mark of heresy, especially of Gnosticism, was wild metaphysical speculation in respect to the person of Jesus Christ. In answer to this the Church set out to define with great precision the humanity and divinity of Jesus in their mutual relationship. The theological definitions in no way solved the problem but gave the church a standard whereby to distinguish orthodoxy from heresy. It had an additional effect upon Christendom: it made it heresy conscious. This pre-occupation with heresy became the obsession of the orthodox. To this a political element was added: the emperors soon discovered the advantages of uniform faith. 'T'he result was that by the fifth century, deviation from orthodoxy became an offence against the State and punishable by law. Within fifty-seven years counting from Valentinian (364-75) sixty-eight laws were directed against heretics.[151]

Eates quotes a passage from a sermon by Nestorius on the occasion of his consecration as Bishop of Constantinople. Addressing himself to the Emperor Theodosius II, he exclaimed: "Give me, my Prince, the earth purged of heretics, and I will give you heaven as a recompense. Assist me in destroying heretics, and I will assist you in vanquishing the Persians."[152] It is part of the irony of history that Nestorius himself was subsequently accused of heresy and deposed from the See. By the time of the eleventh century the custom of dealing with heretics was by burning them. The anathemas attached to the creed were not enough.[153] The Synod of Verona (1184) demanded that bishops ferret out heretics and deliver them to the State for punishment. The Synod of Toulouse (1229) ordered that a party of inquisitors be organized for each parish consisting of one priest and two laymen. According to one source, in the year 1160, thirty heretical preachers reached England from Germany. On discovery they were branded in their foreheads, whipped, stripped naked and left in the street to perish from cold and hunger, no one daring to offer them any help.

Once a person was baptized there could be no deviation from the established creed. Even in case of enforced baptism orthodoxy was an absolute requirement on pain of death.[154] The Church claimed ecclesiastical jurisdiction over all heretics on the principle that deviation from the faith was wilful infidelity as defined by St. Thomas: "a species of infidelity in men who having professed the faith of Christ, corrupt its dogmas."[155] The idea of toleration was utterly inconceivable to the medieval mind and appeared as a sign of indifference to the truth. There could be no co-existence between truth and falsehood and as truth was understood in ecclesiastical terms, deviators had to be purged from society lest they contaminate others. Even a 20th century writer could still appeal to a New Testament text in justification for the Inquisition: "I did not come to bring peace but a sword." (Mtt. 10:34).[156]

The wars of religion must therefore, to some limited extent at least, be regarded as wars of truth, no matter how ill-conceived. Because the Church understood truth in the absolute sense, she was unable to compromise. To allow other truths to stand next to her own would cast a shadow upon all truth and lead to cynicism. This static concept of truth, autonomous and separate from the existential human situation is the legacy of Greek philosophy and far removed from the biblical concept of truth. We will have to return to this subject at a later stage.

The legal safeguarding of orthodoxy is an ancient device which met with Plato's full approval. His reasoning was logical enough; in Jowett's words: "If laws are based upon religion, the greatest offence against them must be irreligion."[157] Plato's concern was with the integrity of society which would be destroyed by the malignment of the gods. He was also afraid of superstitious practices once official religion was defied.[158] For various kinds of atheists Plato suggested different punishments. Those who do not reform are to be incarcerated indefinitely and when they die they are to be refused burial. The suggested penalty for "impiety" was death, for impiety weakens the state and calls punishment from heaven upon those who are innocent. In order to prevent this from happening Plato wanted legislation which would keep in bounds those liable to error and present the practice of "religious rites contrary to law."[159]

Jowett admits that "Plato has not advanced quite so far . . . in the path of toleration" as was the case with Sir Thomas More in his Utopia. On reflection, Jowett arrived at the conclusion that apart from a difference in words, Greek philosophical theory, Christian religion and Gentile practice in general are essentially similar. This is a sober admission.[160] The question we have to ask is: what is the answer to religious intolerance?

Notes to Chapter I

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[1] Prof. William Nicholls, head of the department of Religious Studies in the University of British Columbia, admits that scholars are not agreed regarding a definition of religion and that so far no one really knows what is religion and what it is not; cf. "Liberation as a Religious Theme," CJT, Vol. XVI, Nrs 3 & 4/1970, 140ff'.

[2] Cf. Lucretius, De natura rerum, VI, 24ff. The originator of the theory of fear, according to Strauss is Democritus. cf. Leo Strauss, Spinoza's Critique of Religion, E.T. 1965, 45. Thomas Hobbes regards "the natural seed of religion" as the result of anxiety and dreams. This is especially the case in paganism where religion and politics combine to serve a useful end though by itself it is a form of madness. For him fear publicly sanctioned is called religion, if not so sanctioned it is called superstition (cf. Leviathan II, VIII, XII, .XXIX, XXXII) Cf. also Leo Strauss, 95ff, 100, 220f.

[3] Cf. Eric S. Waterhouse, The Dawn of Religion, 1948, 25f.

[4] Lucretius, op.cit., V, 1196ff.

[5] Cf. Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, E.T. 1950. C. S. Lewis attaches revelatory significance to the experience of the numinous but this is hardly in keeping with the passage he quotes from Pascal (!) (Cf. The Problem of Pain, 1940, Introduction). For a criticism of Otto, see O. R. Jones, The Concept of Holiness, 1961, 127ff.

[6] Roger Caillois, Man & the Sacred, E.T., 1959, 138.

[7] ib. 135

[8] Cf. William James's Letters, ed. by H. James, 1926, II, 149f, 212ff; 269f.

[9] Cf. Oscar Pfister, Christianity & Fear, E.T., 1944, 98.

[10] Cf. Encycl. Brit., 14th ed., art. "Magic" Also the excellent study by E. O. James, The Tree of Life, 1966, especially pp. 163ff.

[11] Sir James George Frazer, The Magic Art, 1911, I, 52f.

[12] Lucretius ascribes the fear of the gods to nothing more than "ignorance of the causes of phenomena," on. cit. VI, 24f.

[13] Cf. Frazer, op.cit 221.

[14] Cf. ib. 224 and n. 2; for a discussion of the subject see George Wobbermin, The Nature of Religion, E.T., 1933, 240ff.

[15] In a footnote Frazer explains the sequence: first magic without religion; then magic cooperating with religion; lastly religion antagonistic to magic (ib. 227 n.2). But what evidence is there for such a neat division? On the subject cf. James Y. Simpson, Landmarks in the struggle between Religion & Science, (n.d.) Ch. 1: “Religion & Magic”. Wobbermin allows for the connection between religion and magic but distinguishes the motivation: magic tries to force the “overworld” while religion submits to it. op.cit 244f.

[16] Cf. John B. Moss, Man’s Religion, 1949, 17. For the place of magic in pre-historic culture, see J. Maringer, The Gods of Prehistoric Man, E.T., 1960

[17] Cf. C. G. Jung, Psychology of Religion: East & West, E.T., 1958, 7, 344.

[18] On magic as the result of psychosis see D. Henderson & R. D. Gillespie, A Text-Book of Psychiatry, 1955, 142f. On religion as psychosis, see S. Freud, The Future of an Illusion, E.T., 1949, 76.

[19] Cf. Ernest Jones, “The Symbolic Significance of Salt," Essays in Applied Psycho-Analysis, 1951, II, 22ff, 92ff; etc. Cf. also A. S. Lee, Freud & Christianity, 1949, 194ff.

[20] Cf. B. H. Streeter, The Buddha & the Christ, 1932, 95f.

[21] Cf. D. Hill & P. Williams, The Supernatural, 1965; E. S. Waterhouse sees no radical difference between primitive and modern man, cf. op.cit 17ff; cf. also Francis King, Ritual Magic in England: 1887 to the Present Day, 1970. F'or a review of this book by Alex Sanders described as “elected King of the Witches by a hundred covens," see The Listener, Nov 19, 1970.

[22] Gilbert Murray, Five Stages of Greek Religion, 1951, 23, 25.

[23] ib. 17ff, 25f. According to the philosopher Euhemerus (c. 301-297 B.C.) the gods were originally heroes whose great exploits earned them the status of divinity; cf. Encycl. of Religion & Ethics, art. “Euhemerism," also art. “Mythology”. For the source, see F. C. Grant, Helenistic Religion (The Age of Syncretism), 1953, 74ff; cf. also Edmund G. Gardner, The Reality of God and Religion and Agnosticism, 1931, 223ff.

[24] Eric S. Waterhouse, op.cit 23.

[25] ib. 28.

[26] ib. 29: Waterhouse suggests that “supernormalism” is perhaps the more accurate term.

[27] Cf. E. Cassirer, An Essay on Man, 1944, 45ff.

[28] Cf. ib. 103.

[29] Paul Tillich, The Courage To Be, 1952, 156. Cf. also Herbert Marcuse, One Dimensional Man, 1964

[30] Cf. Tillich, ib. 160, 172, 181 and elsewhere.

[31] Cf. Kenneth Hamilton, The System & the Gospel, 1963, 83ff. The suspicion of pantheism is largely due to Tillich's impersonal vocabulary, like being, ground, etc. Here is a typical sentence: “whatever one knows about a finite thing one knows about God, because it is rooted in him as its ground.” (Syst. Theol., II, l 959, 9). Though in the following sentence he allows for a difference between thing and God, the suspicion inevitably remains. For the opposite view see Daniel Day Williams, ”Paul Tillich’s Doctrine of Forgiveness”; Pastoral Psychology, Feb 1968, 17ff. But Don Browning's analysis seems to be more accurate of' Tillich’s position: “Tillich's theology is basically anthropology, and most of his talk about God is the extension and analogical application of his anthropology to the ground of being”; ib. 45. In his Syst. Theol. Tillich explains: “nothing can be said about God theologically before the statement that he is the power of being in all being” (III, 294). This is an ambiguous sentence and may mean anything.

[32] Cf. op.cit III, 1963, 95.

[33] ib. Il, 80ff.

[34] The Protestant Era, 1952, 89.

[35] What Thomas Hobbes ascribes to the prophet of "revealed religion" is more applicable to man in general: *gloriatio*. Cf. Leo Strauss, op.cit 95ff.

[36] The Times Lit. Supple., Aug 26, 1955, 496. Cf. also the illuminating article by K. F. Thomson, "Nietzsche's Religious Atheism," Union Seminary Quarterly, 14 (1959), 27ff.

[37] Cf. The Listener, April 21, 1960, 707.

[38] Julian Hµxley, Religion Without Revelation, 1957, 92. For a refutation of Huxley's ideas by a distinguished physicist see C.H.Clark, The Scientist and the Supernatural, 1966.

[39] ib. 22; (cf. Essays of a Biologist, 1928, 284)

[40] Religion Without Revelation, 10.

[41] ib. 145ff.

[42] ib. 215.

[43] Cf. Huxley's essay "Religion as an objective Problem" reprinted in his collection of essays: Man in the Modern World, (Mentor Series), 1948. The same applies to H. G. Wells who wrote in the interests of religion "without the bluster of the Christian formulae" (The Invisible King, 1917, 186).

[44] Edward Caird, The Evolution of Religion, 1907, I, 30f.

[45] ib. 387. Leslie Dewart's elaborate treatise, The Foundation of Belief, l969, adds little to Caird's insights. In spite of Dewart's protestations against pantheism (cf. ib. 385) his removal of the "distance between man and God" (cf. ib. 387), can lead to no other result.

[46] Cf. Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, (Torchbook ed.) 1957, passim.

[47] Emil Weitzner, Meditations of a Humanist, 1959. This "Psalter" is unique in the history of translation as it bears no resemblance to the original text. A random example is a verse from Ps. 16: "I will put my faith in man and man's potentiality. For righteousness and humbleness in awe of mystery." Kenneth Hamilton very appropriately characterizes Mircea Eliade's religious mode of being as "a sense of cosmic coziness" (cf. New Theology, No. 3, 1966, 60); cf. also his article "Homo Religiosus," Journal of Bible & Religion, July, l965. For Mircea Eliade, see his The Sacred & the Profane: The Nature of Religion, E.T., 1956, 148: "man need only decipher what the cosmos says in its many modes of being, and he will understand the mystery of life."

[48] J. Huxley, Man in the Modern World, 132f.

[49] Cf. Journal of Transactions of the Victoria Institute, Vol. LXXXIV, 1952, 6.

[50] Man in the Modern World, 130.

[51] Feuerbach, op.cit 12ff. According to Strauss, Spinoza saw religion as the result of two factors a) ignorance of true causes; b) man's instinct of self-preservation. Cf. Leo Strauss, op.cit 218.

[52] ib. 19.

[53] Cf. K. Barth's Introduction to the Essence of Chritianity, op.cit XXVIIIf. This cannot be said about Tillich who is strangely aware of the demonic; cf. The Dialogue between Paul Tillich and Carl Rovers, Pastoral Psychology, Feb 1968, 57f.

[54] Feuerbach, op.cit 184.

[55] Jung, op.cit 39.

[56] ib. 58. Jung's exposition of the Holy Trinity my serve as an example of his anthropological approach. For him the Trinity is a psychological symbol expressing the subconscious cycle of development: childhood under the Father, adulthood under the Son, fatherhood under the Holy Spirit; cf. ib. 183 n.4. The "New Theology" which identifies God with man and man with God is in complete harmony with this approach.

[57] Rudolf Otto, op.cit 17f.

[58] ib. 221.

[59] ib. 223.

[60] ib. 4l8. The "broad" social aspect of religion is stressed by George Grant: "system of belief (whether true or false) which binds together the life of individuals and gives to those lives whatever consistency of purpose they may have," Technology of Empire, 1969, 46.

[61] Cf. Raymond Aron, Main Currents in Sociological Thought, II, 1965.

[62] Cf. George Albert Coe, The Psychology of Religion, 1916, 27ff.

[63] ib. 71

[64] Cf. Gerhard Szczesny (Frederick Heer), The Future of Unbelief, 1961, 164ff.

[65] Cf. Freud, op.cit 85, 92ff.

[66] Cf. Jung, op.cit 43, 74, 82ff, 86, 105, etc.

[67] Cf. P. E. Johnson, Psychology of Religion, 1945, 238ff.

[68] Feuerbach, op.cit 274f.

[69] Jung, op.cit 43f; 455 n. 464.

[70] C. S. Lewis with his usual insight puts into the mouth of Screwtape: "The fine flower of unholiness can grow only in the close neighbourhood of the holy. Nowhere do we tempt so successfully as on the very steps of the altar". (Screwtape Proposes a Toast, 1965, 27).

[71] Cf. G. A. Coe, op.cit 107ff.

[72] ib. 113ff.

[73] Cf. E. A. Dodds, The Greeks & the Irrational, 1951, 115ff (the chapter: "Plato & the Irrational Soul").

[74] Cf. Ira Progoff, Jung's Psychology & its Social Meaning, 1953, 208f.

[75] Cf. Alan Whicker, "The Isle of Astrologers," The Listener, Jan 25, 1968, 103f. Also Cf. Taya Zinkin's article: "Superstition in lndia," The Manchester Guardian Weekly, Aug. 29, 1957, 16: "Astrology and superstition are so deeply embedded in the routine of daily life that nobody notices any more the extent, to which people exert themselves to placate the gods and avert the evil eye". lndia is a land where one can work for and obtain a Ph.D. in astrology. Superstitious practices are as old as the human race. For an ancient description of superstitious habits see the description given us by Theophrastus (c. 370-288 B.C.) Cf. Fr. C. Grant, op.cit. 72f; cf. also the excellent description of divination in the ancient world by Marcel Leibovici, "La Divination et les sciences humaines," CJT, vol. XVI, Nrs. 3/4, 1970, 155ff.

[76] Luther wisely observes: "astrology is not a science because it has no principles and (no) proofs." For Luther's attitude to astrology, see Table Talks, (Luther's Works, Fortress Press), 1967, Vol. 54, 172f, 2l9f, 449.

[77] Cf. art. Astrologie in HGG, 1957; also Oxford Dic. of the Christian Church (F. L. Gross, ed.) 1958. For Francis Bacon, see Paolo Rossi, Francis Bacon: From Magic to Science E.T., 1968. On Goethe's own admission: "superstition is the poetry of life: it is therefore not harmful to the poet to be superstitious," Sprüehe in Prosa, (Goethes Sämmtliche Werke, Stuttgart, 1868, XIII, 150, cf. also 130). According to Marcel Leibovici a considerable number of French Roman Catholics consult astrologers, CJT, op.cit. 162.

[78] Cf. Grillot de Givry, Le Mussee des Sorciers, Mages, et Alchemistes, 1967. The following is from a review of this book: "An inquiry set up by Unesco shows . . . that 50 percent of all daily papers published in England, France, Belgium, Switzerland and the United States run an astrological column. (The reviewer asks: why omit the rest of the world: what about Brazil, India, Scandinavia?) There are 5000 clairvoyants in Paris, consulted by 60,000 clients; there are 3000 wizards in Hamburg; and so on". (The Times Lit. Suppl. April 27/1967). The situation in the U.S.A. is similar. It is estimated that 10,000 people are engaged full time in astrological forecasting. Another 200,000 are computed to practice astrology part-time. Carroll Righter's horoscopes appear in more than 300 newspapers, read by an estimated 40 million people; Sydney Omarr writes for 225 newspapers on the same subject (cf. Toronto Globe & Mail Oct 20/1969, 17.)

[79] Cf. Francis Huxley, The Invisibles, 1966.

[80] Jung, op.cit. 86. Goethe wrote with great insight: "Superstition belongs to the essence of man and when an attempt is made to eradicate it, it hides itself in the most unlikely nooks and crannies, only to reappear when least expected." (op.cit. 130, author's transl.)

[81] New Theology, edited by Martin E. Marty & G. Peerman, No. 4, 35.

[82] Cf. Heinrich Harrer, Seven Years in Tibet, E.T., 1954. Cf. also the very fine description by Guiseppe Tucci, especially the chapter on religion (Tibet, E.T. by J. E. Stapleton Driver, 1967)

[83] These remarks apply to Tibet prior to the Chinese invasion in 1950. Some of the effects of the invasion upon Christian witness in that austere and mysterious land can be gauged from the personal experiences by Geoffrey T. Bull, When the Iron Gates Yield, 1960.

[84] J. E. Ellam, The Religion of Tibet, 1927, 52.

[85] ib. 54f.

[86] For a description of Shamanism and its relation to Buddhism, see Mircea Eliade, Shamanism, 1964. But Eliade is a committed religionist who who manages to present Shamanism in a positive light.

[87] Cf. Andre Migot, Tibetan Marches, E.T., 1955, 101ff.

[88] H. Harrer, op.cit 292ff.

[89] The five 'M's stand for: *madya* (wine), *mamsa* (flesh), *matsya* (fish), *mudra* (parched grain; interpreted as a reference to some mystical gestures), and *mathuna* (sexual intercourse).

[90] Cf. the description in The Toronto Globe & Mail, Dec 21/1966.

[91] Cf. The Conflicts Between Paganism & Christianity in the Fourth Century, ed. by R. Monigliano, 1963, 167.

[92] Cf. ib. 119.

[93] ib. 115.

[94] ib. 117. Maternus Julius Firmicus was also the author of a work on astrology in eight books: Libri VIII. Matheseos, written about 336.

[95] ib. 118f.

[96] The opinion of M. Eliade quoted by Barb, ib. 124.

[97] ib. 120 n. 5. By the same token a professed atheist reared on modern science like Sir Harold Nicolson, the former governor of the BBC, found himself praying for the safety of his son who was serving in the second world war; cf. The Listener, Sept. 28/1967, 406.

[98] Keith Thomas rightly observes that the “magic sense” is “more spontaneous and socially deeper-rooted than the established religion," this is said in reference to Christianity. cf. The Listener, March 5 /1970, 306.

[99] ib. 103.

[100] H. Harrer, op.cit 167.

[101] An extreme example of religious aberration was recorded by Time Magazine (Jan 19/1962, 56): Outside New Delhi 400 Hindu pundits and priests gathered to recite a Vedic prayer 10 million times in order to avert the catastrophe which threatened the world by the conjunction of five planets and the sun on Feb 3, at 5:47 p.m. (Indian time).

[102] Cf. Lactantius, Institutions, IV, 28.

[103] Cf. Marcilio Ficino, De christiana religione, 1474.

[104] Cf. John Macquarrie, “How can we think God," New Theology, No. 3 (1966) 47.

[105] Cf. ib. 49. For “God reduced to the pious consciousness of man” see K. Barth, Ch. Dog. III/2, 79.

[106] Lactantius, op.cit IV, 26; cf. ib. IV, 64 (69).

[107] Cf. W. Cantwell Smith, Questions of Religious Truth, 1967.

[108] Cf. Bernard Eugene Meland, The Secularization of Modern Culture, 1966, 151f, 153f.

[109] Roger Caillois observes that “the importance of the mystical increases in proportion to the diminishing importance of the cult” (op.cit 132); on the other hand W. T. Stace holds that mysticism cannot be considered a religious phenomenon except where “religion is taken as referring to feeling rather than creed” (Mysticism & Philosophy, 1960, 341f). For an example of full commitment to mystical experience see E. C. Zaehner, “Theology, Drugs & Zen," The Listener, Nov 5/1970, 623ff.

[110] Cf. Frederick Ferré, Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion, 1967, 446ff. Ferré worked himself into a truly Vaihingerian position in his effort to live with “broken mvths". The As If principle does not make for intellectual integrity. (cf. ib. pp. 447ff).

[111] In Kurt Kiesler’s opinion, religion always depends upon art for self-expression, cf. Leo Strauss, What is Political Philosophy & Other Studies, 1959, 252.

[112] Cicero, De civinatione (written to supplement his earlier treatise De natura decorum, c. 45 B.C.), II, LXXII, 148.

[113] Sir Alister Hardy, “An Experimental Approach to Religion,” The Listener, April 16/1970, 507.

[114] Paul Tillich, Syst. Theol. III, 1963, 98.

[115] Cf. Otto Weber, Jahwe der Gott und Jahwe der Götze, 1933.

[116] Cf. Kenneth Cragg, The Privilege of Man, 1968, 86.

[117] Cf. J. H. Kamstra, Encounter or Syncretism, 1967, 177f, 466. J. G. Jennings has shown how original Buddha teaching became distorted by syncretistic accommodation at the earliest possible time (cf. The Vedantic Buddhism of Buddha, 1947).

[118] Cf. W. W. Flinders Petrie, Religion & Conscience in Ancient Egypt, 1898, 16ff.

[119] “In times of danger to the community the whole tendency to conformity is greatly strengthened: the herd huddles together and becomes more intolerant than ever of ‘cranky’ opinion.” (R. Cranshaw-Williams, The Comforts of Unreason, 1947, 28).

[120] Flinders Petrie, op.cit 53f.

[121] The other possibility is in the reverse: as the history of the nations developed the gods became distinctly different (Cf. August Pauly, Real-Encycl. d. class. Altertums, 1846, IV, 587).

[122] Flinders Petrie, 56ff.

[123] The number of gods, spirits and sacred beings in Egyptian mythology is estimated at 438. This list includes eight non-Egyptian divinities. (Cf. Petrie, op.cit 70). Polytheism, says Glover, knows of no false gods. (T. R. Glover, The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire, 1909, 24). Cf. also E. M. Bye, "The Transplantation of Religions," Numen, Dec. 1969, 234ff.

[124] Cf. Sir William Smith, Classical Dictionary, revised by G. F. Marindin, 1904, s.v. Cf. also Dictionary of Greek & Roman Biography, III, 1323a.

[125] R. Bainton, Christian Attitudes Towards War & Peace, 1960, 44.

[126] Cf. von Rad, Studies in Deuteronomy, E.T., 1953, 22: "sermon-like utterances . . . upon questions which were vital."

[127] Cf. Smith, op.cit III, 1310.

[128] Cf. Pauly, op.cit 2te Reihe, 1967, XVIII/II s.v. Cf. also the case of Hera who is consumed with jealousy because of Zeus's unfaithfulness, Iliad XIV, 317.

[129] G. F. Oehler, Theology of the O.T., E.T., 1883, 114.

[130] Johannes Jakob Stamm, The Ten Commandments in Recent Research, E.T., 1967, 61; cf. also H. H. Rowley, Moses & the Decalogue, Bulletin John Rylands Library, Sept 1851, 106 and n.3.

[131] Cf. Francis Bacon, Essays, (The People's Library) 1907, 243.

[132] Gerhad von Rad, Moses, E.T., 1960, 34f.

[133] Cf. Jons Federsen, Israel, 1940, III-IV, 24f.

[134] Cf. Aage Benzen, Introduction to the O.T., E.T., 1948, 138ff.

[135] Cf. Aage Benzen, Bainton, op.cit 49.

[136] E. R. Dodds, The Greeks & the Irrational, 1951, 190.

[137] Cf. W. E. H. Leckey, History of the Rise & Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe, 1863, II, 11.

[138] The story of Stephen, the 12 year old boy who is credited with organizing the Children's Crusade is wrapped in legend. For a concise description see Edith Simon, The Piebald Standard, 1959, 156.

[139] Memoires of Crusades by Villehardouin & de Joinville, trans. by Sir F. T. Marzilias, 1958, 204.

[140] Cf. Edith Simon, op.cit 30f, 45f.

[141] de Joinville, op.cit 148.

[142] Edward Gibbon, The Decline & Fall of the Roman Empire, 1910, VI, 45.

[143] Cf. de Joinville, op.cit. 217f. For the problem of power for Islam in relation to faith cf. Kenneth Cragg, The Privilege of Man, 105ff.

[144] Cf. de Joinville, op.cit 220; also Henry Treece, The Crusades, 1962, 314; Edith Simon, op.cit 56ff.

[145] de Joinville, op.cit 217f.

[146] Cf. H. H. Milman, The History of Christianity, 1892, 253f.

[147] ib. 252.

[148] Cf. Augustine, De haeresibus, composed c. 428 A.D.

[149] Cf. S. Laeuchli, The Language of Faith, 1962, 26 and n. 13; 152f and passim.

[150] H. E. W. Turner, The Pattern of Christian Truth, 1954, 8; cf. ib. 149ff.

[151] Cf. M. Searle Bates, Religious Liberty, 1945, 134. For the obsessive fear of heresy, see the scholarly article in J. H. Blunt's Dict. of Sects, 1891, under: "Heresiologists".

[152] For the source see Socrates, Eccl. Hist., VII, 29. The Greek text is even more expressive: "and I will give you heaven in return . . ."!

[153] Burning on the stake was an ancient institution. According to tradition Polycarp met a martyr's death by burning (cf. the ancient document "The Martyrdom of Polycarp" in The Apostolic Fathers, J. B. Lightfoot, 1893, 189ff). In defence of the practice Bp. Simancas wrote a treatise (1569) in which he said: "*antiquissima est poena ignis adversus impios et hereticos, ut ex actis Chalcedonensis concilii satis constare potest . . .*" (Cf. W. E. H. Lecky, History of the Rise & Influence of the Spirit of Nationalism in Europe, 1865, I, 363n and II, 30n.

[154] Cf. J. Jocz, The Jewish People & Jesus Christ,154, 83ff.

[155] Summa Theol., II-II, Q XI, a. 1.

[156] Catholic Encycl. (1910) art. "Inquisition" by J. Wilhelm.

[157] Jowett, The Dialogues of Plato, 1953, IV, 179.

[158] Cf. ib. 162.

[159] Laws X, 910 d; cf. ib. 885, 948b; 907e ff.

[160] Cf. Jowett, op.cit IV, 182.

Chapter II - The Problem of Syncretism

One way of minimizing religious intolerance is to reduce the differences between the religions. This can be achieved in several ways:

a) by a deliberate effort to fuse religious tenets;
b) by emphasizing the elements which are held in common;
c) by disregarding the differences as outward accretions and placing the stress upon inwardness;
d) by reducing the religions to a moral code;
e) by removing religion from public life and making it an affair of the individual.

The problem regarding religious intolerance has occupied many minds through history. The fight for toleration in the legal sense has greatly contributed towards a solution. In England the liberal attitude of John Halles towards Schism & Schismatics (1642), Jeremy Taylor's Liberty of Prophesying (1647), John Milton's Areopagitica (1644) with its plea for the freedom of the press, John Locke's Letters Concerning Toleration (1689, 1690, 1692) though excluding atheists and Roman Catholics from the privilege, have helped towards a more humane attitude towards those of differing opinions. But there is a difference between legal toleration accorded by the state and tolerance as a moral attitude on the part of its citizens.

The radical change towards people of differing faiths and views is a new phenomenon in history, largely the result of religious indifference. It is significant that Lessing's play Nathan der Weise (1779) which advocates the equality of all religions, specifically of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, was written by a man of highly rationalist views who had no religious commitments himself.

In modern times the answer to the problem of toleration is offered us from two positions: on the part of those who hold religion to be a divisive element in society which ought to be dispensed with altogether; and those who, aware of its persistence, advocate a universal faith. There are forces in the world today working in both directions.

The communist states have declared total war on all religion. But oddly enough, socialism itself has assumed a religious structure and shows all the traits of traditional religion, with saints, holidays, high priests, hierarchy, orthodoxy and intolerance towards those who dare to deviate.[1] In the capitalist countries another and more subtle process is taking place: namely the coalescence of religion and culture, with culture in the dominating role. This is particularly so in the U.S.A.

History shows that political, social and cultural efforts at unification always carry in their wake strong tendencies towards religious syncretism. Such a situation arose in the ancient world following Alexander the Great's conquests. This "noticeable drive towards a common religion," it is suggested, was the direct result of the intermingling of races in a new cosmopolitan situation.[2] A similar phenomenon may be observed today.

As a result of technology and science the inhabited earth is increasingly becoming one global society. Never before has man moved with such speed, such distances and in such numbers. This meeting of races and creeds is having two opposite effects: on the one hand, it is encouraging parochial retreat for fear of loss of identity; on the other hand, it presses towards unification. We are thus witnessing two contradictory phenomena: the rise of a world civilization, and the revival of narrow nationalism at the same time. Which trend will carry the victory only history can decide. But the syncretistic process taking place today is an inescapable fact. This interchange of ideologies, the meeting

of diverse philosophies of life, has a broadening effect upon society straining to free itself from tribal attitudes and moving towards a cosmopolitan point of view. The syncretistic process must therefore be acknowledged as a wholesome phenomenon accompanying our civilization and appreciated as a natural by-product of modern life.

There is however a negative aspect to syncretism especially in the area of religion, which must not be overlooked. In classical Greek the term means to attempt a united front, say, between two parties in order to overcome a common enemy. Σύνκρίσις means to put together, to compound; but in modern usage going back to the 17th century it has come to mean the practice of eclecticism in an indiscriminate and ill-assorted manner. In the theological context syncretism is used in the pejorative sense. In some circles the term is associated with the name of Georg Calixtus (1586-1656) who attempted first, a reunion between protestants, and afterwards between them and the Roman Church.

Calixtus lived at a time of bitter religious strife. For his good and noble intentions his opponents dubbed him a "syncretist." They saw in his efforts a futile attempt to reconcile irreconcilable theological positions and suspected him of indifference to the truth.[3] This in spite of the fact that his formula for re-union was theologically most respectable. Calixtus called upon the theologically divided camps of the Church to return to the *consensus quinquesecularis*, i.e. to the doctrinal position of the undivided Church as set out in the 5th century, plus the Apostles' Creed. To describe his efforts as *Religions-mengerei* and him as a syncretist is to abuse the term as understood today.

Not only between Romans and Protestants, but between Protestants and Protestants there seemed to be no understanding possible. Lutherans resisted union with Calvinists on the question of church order; both resisted union with Roman Catholics on the question of doctrine, looking upon the Roman Church as a false religion. But the division arose from differences within the Church itself. A return to an earlier condition when orthodox Christendom was yet undivided was a logical move and had nothing to do with a syncretistic compromise.

Syncretism as we meet it today is a deliberate quest for reconciliation of diverse elements by overlooking the differences and by glossing over the disparities. It is mainly an effort at unity for utilitarian reasons first, because of an indifference to truth; and second, because of the conviction that all human values are relative. It is the cynicism of our age which makes syncretism a viable solution of differing views and traditions. In one of his sermons, the late C. G. Montefiore observed: "We may be tolerant of all religious opinions because we are indifferent equally to them all." Although he was prepared to allow that "God lets his truth shine through many windows," he rightly felt that false toleration leads to hypocrisy and corruption.[4]

The Syncretistic process in the western world has something to do with the levelling of society on the democratic principle. From the rule that every one is an equal before the law it is inferred that everyone is meant to be like everyone else. This is the negative result of democracy in that it tends to create a uniform and uniformist society. Given the fact that standardization and mass-production is the inevitable by-product of technology, we are faced with a levelling out process on an almost global scale. Under such conditions religious differences appear strangely incongruous and old-fashioned. If old attitudes are still retained this is only on the surface and for social reasons; at a deeper level modern man, especially in the West, lives by the presuppositions of the modern age. Both Will Herberg and Martin E. Marty have shown how the external differences in the U.S.A. between Protestants, Jews and Roman Catholics stand in no relationship to the real values which all Americans espouse.

The quest for syncretistic solutions in the area of religion is widely spread. At least two world-organizations are hard at work to propagate the synthetic attitude to religion. The Moral Re-Armament Movement associated with the name of Frank Buchman is a grand attempt to overlook religious differences for the sake of the moral revitalization of the nations.[5] The other effort at unification of the world on a religious basis is made by the Baha'i religion.[6] This new cult which has as its foundation a progressive concept of revelation in which each historic faith fits into a general pattern of religious experience is making a missionary effort for global recognition.

Of the twelve principles singled out by Gaius Atkins, four bear directly on our subject: one united humanity; universal freedom in the quest for truth; the basic unity of all religions; religion as the only tie to unite the world.[7] There are other signs in many areas, both East and West, where religious accommodation is the general trend. One such move which will ultimately bear its fruit is the "ecumenical" declaration made by Vatican II.

Accommodation is a long-established principle in the Roman Church. The controversies surrounding the missionaries in the Far East arose from this issue. The classical case was Robert de Nobili (1577-1656), a Jesuit missionary sent to India in 1604. In his effort to conform to local custom he went so far as to avoid contact with the Pariahs. In order to find acceptance with the Brahmin caste: "he assumed the saffron robe of the monk, observed Brahman rites and fasts, and tried to be as much a Brahmin as possible." The Jesuit missionaries in China attempted to use similar methods in order to win entrance into Chinese society. This "scientific apostolate," a term coined by the Jesuit missionaries, gave rise to a protracted controversy. Some critics saw in it the danger of transforming Roman Catholicism into an oriental rite. In the end Pope Benedict XIV by the Bull Omnium Sollicitudinem of 1744 ended the controversy by suppressing the method.[8] Though the method of accommodation was officially deprecated, in practice it persists to this day as a latent tendency in Roman Catholicism. This is a logical inevitability as a result of Roman Catholic theology which is orientated toward general revelation, natural law, universal religion and the inwardness of mysticism.

Vatican II in cautious language, in fact so cautious that G. C. Berkouwer was led to conclude that "the changed attitude toward the outsiders does not betray a weakness for relativism or syncretism,"[9] has accepted accommodation as a missionary principle. Warning against syncretism on the one hand and false particularism on the other, it advocates accommodation of Christian life "to the genius and dispositions of each culture."[10] This by itself is innocuous but for the fact that these cultures to a large extent are grounded and sustained by specific religious traditions. To legitimize these cultures means at the same time to legitimize the religions which have nourished them. This is exactly what Vatican II does: it advises "to assimilate the ascetic and contemplative traditions whose seeds were sometimes already planted by God in ancient cultures prior to the preaching of the Gospel."[11]

Though few Roman Catholic theologians may be prepared to go as far as Simone Weil who in her Letter to a Priest, saw no reason why a Hindu should be refused baptism if he believes that Vishnu is the Logos and Shiva the Holy Spirit and that the word was incarnate in Krishna and in Kama before it was incarnate in Jesus. In principle, on the basis of the universality of truth in general revelation and the presence of the *Logos spermatikos* to every man, it is difficult to see why Simone Weil's contention is false. Peter Watkins who discusses her case has to fall back upon the historic incarnation as distinct from Hindu theophanies in order to contradict her.[12] But can we have it both ways? Can we differentiate between the Logos in history and the *Logos spermatikos* to such an extent as to deny a Hindu baptism? There are some theologians who do not think we can make such a distinction. Ninian Smart chides Barth

for his isolationism: “If, then we abandon biblical fundamentalism and interpret revelation in terms of encounter, we cannot simply ignore the encounters which have been enshrined in the best traditions of non-Christian religions.”[13] Following the lead of Dr. Raymond Panikkar’s The Unknown Christ in Hinduism, Ninian Smart declares not only Hinduism, at least to some degree Christian, but even Christianity Hindu: “The unknown Hinduism of Christianity may be well worth finding. When that has been found, the unknown Christ of Hinduism may appear more clearly to Indian eyes.”[14] He sees in “the fundamental unity of all religions,” the only possible answer to the question of truth.[15] This relativism, characteristic for our age, pervades Christian theology in ever widening circles. Peter Watkins finds it difficult to see how the claim that Christ is the only way to God can possibly exclude the validity of the other religions: “Christ took as valid the religious experience of Moses and the prophets and the psalmists . . . What held for them must hold for others and it is a misrepresentation of Christianity to make it deny all value and validity in non-Christian approaches to God.”[16] A. R. Vidler quotes the opinion of an anonymous clergyman whom he prefers to name Tertius: “. . . a man can as well become a disciple of Jesus and use his words to interpret the Five Principles of Confucius as he can use them to interpret the Ten Commandments . . .”[17] This is certainly a legitimate option but behind it is the ever-present desire to overcome the historical particularity which clings to the Christian faith. It is an embarrassing feature in a world which strains towards global unity.

The voices against particularism come from every quarter. We are told that “the world is rapidly shrinking” and therefore “we can no longer rub shoulders with other cultures and still claim to have the final or only religion.” The only possible way is “to unite with others on a supra-sectarian plane - the plane of spiritual and moral values - rather than insist on our theological particularities.”[18] This is the tenor of our age: truth is relative, all religions lead to the same goal, the difference is only in name.[19]

1. The Syncretistic Process

We have already seen that syncretism is a built-in principle in the process of history. The same principle operates culturally as it does religiously. Fertilization of ideas, reciprocal influence, and conscious or unconscious borrowing is the rule of life. Man always lives in dependence upon others. Where there is an affinity of presuppositions, religious and cultural accommodation takes place as a matter of course. This is especially so when the underlying orientation is mythological. In ancient Egypt the three gods Amon, Re and Ptah gradually grew into a trinity: Amon was regarded as the name, Ptah was interpreted as Amon’s body and he was understood to represent his countenance.[20] Perhaps the most impressive example of syncretism comes from China where Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism,[21] combined with native pagan rites to form a composite religious system which became so intermixed that it is now impossible to separate the different strains. A similar situation obtains in Japan where Buddhism, Shintoism, Shamanism and a variety of other rites fused into one complex of religious ideas. India, the home of Hinduism and Buddhism presents exactly the same situation. These religions are remarkably open to outside influence and show great ability at assimilation and adaptation.

Like other religions, Christianity too has not managed to escape the assimilatory process. From some points of view this is a natural and healthy sign. It is a deep psychological need to assimilate new insights and to enrich one’s spiritual comprehension. What cannot be reduced to a common denominator is intellectually unmanageable. From history we know that the past can never be completely overcome. Many customs and rites practiced in the Christian Church go back to pagan traditions. Our very

language carried over ideas and presuppositions which stem from antiquity. There can be no escape from the cultural heritage deeply rooted in the experience of the nations. Why then should Christianity resist syncretistic assimilation? This is the problem before us.

In order to see the implications of syncretism we have to submit it to a more careful analysis. It would be well to distinguish the different aspects of the syncretistic problem.

a) To start we must begin with language. The task of translating a message from one language to another poses difficulties. Translation requires more than putting together equivalent words. The same words in different languages carry associations, ideas and sentiments of quite different content.[22] Spengler points to the difficulty of translating what he calls "primary words" of another culture-language, such as the Greek λόγος and νόμος or the Sanskrit *Atman* and *Braman* - words which indicate a world-outlook and which to somebody bred in a different culture can hardly be comprehended.[23] He points to the change which came about in the very thought-forms of the Christian message when it became detached from the Aramaic idiom and was translated into Greek.[24] A good example is the difficulty of rendering the Hebrew *torah* into another tongue. The LXX translates תּוֹרָה with νόμος but *torah* carries connotations which *nomos* cannot possibly convey. To start with it relates to the Old Testament concept of Covenant, a concept utterly foreign to Greek religious tradition. Another example is the little word *hesed* חֶסֶד for which there is no real equivalent, so much so that the RSV has to paraphrase with the cumbersome expression: "steadfast love." The difficulty lies in the lack of context when such terms are transposed into alien soil.[25] Von Soden makes full allowance for this fact which explains why the early Christian writers frequently offended against the genius of the Greek tongue.[26] The difficulty was already recognized by Ben Sirach when he explains that "the things originally spoken in Hebrew have not the same force in them, when they are translated into another tongue."[27]

The issue regarding transposition of language was recently raised by James Barr. Allowing for the fact that there is a linguistic difficulty he denies the problem of conceptual difference between Greek and Hebrew.[28] But in his subsequent work he has been compelled to modify his position. David Hill recognizes the problem which arises from translating such biblical concepts as God's righteousness; the Two Ages; the Spirit, both as man's spirit and as God's Presence; into an utterly foreign idiom like Greek.[29] It is inevitable that the translator should try to adjust his rendition to the concepts and suppositions of those for whom he translates.[30]

Barr contends that the centre of the conflict in the early church was not conceptual but an issue concerning life, namely the Gentiles' relation to the people of God. 'The problem of "translating" Hebrew concepts into Greek idiom did not bother them.[31] This is perfectly true but does not disprove the result, namely the shift of emphasis from a theocentric to an anthropocentric attitude. It is at this very point that the syncretistic loosening takes place. What follows is simply the logical consequence from the primary shift. This is not to deny that syncretization constantly occurs and that there is evidence for it in the Bible itself.[32]

b) Language is the bearer of ideas. Words evoke the association of ideas and syntax provides the context in which these ideas become operative. Behind ideas are suppositions which make up the world-view to which these ideas relate. Barr's criticism is valid on two counts: not the etymology of a word but the way the word is used in a given context is of primary importance; there is a wealth of "non-

distinctive elements" which all men share and which are part and parcel of "distinctive revelation." These two basic facts must not be overlooked.

If revelation is to be translated into human language, syntax and context are the framework whereby meaning is conveyed. If revelation is to reach man at all it must be conveyed by means of concepts common to mankind. But at the same time we must allow for spiritual and cultural differences which shift both meaning and emphasis in directions originally not intended. The nature of the shift and the results it will produce can never be recognized except in retrospect.

It is commonplace that in controversy opponents tend to modify their positions and unconsciously adapt to the other side. This is always the danger of apologetics. If Spengler's account of the 4th century religious situation was only half as confused as he makes out such modification required little sacrifice. He quotes the case of Synesius, bishop of Ptolemais, a disciple of Hypathia and a noted Neoplatonist, who on joining the church only changed the name but not his outlook. To the rest of his life he retained his pre-Christian philosophy.[33] A more complicated case is that of Justin the Martyr. He too was a Platonist before he became a Christian and he naturally carried over Platonic idealism into his Christian faith as did most of the Church Fathers after him. In his Apologia Justin uses the *logos spermatikos* concept in order to bridge the gap from Greek philosophy to the Christian Gospel. This Greek concept of "creative reason"[34] was used to show that Christianity is the only true philosophy and that Jesus is the greatest teacher of pure reason. The intention was laudable but the result was unfortunate for it turned the Christian faith into a form of moral Deism remarkably close to the religious Stoicism of the time. The outstanding example of such a watered-down Christian philosophy is Minucius Felix.[35] Translating Christian concepts into current philosophical idiom created the impression that this was only another philosophical school. Against a Gentile background Jesus soon attained to the status of a secondary deity and was frequently identified with the Demiurgos.[36] This raises the question whether the Neo-Pythagorean concept of the "Spermatic Word" has any relationship to the Johannine Logos who is made out to be an historic person identified as the biblical Messiah? This is not any more a matter of philosophical analysis of concepts but concerns the very heart of the Christian faith namely God's revelation in Jesus Christ. On investigation it may turn out that the apparent similarity is only semantic and that in essence these are poles apart.

c) The Bible attests faith in a God who addresses Himself to man. The majesty of YHWH as Creator of heaven and earth requires that every word of His carries creative power. Here speech and act are interchangeable: "God spake and it was." Unlike human words, His Word is never wasted (cf. Is. 55:11). Man does not live by bread alone but by "every word" (παντὶ ῥήματι LXX) which proceeds from the mouth of God (Deut. 8:3). This divine word is never fragmented, it is never impersonal, never a secondary influence but the very breath which keeps man alive (cf. Gen. 2:7). It is this strictly personal word which John identified with Jesus of Nazareth. There could be nothing more contradictory to the philosophical sentiment than the statement that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. In the Hebrew idiom flesh (*sarx*) stands for man's creatureliness, his weakness and his transience. To identify the Eternal word of Almighty God with an historic person contradicts all the canons of Judaic logic. But it also stands dead against any meaning Greek philosophy and Stoic mysticism would attach to the concept of *logos spermatikos*. Shotwell tells us that unlike Philo, for Justin the Logos could have been nothing else but a person.[37] This makes it even more difficult to see the propriety of identifying such

utterly incommensurate entities: a historic person and a "life-principle" (*Lebensprinzip* according to Windelband). It is obvious that Justin is here putting himself in an ambiguous position.[38]

The hypostatic concept of Wisdom and the identification of Wisdom with the word of God has a long history behind it. In Prov. 8 wisdom is hypostatically conceived as a divine person. But this is only poetic speech. In the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha the identification between word and wisdom becomes more pronounced (cf. Wisdom 7:24f; 9:1; 2 Enoch 33:4). With Philo *logos* and *sophia* show the same characteristics and are closely linked, though occasionally Wisdom is presented as the mother of the Logos.[39] Most scholars associate the Johannine Logos with the name of Philo but they are also aware of an important difference: "With Philo the Logos is an immanent power bringing the world a revelation of the unapproachable, transcendent God, whilst John presents the Logos as mediating fellowship between God and man, who thus attains eternal life."[40] Justin will have inherited a double tradition: the *logos spermatikos* from Greek philosophy and the Word-Wisdom concept from Hebrew-Hellenistic sources. A powerful influence will have been the letter to the Hebrews whose author was himself spirit related to Philo and Alexandrian metaphysics.[41]

Shotwell points out that in comparison with Philo's intricate system of the *Logos-sophia* theology, "Justin's logos concept is a simple one" and that he may not even be classed as a true Platonist.[42]

It is obvious that Justin deploys the *logos spermatikos* concept for apologetic purposes, as when speaking to Jews he uses a different method.[43] The question arises how seriously must the concept be treated and whether it is able to carry the whole weight of a Christian theology of revelation?

Judging from the results of Justin's apologetic approach the method is not commendable. Windelband points out that by identifying the Christian faith with universal reason and by presenting Christianity as a philosophical system it became reduced to a moral Deism. In this new shape the Christian faith became indistinguishable from the prevailing mysticism of the age and was easily mistaken for yet another variation of the many religious sects clamouring for attention.[44] As such it was not very different from Stoic religiosity which has been described as "a philosophic religion or a religious philosophy which incorporated virtually all popular religious beliefs and, by allegorico-physical explanations, managed to combine its monism with polytheism."[45] This is the ever-present danger to the Church when confronted with the challenge of accommodation.[46]

We pass no value-judgement upon the validity of Greek metaphysical speculation or the religious sects which were sustained by it. Our purpose is only to try to disentangle the knotted skein of ideas which have become intermixed with the Hebraic origin of the Christian faith. In this effort it becomes obvious that the Johannine Logos and the *logos spermatikos* though semantically identical are conceptually poles apart. The verbal similarity must not deceive us to assume that the two concepts can be easily conjoined. John's Logos is never an universal principle in the non-historical sense. The Word which became flesh belongs to a different context and cannot be considered outside a theology rooted in biblical history. Covenantal theology is the underlying supposition of the Fourth Gospel. On the other hand, the *logos spermatikos* is never a person historically confined but rather a principle of rationality which pervades the universe. What Justin has done for apologetic reasons theologians have tried to imitate by turning the concept into a fundamental premise.[47] There is good enough reason to question the legitimacy of the enterprise.[48]

2. The Price of Syncretism

Syncretism presents the Church with an almost insuperable dilemma. The reason for the difficulty is not far to seek: on the one hand life demands a syncretistic attitude; man is involved in a never-ending process of learning, absorbing, reflecting and assimilating. On the other hand, assimilation carries the danger of dissolution of essential differences which inevitably leads to falsification. Kamstra who greatly appreciates Buddhist openness to outside influence and who regards syncretism as an enriching principle, has to admit that in Japan it never came to an "existential" confrontation between genuine Buddhism and the indigenous population.[49] From the very beginning the new faith became so intermixed with the old beliefs that converts continued to think in exactly the same terms as before.[50] If this is the case one is justified to question whether Japan in any real sense became Buddhist at all. Buddhism may be pliable enough to absorb and be absorbed by different mythologies, but can the Church afford to submit to a similar process? This is the crucial question which confronts us today.

Can the Christian message be retained in its integrity alongside with Buddhist, Shinto and Taoist philosophies?

Kamstra sees merit in the fact that in Japan Buddhism and Shinto not only were practised side by side and simultaneously but also influenced and changed each other.[51] The reason for this friendly coexistence he sees in the conciliatory attitude of Buddhism which requires no radical change as a condition for conversion.[52] Is it possible for the Church to assume a similar attitude?

For an answer we must not go to psychology, as some do, and ask whether it is a feasible proposition to demand radical change - *metanoia*? Nor must we go to sociology and ask whether dissociation from the past is a commendable policy. As Christians we can only go to the sources and enquire what demands does the Gospel lay upon men and women?

Once the question is formulated in this way the answer becomes self-evident. The Gospel from the start began with personal and social revolution. The disciples were accused of turning the world up-side-down (cf. Acts 17:6). The problem for entrenched religion was and still is how to tolerate a movement which presses for the re-evaluation of all accepted values. The early conflict with Judaism turned on this issue. The Gospel put not only paganism but Judaism itself under a question mark. This then is the dilemma: the inevitability of syncretistic accommodation on the one hand, and the *dynamis* of the Christian message on the other.

It is obvious that the answer cannot be either-or. In this case the experience of the past provides part of the solution. The early church faced exactly the same problem and solved it in an ingenious way.

Early Christianity worked in an atmosphere of a highly developed philosophical eclecticism. The Church Fathers, made wide use of philosophical concepts, chiefly for apologetic reasons. The danger was an obvious one but it could not be avoided. The many sects and heresies of the first three or four centuries show how easy it was to misunderstand the Christian position. There is much truth in M. Werner's description of the situation: "a Hellenistic-syncretistic Mystery religion laden with the decadence of post-classical religiosity strutting about in Christian dress."[53] But this is only one side of the picture. H. E. W. Turner has shown how Harnack has overstated his case by allowing too much scope to Greek influence. A more careful approach would require a distinction between fixed and flexible elements in determining Christian truth. Without such fixed elements of Christian tradition there could have been no Christian Church at all.[54] The most important element in the Christian faith is its insistence upon historicity: "The fact of Christ as the Historical Redeemer serves to differentiate even the most

metaphysical Christian thinkers from the Greek 'flight from history'." Another point of fixity Turner sees in the canon of Scripture. Patristic theology no matter how prompted by metaphysical predilections was restrained and checked by biblical revelation. To this Turner rightly adds the fixity of the *regula fidei* - the credal statements of faith.[55] It means that in the syncretistic process which inevitably occurs there was built in a point of reference which acted as a breaking-force and which made it impossible for the Church to go beyond a certain limit. Philosophy served more as a tool than a source for interpreting the Christian faith. It provided the Church with the necessary vocabulary and technical terminology in formulating and conveying the implications of its message.[56]

As we will see later the Church Fathers though wide open to Greek philosophy never yielded in their hostility to the pagan religions. This is a point which we must not overlook. At the same time they refused to be rigid in their negative attitude. Though allowing that any manifestation of the truth carried validity they did two things: first, they related all truth to the divine Logos; second, they identified the Logos with the historic person of Jesus Christ.[57] Even philosophy itself was looked upon as a *praeparatio evangelica* to pave the way for the full disclosure of the Good News in Christ. Whatever their methods and whatever the motives behind them on this point there was no compromise: salvation and eternal life depended upon every man's response to the Saviour Christ. On this issue there was no hesitation whatsoever. Even Justin's *logos spermatikos* is essentially a Christian effort of identification. An originally philosophical concept was given a Christian twist to serve a missionary purpose. In so doing Justin had good precedence: the author of the Fourth Gospel and the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews did exactly the same. This is syncretism with a difference.

It has been suggested that the author of the Letter to the Hebrews was a former disciple of Philo who subsequently became a Christian.[58] He thus uses his philosophical equipment for interpreting the Gospel and does so with great effect. Similarly, Justin Martyr, a professional philosopher, on becoming a Christian uses his dialectical skill for the propagation of his faith. It is only natural that he should interpret his Christianity in terms most familiar to him. But does his Christian faith rest upon his philosophical armature? Anyone reading his Dialogue with Trypho can immediately detect that there is another side to Justin's faith which is not so apparent in his Apologia. We are told by Turner that "Hellenization does not necessarily lead either to secularization or to depotentiation. If Greek categories were not naturally well adapted for the expression of Christian realities, they were themselves bent or adapted to subject-matter which they were used to convey."[59] There can be little doubt that subsequent theologians have overstressed the Logos concept as employed by the early Apologists and given it a significance far beyond the original intention. The Church Fathers knew full well that the impersonal *logos* of philosophy and the Logos of the Johannine Gospel were not the same and could only serve as analogies. The theological norm was not the philosophical but the historical criterion. The historical fact of revelation in Christ; His uniqueness as the man Jesus; His Cross as ultimate redemption; were the overriding factors. As an abstract, a-historical concept, the *logos* principle moves within the area of metaphysics and is more a gnostic than a Christian term.[60] The testing-ground is the historic fact of God's condescension in Jesus Christ.

The problem created by translating the Gospel in terms which show verbal similarity but carry different meanings is a real one. Ninian Smart's plea that the Christian faith be "translated" into language which is "really intelligible to those brought up in other cultures" sounds reasonable but is liable to grave distortion. How grave is this distortion can be seen from some of the literature of recent date. An outstanding example is Fr. Raymond Panikkar's The Unknown Christ of Hinduism (1964).

Panikkar tells us that "Christ is already there in Hinduism in so far as Hinduism is a true religion."[61] We have seen that Ninian Smart makes a similar claim. It reminds one of the Christian scholars who tried to prove from the Talmud that Jesus was the Messiah.[62] The Danish missionary Kaj Baago follows a similar course. He appeals to the "latent Christianity" already present in Hinduism and Buddhism and plainly recognized by the Eucharistic Congress in Bombay in December 1964. "Must Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims" he asks, "become Christians in order to belong to Christ?" And he continues: "Do they have to be incorporated into church organizations which are utterly alien to their religious traditions? Do they have to call themselves Christian - a word which to them signifies a follower of the eastern religion. Should they necessarily adopt the Christian traditions, customs and rites which often have their root in Western culture more than in the Gospel? Are all these conditions for belonging to Christ?" - His answer is an emphatic NO.[63]

Baago's position is prompted by the view that "the Christian religion, to a large extent a product of the West, cannot and shall not become the religion of all nations and races." He argues that Christ Himself belonged to a non-Christian religion. There can be no reason why Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims should have to accept the Western interpretation of the Gospel in order to belong to Christ. "He is not the monopoly of Christians." Christ and the Church are therefore not identical. In Baago's view missionaries would have to leave organized Christianity and accept the religion of the people they want to serve with the Gospel; for the Gospel can only be preached from within a religion and not from the outside. This is his advice: "We are to accept these religions as our own religions, letting the Gospel which we have been given and must in turn give, purify them from within." There is however one proviso: Christians can identify themselves with other religions only "in so far as they (i.e. the non-Christian religions) do not conflict with Christ."

Baago's critics were quick to note the complete lack of a theological appreciation of the Church in history.[64] There is a further difficulty which must not escape us: how is the preaching of the Gospel possible without reference to the Bible, its history and its people? It is exactly at this point that the biblical norms of historicity, particularity and finality come into full play. They prevent us from so spiritualizing the "Christ of all the religions" as to detach Him from His original background.[65] It is for these reasons that the loose concept of "catholicity" as presented by J. D. Conway only confuses the issue. In Conway's view pagans who know about a Supreme Being, who are aware of their immortal soul and who know the difference between right and wrong already participate in the substance of the Church: such people, though outside the Church, "are saved by what is Catholic in them, not by anything non-Catholic in their position."[66]

This is an odd use of the word "catholic"; but it is also a perversion of the New Testament concept of salvation. Redemption in New Testament terms is never merited and always a gift. Self-salvation and salvation in Christ are poles apart. It does not seem that Christ *incognito* is the bridge from the religions to the Gospel in spite of the effort by Panikkar and others. The problem is not the assimilation of concepts or interpretation of ideas so as to fit the Gospel into the indigenous mould. It is rather how to interpose the story of an alien people and a Jewish Saviour into the national history of the nations. It seems to us that Fr. Panikkar misses the point for he fails to come to grips with the main issue, namely the peculiar nature of biblical history. The assumption that the logos concept can by-pass the concrete historic aspect of revelation is an illusion. It is not the universality of the logos that offends the religions but the Logos at the point of time. We do not dispute that God is present to Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims,

etc. But we do dispute that He is known as the God of Israel and the Father of Jesus Christ. Even Panikkar admits that God is present to Hinduism in a hidden way.

Huston Smith has argued that each accommodation on the part of the Church resulted in equipping the *Kerygma* rather than diluting it. Like Panikkar he points to the Thomist compromise which made Aristotelian philosophy the handmaid of theology. He asks: "Has there ever been an instance in which faiths have existed cheek by jowl without something of each rubbing off onto the other?"[67] He therefore advises "partial accommodation" in an inter-faith encounter. Apart from the fact that Richard Niebuhr has already pointed to the confusion which arises by equating biblical faith with the "faith" of other religions,[68] Smith makes the additional mistake usually made by those who treat religion as the special locus for revelation.[69] If this were the case then partnership, of course, is the most obvious requirement and there is much that we can learn from the "other" religions.[70]

To help us out of the difficulty Nida suggests "indigenization" instead of syncretism. He explains: "indigenization consists essentially in the full employment of local indigenous forms of communication, methods of transmission, and communicators, as these means can be prepared and trained." Syncretism, on the other hand, involves "accommodations of content, a synthesis of beliefs, and an amalgamation of world views, in such a way as to provide some common basis for constructing a 'new system' or a 'new approach."[71] Nida points to Paul who made use of *Koiné*, the language indigenous to the Hellenistic world but who refused to indulge in syncretistic compromise. By contrast he points to Justin who with his appeal to the Logos found himself on the verge of syncretism though he withdrew at a critical point. On reflection, however, it appears that the distinction is only a semantic one. Once translation takes place syncretism is a concomitant. With the use of *Koiné* new ideas entered into play. But how otherwise was Paul to address Greeks, except in their own idiom?

It would appear that the problem is not just a matter of language. The message which has to be conveyed can only be done in an idiom familiar to the hearer. Every language has a history of its own with nuances of meaning which are characteristic for it. In addition, the listener brings with him fixed presuppositions which cause him to interpret the *kerygma* in terms he best understands. These are facts of life which cannot be circumvented. To compound the difficulty, language imposes limitations which foreshorten the message: the messenger can only witness to and hint at the ultimate which cannot adequately be expressed. If he tries to go beyond the limits he finds himself in the realm of speculation. "Indigenization" therefore is only a verbal solution. The problem is not finding the right concepts in order to convey the right ideas and in an idiom which the hearer understands. The problem is to put the hearer in a context which will provide him with the perspective from which God becomes transparent in the person of Jesus Christ.

The best example that "indigenization" is not the solution we find in the New Testament itself. If we assume that Jesus spoke the same language to His own people, from within the same tradition and within the same culture, we may well ask why was He misunderstood? There appears to be a gap between the messianic expectation in Israel at the time of Jesus and the New Testament understanding of messiahship. Some scholars have tried to explain the difference by the intrusion of an alien element as a result of Hellenistic influence; others like Robert Eisler and S. G. F. Brandon have argued that originally there was no such difference; the historic Jesus was a national rebel who died in the cause of political freedom.[72] But this is an extreme view not accepted by the generality of scholars. The conflict between prophets and priests throws some light upon the problem for we meet here a similar situation. Amos and Amaziah seem to be talking at cross-purposes though both speak the same language. In this respect we

must give James Barr his due: "A good translation is able to present in a new language the effective content of a passage in spite of the unavoidable losses, because it will give a sufficient representation of the sense of the whole . . ."[73] To make language the villain of syncretism is to over-stress the point. After all, language as a human tool has universal application and syncretism, as Barr rightly observes is a phenomenon which occurs under all conditions.[74] It would seem that a better theological orientation to the question of syncretism is required to retain flexibility demanded by life and at the same time to preserve the particularity of the Christian message.

Kenneth Cragg chides the Church for its "proprietary indulgence in uniqueness;" he sincerely questions whether such an attitude is in keeping with her "creative trusteeship of the world, however orthodox may be its motives . . ."[75] Against this, however, we have the incontrovertible evidence from history as to the effects of purposeful and easy-going accommodation. Religious intermingling has produced the most remarkable aberrations as in the case of the Mexican Indians. W. L. Wipfler has provided us with a short but clear description of religious syncretism in the Caribbean. In Mexico, traditional Aztec paganism has blended with Spanish Catholicism to produce a religious parody of both in which neither is any more recognizable. The Indians have remained pagan both in heart and practice but have managed to adapt Catholic forms of worship so as to make it compatible with their own world view: "The Indians of Tecospa have little understanding of the Christian ethics taught by Catholic priests. They do not love the Christian God nor do they think that He loves them . . . In Tecospa a man may think or believe whatever he likes so long as he conducts himself according to the local code." The result is a curious mixture of pagan practice and Christian rites. Wipfler quotes the Spanish missionary Fray Geronomio de Mendieta who complained that "among the idols and demons were to be found also images of Christ our Lord and of Our Lady, which the Spaniards have given them, thinking that with these alone they would be satisfied. But they, having a hundred gods, wanted a hundred and one more, if more be given them." After three hundred years the situation is still the same; as before, curers, rainmakers, witches are still travelling from village to village and thus "keeping alive the old beliefs and practices."[76] Conditions in Haiti are similar. Here the Vodun cult and the Roman Church have worked out a symbiosis whereby both are practiced simultaneously. The crucifix, Christian saints, holy water and Roman litanies are used for ancient ancestor worship and sacrifices. Wipfler quotes an eye-witness who explains: "Psychologically," this "serves to assure the participants that they are not proceeding to worship the African gods without having paid friendly homage to God, the ruler of the universe, and the saints."[77]

William Wipfler regards the Haitian compromise as one of the most outstanding examples of syncretism; he calls it "syncretism par excellence."

Here "Baptism, the cult of the saints, Church prayers, burial practices have all been integrated into Vodun devotions . . ." Wipfler explains that the Haitian appears to regard the forces of the universe under double control, the pagan gods, and the Christian God, and homage to both systems as equally obligatory. According to this philosophy one can be a Christian and a worshipper of other gods at one and the same time. The situation in Jamaica is somewhat similar where the ancient primitive cult became intermixed with some half-baked Christian ideas.[78]

The developments in Mexico and Haiti may be regarded as extreme cases. Here cultural limitations, gross illiteracy and primitive superstition have combined with a low and retrograde form of Roman Catholicism to create a most unwholesome situation. Not even those who write in favour of accommodation with the non-Christian religions would be prepared to endorse this kind of syncretism.

This applies even to Bouquet, the advocate of "a gentler and more generous view" even in the case of "pre-axial religion."[79] With typical Anglo-Saxon generosity, he is prepared to allow for "Christian Buddhists, Christian Confucians, and even perhaps Christian Vedantists or Christian Moslems, without in the least abating their adherence to the Catholic Faith . . ." What impresses Bouquet is the religious fervour and genuine devotion: "even the most naive and unsophisticated of non-literate and simple peasants sometimes display a wholeness and soundness of spiritual insight which makes their prayers and their behaviour very nearly Christian, and put to shame those of some orthodox church people."[80] This, of course, is a value-judgement which is not open to discussion because of its subjective nature but what may be questioned is the assumption that "spiritual insight" is the way to become a Christian? Some would prefer to say that spiritual bankruptcy is the road which leads to Christ and they will find sufficient evidence both from history and experience to prove their point.

The case of Mexico and Haiti is meant to be taken seriously. The mass of Hindus is culturally and intellectually not far in advance of the peoples in the Caribbean. What happened there can easily repeat itself in India given the opportunity and the conditions. Even Bouquet knows the danger of "indigenization" and warns against hasty syncretism.[81] But the problem goes much deeper than the question of cultural limitation. The leaders of Hindu thought are highly intellectual and deeply spiritual. Hinduism is regarded by many Western scholars as theologically closest to the Christian Faith. It is therefore a good example for our discussion of syncretism.

Those who write of Hinduism as a clearly defined entity are either ignorant of the facts or are deliberately misleading. R. L. Slater acknowledges that Hinduism is difficult to define and he thinks this is chiefly because it has no central point of reference.[82] But the real reason lies elsewhere: Hinduism is so many, frequently contrary ideas, derived from so many different sources, that it is impossible to decide what is its essential nature. Slater suggests geography as the binding factor for neither doctrine nor history appear to be the common denominator.[83] Some scholars question whether there is such an entity as Hinduism at all. There is a "large variety of systems, schools and beliefs" which are so separate and distinct "that it is illegitimate to lump them all together under the common name of 'Hinduism'."[84] The peculiar achievement of Hinduism is that these contradictory and heterogeneous views and practices have been assembled in a remarkable symbiosis "all in the same house."[85] But this display of tolerance is entirely due to the vagueness and fluidity of Hindu philosophy. The result is that many different things are held to be genuine Hinduism by many different people. Not even the basic assumption of *samsara* (rebirth), *karma* (law of causation), *moksha* (release from the round of existence) are interpreted uniformly. Professor Slater stretches the point when he calls it the "hidden creed."[86] Bishop Kulandran has shown that not only Vaishnavism, but every other form of Hinduism reveals the same tendency "of absorbing every conceivable type of popular cult, by allowing every kind of deity to be regarded as a manifestation of the divine."[87] The result is the most astounding system of contradictions as classically expressed by the *Saiva Siddhanta* synthesis. This is how Bishop Kulandran puts it: "It aims at no rivalry with the *Vedanta*; but, on the other hand, says that *Siddhanta* is a culmination of the *Vedanta*. It acknowledges the Upanishadic tradition; but also pays equal attention to the Agamic tradition. It claims to be *advaitic*, but also insists that Reality is not just one. It is a Bhakti religion, but also a religion of *Karma*. It teaches that Siva is the Supreme God but has a place for Vishnu and Brahma. It disdains *avatars*; but teaches many manifestations of the Deity."[88] In other words, Hinduism allows a limitless variety of choice not only of doctrines but of gods as well.[89]

What has been said of Siddhanta Hinduism is equally valid of the other sects. Here dualism and monism, atheism and theism, idol worship and high spirituality, grace and *karma*, mysticism and priesthood, the phallic cult and chastity, all find home and are equally valid. In such a situation there should be no difficulty to "indigenize" Christianity as yet another additional ingredient in this remarkable *pot-pourri*. There is however one condition: the Christian faith must become pliable enough to be incorporated into the Hindu kaleidoscope. It means that the Church must drop her claim to exclusiveness and submerge into the larger whole.

The Hindu genius for syncretism has made it possible to weave its many-coloured fabric of religiosity from a variety of traditions both indigenous and foreign. It even managed to absorb its "greatest rebel" by making Buddha himself yet another *avatar* of Vishnu. Bishop Kulandran describes this remarkable feat as "the strangest *coup d'etat* in religious history."[90] For this reason there should be no difficulty in including Jesus in the long chain of divine manifestations. But Hinduism can only do it on its own terms. What are the terms?

In Hindu perspective the *avatar* as "God's descent into man" is a repeatable occurrence. There have been many Christs and there shall be more. Jesus of Nazareth can only be one of them.[91] Scholars have pointed out that the Christian concept of the Incarnation is inapplicable to the Hindu *avatars*; emmanationism is perhaps the correct term to describe its concept of revelation. This is essentially a gnostic concept. There is here a gradual descent of the divine essence in a variety of forms: "The great Fish, the Tortoise, the Boar, the Man-Lion, the Dwarf, the Rama with the Axe, Rama the Hero, Krishna, the Buddha, the Kalki or the One yet to come." The number of *avatars* depends upon different traditions: thirty-three, eighteen, fifteen, ten, or unlimited in number. Any guru or hero can be a divine manifestation.[92] In reaction to the Christian faith Siddhanta Hinduism rejected the whole idea of *avatars* altogether.[93] It is this kind of fluidity, this *neti neti* attitude, so characteristic not only for Hinduism but for Buddhism also, which makes it so difficult to know where faith ends and agnosticism begins.[94] *Samsara* as the cosmic force of repetition, a concept which dominates the Hindu mind, can never be reconciled with the unrepeatability of Christ's Incarnation.[95]

Because Hinduism has no biblical concept of sin, salvation is understood as deliverance from the cycle of metampsychosis. In such a situation the Cross becomes redundant. Contemporary Hindu teachers object to the Christian interpretation of the Cross by which they say the message of Jesus has become falsified.[96] This is a natural objection considering that Hinduism stands first and foremost for self-salvation.[97] It is obvious that Hinduism and Church do not only speak two different languages but operate in two entirely different contexts where the underlying suppositions are diametrically opposed. It is difficult to see what Slater means by his remark that "across the wide world faith speaks to faith . . .,"[98] when at every step we find that the assumptions are so utterly different. For an example we may take the concept of grace: here only the word is similar[99] the meaning however derives from two entirely different world views.

There is however a connection between Hinduism and Christianity but this is on the ordinary human level. Here the saying by Terence is most applicable: *homo sum; humani nil a me alienum puto*. When Slater speaks of "faith," he means religious experience, man's search for God, man's cry for "redemption" (*samsara*) man's "unending speculation," man's quest for "conceptual answers"[100] On this plane we stand together as religious men though our terms of reference widely differ.[101]

Joan Metge discussing the problem of "Christ and Culture" with special reference to Maori Christianity arrived at the conclusion that even partial accommodation by way of a selective and careful

use of traditional concepts carries the danger of misinterpretation. Her own position is expressed in the following sentence: “There are times when people want and need to break completely free of forms that have proved inadequate and make a new start.”[102] Visser’t Hooft takes a similar position: the Gospel must not be compromised; to reach an old culture it has to be broken open and interpreted in the new light. Such reinterpretation must aim at providing a link between the old and the new but it must be a genuine link and this cannot be achieved by glossing over differences.[103] It would seem that the cost of syncretistic accommodation is too prohibitive for the Church to afford it. The case of Confucianism may serve as a wholesome warning. The original teaching of Confucius became so adulterated by way of exposure to extraneous influences as to be unrecognizable. Mr. Costerus quotes H. G. Creel’s verdict about Confucian teaching: “It had triumphed, but at the cost of such transformation that one wonders whether it can still properly be called Confucianism.”[104]

Scholars who write glibly about Christian accommodation towards other religions will do well to ponder this fact. Those who advocate the “universal” dimension of Christology so as to facilitate comprehensive integration with other religions fail to appreciate the true nature of the Gospel message which presses for a decision about Jesus Christ in strictly personal terms.[105] The group which met to discuss “Indigenous Christian Worship” rightly made allowances for language, music, architecture, marriage, festivities, etc. But beyond this it could not go: “that which is truly contradictory to the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments cannot, of course, be accounted as Christian.”[106] In this respect Visser’t Hooft’s position is unassailable: “True accommodation is to let God's Word produce its explosive and revolutionary effect within the culture and religion concerned.”[107] Revolution and syncretism do not easily fit together. The price of syncretism is the loss of the Gospel in return for universal religion.[108]

The surrender of the uniqueness of the Gospel in return for religious integration is too high a price. The fact that the world stands in need of an integrated philosophy of life is not a good enough reason for reducing the Christian Faith to the lowest denominator. Even were such an attempt seriously contemplated it would result in mere futility. Ferkiss rightly pours scorn upon “a society which carries eclecticism to the point where not only the total culture but the individual consciousness becomes a mere congeries of disassociated elements . . .”[109] But the idea that the Christian faith, based upon biblical presuppositions can come to terms with the world religions without much loss is a fallacy grounded in ignorance. Those who plead for a world religion will have to persuade believers to abandon their historic faith and to start *de novo*. But such an artificial creation will never command the loyalty and respect of committed men. Religions are not made this way.

The idea of accommodation is in itself an indication of the loss of faith. Under such circumstances there can be no true dialogue with believers of other faiths.[110] A genuine dialogue is only possible from faith to faith, otherwise it remains an academic exercise.

Notes to Chapter II

[1]Cf. Hans-Gerhard Koch, The Abolition of God, E.T., 1963, 134ff (“Materialistic Atheism becomes a Creed, Apotheosis and Cult”); cf. also Michael Bourdeaux, Religious Ferment in Russia, 1968, 95ff, 189; cf. also Mary-Barbara Zeldin, “The Religious Nature of Russian Marxism," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Spring, 1969, 100ff.

[2] Cf'. R. McL. Wilson, Gnosis & the N. T., 1968, 25.

[3] Cf. RGG, “Synkretistischer Streit”. For greater detail see Joh. von Walter, Die Geschichte d. Christentums, 1938, 4/2, 463ff.

[4] Gf. G. G. Montefiore, Truth in Religion & Other Sermons, 1906, 31, 273f.

[5] Cf. Gabriel Marcel, Fresh Hope for the World, E.T., 1960; especially the Introduction in the form of a letter to “Three anxious friends”.

[6] Cf. "Bahai'i world Faith," by J. J. Keene, Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion, Fall, 1967; cf. also D. Hofman, Renewal of Civilization: Baha'i Faith, 1946. For the origin of Baha'i faith see Ninian Smart, The Religious Experience of Mankind, 1969, 417ff.

[7] Cf. Gaius Glenn Atkins, Modern Religious Cults & Movements, 1923, 332f: For the missionary activity of Baha'ism, see Christianity Today, Feb 18, 1966, 25.

[8] On Roberto de Nobili, see V. Cronin, A Pearl of India, 1959. On the two outstanding Jesuit missionaries in China who were in the centre of the 'Chinese rite' controversy, Matteo Ricci and Alessandro Valignano, see New Cath. Encycl., s.v. See also the art. by Charles Bolton, “Beyond the Ecumenical: Pan-Deism?” Christianity Today, Oct 23, 1964, 20ff.

[9] G. C. Berkouwer, The Second Vatican Council the New Catholicism, E.T., 1965, 186.

[10] The Documents of Vatican II, 1966, 612f; see also Joseph J. Spae, “Christ & the Religions," S. E. Asia Journal of Theol., Jan 1967. “The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions” (Declaration on the Church, 2). These values are regarded as “preparation for the acceptance of the message of the Gospel."

[11] The Documents of Vatican II, 607.

[12] Cf. Peter Watkins, “Simone Weil: Antisemitism & Syncretism” Church Quarterly Review, Oct-Dec 1962, 463ff.

[13] Soundings, ed. by A. R. Widler, 1962, 106f.

[14] Cf. Ninian Smart, "The Unknown Hinduism of Christianity” The Listener, Sept 16, 1965, 414ff. Cf. also his The Yogi & the Devotee, an expansion of his lectures delivered at St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi, 1964, aiming at laying the foundation of an inter-religious theology. (cf. The Times Lit. Suppl. Aug 15, 1968). Joseph J. Spae, writing as a R.C. admits that the Vatican Council failed to provide an answer to the question whether “non-Christians” in possession of (those) “salvific gifts” may legitimately be called “anonymous Christians”. (S.E. Asia Journal of Theol., Jan.1967, 39.

[15] Soundings, 108ff.

[16] Church Quarterly Review, Oct-Dec 1962, 469.

[17] Soundings, 249f.

[18] Fred Gladstone Bratton, The First Heretic, The Life & Times of Ikhnaton the King, 1961, 182.

[19] G. W. Target has drawn the last conclusion from the syncretistic principle by declaring everyone right (Under the Christian Carpet, 1969) cf. review in Church Times, Jan 9/1970.

[20] Cf. H. H. Gowan, A History of Religion, 1934, 338ff.

[21] Cf. E. Züricher, The Buddhist Conquest of China, 1959, 12f: there are “definite indications that at least in some cases syncretism was consciously applied as a tactical device . . ." cf. also 134.

[22] Cf. Oswald Spengler, The Decline of the West, E.T., special ed. 1939, II, 4lff; see also the article by J. A. Johnson, “America and the Future” in America & the Future of Theology (n.d.) 83; for the general problem of translating from one language to another, see Theodore Savory, The Art of Translation, 1957.

[23] Spengler, op.cit. II, 146; cf. M. R. van den Berg, Syncretisme als Uitdaging, 1966, dealing with the problem of Bantu syncretism. According to van den Berg the Gospel fails to reach Bantu mentality and culture; cf. IRM, Oct 1968, 468f.

[24] Cf. T. F. Torrance, The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers, 1948, 106f, 134, 141.

[25] Hermann von Soden, The Hist. of Early Church Literature, Engl. 1906, 11. A good example of the difficulty of translating words from one context into another is the biblical concept of sin when put into the Hindu idiom where man is understood as divine and not sinful. Cf. S. Kulandra, Grace, 1964, 236ff. W. A. Visser't Hooft quotes the Italian proverb: *traduttore - traditore* - the translator is a traitor; by this is meant that all translation is inevitably an accommodation and thus a reduction from the original. (cf. S. E. Asia Journal of Theol., Jan 1967, 8).

[26] Prologue to Ecclesiasticus. For the difficulty of communication between religions, see A. C. Bouquet, The Christian Faith & Non-Christian Religions, 1958, 299f.

[27] Cf. James Barr, The Semantics of Biblical Language, 1961, 266 & note.

[28] Cf. James Barr, Old & New Interpretation, 1966, 49, 54f: also Biblical Words for Time, 1962,158ff.

[29] Cf. D. Hill, Greek Words & Hebrew Meanings, 1967, 20f, 82ff, 163ff, 205ff, 294f; "every word is a semantic marker for a field of meaning" ib. 12.

[30] On the problem of translating the Bible see The Listener, March 23, 1961.

[31] Old & New Interpretation, 60ff; cf. the review by R. McL. Wilson, NTS, VIII, (1961-62) 282f.

[32] For aspects of syncretism in the O.T. see Donald E. Gowan, "Prophets, Deuteronomy & the Syncretistic cult in Israel," Transitions in Biblical Scholarship, ed. by J. Coert Rylaarsdam, 1968, 93ff. G. W. Aahlström's art. in the same volume "Some Remarks on Prophets & Cults" offers a rather naive explanation for syncretism (ib. 128).

[33] Spengler, op.cit II 252.

[34] Windelband, Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie, 1948, 15, 5.

[35] ib. 18, 3.

[36] Cf. W. A. Shotwell, The Biblical Exegesis of Justin Martyr, 1965, 108.

[37] Shotwell, op.cit 112.

[38] No argument on the part of Nels F. S. Ferré can overcome this radical difference; cf. his The Universal Word, 1969.

[39] Cf. Carl Siegfried, Philo von Alexandria, 1875, 215; 222.

[40] W. F. Howard, The Fourth Gospel, (revised by C. K. Barrett), 1955, 147.

[41] Cf. Shotwell, op.cit 58ff.

[42] Shotwell, op.cit 112.

[43] Cf. ib. 108.

[44] Cf. Windelband, op.cit 187.

[45] Cambridge History of Later Greek & Early Medieval Philosophy, ed. by A. H. Armstrong, 1967, 131.

[46] In view of the historic facts it is difficult to understand Mark Rahner's cavalier attitude towards eclecticism. He assures us that "theology is always eclectic and has always been so". Both scripture and tradition have "freely drawn from anywhere" (Theology Digest, Feb. 1968, 36).

[47] Nels F. S. Ferré, The Universal Word, is the most outstanding effort to reduce the Johann Logos to an universal principle of revelation. But to accept this, one would have to go the whole way and with Peter Berger pose "discovery" against "revelation" (cf. Peter L. Berger, A Rumour of Angels, 1969, 104). Ferré does not appear to go that far!

[48] A. W. Argyle who sets out to show “the permanent value" of the Logos doctrine for Christian theology, admits that at the most decisive point it becomes contradictory, namely at the meaning of the Incarnation. The Greek Fathers, he avers, were operating with a weak anthropology: "If the only thing which distinguishes man from the animals is a divine element the soul, there is no distinctively human nature for the incarnate Christ to take . . . It is difficult on this view to find room for the real humanity of Jesus.” (A. W. Argyle, “The Logos Doctrine & Christian Thought," Studies in History & Religion, ed. by E. A. Payne, 1942, 133).

[49] Cf. Kamstra, Encounter or Syncretism, 1967, 468.

[50] ib. 340ff; 395ff.

[51] ib. 364.

[52] ib. 343.

[53] Quoted by H. E.W. Turner, The Pattern of Christian Truth, 1954, 22. (M. Werner, Die Enstehung des christlichen Dogmas, 725).

[54] Chris. M. Costerus, an experienced missionary, wrote: “It is the unwillingness of the Christian faith to compromise that has helped to keep it alive, and also prevented it from becoming accepted more generally in the world.” (The Vine & the Bamboo, Thesis MS at Knox College, Toronto, 1968, 150).

[55] H. E. W. Turner, op.cit 26ff.

[56] Cf. ib. 32.

[57] According to Paul Tillich “Christian universalism was not syncretistic it did not mix, but rather subjected whatever it received to an ultimate criterion” (Christianity & the Encounter of World Religions, 1964, 36; cf. also ib. p. 96.

[58] Cf. Shotwell, op.cit 60.

[59] H. E. W. Turner, op.cit 417.

[60] Cf. T. R. Glover, The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire, 1909, 303f. When Ferré says that “revelation at its full heart cannot be limited to or by any historical faith” he willfully contradicts the basic tenet of Christian belief. (cf. The Universal Word, 17).

[61] R. Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, 1964, 17; cf. S. Radhakrishnan’s remark: “Those who believe in the immanent Logos are obliged to admit the value of other faiths.” (Eastern Religions & Western Thought, 1939, 321). Hans Küng however is critical of those who claim all pious non-Christians for the Church against their choice and will. (Cf. Freedom Today, 1966).

[62] Cf. J. Jocz, “Das exegetische Problem u. die Judenmission” Judaica, März, 1956, 12ff.

[63] IRM, July 1966, 33lf: for the concept of the “latent Church," see P. Tillich, Syst. Theol., III, 153, 155, 220, also On the Boundary, 1966, 67. The outstanding example of making Christians against their will is Karl Rahner’s article “Atheism & Implicit Christianity” Theology Digest, Feb. 1968, 43ff. He defines “Implicit Christianity” as "anonymous Christianity” in the case of those who live in a state of justification and grace though have never come in contact with the Gospel. He is especially concerned with atheists whose atheism is only conceptual but not immoral.

[64] Cf. the reply to his article by Ian H. Douglas and John B, Carman, IRM, Oct. 1966, 483ff,

[65] Cf. ib. 484. W. A. Visser't Hooft raises the important question: “are Christians forever bound to Hebraic ways of thinking?" His answer is straightforward: “. . . followers of Christ can never get away from the Hebraic world of thought and life and have to go constantly back to it to understand the meaning of the kerygma.” (S. E. Asia Journal of Theol., Jan. 1967, 11).

[66] Monsignor J. D. Conway, What the Church Teaches, 1962, 158. As this book has the *nihil obstat* and the *imprimatur* of the Roman Catholic authorities, we may take it as the official position of that Church.

[67] Huston Smith, “Between Syncretism & the Ghetto," Theology Today, April 1963, 2lff.

[68] Cf. H. R. Niebuhr, "On the Nature of Faith," Religious Experience & Truth, ed. by Sidney Hook, 1961, 95, 102.

[69] Cf. Panikkar's characteristic remark: “the Religions meet in religion” op.cit10. He speaks of the Presence of God in other religions; ib. 138. Rahner, though using different terminology, says the same thing. He speaks of theism as “the dimension of man’s transcendentality” (Theology Digest, op.cit 52).

[70] Cf. R. S. Slater, Can Christians Learn from Other Religions? 1963. The answer is Yes, "for where there is a response there must be a call," ib. 88. Is it not possible however, that in religion man is posing &. answering his own questions? Even Hans Kung concedes the “appalling error & moral weakness” of the religions (cf. Freedom Today, text reprint ed. by Owen C. Thomas, Attitudes towards other Religions, 1969, 214f.

[71] E. A. Nida, Message & Mission, The Communication of the Christian Faith, 1960, 185.

[72] Cf. Robert Eisler, The Enigma of the Fourth Gospel, 1938; also S. G. F. Brandon, Jesus & the Zealots: a study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity, 1967, 413ff; cf. also Brandon’s article: "The trial of Jesus: the enigma of the first Good Friday," History Today, April 1966, 251ff; also The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth, 1968, where Peter’s name *Barjona* is understood to mean “terrorist” (ib. p.144) cf. also Joel Carmichael, The Death of Jesus, 1963. The opposite view is taken by Karl Jasper’s, Socrates, Buddah, Confucius, Jesus, E. T. 1962, 72f. For an answer to Brandon see CJT Vol. XVI, 1970, 12ff.

[73] James Barr, The Semantics of Biblical Language, 1961, 266.

[74] Cf. James Barr, Old & New in Interpretation, 1966, 47.

[75] IRM, July 1957; cf. also Christianity in World Perspective, 1968, Canon Cragg (now Bishop in Jerusalem) understands ecumenicity as a “living relatedness to the whole of humanity,” he therefore advises a redefinition of the meaning of conversion so that those of other religious traditions could orientate themselves towards Jesus Christ without leaving their religious communities.

[76] William L. Wipfler, “Religious Syncretism in the Caribbean” Occasional Bulletin, Missionary Research Library, Jan. 1968.

[77] ib. 10.

[78] Cf. “The Cult of Pocomania” The Times British Colonies Review, Spring; 1955, 41; also Ulrich Fischer, Zur Liturgie des Umbandakultus, 1970. In the West there are similar examples. The Aetherus Society, a cult founded in London in 1954 which has to do with flying saucers, atomic radiation and spiritual energy derived from mountaintops has adopted Master Jesus as its guide (cf. John Jackson, “Two Contemporary Cults," The Listener, May 19, 1966, 715ff.

[79] Cf. A. C. Bouqμet; The Christian Faith & Non Christian Religions, 1958, 424f. 1t is noteworthy that Mexico and Haiti have failed to engage the learned author's attention; one wonders why?

[80] Bouquet, ib. 425f.

[81] ib. 424.

[82] R. L. Slater, World Religions & World Community, 1963, 52f.

[83] Slater, ib. 60, 62f.

[84] Sabapathy Kulandran, Grace in Christianity & Hinduism, 1964, 225f.

[85] Slater, op.cit 61.

[86] ib. 53.

[87] S. Kulandran, op.cit 149.

[88] S. Kulandran, ib. 257.

[89] Cf. ib. 242.

[90] ib. 150. This is admitted by Hindu writers themselves. S. Radhakrishnan explains that Hinduism "is a large synthesis achieved in the course of centuries" Eastern Religions & Western Thought, 1939, 339. But they take pride in this fact.

[91] Cf. R. L. Slater, Can Christians Learn from other Religions? 1963, 4lf.

[92] Cf. Kulandran, op.cit 149, 261.

[93] ib. 215.

[94] Cf. Slater, World Religions & World Community, 203.

[95] Cf. Kulandran, 266f. On samsara see ib. 238f, etc.

[96] Cf. Slater, op.cit 26f, 29. The Cross offends the Western humanist as it does the Eastern mystic. Sir Alister Hardy cannot see the connection between "the loving father revealed to us by Jesus" and "a God who could send his son into the world to be tortured to death . . ." (The Listener, April 16, 1970, 507).

[97] Kulandran, op.cit 261; cf. H. Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World, 1938, 165ff.

[98] Slater, Can Christians Learn from Other Religions?, 57.

[99] Cf. Kulandran, 261.

[100] Cf. ib. 238f, 229f, 232f.

[101] Only in this limited sense can Klaus K. Klostermeier's article "Hindu-Christian Dialogue" be acceptable. A dialogue "based on a meditative approach" completely bypasses the main issue (cf. Studies in Religion, Canadian Journal, Fall 1971, 83ff.

[102] Joan Metge, "Christ Culture," S. E. Asia Journal of Theology, Jan. 1967, 31.

[103] ib. 18.

[104] H. G. Creel, Chinese Thought from Confucius to Mao Tse-Tung, 1953, 181.

[105] Cf. Horst Bürkle's critique of Otto Wolff's book: Christus unter den Hindus, (1965); IMR, Jan. 1968, 130f.

[106] Cf. S. E. Asia Journal of Theology, 1966, 26.

[107] ib. 14.

[108] William Nicholls, Revelation in Christ, (1958) rightly remarks that "the person who rejects Christianity altogether has a far clearer insight into its nature than the one who thinks to make such concessions," i.e. to accommodate the "other religions" (ib. 95, cf. ib. 130).

[109] Victor C. Ferkiss, Technological Man: The Myth & the Reality, 1969, 241.

[110] Cf. "Christians in Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths," IRM, Oct. 1970, 382ff.

Chapter III - The Case For Universal Religion

Sir Alister Hardy, whose name has already been mentioned, speaks for many intellectuals both of East and West, when he says that the survival of civilization will depend upon religion, but it will not be orthodox Christianity. What we need, according to him, is "a new natural theology."[1] Arnold Toynbee takes a similar view: "for a human being, to have religion is inescapable." Both Hardy and Toynbee allow a spiritual presence in the universe which transcends man, but the latter differs as to the question of choice. Whereas Hardy opts for a religion adapted to science, Toynbee is more mystical. The capital question, according to Toynbee, which now faces mankind, is which of the contending religions will win man's allegiance? Toynbee is strongly drawn towards Hindu-Buddhism which he believes has a "direct vision of ultimate reality." In addition it "has commended itself to a majority of mankind" and seems to him "that it comes nearer to the truth than theism." But on reflection, Toynbee is not happy to see the different religions coalesce. He regards multiplicity and variety a positive good. He quotes a fourth century Roman senator who protested against the imposition of Christianity: "So great a mystery cannot be approached by one road only." What is needed is not fusion but charitable co-existence in dialogical interchange. He does not think "that the religion of the immediate future is going to be a religion of the highest kind." This strikes a pessimistic note. It is obvious that for Toynbee none of the existing religions come up to the highest ideal. But he is realist enough to know that religions persist for centuries. As he sees it, the present choice is between religion and the evil worship of human power. Unless the religions become rejuvenated the outlook for mankind will be dark indeed.[2]

There are however voices which are more persistent than that of Toynbee, especially in the West. Alasdair MacIntyre insists that not only traditional but even Christianity in its more modern dress is unable to "recognize adequately the connection between the unintelligibility of Christian doctrines to contemporary man." No reforming effort will be sufficient to make Christian theology intelligible.[3] Modern man is thus left in the lurch without a religion.

The shift, in accordance with the spirit of our age, is from the divine to the human, from God to man. God, according to Auguste Comte, served a useful purpose "during the long minority of humanity" but from now on Humanity itself must become the object of man's worship. Comte aimed at a society which will re-organize itself "*sans Dieu ni roi, par le culte systématique de l'humanité*." This new system which he calls *Politique Positive* will replace the old theistic tradition. This does not mean abandonment of religion, only a change in direction of worship. The individual is still to bow before the *Grand Être* which transcends man's comprehension but in terms of positivist empiricism it is Humanity as such which replaces the mystery behind Being: "the real author of the benefits for which thanks were formerly given to God."[4]

Comte's philosophy took some time to make its influence felt in Western thinking. Becker explains that Comte's system was premature for it still lacked a broad enough base "derived from a psychological understanding of human nature."[5] But the new sociological sciences, according to Becker, provide now the necessary base for Comte's "Sociocracy." To achieve this it is necessary to reassess the true nature of man. Becker has here a special problem, Freud, his favourite psychologist, stands in the way of an optimistic view of human nature: the Freudian theory of inherent evil, he tells us, is the hurdle we have to overcome in order to vindicate the Comtian vision; ". . . we cannot tolerate," he writes, "any theoretical approaches to man which take a dim view of human nature."[6] He exhorts us "to trust in the

limitlessness" of human development and not to view man "from within," i.e. subjectively. All we have to do is to "abandon other-worldly gropings for realizable ideals."[7] If we did that we could construct an ordered human world of purpose and beauty which would take the place of "revelation" and by means of education produce "the freest kind of citizen."[8] In Becker's words with reference to Comte: "No nation has yet worshipped the spirit of man, or treated each individual as an end. If they did, there would be no tyranny."[9]

The new religion has its roots in anthropology. There is an unbroken chain of thought which began at the Renaissance and has come to full fruition in the 20th century. It began with an effort to explain phenomena on the basis of natural law and ended with the scientist determining the law and manipulating it. The inevitable result was that the scientist himself assumed the role of the law-giver, which means he became the new divinity. In this process the term God underwent a radical change. Originally it was meant to express a transcendental dimension but now it became a functional symbol. In John Dewey's definition: God means the active relation between the ideal and the actual.[10]

With the growth of science theology came to be interpreted in terms of "natural philosophy." The 18th c., especially in Britain; evolved the concept of "natural religion," sometimes also called Natural Theology.[11] The spokesmen for this new science were the "scientific theologians" whose main task was to prove the Great First Cause. The personal God of revelation is now described in impersonal terms as the Omnipotent Architect or the Divine Engineer.[12] It was easy for T. H. Huxley to reinterpret the theological concept of Providence as the scientific concept of order.[13] The main work had already been done by 18th c. Deists.

The foremost apostle of the sovereignty of reason was John Toland (1670-1722). He is so remarkably modern that it is difficult to visualize him writing his famous treatise Christianity Not Mysterious at the end of the 17th century (1696). His definition of Reason is strikingly pragmatic: "common sense." "It is impossible for us to err," he tells us, "as long as we take evidence for our guide." Where there is uncertainty of proof "we can never go beyond probability." To require our assent "to what is manifestly incredible" is to act foolishly. Whatever the Bible reveals "must agree with natural reason and our own ordinary ideas." Toland vigorously refutes the argument that man's reason is fallible: "were our reasoning faculties imperfect . . . there could be no possibility of our understanding one another . . ." Knowledge is "gradually progressive" faith therefore must not be a substitute for knowledge, on the contrary, faith and knowledge are synonymous. Faith is nothing else but "knowledge and assent." Where John Toland strikes the most modern note is in respect to revelation: unless revelation adds to knowledge it serves no purpose, "reason is of more dignity than revelation."[14] He ends his short treatise with the affirmation: "I acknowledge no orthodoxy but the truth."

Matthew Tindal (1657-1733) in his Christianity as Old as the Creation, argues in the same vein: reason is the only guide to God and to nature. In fact, the difference between divine and human reason is only in degree but not in kind. "Natural religion" is the clue to God's true will: "God's will is clearly and fully manifested in the book of nature that he who runs may read it."[15] There can be therefore no difference between "natural religion and external revelation, like two tallies, exactly answer one another . . ."[16]

For Tindal "natural religion" is tantamount to the law of nature. Because of its "highest internal excellence, the greatest plainness and simplicity, unanimity, universality, antiquity, nay, eternity," Tindal opts for the law of nature over against revelation. The "religion of nature" is perfect and nothing can be added to it: "the truth of revelation was to be judged of by its agreement with it."[17] Tindal's treatise has

been called the deists' Bible. Many other writers of the 18th c. held similar views. Toland and Tindal are typical representatives of the humanist tide with its emphasis upon reason, universal religion and human sufficiency.

The 19th c. only elaborated the humanist philosophy and drove it to its ultimate conclusion. The previous century first identified God with nature. From there the next step was to make Him dispensable altogether. It was an age of a rising tide of optimism which could afford to do without God.[18] The "theological scientists," as Gillispie calls them, tried desperately to hang on to the "Omnipotent Architect" and to bring Him in line with the science of the age, but their efforts were not too successful.[19] 19th century writers to a large extent dispensed with the "theistic hypothesis." We are told that George Eliot after translating Strauss's Life of Christ, wept while gazing at the crucifix. Her younger contemporary, though dismissing God, did not escape religion. Mrs. Annie Besant, the wife of the Rev. Frank Besant, soon set out to found her own church. Her case is unusual, for she was an eccentric woman, but well illustrates the undying need of religious experience. She left her husband, started as an agnostic, then became an atheist, a eugenist, a labourite, a socialist Marxist, a Fabian, a follower of Madame Blavatsky, and ultimately founded her own theosophist Church with a Tibetan flavour.[20] Others, more restrained returned to the bosom of nature and the worship of man. James Mark Baldwin combined these two aspects, "aesthetic contemplation" of nature and the idealization of man and society into a religious philosophy of his own which he called Pancalism.[21] This new religion Baldwin fixed upon the aesthetic experience as the absolute;[22] he called it aesthetic Immediatism.[23] This "enjoyment of beauty" is *sui generis*, allows of no further elucidation, it is the ultimate. Because the aesthetic experience is rooted in the human consciousness, Baldwin concludes that "the individual consciousness is then the organ of reality."[24] Pancalism means "seeing all things *sub specie pulchritudinis*."[25] With this sentiment Baldwin shows himself essentially a child of the 19th c. A 20th c. man could not possibly have written with such naive self-abandon.[26]

The quest for a new religion which would satisfy the canons of the scientific age and at the same time embrace humanity is a characteristic feature of our times. This inclusionist view found expression at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893.[27] A passage from the pen of the outstanding philosopher F. H. Bradley well summarizes the sentiment of many intellectuals: "There is, I should say, a need, and there is even a certain demand, for a new religion. We want a creed to recognize and justify in due proportion all human interests, and at the same time to supply the intellect with that to which it can hold with confidence. Whether we shall get this new religion, and if so, how, whether by modification of what exists or in some other way, I am unable to surmise. But it is not, as far as I can see, in the power of philosophy to supply this general demand."[28] Bradley concludes his chapter with the hope that the need for a new religion will eventually be satisfied.[29]

A major reason for religion on the part of its modern advocates is the recognition that it is socially useful. They would agree with Rousseau that religion exercises a restraining influence without which society cannot survive.[30] Even Christianity may be acceptable for the sake of saving Western civilization. Here is the opinion of a contemporary: "The most prominent argument for Christianity in our time is that it is essential to the maintenance of the civilization that is based on it."[31] This is viable in an age of relativity which rejects every semblance of the absolute and treats "truth" as merely "working ideas."[32] In such a situation even Christianity can serve a purpose irrespective of its content. Creative people, we are told, "are able to withstand lack of structure, the lack of future, the lack of predictability, of control . . ." Such people act "as if their true interests lie in the eternal, or that aspect of the eternal

which is somehow present here."[33] On this basis there would seem to be no need for a completely new religion, all that is required is a reduction of the Christian faith to acceptable tenets for a scientific age. This means the abandonment of dogma for the religious mood. The most assiduous workers in this direction are the theologians themselves. They are, in the words of David Martin, joyfully proclaiming "the death of God and the death of the Church in the name of 'modern man'," while modern man watches "the whole exercise with sad and wondering eyes."[34]

The fifth World Congress of Religion which met in Berlin, 1910, gave full expression to the mood of our time. The formulation of the title was already indicative of the climate: The Fifth World Congress for free Christianity and Religious Progress.[35]

The Rector of the University of Geneva, Prof. E. Monet looked forward to the realization of a dream: "the confederation of the three great monistic faiths: Judaism, Christianity and Islam." This may sound like Utopia, he said, but it need not be, and he pointed to the congress as evidence that the dream can be realized.[36] Others spoke in the same vein. The Rev. T. Rhonda Williams of Brighton, England, said in his speech: "Every temple contains something of value: if one enters in the name of Jesus Christ, or Jahve, or Brama, makes no difference." The mystical experience, he told the assembly, is greater than all our temples, churches and fraternities: "if we know this temple, then we also know that it has many doors and entrances for different kinds of people and their different needs."[37] True to the prevailing atmosphere of the Congress it concluded with a speech by Hyacinthe Loyson: "The Alliance of the Religions." Translated in simple terms it means finding a common denominator and shedding all those aspects which make for specificity. Caird complained about Spencer that he was trying to reduce religion "to the bare feelings of awe and mystery."[38] Caird obviously meant by religion the Christian faith. But the ambiguity is built into the very fibre of our civilization and has a long history behind it. The religious experience which usually means the mystical experience is always seen as the bridge to the other religions. Karlfried von Durckheim tells of an old Buddhist monk who after reading his book on Meister Eckhart was surprised to discover the German medieval mystic so like the Zen masters. Durckheim comments: "This indicates that there is something universal at the root of human existence . . . which may be really experienced and expressed in exactly the same way." He calls it "The Great Experience" whereby we break through the prison of the "conceptual order on which common sense as well as 'science' is based." The unity of the religions lies for him in the "religious experience beyond religion."[39]

On this premise, all religious perception no matter how primitive, expresses man's legitimate reaction to the world and is therefore valid. Robin and Tonia Riddington contend that there is more to Shamanism and Totemism than we are usually prepared to allow. We are told: "Mythical cosmologies are not the attempts of savages to explain in fantasy where empirical knowledge of reality is absent, but are rather the opposite - statements in allegorical form about knowledge of the interrelations between what we call natural (objective), psychic (psychological), and cultural (learned adaptational) aspects of reality."[40]

This has nothing to do with objective fact about the world. Whether civilized man or savage, he experiences the cosmos as a reality which calls forth a religious reaction. According to Bradley this has nothing to do with a personal God.[41] John Dewey tells us that it is a fallacy to attach, as European tradition does, "the highest values, the good, true and beautiful" as properties belonging to God. The "natural experience of the religions" must be sharply distinguished from the religions and there can be no bridging of the gap between the two.[42] It is therefore wrong to say "that a person who does not accept

any religion is thereby shown to be a non-religious person."[43] To the contrary, it sometimes happens that the religious experience is made impossible because of the "historic encumbrances" of the religions. Consequently and rightly Dewey describes the religious experience as "the better adjustment in life and its conditions, not the manner and cause of its production."[44] It is a quality of attitude which expresses itself "in art, science and good citizenship."[45]

The new religion is utterly different from traditional religion. It holds no dogmas, professes no creeds, imposes no values, draws no boundaries, demands no loyalties. It leaves man free to work out his own salvation. This secular and this-worldly religion is both mystical and pragmatic at the same time. The mystical side is expressed in the mood which creates the feeling of the whole; the pragmatic side lies in its possible effect upon society - it links people to each other. The descriptive term is the "religious consciousness" an awareness of the Universe and all that goes with it. In this scheme there can be no thought of a personal God. To quote Bradley again: "God for me has no meaning outside the religious consciousness and that is essentially practical."[46] Whatever serves to maintain society, be it aesthetics or ethics, art or science, has religious value and ought to be cultivated.

This new stress upon the functional aspect of religion is best formulated by Henry N. Wieman. He is convinced of the importance of religion for society. If man is to survive "the greatest transition of our time" and be saved from his "self-destructive and degenerate propensities," he needs an over-ruling commitment to direct his strivings. Such direction can only be provided by religion but it must be a religion totally different from the traditional religions of history. The guiding principle of this new religion must be "creative transaction." By this phrase Wieman means human creativity which creates both the knowing mind and the world to be known. "Creativity" is the magic word which Wieman exchanges for the old-fashioned term God. Such creativity, he explains, constitutes the very essence of human individuality and freedom. Man creates his own humanity and saves himself, according to Wieman. He creates his own world and produces society and the values which add meaning and destiny to human life. He therefore rejects any notion of a super-natural person as Creator of the universe, existing in independence of the human mind. In fact, not only God but the universe itself does not exist except for the inquiring interaction of the human mind: "It must be created by the creativity operating in human existence."

Wieman is emphatic on the pressing need for religion which would restore value to human life and chides those who naively treat the importance of religion lightly. He even makes allowance for worship "to express the fullness of being." But it is worship without a God. He even chides Dewey for identifying God with the highest ideal.[47]

Even Mordecai M. Kaplan in his review of Wieman's book on religion expresses doubt whether "creative interchange" is sufficient to achieve the human goal and he vaguely suggests his own well-known remedy of "ethical nation" as more effective.[48]

Behind all these efforts is the underlying rejection of total commitment. But this open-endedness, which so well suits the temper of our age has its insuperable difficulties. To start with, by refusing to make a radical distinction between right and wrong, truth and falsehood it undercuts the very foundation for moral values. The only absolute Bradley allows is the absolute of "an all pervasive relativism." He therefore rejects outright any suggestion of a radical division between true and false: there is no truth without error and no falsehood without some truth in it. To say otherwise is sheer idolatry. The only ultimate good is the "Whole." By the "Whole" Bradley means the cosmos in all its changeableness and fluidity.[49]

This leaves man in the void without anchorage. There is nothing to fasten to, there is no guiding light, except man's own intuition. Such suspense is difficult to bear and much of present day turmoil has been rightly diagnosed as Ideopathology. Positivist philosophy with its "closed system which may be understood without remainder" has not only removed awe and wonder from human life but has left man an ideological cripple. Sam Keen sees a common characteristic between the neurotic and the positivist philosopher in that both demand 100 percent certainty. He regards this as a morbid attitude which deadens the zest for life and destroys every possibility of surprise.[50] It is therefore no wonder that in the popular mind "science" has become a substitute for religion in that it promises to provide an ideological resting-place. The natural thirst for certainty has turned science into the religion called "scientism."

Isaac Newton argued from phenomena to causes and from causes to effects until he came to the first Cause "which was certainly not mechanical."[51] But gradually scientific thought moved from a dualist position of matter and spirit, to a monist perspective of a physical universe. Physics, the study of matter in all its aspects, became the dominant science of our age. In a purely physical universe there can be no room for a spiritual God. God becomes the Universe as a whole. Religion is now defined "as an emotion resting on the conviction of harmony between ourselves and the universe at large."[52] This is a different kind of harmony from that of intelligent man and an all-wise God. The scientific method of induction becomes the measure of all truth. Man declares himself lord over nature and takes his destiny in his own hands. He comes of age.

The religion of scientism, is not the faith of the scientist, who by definition must have no faith at all, but the popular faith in the scientist as the new divinity. If certainty is not to be found outside man then it must be found with man. Faith in the scientist is thus faith in man and his ability to harness nature to our advantage and thus to solve all human problems.

The story of our age is the story of science which has broken through almost all boundaries and reached into the limitless regions of space. We know about the atom, about the galaxies, we have landed on the moon and are preparing to go beyond. We have performed wonders our forefathers would have never dared attempt in their wildest dreams. Faith in science is therefore a natural reaction.

Prof. C. F. von Weizsacker in his Gifford Lectures has shown how science has stepped into the vacuum created by the crisis of faith and has become a substitute for religion. In fact, it has become a religion of its own: it has its temples, a world-wide priesthood, a common treasury of irrefutable truth and offers a common faith to common man which he can understand. But unfortunately, science is a two-edged sword: it exists by a paradox: it builds and destroys, it heals and it kills; it saves and it squanders.[53]

There is much to be said to the credit of science but this must not blind us to its more sinister results. One of its most dubious achievements is the evolvement of technological man. Sir Peter Medawar in his presidential address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, argued that man cannot rightly blame technology for his problems.[54] But this is only partly true. Technology has placed tools into human hands which make it possible for man to fight nature to the last. Emmanuel G. Mesthene, the Executive Director of Harvard University for the programme on Technology and Society, exults in the fact that technology has made it possible to overcome "the tyranny of matter" and has thus challenged the ancient misconception that man is tied to natural law "to which all human law was for ever subservient." By means of technology man has come of age and is now in possession of true freedom. He remarks: "It surely does no glory to God to rest his power on the impotence of man."[55] But no one knows better than 20th c. man that Dr. Mesthene has overstated his case. Prof. Marston Bates of the

University of Michigan, rightly reminded his readers of Francis Bacon's dictum in the Novum Organum: "We cannot command nature except by obeying her." Prof. Bates comments: "Man's destiny is tied to nature's destiny and the arrogance of the engineering mind does not change this."[56]

Technology has produced the new "culture-hero;" his name is "the competent man."[57] He has exploited the earth, devastated the forests, polluted the seas, upset nature's ecology and covered the green fields with asphalt.[58] There is a demonic quality about technological man which lies in the replacement of the God of creation by man the creator, according to Albert Salomon. It is this perverse sense of power which makes man so dangerous. "The present world is demonic," says Salomon, "by virtue of its power to control nature." He significantly adds: "And, in the final analysis, satanism and demonism coincide."[59]

Empirically, "the religion of progress," the only religion technological society knows, speeds the dehumanization of man. George Grant argues that the freedom which technology offers in lieu of virtue is only an apparent freedom. In essence it is a new tyranny masked as freedom for we lack "a system of meaning."[60] The question technological society is unable to answer is the very question which ultimately matters: "freedom for what purposes?" Prof. Grant finds it difficult to celebrate the dynamo, but this is all that is left to us once we discard "the idea of a presence above."[61] His point is well taken: "The religion of progress," he tells us, "may have been able to kill Christianity in the consciousness of many, but has not succeeded in substituting any other lasting system of meaning."[62] Without meaning, however, man cannot live. Because meaning has gone out of the universe, good and evil have ceased to matter.

Dostoevsky, with prophetic insight has anticipated the condition of our age and has diagnosed it as the bankruptcy of rationalism. C. M. Woodhouse commenting on Stavrogin, the leading figure in Dostoevsky's novel The Possessed remarks that ever since Plato it had been taken for granted "that once a man understood the difference between good and evil, he would choose the good." But not so in Stavrogin's case, he understood the difference, "but deliberately chose the evil." Woodhouse adds the rider: "Nineteenth century civilization could not conceive such a man, but the 20th century has unfortunately vindicated Dostoevsky's perception."[63]

The discovery of the facile basis of faith placed in science first caused doubt, but now rumours of revolt are being heard. Hitherto scientism was descried by theologians[64] but now scientists themselves are in rebellion against the false hopes it raised.[65] Emeritus Professor of the History and Philosophy of Science at London University, Herbert Dingle, has publicly expressed his doubts about the very assumptions of modern science. He especially rebels against the "tyranny which mathematics now exerts over the minds of physicists." No matter how fantastic and absurd the mathematic equation, it his held to be a physical reality." It is as if truth depended upon the correct grammar of a sentence. It all leads to verbal abstractions far removed from the realities of the real world. He complains that the scientist substitutes "for what everyone experiences but cannot define, some invented concept that can be defined but cannot be experienced," yet the claim is made that knowledge has been advanced.[66] Other disciplines than physics have had their share of bitter criticism, especially the social sciences. Geoffrey Hawthorn deplores "the rigid determinist cosmology" on the part of sociologists as if there were a proven analogy "between human and non-human behaviour."[67] The most bitter cry of outrage is expressed by John Vyvan against the merciless treatment of animals in vivisection in the cause of scientific research.[68] Brigid Brophy discussing Vyvan's book writes about "the pilotless mechanical god" requiring the sacrifice "of sentient beings in quantities and in extremities of agony that would

shame the bloodiest god of pagan antiquity." There is a note of disgust in Brophy's words: "Under the tyranny of Science, uncanniness belongs no longer to the supernatural but to the natural sciences." Science which originally meant "knowledge," has now come to mean the numinous.[69] Prof. Robert S. Morison who heads the division of biological sciences at Cornell University, admits to a general change of attitude towards science.[70]

It is now obvious, even to the most infatuated with science, that it is not meant nor can it fill the void of an empty universe. Once this last stronghold is fallen, what is there left for twentieth century man to hang on to?[71] The new phenomenon of the so-called "drug subculture" is the direct result of the spiritual crisis man faces in the technological age. "The young protest," writes W. J. A. Kirkpatrick, "for a secure base from which to mature within a growing and expanding structure of reference . . ."[72] But this is exactly what they cannot derive from our civilization. There is no "secure base" left, for the centre of the universe has collapsed. Kirkpatrick explains correctly: "The protests of the young today, are a demand, not for the means of living, but rather on the reasons for living." For this neither contemporary philosophy nor science has the answer.

Astrology, witchcraft, black magic, exotic sects, and sheer superstition have thus entered the breach.[73] There is truth in the ancient saying ascribed to Horace: *A naturam expelles furcâ, tanen usque recurret*. There seems to be no escape from religion. Guyau who writes as an anti-religionist is quite aware of this fact. He knows that the religious sentiment will persist because of man's perennial need "for some object of worship." But he visualizes a situation, as a result of the evolutionary process, ending in emancipation from dogmatic and institutionalized religion. Guyau expresses the conviction that such a change would not lead to impiety, for society will hold on to "all that is pure in the religious sentiment." To these he counts admiration for the cosmos and the infinite powers displayed in it, plus religious morality expressing itself in respect, love and ecstasy.

When Guyau wrote The Non-Religion of the Future at the close of the last century he was convinced that natural science had already killed every sense of the supernatural "in the very centre of our being." The new religion therefore which will come to birth in the future will have nothing to do with a Creator God but will be centred upon the cosmos and upon man. The driving force will be the aesthetic experience: "Wagner," he writes, "was not absolutely wrong in the notion that music will be the religion of the future, or, at least, the cult of the future."[74]

Characteristic for his age, Guyau's faith in progress is limitless. In a real sense he is the precursor of Teilhard de Chardin. Like Teilhard after him he firmly rejects materialism for its inadequacy to account for the spiritual evolution of man. His philosophy is that of idealist nomism whereby matter and mind are united in a process ultimately engendering consciousness: "Life means, in fact, development towards sensation and thought."[75] On this basis Guyau sees the possibility of life even after death, though he admits that so far this has not been proven.[76] The evolutionary principle so dominates his thinking that he is forced to accept the possibility that the evolution of mind may ultimately "elude the law of destruction" so that man becomes immortal.[77]

The odd thing about Guyau is that with all his aversion to religion he is essentially a religious man, even a believer. His problem however is characteristic for modern man: confrontation with an empty universe. Man is thus left with no other light, except his own intelligence in search of a new world while at the same time doubting whether such a world exists.[78] Guyau even hopes that an ultimate answer will be provided beyond the grave, for death seems to him to hold the secret and constitutes the great enigma: "The philosopher" therefore, "is essentially a worshipper of the unknown."[79] Guyau's is in

many ways a moving book which ends with the pathetic sentence: “Man’s last agony and his last pulse of curiosity is one.” In the end it would seem that the non-religion of the future is religion all over again in more elaborate terms.

Guyau’s spiritual nomism, like that of Teilhard de Chardin, ill befits our contemporary climate. De Tocqueville’s “virtuous materialism” seems to be better suited to the modern temper.[80] Ferkiss points an accusing finger at religion, art and science which have failed technological man by the inability to provide him with a meaningful ideology in his existential crisis. He does not look to contemporary science for an ultimate answer: “There is little reason to believe that electronics can provide an adequate substitute” for man’s loss of an ideology.[81] The recovery of the new vision of human existence must ultimately come from man himself with the discovery of a “meaningful philosophy” which would provide leadership for the emerging new technological type of man.[82] What is required is a new naturalism, a new holism, a new immanentism which would set new values for the future civilization.[83] It means that man in his new technological setting will ultimately assert himself: he will “control his own evolution” become “his own master” and “create his own future.”[84] It would seem that this kind of technological humanism is the projected religion of the future by a large section of the educated public; and it is true to type for in the last resort, religion is what Tillich called *Eigenmachligkeit* - self-sufficiency. The Dean of King’s College, Cambridge, seriously counts the possibility that the evolving religion of the future, in the West at any rate, will be “without the traditional God.” The West, he tells us, is desperately in search of a religion to serve as a substitute for Christianity.[85]

Notes to Chapter III

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[1] Sir Alister Hardy, “An Experimental Approach to Religion," The Listener, April 16, 1970, 507: “I do not believe that civilization can survive without (religion)”.

[2] “Arnold Toynbee expresses his belief in a continuing future for religion," The Listener, April 2, 1970, 439f.

[3] Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, “Secularization," The Listener, Feb. 18, 1968, 194.

[4] Cf. Edward Caird, The Social Philosophy & Religion of Comte, 1885. Guyau’s criticism of Comtism is interesting for it comes from an anti-religionist: “Love of humanity is the greatest of virtues and the most ridiculous of fetishisms.” (The Non-Religion of the Future, E.T., 1897, 365f; cf. also ib. 445f).

[5] Ernest Becker, The Structure of Evil, 1968, 350f.

[6] ib. 369.

[7] ib. 376.

[8] ib. 379.

[9] ib. 375.

[10] Cf. Intelligence & the Modern World, John Dewey’s Philosophy. ed. by Joseph Ratner, 1939, 1025: “It is this relation between ideal and actual to which I would give the name ‘God’.”

[11] Cf. Charles Coulston Gillispie, Genesis & Geology, 1959, 29f, 38f.

[12] ib. 104, cf. 275 n.23.

[13] ib. 219.

[14] John Toland, Christianity Not Mysterious, 1696, reproduced in the Source Book Deism & Natural Religion, ed. by E. Graham Waring, 1967.

[15] Op.cit 119.

[16] ib. 127.

[17] ib. 128.

[18] Cf. Charles Vereker, Eighteenth Century Optimism, 1967.

[19] Charles Coulston Gillispie, Genesis & Geology, 1959, 104, 133.

[20] Cf. The Times Literary Suppl., Oct. 19, 1967, 995. For the adventurous life of Annie Besant see Arthur Nethercot: The First Five Lives of Annie Besant, 1960; The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant, 1963.

[21] Pancalism: from the Greek "the beauty of the whole" (Universe); cf. Genetic Theory of Reality, 1915, Preface: the universe "is good and true *because it is beautiful* (his own ital.); cf. p.312.

[22] ib. 299.

[23] ib. 150.

[24] ib. 303.

[25] ib. 212.

[26] Ernest Becker, The Structure of Evil, 1968, 377: "With Pancalism, Baldwin tried to declare that the science of man was anesthetics that could take over the problem of religion and provide the organism with an awe-inspiring universe partly of its own making." Strange to relate, Becker supports the idea.

[27] Cf. Donald H. Bishop, "Religious Confrontation, A Case Study: The 1893 Parliament of Religions" Numen, April, 1969, 63ff.

[28] F. H. Bradley, Essays on Truth & Reality, 1914, 446.

[29] ib. 447.

[30] Cf. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Second Discourse, (St. Martin Press), 1964, 170.

[31] Sir Richard Clifford Tute, After Materialism - What? (n.d.) 157. Cf. G. B. Shaw's statement in his introduction to Back to Methuselah: "for I had always known that civilization needs a religion as a matter of life and death". He hoped that Creative Evolution would become the religion of the future.

[32] F. H. Bradley: "all our truths without exception are merely working ideas." (op.cit 445)

[33] A. H. Maslow, Eupsychian Management, 1965; cf. Manas, July 16, 1969, 8.

[34] David Martin, "Sociologist fallen among secular Theologians," The Listener, April 25, 1968, 528. David Martin, with a good dose of irony, remarks that theologians find it difficult to shed their habits, they thus accept the myth of modern man *de fide* (!).

[35] Fünfter Weltkongress für Freies Christentum und Religiösen Fortschritt, (Berlin 5 bis 10 August, 1910). At the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago (1893) theatre was still the suspicion of missionary motive on the part of Christian organizers. (Cf. D. H. Bishop, "America in the 1983 World Parliament of Religions" Encounter, Autumn, 1970, 371, n.116.

[36] ib. 702.

[37] ib. 693, 697.

[38] Caird, op.cit 167.

[39] Modern Trends in World Religions, ed. by Joseph M. Kitagawa, 1959, 144f.

[40] Robin & Tonia Ridington, "The Inner Eye of Shamanism & Totemismn," History of Religions (Intern. Journal for Comparative & Historical Studies) vol. 10, No. l, Aug. 1970.

[41] Bradley, op.cit 432n.

[42] Intelligence & the Modern Mind, John Dewey's Philosophy, ed. by Joseph Ratner, 1939, 307, 1037.

[43] ib. 1009f.

[44] ib. 1013.

[45] ib. 1019.

[46] F. H. Bradley, op.cit 428.

[47] Henry N. Wieman, Religious Inquiry: Some Explorations, 1968.

[48] Cf. Judaism, Summer 1970, 372. Mordecai M. Kaplan is the founder of a religious movement within Judaism, called Reconstructionism, which stands for "a kind of spiritual nationalism." (Encyclp. of The Jewish Religion, s.v.)

[49] F. H. Bradley, op.cit 472.

[50] Sam Keen, Apology for Wonder, 1969, 162, 167, 170.

[51] Isaac Newton, Opticks (4th ed. 1730) London, 1931, 369f - quoted by Gillispie, op.cit 6.

[52] J. M. E. McTaggart quoted by Melvin Rader, The Enduring Question, 1969, 417.

[53] Cf. C. F. von Weizsäcker, The Relevance of Science, Creation & Cosmogony, 1964.

[54] Cf. Daily Telegraph, Sept. 4, 1969, p. 23.

[55] Emmanuel G. Mesthene, "Religious Values in the Age of Technology," Student World, Nos. 3 & 4, 1969, 227ff. Against this cf. Henry Margenau's more humble and cautious assessment of science. Especially his criticism of scientific dogmatism, Open Vistas, 234ff.

[56] Marston Bates, "Man's Place in Nature" The Forest and the Sea, 1960.

[57] Albert Salomon, The Tyranny of Progress, 1955, 66.

[58] Cf. Pollution Probe, ed. by Donald A. Chant, 1970.

[59] Albert Salomon, op.cit 84; also Karlfried Froehlich, "The Ecology of Creation," Christianity Today, Oct. 1970, 263ff.

[60] Cf. George Grant, Technology & Empire, 1969, 137ff.

[61] ib. 143.

[62] ib. 58. For the demonic aspect of science and technology see Paul Tillich, Der Widerstreit von Raum und Zeit, Gesammelte Werke, Bd. VI, 1963, 69.

[63] C. M. Woodhouse, “Dostoevsky," The Listener, Oct. 22, 1970, 544.

[64] Cf. D. R. G. Owen, Scientism, Man & Religion, cf. also Christianity Today, Feb.16, 1968, 6f.

[65] Cf. C. F. Weizsäcker, The Relevance of Science, 1964; Robert S. de Ropp, Science & Salvation, 1962; Magnus Pyke, Slaves Unawares? 1959.

[66] Herbert Dingle, “Definitions & Realities - the Modern Delusion," The Listener, July 3, 1969, 16f. Such an attack upon the very foundation of science could not pass unanswered; cf. the reply by Prof. A. Sudbery of the department of theoretical physics at Cambridge, The Listener, July 31, 1969, 155.

[67] Cf. The Listener, Oct. 16, 1969, 511f: “Geoffrey Hawthorn deplores some scientific pretensions of sociology.”

[68] John Vyvan, In Pity & in Anger, 1969.

[69] Brigid Brophy: “The Bloodiest Superstition," The Listener, Nov. 27, 1969, 741f.

[70] Robert S. Morison, “Science & Social Attitudes," Science (American Assoc. for Advancement of Science), July 11, 1969, 150ff. He dwells upon the changing mood regarding science and the growing scepticism about rational systems. His concluding remark is significant: “Thus ends the comfortable isolation of science from the ordinary concerns of men as a ‘value-free’ activity” (p.156). The shift from Positivism to Idealism in philosophy is described by Anthony Quinton, cf. The Listener, Dec. 10, 1970, 808f.

[71] Sir Richard Clifford Tute, After Materialism - What? (n.d.) Unfortunately, Sir Richard prognosticates nothing more definite than a vague mystical Christianity.

[72] W. J. A. Kirkpatrick: “Drug Abuse & Misuse - as a Part of the Protest Syndrome of the Young," The Modern Churchman, April 1970, 262. Cf. also the searching article by Charles Davis, R. C. priest who left the Church in 1936: “Religious Pluralism & the New Counter Culture," The Listener, April, 1970, 478ff.

[73] The daily press supplies the details under headings like: “Movie stars turning to the Zodiac” (cf. Toronto Globe & Mail, April 3, 1968) or “Black Magic - the scandalous curse has struck in Britain” (Globe & Mail, July 30, 1970). A leaflet advertising “England’s Famous Cork Tree Brings Luck to U.S.A” contains a number of testimonies of people who have benefitted from a small piece of cork. The cost is a dollar per piece plus 25c postage. The tree is described as the Wishing Cork Tree at Coombe-in-Teignhead, Devon, England. For a serious discussion of the subject, see Francis King, Ritual Magic in England, 1970.

[74] M. Guyau, The Non-Religion of the Future, A Sociological Study, E.T., 1897, 417ff.

[75] ib. 495.

[76] ib. 509.

[77] ib. 534.

[78] Cf. ib. 390.

[79] ib. 538.

[80] Cf. Victor E. Ferkiss, Technological Man: The Myth & the Reality, 1969, 239.

[81] ib. 238; cf. also ib. 241.

[82] ib. 246.

[83] ib. 247, 250ff.

[84] ib. 255.

[85] Cf. David E. Edwards, Religion & Change, 1969, 8ff. A similar situation has developed in American Jewry where in the so-called Jewish revival God plays hardly any part: "most suburban Jews doubt the existence of a personal God." (cf. Judaism, Winter, 1960, 89f.) But this does not make them irreligious. Charles Rycroft, a psychoanalyst himself, has pointed out that even Freudian psychology has acquired the organized structure of religion: a hierarchy, apostolic succession, the laying on of hands, etc. (cf. The God I Want, ed. by James Mitchell, 1967, 30ff). Cf. also Philip Reift, The Triumph of Therapeutic, 1966.

Chapter IV - Apology For Religion

There is good reason why religion and Gospel are so easily identified: first, man is essentially religious and his only possible response to the Gospel is a religious response; second, in order to appropriate the Gospel he has to clothe it in religious language; third, both religion and Gospel appear to be concerned with the same things, namely man's ultimate destiny. This becomes evident when we ask what is the message religion carries?

1. Religion as Truth

We have insisted that religion is primarily a mood, a feeling evoked by the totality of existence. But religion once it becomes verbalized assumes much wider ramifications. Not only sentiment but also will and intellect become involved in the religious experience. There is an intellectual side to religion which may be described as the quest for meaning. Meaning is essential to purposeful living; in order to make life meaningful, man has to rationalize his existence and discover a purpose. Only as long as religion is able to provide a viable answer to the meaning of life does it meet with response. The problem arises when religious answers fail to satisfy accepted standards of rationality. This happens at regular periods in history. At such times the question regarding truth becomes a burning cultural issue.

Perhaps at no time in history is religion more severely tested regarding truth as it is today. The shape of religion depends on the cultural values of an age. Modern man in the midst of a cultural crisis is profoundly concerned about truth; but his concern goes beyond the traditional question regarding truth. What he asks about is not just meaning but the meaning of meaning. This goes beyond the philosophical tradition which concerned itself with truth in relation to Being but never doubted Being as such. Linguistic analysis which began with a concern for "meaning" is now on the verge of abandoning meaning because it is not too sure that there is meaning in meaning. The crisis of meaning is a crisis of truth. For this reason, concepts like "intention," "value," "referent," etc., are being used as substitutes for the more traditional concept of truth.[1] Jonathan Cohen has rightly seen the close connection between the assumption of an empty universe and the question of meaning.[2] Because religion cannot operate in an empty universe, except in extreme cases, "truth" is a constitutive element in its structure.

In the classical tradition truth is what corresponds to fact. The discovery of truth according to Aristotle is achieved by the intellect. The intellect is a function of the soul and the soul has a natural tendency towards that which is true.[3] The assumption that truth is merely a matter of reason and that perception is the only means of its discovery is questioned by metaphysicians. Philosophers are aware of the subjective nature of truth and therefore of its inconclusiveness: what is truth for me is not necessarily truth for my neighbour. Plato was worried about Protagoras's anthropocentric definition of truth. In the Cratylus he asks Hermogenes: "Do you agree with him (i.e. Protagoras who held to the principle that man is the measure of all things) or would you say that things have a permanent essence of their own?" Hermogenes's answer is interesting in that he appears to voice Plato's inner struggle for clarity: "There have been times, Socrates, when I have been driven in my perplexity to take refuge with Protagoras: not that I altogether agree with him."[4] Plato's problem is the problem of all philosophers, the problem of ascertaining what Kant called *das Ding an und für sich* (the thing as it is in itself). Plato liked to believe that the world outside himself was a real world independent of our relation to it; a world which persisted

in maintaining its own essence; but can one really comprehend it? For an answer he looked to language on the supposition that "names" correspond to being. "Names" for Plato were like pictures or imitations of the things they described. The elucidation of the truth depended upon the correct use of names.[5] The connecting link between naming a thing and the thing named was the soul which has the faculty of grasping the truth by intellective vision.[6] Religion depends for knowledge upon this Platonic presupposition. It is only when we abandon the divine origin of language and with it the realist theory of identity between thinking and being that religion finds itself without terms of reference in respect to truth.[7] This is the reason why in theological discourse Platonism has played such an important role. Once the premise is denied the elaborate edifice constructed upon the supposition of truth obtained by intuition falls to the ground.

Religion however cannot give up the premise that its concern is truth, for its very existence depends upon it. On the assumption that intuitive truth is valid truth, a limitless system can be built on metaphysical speculation. The meaning of revelation as understood by the "natural" theologians, particularly those of the Anglo-Saxon tradition, is founded on the principle of the Platonic vision of the soul. This reduces revelation to a general Truth and rids it of the particularist blemish of history. So interpreted revelation becomes a wide-open possibility: "unless all existence is a medium of revelation" writes William Temple, "no particular revelation is possible." He continues: *"Only if God is revealed in the rising of the sun in the sky can he be revealed in the rising of a man from the dead; only if He is revealed in the history of Syrians and Philistines can He be revealed in the history of Israel . . ."*[8] James E. Sellers moves beyond nature and history into the sphere of sociology by declaring that all human activity carries revelatory significance. Revelation therefore is not any more what God does but what man does. Sellers tells us that all "natural human activity . . . must now be assigned a primary place rather than an ancillary one in the theological investigation. God speaks through human acts and words as well as through receptivity and silence, for either state is at best a kind of finite witness to the divine . . ."[9] On this assumption all specificity of revelation has gone with the wind; man is left as the sole actor; he is both revealer and the source of revelation.

This surrender to immanental philosophy is in perfect harmony with the religious principle. Preoccupation with mysticism and religious experience thus becomes the basic task of theological endeavour. This is a retreat from objective revelation as understood in former days. Dean Inge admits that the capitulation came about as a result of scientific criticism. Since the theory of evolution, he tells us, has called into question the traditional proofs of the existence of God "the defenders of religion have been led to lay more stress on the inspiration of the individual." He fully approves of this shift of emphasis: "I think we may say that this support of faith has proved strong enough to bear the weight."[10] But Inge is too much of a thinker not to see the implications of this move. He therefore feels unhappy with the intrusion of psychology into the field of religion. The psychological approach to mystical experience suggests an utterly subjective state of consciousness whereas Inge would prefer to think that there is an objective element which could be identified as proof of the speaking God. He therefore denies that the mystical experience is the prerogative of the mystic only, by prayer everyone who wishes could participate in it. Söderblom describes it as the "consciousness of infinity" and regards it both as the source and the channel of revelation. For Söderblom religion and revelation are synonymous and of universal application. Both can be found "in some measure" among all human beings. But in a more specific sense these gifts are the endowment of "the mystically gifted men and women in whom

consciousness of infinity and the longing for the "ideal" resulted in "a real perception of the being of God."[11]

It is told that Söderblom on his deathbed is supposed to have exclaimed: "There is a living God. I can prove it from the history of religion."[12] It is a pity that the Archbishop of Uppsala was not granted a reprieve to make good his promise. His faith in the history of religion depended entirely upon intuitive truth as the inner voice and has nothing to do with Luther's *vox extra nos*.

The apostle of the inner life is none other than Schleiermacher for whom *Gefühl* of the divine is at the heart of theology. Medieval mysticism and Germanic romanticism have combined forces to produce this religion of inwardness. Jacob Friedrich Fries (1773-1843) is perhaps the most systematic theologian-philosopher in the shift from objective revelation to subjective religion. It is no accident that he comes from a pietistic background (*Herrnhuter*) where the emphasis upon inwardness was the very mark of religious life. Fries's theology is grounded in the concept of *Ahnung* (intuition). It must be stressed however that for Fries *Ahnung* is more than an intuitive guess, it is rather an inward grasp of ultimate reality. Plato's vision of the soul is perhaps the nearest description of *Ahnung* which is understood as the faculty for apprehending the spiritual world. Because for Fries this is a universal endowment, "even crude and grotesque religion" offers glimpses of the infinite.[13] Rudolf Otto's analysis of the Holy is only another elaboration of the same principle. The psychological implications of this purely subjective approach which worried Dean Inge constitute no problem for the prophets of inwardness. They do not feel any inconsistency between the religious mood and objective fact in the experience of the numinous. It is of some significance that John Baillie though rejecting the main premise of "ontologism" i.e. that knowledge of God is innate to man, is yet defending it on other grounds: God must be acknowledged as the reality "by which we are most directly and intimately confronted."[14] It is difficult to see how Baillie can write about a "direct" and "intimate" confrontation with God and at the same time appeal to Luther's concept of the veiling of God, the *Deus velatus*.[15] There is here an inconsistency which mars his theology and sustains the suspicion that he is not really taking historic revelation seriously.

Luther objected to ontologism from the very beginning. Already at the Heidelberg disputation in 1518 he denied that anyone is a theologian who tries to infer from creation to the invisible things of God "as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened" (art.19).[16] Nicolas Malebranche's (died 1715) thesis that "God is the locus of our ideas, as space is the locus of our bodies" has been rejected by the Roman Church as an heretical opinion. The revival of ontologism in the nineteenth century in the Roman Church has met with strong opposition and was condemned by Pius IX.[17] Vicenzo Gioberti's (died 1852) theology structured upon intuitive knowledge of God present to the human mind in archetypal form and innately perceived and which has universal application, could not possibly be tolerated by a Church committed to historic revelation.[18] But such rejection brings this Church into a difficult position since by tradition she is committed both to mysticism and private revelation.[19]

G. M. Sauvage has tried to overcome the difficulty by making a distinction between knowledge and being: "the order of knowledge," he tells us "may be different from the order of being." But unless at some point these two orders coincide there can be no meaning to "religious truth."

There seems to be no way out of the impasse, unless we are prepared for Luther's radical solution: man is not meant to search the majesty of God but "to look only upon this man Jesus Christ" as the Mediator between God and man.[20] But in this case we would not be able to speak of the "truth of

religion" but only of the "truth as it is in Jesus" (Eph. 4:21). Such narrowing of "truth" to a particular historic instance religion cannot accept. Religion in order to survive in its autonomy must be wide open to intuition. It is on this principle that Fries declared the validity of all religion and identified religion with theology.[21] Tillich, on analysis, proceeds on the same principle though his language is more elaborate and his approach more devious. His deployment of symbols in the representation of "religious truth" frees him from historic particularity and gives him wide scope for metaphysical speculation.[22] J. M. Bochenski who objects to Tillich's subjectivism, contends that religious discourse carries "indicative sentences" which carry "truth contents." But in principle their methodology is the same though their language is different.[23] Tillich speaks of the Ground of Being, Bochenski allows a direct encounter with God. How otherwise can man encounter God directly except by identifying Him with Being?[24]

It is obvious that "religious truth" is a peculiar kind of truth: it is perceived intuitively, it is indefinable and cannot be easily communicated. Father Weigal admits that it is an ambiguous term. He suggests three possible uses of the term in ordinary discourse: fundamental meaning of reality; mental achievement of reality; faithful communication of reality.[25] The question arises how do any of these aspects relate to religion? Reality itself is a vague term and may mean anything. Religious experience as the experience of "reality" is devoid of every rational principle and meaningful content. On this basis Paul Weiss's suggestion is both reasonable and inevitable: let religion be freed of every "specification" and remain unhampered by the trammels of "truth-conditions."[26] In this case religion is exactly what we suspected it to be, namely a nostalgic mood, what the Germans call *Weltschmerz*. But though religion may depend upon mood, religions cannot do so. Religions have a history and history carries traditions. Unless the religious mood can be verbalized it remains incommunicable. It therefore needs a superstructure, a rationalized content to convey a world-view which would satisfy the human mind. This explains why every religion depends upon myth and symbol so as to provide scope for re-interpretation. The metaphorical idiom is also necessary to endow common-place experience with esoteric meaning. The ordinary occurrences of life thus acquire a metaphysical significance and point beyond themselves. But such use of myth and symbol opens unlimited vistas for speculation unless controlled by reason and fact. A lack of control by reason and fact creates a fantastic world of endless speculation as in the case of Hinduism. Bishop Kulandran rightly complains of the unending speculation which characterizes Hindu religion.[27] The principle of "private revelations" in Roman Catholicism is another source of superstitious elaboration and sentimental piety. The question arises: what is the "truth" content behind this prodigious effort?

Frithjof Schuon without surrendering the truth-principle in religion has tried to distinguish between truth and revelation. Whereas revelation is the Absolute which never varies, "truth" is a relative concept which reaches us under a variety of forms depending upon tradition. By reason of the fact that the religions are only relative expressions of the Absolute they all move on the same level and can claim no superiority over each other. The contradictions we meet in the various religions are entirely due to their relative character as "human receptacles" and not to the Absolute which never varies. Traditions, languages and symbols may differ but the substance is always the same.[28]

Schuon's insistence upon the relativity of "truth" under human conditions is a laudable admission. It is difficult however to see on what grounds he affirms the constancy of the Absolute. As usual, his principle of verification is the human intellect as part of the Divine.[29] But if this is the case should truth be relative if revelation is not? If truth is primary "knowing" then the Divine intellect in man "knows" Himself, though Schuon tries hard to forestall such a pantheistic conclusion.[30] It would seem that "truth"

conceived in general terms leads either to subjective relativity or complete vacuity which would leave religion without content.[31]

We have argued elsewhere that biblical "truth" is non-speculative and belongs to the covenantal context. It is not what man thinks about God or the world but the way he responds to the covenant-keeping God. "Truth" in biblical terms is primarily faithfulness to a God who is always faithful to His Promises.[32] It would seem therefore that those who argue for the truth of religion are arguing from a context which is alien to the basic assumption underlying biblical faith. This is not to deny the insights, ideals and aspirations of the religions. This is not even to deny that God, the same God, is present to the religions as He is present to the Church and that no one has the monopoly over Him. For the present we are only questioning the principle of a common "truth" which underlies the religions.[33] We might as well ask with Pontius Pilate: what is truth? and still await an answer.

William M. Watt has set himself the task of elucidating the Truth underlying the religions. After involved argumentation he reaches the conclusion that the religions employ metaphors to convey dynamic ideas and that these ideas have something to do with the vital task of living. But this is "truth" in quite a different sense from the philosophical concept of truth. That religion is a useful commodity and that prayer releases spiritual energy, strengthens the community spirit and helps the simple minded, has little to do with "truth."[34] In fact, Watt arrives at a negative result: the only truth about the religions is that none can claim absolute truth.[35] But if this is the case in what sense do we speak of religion as truth?

Truth must inevitably mean commitment. Both logically and morally it carries the nature of compulsion. But commitment implies a personal decision and allows no double-mindedness. Unfortunately Watt, like most modern writers, is too sophisticated to espouse such a position. In our age of relativity truth as commitment goes against the grain. L. H. Hough wisely observes: "relative loyalty of a relative person to a relative principle" makes no sense. We cannot have it both ways: "A relative truth is not a truth."[36] Truth conceived as only an option loses its compulsive force and therefore ceases to be truth. The modern relativist for whom truth has no fixed content speaks of adaptation in a different context from that of the ancient Fathers. The Fathers were intent on bending non-Christian concepts towards the Christian truth by which they meant revelation in Jesus Christ. The modern apologist for religion moves in the opposite direction: he is adapting Christian revelation to suit non-Christian religious suppositions.[37] Because of the ambiguity of the term, we therefore suggest that we accept Aristotle's ruling and confine "truth" to philosophical discourse and treat religion in more practical terms.[38]

Religion deals with life and the meaning of life; at the same time it is the result of man's response to life. It espouses ideals, it sets goals, it shapes character. It is a quest for the Unknown, or in W. C. Smith's terms it is "involvement with the transcendent." It is as vague as this and as ill-defined. There is however a more practical aspect to religion to which we must now turn.

2. Religion as Law

We found Truth to be a vague and recondite concept. By reason of its subjective nature Truth appears to be primarily a value-judgement. This seems to meet the opinion of modern philosophers who refuse to give to Truth an absolute connotation. Truth is more a continued process of inquiry than a final

conclusion.[39] A. N. Whitehead prefers to relegate Truth to the area of aesthetic experience and direct intuition rather than to pure reason.[40]

The subject of law in respect to revelation would seem to be more amenable to our purpose. To start with, law plays an important part in the history of the religions. Because of this fact we may find here a common denominator for the otherwise widely differing traditions. Furthermore, law is a determining factor in the Hebrew Bible and may therefore serve as a bridge to the other religions. Be it noted, while the Old Testament has no term for religion it deploys many synonyms for the concept of law.

In history the religions were the traditional guardians of law. The concept of law has its roots in the deistic principle. Plato opens his dialogue on the Laws by affirming their divine origin. Plato's Laws, says Jowett, "rest upon a religious foundation."[41] Because "the ruler of the universe has ordered all things with a view to the excellence and preservation of the whole" Plato concludes that it is incumbent upon man to preserve this order. The individual must realize that the universal order exists for the benefit of all and not just to serve his own interests. Only those who are ignorant of the "universal scheme" will refuse to abide to the rules of the game and thus transgress against the pre-ordained pattern.[42] The world-order is so designed, according to Plato, as to benefit the good and to punish the evil.[43] There is thus a close correspondence between nature and morality. The moral principle is built into the very fabric of nature. Impiety is therefore a disruption in the order of nature and a breach in the ordering of society. Not only the individual, but "the whole state reaps the fruit of impiety."[44] On this view there is a causal connection between the laws prevailing in the universe and in human affairs: the behaviour of the individual and the life of the community receive their standards from outside. There is a given pattern with which man is meant to comply.

The "notion of Law" according to Whitehead derives from the observation of regularity, persistence and recurrence of phenomena in the world of creation. Such an assumption of regularity is the very basis of all human endeavour: "the urge towards technology, methodology, scholarship and speculation" derives from this fact.[45] Both science and civilization depend upon the constancy of the sequel between cause and effect. Without such an assumption science would be impossible. The "laws of nature" are therefore a fundamental premise for scientific research. But once we accept the hypothesis of fixed "laws" underlying natural phenomena, the problem of meaning comes to the fore. Whitehead therefore rightly asks the question whether it is at all possible to assume laws in nature "independently of a metaphysical discussion?"[46] The moment we allow a built-in order in the universe we are forced to admit metaphysical implications.[47]

Those who accept the Deistic principle have no difficulty with the laws of nature. For them the ordering of the universe points to an intelligent Creator. This is the premise of the Western tradition and the very foundation of Judea-Christian thought. But parallel with it there is a contrary view which goes back to classical philosophical atheism namely that the "laws of nature" are only "laws" in a derived sense. On the atheistic principle of immanence the "laws of nature" are nothing more than descriptions of the way things behave. We call these "laws" simply because of the "observed order of succession." This is of such constancy that it gives the impression of a law.[48] Positivist philosophers see reason to question the presumed regularity of natural phenomena and are in favour of a capricious element in the working of the universe. On such a premise, according to Whitehead, there could be "no reason why the Universe should not be steadily relapsing into lawless chaos."[49] The positivists' answer would probably be that this is exactly what is happening only that we are not aware of it.

Religion is not concerned with the remote questions which occupy philosophers. For the ordinary man the ordering of the universe, the recurrence of natural phenomena, the sequence of cause and effect, are daily experiences pressing for an explanation. The argument from design, but mainly the ontological argument is the philosophical answer to man's questioning.[50] God as Creator and Law giver is the most rational answer to the puzzle of existence: God is the meaning and the measure of all things.[51] Law therefore as seen in the religious context is nothing else but the will of the Creator with which man is meant to comply. Religion concerns itself with enforcing God's will upon the individual and society.

When we come to ask what is God's will, each religion seems to give a different answer depending upon its concept of God. When God is conceived as an impersonal life-force, Law inevitably takes on primary meaning. Not only the universe but God Himself has to comply with the undeviating rule of necessity. Plato twice quotes the proverb with approval: "not even God himself can fight against necessity," though he quickly adds that what is meant is "divine necessity."[52] In Greek mythology the *moira* sometimes appear to be above the gods, and even Zeus himself is occasionally pictured as dependent upon them.[53] In Hinduism the law of *karma* appears to dominate the universe with an iron rule.

Sometimes even God, it would seem, is subject to the law of *karma*. Bishop Kulandran cites Nicol Macnicol as saying: "In the theistic systems of India God is apt to be looked upon as an accident, while the system of Karma is, for the individual, the substance of Reality."[54] Bishop Kulandran disagrees with the statement and calls it an inexcusable *faux pas*. On the contrary, he tells us, the Being of the Deity, is "the preoccupation of the Indian mind;" *Karma* is only the main presupposition. But one wonders whether there is not here a mere difference in semantics. The good Bishop himself admits that the essence of Hinduism is *Samsara,* i.e. deliverance from the wheel of perpetual re-birth. The controlling principle of *samsara* is the law of *karma*. Kulandran agrees with G. A. Grierson to the effect that *karma* hangs "like a pall over the Indian religions" and the Bishop himself admits that "*samsara* is the preoccupation of the Hindu mind."[55] The conclusion is therefore inevitable: the controlling principle is *karma* and not God. The only exception to the rule would appear to be the *Siddhanta* where a compromise is achieved in that the law of *karma* is understood as a means of grace on the part of the Deity to achieve salvation for man.[56]

In Buddhism the situation is even more extreme. Here there is nothing else besides the karmic law: "There is no God over and above it. The karmic order is entirely autonomous and all-determinative."[57] Whitehead draws attention to the strange inconsistency: "Buddhists have shunned the intrinsic evils of the impersonal immanence of the Law imposed by the inflexible Allah" of the Islamic faith, while at the same time submitting willingly to the iron rule of *karma*.[58]

Though the term *kismet* (or *qismet*) is not to be found in the Quran and its teaching on predestination and free-will is ambivalent, in practice, for the Muslim "fate is a shadow of an inscrutable Providence brooding over all."[59] In Islamic tradition the sovereignty of God so dominates human destiny as to make man the tool of God's inscrutable will. Hence the rigid concept of Law in Islam. The term Islam means surrender and signifies the believer's submission to the omnipotent God. Especially in the earlier tradition of Islam, law and religion signified the same thing. As in the case of orthodox Judaism, Islam is seen by Muslims "primarily as an all-embracing legal system."[60] What *torah* means for Jews, *shariah* ("Way") means for Muslims: detailed prescription of ritual observance regarding cleanliness, food, prayer, etc.[61] The Muslim God is first and foremost a Lawgiver who thus reveals Himself as both omnipotent and omniscient: "Nothing resists His wish. All was and is by His preparation, His order, and

His requisition." To resist God's preordained will would amount to sheer folly. All that man can do is submit to his fate for his destiny is not in his own hands: "For every soul he (i.e. God) decreed a period of residence in the body, a period beyond extension or foreshortening, and this is the term of the soul. When the term closes, the soul and body are severed."[62]

This stern concept of God whose decrees are preordained and absolute has not been left without challenge. Ibn Arabi's (1165-1240) heresy consisted in a desire to lessen the severity of the divine image in Islam. An early seventeenth century writer says about him: "In most of his works he stressed the gentler aspects of divinity rather than the sterner ones, and this has caused much dispute ever since . . ."[63] But the prevailing tendency has always been in the opposite direction. This is imposed upon Islam by loyalty to the Quran where Allah is described as a God who "ordaineth that which pleaseth Him" (V:l). *Al-Islam* - surrender to Allah is the keynote of Quranic faith.[64] Surrender here carries a double connotation: personal surrender to Allah; surrender to Allah's will as deposited in the Quran by the mouth of His Prophet. Islamic legislation was later elaborated into an intricate system of legal prohibitions which control every detail of a Muslim's life. "Islam" says Kenneth Cragg, "is totalitarian," in that it covers the whole of human life in relation to God and society. Cragg points out that Islam is only realizable in the political pattern of community-existence; "The true law in the custody of the true community is the condition of the true society." This, according to him, is the ultimate meaning of Islamic law. The identification between Islam and law is such that the two are indistinguishable. When we speak of "Islam as law" we give the impression that there is something else besides, but this is not so: "the historic Religion is a total way of life, known from Divine disclosure and attainable in political, social and economic existence, by men on earth."[65]

The affinity between Islam and rabbinic Judaism in respect to law is so close that it is difficult to make a distinction. *Torah* as the all-comprehensive way of life corresponds to *shariah* as the Islamic ideal for man; divine legislation is here the governing principle for human behaviour. As in Judaism, revealed law is adjustable to changing circumstances, but always so that *shariah* serves as the basis.

The *mujtahid,* like the rabbi, is a scholar who qualifies as interpreter of Islamic law after "prolonged grammatical, legal and theological training." His task is to reach conclusions which would meet with the general consensus of scholarship.[66] The *talmudic* discussions are based on exactly the same principle. The *Talmud* is "the record of a process . . . by means of which the law is made clear." It proceeds on the pattern of dialogue between scholars in search of "underlying unifying principles" to discover new rulings on the basis of ancient law.[67] Muhammad's indebtedness to the Old Testament and to Judaism is only too obvious. One has only to open the Quran to convince oneself of Islam's dependence upon Hebraic tradition. But behind the historic connections there is a more basic factor of decisive importance.

Law as order is a fundamental requirement of society. The special contribution of the Old Testament was to stress the moral implications of law before a holy God. The divine ordinances and man's moral duty are inseparably linked in the mind of the Prophets: "obedience of the human will to the expressed and revealed will of God."[68] This is not the discovery of the Hebrew Bible, only the intensely moral emphasis is new. Ancient legal texts outside the Bible usually appeal to divine authority as their source. The Prologue to the Lipit-Ishtar code explains that this god, as the Wise Shepherd is concerned to establish justice in the land in order "to banish complaints, to turn back enmity and rebellion by the force of arms (and) to bring well-being to the Sumerians and Akkadians . . ."[69] Similarly, Hammurabi is seen, according to the famous bas-relief, in the act of being instructed by the sun-god Shamash, the god

of justice, on the code of laws. The purpose of the code, according to the preamble, is "to cause justice to prevail in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil, that the strong might not oppress the weak . . . and to light up the land."[70]

These laws are not dependent upon the whim of the ruler. The authority is derived from Shamash "the great judge of heaven and earth" and from Marduk the king's Lord.[71] The code ends with a long list of curses from the gods upon the person who will attempt to pervert the law and alter the statutes. Law is here conceived as imposed upon human society from the outside. The gods are the guardians of justice and demand equity both from those who rule and those who are ruled. The logic of justice lies in the need of society to maintain order. But it points beyond mere usefulness to a purposeful pattern outside the human domain. "The disharmonies in the actual world" of which Whitehead speaks,[72] are countered by an effort to conform to a higher order more truly in line with the purpose of existence. Behind it is the conviction that such an order exists and that it serves ultimate ends. All theistic religions live by this premise; on the other hand, law immanently conceived inevitably requires a pantheistic approach.[73]

The Old Testament concept of law does not contradict the universal premise of traditional Deism. God is indeed the Creator of order in the Universe; He also orders the relationship between man and man and of society at large. The God of Israel is both Law-giver and Judge; He is supremely the Guardian of justice. But justice in the Hebrew Bible acquires an ingredient which totally revolutionizes the meaning of law. The stern legalism of ancient law is here transcended by the concept of Covenant. That God is the God of the Covenant spells out *hesed* ("steadfast love") to sinners. YHWH is prepared to spare Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of a few righteous. Abraham's question reveals a new concept of justice: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25). *Mishpat* ("right") in this text is not any more mere equity but mercy. Wheeler Robinson denies that Old Testament law is legalistic: *torah* is always more than law. Because the background of *torah* is the Covenant, law is inseparable from *hesed* (loving-kindness and faithfulness on the part of YHWH) which is the purpose and meaning of God's Commandments.[74] Behind the tables of the law is the faithful and loving God for whom *mishpat* is *zedakah*: righteousness. This is eminently so in Deutero-Isaiah where "the decisive element was that of God's gift of salvation, both to Israel and to the Gentile world . . ." For the Prophet, *zedakah* spells out the "readiness on the part of God to succour his creatures" and His "loyal adherence to an eternal purpose." Eichrodt significantly adds: "Here too the relationship of legal obligation has become a relationship of grace."[75] The messianic promise of the Prince of Peace whose name is YHWH-our-righteousness (Jer. 23:6) leads directly to the Pauline concept of God's righteousness who justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5). But grace and judgement are here always kept in juxtaposition so that man is confronted by a God who is both Holy and Merciful, Judge and Pardoner.

At the point where law is understood in terms of grace the religions come close within the circumference of biblical prophetism. To allow love as the principle of justice removes law from the rigidity of the letter and places it within the freedom of the Spirit where the moral imperative becomes the decisive factor. There is therefore some justification for Tillich's contention that the ethical wisdom of the nations carries revelatory significance.[76] The moral law, according to Tillich, depends upon *agape* for its ultimate validity and norm.[77] We can therefore say that whenever love becomes transparent as the principle of law, there, and only there, do the religions transcend themselves.

There is a rigidity about law in that it demands strict application under all circumstances. It makes no provision for the exceptional case; because of its abstract nature it is "inadequate to any unique situation."[78] The proverb: *summum ius, summa iniuria* is a real possibility in daily life. Sophocles was

right when he said: "there is a point when even justice is unjust."[79] Law without mercy is a tyrant which destroys. Religion as pure law is a demonic force. Only when *agape* becomes the principle of justice is justice possible under human conditions. It means that Grace supersedes Law even to the point when it becomes *contra rationem et contra legem*. But here lies the danger: cheap grace, which is the greatest enticement to the religious man, ie. not really grace even when put in a theistic context. In the end it becomes self-forgiveness, self-acceptance, self-salvation. This was Kraemer's severest criticism of all the religions.[80] Cheap grace, i.e. grace without the Cross, is as much a temptation to Christians as it is to those outside the Church. Dietrich Bonhoeffer has reminded us of the fact in an unforgettable way.[81] There is however a difference: at least formally the Christian faith is unthinkable without the Cross and what it stands for. Bishop Kulandran rightly says: "The Cross of Christ is not merely integral but central to the doctrine of Grace and the entire Christian religion . . ."[82] Whenever atonement is spoken of in Christian terms, grace can never be cheap. It is no accident that Hindus are so opposed to the Christian doctrine of salvation which has as its focal point the Cross of Jesus Christ.[83] It is at the point of the Cross that religion as Law is transformed into religion which lives by the *agape* and God's grace.

3. Religion as Love

Law, as we have seen, spells out a fundamental aspect of human existence. Man cannot survive without it. Law implies an order which goes beyond the exigencies of human society and inheres in the very nature of things. It is therefore legitimate to describe it as a basic ontological category. It presupposes a principle which orders the multiplicity of matter from chaotic disarray into a unified and purposive system. The pattern which is imposed upon human life by the physical universe demands complicity and submission. Man can only survive by accepting the rules which govern life and by complying with them. The illusion created by technology is that man can by-pass these rules and rearrange the pattern. But this is a dangerous assumption which leads to false conclusions. The idea that science can break the laws of causation and so adjust the rules as to suit our convenience is at the root of the new religion called "scientism."[84] But what we call the "laws of nature" are only statistical observations of regularity arrived at by the method of induction as shown by John Stuart Mill: explanation and prediction of facts under similar conditions.[85] Mill therefore questions the uniformity in nature: "regularity results only from the coexistence of partial regularities." The same facts only recur when the same circumstances are present.[86] But there is still the even more puzzling phenomenon which occupies Charles Sanders Peirce: why given the same circumstances are the facts predictable? The only possible answer is that there is a built-in tendency to obey laws. Nature somehow tends towards uniformity. Like Teilhard de Chardin after him, Peirce connects this tendency with the principle of evolution moving inexorably away from indeterminacy towards "a complete reign of law."[87] Peirce refuses to ascribe to the "laws of nature" as *de facto* existence, or as the result of a divine fiat, all he allows is the tendency towards uniformity.[88] But he allows that it is a tendency based upon the invariable principle of evolution. At this point he evades the issue with his hypothesis of "chance spontaneity" which ultimately leads him to a position of "pan-psychism". In this regard Teilhard is more consistent: evolution itself requires a rational explanation. Impersonal law, therefore, however we look upon it, still leaves us puzzled. Why should there be a tendency towards evolution? Faced with the question Teilhard de Chardin falls back upon a spiritual principle inherent in the Universe. This is not what the Church means by revelation but it may be a pointer towards it. Once we admit a non-mechanical, non-physical

principle underlying the physical world, the meaning of law assumes constitutive importance. It implies a principle which transcends social usefulness and becomes an all-inclusive aspect of the cosmos.[89] The universal sense of right and wrong of which Aristotle speaks as "intuitively divine,"[90] is in fact the discovery that life depends upon a positive postulate. Right is what serves to preserve the order of the universe; wrong is what is destructive to life. But once we give to life a positive connotation we place it not only within our scale of values but raise it to the highest good. Even the destructive and evil forces which go with existence lose something of their terror and threat at this point.

The religions stand for a positive affirmation of life; this applies even to Buddhism which carries the promise of an ultimate solution - *nirvana*.[91] The *summum bonum*, man's highest good, the religions conceive in his accomplishing a pre-ordained destiny: redemption from the law of return (*samsara*), achievement of ultimate peace (*nirvana*), participation in the hall of fame (*valhalla*), admission to the Presence of God (Heaven). All these concepts carry the same meaning: a goal to strive for, a destiny to complete. Each of these concepts is inescapably linked to the moral good. It was Kant's great achievement to have realized that the moral law precedes and is the foundation of the moral good: "it is the moral law which first determines the concept of good and makes it possible."[92] Kant however placed the moral law in the will: "nothing can be called good without qualification, except a Good will." But this gives man ultimate autonomy: his good will decides the ultimate good. This is the very problem to which Prof. W. G. de Burgh addresses himself in his Gifford Lectures (1938).[93] We cannot treat the moral imperative seriously unless we allow for an objective Good outside man.

Adam's original sin was to take it upon himself to decide about good and evil.[94] Law in the ultimate sense can only be good if it corresponds to an ordered universe. Joachim Wach's "syntonic" concept of religion as a "rapport with ultimate reality" has here full application.[95] But if law spells order, purpose, moral good, it adds a new dimension to existence, namely the dimension of love.

Agape is a specifically Christian concept. Anders Nygren has shown not only how central is this concept to the Christian faith but also how it differs fundamentally from *eros*: theocentric as opposed to egocentric love: "*Eros* which is the rival of *Agape*" is to Nygren not just sensual love, but the more refined spiritual form, Platonic love, in quest for heavenly things; and yet the two are completely dissimilar. According to Nygren the dissimilarity is such that a synthesis is impossible: sublimated *Eros* does not become *Agape*. He allows however that the two run "parallel courses."[96] This may be so in theory, but in practice it would seem that man responds to *agape* erotically and *vice versa*. For *Agape* in the full sense is not human love at all, it is Divine love; it is the love wherewith God loves man in Jesus Christ. Nygren's description of true Christian love is ideally stated.[97] Under human conditions *Agape* remains an ideal to strive after by the grace of God. Grace already means openness to God's redemptive love. Man is not capable of *Agape* in his own strength and all the time. To him love is either *Eros* or *Caritas*, what Nyrgren calls the "upward tendency" i.e., man's own striving for perfection.

Religion, outside the Gospel, reveals this "upward tendency" as a potent factor in human life. In theology it is described as natural law: the Divine Preserving of His creation.[98] This is not meant as an impersonal principle but "an overflowing of His (God's) free love."[99] A love which does not only preserve but accompanies the creature upon his path.[100] The "laws of nature" must not be treated as a manifestation of an impersonal cosmic force but rather as "arrows pointing in the direction of real order and form, i.e. of order and form which are objectively immanent in and proper to actual occurrence itself."[101] Barth refuses to treat the laws of nature as absolute dogmas and give them the character of ontic law; nevertheless there is an undeniable relationship between the laws of nature as we know them,

and the Creator behind these laws. Barth insists that our relation to these laws is indirect whereas our confrontation with God is personal.[102] By this distinction he purports to avoid the pitfalls of the two extremes: the Stoic doctrine of fate and the Epicurean doctrine of change.[103] For this reason natural law must not be treated as abstraction but in close relation to the Creator who is the Preserver, Sustainer and Ruler of his world. God's gracious providence extends to the whole of creation in all its aspects. The *conservatio, concursus et gubernatio Dei*, is not something reserved exclusively for Christians. The believer and the unbeliever stand together under the universal Lordship of God the Father.[104]

In the context of God's providence the laws underlying creation are means of grace. Because God is the Creator of all men the laws as grace extend to all mankind. These laws are expressions of His will to protect his creation. Even the sexual drive which pervades and dominates all living creatures expresses God's will to perpetuate, protect, and bless life. In this sense *eros* is not antithetic to the love of God. *Eros* and *Agape* intersect and impinge upon our human relationships.[105] *Eros* and *Agape*, according to Thielicke, stand in unresolved tension: *agape* comes to us as a challenge, as a reminder, as a call to transcend instinctual life. But under human conditions both *agape* and *eros* are part of man's experience. Man stands between the order of creation and the order of nature at the point of decision. Thielicke refuses to identify these two orders: "the order of creation must rather be heard as a summons to responsibility over against the order of nature."[106] To reduce the two orders to a synthesis would be to deprive man of his special dignity as a responsible creature before God. In human experience both *eros* and *agape* bear in upon life pressing for a decision. Man transcends erotic love in many of his relationships, as in the case of mother to child, friend to friend, brother to brother. This applies to humanity at large and not only to Christians.[107] Thus certain aspects of Chinese ethics appear to come close to the Christian concept of *agape*; though the popular concept of love is still incompatible with it.[108] Pagan philosophers were not ignorant of the deeper meaning of love. "Love is more a question of friendship than of intercourse," says Aristotle.[109] True love, he maintains, is beneficent, it expresses itself in good will.[110] But above all it is Plato who comes remarkably close to the Christian concept of *agape* as self-less love. This kind of love which seeks for the beloved to achieve excellence is different from physical attraction and ordinary friendship.[111]

Though related to the first two it moves on a different plane. Phaedrus challenged by Socrates to speak in praise of Love, acquits himself with remarkable skill: there are more loves than one - not every love is noble and worthy of praise "but only that which inspires men to love nobly." It is not the vulgar love of the body but the love of soul which is true love for Plato. Phaedrus explains that the purpose of such love is for lover and beloved eagerly to work for mutual improvement.[112] Perhaps the finest exposition of love as *agape* we find in *Lysis*. This Dialogue is concerned with the elucidation of the meaning of friendship. Friends have all things in common; but Socrates raises the question: does love depend upon mutual friendship? What happens when the lover is not loved? The long argument which follows appears inconclusive but for the fact that early in the Dialogue Plato already posites the possibility of unselfish love as in the case of parents.[113] Both Plato and Aristotle conceive of *eros* as a supra-natural force which performs a cosmic function: "It is the power of attraction in virtue of which the original principle maintains all being in order and movement. This loving which inwardly holds the world together has nothing more to do with intoxication. It is an act which is strictly volitional in character."[114] Especially with Aristotle love is a cosmic force. In no sense is this to be understood in personal terms. Greek philosophy was mainly concerned with the Cosmos and used the principles of Love and Hate to explain the forces which kept the world together.[115] But religion is not expressed in

philosophical reasoning but in the devotions of the faithful. It is here that the principle of *lex orendi lex credendi* comes into its own.[116] It is when we look at the prayers of the antique world that we discover the deeper motives behind the religious rites. Especially in the cult of the Great Mother we encounter the real purpose religion is meant to serve: the turning of a hostile universe into a warm and friendly home. Here is a typical prayer to Isis, the goddess of the "countless names":

> "Holy and blessed dame, the perpetual comfort of mankind,
> who by thy bounty and grace nourishest all the world, and
> bearest a great affection to the adversities of the miserable
> as a loving mother, Thou takest no rest, night or day,
> neither art thou idle at any time in divine benefits and
> succouring all men as well on land as sea; Thou art she
> that puttest away all storms and dangers from mens'
> life by stretching forth thy right hand, whereby likewise
> thou dost unweave even the inextricable and tangled web
> of fate, and appeasest the great tempests of fortune, and
> keepest back the harmful course of the stars. The gods
> supernal do honour Thee, the gods infernal have Thee
> in reverence; Thou dost make all the earth to turn, Thou
> givest light to the sun, Thou governest the world, Thou
> treadest down the power of hell . . ."[117]

Any book of devotions to the Virgin Mary will reveal a similar note of outgoing love.[118] Behind this attitude is a fervent affirmation of life as a good. Phallic worship, depraved as it is, is in essence an expression of a positive approach to life. There is here an underlying assumption that what is good is true and what is true is good.[119]

It was Vladimir Solovyov (1953-1900) who saw the love between man and woman as an expression of "absolute significance." Its intention is more than propagating the species, it lays man open to the great mystery of life behind which is the Creator of the Universe, the author and source of Love.[120] Religion by celebrating life, celebrates love, but it does so in the order of nature rather than in the order of creation. Thielicke's distinction between these two orders of existence is based on the theological assumption of the Fall. Man's fallen nature reveals itself in his addiction to idolatry, i.e. by exchanging the truth about God for a lie in worshipping the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). The history of religion carries this strange ambiguity: it celebrates life and love and so points to Him who is the Author[121] of both but at the same time becomes so entangled with nature as to turn religion into a human fortress in opposition to God. At this point nature becomes divinized and thus acquires an idolatrous character. There is a measure of idolatry in every religion and this becomes especially apparent when centred upon itself and serving its own ends.

It is difficult to know what construction Tertullian put upon his famous exclamatory sentence: *testimonium animae naturaliter Christianae*, but religion in terms of truth, law and love if it could be separated from man's egocentricity and kept in its pristine purity could serve as *praparatio evangelica*. But there are no such conditions here upon earth. No human soul is "by natural instinct Christian."[122] The facts of history point in the opposite direction: here religion and Gospel never coincide but remain in constant tension and conflict.

4. Religion as S*ensus Divinitatis*

Brunner attaches special importance to the religious instinct. But even Barth is prepared to concede the presence of God in religion, though only in a hidden manner. In this they follow an old-established tradition that no matter how depraved, religion is yet man's cry for the living God. Novatian, the notorious Roman presbyter, in his treatise on the Trinity (middle 3rd century) in a lofty passage gives expression to this conviction of the *sensus divinitatis* in man: "This God, then, setting aside the fables and figments of heretics, the Church knows and worships, to whom the universal and entire nature of things as well visible as invisible gives witness; whom the angels adore, stars wonder at, seas bless, lands revere, and all things under the earth look up to; whom the whole mind of man is conscious of, even if it does not express it." The crucial text in Latin reads: *quem mens omnis humana sentit etiamsi non exprimit*. Hans Weyer, the translator of Novatian, renders it: "of whom every human mind is aware though it cannot describe him."[123] The meaning is plain: whether consciously or unconsciously, whether put in words or left inarticulate, to be man means to have a capacity or a faculty for God.

The *sensus divinitatis* is an important concept with Plato. Though every human being as a possessor of a soul is already related to the Supreme Soul, it is the poet who best demonstrates man's sense for the divine.[124] Cicero, under strong Platonic influence, was a great believer in man as the image of the divine. If only people would become aware of the *divinum simulacrum* within them, their problems would be solved.[125] Rexine quotes an interesting sentence from an early work by Cicero where he defines religion as the "feeling of the presence of a higher or divine nature which prompts man to worship . . ." - *cura et caeremonia* - worship and holy awe.[126] Marcus Aurelius in his Meditations repeatedly refers to man's divine nature. The divine authority within man identifies with soul and reason and this is not just the privilege of the few but of everyone.[127] This conviction has persisted to our day irrespective of religious differences. An orthodox Christian like Hendrik Kraemer merely reaffirms the views of Plato and Cicero when he says: "man's nature is indelibly stamped with a *sensus divinitatis*; a *sensus religionis* is implanted in it, as ancient writers had it."[128] This sense for the divine is the foundation-stone of all natural religion in theology which has played as great a part in classical Protestantism as it has in medieval scholasticism.[129] It is also the basic principle of every religious synthesis: "the axiomatic assumption of the essential oneness of all religion" - in W. E. Hocking's words.[130]

From the perspective of the unity of all religions the distinction of degrees is of small account. H. H. Farmer who distinguishes between religion and Religion would only pay serious attention to the religious phenomenon "at the point where ultimate reality impinges on the human spirit." But he is quick to add that even religion in the lower key is not just illusion. How do we decide when "ultimate reality impinges on the human spirit?" Here is his answer: "whenever religion arises with some degree of spontaneous, creative, living power, it does so because at that point ultimate reality is disclosing itself as personal to man."[131] Why such creative activity should be recognized as "ultimate reality" and even as "personal" he does not explain, except on the suspicion of a veiled pantheism.

For the Christian here lies he main difficulty: the blurring of the distinction between Creator and creature. Every theological effort built upon the *analogia entis* principle, no matter how carefully defined, in the end obscures the radical distinction between God and man. H. H. Farmer had first to secure his argument from analogy before he was able to use religion as the gateway to "ultimate reality."[132] But his is by no means a convincing assumption when applied to the Otherness of God. What

would happen to Farmer's argument for religion once we rejected the argument from analogy? All we are left with is a subjective experience.

Even H. H. Farmer allows that much in religion is of questionable value. But when in addition the fundamental principle of God's majesty is in danger of infringement must we not pause and ask whether we are on the right track?

A way out of the difficulty created by the principle of analogy would be the traditional distinction between nature and grace: general grace and special grace. This two-level approach which goes back to Augustine has its own difficulties. Nature is also grace for, as St. Thomas rightly saw, man's natural life is wholly dependent upon God's constant and unlimited grace.[133] St. Thomas managed to avoid the dichotomy between the natural and the supernatural on the premise that grace does not abolish nature but perfects it. But this too creates a problem for it deprives grace of is radical character and makes it a mere crutch instead of the vivifying and renewing Presence of God. This was Barth's main contention against both scholastic and contemporary theology.

The question of grace raises an anthropological problem: what is man's position before God? How free is he to hear and respond?

The argument for man's dignity is based on the *imago Dei* principle: as the bearer of God's image he has an inbuilt ability to hear and respond to God as his partner.[134] This would have been an ideal solution to our problem except for the contrary facts we have already seen, and Brunner was the first to admit, that religion is not just hearing and responding to God's Word; it does far more: it answers its own questions and creates its own gods. These superstitious idols are a "reproach of the Deity."[135] Lord Bacon quotes Epicurus: "It is not profane to deny the existence of the gods of the vulgar: but to apply to the gods the notions of the vulgar is profane."[136] How much more does this wise saying apply to religion in reference to Almighty God? There is something very genuine in Lucretius's famous cry: *tantum religio potuit suadere malorum!* Francis Bacon was only too aware of this fact when he cautioned "sacred theology" to beware of the "light of nature" and to build only upon the Word of God.[137] Bacon's definition of idolatry deserves our attention: the worship of false gods while supposing them to be true.[138] The "truth" of religion, it appears, can never be taken for granted. Here truth and falsehood are strangely intermixed, not at the lowest level, but at the highest; for the higher man's culture, the more subtle is his addiction to false gods.

At this point a word or two about "religionless Christianity" may be inserted. The phrase became popularized with the name of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.[139] In German theology the concept has a much longer tradition and goes back to the Reformation with its distinction of true and false religion. Contemporary advocates of "religionless Christianity" mean however something other than what the reformers meant and what D. Bonhoeffer appears to have meant. They mean a "Christianity" in secular terms and in conformity with scientific presuppositions. Such a Christianity must shed its metaphysical ballast, its otherworldly tendencies, its ecclesiastical structure and only retain the Sermon on the Mount.

On our broad definition of religion as man's response to the world around him, "religionless Christianity" is a misnomer. Man cannot escape religion, no matter what terminology he uses. On the more narrow definition of religion in terms of ecclesiastical institutionalism and cultic expression, "religionless Christianity" is a viable possibility only that at this point it will cease to be "christianity". An ethics based on the universal principle of love lacks the biblical norms which is the only testing ground of its genuineness. It would therefore appear that religion and Christianity are inseparable entities not because there is no difference, but because man cannot do other than respond religiously.

We will now attempt to summarize our somewhat lengthy discussion:

a) We have attempted to establish a connection between man's experience of the universe and his religion.

b) Religion when articulated passes from mood to dogma: it becomes a "science," a theology. Only as "doctrine" is it communicable. Without this intellectual content it can acquire no social status. Julian Huxley who pleads for religion as pure experience misses an essential factor.[140]

c) To the extent to which creeds, doctrines, dogmas, morals express "truth" for man's good and progress, religion carries validity and deserves respect. There must be no wholesale rejection of religion because it is just religion.[141]

d) All religions, the Christian included, must be judged in their twofold meaning: as response and as entrenchment; it is always both. Because of the idolatrous tendency built into religion it needs constant re-orientation and testing. Only when it points away from itself to the living God is it genuine.

e) Only when religion becomes open to the Gospel and is willing to surrender its autonomy can it be seen as true.[142] The characteristic of false religion is autonomy and self-sufficiency.

f) Religion is the way the human person expresses his encounter with life in all its aspects. This may take a variety of forms such as music, art, dance, etc; or a combination of all three.

g) It is possible to serve the true God under false images; it is also possible to serve false gods under the true image.[143]

The ambiguity about religion derives from the ambiguity about man: he himself is a contradiction. Man is both *faber idolorum* and the bearer of the *imago Dei*. This ambivalence must never be lost sight of if we want to assess the human situation realistically. But to see man as he is we must see him *coram Deo.*

Notes to Chapter IV

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[1] Cf. C. K. Ogden & I. A. Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, 1939, 249.

[2] Cf. L. J. Cohen, The Diversity of Meaning, 1962, 259.

[3] Cf. Aristotle, Categories, 5, 4 b; Nichomachean Ethics, 6, 2.

[4] Plato, Cratylus, 38; cf. Sören Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, E.T., 1944, 5.

[5] Cf. ib. 391 a; 431.

[6] Cf. Phaedo, 65 d - e; the answer to the problem of the quest for truth Plato saw in the concept of Recollection, otherwise there seemed to be no solution: if the truth is unknown one would not know what to seek; if known there would be no reason for the quest to start with.

[7] Cf. L. J. Cohen, op.cit 146.

[8] William Temple, Nature, Man & God, 1951, 306. (Temple's italics)

[9] James E. Sellers, Theological Ethics, 1966, 46.

[10] W. R. Inge, Christian Mysticism, Bampton Lectures, 1899. (Preface to 1932 ed.)

[11] Nathan Söderblom, The Nature of Revelation, E.T., 1933, 117ff.

[12] ib. translator's Introduction.

[13] Cf. Rudolf Otto, The Philosophy of Religion, E.T., 1931, 22a. For a criticism of Otto see O. R. Jones, The Concept of Holiness, 1961, 127ff.

[14] Cf. John Baillie, Our Knowledge of God, 1939, 175. Baillie has never departed from his main premise that "intuitive insight" is at the heart of all religion. His criticism of Schleiermacher is therefore only a matter of semantics; cf. John Baillie, The Roots of Religion in the Human Soul, 1926, 42ff, 48, 69f, 112.

[15] Cf. ib. 191f.

[16] Cf. Luther's Works, American Edition, 1957, Vol. 31, 40.

[17] Cf. Art. "Ontologism" by G. M.. Sauvage, Catholic Encycl., 1910.

[18] Cf. John Baillie, op.cit 173ff.

[19] Art. "Revelations," Cath. Encycl. Here a distinction is made between "catholic faith" which is obligatory and "human faith" which when "in conformity with the dictates of prudence" deserves credence. Even in the case of private revelations "there are occasions in which we can be certain that a revelation is Divine."

[20] Cf. Luther on Gal. 1:3: A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, E.T., 1953, 42ff. Luther lays down the rule: "that men ought to abstain from the curious searching of God's majesty."

[21] Rudolf Otto, op.cit 222: "Modern theology is a Science of Religion; Christian theology is a Science of Christian Religion."

[22] Cf. P. Tillich, "The Meaning & Justification of Religious Symbols" Religious Experience & Truth, ed. by S. Hook, 1961, 3ff; Ronald E. Santini in his Introduction to Religious Language & the Problem of Religious Knowledge (1968) discusses Tillich's ambiguities regarding God and Symbol (cf. ib. 19ff).

[23] Cf. ib. 39ff.

[24] The "new theology" in the Roman Church as represented by Rahner, Baum, Dewart & others, appears in essence to be no more than a rephrasing of the mystical tradition (Gregory Baum, "Truth in the Church - Kung, Rahner and Beyond," The Ecumenist, March/April, 1971)

[25] Cf. ib. 107.

[26] Cf. ib. 85f. But many religiologists cannot accept such a suggestion for it would make their effort meaningless. Georg Wobbermin lays it down as a fundamental principle that "Truth-Interest" and religious experience are inseparable: "This assumption of a uniquely valid truth must be granted if we would rightly comprehend the unique meaning of the religious consciousness" (The whole sentence is in italics). (G. Wobbermin, The Nature of Religion, E.T., 1933, 17). On the other hand, Donald H. Bishop defends pluralism in religion on the grounds of relativism: "Man can only know partial truth . . . Man's relationship to God is a relative one in that it takes many forms, varying from culture to culture. Thus, there is no universal standard by which conclusive judgements can be made regarding truth or falsity of a particular religion." ("Religious Confrontation, a case study: The 1893 Parliament of Religions," Numen, April 1969, 76.)

[27] Cf. Kulandran, op.cit 229f. Kulandran quotes Max Müller's description of the Upanishads as "the acme of human speculation". Cf. the delightful passage in The Meaning of Truth (1911) by William James where he speaks of "the flight of conceptual reason through the upper air of truth" where "every crazy wind will take her . . . like a fire-balloon at night . . ." (40f).

[28] Cf. Frithjof Schuon, Gnosis, E.T., 1959, 29ff.

[29] Cf. ib. 79.

[30] Cf. ib. 96f.

[31] Wilfred Cantwell Smith is trying hard to free religion from the truth content and at the same time guard it against "sheer relativism" but he is well aware of the difficulty; cf. The Meaning & End of Religion,1963, 244n, 157, 322 nl4. Karl Rahner rightly observed: “The absoluteness of truth and the historicity of truth is one of the basic problems of philosophy” (Theology Digest, Feb. 1968, 31). For W. C. Smith’s plea for amore personal aspect of truth see Studies in Religion, (Canadian Journal, n. 1, 1971).

[32] Cf. J. Jocz, The Covenant, 1968; W. C. Smith argues in the same vein (cf. op.cit l83f & 322 n15) but unfortunately, he does not seem to take biblical revelation seriously enough. For him “involvement in transcendence" is the guiding principle, the result is pure relativism which means that "no statement can be true or false” (ib. 182); cf. also A. R, Gualtieri’s article: “Faith, Tradition, & Transcendence," CJT, April, 1969, 103ff.

[33] Prof. D. E. Trueblood is fully aware of the fact that experience is always subjective and that “we cannot escape from the circle of our subjective ideas”; yet at the same time he refuses to draw the conclusion “that objects of religious experience are lacking in objective reference”. This he does on the grounds that here is objective “truth” irrespective of our opinions about it. But this surely is an act of faith and not deducible from dialectic reasoning? (Cf. The Philosophy of Religion, 1957, 33ff.

[34] Cf. William Montgomery Watt, Truth in the Religions, 1963, 129 and passim; 156f.

[35] Cf. ib. 163ff.

[36] Cf. Lynn Harold Hough, The Meaning of Human Experience, 1945, 328f. It must be admitted however that in science, relative truth carries conviction: “Scientific truth," writes Margenau, “is dynamic truth, carried in a spirit of continual self-correction toward an ideal limit of understanding . . .” (Henry Margenau, Open Vistas, 1961, 74). He therefore deprecates religious dogmatism as he does scientific dogmatism; cf. ib. 232, 239.

[37] Soundings, 115, 121.

[38] Cf. Aristotle, Metaphysics, II, 5: “Philosophy is rightly called a knowledge of Truth”; “The object of theoretical knowledge is truth, while that of practical knowledge is action . . .” The practical aspect of truth is more biblically defined by some modern Jewish writers like Abraham Heschel, Leo Baeck and Martin Buber; cf. H. D. Leuner, op.cit Religiöses Denken im Judentum des 20. Jahrhunderts, 1969, 36, 64, 68. For a thorough critique of the Greek concept of truth, see Leslie Dewart, The Foundations of Belief, 1969, 69ff, 76ff, 89ff, 107ff, etc. We would especially single out the following sentence: “. . . concern for the truth is not necessarily the same as the truth; not every view advanced in defence of truth is necessarily true, nor does it always profit the truth” (109). Cf. also Karl Rahner, “The Historical Dimension in Theology," Theology Digest, Sesquicentennial issue, Feb. 1968, 30ff. Contemporary philosophers appear to be preoccupied with questions of “truth-conditions” and “communication-intention” rather than Truth in the classical sense (cf. P. F. Strawson, Meaning and Truth (Inaugural Lecture), Oxford 1970.

[39] Cf. William Jones, The Meaning of Truth, 1911, 75, 90, 149.

[40] Cf. A. N. Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas, 1933, 277ff, 290ff, 305ff. This marks the difference between idealist and positivist philosophy. Leibniz knows two kinds of truths: truths of reasoning and truths of fact; “truths of reasoning are necessary and their opposite are impossible; those of fact are contingent, and their opposite possible," Monadology, 33.

[41] B. Jowett, The Dialogues of Plato, 1953, IV, 179; the same position is taken by Cicero both in De legibus and De republica, where law is conceived as divine, in accordance with reason, and at the core of the natural rule of the universe.

[42] Cf. Plato, Laws, X, 903 b - 4.

[43] Cf. ib. 904 a - b.

[44] Cf. ib. 910 b.

[45] Cf. ib. Whitehead, op.cit 130. H. L. A. Hart distinguishes between “prescriptive” laws ordained for the protection of society and “descriptive” laws such as science derived from observation. He allows minimal connection between natural law and moral law: there is “a core of indisputable truth in the doctrines of natural law” by reason of its teleological character in serving the law of survival (*persaverare in esse suo*) (The Concept of Law, 1961, 182f, 187ff, 194).

[46] ib. 54; cf. H. Margenau, op.cit 171ff; 234, who argues that the universe favours continuity of order. Hans Reichenbach denies that the Universe follows strict rules; ("Mathematics of Chance & Logic" Space, Time & the New Mathematics, ed. by Robert W. Marks, 1964, 71).

[47] Werner Heisenberg, the famous physicist, the author of the indeterminacy principle in quantum physics, does not hesitate to speak of a "fundamental law that can be expressed in mathematical language . . ." and that such a law must be expressed in "observed symmetries." "In the beginning," according to Heisenberg "was the form, the mathematical pattern not the material thing" (this is with reference to Plato's concept of ideas); cf. Marks, ib. 124f).

[48] Whitehead, op.cit. 145ff.

[49] ib. 137.

[50] Cf. Plato, Republic, X, 596f.

[51] ib. 716 c: "Now God ought to be to us the measure of all things, and not man . . ." (in contradiction to the views of Protagoras). For the rehabilitation of natural law, see Ian T. Ramsey, Christian Ethics & Contemporary Philosophy, 1966.

[52] Plato, Laws, 818 a; cf. 741 a.

[53] Cf. Oxford Classical Dictionary, 357, 1.

[54] Nicol Macnicol, Indian Theism, 1915, 221. (Full title: Indian Theism from the Vedic to the Muhammadan Period, 1915).

[55] Kulandran, op.cit 232.

[56] ib. 216f.

[57] ib. 256.

[58] Cf. Whitehead, op.cit 161. J. G. Jennings explains that the fundamental idea in the Indian mind is the impersonal divine Whole, "the universal breath or spirit (*atta*) the creative force . . ." This holds good for Buddhism as well as Hinduism (cf. The Vedantic Buddhism, 1947, XLVf). It is this monism which demands the karmic principle.

[59] Kenneth Cragg, The Dome & the Rock, 1964, 163.

[60] Cf. J. A. Williams, Islam, 1961, 92f. For the origin of the concept *din* (= law, religion) see C. Smith, op.cit 289 n67.

[61] Cf. ib. 96ff. The whole of chapter III, dealing with Islamic Law, reveals the similarity between Mosque and Synagogue in the approach to law. Cf. also H. A. R. Gibb, Mohammedanism, 1953, 72ff.

[62] Al Ghasali; cf. Images from the Arab World, translations by H. Howarth & I. Shukrallah, 1944, 74f.

[63] Katib Chelebi, The Balance of Truth, E.T., 1957, 80f.

[64] Cf. The Glorious Koran, V:3. Cf. W. C. Smith, op.cit 297 n. 104.

[65] Kenneth Cragg, The Call of the Minaret, 1956, 142f.

[66] Cf. ib. 147.

[67] Cf. Judah Goldin, The Living Talmud, 1957, 15f.

[68] Cf. H. Wheeler Robinson, Religious Ideas of the O.T., 1949, 41.

[69] Cf. Ancient Near Eastern Texts, ed. by J. B. Prichard, 1950, 159.

[70] ib. 164: in Roman law the XII Tables contained both *ius divinum* and *ius civile* but by the 4th century B.C. separation took place. Cf. H. Wheeler Robinson in Judaism & Christianity, III, 1938, 48.

[71] Ancient Near Eastern Texts, 178, (80ff) .

[72] Whitehead op.cit 298f.

[73] Cf. ib, 144. Leo Strauss commenting on Xenophon's Hiero or Tyrannicus observes: "If natural order is traced to the gods the compulsory character of the law recedes into the background . . . The law assumes a higher dignity if the universe is of divine origin" (Leo Strauss, On Tyranny, 1963, 109.)

[74] Cf. H. Wheeler Robinson, "Law & Religion in Israel," in Judaism & Christianity, II, 1939, 62: "Berith is the shell, and *hesed* is the kernel." Cf. David Daube, Studies in Biblical Law, 1947, 160.

[75] W. Eichrodt, Theology of the O.T., E.T., 1961, I, 246f.

[76] Paul Tillich, Syst. Theol., III, 48.

[77] ib. 46.

[78] Tillich, ib. 84.

[79] Cf. D. Daube's chapter on Summum ius - summa iniuria, Studies in Biblical Law, 190ff.

[80] Cf. H. Kraemer, World Cultures & World Religions, 1960, 364, 372ff; cf. also Kulandran, op.cit 261.

[81] Cf. D. Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, E.T., 1964.

[82] Kulandran, op.cit 240.

[83] Cf. Kulundran, op.cit 240f; according to Sri Ramakrishna only weak-minded men call themselves sinners (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, 1930, I, 224; cf. ib. 65, 179, 290).

[84] Cf. Infra p.

[85] J. S. Mill, A System of Logic, I, 2, 4 (p. 182).

[86] ib. I, 4, 1 (p. 189).

[87] Cf. W. B. Gallie, Peirce & Pragmatism, 1952, 218.

[88] Cf. ib. 201, 216.

[89] Leo Strauss points to the Averroistic concept of religion as institutionalized law by which to manage the populace, later taken up by Machiavelli (Spinoza's Critique of Religion, E.T., 1965, 49).

[90] Aristotle, Rhetoric, 1, 13.

[91] Soundings, 111ff. According to W. T. Stace, Nirvana for Buddhism corresponds to the God of Christianity. It is not a concept or a theory "it is simply the numinous experience itself." (Time & Eternity, 1952, 21ff). Prince Chula of Thailand describes Buddhism with its doctrine of Nirvana as a source of true happiness for it helps toward "detachment from all material things and sense perceptions" ("Buddhism in Everyday Life" The Listener, June 30, 1960, 1131). A. L. Basham emphatically denies that Buddhism is a gloomy faith: "the average Buddhist is neither pessimistic nor negative . . . joy is one of the cardinal virtues of Buddhism" ("Buddhism," The Listener, Dec. 10, 1964, 936.)

[92] Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, 155f, 205, cf. 94.

[93] W. G. de Burgh, From Morality to Religion, 1938, 127ff.

[94] Cf. H. Türck, Pandora und Eva, Menschwerdung und Schöpfertum, 1931, 48ff.

[95] Cf. J. M. Kitagawa's Introduction to Wach's The Comparative Study of Religions, 1958, XXIII, XXXI.

[96] Cf. Anders Nygren, Agape & Eros, E.T., 1932, Pt. I, 27ff.

[97] Cf. ib. Pt. II/II, 508f.

[98] Cf. K. Barth, Ch. Dog., E.T., III, 49, 1.

[99] ib. 68.

[100] Cf. ib. 49. 2.

[101] ib. 27.

[102] Cf. ib. 129.

[103] ib. 162.

[104] Barth, ib. 49, 239ff.

[105] Helmut Thielicke, The Ethics of Sex, E.T., 1964, 33; cf. also V. Solovyov, The Meaning of Love, E.T., 1946; cf. also Robert G. Hazo, The Idea of Love, 1967.

[106] Thielicke, op.cit 210.

[107] Thielicke criticizes Nygren for presenting a too idealistic concept of *agape*. His point is that *agape* "can realize itself only in the framework of (these) interhuman media . . ." (ib. 27)

[108] Cf. A. C. Bouquet, The Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions, 1958, 90. Watt questions whether we can legitimately speak of "Christian ethics," "Muslim ethics," etc. but he contradicts himself by saying that Muslims have no concept for conscience. There is obviously a difference of moral perception; Cf. W. M. Watt, Truth in the Religions, 1963, 90, 92, 94f.

[109] Aristotle, Prior Analytics, 2. 22.

[110] Aristotle, Magna Moralia, 2. 11.

[111] Plato, Laws, 837d.

[112] Plato, Symposium, 178f.

[113] Lysis, 210 c - d. Contrary to the rule it seems that Plato in this case allows Lysis to express the more correct sentiment about parental love though he is chided by Socrates for conceit.

[114] TDNT, I, 35f. This is in contrast to Sophocles for whom the goddess of love, the Cyprian Queen, wildly dominates all creatures, the gods and Zeus included (cf. fragment 941).

[115] Cf. Kathleen Freeman, God, Man & State: Greek Concepts, 1952, 27ff. In the case of the Greeks we have to fall back upon philosophy as their mythology is so varied that nothing conclusive can be deduced from it.

[116] The principle of prayer as the expression of belief derives from Coelestius' (422-32) formulation in the *Indiculus: Ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*: The rule of faith is determined by the rule of Prayer. For its importance for Christian thought see H. E. W. Turner, The Pattern of Christian Thought, 1954, 28, 302f, 319, 367, et passim.

[117] The Prayers of Man, (compiled by A. M. di Nola, ed. by P. O'Connor, 1961, 403. For similar prayers to Heaven; to the Moon; to Nature; to Ceres; cf. ib. 377ff; 384; etc.

[118] Douglas Clyde Macintosh makes this the principle of his theology: the moral optimism "involves believing that there is ultimately a harmony between what is good for man and what is true." The Reasonableness of Christianity, 1926, 53).

[119] Vladimir Solovyov, in A Solovyov Anthology arr. by S. L. Frank, 1950, 155ff. (The Meaning of Love) cp. also C. G. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 1961, on the mystery of erotic love (p. 335).

[120] ib. 172ff; cf. also Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, The Phenomenon of Man, 1955, 264ff.

[121] Schillebeeckx rightly regards the affirmation of Life as a presupposition of faith (cf. Theology, LXXI, 301).

[122] Tertullian, Apology 17. 6. The Latin sentence could be translated: "O (how wonderful) is the testimony of the soul that is naturally Christian" (or Christian by nature?). The new translation of Fathers of the Church (1950) reads: "O testimony of the soul, which is by natural instinct Christian!"

[123] Hans Weyer, De Trinitate, 1962, VIII, 40: "Ihn ahnt jedes Menschen Sinn, auch wenn er ihn nicht beschreiben kann."

[124] cf. Plato, Laws, III, 682a.

[125] Cf. John E. Rexine, Religion in Plato & Cicero, 1959, 34f.

[126] Rexine, ib. 48; cf. Cicero, De. Inventione, II, 161.

[127] Cf. Marcus Aurelius, V, 27.

[128] Hendrik Kraemer, World Cultures & World Religions, 1960, 350.

[129] For natural religion in classical Protestantism, see Heinrich Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, E.T., 1950, 1ff.

[130] Quoted by Kraemer, op.cit 340. Stace sneaks for all the religionists when he expresses the view that all religion is reducible to mysticism and that all religious men are mystics (W. T. Stace, Religion & the Modern Mind, 1952, 229f).

[131] H. H. Farmer, Revelation & Religion, 1954, 28.

[132] cf. ib. 12f: "An argument by analogy can never disclose to us even the probable existence of anything whose nature and relation to the data under discussion are not of fundamentally the same order as that which we already apprehend and on the basis of which we are arguing." The logic of this sentence is more than puzzling. This kind of circular reasoning which first assumes and then proves on the basis of the assumption only begs the question. It is the assumption of a "fundamentally same order" which we question.

[133] Cf. Joseph Dalby, The Catholic Concept of Law & Nature, 1963, 25, 27, 35.

[134] Cf. Emil Brunner, Natur und Gnade, sum Gespräch mit Karl Barth, 1935, also Man in Revolt, E.T., 1939, Appendix II, 527ff.

[135] Lord Bacon, "Of Superstition," Essays, XVII.

[136] Non deos vulgi negare profanum; sed vulgi opiniones diis applicare profanum, "Of Atheism," ib. XVI.

[137] Bacon, The Advancement of Learning, XXV, 1 - 3.

[138] ib. XXV, 24.

[139] Cf. for a discussion of its meaning, A. R. Vidler, "Religion & the National Church," Soundings, 1962, 253f, and J. W. Woelfel, "Bonhoeffer's portrait of religionless Christianity," Encounter, Aug. 1967. Cf. also Leon Morris, The Abolition of Religion, A Study in 'Religionless Christianity', 1964.

[140] Cf. in this connection J. H. Bavinck, The Impact of Christianity on the Non-Christian World, 1949, 102.

[141] For creedless religion see Paul Weiss who wants religion to be freed from "specifications," cf. Sidney Hook, Religious Experience and Truth, (Symposium), 1961, 85f.

[142] For the social usefulness of religions see: W. Montgomery Watt, Truth in the Religions, 1963, 3, 9f, 172; for T. S. Szasz, religion is a "'retreat to irrationalisn" but "those with small capital of hope" may be well advised to invest their "savings in religion" - "in this sense, religion is truly the hope of the hopeless." (The Myth of Mental Illness, 1961, 287, n3).

[143] Cf. Otto Weber, Jahwe der Got u. Jahwe der Götze, 1933; cf. Also H. Kraemer's remark: Christianity is not an absolute: "it is not even in all respects the 'best' religion . . ." (Why Christianity of a11 Religions? 115).

Chapter V - The Radical Claims of the Church

1. The Problem of Change

The church in her encounter with the world faced a handicap which is not often recognized. Entering the world-arena as a fighting faith she was confronted with a host of contestants who made similar claims upon man's allegiance. But while her rivals were eclectic in attitude and always ready for compromise she alone had to stand her ground without giving way. The issue was both religious and moral. Though the church could come to terms with the leading philosophical systems, mainly with Platonism, she could not accommodate herself to pagan gods and morality. In the way stood her biblical heritage, chiefly the Old Testament.

Because in the ancient world religion and culture were so closely intertwined, the Christian struggle against pagan religion inevitably brought the church in conflict with the culture of the time. The violent reaction on the part of pagan society can be understood in a real sense as a *Kulturkampf*. Pagan religion was essentially tolerant towards heterodox views as long as co-existence was maintained as a principle. It was the uncompromising attitude of the church which outraged pagan society and earned her the epithet of *exitiabilis superstitio* - a deadly superstition, and Christians as haters of the human race.[1]

Culture is never a static phenomenon, to keep alive it has to be open to change. But in settled times such change occurs gradually and is therefore almost imperceptible. As culture changes the community changes. The speed of change depends upon the extent of exposure to outside influence. In a cosmopolitan society where the exchange of ideas is a daily experience cultural change is more rapid and tolerance towards heterodox views a necessary accommodation. An outstanding example is the Ionian seaboard as compared with the Greek mainland.[2] A community which exists under parochial conditions is always in danger of becoming culturally sterile.

At this point it may be useful to draw a distinction between culture and civilization though in English usage these two terms are treated as synonyms.[3] Culture and civilization though correlative are not identical, at least in origin. Culture is always the achievement of an *élite*, whereas civilization is the diffusion of culture in the mass. Cultural achievement is mainly due to the individual, to his intellectual effort and moral discipline, while civilization is culture externalized and put to public use. For this reason it may be more accurate to describe the Christian struggle as a struggle against pagan civilization and its moral values rather than hostility to culture.

Culture depends upon the cross-fertilization of ideas. Though it is a personal achievement it is never so private as to be unconnected with the past. The accumulative experience of history is an important factor in culture and in this sense it is a communal achievement.[4] In practical terms culture must be understood as a constant movement in the direction of change. The wider the area of human intercourse the stronger the pressure towards change. A living culture therefore always moves within the poles of tension between past and future, between tradition and innovation, "between the reproductive and creative forces."[5] The resulting synthesis from such tension is always a compromise between the new and the old. The "new" is never entirely new and the "old" is never completely superseded. If this is so it becomes evident that syncretism is an essential principle which governs the pattern into which any civilization is woven.

It is this very principle of syncretistic accommodation which constitutes a problem for religion, especially for the Christian faith. It does this in two ways: first, by straining towards a nondescript universalism which contradicts the historic heritage;[6] second, by its openness to change which militates against the conservative element in every religion.[7] Civilization rather than culture is therefore the more natural ally of religion in the sociological setting. As a rule the structure of society does not change as fast as does the individual. In history a civilization and a given religion manage to coexist without too much stress over long periods of time. In fact, for practical purposes the history of a religion is frequently the history of a given civilization. When differentiation takes place, as it does from time to time, it results in a major social upheaval.

This does not mean that religions are unaffected by change. In fact religion like civilization is a hybrid plant composed of many different elements and influences. Many religious myths which have survived to our own times may be traced as far back as pre-historic man. These myths are deeply embedded in the human consciousness and are sometimes described as archetypal.[8] Because of their elemental importance to man such myths remain meaningful in every age and are made relevant by a continuous process of re-interpretation. In the overall complex of civilization, religion by resisting too rapid change, may serve as a stabilizing influence in society without which community life would fall into chaos. That religion itself is exposed to change is self-evident. Under the pressure of a changing world it is forced to readjust its tenets to suit the new age. But such readjustment is a gradual process though never entirely painless and without a struggle. The gradualness of the process safeguards the sense of continuity with the past which is of great psychological benefit. Rapid change makes for insecurity and neurosis.[9] Only in the perspective of history is it possible to see the extent of change when measured against another era. Gilbert Murray's observation deserves to be quoted in full: "Take three orthodox Christians, enlightened according to the standards of their time, in the fourth, the sixteenth, and the twentieth centuries respectively; I think you will find more profound differences of religion between them than between a Methodist, a Catholic, a Freethinker, and even perhaps a well-educated Buddhist or Brahmin of the present day, provided you take the most generally enlightened representative of each class."[10] Religion does change but it changes at a different pace, and less perceptively, for it does not appear to relate to the most immediate and practical issues. The strain which arises from the disparity between daily life and religious attitudes is usually countered by psychological rationalization. It is only when a compromise becomes impossible that a crisis arises. Such falling apart of religion and life is a repeated historic phenomenon: it happened in ancient Greece; in imperial Rome; in 18th century Europe; in our contemporary age it is taking place on a global scale. The resulting upheaval presses for a quest of new values, or more accurately, for a quest of new words "to denote a new thing."[11] The need is for a reinterpretation of the older ideology to meet the intellectual requirements of the new age.

We have already observed that the old religion is never completely transcended for it is impossible to evade the past. Every new orientation is only a modification of what went before.[12] A classic example of this fact is the compromise worked out between early Christianity and Greek culture, especially philosophy.[13] Julian the Apostate tried to resist the new age but his mistake stemmed from an inability to recognize that the old forms of paganism were irretrievably lost. His efforts at reviving classical polytheism was a retreat into the past and utterly unrealistic in relation to the trends of the times.[14] On the other hand, Christianity by gradual accommodation worked out a solution in terms of a compromise. It would seem that no matter how much we try, religion like civilization can never start *de novo* so as to

transcend the past. Life is governed by an historic causality which may not be apparent to the revolutionary but is nonetheless an irreducible fact.[15] The question which confronts the theologian, especially in our age of rapid change is this: how much of the past can be safely surrendered for the sake of accommodation without betrayal of the core?

It is on this question that the various schools of thought sharply divide. It is an issue which vitally concerns the church today. In order to see the problem more clearly we may have to probe the very foundation of the Christian faith and ask ourselves what are its basic assumptions.

In the view of this writer the Christian faith stands and falls with three essential premises: historicity, particularity, finality.

Once we accept the definition of culture as a ceaseless movement towards change we immediately become aware of the difficulty which confronts the Christian theologian. There would seem to be an incompatibility built into the Christian faith which makes it resist the changing pattern of culture and weights it towards tradition. But this is only the case when the Christian faith is understood in static terms fixed once and for all and crystallized in dogma. That this is an important aspect of historic Christianity there is no doubt, but it is not the only aspect. Such a horizontal perspective must be complemented by a vertical view, which means that Christianity does not only coincide with culture but also judges it. Whenever it coalesces with culture (or civilization) to the point of identity it dissolves into it and becomes negligible as a vital force. It is only when it questions culture as to its aims and values that it performs its historic task.

It is at this point that the complexity arises: we have to distinguish between the historic and the spiritual element in Christianity. There is here a dichotomy between Christianity and Christianity. In the historic context Christianity identifies with culture and promotes it. But by its message it questions culture and opposes it. For the purpose of clarity, the message of Christianity we will henceforth call the Christian Faith.

This sitting in judgement upon culture must not be put down to an inherent reactionary otherworldliness but rather to the dialectic which pervades history, namely the tension between what is and what ought to be.

2. The Church in Confrontation With the Pagan World

History is a useful guide to understanding present day problems, and a survey of what happened in the past may both illustrate and sharpen the issues we are faced with today.

It is of importance to note that none of the problems the church faces today are entirely new. On the contrary, the issues of today have perennially confronted the church from the very beginning. First, in confrontation with Judaism and later in confrontation with paganism the question of religion was one of the main issues which she had to meet head-on. On both fronts the church found herself in a fighting position since from her very inception she was a missionary church. To proclaim to the world the Good News was a duty laid upon her by her Lord and Master. But the world which the church confronted was not no-man's land, far from it. It was already occupied by highly developed religious systems and ideologies.

As far as Judaism was concerned the struggle was of a different nature. The problems connected with the claims to historicity, particularity and ultimacy developed in a different context: what the church claimed for Jesus the synagogue already claimed for the *torah*. Judaism was similarly structured

but at its core it had a different objective. The difficulty for the Jew lay in the position allotted to Jesus as Messiah. The synagogue could not tolerate a position of ultimacy ascribed to an historic person. Neither Abraham, nor Moses, nor anyone else in Jewish tradition, was allowed the significance the church attached to Jesus of Nazareth. Trypho the Jew expresses genuine Jewish concern when he says to Justin: "Sir, . . . you utter many blasphemies, in that you seek to persuade us that this crucified man ascended up to heaven and comes again to earth and ought to be worshipped."[16] Jewish sentiment was bitterly opposed to the Christian claim that God's salvation was tied to a human being: "Are you greater than our father Abraham?" asked the Jews, "who do you think you are?" (John 8:53)[17] Behind this question is both surprise at the audacity of the claim and offence at its implication.

If the Fourth Gospel reflects the heated controversy with Judaism, as scholars assume,[18] then it provides us with the most authentic evidence as to the nature of the dispute. The central issue in the contest was the question regarding the interpretation of messiahship. Whether Jesus was the Messiah is only a side issue; the main problem was what kind of Messiah Judaism was prepared to accept. Any concept of a Messiah which violated strict monotheism was abhorrent to Jews.[19]

The controversy with paganism was often differently constituted. The Son of God concept was no offence to people reared in the tradition of Greek mythology.[20] On the contrary, it fitted remarkably well into the pattern of a theogony based upon polytheism. The offence to the pagan world lay elsewhere and had to do with the very presuppositions which underlay the biblical message, namely, the insistence upon historic non-recurrence, uniqueness and finality. In other words it was the exclusiveness of the Christian faith which outraged pagan society.[21] These biblical presuppositions ran contrary to the philosophical assumptions and the religious traditions of the ancient world.

a. The Problem of Historicity

The Christian proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ occurred in the mid-stream of history. The Christian claim thus split history into two: *ante et post Christum natum*. This in itself created a problem: why did God wait all this time? This is precisely the question posed by Celsus, the typical antagonist of the Christian faith. He asks: "Is it only now after such a long age that God has remembered to judge the life of men? Did he not care before?"[22]

Both Origen and Eusebius of Caesarea set out to answer this difficult question. Origen's answer is evasive: first, he explains that "there was never a time when God did not wish to make men live righteously," on the contrary, "he continually showed his care for the improvement of man by affording him opportunity to exercise virtue." Then, he continues to affirm that in every age God granted wisdom to those souls which were counted worthy or fit to become friends and prophets of God. Lastly, he confesses "an element of profound mystery" which is beyond the ordinary ability of grasping by the common mind.[23] Origen had a problem in controversy with Gentiles, namely, that an appeal to fulfilment of Hebrew prophecy would carry little weight. But beyond this was the difficulty of bringing within the ken of the pagan mind a concept of history which presupposed both direction and purpose. He therefore left out the main answer a Christian could offer, probably from a desire to simplify his task. For this reason his argumentation is not convincing.[24] In controversy with a complete outsider an appeal to Scripture would make little impression and for this reason Origen had to rely on a different kind of argument.

Celsus unceremoniously described Christians as a "pest" (λοιμός). Origen replies: how is it then that a "pest" is able to convert people from an evil to a virtuous life?[25] He then proceeds to ask: "Where is

the absurdity in the coming of one who is, on the account of the prevailing flood of wickedness, to purify the world, and to treat every one according to his deserts? . . .” Origen observes that such a hope is not only held by Christians but by Greek philosophers as well; but while the philosophers are treated with respect, Christians are held up to ridicule.[26] There is however no direct answer to Celsus’s question. To provide such an answer Origen would have had to fall back upon biblical authority and this he knows would carry no conviction.

Eusebius, two generations later was in a similar predicament: only by an appeal to the Bible could there be a reasoned answer why Christ appeared at the time he did. Here Israel’s history constituted the necessary background as a *praeparatio evangelica*: the Law was the schoolmaster and the prophets the preparers of the way for the coming of the Messiah (Gal. 4:4). In the biblical perspective of history there was a progression, a sequence, a continuity and a *telos* which fitted into a pattern.

It is of special interest to note how Paul coped with the problem when confronted with an audience untouched by the biblical tradition. In his speech on the Areopagus in Athens, it is not “the fulness of time” which is the decisive factor but the forbearance of God: “the times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands men everywhere to repent.” (Acts 17:30). The word ὑπερεῖδον expresses God’s patient forbearance, not that He condones sin but that He graciously bides his time and is ready to wait. A similar thought occurs in Rom. 3:25f where πάρεσις expresses God’s willingness to “pass over” former sins. But now, since the Messiah has come, God’s righteousness is revealed by justifying sinners through faith in Jesus Christ.

Israel's history is treated as *praeparatio* or fore-history (*Vorgeschichte*) in order to give a reasoned explanation of the time factor, but this was only possible in the case of opponents with a Hebrew background.[27] But what of Gentile history, does it count for nothing? Could perhaps pagan religion be fitted into the scheme of God's providence?

It is noteworthy that Paul never once appeals to the truth content of pagan worship. Such an appeal would have had obvious apologetic advantages. He allows that the Gentiles though without the law are a law to themselves for they have by nature a law written on their hearts (Rom. 2:14f) and that God’s eternal power and deity is made visible in creation (Rom. l:19f). But this did not prevent him from condemning paganism as a lie (Rom. 1:25) and pagan conduct as utterly immoral (Rom. l:28ff). It is important to notice that early Christian apologists faithfully followed in Paul’s tradition. They made no bones about their feelings in respect to pagan worship. Aristides, probably the earliest of the apologists,[28] addressing himself to the emperor (probably Hadrian) openly ridicules the pagan gods and pokes fun at the childish ideas of traditional polytheism. He castigates the addiction to deify nature (ch.5) and he pours scorn upon the immoral stories which are told of the pagan gods (ch.10). As far as Aristides is concerned, except for the Jewish people, the rest of the nations abide in error and darkness (ch.16); only the Christians know the truth about God (ch.15). Christ’s purpose in coming into the world was to recall the nations “from their wanderings after many gods.”

But when we come to Greek philosophy the tone of Christian apologetics changes. Most of the apologists were themselves trained in Greek philosophy and retained a high regard for it. To account for the wisdom and the valid knowledge of the Greek sages the Christians resorted to two expedients: first, they related the truths expressed by philosophers to the eternal logos as its source and inspiration; second, they accuse the philosophers of plagiarizing the wisdom of Moses. In the first case they saw evidence of God’s presence among the Gentiles in the fact that a measure of wisdom was not denied to them; in the second case they were able to claim all that was good in pagan tradition as their own. In

either case there was a link and a foothold for the propagation of the Gospel which was utilized with great vigour and determination.

It was thus philosophy and natural law rather than religion which constituted the bridge from the pagan to the Christian world. The Church Fathers were not prepared to say that the Gentiles were entirely without God. They had some knowledge but their knowledge was dulled and distorted. Origen explains: "in the sacred books you could find holy men in each generation who were perceptive of the divine Spirit, and who devoted all their powers to converting their contemporaries."[29] Justin already held that the seed of the divine Logos was implanted in every race.[30] Most of the Church Fathers showed special respect for Plato, though Origen on one occasion mischievously suggests that even Plato must not be trusted blindly for the Devil has a habit of transforming himself into an angel of light.[31] It was only natural that Plato should be singled out for special esteem among Christians. Arnobius refers to him as the "divine Plato" and readily concedes that many of his thoughts were worthy of God.[32] Clement of Alexandria lifts philosophy to the status of covenant and regards it as a counterpart to the Hebrew law: "the one and only God was known by the Greeks in a Gentile way, by the Jews Judaically, and in a new spiritual way by us."[33] What Clement is saying is not that Gentiles and Jews had no knowledge of God but that their knowledge was of a different kind: the Greeks knew of God by means of philosophy, the Jews by Means of the Law, Christians had a new spiritual perception of God. Theirs was an incomplete knowledge and therefore inadequate.

Similarly, the question of time was raised by Porphyry: why has Christianity appeared so late in history? Augustine with less quibbling and greater honesty than some of his predecessors answers: "we may not, nor any hereafter, say why comes it, so soon, or, why so late," this belongs to God's wisdom and is unsearchable to man. All we can presume to say is that God's purpose is universal and is not tied to one particular nation: "He has never failed mankind, either in prophecies or their performancies."[34] Augustine is not prepared to throw out everything heathen indiscriminately. Some branches of heathen learning contain false and superstitious fancies, placing "heavy burdens of unnecessary toil" which Christians must avoid. But on the other hand "they also contain liberal instruction which is better adapted to the use of truth; and some most excellent precepts of morality; and some truths in regard even to the worship of the One God are found among them." The philosophers therefore, and especially the Platonists are not to be treated with contempt, for some of their teaching is in harmony with the Christian faith.[35]

Such appreciation of Gentile philosophy, learning and law is however not extended to religion. Pagan religion was abhorred on two counts: first, it was idolatrous, and second, it was immoral. This created a problem for the Church Fathers which they were unable to resolve. On the one hand, they held on to the immortality of the human soul, a doctrine inherited from Platonism; but on the other hand, they were faced with the demonic in man which showed itself especially in the superstitious practices of the pagan cults. This irrational side of man they put down, in true biblical fashion, to the fall of Adam. Justin explains that in the beginning the human race was endowed "with the power of thought and of choosing the truth and doing right, so that all men are without excuse before God; for they have been born rational and contemplative."[36] It means that even now, because man is still a rational being, he is responsible to God in respect to the truth. Similarly, Origen makes it clear that evil is only possible to rational beings and that within man there is an impulsive drive which militates against his rational nature.[37]

But this does not exonerate him from responsibility, on the contrary: "each person's mind is responsible for the evil which exists in him, and this is what evil is."[38] The blame therefore for idolatry is upon each man who practises it. But at the same time, because of the presence of the Logos within man, no one is entirely devoid of truth though it may be obscured by falsehood and superstition.

But resort to the Logos as the bearer of truth was only one way of accounting for the presence of reason and wisdom among the Gentiles. The other method was more devious and complicated. The Church Fathers, puzzled by the remarkable affinity between the best in Greek thought and biblical revelation, were driven to the conclusion that the Greeks borrowed from the Hebrews without admitting their debt. They suspected that Greek philosophers and poets received what truth they possessed from the Hebrew prophets. According to Justin, Moses was the source of Greek wisdom and Plato himself learned all he knew from him.[39] It must however be admitted that the idea was first suggested by Philo and Josephus.[40] Christian writers accepted the theory as if it were a proven fact and made effective use of it in their apologetic approach. Eusebius argues extensively on the assumption of Greek indebtedness to Hebrew philosophy and theology. He especially singles out Plato as a plagiarist of Hebrew lore.[41] Clement is the most insistent on this point; he asks: "Whence, O Plato, is that hint of the truth which thou gavest?" And he answers: "I know thy teachers, even if thou wouldest conceal them. You have learned geometry from the Egyptians, astronomy from the Babylonians; the charms of healing you have got from the Thracians; the Assyrians also have taught you many things; but for the laws that are consistent with truth, and your sentiments respecting God, you are indebted to the Hebrews."[42] But it was not Plato alone who was dependent upon the Hebrews, the other philosophers and poets were equally indebted. In fact, all aspects of philosophy consistent with the Christian faith, especially on the subject of Monotheism was mainly acquired from the Hebrews, though Clement does not entirely exclude direct inspiration.

Connected with the question of time was the question of antiquity. Pagan writers derisively referred to the Christian faith as a newfangled religion.[43] To this Christian apologists replied that it is as old as the human race. By this they meant that it is the original faith restored to its pristine condition. They turned the tables on their critics and tried to show that it was not the Bible but Greek philosophy which was the upstart. Heathenism is of recent date, Moses preceded all Greek philosophers and poets.[44] In the Christian view, the truth uttered by the philosophers bore witness to an antiquity of the Bible, for the Bible is the only source of the true knowledge of God. This they regarded not as a coincidence but a sign of divine providence, so that the philosophers, though unwillingly, should bear witness to prophetic utterance in order to contradict polytheism.[45]

In all this the discussion turned upon truth in relation to philosophy and the Bible. Pagan religion was not taken seriously enough by either party to deserve more than passing attention. The apologists realizing the vulnerability of paganism were more prone to dwell upon the subject than were their opponents. The real issue was between philosophy and the Christian faith. Men like Clement of Alexandria took philosophy very seriously. For him philosophy was both preparatory training and a way of righteousness for the Gentiles. What the law was for Jews, philosophy was for the Greeks, namely a schoolmaster in order to bring "the Hellenic mind to Christ." But not even Clement was prepared to say that biblical truth and philosophic truth were on the same level and moved in the same direction. Philosophy only remotely contributed to the discovery of the truth. In the last resort, the authentic and unassailable truth is to be found nowhere else but in the discipline of Jesus Christ. He likened

philosophy to sauce and sweetmeats, whereas "the truth which is according to faith is as necessary for life as bread."[46]

This selective approach to the intellectual heritage of the Gentiles reveals both discernment and appreciation. The rejection of paganism was *in toto*. There was no effort to compromise with pagan immorality and superstition. On the other hand, the finer insights of philosophy were readily endorsed and claimed for Christ. This was especially so in the case of Platonism. Even Tertian, the least friendly to the philosophers, who does not hesitate to accuse them of plagiarism, confusion and immorality, has to admit that they profess worthy ideals though they do not live up to them.[47]

The Church Fathers were themselves converts or children of converts. They thus knew from personal experience the inadequacies of the ancestral faith. Polytheism was both morally and intellectually an abortive creed. Pantheistic nature-worship was equally misguided. The escape into philosophy only added to the confusion by reason of the conflicting ideas of the philosophical schools.[48]

The decline of religion in the antique world has a long history. By the time of Plato it was already treated with disdain and cynicism by the educated classes.[49] The Fathers therefore enjoyed a moral and spiritual advantage over their opponents which in the end led to victory. Their appeal was not only to Scripture but to conscience and reason. When accused of betrayal of the ancestral faith they countered by stressing the danger of following a lie. The most eloquent rebuttal of tradition comes from the pen of Clement of Alexandria.

Clement begins with a recitation of the spiritual poverty of the Gentiles whom he describes as overcome by sleep and drunkenness. He calls them to awake from their slumber for the time of decision had arrived. They must not squander their substance in ignorance and throw away their lives for the mere love of tradition. To meet the new age requires "enterprise and noble daring" which will result in a new way to God and lead to eternal life. His appeal is primarily not to the "low-rabble who lead the dance of impiety," but to those who love righteousness and are in pursuit of eternal life, i.e. those who are able "to endure the austerity of salvation." It is they who must recognize the allurement of custom which leads to the abyss while truth leads to heaven. At this point Clement makes so impassioned a plea that only his own words can convey the pathos behind it: "Let us avoid custom as we would a dangerous headland, or the threatening Charybdis, or the mythic sirens. It chokes man, turns him away from truth, leads him away from life: custom is a snare, a gulf, a pit, a mischievous winnowing fan."[50] This call to break with tradition was at the heart of the missionary problem. The historical continuity of culture and custom is here challenged in a radical way. What is being required is nothing less than a break with one's own history in exchange for an alien tradition and a foreign way of life. From the Christian point of view it meant obedience to a higher call, but for the outsider it was sheer betrayal of one's heritage. This was the very accusation made by Celsus against the Christians. He describes them as "those who have abandoned their own traditions and professed those of the Jews."[51] But for Celsus Christians are worse than Jews, for the latter, peculiar as they are, at least worship according to their own tradition, whereas the Christians are nothing but traitors. His rule is: "each nation retains its ancestral customs, whatever they are."[52]

This insistence upon national tradition is a major issue in the polemics between Origen and Celsus. Celsus holds on to the conviction that it is "an obligation incumbent upon all men to live according to their country's customs." Christians have abandoned their native customs and thus are not even a nation like the Jews.[53] But at the same time Celsus objects to a god bound to history and to a special people at

that. His god is a-historical and utterly impersonal, so much so that he can identify the universe with god. Such pantheism is a characteristic mark of pagan thinking.

Celsus takes offence at the historical pre-suppositions underlying the Christian faith. The offence is the greater as the faith of Christianity is associated with the history of an alien people. The gods of the pantheon were mythological figures symbolizing the forces of nature and entirely independent of historical confinement.

The mythological character of the pantheon lent itself well to allegorical interpretation. In fact it depended upon mythology for definition of general truths. The Christian faith was not as pliable though there was the ever-present temptation to proceed on similar lines. Athenagoras protests against the evasiveness provided by the use of allegory. He chastises the heathen for playing about with a serious subject when they identify Zeus with fire, Hera with the earth, Aidoneus with the air and Nestis with water. Such allegorizing he regards as an insult to religion. But his protests fell upon deaf ears for paganism was already too incoherent to enter into serious discussion with the Church.[54] The bankruptcy of pagan religion became apparent in Julian's abortive attempt to revive it. The decay set in long before Christianity appeared on the scene and by that time only the philosophers were left to defend the old way of life.[55]

Mythology and history can never be paired. These are two contradictory norms of thought. Once historical thinking displaces mythology the latter ceases to be meaningful and turns into fable. The Christian message came to the pagan world not as mythological symbolism but as recorded events in history: Jesus whom Pilate killed, God raised from the dead (cf. Acts 13:26ff). This kind of historic confinement delimits the range of allegorical interpretation and invests events with particular meaning. The philosophers were in search of general principles whereas the Christian faith was made up of apparently insignificant events entirely dependent upon the contingencies of history. Such a pattern of unpredictable happenings proved irreducible to rational order and could only be assimilated when freed of its historic setting. This is the reason why the universal logos as the rational principle in the universe was such a temptation to Christian writers of every age. The *logos spermatikos* was a conceptual device free of every suspicion of contingency and utterly untrammelled by history thus ideally suited to the temper of the Greek mind. Unfortunately it stood in direct contradiction to the Christian message which was that the *logos* became *sarx* and entered the contingent interplay of history. There seemed to be no way out of the difficulty except by a compromise which did justice to neither side.

b. The Problem of Particularity

Aristides acknowledges, though with some reluctance, that Christians are spiritually related to the Jewish people. To lessen the embarrassment he reminds his readers that the Jews had rejected Jesus who is the founder of the Christian Church.[56] But complete detachment from Hebrew tradition is not possible for a Christian, he therefore tells his readers that the Jews only of all the nations have a true knowledge of God. The reason for such knowledge he puts down to their descent from Abraham. But in spite of their privileged position they have proved stubborn and ungrateful so that they frequently served idols and even killed their prophets.[57] When the Son of God appeared in their midst they betrayed him and delivered him to Pilate. This being the case, the Christians alone of all the nations on earth are those who know the truth.[58]

Aristides's admission that Christians stand within the Hebrew tradition was dictated by the commitment of the Church to Holy writ. It is because of the pre-history of the Church that for Aristides

humanity is divided in three sections: the worshippers of the gods, the Jews and the Christians.[59] The Christians regarded themselves as the *tertium genus*, a new people, different from pagans and Jews.[60] But no matter how different the "new Israel" may be from the old, the interconnection between the two was undeniable. The Scriptures, the promises, the moral law, the nomenclature, was shared by both. Above all, the God of Israel was the Father of Jesus Christ and therefore the God of the Church. Hebrew history, even to the Maccabean wars, came to be regarded as preparatory for the coming of the Messiah. It was this that prevented a radical break with Hebrew tradition and led to the rejection of Marcionite theology as heretical.[61] The only distinction Christians could make was to differentiate between Israel *kata pneuma* and Israel *kata sarka*.[62] Justin's version of Is. 19:24f is typical: "In that day there shall be a third Israel among the Assyrians and Egyptians, blessed in the land which the Lord of Sabbaoth hath blessed" (Dial. 123). This is not in LXX and is an obvious interpolation.

The Church refused to identify with Jewry guilty of rejecting the Messiah, but had to identify with Old Testament history though in spiritualized manner: "there are two seeds of Judah," says Justin, "two races, as there are two houses of Jacob: the one begotten by flesh and blood, the other by faith and the Spirit" (Dial. 135; cf. Gal. 4:2ff). But on one point there could be no retreat whatsoever, namely on the validity of God's revelation in the Old Testament. The pagan writers mocked the Christians for worshiping "the God of the Jews." Celsus rejects the idea that the Jews are in special favour with God and that their God is different from the gods of the other nations. A god tied to one particular people and limited to a definite area was not any more acceptable to a pagan intellectual.[63] Celsus knew only too well that the God the Church believed in was not an universal god like Zeus whose name could be translated into many languages, but YHWH, a peculiarly restricted and confined god to one particular people. Celsus is amused at the the thought that God should have chosen an insignificant and subject people, a people living "in some corner of Palestine," as the locus for his Son.[64] In a spirit of obvious derision he exclaims: "we see both the sort of people they are and what sort of land it was of which they were thought worthy!"[65] The fact that Jews had suffered defeat and that Christians were undergoing persecution was regarded by Celsus as the best evidence for the ridiculousness of their claim to special favour.[66]

The association with a people unpopular and despised by antiquity was a matter of embarrassment to the Church. Eusebius is only too conscious of the predicament and tries his best to explain why the Christians have preferred the "philosophy" of the Hebrews above their own ancestral heritage. The reason he gives is a moral one: of all the nations, the Hebrews alone have refused to yield to the pleasures of the flesh. To fortify this claim, he further adds that they were also the first people to devote their thoughts to "rational speculation." It is obvious that both these reasons are *argumenta ad hominem*. In his apologetic zeal he lifts the ancient Hebrews to incredible heights of achievement: a people of philosophers who "with purified mind and clear-sighted eyes of the soul learned from the grandeur and beauty of His creation to worship God, the Creator of all."[67] Eusebius's version of Hebrew eminence is so unlike the biblical record that it makes one wonder whether he ever read the Old Testament at all: the Hebrews were singled out by reason of their "godly virtue" and their "general piety"; a people living wisely and utterly devoted to God's service.[68] But he is also careful to distinguish between them and the Jews: the Hebrews preceded Moses and were ignorant of Mosaic legislation for they enjoyed "a free an unfettered mode of religion" while living in full harmony with nature. They "had no need of laws to rule them, because of their extreme freedom of their soul from passion." It was they and not the Jews who "had received the true knowledge of the doctrines concerning God."[69]

The special pleading of this chapter makes it very suspicious as to the real motives of the writer. This becomes even more so when Eusebius in an earlier remark avers that the Hebrew race alone was entrusted with the true knowledge of God while to the nations was assigned the worship of the luminaries.[70] It looks as if Eusebius was trying to evade one of the most difficult aspects of biblical faith, namely the particularity of revelation. Hence his frequent reference to the One Supreme God. Knowledge of this God came to the Gentiles thanks to the accurate rendering in Greek of the Holy Scriptures under King Ptolomy. This was an act of God's providence for the Jews sought to hide the divine oracles out of sheer jealousy.[71]

This playing down of the Jewish role in the story of revelation seems to be motivated by two desires. Eusebius does not credit the Jews with any importance in the transmission of the Gospel to the Gentile world. First, he desired to dissociate Christians from an unpopular people; he stresses that the Christian faith goes back to antiquity and began with Abraham who was not a Jew. Second, he desired to tone down, if at all possible, the particularity of biblical faith; he insists that Christianity is the pristine religion of mankind in complete harmony with the laws of nature.[72] It is obvious that Eusebius's concern is mainly apologetic. Elsewhere his attitude towards the Jews is quite different.[73] We have reason to suspect that his difficulty in confrontation with the Gentiles was the biblical doctrine of election. The sharp distinction between the ancient Hebrews and the contemporary Jews did not serve much purpose, for everyone knew the historic link between them. We have already seen that Aristides tried this line of argument but with small success.[74]

Another line of approach was to by-pass the pre-history of the Church and to declare Jesus as the originator and founder of a new race. This was already done by Justin in his controversy with Trypho; "we have been quarried out from the bowels of Christ" he declares. Because Christ, according to Justin, is Israel and Jacob, the Christians are the true Israelites. Oddly enough he uses Old Testament texts to prove his point with an exhortation to Trypho: "understand, therefore, that the seed of Jacob is now referred to something else, and not as may be supposed, spoken of your people."[75] This of course deprives Jesus of his historic context and by-passes the particularity of biblical revelation. But the Gospel story is not easily severed from its historic background. Particularity therefore remained a difficulty the Church was unable to resolve. The fact remained that Christian origins were deeply rooted in the history of an alien people. The Church was committed to worshipping a particularistic God; it owed its salvation to a Jew. The Gospel most appealing to Gentiles had it written in black and white: salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22). It was this association with Jewish history which saved the Old Testament for the Church and made an a-historical interpretation of the faith impossible. In the last resort, the conflict was not between Christians and non-Christians but between paganism and the God of Israel. On this score there could be no compromise whatsoever. Eusebius, like the rest of the Church Fathers, did not shy away from declaring the religions of the Gentiles as nothing but corruption and their gods daemons who must be abandoned. Only the Gospel, now offered to the nations can deliver them from the bondage of the evil powers.[76]

In our criticism of pagan accretions into the church we are apt to underestimate the ferocity of the struggle between the Church and paganism in the early centuries. It is frequently assumed that there was an easy readiness on the part of the Church to compromise with pagan ideology and practice. This is far from the truth. The inner structure of the Gospel demanded a total and absolute break with the pagan past. For psychological and cultural reasons such a break could not be easily achieved and pagan influence made itself felt at an early stage, but never by conscious compromise. Resistance to the pagan

religions was both the strategy and the purpose of the Church. Nock even refutes the suggestion that the Church purposely made use of the technical vocabulary of Greek piety and Oriental mysticism to facilitate her missionary propaganda. On the contrary, "they failed to use certain Greek words which were undeniably familiar in the context of religious thought and practice and which would have been appropriate."[77] He also contradicts the widely accepted notion that the doctrine of the incarnation served as a bridge to paganism. The opposite is the case: "it was a stumbling block and not a point of attraction to the Greeks."[78] But the greatest obstacle of all was Christian exclusiveness. Like Judaism, Christianity refused to barter with pagan ideology and rejected it out of hand.[79]

The mixing of religions and the assimilation of the gods reached its height in Imperial Rome. According to Furneaux this religious syncretism was more an interchange than a fusion. Foreign gods were imported to Rome and Roman gods were exported abroad: "Temples of Jupiter Capitolinus are found in the provinces; and, in turn, whatever was attractive in the provincial religions struck root in Rome; and supplied what colder forms of state ritual failed to supply . . . Many foreign religions obtained special licence, and even the illicit might enjoy practical impunity, till circumstances pointed attention to them . . . Nor could any coercion keep out the forbidden mysteries of astrology and magic . . ."[80]

Among the Greeks the situation was not dissimilar. Lucian in his Dialogue of the Gods holds up to ridicule the gullibility of the populace for alien gods. He lets Monus, the jester of the Olympian assembly, complain: "divers aliens, not only Greek but Barbarians, who are in no wise entitled to the freedom of our community, have got themselves enrolled as gods and so crowd heaven that it has become a mere disorderly mob of all nations and languages." The process of assimilating foreign divinities was a characteristic tendency of the antique world. Lucian by no means exaggerates; according to Herodotus, most of the Greek gods were imported from Egypt.[81] The tradition that Marcus Aurelius in his private chapel had arranged the busts of so heterogeneous an assembly as Orpheus, Abraham Apollonius of Tyana and Jesus of Nazareth, gives some indication of the wide range of eclectic piety which prevailed in pagan society at the time.[82] An outstanding example of ancient syncretism is Antiochus I of Commagene who is credited with erecting a special throne-room for all the gods he could think of. Commagene had a most highly developed syncretistic religion drawn from Persia, Greece and Anatolia. The Greek Apollo and Mithras of Persia were fused with general Sun worship.[83]

This remarkable tolerance towards foreign divinities was not always a sign of religious indifference or of superstitious piety. It was frequently born by the conviction that the various gods were only different names or aspects of one universal Deity. Mithraism, the most "composite religion" of the ancient world, managed to integrate a multitude of gods into one unified system.[84] Especially in Syria this synthesis was achieved by a process of integration with astrology as the dominant motif and the Sun as the leading deity. It would be a mistake to allow too much importance to the "latent monotheism" we occasionally are led to observe among the ancients. The guiding principle was not monotheism but syncretism where the "confusing array of cults . . . were ready to blend or be equated . . . with little tendency to that exclusiveness which was a distinctive feature of Judaism and Christianity."[85] At best we can speak of a "quasi-monotheism" which derived from philosophical thought rather than religion.

By the time of Plutarch (early 2nd c. A.D.) the assimilation of the gods was well advanced. In his treatise addressed to a lady by the name of Clea on the subject of Isis and Osiris, he throws out the suggestion that the various names of the gods are only different designations of Reason which ordered the universe.[86] Greek mythology was not unaware of a supreme god: Homer calls Zeus the father of men

and of the gods.[87] But neither philosophical "monotheism" nor the mythological position of Zeus comes anywhere near biblical faith. The philosopher's god is mainly an impersonal world-force which moves the universe or the source of that force. Even Plato's monotheism cannot be taken too seriously as can be seen from his frequent lapse into polytheistic terminology. He remarks with apparent approval the proverb that even God cannot fight against necessity,[88] and he does not hesitate to put nature and chance at the helm of the universe.[89] The fact that he freely uses both singular and plural to describe the divine must serve as a warning. In the end, his God appears to be a poetical and mythical "personification of the active principle of movement and causation."[90]

With Xenophanes the case for monotheism is even more questionable. If we accept Aristotle's description of Xenophanes's philosophy as accurate we arrive at a crude pantheism. Xenophanes reasons thus: God to be truly God, he must be one for he must of necessity be the most powerful. But then Xenophanes proceeds to the conclusion that God must also be spherical "for he cannot be of such a kind in one direction and not in another, but must be of that kind in every part. But being eternal, and one, and spherical, he must be neither limited nor unlimited. For non-being is unlimited; for this has neither middle, nor beginning, nor end, nor any other part . . ." No wonder Aristotle is genuinely puzzled by these contradictions. He concludes that Xenophanes's god must be a body for otherwise he could not be spherical.[91] This is how Aristotle summarizes Xenophanes's position: "In all respects, then, God is of this kind, eternal and one, alike throughout and spherical, neither limited nor unlimited, neither at rest nor movable."[92] It is obvious that Xenophanes's "monotheism" is nothing but pantheism dialectically stated. It would be a mistake to see in it a latent tendency towards a monotheistic position.[93] Pantheism is a tendency philosophers find difficult to resist. The Greek intellectuals conceived the gods as expressions of the manifoldness of nature and therefore could not attain to a personal God. This may be one of the reasons why the East was such an attraction for the philosophically minded: "the Semitic gods tended to become pantheistic because they comprehended all nature and identified with it."[94] Polytheism according to Cumont "showed a confused tendency to elevate itself into a superior synthesis," but it was a synthesis grounded in nature worship; this is why Syrian astrology which centred upon the deification of the sun achieved such prominence in the antique world.

The impersonal forces of nature manifesting themselves with predictable accuracy in the motion of the universe required a cyclic concept of history. The Heracletean formula that "all flows, nothing remains" expresses a cosmic process of aimless motion in perpetual repetition.[95] In such a universe events in history lost their particular significance, for people are only cogs in the great machine of perpetual movement. The repetitious character of all occurrences voids every effort at attaching ultimate significance to historical events. A passage from Marcus Aurelius well illustrates the point: "If you either dip into history, or recollect your own experience, you will perceive the scenes of life strangely uniform, and nothing but the old plays revived. Take a view of the courts of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, of Philip, of Alexander or Croesus, and you will find the entertainment the same, only the actors are different."[96] Nothing really changes, even the gods exist under the eternal rule of necessity. Their different names are only guises of the unchanging laws of nature. Celsus finds it difficult to understand why Christians insist upon one particular name for God as if all the other names were not equally valid. "It makes no difference," he says, "whether one calls the supreme God by the name used among the Greeks, or by that, for example, used among the Indians, or among the Egyptians."[97] There is good logic in this: a conceptual God, removed from history, has no particular characteristics by which to identify him. He is

the god of many names; it does not matter what you call him. Here Origen's reply to Celsus is most illuminating for it reveals the distance between two world-views.

Origen begins by explaining to his opponent the importance of taking care in applying names correctly "in their respective connections, some in one case, some in the other." His point is that God's name must not be mixed up with his creation. Then he continues to explain that names carry associations and that an interchange of names makes for confusion. The name Zeus "at once associates the son of Chronos and Rhea, the husband of Hera, the brother of Poseidon, the father of Athena and Arthemis, the one who had sexual intercourse with his daughter Persephone." How then could the God of the Bible exchange his name with that of Zeus? Furthermore, there is a particular power in the name of Jesus whereby countless demons are expelled, how can Christians equate the name of Jesus with that of Zeus? For Christians therefore there can be only the One God "the Creator of the universe, the maker of heaven and earth, who sent down to the human race such and such wise men." About this God Christians speak without any qualifications: He is God.[98]

Origen's reference to historic revelation provides the particularity of identification which Celsus is unable to grasp. It is at this point that the two world-views separate: while the Greek conceives God mythologically, the Christian does so historically.[99] History consists of particular events which carry unique and unrepeatable significance. It is not so much the non-cyclic aspect of history as the particular nature of events which makes for the difference. Particularity spells out God's ultimate purpose; for this reason, historic time cannot be equated with sidereal time. The movement of the stars is repetitious, history does not repeat itself. It is only in the context of history that the Gospel can be preached: Jesus of Nazareth stands for God's presence in the midst of time. It is the time-character of biblical faith which makes for particularity.

The diversity of perspectives which is implied between mythology and history made a compromise impossible. However much the Church Fathers may have tried to resolve the problem they could only accommodate the Greek mentality to a limited degree; beyond this they could not go. Nock's verdict deserves careful attention: "to any student primarily concerned with the religions of the empire, Christianity stands out as curiously uncompromising, in spite of the attempts of the apologists to represent it as a reasonable Greek philosophy."[100] In the last resort biblical particularism could not fit into the all-inclusiveness of pagan civilization. It was too deeply grafted into a particular historical context to be reducible to a universalized mythological pattern. The only possible answer of the pagan world was hostility and rejection. Visser't Hooft's shrewd observation is here most apposite: "revolt against uniqueness and concreteness of a revelation in history leads syncretism to its own type of exclusiveness . . ."[101]

c. The Problem of Finality

Historic thinking operates with particular events. Historic time moves on a different plane from that of sidereal time. Change of seasons, day and night, seedtime and harvest, birth and death, are recurring phenomena. Here life is related to the order of nature and moves in cycles. A religion which is orientated towards nature is of necessity a-historical and uses myth to express itself. Once we set the human drama in the context of the recurring cycle of nature history becomes unimportant for in the end it always means the same. There can be no ultimate goal, reincarnation is the logical assumption. Because the Christian faith is rooted in historical events it carries within itself the meaning of finality. It means that it visualizes a goal for human life and therefore for history as a whole. Eschatology is the necessary

correlative to historic existence. History without purpose is history without a pattern and therefore pointless.

In such a scheme finality carries a double connotation: every event expresses finality under temporal conditions; every event also points to the end, the climax of history, the end-completion of human destiny. In terms of time, finality spells out the irreversible occurrence of events. It has the quality of the *novum* about it although it is never separate from the past. In the historic chain of events every phenomenon is both old and new at the same time. Ecclesiastes therefore expresses only half the truth: "What has been will be; what has been done will be done, there is nothing new under the sun." (1:9) The more biblical perception is that of the prophet: "Behold, I am doing a new thing." (Is. 43:19; cf. 42:9; 48:6)[102] But finality primarily points to the future. It is for this reason that hope is such an important element in Christian faith. Under temporal conditions finality can only be experienced in faith by waiting for the consummation of all God's promises.

The eschatological hope is therefore not something additional to the Christian faith but a constituent part of its structure.[103] The fulfilment, of the Christian hope begins with the advent of Jesus Christ. In Him is spelled out the fulfilment of the messianic expectation. In the last resort, it is the messianic claims attaching to the person of Jesus that gives to the Church the sense of finality which is so characteristic of its message. This is already demonstrated in the New Testament with its joyous Easter proclamation: Jesus lives! Paul puts it in one remarkable sentence: "all the promises of God find their Yes in Him." (2 Cor. 1:20) Jesus is the harbinger of messianic redemption. This is what the New Testament means by calling him the Son of God. As Son in this special and unique sense, He is God's plenipotentiary among men, "All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son." (Matt. 11:27; cf. 28:18) The Johanine Gospel expresses the same conviction in a variety of' texts (cf. John 3:25; 5:20f; 13:3; etc.) This Gospel sums it up in one sentence: "He who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9) The Book of Revelation says about Jesus what it says about God: He is the Alpha and the Omega. (Rev. 1:8; 22:13)

The Church Fathers inherited from the primitive Church the conviction that God's word of Salvation is spelled out in the Person of Jesus Christ. This emphasis upon fulfilment was in Jewry associated with messianic times. To the mind of the rabbis the Age to Come and messianic times were closely related if not identical.[104] For the Church, Jesus was the Messiah and the Gospel proclaimed the breaking in of the New Age: "the old things are passed away; behold, they have become new." (2 Cor. 5:17) The Christian believer therefore, found himself on the margin of history, between his own salvation and the completion of God's purpose with mankind.[105] Such eschatological suspension is an inherent characteristic of the Christian faith. The Church is a community of believers living between the times: the advent and the return of her Lord. It thus rejoices in the knowledge of salvation yet waits for the day of the Lord. It acknowledges no other physician save Jesus the Son of God.[106]

One of the early martyrs of the Church, Polycarp, speaks of Jesus as the King. This title derives from the Gospel tradition, especially from John, where the Cross is understood as the throne of the King Messiah. The main issue at Jesus's trial before Pilate was whether He was making claim to Kingship. (John 18:33ff) The connection between messiahship and kingship is an old-established tradition and goes back to very early times. (cf. 1 Sam. 16:13) Against the wider Gentile background messianic kingship assumed world-wide proportions. Jesus was seen not just as the King of the Jews but as the King of the human race. According to an old document relating the martyrdom of Polycarp, this ancient

Christian disciple is told by the Roman Proconsul to renounce Christ and take the oath of allegiance to Caesar. Here is Polycarp's famous reply: "Eighty six years have I served Him . . . how can I blaspheme my King who has saved me?"[107] The document concludes with the following statement: "The blessed Polycarp was martyred . . . the seventh day before the calends of March (i.e. Feb. 23), the Great Sabbath, at the eighth hour . . . but Jesus Christ rules for ever; to Him be the glory, honour, majesty, eternal dominion, from generation to generation. Amen."[108]

This defiant spirit which made humble believers oppose the might of Rome, was borne by the conviction that Jesus of Nazareth, God's anointed servant makes a legitimate and total claim on every human life. The legitimacy of that claim was vested in the person of Jesus and not in the Church. It was not the new doctrine of salvation but the appearance of the person of Jesus that made the Gospel the Good News.[109]

The response of faith demanded total allegiance to the messianic King as the "Enlightener and Guide of the human race."[110] Like the New Testament, the Fathers understood the advent of the Messiah as the consummation of history. Tertullian describes the messianic era as the last in the cycles of time.[111] It was this claim to finality which made the Church missionary-minded. Without the eschatological orientation which gave urgency to its message the missionary activity of the Church would be inexplicable. That Jesus only is Lord made a compromise with the other religions impossible. This claim to uniqueness put Christianity in the fight against polytheism. There could be no room for any other loyalties in view of the total claim of Jesus as the fulfiller of all human hopes. With the Apostle to the Gentiles as their example Christians knew themselves obligated "both to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish." (Rom.1:14) They did not engage missionaries, they were missionaries.[112] This why the Church spread so rapidly.

The problem of the other religions is perennial to the Church. In our own age it is an acute problem in as much as our knowledge of the world has widened and our encounter with foreign religions is more personal and more frequent. Modern man lives in a cosmopolitan atmosphere and is thus exposed to other religious traditions than his own to an extent unheard of in the past. Our forefathers knew of other faiths largely from books or from hearsay. We, on the other hand, have next-door neighbours who profess the most exotic creeds. In addition, secularization and scientism have greatly reduced the gap between the religions and class them all under one denominator. At the same time, there appears to be a closer bond between spiritually-minded people and Christian believers than between them and materialists. Christianity cannot any more ignore the non-Christian faiths as of no account and has to accommodate itself to a free society in a multicultural world. The dialogue therefore between the religions is unavoidable and presses for a thorough re-examination of the Christian position in relation to the other faiths. It is not anymore the Synagogue and the Mosque, as in the Middle Ages, which challenge the Church, but a great variety of creeds clamouring for attention, and this on our very doorsteps. Furthermore, Christians have suddenly discovered themselves a small minority in an increasingly non-Christian world. The question therefore about the other religions is a vital one and demands repeated theological clarification.

The problem regarding Christian missions is inseparable from the question of the validity of the other faiths. The Church can only be a missionary Church if she knows herself to be offering something which the other religions lack. Strictly speaking, what the Church has to offer is not "something" but somebody, namely, Jesus the Christ. There is a sense of finality about Him which is offensive both to the other religions and to the modern mind. The world as we know it is a world of constant change where

nothing is final. The other religions, especially Hinduism, make allowance for change, growth and development. Christianity itself has developed from its primitive origins into a complex structure of doctrine which develops and changes from age to age. The problem of finality is therefore not only a problem in the encounter with the other religions but is a problem with the Church herself. It derives from the fact that at the core of her message is not a system of doctrine but an historic person. Our ideas and perceptions may change but He remains the same if He is to be historically identifiable. W. E. Hocking took comfort in the fact that "astrophysics favours the application . . . of the much-abused term 'unique'." He was thus encouraged to assert that "we live in the presence of *das Einmalige*, that which occurs only once."[113] But the Christian cannot depend upon astrophysics for the authentication of the ultimacy of Jesus Christ. What is final about him does not derive from the structure of the universe but from the fact that He is God's word to man. For this reason the Bible described Him as the same yesterday, today and forever. (Heb.13:8)[114] We will thus turn to historicity and particularity as these apply to the person of Jesus Christ.

Notes to Chapter V

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[1] Tacitus, Ann. XV: 44. Something of the problem facing the early church can be gauged from Tertullian's tract On Idolatry: Cf. 17.

[2] Cf. G. L. Huxley, The Early Ionians, 1966; see the review of this book in the Times Lit. Supple., Aug. 24, 1967, 766.

[3] Some writers however do make the distinction: cf. Krishan Kumar: "Excellence & Anarchy," The Listener, Oct. 16, 1969, 508f, who distinguishes between "high" and "low" culture. Henry N. Wieman, describes culture as the "creative event" and contrasts it with civilization which he regards as a synonym for technology (cf. The Source of Human Good, 1946, 68f; Hans Keller traces the differentiation between culture and civilization to Sprengler's Decline of the West; (cf. The Listener, Feb. 26, 1970, 269).

[4] Culture in purely ethnic terms is a contradiction for true culture depends upon an openness to the outside world. What is usually described as ethnic culture is nothing more than a closely circumscribed tradition. E. B. Taylor, Primitive Culture, 1924, defines culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society."

[5] Cf. Ernst Cassirer, An Essay on Man, 1944, 224.

[6] Cf. ib. 125.

[7] Cf. George Santayana's essay: "Modernism & Christianity," Winds of Doctrine, 1957, 25ff.

[8] Cf. C. G. Jung, Psychology & Religion: West & East, 1958, 59, 88f, 155f; etc.

[9] On the dang:er of too rapid change, see D. W. Shriver, "Continuity & Change in Society & Theology," Theology Today, Jan. 1969, 419ff. Cf. also Alvin Toffler, Future Shock, 1970, dealing with the effects of rapid change in modern society.

[10] Gilbert Murray, Five Stages of Greek Religion, 1955, 167.

[11] op.cit 39, 84, 109, etc. Cf. also Arnold Toynbee, An-Historians's Approach to Religion, 1956, 262, 282.

[12] Cf. Peter Burke, "Ideas have a history," The Listener, Feb. 9, 1967, l89f and Feb. 23, 1967, 225f.

[13] Cf. the excellent work by H. E. W. Turner, The Pattern of Christian Truth, 1954, especially the chapter on Orthodoxy and Reason, 389ff.

[14] Cf. Gaetano Negri, Julian the Apostate, Eng. 1905, II, 42lff. H. H. Milman suggests that the revival of Zoroastrianism which falls at the same period is "the only instance of the vigorous revival of a Pagan religion." (The History of Christianity, 1892, II, 247).

[15] Donald Schon has shown in his Reith Lectures for 1970 how the principle of "dynamic conservatism" is built into every social structure. By "dynamic conservatism" he means the protective instinct to resist change. (cf. The Listener, Nov. 26, 1970, 724f).

[16] Justin, Dialogue with Trypho, 38.

[17] Lit: "What do you make yourself (to be)?"

[18] Cf. W. F. Howard, The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism & Interpretation, (revised by C. K. Barrett), 1955, 24, 74, 132.

[19] Cf. J. Jocz, The Jewish People and Jesus Christ, 1954, 113, 150, 265, 309f.

[20] This is no exaggeration when we remember that Homer's poems, especially the Iliad, "were the Bible of the Greek nation in pagan times" (cf. Sir W. Smith's Classical Dictionary, 1904, v.s.) Outside Greek culture, especially under Persian influence, the Son of God concept was widely held. (cf. Walter Classen, Einhitt des Christentums in die Welt, 1930, 16ff.)

[21] The Christian position was not unlike that of Judaism in the Roman world and for similar reasons, only that unlike Judaism, Christianity was for a long time *religio illicita.* (Cf. James Parkes in Judaism & Christianity, 1937, 116f).

[22] Cf. Origen, Contra Celsum, IV, 7. That the question was asked by others can be seen from the anonymous Epistle to Diognetus (2nd or 3rd c.) whose author attempts an answer.

[23] ib. IV, 20.

[24] Contra Celsum, IV, 8.

[25] ib. IV, 8.

[26] By contrast cf. his more biblical approach in De principiis, IV, 1.

[27] Cf. Peter's sermon in Jerusalem in Acts 3: 11-26.

[28] Some hold that Aristides preceded Justin Martyr by a quarter of a century; cf. Ante-Nicene Fathers, (American ed.) 1951, X, 259ff.

[29] Contra Celsum, IV, 7.

[30] Justin, Apology II, 8; cf. I, 44.

[31] Contra Celsum, VIII, 4.

[32] Arnobius, Adversus gentes, II, 36.

[33] Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, VI, 5.

[34] Augustine, Civitas Dei, X, 32; cf. also J. O'Mara, Porphyry's Philosophy from Oracles in Augustine, 1959, 54.

[35] Augustine, Enchiridion, II, 60.

[36] Justin, Apology, I, 28.

[37] Contra Celsum, IV, 99.

[38] ib. IV, 66.

[39] Justin, Apology, I, 59; cf. 44.

[40] For references see J. Geffcken, Zwei griechiche Apologeten, 1907, 31 and note. The originator of the idea was apparently an Hellenized Jew by the name of Aristobulus (c.150 B.C.) Cf. J. Adam, The Vitality of Platonism, 1911, 123.

[41] Cf. Eusebius, Praeparatio evangelica, X-XII.

[42] Clement Alex., Exhortation to the Heathen, 6.

[43] The Emperor Julian speaks derisively of "the new fangled teaching of the Hebrews" which has led to the casting off the traditions of the fathers (Against the Galilaeans, Loeb Classical Lib., Works of Emperor Julian, III, 391).

[44] Cf. Athenagoras, A Plea for the Christians, 17; also Theophilus to Autolycus, III, 20ff; also Clement, Stromata, I, 21.

[45] Cf. Justin, Address to the Greeks, 36 (end).

[46] Cf. Clement, Stromata, I, 2; 7; 19; 20.

[47] Tertullian, Apology, 46-48; cf. also De anima, 2.

[48] Cf. Tatian's Address to the Greeks, 29.

[49] For the poor state of religion in the Greek world at the time of Plato, see B. Jowett, The Dial. of Plato, 1953, IV, 181.

[50] Exhortation to the Heathen, ch. 10-14. (Ante-Nicene Library, Vol. II.)

[51] Origen, Contra Celsum, V, 4l. For pagan hostility towards proselytes to Judaism see Tacitus, His. 8: 5; Juvenal, Sat., XIV, 100ff; cf. Henry Chadwick, Origen: Contra Celsum, 1953, 296 and n4.

[52] Contra Celsum, V, 25.

[53] ib. 35.

[54] Cf. Athenagoras, A Plea for Christians, 22.

[55] Cf. Gaetano Negri, Julian the Apostate, Engl. 1905, II, 421f, 425; cf. also Frederick C. Grant, Hellenistic Religions (The Age of Syncretism), 1953, 71: "The criticism of traditional religion probably began before the time of the Sophists, but they were the ones who carried it to the farthest extreme . . . Criticism did not end with the Sophists, however, it continued throughout the rest of antiquity . . "

[56] Aristides, Apology, II; (Syriac only; but cf. Greek version, ch.15)

[57] ib. 14.

[58] ib. 15. (Greek)

[59] Cf. ib. II; according to the Syriac version: Barbarians, Greeks, Jews and Christians. Such a division is already assumed by St. Paul, cf. Rom. 1:14; 1 Cor. 10:32; Col. 3:11.

[60] Apparently the phrase *tertium genus hominum* occurs only once in the ancient Christian literature. But the conviction that the Christians are a new race, the new people of God, the true Israel, is taken for granted by the early Christian writers: cf. A. von Harnack, Die Mission u. Ausbreitung d. Christentums, 1902, 177ff.

[61] Cf. E. C. Blackman, Marcion & His Influence, 1948, 119ff. The Church identified herself with Hebrew history to the point of an annual festival commemorating the Maccabean struggle. At least in the West the Feast of the Maccabean Martyrs was celebrated on August 1st. Cf. Sermon by Gregory of Nazianzen (No .15) also St. Augustine (Sermons 300-2). Ambrose makes reference to monks who on their way "to celebrate the Feast of the Maccabean Martyrs" were interfered with by the Valentinian heretics (Letter 40,16).

[62] Origen, Contra Celsum, V, 25; cf. Julian the Apostate's objection to the claim of particularity, Against the Galilaeans (The Works of the Emperor Julian, Loeb Classical Library, III, 343f; 367).

[63] ib. IV, 36; VI, 78.

[64] ib. V, 41.

[65] ib. V, 41.

[66] ib. VIII, 69.

[67] Eusebius, Praeparatio evangelica, VII, 3; (E. H. Gifford's translation, Oxford, 1903, 301f).

[68] ib. VII, 5.

[69] ib. VII, 6.

[70] ib. I, 9 (30 a-b).

[71] ib. VIII, 1.

[72] On the subject of the antiquity of the Church, see Harnack, op.cit 178; For Augustine the Christian religion already existed from the beginning of the human race (Retractationes, I, 12).

[73] For a more appreciative attitude on the part of Eusebius towards the Jews, see Theophania, IV, 24; V, 45. Here Eusebius concedes that the Church was established from among Jews and Gentiles and that the first bishops were Jews.

[74] It is of interest to note that Aristides refers to our Lord's mother as a Hebrew virgin and not as a Jewish virgin; cf. Apology, 2 (Syriac).

[75] Dial. 135.

[76] Eusebius, Praep. evangelica, VII, 16.

[77] Arthus Darby Nock, Early Gentile Christianity & its Hellenistic Background, 1964, XIII.

[78] ib. XI.

[79] Cf. ib. 17, 23, 101, 104.

[80] Henry Furneaux, The Annals of Tacitus, 1934, 130f. For the mingling of religions in Imperial Rome, see Theodor Mommsen, The History of Rome, (Everyman's ed.) III, 411f; cf. also Fr. C. Grant, op.cit XVII.

[81] Herodotus, The Persian Wars, 50; Cf. Regina Salditt-Trappmann, Tempel der Agyptischen Götter in Griechenland und an der Westküste Kleinasiens, 1970.

[82] Cf. E. Gibbon, The History of the Decline & Fall of the Roman Empire, II, 128; cf. also Encyl. Brit., art. Syncretism; also Catholic Encycl., (1912) art. Syncretism.

[83] Cf. the publication by the National Geographical Society, Every Day Life in Bible Times, 1967, 413. (note the fascinating picture of the sun god.)

[84] Cf. Franz Dumont, The Mysteries of Mythra, E.T., 1910, 30ff.

[85] Nock, op.cit 17.

[86] Quoted by Nock, op.cit 56.

[87] Odyssey, I, 25.

[88] Cf. Laws, 7412; 818 a-b.

[89] ib. 889a.

[90] Cf. G. M. A. Grube, Plato's Thought, 1935, 169.

[91] Cf. Aristotle, Minor Works, (Loeb Classical Lib.), 495.

[92] ib. 487 (end of 3).

[93] Cf. Wm. Windelband, A History of Philosophy, E.T., 1958, I, 34f; also K. Freeman, God, Man & State, 1952, 20ff.

[94] Franz Cumont, The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism, E.T., 1911, 132. Cf. Thales's saying: - all is full with the divine, a typically Spinozian concept.

[95] Cf. Aristotle, de Caelo, 3. 1. 18.

[96] Mark Aurelius, Meditations, X, 27.

[97] Origen, Contra Census, I, 24; (cf. V, 41).

[98] ib. I 25.

[99] Nock quotes Jacob Burkhardt as saying that for the Greeks, mythology was "the ideal basis of their whole existence - *die ideale Grundlage ihres ganzen Daseins*" (op.cit 127). Nothing is more characteristic for the two world-views, the one based upon the cycle of nature and the other upon the irreversibility of historic events than the transformation of the *saturnalia* into Christmas: the first celebrates the motion of the sun, the second an event in history. On the subject of myth in relation to history, see Avery Dulles, "Symbol, Myth and the Biblical Revelation," New Theology, No. 4. especially pp. 63f.

[100] Nock, op.cit 101. Minucius Felix has perhaps tried hardest of all to present Christians as philosophers and philosophers as Christians. (cf. H. E. W. Turner, The Pattern of Christian Truth, 1954, 416). On the irreducible aspect of the Christian faith see T. R. Glover, The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire (1909) who stresses the importance of the historical background in preventing Christianity being assimilated as yet another philosophy (cf. ib. 152, 157, 194, etc.) Glover's testimony is the more valuable as he writes in the spirit of a liberal scholar.

[101] W. A. Visser't Hooft, No Other Name, 1963, 90

[102] Cf. J. Jocz, The Spiritual History of Israel, 179, 215.

[103] Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, Religion, Revolution & the Future, E.T., 1969, 208ff.

[104] Cf. H. B. Swete, The Apocalypse of St. John, 1922, 307.

[105] Cf. J. Jocz, A Theology of Election, 79f.

[106] Cf. Ignatius, To the Epheians, 7; 15.

[107] The Martyrdom of Polycarp, 9. 13.

[108] ib. 21.

[109] TWNT, II, 725, 30: "Sein Evangelium ist nicht eine neue Lehre, sondern er bringt sich selbst. Was mit seiner Person gegebin ist, macht den Inhalt des Evangeliums aus." (His Gospel is not a new doctrine, to the contrary, he brings himself. What is given with his Person, makes up the contents of the Gospel.)

[110] Tertullian, Apology, 21, 7.

[111] ib. 21, 6.

[112] Cf. T. R. Glover, op.cit 159ff; especially the remark: “the force of the Christian movement lay neither in church, nor in sacrament, but in men.”

[113] W. E. Hocking, Science & the Idea of God, 1944, 104.

[114] Cf. Revelation as History, ed. by W. Pannenberg, E.T., 1968, 142.

Chapter VI - The Three Basic Premises of the Christian Faith

Religion can be viewed from two different angles: first, as a universal phenomenon of which particular religions are only expressions of a general principle; or, second each religion as *sui generis,* characteristically and incomparably a specimen on its own. In the first place the emphasis is upon a common denominator; in the second place the accent is upon difference. The Christian theologian is here put to the test: how is he to relate his faith; to the first or the second category? Both methods have been tried with questionable results. But there is yet another possibility, namely that the Christian faith extends to religion as it stands to culture, not horizontally but vertically. It does not coalesce with religion but questions it. This dialogue takes place within the household of Christianity itself. Here historic Christianity and the Christian faith face each other in unremitting tension. The resulting controversy turns on questions fundamental to the Church for the understanding of her own faith.

1. Faith Rooted in History

Though the Bible knows God as a Presence transcending time and space, yet it regards revelation as anchored in history. In other words, revelation is not a personal and private experience which begins and ends with each individual, but a continuing and consecutive story. It is no accident that the historic books are part of the Old Testament canon and that built into the New Testament is the history of the Apostolic Church. These books, especially in the Old Testament, are not strictly "religious" books where the individual and his God are in private session. The centre of attention is the community, the people of God under God's providence working out the pattern of His purpose. Only where there is community is there history in the proper sense for only in the community is there continuity. It means that the prehistory of the Christian Church is not merely an introduction to what is to follow but a constituent part of the whole complex of historic revelation.

The characteristic feature of history is the uniqueness of every event. In biblical terms history is irreversible and non-repeatable. Biblical revelation therefore in terms of history does not express itself abstractly in general truths but in specific acts and events and interpretations. But this is only the pattern of revelation, the response to the pattern requires a decision of faith. The prophet's task is to act as interpreter of historic events as meaningful and purposeful acts of God. The prophet is called a seer because he is able to see beyond the ordinary occurrences of history not only the guiding hand of God but the working out of His eternal purpose for mankind. There is both sequence and cohesion in the pattern which must not be disrupted. The historic past is thus a determining factor in the apprehension of the Christian faith if it is meant to retain its genuine context. In the centre of that Faith is not a credal definition but an historic person with a name, a history and a destiny. What God did and said in and through Jesus of Nazareth is here understood as of momentous importance for the whole human race.

Jesus lived almost 2000 years ago. In terms of culture, knowledge, history, two millenia is a very long time. Humanly speaking, his cultural apparatus and scientific assumptions were determined by his age and environment. If we take the humanity of Jesus seriously we have to allow for his use of thought-forms which belonged to his age and people; he cannot be understood in any other way. Bultmann's attempt to detach the essential message of the Gospel from the time-bound suppositions of the first century is prompted by the desire of translating that message in a twentieth century idiom. That such an

hermeneutic task is necessary is Bultmann's deep conviction. But this apparently legitimate concern runs into a major difficulty: by detaching the message from its historic background it loses its rootedness in history and tends to become an a-historical truth of a universal and philosophical nature. It is no accident that Bultmann's theology is wedded to Heideggerian presuppositions. This dependence upon philosophy, and a specific philosophy at that, puts Bultmann under suspicion of exchanging one myth for another. De-mythologizing thus becomes an empty phrase. A case in point is the story of Jesus's resurrection. The early Church had no difficulty with the resurrection of Jesus Christ,[1] though philosophers of the Platonic school felt it was a crude form of materialism.[2] Ignatius well expresses the view of primitive Christianity when he affirms that Jesus was raised bodily from the grave by the power of Almighty God.[3] If anyone raised objections to such a miracle, the answer would be that with God all things are possible. For the modern Christian reared in an atmosphere of science which frowns at the miraculous, such a literal interpretation becomes more than difficult. In order to make it credible he has to re-interpret the resurrection story in accordance with more modern presuppositions. Thus what was once a bodily resurrection becomes a spiritual resurrection or a metaphor of an eternal dimension to which believers are raised.[4] But the re-interpretation is only an apparent solution, in fact it only aggravates the problem: if the early disciples were mistaken; if Christ's resurrection rests upon an hallucinatory experience; if the Church has been labouring under the illusion of a miracle that never took place, what necessity is there to connect the metaphor with the historic person of Jesus in the first place? Why not with the grain of wheat as the Johannine Gospel suggests (John 12:24) or an egg which has become the symbol of Easter?![5]

Once history becomes unessential the story about Jesus's resurrection appears as part of the universal myth of the dying and rising god so well documented by anthropologists.[6] What was held to be an historic occurrence becomes a mere pious hope devoid of reality. Oddly enough, with the removal of the resurrection into the area of myth there takes place a shift in the meaning of the Gospel from Jesus himself to his teaching. The centre of our attention inevitably moves from the Saviour of the world to the Sermon on the Mount and the parables. But our troubles only now begin for we soon discover that the Sermon on the Mount can be paralleled by similar teaching from other sources.[7] The specificity of the Christian faith must thus be surrendered and instead we are left with a complex of general truths dressed in mythological language. In this new situation the person of Jesus becomes incidental, except as an example to be imitated.[8] The personal dedication of faith, loyalty and obedience to the Master become displaced by acceptance of his teaching and his philosophy of life. The Church is turned into a philosophical or ethical academy where like-minded people discuss a set of lofty ideals. But even the modern Christian knows that at the heart of the Christian faith is not a code of ethics, a body of doctrine, or a philosophy of life but an historic person, namely Jesus of Nazareth.

This then is the problem: is the resurrection of Jesus an event in time or the mythological expression of a religious hope? Prof. Beare sees little value in attaching importance to a resuscitated body even though it be the body of Jesus himself. But in theological perspective the question at issue is not so much the physical "reanimation of the corpse," rather, it is the meaning of revelation in space and time. Admittedly, the two aspects are inseparable and Prof. Beare rightly points to the Pauline understanding of the resurrection as relating to a different level of reality. But does St. Paul mean that it is a supra-historical event outside time and space? This is the crucial question.

The fact that by its very nature the resurrection cannot be authenticated and that we have no other evidence for it except the biased opinion of the New Testament, removes it from the area of objective

investigation. But it appears to this writer that Dr. Beare tends to treat the New Testament witness too lightly.

The earliest record of the resurrection is not contained in the Gospels but in the Pauline letters. Paul goes out of his way to provide a detailed account of eye witnesses who have met with the risen Christ. (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3-8).[9] We may argue that this was an hallucinatory experience on the part of naive and uneducated people who were swayed by the will to believe. Or else we may proceed on the Jungian theory that imaginary "facts" are real, they exist in the mind of the beholder, though not in physical and tangible form.[10] But none of these answers is satisfactory. Such a psychological interpretation of the resurrection raises more problems than it solves. It is the difficulty to account for the triumph of a defeated Messiah on the basis of a mere hallucination that led some recent writers to look for a more plausible theory.[11]

From a theological point of view the question regarding the resurrection is not of the same order as the Virgin Birth for the simple reason that the latter does not carry the same weight in the New Testament. The Virgin birth is only scantily attested and even without it the main outlines of Christian theology would remain unaltered. The same cannot be said about Christ's resurrection. Faith in the risen Christ is at the very heart of the Gospel message. The primitive Church did not preach a dead Messiah but the risen Lord. The question therefore whether it occurred or not must be taken dead seriously. On the other hand, if it is only an allegory dressed up in mythological language then it is an imaginary tale conjured up by pious minds. Once the resurrection becomes hallucination or allegory it loses its compelling force and may be assigned to the realm of symbolism. This is the issue.

As myth, the resurrection must be placed outside the sphere of the biblical premise which is concerned with the transparency of God's presence in history. The incarnation as a "fact" and the resurrection as a myth belong to two different orders of thought and cannot be paired. It is either both or none. Myth as the Greeks understood it; i.e. as an a-historical dramatization of a universal concept and therefore universally applicable is utterly alien to biblical thought. This brings us to the next question: why not retain the historic Jesus minus the resurrection? It has been attempted many times over and marks the boundary between historic Christianity and liberal theology. The appeal to the "empty tomb" on the orthodox side is an apologetic effort towards authentication, but a feeble one.[12]

We are thus faced with a major difficulty: reason revolts against the idea of a physical resuscitation of a dead body but at the same time we find it impossible to account for the existence of the Church without Christ's resurrection from the dead. Bornkamm readily admits the tension between the unmistakable unanimity to the miracle of Easter in the New Testament and the ambiguity of our records. But he refuses to resolve the tension by subscribing to a subjective theory such as an hallucination on the part of the disciples or as a metaphorical illustration of the cycle process of nature. The only explanation, he suggests, is to be sought in the unity of the person of Jesus himself.[13] Such an explanation is outside the area of historical evidence and operates on the level of faith. But at the same time to be meaningful the resurrection of Jesus must remain an historical "fact." James M. Robinson rightly observes: "An unhistorical symbol can hardly symbolize transcendence within history."[14] What applies to the *kerygma* in general, of necessity applies to the resurrection in particular, though Käsemann, Fuchs and even Bornkamm are reluctant to regard Easter as the foundation of the Christian message.[15] But this is stretching our imagination beyond bounds for without the resurrection it is difficult to see what the Christian message could have been except a defeated Messiah? J. M. Robinson's observation deserves full weight: "a myth does not become historical simply by appropriating the name of a historical

personage."[16] To this may be added that the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth ceases to be of any value either as symbol or myth the moment the historicity of the person is stressed.[17] This lengthy digression on the question of the resurrection of Jesus was undertaken not to prove its credibility but to demonstrate the importance of historicity to the Christian faith. As a symbol the resurrection would only point to a universal principle but in this case the whole issue dissolves itself into a general myth of immortality. Only if rooted in an historical event does the resurrection of Jesus acquire unique proportions of a revelatory nature. Otherwise it can only serve as material for an anthroposophical system with strong gnostic overtones.[18]

For theology the question of Christ's resurrection is inseparable from the biblical concept of history as the pattern of irreversible and unique occurrence. What is repeatable belongs to the cycle of nature and moves on a different level. Myth expresses a universal principle in which the singular can only serve as an example of the general. Jesus's rising from the grave would thus only typify the immortality of the soul. This is not what the New Testament wants to convey. Here the resurrection of Jesus is an awesome event of tremendous implications: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17). Paul staked his life upon this conviction. No man can evade the issue and call himself a Christian.[19] It is at this focal point that the decision of faith is made.

2. Faith Rooted in an Historic Person

In the Western tradition history has acquired a non-cyclic direction. By reason of the irreversibility of time an historic event can only happen once. If it recurs at regular intervals it does not belong to history but to the cycle of nature. From this it follows that historic events cannot be reduced to general principles. True history is unpredictable.

Whether events can be marshalled into patterns is a matter which does not concern us here. Our main purpose is to concentrate upon the particularity of historic events which is founded on the Hebrew concept of time. Because history for the Hebrew is understood as a linear movement it spells out the unrepeatable singularity of every occurrence. Contrary to the Greek view, history does not repeat itself. The stress upon particularity of events derived from the Bible is woven into the very fibre of the Christian faith. It means that biblical faith, and therefore Christian faith, is structured not upon concepts but happenings. Such happenings are unique in a twofold way: 1) by relating to particular persons in history; 2) by relating to a purposeful direction under God's providence. A faith so structured upon historic occurrence becomes philosophically inscrutable for in this case no universally accepted rules can be applied. In the last resort the Christian faith is irreducible to concepts, truths or principles; it centres upon persons, chiefly upon the Person of Jesus Christ.

At this point the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth comes into focus. By stressing the historic fact about Jesus we stress his particularity and not just the fact that he lived at a certain time. As there will never be another Abraham, Moses, or Isaiah, so there will never be another Jesus both as person and as Messiah. In the biblical pattern of events no person is ever superseded so that his achievement is voided by what follows. It is on this principle that the Old Testament is joined to the New Testament and the heroes of faith of Israel and Church belong together (cf. Heb. 11:40).

The messianic event centred upon the Person of Jesus can only be assessed in terms of biblical particularity: there never will and never can be another Messiah. If it were otherwise then Jesus is only

the fore-runner. This stress upon His uniqueness is the message of the New Testament: "when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman" to redeem mankind (Gal.4:4; cf. Heb. 1:1ff.). Such irreducible stress upon the particular person is dictated by the irreversibility of biblical time. It is not the universal Logos who descends upon the man called Jesus so that he becomes the Messiah (which is an adoptionist or Ebionite view), but Jesus is identical with the Logos and the Logos is Jesus in tangible form (cf. Col. 1:15, 19). This is the meaning of the Johannine affirmation: *verbum caro factum est* (John 1:14).[20]

Biblical particularity is always rooted in history. No person, not even Melchizedek, (in spite of Heb. 7:3), appears out of the blue without a pre-history. Hence the importance attached to genealogies both in the Old and New Testaments. Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldeans: "these are the descendants of Terah. Terah was the father of Abraham . . ." (Gen.11:27). Moses came from the house of Levi: his father's name was Amram and his mother Jochebed. Ex. 6:16ff provides a complete genealogical tree for the house of Levi. Jesus too has a pre-history: the gospel genealogies are important documents for the Hebrew sense of historic cohesion. No Hebrew person stands alone in his own right. Every Hebrew belongs to a wider context: family, clan, tribe, nation. The pre-history of a given person is as important as the person himself. A man is identified not only by his own name but by the name of his father and grandfather. Because of the significance attaching to historic events even the contingencies of history are meaningful. All historic occurrences lead to a goal for they stand under the providence of an all-wise God. The Bible knows of no fortuitous happenings; all events carry a redemptive purpose though this may not be apparent at the time.

Jesus's pre-history in the widest sense is the history of his people. In the more restricted sense it is the history of the tribe of Judah (cf. Heb. 7:14) and of the house of David (cf. Rom. 1:3). But the identification must go beyond the national boundary for every man is also a brother to every other man no matter of what race. Jesus is therefore also the son of Adam and in the last resort the son of God (Luke 3:37). If we take the humanity of Jesus seriously as indeed we must in order to avoid the docetic fallacy we cannot but stress his relationship to the human race. Jesus is in the profoundest sense the son of Adam and therefore belongs to humanity at large. This is the meaning of Irenaeu's concept of *recapitulatio*: "When He was incarnate and made man, He recapitulated in Himself the long line of the human race . . ."[21]

Jesus is thus no freak of history. His appearance is the climax of God's eternal design for mankind. But He is not just universal man, or the quintessence of man, or the epitome of man, but uniquely Himself.

a. Jesus the Man

Jewish scholars have challenged the notion that Jesus was a religious genius. Their criticism centres upon the ethical teachings as found in the Gospels. They paid special attention to the Sermon on the Mount and found that there is nothing in it of value that was not already taught by the rabbis.[22] The rest of the Sermon on the Mount is exaggerated Judaism and utterly impracticable.[23] There is therefore nothing original about Jesus. This view is motivated mainly by apologetic reasons and could be challenged but this is not how we would seek to assess the importance of Jesus. It is a misconception that human greatness must express itself in unusual originality of doctrine. True humanity is of a personal quality and largely depends upon the integrity, harmony and coherence of character. The latter is difficult to define except on the basis of the degree of correspondence between ideal and practice,

between doctrine and daily living. This kind of integration is the only measure we have for assessing what is meant by being human: an integrated person in whom the ideal aspiration is consistent with his daily life.

Biologically speaking, man's greatest accomplishment is his "extraordinarily versatile hand and a highly developed brain to direct it."[24] This, according to biologists constitutes man's uniqueness. But it leaves an open question as to the direction the hand is intended to move and the purpose it intends to accomplish. Man's *humanitas* entirely depends upon the answer to this question. Rabbi Abraham J. Heschel rightly insists that "the truth of a theory about man is either creative or irrelevant, but never descriptive."[25] It means that the mobility of one's hand and the function of the brain does not yet define what it means to be human. The importance of Jesus as man lies in the fact that he is man with a difference. In fact, some would say that his humanity is such that he cannot be compared with any other man in history.

Every human being is unique for he is different from everyone else and therefore unrepeatable. His self-consciousness is peculiarly his own and can never be transferred or imitated. But at the same time there is a similarity between man and man which makes it possible to generalize human behaviour and work out a common psychological basis. The odd thing about Jesus is that he does not easily fit into any preconceived category. He is psychologically unpredictable and culturally a puzzle. Humanly speaking he is best described as a freak of history; there was and there could be no room for a man like Jesus in any society. He is in the strictest sense of the word *sui generis*; he fits into no niche. This is the reason why every biography which fails to take the utter uniqueness of Jesus seriously is doomed to failure.[26] It is this dimension of uniqueness which is at the bottom of the Christian faith. Lord Eccles in his honest quest for the truth is only too aware of this fact. This is what he says: "Throughout this book I have been asking whether the Jesus of the Gospels differs from other immortal characters only in degree, or whether he is of a different nature altogether."[27] Lord Eccles adits that he is still groping for an answer which some theologians are only too quick to offer.

Traditionally the Church tended to underrate the true humanity of Jesus in favour of His divinity. Against this imbalance the New Testament stands as an important corrective; it stresses repeatedly the utter humanity of the Master of Nazareth: Jesus in prayer upon the mountain top; Jesus shedding tears at a friend's grave; Jesus crying out in dereliction upon a cross. In all the vicissitudes of his life we meet in Jesus a man utterly dependent upon God. In the words of the Letter to the Hebrews: "he was made like his brethren in every respect" (Heb. 2:17); and again: "for we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning" (4:15). Dr. Pittenger's insistence upon Jesus's true and complete humanity is therefore well justified. We must guard against what he calls "a false uniqueness."[28] But at the same time it is a misunderstanding of our human situation to claim that the difference between Jesus and ourselves is only a matter of degree. Pittenger's argument rests on the following premise: "in a world in which there is organic consistency and co-inherence, there can in fact be no absolute difference in kind." He therefore concludes that the difference between Jesus and ourselves is only a difference of accomplishment or achievement.[29] This pragmatic and flat kind of reasoning overlooks the essential fact about Jesus, namely his unique God-consciousness. There is in His life a consistency and dedication, an awareness of his Father's Presence which has never been matched. In this vital respect Jesus is unlike any other human being. What it means to live the human life without sin, in unbroken fellowship with God, none of us knows. This is a different quality of living and not merely a matter of "immeasurable

degree," as Pittenger would have it. In Jesus we meet for the first time in history a different kind of man living on a different level.[30]

The difference between Jesus and ourselves turns on the question of sin. Sinless humanity is so utterly strange to us as to be unthinkable. We have no experience of a condition when sin does not intervene between us and God. Only by taking sin lightly does the difference melt into insignificance: Jesus is the Man-without-sin; in New Testament language he is the Second Adam.

There is a radical difference between Adam and the Second Adam: both are human; both are flesh and blood; both live under the physical and moral laws; both move in time and space; both are exposed to temptation and suffering. Yet the one is utterly different not only in degree but in kind. The distinction is made by St. Paul: "the first Adam became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit; the first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven" (Cor. 15:45, 57), The Second Adam is the harbinger of the new humanity, the initiator of the new order,[31] resulting from the fact that he chooses to become man's elder brother.

Abel's brother committed fratricide; instead of a protector he becomes a murderer. In the parable of the Prodigal son the problem child is the elder brother who though in his father's house remains a stranger to his father's spirit of love and forgiveness. The new humanity constituted by Jesus presents us with a different situation: here the older brother takes upon himself the whole burden of responsibility due to his position. He willingly and lovingly acts as his brothers' keeper. The whole concept of vicarious suffering is rooted in the biblical ideal of primogeniture. The Messiah does not rest satisfied in his exalted position, rather he identifies himself with the least of his brethren to the point of a shameful death: he takes the place of the guilty.

The position of the *bekhor* (בְּכוֹר) in the Hebrew family who is both heir and successor to headship will explain the meaning of prõtókos (πρωτότοκος) in the New Testament as a description of the Messiah. As Elder brother he stands in a special position of responsibility for his brethren (cf. Rom. 8:29; Heb. 11:6; Rev. 1:5). As the true and dedicated Servant of God he acts as the man-for-others.[32] Because Jesus is totally and unreservedly the man for God he is the man for his brethren. "The difference between Jesus and ourselves," says Barth, is indissoluble and fundamental: "for of no other man can we say that from the outset and in virtue of his existence he is for others. Of no other man can we say that he is the word of God to men . . . There can be no repetition of this in anthropology. We are the victims of idealistic illusion if we deck out the humanity of man generally with features exclusive to that of the man Jesus . . . Jesus is that which is peculiar to Him."[33]

In the history of the human race Jesus is a *novum*. He did not just preach the truth, He lived it. Well says Hugh Vernon White: "the truths Jesus taught are not only illuminated by his life; they are embodied in his life. Their truth is living truth because he lived it."[34] Principal Curtis put it even more succinctly: "He and his Gospel were one."[35] This is so new a phenomenon that its very unfamiliarity is a *skandalon* to us for it is both puzzlement and challenge. Only what is familiar to us is credible.[36] In the case of Jesus we are left without a comparison. Only by reducing him to a familiar model are we able to assess his value. But the fact is that Jesus the Man is irreducible.[37]

b. Jesus the Son of God

Against the Old Testament background the term Son of God strikes a disturbing note. Either it means that Jesus as a son of Israel is a child of God in the conventional sense; or else, that Jesus is here described as a divine hero in the pagan sense: *divi filius* or *filius dei*.[38] It is obvious that the New

Testament intends neither of these: on the one hand, it stresses Jesus's sonship in an unique sense; on the other hand it refuses to make him into a second God by insisting upon his humanity. This double aspect finds special emphasis in the Johannine Gospel, notably in the prologue.

That man is the creature of God and that Israel in particular is the son of God the New Testament inherited from the Old. But this is not what is meant by the phrase Son of God when applied to Jesus. What the New Testament unmistakably wants to convey is not only that Jesus is different from other men but that his relationship to God is absolutely unique. In Pauline words: he is the first-born of all creation (Col.1:15). The Second Adam is in fact the First, the true head of humanity, the ἀρχή, the Beginning (Col. 1:18).

The Sonship of Jesus in this unique sense is difficult to describe without falling into the maze of metaphysical speculation or mystical symbolism. This has been the temptation to Christian orthodoxy of all ages. On the whole the New Testament manages to avoid both metaphysics and mysticism in its presentation of the Messiah as the Son of God. It does this by a strict adherence to history. Even Paul with his bias towards apocalyptic eschatology remembered that God's Son was descended from David according to the flesh (Rom. 1:3) and was born of a woman (Gal. 4:4). His Christology is strictly circumscribed between Advent and Easter; in other words, it takes its clue from these two focal points in history.[39]

What does the New Testament mean by Son of God?

Against the Hebrew background it is impossible to accept the view that the whole idea is of pagan provenance. Paul would have been the oddest of Jews to acquiesce to a position which would compromise his biblical faith in the one and only God. Even Klausner admits that the roots of Paul's theology are Jewish though the inevitable result of his concentration upon the heavenly Christ ultimately led to the Trinitarian doctrine.[40] We will therefore have to allow for a biblical interpretation of the Son of God concept to do justice to the New Testament.[41]

First, the Son of God concept carries a moral connotation: Jesus is the dedicated Servant of YHWH. The Gospels go out of their way to stress this point, especially John. The Son's supreme task is to do the will of the Father: God sent His Son not to condemn the world but to save the world (John 3:17); it is the Son's food to do the will of Him who sent him and to accomplish His work (4:34). Jesus in controversy with the "Jews," constantly avers: I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me (6:38; cf. 5:30). He does not seek glory for himself but the honour of his Father (8:49; 17:4). The Son can do nothing of his own accord but only what he sees the Father doing (5:19). The authority he exercises is given him by the Father (1:12; cf. 5:27, 30). This identification of Father and Son expressed in the moving sentence: "all mine are thine and thine are mine" (John 17:10), points to a unity of desire, intention and purpose which can only be described by the ideal relationship of Father and Son.

Although the Fourth Gospel because of its theological concern is more expressive of the Messiah's moral commitment to his heavenly Father, the Synoptic Gospels reveal a similar attitude. Doing the will of God is the only mark of true discipleship (Mtt. 7:21ff; 12:46ff; 25:31ff). Above all, it is the Messiah himself who in the hour of bitter trial cries out, Father, thy will be done (Mtt. 26:42) and he teaches his disciples to do the same (6:10).

Second, the Son of God concept carries revelatory meaning: Jesus is the Word of God in hypostatic form, i.e. made visible in a living person. In him the word of the living God takes on flesh and blood.

This is magnificently expressed in John's prologue: "The word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we beheld his glory, the glory of the only Son from the Father (John 1:14).

Paul's description of the Messiah as ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15) says the same thing in different imagery. This reference to the image of God goes beyond Gen. 1:27 where it is said that man was created to be the bearer of the *imago Dei*. For Paul, the Messiah is the prototype of man in whom the image of God remains unmarred and in its pristine beauty. It is the believer's privilege to be moulded into the image of God's Son so as to acquire the likeness of the first-born (2 Cor. 3:18). It is obvious that Sonship is here understood as an inward quality and not an outward appearance. The believer is in the process of a metamorphosis: "Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven" (1 Cor. 15:49). It is only in our association with the Son who "reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of His nature" (Heb. 1:3) that we acquire the qualities of sonship. Because Christ as the eternal Son identifies himself with sinners, sinners acquire the status of sons by adoption (Gal. 4:5; Rom. 8:29; cf. John 1:12; 1 John 3:2). When the Greek Fathers spoke of Christ as *logos ensarkos* - the enfleshed word, or *logos enanthropesanta* - enmanned word, they were only paraphrasing what the New Testament meant to convey by the Incarnation.[42]

Third, the Son of God concept intends to convey the Messiah's unwavering trust in his heavenly Father. The Hebrew concept of faith as affiance and trust finds in the life of Jesus its most perfect expression. This comes out as the outstanding feature of our Lord's attitude; he is essentially a man of faith. Even at the moment of his greatest trial, in the cry of dereliction: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me, He is still his God. Apart from the fact that these are the opening words of Psalm 22 and that the psalm ends on a note of buoyant faith, God is still the Messiah's God even in his god-forsakenness. The Master's trust in God is magnificently dramatized in the incident of the storm on the lake of Galilee: the small boat is swamped and buffeted by raging waves and tossed by the fury of the wind, the disciples are terrified for fear of death, but Jesus calmly sleeps on as if cradled in the hands of his heavenly Father. Mark adds a special touch to the incident by mentioning that he was lying on a cushion (Mark 4:38). When woken by the frightened disciples he asks them with genuine surprise: "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" The result was that they were filled with awe (4:40f). The contrast between the Master's unquestioning trust in his heavenly Father and his disciples' panic illustrates the difference between his and their faith. He frequently calls them *oligopistoi* (ὀλιγόπιστοι) and finds it difficult to reconcile himself to this trait in human nature (cf. Mtt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8). Jesus is puzzled by their lack of faith.[43]

Lastly, Jesus as the Son of God par excellence is more than the Servant of YHWH who is used as a tool to accomplish God's ends. He is not merely an instrument for man's salvation, as if God condescended to man by proxy. The term Son of God means to convey God's Presence in the midst of His people. Jesus of Nazareth is God's Representative in a unique sense. His authority (ἐξουσία) which is such a puzzle to the multitude and such an offence to his enemies is the visible expression of Sonship. There is much in the Gospels to substantiate this, especially his freedom in regard to the Law.[44] It is a fact that every effort to rationalize Jesus's attitude and to explain him either as a fanatic or revolutionary is doomed to failure; not even as a religious reformer does he make sense.[45]

Except on his own terms, Jesus remains an enigma. There is no adequate explanation for him; not even the prophetic heritage is sufficient to account for his insights into the depth of God's love and his intimacy with his heavenly Father.[46] In both cases, as Son of Man and as Son of God, he remains a puzzle for which psychology has no clue.[47] If we try to explain him as the Son of Man the only result

can be a suspicion of megalomania; if we try to explain him as the Son of God he becomes so unlike the historic Jesus separated from us in unapproachable remoteness. The Gospels portray him as the friend of publicans and sinners (cf., Mark 2:15-17).[48] The problem is not solved either way: exalting his humanity or reducing his divinity. The Christological definitions of the ancient Church were prompted by the determination to hold on to both aspects of his character without compromise: *vere homo* and *vere Deus*. In view of our documents there is no alternative.[49]

Those who accept the definition of the Nicene Creed will recognize the absolute uniqueness of the Man Jesus as the Son of God. As far as the Church is concerned, her faith stands and falls with the assumption that there can never be another Jesus in time or in eternity.

c. Jesus as God's Final Word

If historicity and particularity puts the Church under definite restrictions, the claim to finality only adds to her embarrassment. In a world of constant change finality is a difficult claim to make. This is so contradictory a claim both for ancient and modern thinking that it can only be attributed to either bigotry or boorishness. Yet the New Testament places the Church under this sign by its eschatological perspective which makes Advent the beginning of the End.

The concept of finality in relation to historical continuity puts a heavy strain upon theology. This is already evident in the New Testament where the question of messianic fulfilment is acutely raised at an early stage: "where is the promise of his coming?" This is not a rhetorical question but anxiously asked by those who could see no visible difference between *ante* and *post Christum natum*: "For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from beginning of creation" (2 Pet. 3:4). The answer which 2 Peter provides is no answer at all, only an effort to cover up a difficult situation. The question is legitimate enough: history continues without any visible change. Martin Buber spoke not only for the Jewish people but for the world at large, when he said: "we however know, as we know that the air is . . . that space is . . . more profoundly and more truly do we know that the foundation of world history has not yet been cleft, that the world is not yet saved. We feel (*wir spüren*) that the world is not redeemed (*die Unerlöstheit Der welt*).[50] The New Testament itself knows only too well that the world is still in the power of the Evil one (1 John 5:19) and that the whole creation is groaning in travail and not only the creation but the redeemed themselves are still waiting for the consummation of their hope. (Rom. 8:22f).

There would therefore seem to be a contradiction built into the Christian message which says two things at the same time: the Messiah has come and salvation is not yet.[51] This "already and not yet" is the constant embarrassment for the Christian apologist. The contradiction cannot be explained away not even dialectically. Theological honesty demands that the tension between "already and not yet" be not lessened by a mere verbal solution.[52] On the other hand, to speak of the eschatological hope lightly as an unfortunate misunderstanding on the part of New Testament writers is too easy a solution to be acceptable. Bishop Stephen Neill shows undue haste in accepting John Robinson's theory that the idea of a Second Coming was the invention of the Church to escape the embarrassment of unfulfilled hopes.[53] The fact that such early documents, if not the earliest, as the letters to the Thessalonians, already contain a fully developed doctrine of the *Parousia*, must sound a note of caution. There seems to be a close connection between the Kingdom parables and the doctrines of the Second Coming. Unless we declare these parables as the invention of the later Church we will have to attribute the idea of the *parousia* to Jesus himself. The curious mixture of tenses, of present and future, which we find in these

parables is carried over in the later doctrine of the Church where "already and not yet" remain in unresolved tension. Here salvation is always both: a present fulfilment and a future hope.[54] These parables carry yet another tension which is somehow related to the eschatological hope, namely that the Kingdom is both a process and a gift. It is the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom to the little flock (Luke 12:32), yet at the same time it is like the seed put in the ground taking time to germinate and to produce a harvest (Mtt. 13:18ff; 24ff; 31ff; etc.). The Kingdom of God is both visible and invisible, it is here and it is to come, it is a gift and an achievement, it is to be expected and comes suddenly like a thief in the night. The disciples are to pray: "thy Kingdom come," yet it is here in their midst (Luke 17: 21).[55]

In a real sense Kingdom and Gospel are interchangeable: the Gospel is the Good News about God's reign and the proclamation that the Kingdom is near, in fact, it has already arrived. In the centre of the Kingdom is the King Messiah; Messiahship is synonymous with Kingship. But God's Anointed is not anymore just another scion of the house of David, the pretender to an earthly throne, but David's Lord. (cf. Mtt. 22:41-46; cf. Mark 12:35ff). That the King Messiah was greater than David was certainly the current view at the time of Jesus.[56] That Jesus claimed Messiahship, though in a veiled and secret manner, there can be little doubt.[57] Otherwise the trial of Jesus would be inexplicable and so would the rift between his followers and the rest of the nation. As far as the Jews were concerned the cause of rupture was not Jesus's claim to Messiahship but his peculiar understanding of that office. For him Messiahship carried overtones which were offensive to Jewry. For his followers however the message of the Kingdom became identical with his own person: he was the expected King (Mtt. 21:1ff). Nothing in the New Testament is so expressive of the sense of fulfilled hope as the Lucan poetry attributed to Zacharias. The *Benedictus* is a magnificent paean of joy because "the Lord God of Israel has visited and redeemed his people." He has remembered His Covenant and fulfilled the promise made to Abraham. "The dayspring from on high" (Luke 1:78), or better: "when the day shall dawn upon us" (RSV), is the day of the Messiah.

That the Day has come; that Jesus has fulfilled Israel's hope was the triumphant faith of the early Church. This was the Good News that God Himself "in Christ had broken down all the barriers of human sin, and now was offering salvation to all who would receive it."[58] Such an offer could never be piece-meal; 1) because it is an offer made by God; 2) because messianic fulfilment implied ultimacy, otherwise it was not messianic.

The biblical concept of God carries the meaning of ultimacy. Whatever God does, He does to perfection. A repetition of the same act would cast doubt upon His sovereignty and power. All God's decisions are final and absolute. Everything that went before is never annulled but always is preparation for what is to follow. Thus the Mosaic Law is not abrogated but fulfilled (cf. Mtt. 5:17-20; Rom. 10:4).[59] It means that thanks to the Messiah's presence the demands of the law are now complied with not mechanically according to the letter, but inwardly and personally, according to the Spirit (cf. 2 Cor. 3:3-6).[60] There could be no alternative if God is to be taken seriously; His predetermined counsel stands no matter what the vicissitudes of history (cf. Acts 2:23; 4:28). This concept of ultimacy is based upon the conviction that the God of Israel never changes in His loyalty and purpose (Mal. 3:6) and that in Him there is no shadow of turning (James 1:17). He wills that all men should come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4), he therefore sent His Son to save the world (John 3:16). If these and similar passages mean anything they unmistakably say that God acted in Jesus Christ once and for all (cf. Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10).

The second reason why the Gospel carries the connotation of ultimacy is connected with Jesus as the Messiah. Whatever messiahship may have meant to Jesus's contemporaries, in the New Testament it is an exalted title which borders on divinity. This is the very paradox that Jesus, the humble servant, is the exalted Son of God. Here his cross is his throne and his humiliation the mark of his royalty; his power is in his weakness, man's salvation is in his suffering, his death is his resurrection. He belongs to a different order of existence and his authority derives from a different source. He requires no army to challenge the forces of the Evil One, a touch of his hand drives out demons.

The final and ultimate meaning of salvation in Jesus the Messiah in whom God reconciles the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19) can only be grasped from the uniqueness of his position: God acts in and through him. Given these assumptions the logic for the claim to ultimacy is incontrovertible: Jesus of Nazareth is God's absolute answer to all Jewish hopes and the world's needs.[61]

This claim to ultimacy dictated by the position which Jesus occupies in the Christian faith creates a problem in encounter with the other religions. Traditionally the Church took two opposite views: either she claimed that the other religions serve as preparations for the Gospel and are thus incomplete without it; or else she held that the other religions are false and must be rejected as aberrations of the truth. In either case there could be no compromise between the Christian faith and the non-Christian religions. But since the age of enlightenment, and particularly since the rise of Deism, a new attitude came into fashion, namely that all religions are expressions of the same truth and that none can claim a monopoly. In our own century, with the vast extension of communication and the increasingly multicultural composition of society a syncretic view of all religions became accepted as a desirable solution to religious rivalry. Syncretism is thus a major problem for the Church today. If the Incarnation is to be taken seriously, then Prof. Torrance's conclusion is the only possible one: God's decisive action in Christ "invalidates all other possibilities and makes all other conceivable roads within space and time to God (actually) unthinkable."[62]

Here lies the reason for Christian intransigence. It is from the fact of Jesus Christ that we have to approach the meaning of religion.

Notes to Chapter VI

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[1] Cf. the arguments for the resurrection put up by Clement of Rome, I Epistle, 24-26.

[2] Cf. Ignatius's controversy with the Docetae, Ep. to the Trallians, 9-11; also Augustine's controversy with Porphery, de Civ. Dei, X, 29; XII, 25ff.

[3] Cf. Ignatius, To the Smyrnians, lII.

[4] Cf. F. W. Beare's understanding of the resurrection story, The Earliest Records of Jesus, 1962, 240ff.

[5] Cf. J. G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, Pt. V: Spirits of the Corn & of the Wild, 1912, I, 90f; for Easter eggs cf. 'l'. W. Doane, Bible Myths, 1882, 228.

[6] Cf. J. G. Frazer, Adonis Attis Osiris, 1907, 5ff, 183ff, 227ff, 263ff, 323ff.

[7] Cf. Gerald Friedlander, The Jewish Sources of the Sermon on the Mount, 1911. “Is Jesus more inspired than Hillel?” asks Rabbi Friedlander, and his answer is in the negative. (ib. 261)

[8] A contemporary example of reductionary Christology is the position taken up by John A. T, Robinson. Christ is here reduced to a representative function: “What happened at the incarnation, if we can so put it, is that God, the power of nature and history (or, to use the old term, the *logos* or the principle of the evolutionary process) began to be represented in a new way.” It is not really God who acts in Christ but man who matures in Jesus: “in Jesus . . . mankind did come of age; he dared to accept the role of sonship.” (cf. John A. T. Robinson: “In What Sense is Christ Unique?” The Christian Century, Nov. 25, 1970, 1409ff. Cf. also Norman Perrin, “Recent Trends in Research in the Christology of the N. T.," Transitions in Biblical Studies, ed. by J. C. Rylaardsdam, 1968, 217ff. Perrin holds with Bultmann on “the radical distinction between the message of the historical Jesus and the theology of the early Church.” (ib. 231)

[9] It strikes one as odd that apart from a mere mention of this text, Prof. Beare does not give it a further thought. (cf. op.cit 244) But surely this Pauline document takes precedence over anything recorded in the Gospels about the resurrection by reason of priority in time.

[10] Jung calls it “ absurd prejudice” that existence can only be physical: “As a matter of fact, the only form of existence of which we have immediate knowledge is psychic.” (Jung, op.cit 12) In contrast to the spiritualizers Wolfhart Pannenberg insists upon the Resurrection as historical fact and makes this a foundation for his Christology; cf. Jesus - God & Man, E.T., 1968; cf. also John Austin Baker: “If this did not happen, then the New Testament and the whole story of the Church is inexplicable” (The Foolishness of God, 1970, 267); cf. also Eduard Schweizer, in New Theology, No. 1, ed. by Marty & Peerman.

[11] Far-fetched as are the ideas of Robert Graves and Joshua Padro, Jesus in Rome, 1957, they show how difficult it is to account for the birth of the Christian Church on the theory of a mere illusion. Cf. also the rather abortive effort by Hugh J. Schonfield, The Passover Plot, 1965. For a theological and positive approach to the question of the Resurrection of Jesus see the closely reasoned article by W. Marxsen, “Erwegungen zum Problem des verkündigten Kreuzes” NTS, VlII, 204ff, 212ff.

[12] It is suggested that the evidence of the empty tomb is a later addition which had no part in Peter’s preaching or in the theology of Paul; cf. Beare, op.cit 241; also J. Warschauer, The New Evangel, 1907, 174ff where the inconsistencies of the Gospel records are forcefully pointed out.

[13] Cf. Gunther Bornkamm, Jesus von Nazareth, 1956, 166ff. Warschauer associates the resurrection tradition with Mary Magdalene’s discovery of Jesus’s “immortality” (op.cit 187). But even he allows that “sound historical criticism” must admit that “*something* happened” (his italics), though we cannot say with any certainty what it was (ib. 188); cf. also T. R. Glover, The Jesus of History, 1920, 188: “Take away the resurrection, however it happened, whatever it was, and the history of the Church is unintelligible;” also 189: “Something happened, so tremendous and so vital that it changed not only the character of the movement and the men - but with them the whole history of the world.”

[14] James Robinson, A New Quest of the Historical Jesus, 1949, 84.

[15] ib. 84 n. 1.

[16] ib. 88.

[17] C. J. C. Hoffmann, “Providence in a World Come of Age,” CJT, April, 1968, 96ff; also “Jesus or Christ?” Times Lit. Suppl. April 18, 1968, 396.

[18] A good example is Rudolf Steiner’s gnosis where the resurrection of Jesus is part of a general principle; cf. Rudolf Steiner, An Outline of Occult Science, 1949, 53, 71, 192; also A. Pearce-Shepherd, “Anthroposophy & the Christian Churches,” Rudolf Steiner Information Centre, 1966. The Incarnation is here also used as a general principle of “descent and assent," ib.12f. For the connection between resurrection and re-incarnation, see Reincarnation in World Thought, ed. by Joseph Head & S. L. Cranston, 1967, passim.

[19] Lord Eccles saw this with fine insight: “The Gospels insist that the Resurrection is the central fact in Christianity. I see all too clearly that this requires an act of faith. Either Easter Sunday was a revelation from outside the process of evolution or Christ’s flag should be hauled down and the non-disreputable flag of humanism unfurled in its place.” These sentiments are especially significant as uttered by a man who is not yet a Christian. (cf. Lord Eccles, Half-way Faith, 1966, 94). For a discussion of the Resurrection see John H. Hayes, “The Resurrection as Enthronement in the Earliest Church Christology,” Interpretation, July 1968, 333ff.

[20] Preoccupation with the eternal logos to the neglect of the historic Jesus is a characteristic feature both of docetism and gnosticism. (cf. Ignatius’s warning to the Trallians 9:10; also Irenaeus, Against Heresies, I, 24:1f; also R. M. Grant, Gnosticism, 1961, passim. Rudolf Steiner’s remark is characteristic for an adoptionist position: “The personality of Jesus became able to receive into its own soul Christ, the Logos, who was made flesh in that soul.” Christianity as a Mystical Fact, 1938, 202.) For a positive Christian approach to the meaning of *Logos* see David Hill “The Relevance of the Logos Christology," Exp. Times, Feb. 1967, 136ff. The scholarly monograph by Bertil Gärtner has shown the importance Stoic philosophy attached to the Logos concept in order to establish a kinship between man and God (cf. The Areopagus Speech & Natural Revelation, E.T., 1955, 164; cf. also ib. 109, 180). Gärtner adds that this has nothing to do with the *imagio Dei* concept in Gen. “since the latter phrase has not the slightest thought of a pantheistic relationship.” (ib. 165)

[21] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, III, 18:1: *recapitulavit* may mean “he summed up," or “he commenced afresh," or “he repeated," but it also carries the meaning of solidarity or loyalty as can be seen from the context. Irenaeus explains: “he was always present with mankind.”

[22] Cf. J. Jocz, The Jewish People & Jesus Christ, 135ff, 139f.

[23] Cf. Joseph Klausner, Jesus von Nazareth, 1934, ch. V: Jesus Ethik, pp. 529ff.

[24] Cf. Allison L. Burnett & Thomas Eisner, Animal Adaptation, (Modern Biology Series), 1964, 130.

[25] A. J. Heschel, Who Is Man?, 1966, 8.

[26] Prof. Albert Einstein's assessment of Emil Ludwig’s Der Menschensohn, Geschichte eines Propheten, (Berlin, 1928) is applicable to many similar efforts: “Emil Ludwig’s Jesus is shallow. Jesus is too overwhelming for the pen of phrasemakers, even if they know their art. Nobody is to waive Christianity with a single gesture . . . nobody is able to read the Gospels without being convinced of Jesus’ actual existence. His personality throbs in every word.” (In an interview with George Sylvester Viereck, Saturday Evening Post, Oct 26, 1929. I owe the source of the above quotation to Dr. Henry Einspruch of Baltimore).

[27] op.cit 127.

[28] W. N. Pittenger, The Word Incarnate, 1959, 254.

[29] Pittenger, The Word Incarnate, 243. Pittenger’s Christology is determined by the philosophical presupposition of evolution, it therefore cannot allow the intrusion of a non-evolutionary factor. “Process theology” by definition cannot attach ultimate importance to historical contingencies. For Pittenger, therefore, Christ is only a symbol, a focal point. Incarnation underlies all existence and must not be confined to one historical person. (Cf. W. N. Pittenger, God in Process, 1967, 19f, 101, 105f; etc.)

[30] The difficulty with Dr. Pittenger’s positjon is its implied apotheosis of a great man, a position verging upon adoptionism and resolutely rejected by the Church. Here is a characteristic sentence: “Christ is divine not by being utterly different from other men in whom God dwells and through whom the divine activity works; rather he is divine in that he actualizes in human nature that transcendental divine principle which is at the root of man’s being, but which through other men is only potentially or at best partially expressed.” (op.cit 167f) The more one contemplates this sentence the more one wonders how Dr. Pittenger managed to evade the fundament Old Testament rule that man is always a creature no matter how great! He must not complain of being called a “humanitarian liberal” dedicated to a Promethean ideal, for “actualizing divinity” is so removed from the New Testament concept of salvation as to put the whole structure of his thinking under a question mark. The more Dr. Pittenger explains what he means by “Process Christology” the more untenable becomes his position; cf. The Expository Times, Oct. 1970, 8ff. On an assessment of process thinking by a liberal theologian, see Nels F. S. Ferré, The Universal Word, 1969, 71-74.

[31] For the distinction between the first and the second Adam, see W. D. Davies, Paul & Rabbinic Judaism, 1948, 304.

[32] Both Barth and Bonhoeffer describe Jesus as the "Man for others" (cf. K. Barth, Ch. Dog. III/2, 203ff; D. Bonhoeffer, Letters from Prison, 1953, 165.

[33] Ch. Dog. III/2, 222.

[34] Hugh V. White, Truth & the Person in Christian Theology, 1963, 125.

[35] W. A. Curtis, Jesus Christ the Teacher, 1945, 226.

[36] Cf. W. Macneile Dixon, The Human Situation, (Gifford lectures, 1935-37), 429.

[37] Karl Jaspers, Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, E.T., 1962, 73: "If Jesus was not an active political leader (like the so-called Zealots); if he desired no social revolution; if he did not seek a martyr's death as proof of his message; if he led the life of a believer, awaiting God's action but making no attempt to force God's hand; if he was far from any desire for self-aggrandizement, his whole life was an act of obedience to God's will, his conduct becomes hard to understand . . ."

[38] Cf. J. Klausner, From Jesus to Paul, E.T., 1944, 107ff.

[39] Those who criticize Paul for his lack of concern with the historical aspect of the Messiah fail to appreciate his frequent use of the two appelatives, Jesus Christ. This frequent use, so characteristic for Paul's letters, is a deliberate effort to connect the historic Jesus with the Christ of God.

[40] From Jesus to Paul, E.T., 1944, 589ff.

[41] It does not appear to us that Prof. M. F. Wiles of Oxford, has done justice to the New Testament by dividing the story of Jesus into two: "the human historical story" and "the divine mythological story." According to him the whole classical Christology of the Church rests upon a misunderstanding which arose from the mistaken assumption "that the full divine character of redemption in Christ could only be maintained if the person and act of the redeemer were understood to be divine in a direct and special sense." Prof. Wiles does not allow such a necessity but he will have to admit that the New Testament rests on the two assumptions he rejects: 1) that the human and divine stories are treated as one single story 2) that person and act are understood as inseparable (cf. M. F. Wiles, "Does Christology rest on a Mistake?" (Religious Studies, Vol. 6, No. l, March 1970, 69f). The same must be said about Norman Perrin and all those who locate the beginning of Christology in the early Church in separation from the Jesus of history. (cf. Transitions in Biblical Scholarship, 217ff) For a re-statement of the co~ordination of the two aspects of Christology (Son-of-Man Son-of-God) see Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jesus-God & Man, E.T., 1968.

[42] Cf. W. N, Pittenger, The Word Incarnate, 166f, 216.

[43] Matthew appears to have special preference for the expression ὀλιγόπιστος though the term occurs in the other Gospels as well.

[44] On the question of authority see J. Jocz, The Jewish People & Jesus Christ, 34ff; on the question of the Law see B. H. Branscomb, Jesus & the Law of Moses, 1930; cf. also J. Jocz, "Jesus and the Law," Judaica, Aug. 1970, 105ff.

[45] Cf. the excellent article in The Times Lit. Supple. April 1, 1968, 396: "Jesus or Christ?" This is in connection with the book by Marcello Craveri, The Life of Jesus, E.T., 1967.

[46] Like most Jewish writers H. G. Enlow stresses Jesus's dependence upon Jewish tradition. He thinks that Jesus's originality consisted chiefly in making religion a personal matter (A Jewish view of Jesus, 1931, 26, 29ff). But does this adequately explain the Master of Nazareth?

[47] Karl Jaspers, Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, E.T., 1962, 79: "Both his actions and his words seem contradictory by the standards of reason: on the one hand, struggle, hardness, the ruthless alternative; on the other infinite mildness, nonresistance, compassion with all the forlorn. He is the challenging warrior and the silent sufferer."

[48] Cf. K. Barth's insistence upon the complete humanity of Jesus, K. Dog., I/2, 153; III/3, 351.

[49] Cf. H. G. Wood, Jesus in the Twentieth Century, 1960, 147f; also Eric George Jay, Son of God - Son of Man, 1965.

[50] M. Buber, Die Stunde u. die Erkenntnis, 1936, 153.

[51] Cf. J. A. T. Robinson, Jesus & His Coming, 1957, 154f.

[52] Cf. the excellent article by Anthony E. Harvey, "A crisis in biblical theology" The Listener, August,14, 1958, 24lf.

[53] Cf. Stephen Neill, "New thought on our hope for the future," Church of England Newspaper, March 21, 1958, 7.

[54] J. Jocz, The Spiritual History of Israel, 1961, 212, 213ff.

[55] Cf. T. Francis Glassen, The Second Advent, 1947, 109f.

[56] Cf. Strack-Billerbeck, Exhurs 18: Der 110 Psalm in der altrabbinischen Literatur, IV/I, 452ff.

[57] It is difficult to understand why Georgina Harkness is so pusillanimous on the question of our Lord's Messiahship. How otherwise can she explain the incident at the Synagogue in Capernaum (Luke 4:18f) which she quotes? (cf. Our Christian Hope, 1964, 127f)

[58] James Southerland Thomson, The Hope of the Gospel, 1954, 89.

[59] "For Christ is the end of the law" (KJV) is an unfortunate mistranslation; The Greek word translated as "end" here stands for completion, fulfilment and not abrogation. Cf. J. Jocz, The Jewish People & Jesus Christ, 25ff

[60] The weakness of situational ethics is not its insistence upon the rule of love as decisive, which is a Christian principle; but its complete neglect of God's law as also a means of love and a vehicle of grace. (cf. Joseph Fletcher, Situation Ethics, 1966). It is of interest to note that Vladimir Solovyov discussing the question of law makes allowance for the individual to "have a certain amount of *freedom to be immoral*" (his italics) but this in no way lessens the importance of law as a good. (cf. A Solovyov Anthology, by B. L. Frank, 1950, 200ff).

[61] The title of Karl Heim's book well summarizes the meaning of ultimacy: Jesus der Weltvollender (19521. The English title though a literal translation does not quite convey the nuance of the German *Vollendung*: fulfilment, completion, accomplishment, consummation (Jesus the World's Perfecter, 1959). By contrast, Judaism which traditionally is still awaiting the Messiah logically lacks the perspective of ultimacy. H. D. Leuner's observation is here well taken: "Obwohl die Offenbarung vom Sinai der Grundstein geblieben ist, auf dem das Judentum ruht, hat die Offenbarung an keinem speziellen Punkt der Geschichte ihre letzte Vollendung erreicht, sie ist progressiv geblieben." (Religiöses Denken im Judentum des 20 Jahrhunderts, 1969, 10.)

[62] Thomas F. Torrance, Space, Time & Incarnation, 1969, 68.

Chapter VII - Religion Versus the Gospel

We have seen that sociologists ascribe to religion a positive task, it is a useful commodity. Earnest van der Haag allows that "religion is quite necessary, even if it be undemonstrable." Society, he explains, cannot be without it. Even if there were no god "organized religion would be indispensable" and more so, just to prevent utter chaos. Man needs a god to make life meaningful.[1] This truly Vaihingarian approach which legitimizes "fiction" as long as it serves positive ends is frequently accepted as a last resort to save society.[2]

But the use of fiction is unnecessary to prove the usefulness of religion. Many writers hold that the lack of a supernatural reality does not void the function of religion. As long as religion contributes towards a "sense of cosmic piety," helps to cultivate a feeling of "awe," "wonder" and "reverence," it deserves to be taken seriously.[3] The variety of religious attitudes makes little difference: "for people who are conditioned in a certain way, this is the only way in which they can face life constructively . . ." and for this reason they should be encouraged.[4]

Other writers feel unhappy about a purely utilitarian basis for religion; they seek to ground the religious experience in a more objective reality. This was the intention of Joachim Wach who tried to avoid a purely subjective construction by stressing "the independent existence of the object experienced."[5] For this reason he defines religion as man's response to Ultimate Reality.[6] Both the language and the sentiment expressed by Wach is as old as religion itself. Antiquity knew all about it.[7]

The question which has to be raised is the transition from Ultimate Reality to the living God. This was the problem which occupied Tillich for most of his life. According to Sidney Hook, Tillich never managed to find a solution: "For all his talk of God as an 'unconditioned transcendent', Tillich's God," says Hook, "is the all-in-all of pantheistic spiritualism."[8] Other critics have reached similar conclusions. It is a fact that once God is identified with Being as such, the additional adjectives make little difference. The result is invariably the same: we are left with a cosmic mood in which ultimate concern becomes a divinity.[9] It would seem that there is no possible bridge from ontology to a confrontation with a personal God, in spite of the prodigious effort.[10]

This was the major problem for scholastic theology. In order to create a bridge between Being and the God of revelation it had to fall back upon an elaborate doctrine of analogy: what can be said of man can also be said of God though with greater intensity. This is the meaning behind the principle of proportionality. But is such a principle valid? Is God the Creator proportionate to His creation though He exceeds it? This has been questioned by Dorothy M. Emmet on metaphysical grounds and by K. Barth for reasons of biblical revelation.[11]

The other principle adopted by scholastic theology to bridge the gulf between Creator and creature was the principle of participation: *una ratio diversae rationes*.[12] This typical Platonic idea elaborated by neo-Platonism is only another variation of *analogia entis*. The analogical principle rests upon ontology as its basic presupposition. The only way to move from ontology to the living God is by reducing the Creator to the level of creation. The difference between God and man becomes a matter of potentiality: man is what God is but less so.

Religion depends on the ontological presupposition for its intellectual structure. The religious attitude is only possible by a reduction of the distance between man and God even then when God is worshipped in all his beyondness. There is therefore built into religion the tendency towards pantheism.

In this way man manages to reverse the order: by trapping God in the order of Being he himself moves up higher on the scale of divinity. Religion therefore must be seen as the most subtle form of Promethean arrogance. Even its humility is a subterfuge for pride.

1. The Name and the Names

Man is addicted to the art of naming.[13] To name means to define, to delimit, to explain and to grasp. To possess the name means to possess the object. By naming God the religious man lays hold upon him. The noun "God," in whatever language, is so conceived as to contain all that man is concerned with, namely power, wisdom and benefit.[14] This is his ultimate concern, beyond it he cannot go.[15] But religion is not only a matter of intellect; the religious man is more than a philosopher, he is also a mystic. His need is to respond to the mystery of existence in terms of awe, wonderment, gratitude and fear.[16] The religious experience is therefore described as "a total response of the total being to Ultimate Reality."[17]

The descriptive effort applied to God is to rationalize the Ultimate Reality and bring it within our grasp. Naming "God" is the game of all religions. Max Müller likes to think that we have to distinguish between the One who is named and the names which he is given; he writes: "the names may change, and become more and more perfect, and our concepts of the deity become more and more perfect also, but the deity itself is not affected by our names . . ."[18]

Behind this view is the naive identification between name and the object named. Why a more "perfect" definition should bring us closer the "deity" is difficult to say. Is it not possible that all "God-talk" is nothing more than a game of words? Some writers are convinced that this is the case and it will be difficult to prove them wrong.[19]

Deity is a vague and undefinable term. From a purely nominalist position a name is no more than a sound for purposes of identification. But the term "deity" is not even a name, only an abstract noun. It is broad enough to contain anything one wants to put into it. Its main mark is the lack of personal connotations; it is strictly an "it". Even if we take the realist position we cannot free the concept "deity" from its abstract connotations. All we do is to plunge deeper into the world of Platonic idealism.

If God is truly God, naming Him becomes both epistemologically and theologically an impossible task. This can be seen from the fact that the ancient names of divinities were never meant to be more than mythological symbols for the creative powers of nature. For this very reason their names were interchangeable for at bottom they stood for nature in its totality. In ancient Egypt Isis was the wife of Osiris and the mother of Horus. Herodotus identifies her with Demeter; she is also identified with Aphrodite. At one stage Isis even acquired historic dimension and became identified with the Ptolemean queens. She is obviously a lady of many names and is equated with many goddesses.[20] Such interchange of names was only possible because Isis was not conceived in personal terms, she functioned as a symbol of the creative forces in nature. Her names could therefore be multiplied, adapted and expanded to suit the moods of her worshippers. This is the very characteristic of myth, it symbolizes creaturely existence. Ernst Cassirer explains that "religious symbols change incessantly, but the underlying principle, the symbolic activity as such, remains the same." He thus quotes the saying: *una est religio in rituum varietate*.[21] The reason for the versatility Cassire puts down to the fact that the substratum of myth is not thought but feeling. Myth he explains, expresses not an analytical but a synthetic view of life.[22] His formulation is of particular value to the understanding of religion: "To mythical and religious feeling nature becomes one great society, *the society of life*."[23] This provides us with an important clue

to the meaning of religious myth: it represents the symbolic hypostasis of the forces of nature. Because man encounters nature in a multiplicity of forms, symbolic names become interchangeable. The symbols for the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, the rivers, the trees and the animals, all stand for different aspects of the same Whole. For this reason the mythological gods are a gregarious company, they may fight but never to destruction. They cannot be treated in isolation, for they are interdependent and only together do they make up the Whole. Even Zeus (or Jupiter) can only continue in company with the Olympic crowd - what would become of him without his goddesses?

Nature worship is always pantheistic; but there is little difference between pantheism and polytheism. Once the All is god then all its aspects are equally divine. In a polytheistic universe the gods are interchangeable for they are only varying perspectives of the Whole. Zeus represents the sky and is identified with it; Ouranos is only another name for the same sky. Whether we say Zeus or Ouranos makes little difference. Dionysus is the god of vegetation; so also is Bacchus; whether we say Bacchus or Dionysus, we still refer to the fertility cult.

Phallic worship is a common characteristic of nature cults. Its purpose is to celebrate the mystery of life.[24] The survival of the phallic cult in Hinduism goes some way to explaining its remarkable adaptability towards syncretistic absorption. Hindu all-inclusiveness as a basic principle reveals itself essentially as a nature cult. It is as wide and as broad as nature itself. L. H. Hough well describes Hinduism as "the tragedy of the great gregariousness." Those who favour the syncretistic compromise would do well to look at Hinduism more closely. Its many-sidedness is geared towards free and unrestricted expression of religious sentiment which includes every possible aberration. Nothing is too bizarre to be excluded. In Hough's words: "you have here the starkest primitivism combined with the subtlest and most sophisticated thought. You have theism. You have polytheism. You have atomistic pluralism." In fact, you have whatever you want - the choice is unlimited. In Hinduism no distinctions are valid; every human fancy is but a reflection of the whole and only represents a different facet of life's many-foldedness.[25] It is interesting to note that according to an old tradition the gods were originally without names, which means that they were undifferentiated. Herodotus ascribes the naming of the gods to the Egyptians.[26] A world pantheistically conceived cannot logically differentiate between the powers of nature. In this holistic perspective every phenomenon is only part of the whole. Whether the gods are named or not they are interchangeable. This is already evident from the etymological derivations of the names of the gods. We are here confronted with an example of circular reasoning: first, the powers of nature are hypostatized; then the collective nouns become personal names; then the personal names become the basis for etymological analysis. Plato sensed something of the fallacy behind the effort to explain the gods etymologically. He avers that the real names of the gods are unknown to men and that we have to be satisfied with the customary names for their identification.[27]

There may be some good reason behind the realist contention that names are more than labels, as long as we avoid falling into a position of Platonic idealism. Names correspond to certain aspects of being mythologically symbolized by the pagan divinities.[28] Behind the names of the gods are certain facts of nature or of human experience for which these names stand. But the differentiation has its origin in the experience of the beholder. In themselves, these names stand as part of the Whole. True differentiation is only possible at the point where a radical distinction is made between Creator and creature. This is the biblical position.

In biblical tradition God's name is closely associated with the Covenant.[29] Although YHWH has etymological meaning as do all the Hebrew names, the Name does not belong to the order of creation,

but is rather the source of creation. It is only because YHWH is who He is that there is a world at all. In the Bible God reveals His name in the context of history and not of creation: He is pre-eminently the God of the fathers (cf. Ex. 3:16). The characteristic of biblical revelation is that God names Himself. By His name he identified himself as the God of history, though obviously He is also the God of creation. The Bible knows nothing about two different gods. YHWH is not the discovery of the mystic or the philosopher. He is the God who addresses himself to man as his *vis à vis*. He is never part of the world but stands over against it. It is this radical personalistic monotheism which the religions lack with the exception perhaps of Islam.[30]

By "radical monotheism" we do not mean the unitary principle like the one of Neoplatonism or the conceptual monotheism latent in Judaism and Islam but rather the biblical monotheism where God as Creator in no sense can be identified with his creation.[31] We may therefore speak of a biblical dualism where God is always God and as such is always the Other One. In this sense knowing the name of God bearing His name and acknowledging His sovereignty. This is what is meant by Covenant.

Biblical faith is not only rooted in historic events, but God Himself as the God of revelation has a history in time. All we know about YHWH is historically conditioned: He steps out of His secrecy into the affairs of men and nations. The Bible has no metaphysical knowledge of God, only an historical knowledge of Him. He is never Pure Being, or Ground of Being, or First Mover, etc. He is always and pre-eminently the One-Who-Acts and He becomes known by proclamation and by His deeds. Identification by His Name is always therefore in connection with concrete events in history. There is here a pattern spelt out which exemplifies God's dealing with mankind. In this sense we may speak of salvation history (*Heilsgeschicte*)[32]

D. F. Strauss in his Life of Jesus (1835) repeated Lessing's objection to the uniqueness of historic events as a means of revelation. But without the concreteness of particularity God becomes a general notion incorporated in the processes of nature. It would seem that we cannot have it both ways: a non-historical Deity and a personal God. The One can only be expressed in singular terms, i.e. as the unique and incomparable; while the many is open to generalization. The problem for theology turns on the question how to relate an apparently particularistic God - the God of Israel - to the God of the nations? In other words: how does religious knowledge of the Gentiles express true knowledge of God?

If we could accept the holy writings of the other religions as sources of revelation the difficulty would be solved. But is this a viable solution?

Many scholars in the West see no difficulty in treating the holy scriptures of the great religions with utter seriousness. Nels Ferré has no difficulty in relating all the religions to the Universal Word. "The gifts of the Spirit come in the forms of many religions, according to the need, background, and response . . .". Ferré affirms that as far as the exhibition of creative living is concerned "the Buddhas, the Christs, the Mohammeds, the Ghandis and the Baha'u'llahs of God" are all part of the great process of God's "eternal resources."[33] In such a situation the difference is only incidental, in essence all the religions say the same thing though using different symbols. But if the difference is as minimal as our scholars make out how is it that we did not discover it before? Was there any point of dying for the faith when both Christians and pagans believed the same though expressed it differently? Why could not Paul remain a Pharisee and a good Jew?

There is of course the other possibility: the reduction of distance between the religions is not due to the discovery of compatibility but rather the loss of the distinctive characteristics which make for the difference.

Visser't Hooft has argued that the Christian faith is irreducible for a number of reasons. First and foremost, because it is historically rooted in the Old Testament. The other religions belong to a completely different background. He contends that "to interpret (i.e. the N. T.) in the context of the religions with fundamentally different presuppositions is to distort its whole meaning." But his argument can only be valid if we allow his premise that the Bible "is not an encyclopedia of religious ideas. It contains the witness of divine history, to the acts composing together the design of God."[34] It must be admitted that this is not a self-evident premise. It requires the perspective of Salvation History to distinguish the Bible from the other holy writings. The answer to our problem can only come from an affirmation of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. This is the reason why writers like Pittenger, John A. T. Robinson, Nels Ferré and many others feel compelled to re-interpret the significance of Jesus Christ in order to overcome the barrier.

There can be no doubt that the problem regarding the religions in relation to the Gospel hinges on the question of particularity. It is on these grounds that Ian H. Douglas and John B. Carman quarrel with Kaj Baago. They feel that Baago's chief mistake is to overlook Jesus's close identification with Jewish particularity.[35] Baago's reply is interesting: incarnation theology already implies that in a certain sense Christ is "incarnate" in the other religions and cultures in exactly the same way as in the case of the Jews. Behind his argument is the concept of the *logos spermatikos*. He consequently objects to what he calls "modern" *Heilsgeschicte* theology which over-stresses the Jewish context of the Gospel and thus denies "the real and full incarnation of God in Christ."[36] There can be no valid theological reason, he argues, for absolutizing Jewish-Christian history. The very process of syncretism demands of the Church total accommodation.[37] This presupposes a coalescence between the name and the names; an interchange which rests on a semantic difference but in essence spells out the same meaning.

2. The God of the Nations and the Nations' Gods

In his argument with the Jews Paul raised the important question: "is God the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles?" His answer is unequivocal: since God is one, He is the God of all (Rom. 3:29f). This affirmation led him to the strange conclusion: exactly because God is the God of the Gentiles, He must be proclaimed to them. Does this imply that the Gentiles are without God?

As a Jew of the Diaspora Paul had personal and immediate knowledge of the other religions. He was familiar with pagan civilization and occasionally even quoted classical poets. Paul readily admits that the Gentiles, though without the Law, are yet a law unto themselves for it is written upon their hearts, keeping alive within them the moral sense (Rom. 2:14-16). He was therefore unwilling to say that the Gentiles were without God (but cp. Eph. 2:12). At the same time he knew that the gods they worshipped were idols (cf. 1 Cor. 8:4ff). Is there here an inconsistency due to a narrow Jewish attitude or is the apostle holding together two opposing views? It is the conviction of this writer that there is here an inner consistency between the two views: God is the God of the nations, yet the nations' gods are mere idols.

The best example of the contradiction we meet in the case of Israel. Here YHWH worship and idolatry is not only practised side by side but alternately. The situation is even more subtle than this: YHWH worship itself frequently deteriorates into idolatrous attitudes. This becomes especially plain in connection with the cultus. The sacrifices were used to placate a wrathful god or to ingratiate themselves into his favours. The prophet accuses Israel of mere lip-service while their heart is far removed (Is. 29:13; cf. Amos 5:21ff). Apparently it is not enough to use the name of YHWH; even the name can

become an idol and used for superstitious purposes.[38] According to the Johannine Gospel Jesus accuses the "Jews," i.e. the religious hierarchy, that they are ignorant of God. (John 7:29) But these "Jews" are the very people who serve in God's temple, preach in his Name, and expound His *torah*. In Paul's view a zeal for God is not enough unless it goes with enlightenment (Rom. 10:2). He himself, a pious Pharisee, had to retrace his steps, rethink his theology and re-orientate his life in order to become a disciple. He had to give up his religious position, surrender his religious values and count them as refuse in order to gain Christ and to be found in Him - which means freeing oneself of every semblance of self-righteousness (Gal. 3:5-11). Paul tells the Galatian believers that formerly they did not know God, though they were religious to a degree, rather they were in bondage to false gods until Christ had made them free (cf. Gal. 4:6). There is thus an indissoluble discrepancy between the biblical meaning of knowing God and the religious assumption that God is known when man feels religious.

A leading English churchman told the Anglican Congress in Toronto that "in the beginning of every religious experience is God."[39] Such rhetorical exuberance is echoed by all the defenders of religion. Canon Warren appeals to the "God of a hundred names" who reveals Himself under various forms in the religious experience of the nations. But at the same time he desires to hold on to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ; though he admits he is not too sure how this can be done. Others have solved the problem for him. We have already mentioned Panikkar's valiant effort at a synthesis between Hinduism and Christianity. Ninian Smart went further and pronounced the Hindus already Christian without them knowing it. Kaj Baago declared Christ freed from all historical shackles and L. S. Rouner abandoned *Heilsgeschichte* in favour of *Weltgeschicte* so that the Logos may operate on universal scale.[40] Behind these views is the underlying assumption of the validity of every religious experience. There is even an effort to validate Schleiermacher's contention that religion is primarily an emotion, a feeling of dependence. P. R. Glifford, analyzing the Schleiermachian definition, endows intuition itself with a supernatural quality.[41]

To achieve this kind of universalism we must allow full play to religious experience and abandon all dogmatic affirmations. There is a clamour for non-dogmatic religion. Panikker holds up Hinduism as an example of a "universal and boundless religion." Because Christ is already there, the difference is only minimal: "We all meet in God. God is not only everywhere but everything is in him, and we including all our strivings and actions are <u>of</u> him, <u>in</u> him, <u>from</u> him, <u>to</u> him."[42] This naive pantheism reminds one of Rilke's delightful story of the thimble: "Anything can be God. One has only to tell it."[43]

We would ask in all seriousness: in view of what we know about man, his fickleness, his selfishness, his ego-centricity, how much weight may be placed upon his religious experience? To answer this question perhaps a look into the very heart of religion may provide a clue, namely prayer.

Prayer is the most revealing endeavour of the religious life. In prayer man reveals his most secret longings. It is therefore the best testing ground of what religion is about. When we look upon the prayers of the nations we meet a twofold strain: lofty idealism and downright selfishness. The oddity of the situation lies in the fact that the same man of the same faith can practice both kinds almost simultaneously. Again, the best example of this we find in the Bible, mainly in the Psalms. Some of the most lofty Psalms suddenly fall from the heights of inspiration to the depts of blood-curdling vengeance:

> O God, break the teeth in their mouths
> Tear out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord!
> The righteous will rejoice when he sees vengeance;
> He will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked (Psalm 58).[44]

There are many psalms in a similar vein. The same phenomenon we meet elsewhere. For a similar example we go to Islam. A contemporary prayer used by the boys in Cairo schools is particularly revealing both for its inconsistency and its vehemence:

> "O Lord of all creatures! O Allah!
> destroy the infidels and the polytheists,
> thine enemies, the enemies of the religion!
> O Allah! make their children orphans, and defile
> their abodes and cause their feet to slip and give
> them and their families and their households and
> their women and their children and their relations
> by marriage and their brothers and their friends and
> their possessions and their race and their wealth and
> their lands as booty to the Muslims!
> O Lord of all creatures!"

The inconsistency lies in the fact that this blood-thirsty prayer begins with an invocation to Allah, "The Compassionate, the Merciful."[45] Allah is obviously only merciful to Muslins. The assumption that our enemies are also God's enemies is as old as the human race. Those who do not worship in our particular way and profess the same name are destined for destruction.

The other most dominant characteristic of prayer is petition. Man asks favours mainly for himself, his family, his clan. God chiefly exists to supply man's needs. Here is the simple and naive prayer offered by a primitive woman of the Navigator Islands, but could be multiplied a thousand times from more advanced civilizations:

> "the old grandmother stands before thee
> turn your-benevolent gaze upon this family.
> Grant it growth in prosperity.
> Keep it in good health.
> Make our plants productive
> and cause the food to grow.
> Let us live in the midst of abundance."[46]

Gruesome as it may be, even cannibals pray to their gods and return thanks for the gift of human flesh.[47] If Moloch is also a god then God is nothing but an idol.

But the issue does not only turn on moral insight. There is involved here an important psychological fact. We cannot lightly dismiss Feuerbach's contention, namely that man makes his own gods according to his image and needs. Such gods are always pliable, amenable, undemanding. It is we who bestow favour upon them; without us they would not be. An idol is useful and serves many purposes: he helps towards a pseudo-dialogue; he relieves man of fear; he stills a bad conscience; he provides a sense of security; he creates a religious atmosphere; but above all he shields from the beyond.

Idols are not necessarily made of wood and stone. False gods intrude in the most subtle ways into human life. Not religion is immune; the higher its spirituality, the loftier its idealism, the more subtle become its aberrations. In the Christian context, Church, Creeds, Sacraments, easily become substitutes for the Living God. The religious man is very much the same no matter what his profession. In this sense, but only in this sense, all religions are essentially alike. There is however a difference between the religions. The difference appears at the point of repentance. In Christian theology this is expressed by

the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. It means that at this point man appears before God not with his religion but with his sins. To repent means to recognize that we do not live by religion but by grace vouchsafed in Jesus Christ. To know this is to be a Christian, there is no other definition for the Christian faith which can take its place. To have rediscovered this essential truth about the meaning of the Gospel is the lasting merit of the 16th century reformers,

Once we are prepared to accept the meaning of salvation in its radical implications we cannot but treat all religions with an air of suspicion. It is of no small significance that the Roman Church with her bitter opposition to this cardinal doctrine of the Reformation is aways in the forefront of religious syncretism. The cautious schema on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions of Vatican II[48] is vastly exceeded by Roman Catholic theologians in their desire for religious compromise.[49] The conclusions of the Conference on "Christian Revelation and non-Christian Religions" (Nov. 23, 1964) held under the auspices of the International Eucharistic Congress in Bombay, go far beyond the traditional order of "natural theology" and are placed in a direct relation to God: "every human being and every world religion is under God's grace." This goes with the affirmation that such universalism is grounded and centred in Christ. The conference denounced "narrow intolerant particularism" and "an enfeebling agnostic indifferentism" and declared itself for active cooperation with all religions.[50] The chief spokesman for religious reconciliation at the conference was Hans Küng who adopted a most ambiguous stance. On the one hand he declared himself against a syncretistic compromise,[51] on the other hand, he pronounced even false religions true: "they are, in actual fact, concerned with the true and merciful God."[52] It would appear that Küng's gravest mistake lies in identifying religious systems with living people. Though it is perfectly correct to say that God is both concerned and near every human person, it is strangely ambiguous for a theologian to lay down the rule: "*The world religions do, though in error, proclaim God's truth*."[53] This is an objectionable statement both on logical and factual grounds. He cannot have it both ways, the religions are either true or false, they cannot be both. That God can use false religions to convey truth is a hypothetical statement for which there is no warrant. Küng's affirmation that the grace of the true God can witness to itself even through "false gods," may be true theoretically but is violently contradicted by the biblical tradition. There is however a statement in Küng's exposition which cuts at he very nerve of the Gospel itself: "every man," he says, "is intended to find his salvation within his own historical condition." On this premise Abram ought to have remained in Ur of the Chaldeans, Paul in Gamaliel's academy and Küng himself in the temple of Odin.[54] To understand the relationship between God and the religions we have to take a more personal view of faith. God's relationship with the individual transcends and frequently bypasses the religious pattern of a given civilization. Küng's sentence therefore, "The Church and the world religions together make up the whole of mankind" is too inclusive a premise. The error lies in the assumption that human beings are identical with religious systems. God's grace extends to every human being in spite of his religion and not because of it. The assumption that religion is the specific vehicle of grace has yet to be proved. It is difficult to see why God has to depend upon the religious mood in order to come close to man. It is frequently held that religion is the human response to God. But is it a valid response? May it not be that God sometimes bypasses the religious defences in order to touch man in his totality of life?

No Christian can dispute the affirmation that God was, is and remains the God of the nations whatever their religions. In the last resort the religions are both true and false: true when they confront man with the saving God; false when they help him to hide behind the system. But do the religions confront man with the saving God? It is exactly this which is under dispute.

It is the peculiar nature of grace that it disarms man's opposition and leaves him defenceless. At no other point except the Cross does man discover himself in his radical need. The biblical meaning of *metanoia* is the reverse side of grace: it is man's humble response to the love of God in Christ Jesus. The question is therefore not how much religious truth do the religions carry, but how open are they to the Gospel message?[55] The same question of necessity applies to the Church. Here perhaps more than elsewhere is repentance the mark of authenticity. Grace is never a *habitus* but a "movement of life" as Fr. Fransen so beautifully defines it.[56] The Christian "religion" must be put under the same rigour of testing as we do with the other religious systems. The word of the Gospel is the only corrective to religion. Self-sufficiency is a universal human trait and shows itself most insistently in the religious endeavour. It is for this reason that Schleiermacher's definition of religion as a sense of dependence is misleading for it only tells half the story. The other half is equally valid: man lays hands upon God, tries to reduce Him to human proportions in order to adjust Him to his own needs.

Religion is essentially a human affair. Because God is near and concerned with man He is not absent to religion but in quite a different manner than is a acceptable to the religious man.[57] God's presence is not the soothing, lulling, mesmerizing enjoyment of cultic worship but the questioning, interfering, presence of the Holy God. If God is in the temple He is not there because it is a temple but because the temple is the very place where man may try to hide from the living God.

The God - man encounter takes place in the act of living. In a sense man says Yes to God when he says Yes to life. But man's affirmation of life is limited by what he knows of God. The deeper his knowledge of God the more profound is his affirmation of life. It is the Christian contention that man's knowledge of God in Christ is ultimate and unsurpassable knowledge. Only in Christ Jesus can man discover his true destiny and vocation. But how can man say Yes to Christ unless he knows Him?

Man's affirmation of life is an affirmation of his creatureliness, but his affirmation of Christ is an affirmation of sonship. To say Yes to life is not tantamount to saying Yes to Christ, contrary to what the writers of the Theological Dictionary suggest.[58] There can be no such Yes without surrender of one's entrenched religious position. Such foreshortening from autonomy to discipleship is the very mark of human *hybris*. For this reason religion must always remain under a question mark: like everything else about man it cannot be taken on its face value. To do so is to overlook the the demonic fact of sin which taints all man's endeavours. Both our religions and our gods have constantly to be measured against the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and not the other way round.

We must however guard against an attitude of exclusiveness which puts a monopoly into human hands. There is no need to fall back upon a metaphysical Logos principle in order to account for the fact that much of the Gospel has touched the lives of men and women of different creeds. An outstanding example is Ghandi whose admiration and love for Jesus went beyond the merely conventional.[59] The same can be said about Sholem Asch,[60] Victor Gollancz,[61] and in some measure Martin Buber.[62] Marc Chagall is a case on its own.[63] India has not been left untouched by the leaven of the Gospel.[64] We will therefore have to say that there are degrees of meeting with the historic Christ. This applies not only to "outsiders" but to those who call themselves Christians. Because in history there can be no absolutes, no man can claim perfection (cf. Phil. 3: 12-14). While we are still pilgrims we are always in a state of growth until our journey's end. The difference between the Christian believer and the non-believer is that the first submits to the discipline of being fashioned into the image of Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 8:29), while the latter is under no such discipline.

Under the Cross all our religious values are challenged and undergo a transformation. The Jewish concept of Messiahship was turned upside down as a result of the Gospel. Why the Hindu concept of *samsara* and the Buddhist concept of *nirvana* are supposed to be less vulnerable is difficult to understand.

Notes to Chapter VII

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[1] Religious Experience & Truth, ed. by S. Hook, 1962, 151ff.

[2] Cf. John Macquarrie, Twentieth-Century Religious Thought, 1963, 81f. Macquarrie quotes a revealing sentence: "The real tragedy of life is that the most valuable ideas are, from the point of view of reality, worthless." For Vailinger's philosophy, see The Philosophy of As If, E.T., 1924, 44.

[3] George Nakhnikian in S. Hook's Symposium, op. cit, 156.

[4] ib. 164.

[5] Joachim Wach, Comparative Study of Religions, 1958, 28; cf. also Georg Wobbermin, The Nature of Religion, E.T., 1933, 227ff.

[6] ib. 30f.

[7] J. G. Jennings, The Vedantic Buddhism of the Buddha, 1947, XLV, 39: "Behind the individual self and the visible world there lies, in the Indian mind, the fundamental. idea of the whole, the impersonal divine One, the universal breath or spirit (atta), the creative force or Brahman (neutre)". It is the neutre which is revealing to us who come from a different tradition. For the non-personal and historic aspect of Hinduism see J. G. Arapura, "Language & Phenomena," CJT, No. 1, 1970, 53. Cicero, interestingly enough, associates true religion with the knowledge of nature (Cf. De natura deorum, II, LXXII, 148).

[8] Sidney Hook, op.cit 60; cf. also John E. Smith's caustic remark: "everyone has a god or gods; not everyone acknowledges God," ib. 68.

[9] Cf. Kenneth Hamilton's assessment of Tillichian theology, The System & the Gospel, 1963, 45f, 99, 110, 113f, etc.

[10] The most recent effort by Thomas F. Torrance to build ontology into revelation by means of the Incarnation in order to save "creaturely rationality" deserves attention (cf. Space, Time & Incarnation, 59ff). But in order to achieve his end Torrance has to deny to natural laws *a priori* status which seems to contradict the ontological premise.

[11] Cf. Dorothy M. Emmet, The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking, 1946, 5ff, 115ff, 169ff, etc. Karl Barth, Ch. Dog. III, 3, 50ff, 421f; cf. also T. F. Torrance, Karl Barth, 1962, 46, 102, 142, 152.

[12] Cf. George P. Klubertanz, St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy, 1960, 23ff.

[13] Cf. Ernst Cassirer, An Essay On Man, 1944, 132ff, 209f.

[14] That is why the attributes of God are conceived as *potentia*, *sapientia* & *bonitas* (cf. L. R. Farnell, The Attributes of God, 1925, 11).

[15] In this respect Anselm's definition fits perfectly: *quo maius cogitari nequit* (Proslogion, chs. II & III).

[16] The importance of wonder and awe in human life is well-described by Sam Keen, Apology for Wonder, 1969.

[17] Joachim Wach, op.cit 49; J. M. E. McTaggart: religion "may be described as an emotion resting on the conviction of a harmony between ourselves and the universe at large." (quoted by M. Rader, Enduring Questions, 1969, 417).

[18] Max Müller, Thoughts on Life & Religion, E.T., 1915, 56.

[19] Cf. KajNielsen: "Can faith validate God-talk?" Theology Today, July, 1963, 158ff. Since Wittgenstein, linguistic analysis has become the major problem of epistemology. There is an ever-growing literature on the subject; cf. James Alfred Martin, The New Dialogue Between Philosophy & Theology, 1966; Arthur Pap, Semantics & Necessary Truth, 1958; Roland E. Santoni, Religious Language & the Problem of Religious Knowledge, 1968; cf. also the essay "Barth on Talk about God" by Prof. Donald Evans, CJT, Vol. XVI, 3/4/1970, 175ff. Specially his summary on pp. 191f. On the importance of Wittgenstein in the philosophical study of language see "Conversations with Philosophers," The Listener, Dec 24, 1970, 870ff.

[20] Cf. Oxford Classical Dic. art. Isis: "In the great hymns which celebrate her manifold accomplishments, virtues and miracles, she is addressed as 'O Thou of Countless Names', and is identified with many and varied goddesses."

[21] E. Cassirer, op.cit 73. This is essentially the Hindu position. Swami Niklilananda explains: "all religions are so many paths to the one goal." The difference is only a matter of temperament, in essence, all religions manifest one and the same thing. (cf. Essence of Hinduism, 1948, 44); cf. also S. Radhakrishnan, East & West, 1955, 125, 127. Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648) the father of English Deism sets out to show the common notions concerning all religions (cf. De veritate, English text cited by Owen C. Thomas, Attitudes Towards Other Religions, 1969, 32ff).

[22] ib. 81.

[23] ib. 83 (Cassirer's italics).

[24] Cf. Oxford Classical Dict., art. Dionysus; cf. also Y. Kaufmann's remarks about the natural functions of the pagan divinities, (The Religion of Israel, 1960, 37, 73f).

[25] L. H. Hough, The Meaning of Human Experience, 1945, 329. Prof. Slater's docile and somewhat insipid presentation of Hinduism stands in strange contrast to Hough's assessment of that religion. To avoid value-judgements may be scholarly etiquette, but Hindu writers about Christianity are not so inhibited; cf. Swami Prabhavananda's book, Religion in Practice, 1969. It would seem that Winston L. King is more truthful in his presentation of Theravada Hinduism. He sharply distinguishes between the "Literary & Export Buddhism" used for propaganda abroad and "Pagoda" Buddhism as practiced in contemporary Burma; (cf. A Thousand Lives Away: Buddhism in Contemporary Burma, Oxford, 1964). Arthur Koestler's The Lotus & the Robot (1960), may serve as a useful corrective to the idyllic presentation of far-Eastern religions by Western scholars.

[26] Cf. TDNT, V, 248, 3.

[27] Cf. Plato, Cratylus, 401a.

[28] Cf. TDNT, ib. 243 where Leeuw is quoted: "the name is not just a designation but an expressed essentiality".

[29] Cf. J. Jocz, The Covenant, 1968, 49ff.

[30] According to some scholars Islamic monotheism is more "the Pantheism of Force" than the God of the Bible (cf. Samuel Zwemer, Islam, 1907, 87).

[31] Rabbinic monotheism was traditionally conceived in strictly personalistic terms (cf. George Foot Moore, Judaism, I, 360ff). But as a result of Greek philosophy later Judaism moved towards a more conceptual concept which in the case of Maimonides is already monistic in the abstract sense (cf. his Guide for the Perplexed, E.T., 1947, 49f;. also Judaism, Winter, 1958, 74f; also Commentary, August 1962, 109, 142. For Islam see Kenneth Cragg, The Privilege of Man, 1968, 79.

[32] The relation of salvation history to universal history constitutes a problem. Von Harnack rightly refuses two kinds of history but is unable to resolve the difficulty. (Cf. G. W. Glick in The Impact of the Church upon Culture, ed. by J. C. Brauer, Vol. II, 1968, 370ff). Wolfhart Panneberg takes a similar position. He refuses to treat *Heilsgeschichte* "apart from world history" (Revelation as History, E.T., 1968, 134).

[33] Nels F. S. Ferré, The Universal Word, 170, 187. It may appear somewhat contradictory to find that Ferré manages at the same time to say that Christian theology "needs to generate its own philosophy and should not forfeit its inherent truth by an alien framework of concepts." (ib. 61) But how can one separate "creative living" from creative thinking? Wherein lies the difference between Buddha and Christ, if there is one at all?

[34] Cf. IMR, Oct. 1966, 484.

[35] Cf. IMR, Jan. 1967, 99ff. Baago maintains that it is not the task of the Church "to convert Hindus and Buddhists to (Greko-Roman) Christianity, but to convert Hindus and Buddhists, Christians and Muslims, in one brotherhood in Christ, who is over all and through all and in all."

[36] ib. July, 1966, 332.

[37] W. A. Visser't Hooft deals with the question of "Accommodation - True & False," S. E. Asia Journal of Theol. Jan. 1967, 12; against this cp. Dillenberger, God hidden & Revealed, 1953, 162: "It must always be recognized that there is no direct line, not even from the Old Testament to the New."

[38] Cf. art. Amulet, Encycl. of Jewish Religion, 1965.

[39] Opening address by Canon M. A. C. Warren, Anglican Congress, 1963, 19f. This is a widely held view. Even Hans Urs von Balthasar who deprecates the position of liberal theology that Christianity is nothing more than *prima inter pares religiones* holds on to the validity of "natural Religion". This "basic openness" (*die gründsätzliche Offenheit*) is necessary, he holds, for the preaching of the Gospel. (Verbum Dei, 1960, 27lff).

[40] Cf. Religion & Life, Autumn, 1966, 544; Prof. Ninian Smart attempted to trace "The Logos Doctrine" in Eastern beliefs but with little success; cf. Exp. Times, March 1967, 168ff. This goes beyond traditional liberalism. Even von Harnack who struggled with the problem of universal history in its relation to Church history, felt unable to abandon the "special character which attaches to the history of the Church." For the "fundamental fissipority" in Harnack's approach see G. Wayne Glick's essay on Harnack in The Impact of the Church Upon its Culture, ed. by J. C. Breuer, II, 1968, 272f.

[41] Cf. Paul Rountree Clifford, "The Place of Feeling in Religious Awareness," CJT, Oct. 1968, 219ff. If we understand M. A. C. Warren and John Taylor correctly, their missionary theology is structured on a continuity of the sense of the Presence of God; (cf. John V. Taylor, The Primal Vision: Christian Presence Amid African Religion, 1963)). Here intuitive religion plays a decisive role.

[42] Panikkar, op.cit 15ff.

[43] Rainer Maria Rilke, Stories of God, E.T., 1932, 131.

[44] There are other Psalms which reveal a similar attitude (cf. Ps. 137:9). Psalm 58 was left out of the Canadian Anglican Prayer Book as unsuitable for Christian worship.

[45] Quoted by Edward Burnett Tylor, Religion in Primitive Culture, 1958, 457.

[46] The Prayers of Man, compiled by A. M. Di Nola, ed by P. O'Connor, 1961, 76.

[47] Cf. ib. 84.

[48] Documents of Vatican II, 1966, 660ff. For a discussion of the missionary orientation of Vatican II, see Josef Glazic, IRM, Oct. 1968, 462ff. Cf. also J. Spae, "Christ & the Religions," S. E. Asia J. of Th., Jan. 1967.

[49] Cf. O. C. Thomas, Attitudes Towards Other Religions, 1969, 193ff.

[50] Cf. Christian Revelation & World Religions, ed. by Joseph Neuner, 1967, 21ff.

[51] Cf. ib. 57.

[52] ib. 45.

[53] ib. 51. (Küng's italics). Glazik wisely observes: "'adaptation' is too little with which to confront the world religions . . . the Gospel as decision will first be truly preached *vis-à-vis* the world religions when it is seen as a challenging message, when these religions are led to a knowledge and recognition of their fragmentary character and are subjected to the judgement of God's word." (IRM, Oct. 1968, 466.) Leslie Dewart who writes from within the R.C. tradition regards Vatican II on the non-Christian religions as the "most consequential and revolutionary" statement. The task of the Church is for him "not proselytic but ecumenical". By this he means the "religious integration of mankind". The way to such integration is first by uniting the denominations, then the three Semitic religions and lastly the world religions in general. (cf. The Foundations of Beliefs, 1969, 16f.)

[54] There is much in Küng's exposition which directly appeals to the Christian conscience especially his concern for the nations and his insights into the meaning of the Gospel (cf. what he says about *metanoia*). But when he comes to the confrontation with the world religions he both mystifies and confuses. The affirmation that God *sanctions the religions* as such (his italics) - as social structure" is a strange thing to say in view of the Hindu caste system. To print in italics: "*The world religions teach truth about the Gospel of Christ, which in their error, they do not know as that which it really is: the Truth*" and then to be told not to treat their worshippers as "anonymous Christians" is strangely contradictory. But so are most of his statements regarding the world religions. It is a curious fact that while Küng admits the Bible's concern for the nations to the neglect of their religions, he somehow manages to shift the accent to their religions rather than to themselves. For a criticism of Küng see H. von Straelen, Catholic Encounter with World Religions, 1966.

[55] Cf. J. H. Bavinck, The Impact of Christianity on the non-Christian World, 1949, 102; cf. 96f.

[56] Cf. Fr. Piet Fransen's exposition, "The dialectic movement of Grace," Christian Revelation & World Religions, ed. by J. Neuner, 1967, 74ff.

[57] David Baily Harned, The Ambiguity of Religion, 1968, 109: suggests that even when religion appears as the enemy of God "God identifies Himself with His enemy, adopts and blesses him even in his enmity".

[58] Cf. Art. "Jesus Christ," Concise Theol. Dict., ed. by K. Rahner & H. Vorgrimler, E.T., 1965.

[59] There is a diversity of opinion about Gandhi's attitude to Jesus Christ. Fisher makes him out, to be not only a disciple but perhaps the only true Christian of our generation. (cf. Louis Fisher, Gandhi, 1960, 130f) On the other hand, Devanandan seriously questions the extent of Christian influence upon him. (cf. Paul David Devanandan "Renascent Religions & Religion," Symposium in honour of John A. Mackay, The Ecumenical Era in Church & Society, 1959, 17lff).

[60] Asch's two books: The Apostle, (1943) and Mary, (1950) reveal profound Christian insights remarkable for a Jewish writer; no wonder he was suspected of crypto-Christianity by Jewish orthodoxy.

[61] For Victor Gollancz's attitude to Jesus see his autobiographical sketch: My Dear Timothy (1952), especially pp. 408ff.

[62] For M. Buber's attitude to Jesus see Two Types of Faith, E.T., 1951, 12f.

[63] Cf. The Bridge, ed. by J. M. Oesterreicher, 1955, 96ff.

[64] Cf. Nirad Chaudhuri, "The Impact of England," The Listener, Nov. 2, 664f; also A. Koestler, The Lotus & the Robot, especially the Epilogue, 276ff. Hermann Noack rightly observes that the nations who have heard the Gospel cannot revert to their former state as if nothing has happened: "*Das 'Antichristentum ist kein vorchristliches heidentum mehr*". (Sprache und Offenbarung, 1960, 179f).

Chapter VIII - The Gospel Versus Religion

In a discussion of the religions the question regarding the three biblical norms, historicity, uniqueness and finality, carry no weight. The reason for this is simple: only at the point where religion encounters historic revelation do these norms become relevant. Religion as such does not require such norms, in fact it is antithetic to them. Religion exists in its own right and the criteria of the biblical norms can only contradict its autonomy. This applies to all religion, Christianity included when interpreted purely as religion. "Christianity" as a religious system, with its symbols, rites and institutions manages to bypass these norms though with some difficulty. It can try to express religion pure and simple though couched in traditional Christian language. It is this ambiguity about religion which makes it such a baffling subject for the Christian theologian.

In an effort to assess the religious phenomenon we have the choice of two possibilities: either to regard religion as a veiled manifestation of the divine, or else, as a demonic expression of man's will to manipulate the powers behind the universe. There are protagonists for both views and much could be said for either side.

1. The Religious Disposition

We have already observed that religion is to a large extent a mood which takes hold of man under certain circumstances. Those who take this mood seriously work on definite anthropological assumptions. Man, they argue, is more than the sum-total of his biological existence. He is first and foremost a spirit, a soul, an ego, a person. As such he confronts the eternal spirit, the eternal I, the eternal Person. The whole I-Thou theology built upon the pattern of Buberian mysticism rests on this premise. In this context the *Imagio Dei* concept plays a dominating part: man is both the bearer and the mirror of the image of God. He therefore already has by reason of his humanity the initial capacity to transcend himself and to reach out to the Beyond in search of the Eternal Spirit. Religion, we are told by H. H. Fermer is not an illusion, although illusion and falsehood may be mixed up with it: "rather it comes into existence as a living creative power in human life because an ultimate spiritual reality does in fact manifest itself to the human spirit."[1]

This is the classical view regarding man and is supported by Greek philosophy, mainly Platonism, and much orthodox Christianity. In this view man has an inborn passion for God which, we are told "is no less a real appetite of our nature than the passion for food."[2] W. T. Paterson in his Gifford Lectures for 1924/5 makes a case for an innate religious instinct on the grounds that religion is a persistent phenomenon. Here are his words: "The age-long duration and the world-wide prevalence of religion raise a presumption that it has had a root in human nature, and that man has felt an inward constraint to lift up his eyes to the hills, and set his feet in the way to some Jerusalem. Paterson deduces from this fact a disposition or *Anlage* which compels man "to organize his experience from a religious point of view."[3] The concept of natural religion which played such an important part in the development of 18th century Deism hangs on the premise.

The deists held to the concept of "natural religion" as a human endowment of which the various religions were different manifestations of the same fact. In essence, they taught all religions were the same; the division between them was due to eccentricities artificially introduced to divide humanity.

They refused to accept the superiority of "revealed religion" as claimed by the Church. Matthew Tindal (d. 1733) regarded Christianity as old as creation, though the name was of more recent date. Reason, they pronounced, was the guiding principle of all religion. To act in accordance with reason was the highest expression of religion. But apparently when these philosophers said "reason" they meant "nature," for as Charles Vereker has shown, the deification of nature was the deists' ultimate intention. They conceive nature both as benign and providential and equated it with God.[4] This facile optimism in the Age of Enlightenment has been rudely shattered by the bouts of unreason in our Atomic age. Psychology has helped us to uncover depths of irrationality in the human psyche which would have outraged the worshippers of "nature" a couple of centuries ago. The religion of the deists has proved to be an illusion.

We live in a different age in which religion is reverting to type and is revealing traits which would have shocked our forbears. The reviewer of Warren Sylvester Smith's book, The London Heretics, remarks: "Man's hunger for God is insatiable. Even when reason rejects the possibility of a divine creator, unreason elevates Caesar, Stalin, or Mao Tsetung to near godhead. The religious urge cannot be suppressed; it can only be side-tracked."[5]

But is man truly a creature "hungry for God"? This is the question which we have yet to answer.

2. The Ambivalence of Religion

In traditional theology religion is regarded as the natural ally of Christianity. If not an ally, at least a stepping-stone from a lower to a higher form of religious experience. Occasionally, the Bible gives countenance to such a view. The religion of the Gentiles is not always rejected out of hand. Malachi tells us that God's name is honoured among the nations and in every place incense is offered to Him (Mal. 1:11). It would seem that the prophet refuses to treat Gentile worship lightly and sees in it a veiled expression of true piety. Similarly, Paul in his sermon on the Areopagus with his reference to the "unknown God,"[6] seems to suggest a genuine religious quest, though ill-informed and tentative. He opens his speech with the words: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious."[7] This is further heightened by his reference to the human compulsion to seek after God, "in the hope that they might feel after and find him." The Apostle even quotes one of their own poets who said: "In him we live, move and have our being" (Acts 17:27f).

At the same time, there are aspects which lessen the effect both of Malachi's universalism and Paul's tolerance. To start with, the Bible in general looks upon Gentile worship with grave misgivings. The reason for this is not far to seek: the idolatrous character of paganism and the immorality it encouraged was abhorrent to men reared in the prophetic tradition. But we must not forget that the prophets were more severe upon the Hebrews who yielded to the customs of the Gentiles than they were to the Gentiles themselves. The Israelite faith was committed to the One God who created heaven and earth and any suggestion of polytheism was out of the question. For this reason the gods of the heathen could be nothing but idols (cf. Ps. 115). The biting irony of Is. 44:9ff where is described the making of a god by a skilled craftsman out of wood and iron well portrays the prophet's attitude towards this naive and superstitious form of religion. As far as Paul is concerned we must not forget the apologetic purpose of the Sermon at Athens and the fact that he never struck, at least as far as we know, a similar note again.

From his letters we know what he thought of pagan worship - he regarded it demonic and devoid of reality. (cf. 1 Cor. 8:1ff; 10:14ff; Gal. 5:20; cf. Col. 3:5)

It may be argued, of course, that the gross aspects of pagan worship fail to do justice to the more noble intentions behind the cults. We may even say that polytheism in all its forms was in essence a manifestation of man's outreach, though ill-conceived, towards the true God. But strangely enough, Paul who knew more about it than do modern writers, takes the opposite view.

The crucial text is Rom. 1:18ff. Admittedly it is patient of several interpretations. On the surface it would appear that Paul's intention is to prove the validity of natural religion. Some commentators do not hesitate to read it in this sense. Even Luther follows the well-trodden path of tradition: "The Apostle speaks of the natural knowledge of God as the explanatory words prove: invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen."[8] The reference is to the *sensus divinitatis* which played such an important part in the history of theology. Calvin, like Luther, makes considerable allowance for this inbred, instinctual faculty for the divine, characteristic of the human race and derived from the i*magio Dei*.[9] For us it is not possible to say with any measure of certainty the construction Paul put upon his words, though from Rom. 2:14 it would appear that he seriously entertained the view that the Gentiles did by nature what the Law required of the Jews. But even this is doubtful. Schoeps suggested that the *theologia naturalis* behind this text is deceptive. What Paul really meant was the *derekh 'erez* doctrine widely held by Jewish missionaries to the *goyyim*. Jews were gratified to observe that many Gentiles strove after righteousness and led moral lives though they lacked the *torah*.[10] *Derekh 'erez* (lit. "the way of the world'') refers here to the natural virtues, like mother-love, etc., practiced as a matter of course among all nations. This is what Paul meant by saying: "the Gentiles are a law to themselves." But this is a long way from a full-blown natural theology as a constituent principle.

Prof. Johannes Witte undertook a careful analysis of the whole context in Rom. 1:18ff. His conclusions are exactly the reverse of what is traditionally accepted as proved. Witte does not deny Paul's intention that man may know from the fact of creation that there is a God and that His will is supreme. But this in no way warrants the conclusion that such knowledge also implies a discovery who God is and what is his attitude towards man. Without revelation man can only know that He is, but nothing beyond it. Witte therefore concludes that there is nothing positive about the religions and that from the context of Rom. 1 it appears that for Paul, Gentile piety amounted to perversion.[11]

Ulrich Zwingli in his address to the King of France, Christianae fidei expositio (1531)[12] placed into the Christian heaven along with the saints of the Bible the heroes and the sages of the Gentile world: Hercules, Theseus, Socrates, etc. Luther reacted violently to such an audacious move. Witte explains that what angered Luther most of all was the suggestion that these famous pagans were admitted to heaven on the grounds of their own merits. Luther stood his ground on the principle of justification by grace alone. Man is capable of making all sorts of decisions but "in matters divine man is nothing except darkness, error, malice and perversity of will and intellect."[13] Only in the natural realm can man be taken at his face value, but in relation to God man is drowned in sin and utterly incapable of saving himself. This is the later Luther who has freed himself from humanism and idealism and has come to recognize the more sordid side of human nature.

In defence of Zwingli it must be said that he was well aware of the distinction between false and true religion: the first is the invention of human conceit and wisdom; the second has its origin in the word of God. True *pietas* comes only by the power of God's grace. But, Zwingli had a problem which is with us to this day: what to do with the good and saintly pagan?[14]

In respect to natural endowments Zwingli knows no distinction between believer and unbeliever: each is capable of error when relying upon his own reason. It is only because God calls us and binds us to Himself that we are able to believe: "it is only God's work alone that you believe and trust that there is one God." Without grace man is as ignorant of God as are insects ignorant of man. The gulf is even greater between man and God than between man and insect, because the latter are only creatures whereas God is Creator. Just as no one can know of the essence of man except by the spirit of man, so no one knows the essence of God except the Spirit of God. Zwingli calls it sheer arrogance on the part of Lucifer and Prometheus to pretend to any knowledge of God.

Zwingli even chides the theologians and the philosophers for attempting to define God. He accuses them of contributing towards false religion. If any of them ever managed to say what is true it is only because God was pleased to sow a few seeds among the Gentiles. Without this the nations would have no truth at all. As for Christians, they have no need of puffed-up human wisdom to know about God. Their knowledge derives from the Word of God. It is only when the Scriptures are treated disdainfully that we sink to the carnal knowledge of philosophy. More often than not "it is the arrogance of the flesh which pretends to be theology." Who God truly is can only be learnt from His Word.[15]

It is obvious from the above that Zwingli is no glib humanist. There is nothing in his treatise on True & False Religion Luther could have objected to. We meet here a theology which was radically different from that of philosophical scholasticism What puts Zwingli in line with the reformers was his discovery of man's utter inadequacy: sinful man can know nothing of God by his own wisdom. Zwingli repeats again and again that whatever knowledge we have of God is by grace alone. True religion therefore begins at the moment when fallen man discovers himself naked and guilty before God. It is at this moment that God, like a loving Father, takes pity upon lost and despairing Adam and calls him back.[16]

How then did Zwingli manage to admit pagans to a Christian heaven?

It was at the point of the biblical norms that his theology failed. He could not bring himself to believe that God is a respecter of persons, that He would reveal himself to the Hebrews and leave the nations in complete ignorance. To the contrary, God has not left the nations without a witness. The very fact of the pagan religions is an indication that God has vouchsafed some truth of Himself to the Gentiles. But sin and human frailty have turned God's original witness into superstition and false religion.

Zwingli's special contribution was the discovery that Christianity itself could be true and false. His intention was not to write about religion in general but about the Christian faith. In this he stands firmly upon the ground taken by the other Reformers: religion is only true when it is in response to God's revelation in the Bible. False religion is what is invented by man even if it is called theology.

Barth's position about man's knowledge of God is in essence no different from that of Zwingli: "The possibility of the knowledge of God springs from God, in that he is Himself the truth and He gives Himself to man in His Word by the Holy Spirit to be known as the truth . . ."[17] Does this mean that Socrates also received the Word or is the Word only confined to the Bible?

Barth does not deny that "the invisible and unapproachable being of God, His everlasting power and divinity, are apprehended and seen in His works from the creation of the world" (Rom. 1:20), for God has not left Himself without a witness (Acts 14:17). But this fact only goes to emphasize the lostness of the Gentiles who have falsified that witness and turned it into a "radical contradiction."[18] They have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, worshipping the creature instead of the Creator (Rom. 1:25). Barth stresses the point that "Paul says nothing at all about the heathen maintaining a remnant of the 'natural'

knowledge of God in spite of this defection."[19] Admittedly, the voice, the storm, the sea and the earthquake still point to God's might, but this can only awaken a vague inkling and usually leads the heathen to speak of the powers of nature in a neutral sense. Not only is man unable to say who God is but even that He is at all appears to him an uncertainty. On this point of man's knowability of God Barth is ready to challenge the whole weight of theological tradition. If we take the *incomprehensibilitas Dei* seriously, he contends, there is no other way but acknowledgement of man's utter inability to know God by his own effort. This is not a matter of poverty of language or limitation of intellect, but only because God is God.[20] The gap can only be closed from the other side: "included in God's availability for man is posited man's availability for God and also the knowledge of God."[21] Man's knowledge of God does not come to him from contemplating the universe, but only through historic revelation. Barth therefore lays down the rule: "the reality of our knowledge of God is the reality of His revelation."[22]

How does this answer the question regarding the religions?

Barth's position is ambivalent: on the one hand he admits that revelation in history of necessity becomes a psychological experience. For this reason "Christianity" as a religion exists alongside the other religions and must be counted among them. But on the other hand, if we take revelation seriously we cannot reduce it to man's religion and thus speak of the Christian faith as it were "a religion among other religions."[23] The Lordship of Jesus Christ makes this impossible. Revelation properly understood must always remain a sovereign act of God. In this act Christ lays hold upon man. Man can only exist as the possession of Jesus Christ. For this reason there can be no "systematic coordination of God and man, of revelation and religion."

But strangely enough, Barth refuses to discount the religions out of hand. He even allows that in the general pattern of religion God is present in a hidden manner. He denies to Christianity as such special status as if as it were exempted from the dangers, frailties and failures of the other religions. He knows only too well of the demonic side of religion as man's Promethean attempt to lay his hands upon God. Religion is not necessarily exposure to God but entrenchment before Him. In religion man can bolt and bar "himself against revelation by providing a substitute . . ."

Religion, even the Christian religion, is always in danger of idolatry.[24] The religious man is always tempted to create his own deity after his own image, thus reducing Almighty God to an idol. In this perspective religion is not faith but unbelief. For religion to become true religion it has to be received like every other human faculty. From this Barth concludes that revelation spells out God's judgement upon religion with its "capricious and arbitrary picture of God." It is only in the power of the Holy Spirit that the Church becomes the locus of true religion "as through grace it lives by grace."[25]

Although Brunner's theology is differently orientated from that of Barth, on the question of religion his judgement is even more severe: "religion," he tells us, "is the product of man's sinful blindness."[26] In his view original sin breaks out first of all in religion. To Brunner, "the God of the 'other religions' is always an idol," because he is nothing else but "a blend of God and the world, or of God and the self."[27] But like Barth, he refuses to reject the religions as of no account. In spite of the aberrations the religions express an awareness of God. In his effort to see the positive side of religion, he goes beyond Barth. Religion, according to Brunner, is a natural endowment which points beyond itself and expresses a genuine submission to a higher and holy command. Even "behind all the rank fantasy growth of affective thought there is an element which cannot be derived from fantasy at all: the knowledge of something which is unconditional, ultimate, normative, supramundane, supratemporal."[28] This

"something" is present in all religions no matter how primitive. But unfortunately, religion is always "mingled with the fear of the absolute Terrible," which in the end leads to slavery and superstition.[29]

In the end, the result of Brunner's analysis is not different from Barth's: religion presents us with an ambiguous situation. On the one hand, it is a God-given endowment; on the other hand, it is a demonic force. Its tendency towards idolatry and self-gratification must warn us against its deceptive nature. Religion reveals its true face in confrontation with Jesus Christ who is both: "the Fulfilment of all religion and the Judgement of all religion." For this reason Brunner hesitates to call the Christian faith a religion, for to him it is something else, something other than religion.[30] We now have to ask how does it differ from religion and wherein lies its otherness?

This question can only be answered when we approach the fundamental issue with which religion is concerned, namely man's knowledge of God.

In the long history of theological thought there are three distinguishable trends regarding man's knowledge of God: the first is the philosophical assumption that God is mainly known by inference; the second is the strictly theological position that God is unknowable except by revelation; the third attitude is a combination of the two: God is known partly by revelation and partly by deduction. It was the latter position which has largely dominated theological thinking.

Both scholastic orthodoxy and Reformation theology worked on the assumption of the coincidence between reason and revelation. Sometimes the one and sometimes the other was given greater prominence. Such a compromise gave wide scope to theological speculation in which Bible and philosophy played their part. The result of such a combination was an increasing preoccupation with ontological reasoning with special emphasis upon truth abstractly conceived. The philosophical tendency ultimately led to metaphysical elaboration which in turn distorted the peculiarly biblical concern for the historical, the unique and the ultimate in revelation.

3. The Philosophical Structure of Theology

The main difficulty for philosophical theology lies in its morphological structure: its assumptions are too wide to avoid intellectual abstraction. The philosophical principle that reason is an adequate tool to cope with the question of being works towards the removal of the tension between the otherness of God and the finitude of man. The result is a flat, tension-less theological system which dwells upon the givenness of "truth" and thus can have no room for a dialectic of faith. Faith under these circumstances means intellectual acceptance of defined doctrine backed by reason. The main emphasis here lies upon the proof of the existence of God and once this premise is granted the rest follows in logical sequence. The initial flaw in the system is the reduction of God to an intellectual verity which contrasts radically from the God of the Bible who is Lord of Heaven and earth.

Once God is reduced to a conceptual dimension, the evolutionary principle invades the theological domain. Every concept has a history which means that it is subject to the evolutionary principle in time. Allen Grant, at the beginning of this century, made full use of this recognition by tracing "the genesis of the belief in a God from its earliest origin in the mind of primitive man up to the fullest development in advanced and etherealized Christian theology."[31] Whatever we may think of the results of his effort, such an undertaking is historically justifiable. Once God is conceived as an idea He is subject to the evolutionary process built into every idea which continues through history. Therefore, if Grant's method is correct theology must be understood as an integral part of the history of ideas.

This is how Grant approached his subject: he first asked the question: “How did we arrive at our knowledge of God?” This question led him to an historical investigation. He soon discovered that there was no univocal answer but a number of answers dependent upon cultural development. Primitive views of the gods were gradually refined until ultimately we arrive at the concept of moral monotheism. Relying upon anthropological studies and following the lead of Herbert Spencer, Grant sees the beginning of theology in ancestor and corpse worship. He tells us that “the protoplasm of mythology and of its more modern and philosophical offshoot, theology,” is exactly this most primitive cult. It must be granted that given his premise his conclusions are strictly logical.

In view of the accumulated anthropological evidence it will be difficult to deny the evolutionary connection between primitive views and the more refined insights of the historic religions. It is now widely accepted that anthropology holds the clue to the origins of religious phenomena. We are thus faced with the inescapable question: what objective validity is there to man’s knowledge of God?

From our investigation thus far, we have not been able to arrive at a univocal answer. The suspicion that man’s god is a convenient commodity resulting from wishful thinking on the one hand, and primitive fears on the other is not easily set aside. But once God is discovered to be a human creation he naturally becomes dispensable. One has to be very naive to put one trust in a make-believe god. This is always the tragedy of civilized man that he outlives his gods. When this happens religion does not die, it takes on new and peculiar forms; in the case of modern man it becomes “mass-tailored religiosity.”[32] In this way the circle turns full course: first man invents religion and then religion proves to be a “self-devouring monster.”[33]

The demise of the gods always spells profound crisis in human history. The twilight resulting from the disappearance of the gods creates a crisis in the concept of freedom. “If God is not," said Dostoyevsky, “then everything is allowed.” In his novel The Possessed his hero, Kirilov, reasons: “If there is no god, then I am God.” He proves his freedom by committing suicide. This is freedom with a vengeance: man cannot survive his own divinity. Kirilov is here the prophet of the god-less age: “they will divide history,” he announces, “into two parts: from the gorilla to the annihilation of God, and from the annihilation of God to the transformation of the earth and man . . .” But this feverish activity of civilized man is only a device to cover up his un-freedom. Inwardly Kirilov remains fettered to his unbelief.[34]

No one was more aware of the consequences of the demise of God than was Nietzsche. He fully realized the implications: “there never was a greater event,” cried the Madman in the Joyful Wisdom.[35] Nietzsche speaks of it as “this prodigious event: God is dead and we have killed him!” It meant for him the most significant achievement of the modern age; the removal of God adumbrated the advent of the superman.[36] Whether Nietzsche’s superman will prove sufficient to take the place of God is a question which is perplexing many modern minds. With the removal of God there is created a void which will have to be filled by more up-to-date idols. Man cannot live without some sort of faith: “faith in fallacies," wrote H. C. Link, “is better than no faith at all.”[37]

The transition from the age of faith to the age of non-faith is so radical a change that it requires more careful investigation: what was the theological climate which brought about so great a revolution?

a. The Inferred God

Nietzsche in an interesting passage raises this very question: “why atheism nowadays?” he asks. His answer is that God “seems incapable of communicating himself clearly.” He wonders why: “is he

uncertain?" Nietzsche explains that the decline of European theism has to do with this incapability. This does not mean to him a decline of the religious instinct, only of the theistic principle. Modern man "rejects the theistic satisfaction with profound distrust."[38] The epistemological scepticism of modern philosophy, he tells us, though by no means anti-religious, is either secretly or openly anti-Christian.[39] By now, more than half a century later, this philosophical scepticism has invaded the Church itself and has made deep inroads into theology. The contemporary mood is to free religion from the theistic premise and allow it to move in a non- or even anti-theological direction. The question we have to ask: how have God and religion become so divided?

Though what follows is not the whole answer, yet we believe it goes a long way to prepare for an answer. For a long time Christian theology has lived with an inferred God. The theologians' faith was staked upon ontology. The existence of God depended upon rational proof until gradually men began to realize that what can be proved can also be disproved. The fact is that the ontological argument has fallen upon evil days. Alasdair MacIntyre has reiterated what was already known for a long time that existence is not a predicate and that therefore, the proof for existence rests upon a fallacy. In his own words: "a deductive argument is one in which the conclusion follows from the premises simply because it is already contained in the premises."[40] It means that for many centuries we have been arguing in a vicious circle without paying attention to the consequences. MacIntyre cleverly quotes the witticism that no one doubted the existence of God until the Boyle lecturers began to prove it. There is more truth in the levity than we care to admit, though the proving began at a much earlier stage. In fact, Plato, as usual, laid already the ground work.[41]

A decisive voice in the attempt to prove God's existence was Thomas Aquinas. His five ways became the *vade mecum* of theological writers through the centuries. His argumentation reduces itself to the thesis that God is a "logically necessary being," in spite of the fact that "necessary being" is a tautology.[42] This inferred god as a necessary being became the apologetic arsenal of innumerable tomes. Pringle-Pattison dealt with this subject in his Gifford lectures for 1912/13. He took David Hume as his starting point and tried to use him as an authority of divinity, philosophically established. But Hume proved to be a subtle and difficult writer. On the surface he gives the impression that he stands for a theistic principle in the universe. Pringle-Pattison quotes him as saying: "All the sciences almost lead us insensibly to acknowledge a first intelligent Author . . . The existence of a Deity is plainly ascertained by reason."[43] But on closer examination it turns out that Hume's even "attenuated theism" was only a passing phase. Hume's god does not seem to count for much; the inference of a possible god does not seem to affect human life nor can it be "the source of human action or forbearance."[44] When Hume speaks of "true religion" he only means the kind of calculated reflection which at most leads to the conclusion of "a cause or causes bearing some remote analogy to human intelligence."[45] We are told that "theism" for Hume "is little more than a recognition of the mysterious character of all ultimate modes of existence."[46] In fact, Hume was writing his Dialogues in order to destroy the last bastion of theistic proof left to theologians, namely the argument from design. In this posthumous work all he is prepared to admit is an "unknown cause." We thus have in him the first modern agnostic who advocates "a total suspense of judgment" as the only reasonable attitude.[47] With him the spell of the Five Ways is broken in that he contradicts on purely logical grounds "that the Deity is a necessarily existent Being." Hume explains that the phrase "necessarily existent" is both contradictory and meaningless.[48]

The reason we have paid special attention to Hume is because of his importance in the history of the argument for the existence of God. In him we have a classical example of a consistent thinker who begins with the premise of a putative God and ends with a *non sequitur* conclusion.

One more name must be mentioned in the history of the quest for evidence for God's existence. Immanuel Kant has greatly influenced theological thinking and counts as a giant in the story of philosophy. If Hume's investigation into the nature of the universe led him to assume a physical order and moral chaos, Kant arrived at the opposite conclusion. For him the ordering of the world served moral ends and these are meant to dominate the physical world. In Kant's view the "frame of nature" includes moral values so much so that he was able to see a connection between the starry heavens above and the moral law within the human heart. He therefore postulates the moral order as the basic principle pervading the universe and demands of man to respond positively to its challenge.

But once again we meet in Kant the same predicament we already noticed in the case of Hume. The Kantian system presents us with a carefully reasoned structure of theistic premises metaphysically founded but with an absent God. Instead of the Presence of the living God we are confronted with a Supreme Being who at no point impinges upon the affairs of man. The Moral Imperative takes the place of the speaking and acting God of the Bible. This then is the result of the Kantian effort, imposing as it is: instead of God, man is left with the concepts of the *summum bonum,* the moral imperative, the *a priori* categories and a series of other postulates.

Theologically speaking, it becomes plain that an inferred god does not take us very far. It would appear that the reasoning faculty applied consistently, ultimately reaches a point where God becomes redundant. This fact is both logically and psychologically well grounded. Man and his reason are so constituted that he has to go the whole way providing rational explanations as he goes. No limit must be set on his capacity for understanding. It was in this way that the ontological argument cancelled itself out. Norman Malcolm, a close friend and disciple of Wittgenstein, was able to prove on logical grounds that both Hume and Kant were correct in declaring that "necessary existence" cannot be treated as a predicate and therefore there is no argument.[49] This fact created, a crisis for theology which depended upon metaphysical reasoning. To overcome the difficulty the theological effort turned in a new direction beginning with Schleiermacher. It moved away from the emphasis upon reason to the emphasis upon feeling. Religious experience became the corner stone of theological discourse.

There is a long list of "experience theologians" with some illustrious names claiming attention: Schleiermacher, Jacob Fries, Rudolf Otto, William Temple, John Baillie, just to mention a few at random. Because of their influence and prestige we have decided to quote a lesser light in the person of Edgar Sheffield Brightlan. Brightlan declares the religious experience as the sixth and final proof for the existence of God. Taken by itself, he explains, it cannot be easily used as evidence, "but taken in connection with the rest of experience and with our total world view, it may be regarded as strong empirical confirmation of belief in God."[50]

We have selected the above passage as an interesting example of circular reasoning. Brightman first posits the theistic principle, then he interprets his daily experiences in accordance with this principle and lastly, he adds his religious insights to prove his point.

The appeal to religious experience for a proof of God's existence is the last stronghold in the process of theological reduction. It would seem that beyond this defence there is nothing but the void. But theologians are most inventive, they have thus one more argument to carry on the fight.

b. The Unknown God

By definition, if God is God, He cannot be known as objects are known. Luther frequently spoke of God as *Deus absconditus*, a reference to Isaiah where is described as *El mistater* (Is. 45:15). In Christian tradition the concept of the unknowability of God goes back to the unknown author associated with the name of Dionysius the Areopagite (cf. Acts 17:34). The Pseudo-Dionysian literature of a later date spoke of God as the Nameless One, the Ineffable, Highest, the Ultimate Cause, etc. Kataphatic theology which was at the basis of this literature worked on the principle of a "process of emanation" descending downwards by degrees of divine reduction towards the multiplicity of creation. In Dionysian theology the varied names of God are only inadequate symbols to indicate the Super-Essential Being for whom there can be no description in human language. It deprecates every effort at positive statements: God must always remain the essentially Nameless One.[51] As the *totaliter aliter* God can only be described in an ambivalent manner, as Being and non-Being, as He and It, as Life and Lifelessness. Because we can only hint at him, He is best spoken of in "negative images."[52]

This literature makes frequent references to biblical texts and to the TrinIty but the aim is different from that of the Bible. Whereas in the Bible God is the one who descends to the human level and addresses Himself to man inviting man to listen and obey, here God's beyondness is such that man is left in the void, for God's Absolute Divine Goodness ends in Secret Silence.[53] This mystical theology is perplexed by a built-in dichotomy: on the one hand we are assured that the writer's purpose is not "to reveal the Super-Essential Being in its Super-Essential nature for this is unutterable, nor can we know It, or in anywise express It . . ." All it purports to do is "to celebrate the Emanation of the Absolute Divine Essence into the universe of things."[54] But the writer does not manage to keep within the restrictions which he sets for himself. To do so would have brought his speculations to an abrupt end. He thus continues on his chosen path breaking his "passive stillness" by a superfluity of language though constantly averring that his real concern is the pursuit of a "negative" theology.[55]

The Darkness of Unknowing ultimately ends in a gnostic system of emanental pantheism whereby God as the Absolute Good overflows into the world of things and by Divine Yearning re-absorbs the universe unto Himself. The impersonal character of Dionysian mysticism reduces the Divine to the cycle of nature "perpetually advancing and remaining and returning to Itself."[56] It is quite obvious that this is a different god from the One Dionysius met in the Bible.

The Pseudo-Dionysian literature is important for it established the tradition of a negative theology in the Christian Church. By the time of the 9th century John Scotus Erigena (810-77) is able to declare that all positive theological affirmations are merely symbolical.[57] Neither the doctrine of the Unity nor that of the Trinity touches the essence of the Divine but is nothing more than a feeble human effort to say something about the Ineffable. Doctrinal formulations, Erigina declares, are only useful to the pious in that it provides them with an object of contemplation but have no substance in themselves. This is more than an echo of Dionysian theology which already reduced biblical revelation to symbolism with a negative connotation.[58] This element of scepticism penetrated Western theology and has persisted to this day. Samuel Laeuchli regards the resort to symbolism as the most authentic mark of the gnostic world view.[59] "To reject objectivity" writes Torrance, "ultimately reduces theological statements to nonsense."[60]

There is here a logical sequence between the unknowability of God, negative theology and symbolic language. Pseudo-Dionysius was not the originator of the trend. He followed a much older tradition which stretches beyond Neoplatonism. The pagan philosopher Proclus who began lecturing at Athens in

430 A.D., expresses ideas very similar to those of the Dionysian literature. But Proclus himself draws upon his predecessors: "Behind Proclus stands the figure of his master Syrianus" says Dodds,[61] and behind Syrianus is Porphyri and Plotinus. Dodds sees a difference between the Unknowability of God with Proclus and that of Neoplatonism. In the case of Proclus every suggestion of a mystical union is utterly excluded as is also any attempt at an analogical connection.[62] With Proclus God remains the absolutely unknown: "All that is divine is itself ineffable and unknowable by any secondary being because of its supra-existential unity, but it may be apprehended and known from the existents which participate it: wherefore the First Principle is completely unknowable, as being unparticipated."[63] This passage is important for its later influence upon medieval mysticism but it ill-accords with the biblical premise that God is known by revelation.

This negative theology has made a strong appeal to Christian writers. Even Augustine is not entirely free of it: to know what God is not he regards as a useful preliminary to knowing what He is.[64] He counsels those who want to enquire about God not to embark too rashly upon the positive quest but rather to start enquiring what he is not.[65] In spite of the biblical background, such a quest for Augustine appears to be an intellectual exercise requiring the two-fold science: "the science of right reasoning and that of the power of numbers."[66] The principle of negative theology described as the *via negationis seu remotionis* has entered the literature of traditional theology as an important aspect of philosophical reasoning.[67]

The unknowability of God denies the basic assumption of the Christian faith, namely that God Almighty has made Himself known in the Person of His Son. Both Augustine and Thomas know only too well that according to the Christian faith God is both intelligible and knowable though there is "a great difference" in our knowledge of God in comparison to other sciences.[68] They both know that it is a different kind of knowledge. No one can read Augustine's IV Book On The Trinity without realizing the difference between him and the medieval mystics. The splendour of God's presence in Jesus Christ is totally incomparable to the Cloud of Unknowing of later mysticism. For Augustine the conditions for knowledge of God is to know one's own wretchedness; to know "how many figments the human heart gives birth to;" to be "kindled by the warmth of the Holy Spirit;" to know one's utter inability in one's own strength to come to Him.[69] But this is only the preliminary step. The rest God accomplishes by his holy Word.

In spite of all Platonic tendencies and Neoplatonic influences Augustine's Christianity remains true to the centre: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the sole measure of God's wisdom and absolute Truth. God is knowable in Jesus Christ. To the question: who is the Son of God? Augustine has only one answer: The Truth.[70] That God is both invisible and unsearchable is already laid down in Scripture. Moses cannot see his face and live (Ex. 33:20).[71] Zophar asks of Job the embarrassing question: "Canst thou by searching find out God?" (Job 11:7f) The Psalmist reiterates that God's greatness is unsearchable (Ps. 145:3) and Paul echoes the same conviction: O the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways! (Rom. 11:33) But this humble and worshipful acknowledgement of the hiddenness of God is totally different from the Pseudo-Dionysian principle of the unknowability of God.[72] For the biblical writers God is unknowable in His Essence but he is knowable in his deeds and reveals Himself by His Word.

Theologians of all ages have stood in awe and worshipful reverence before the unutterable splendour of the Thrice Holy God. Richard Hooker rightly observes that only a feeble brain would presume "to wade far into the doings of the Most High."[73] He suggests that the "soundest knowledge is to know that

we know him not as indeed he is, neither can we know him: and our safest eloquence concerning him is our silence, when we confess without confession that, his glory is inexplicable, his greatness above our capacity to reach." He therefore counsels that when speaking of God our words be "wary and few."[74] But this does not mean that we have nothing to say at all. To take this position would mean to deny the kerygmatic aspect of the Gospel: what God is towards us in Jesus Christ. The Incarnation means exactly this.

T. F. Torrance has shown that for the Nicene Fathers the knowability of God was closely tied up with the definition of *homoousion*: "In his economic condescension God really imparts to us knowledge of himself as he is, for he is antecedently and eternally in his own Being what he reveals of himself in his Incarnation and humiliation in Christ."[75] The whole struggle at Nicea turned on this issue. Only on the assumption of an eternal relatedness of the Son to the Father could there be any true and objective knowledge about God. This kind of knowledge is essentially different from any putative surmise in that it is knowledge which God Himself imparts about Himself.

Irenaeus's quarrel with the heretics is an excellent example of the difference between pious speculation and biblical faith. The ancient Bishop of Lyons knows only too well of the insufficiency of human language to give adequate expression to what is conceived by the mind.[76] But the Christian believer does not depend upon his own resources for his knowledge of God: though "invisible and indescribable" yet God is "by no means unknown."[77] The Son of the Father has declared Him: "the Word became the dispenser of paternal grace for the benefit of men . . ." Because the Word and God are One, man is not left in ignorance of the Father. Irenaeus makes the pertinent point that the heretics are wont to speak of Him as the Ineffable yet pretend to be "acquainted with the unspeakable mysteries of God" and are given to "endless conjecture."[78] Christians on the other hand, pretend to no other knowledge "except Jesus Christ the Son of God, who was crucified for us." It is this humble knowledge which keeps them from falling into impiety "by subtle questions and hair-splitting expressions."[79] Irenaeus deprecates the "utter madness" of those who think to be able to uncover God's innermost secret and thus indulge in speculations for which there is no warrant.[80]

But there are others who keep on saying: "Never mind seeking after God; for He is unknown and you shall not find him." To those Irenaeus has the following to say: "the Lord taught us that no man is capable of knowing God unless he be taught by God: that is that God cannot be known without God: but this is the express will of the Father, that God should be known. For they shall know him to whomsoever the Son has revealed Him."[81] This important passage expresses genuine Christian conviction. God is certainly unknowable except for His self-disclosure in Jesus Christ.

A theology which by-passes historic revelation and relies upon physical experience or metaphysical speculation can in no sense claim to be Christian.

Abbot Justin McCan who edited The Cloud of Unknowing explains in his Introduction what is meant by ignorance and unknowing in the language of the mystics: "the mind ceases, indeed, to consider this or that divine attribute, ceases from any vain effort at comprehending the incomprehensible; but it raises itself up to that which is highest of all, the pure Being of God, and in an inexpressible way is united with this Being."[82] This is a revealing statement for its complete reversal of what the Christian means by God's condescension towards man. The unknown 14th c. English author writes about love as the key to the "naked knowing" of God,[83] but for the Christian such "naked knowing" can be nothing else than presumption. Man's love of God is never complete and never perfect; only God is capable of such love.

Reading the Cloud of Unknowing one cannot help wondering whether the author has ever heard the Gospel message? His attention is almost exclusively devoted to one single passage where Mary is held up as an example over Martha (Luke 10:38ff). He sees in her the prototype of the true contemplative for she keeps away from the ordinary chores of daily life.[84] This is the ideal of the mystic: he must strive to rid himself of all knowing and feeling and keep aloof from "all other creatures and all other works."[85] The way towards achieving this goal is by inward concentration whereby "knowing by unknowing" is experienced as the highest love.[86] This ideal of detachment is radically different from the biblical position where the accent is always upon involvement with and responsibility for others. T. F. Torrance rightly describes theology as *scientia practica*.[87] The reason for this down-to-earth attitude derives from the nature of the Christian message: the Son of God was also the son of a carpenter and lived a humble human life.

From the doctrine of the Unknowability of God there is only one step to "christian" agnosticism. The modern prophet of the Unknown God is pre-eminently Paul Tillich. It is no coincidence that the symbolic use of language plays such an important part in his theology.

Symbolism for Tillich is the only legitimate tool of theological discourse. The whole language of theology is to him an effort in symbolic exercise. Expressions like Kingdom of God, the Persons of the Trinity, God as Life, the mystery of Being, Christ, the Cross, etc , are only metaphors which point to a dimension in depth. God Himself remains the God above God and therefore eternally unknown. "God," says Tillich, "can never become the object of man's knowledge."[88] All that man is left with is the courage of "radical doubt." Here faith lacks all objectivity and is an act of despair in an effort to transcend traditional theism and reach out to the God who is unreachable.[89]

Once theological discourse becomes a semantic game in symbolism, the Christian message loses its edge. All we are left with is religious sentiment, or to use the Tillichian expression, "a mood of reverence."[90] However, there is yet one other possibility to which we now turn.

c. God in General

If God is God then by definition He is omnipresent and omnipotent. He cannot be limited to one single avenue of communication. All phenomena are a form of His speech: does not the Psalm say: "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork?" (Ps. 19:1) We are therefore meant, so the argument goes, to observe creation and deduce from it about the Creator. This is at the back of all theology which depends upon the argument from Being. Because the question of Being is ultimately unanswerable, the theistic solution fills the gap admirably. Such an answer is emotionally satisfying for it saves us from the yawning void. To accept an empty and aimless universe is a traumatic experience which few can endure. In addition, the argument for a god appeals to reason for it seems to be the best of a number of possible answers. This was the conviction of l8th c. Deism. The Deists needed an explanation to account for the "world-machine" and god as the engineer was a plausible answer.[91]

The transition from ontology to metaphysics is a natural one. What the Deists called natural religion starts at this point: nature as the book of evidences for a supernatural intelligent Being. In John Toland's words: "For as 'tis by reason we arrive at the certainty of God's own existence, so we cannot otherwise discern his revelations but by their conformity with our own natural notices of him, which in so many words agree with our own common notions."[92] In practical terms it means that the Deist relies upon reason and philosophy for his metaphysical construction of a world-view. But many 18th c. Deists were

not prepared to annul revelation altogether. To the question: does not such stress upon reason set revelation aside? Matthew Tindal replied: "No, if revelation be a reasonable revelation, the greater stress we lay upon reason the more we establish revelation."[93]

On the assumption that the essence of revelation is to reveal truth Tindal's reasoning is beyond contradiction. Because theology took this assumption for granted it had to depend upon the two sources: reason plus revelation; natural theology plus revealed theology; the God of nature and the God of the Bible. It certainly could not countenance a dichotomy between nature and grace as both derive from the same Lord. The dilemma was therefore to keep together the two truths: the truth of the Gospel and the truth of reason. The prodigious theological effort down the centuries was concentrated upon this problem. Theology was thus concerned about bridging the gap between the two worlds: the world of faith and the world of reason.

The problem is not a biblical one where faith and reason have their origin in God. It came into theology from the ancient dualism which saw a radical disjunction between the world of the senses and the world of reason.[94] Neoplatonism inherited the same problem but solved it in a monistic fashion with the emphasis upon pantheism. Gnosticism approached the problem from a mystical position and in the spirit of dualism: man's task is to overcome the division by means of ascent to the realm of the Spirit.[95] The ancient church had its own answer which is essentially a biblical one: Christ by his Incarnation steps into the gap between the two worlds and brings them together. This according to Torrance is the ultimate meaning of the Nicene definition of *homoousion.*[96] It means that theological reasoning based upon Christology moves in the opposite direction: not from below upwards but from above downwards.[97]

Theology, if Christian, does not start with the created order and work itself upwards until it arrives at a theistic conclusion. On the contrary, it begins with God's condescension in Jesus Christ and sees the world in light of this stupendous fact. The world acquires concreteness and meaning from the Incarnation of the Son of God. Here lies the radical difference between Gnosticism in its manifold forms and the Christian faith.

The Athenian Stranger speaks for Plato when he says: "If a man look upon the world not lightly nor ignorantly, there was never anyone so godless who did not experience an effect opposite to that which many imagine," namely the the study of the universe will result in atheism.[98] To the contrary, "the order of the motions of the stars, and of all things under the dominion of the mind which ordered the universe" will lead the careful observer to the opposite conclusion. Plato's philosophy rests upon the unitary principle of the Soul as the central instance which gives meaning and substance to the visible world.[99] Souls are related to the Divine in the midst of matter and move upwards to the source of their origin.[100]

The principle of ascent from the material to the spiritual is the special characteristic for Gnosticism. Laeuchli has shown the connection between Platonic realism and the Gnostic content of ascent as a means of knowledge.[101] The combination of Platonism and Gnosticism has profoundly affected Christian theology. The metaphysical tendencies within the Church derive from these combined sources. To these must be added the unfortunate coincidence that Aristotle's treatise dealing with the problem of epistemology was placed by Andronikus of Rhodes (70 B. C.) after the natural sciences (μετά τά φυσικά). This haphazard arrangement not only gave rise to a very vague and popular term but also served as an encouragement to separate questions of logic and understanding from the natural order. Metaphysical thinking therefore was conceived to begin at the point where experimental knowledge ends. We are inclined to think that the resorting to analogy is somehow connected with this fact. Man

cannot reason without reference to the material world in which he lives. In order to raise himself above the limitations of the created order he has to fall back upon analogical comparison. Although analogy was used before St. Thomas, he may be regarded as the one who gave to analogy profound epistemological significance.

Thomist epistemology begins with the senses: non-sensible realities become known through the senses and are arrived at by discursive reasoning. Realities are therefore known to us not directly, *per se,* but *per suos effectus*. The theological implication of St. Thomas's theory of knowledge inevitably leads to an inferred God.[102] Thomas Aquinas was too much of a Christian to pin his faith upon reason alone so that revelation would become unnecessary. But he held that discursive reasoning though not providing all the information yet opens the way to some definite conclusions:

1. By discursive reasoning we may arrive at a positive knowledge of the existence of God, namely that He is.

2. By the same method we may also conclude negatively what He is not (*via negationis*).

3. By means of analogy (*via analogiae*) we may also proceed to a more positive knowledge of God's nature like omnipotence, etc.

The basis for this theory is founded upon his view of man: "man possesses a natural aptitude for understanding a loving God; and this aptitude consists in the very nature of the mind, which is common to all men."[103] But if this is the case what purpose is there in revelation? St. Thomas would answer: revelation augments what is lacking in man's natural knowledge of God. It comes to us by a different channel and is therefore a different kind of knowledge. Revelation is knowledge backed by authority, namely the authority of Scripture; but as such it is unsupported by evidence. When knowledge reaches a more perfect stage authority ceases to be necessary. Thomas compares information backed by authority to the kind of information which is imparted to a schoolboy who accepts facts for which he has as yet no evidence. The decisive role in man's knowledge of God is played by reason: "the mind can make use of reason in order to understand God."[104] This does not mean that the *testimonium internum spiritus sancti* is entirely left out; grace is still needed but only, it would appear, in an ancillary capacity. To give St. Thomas his due it must be added that for him *scientia* is more than discursive reasoning. Knowledge for St. Thomas, as Gilson explains, is hierarchically structured. There are modes of cognition: from faith to understanding, from understanding to the vision of God. The last stage is reserved for those who are no more *viatores* but have already arrived *in patria*.

This beautiful knowledge is on a different plane from discursive reasoning. St. Thomas quotes John 17:3: "This is eternal life to know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." For this man needs grace in order to know Him who under human conditions remains as the One unknown (*quasi ignoto)*; as the One wrapped in veils (*velaminibus circuvalentus*). For this reason it is not so much faith as knowledge by which God is known more directly. It is at this point that the question of truth becomes crucial for Thomist theology: the intellect as the divine organ implanted in makes it possible to apprehend and retain knowledge; and knowledge means truth. "Man's salvation," says St. Thomas, "consists in knowing the truth, so that the human mind may not be confused by divers errors."[105] It means that a man in error cannot be saved. This scholastic emphasis upon cognition radically alters the meaning of faith as derived from the Bible. Faith (*pistis*) as a style of life ("doing the truth," John 3:2l; the "Way" Acts 9:2), takes on the meaning right thinking (*orthodoxa*); and right thinking is thinking in conformity with ecclesiastical definition. That faith is first and foremost faithfulness to the Covenant-

keeping God is here strangely neglected. Instead, faith for St. Thomas is the elevation of the intellect Godwards.[106]

Buber's criticism of the Pauline concept of *pistis* is more applicable here than to the New Testament.[107] For scholastic theology faith has lost its daring and become an intellectual enterprise strictly controlled by ecclesiastical tradition. Faith, says St. Thomas, believes "all things which should be believed."[108] This impersonal and intellective aspect of faith is, oddly enough, defined in a treatise by St. Thomas which deals with love: "The formal notion in the object of faith is the first truth manifested through the teaching of the Church; just as the formal notion of science is the medium of demonstration. Therefore just as one who remembers the conclusions of geometry does not have the science of geometry if he does not assent to the conclusions because of the reasons of geometry . . . so also one who holds those things which are of faith but does not assent to them because of the authority of Catholic teaching, does not have the habit of faith . . ."[109]

That for St. Thomas faith is something other than what Paul means by *pistis* in Rom. 4:9ff is only too obvious. The daring of faith which believes (i.e. trusts) "against hope" (Rom. 4:18) is here completely lacking. Scholastic faith is structured upon syllogistic reasoning. Only the ignorant have to depend upon the Bible for their knowledge of God; those trained in philosophy read the truth by the application of reason. Admittedly, the truth is the same but there is a difference and intensity: faith provides *maior certitudo*, whereas reason provides *maior evidentia.* Knowledge thus reached by way of faith is somewhat deficient for it lacks rational cognition (*deficit a ratione cognitionis, quae est in scientia*).[110] This does not exclude the necessity for divine revelation, for there are things which "natural reason cannot reach, as, for instance, that God is Three and One."[111]

There is here an unfortunate imbalance between reason and revelation which St. Thomas tries to rectify but never quite succeeds. In the Summa St. Thomas raises the question whether by grace or by reason a higher knowledge of God may be obtained? At first sight priority is given to grace: "I answer that, we have a more perfect knowledge of God by grace than by natural reason." Had he stopped here his position would have been plain. But this would have left him dependent upon revelation which ran contrary to his entire epistemology. He therefore continues to explain: "Now in both of these, human knowledge is assisted by the revelation of grace. For the intellect's natural light is strengthened by the infusion of gratuitous light . . ."[112] The meaning is clear, reason goes a long way but not all the way; there is a point beyond which it cannot go, at this point grace takes over. Such co-ordination between reason and grace, or natural light (*lumen naturale*) and revelation rests upon the principle that grace does not abolish nature but perfects it. On this basis there is no dialectic possible: at the point of human limitation God steps in and completes the process of cognition.

We have tarried at some length with Thomas Aquinas for two reasons: first, because of his commanding position in the history of theology; second, he is the most outstanding example of a systematic endeavour to relate reason to revelation. There is a host of men of lesser lights on both sides of the divided Church who have walked the way of St. Thomas and who have become enmeshed in the problem. As a result, some have abandoned reason, others have abandoned revelation. In most cases however a compromise was attempted by which revelation and reason have been kept together in such a manner that neither was allowed full play.

The difficulty arises from the basic assumption that God reveals truth for the enlightening of the mind. In an age when knowledge is obtained by experimental verification enlightenment of this kind

looks like superstition. But once revelation is abandoned theology is left with no other basis but religious experience to analyse. Hence its straying forays into the field of psychology.[113]

The God in general is a vague being: He is everywhere and nowhere. He is identical with creation and different from it. He is present to those who have the faculty for seeing Him hidden in the objects which surround them. These are those whose *sensus divinitatis* is active enough to keep them in the mystical mood. For them God is everywhere: move the stone and he is there.[114] In the words of the Greek poet Epimenides: "in thee we live and move and have our being" (cf. Acts 17:28). A. A. Luce says of George Berkeley that this text is the very linch-pin of his philosophical system. He calls it "the text of Immensity." Luce explains: "Man's environment is not composed of dud or neutral objects or chunks of meaningless matter, but of sense-data, i.e. objects given to sense by a Giver, from mind and for the mind, objects covert with light of meaning, as with a garment." And he continues: "Man would not perceive as he does unless God encompassed us and all, the Immense all-pervasive spirit, in whom we live and move and are."[115]

Luce suggests that Berkeley was strongly influenced by Malebranche who looked upon Acts 17:28 as a key text which led him to the conclusion: "that we see all things in God."

There are here some grave difficulties for theology: first, how seriously is one to treat the Epimenidian[116] text used by Paul in an apologetic situation, especially as it ill-accords with the general biblical position? Second, what does the text mean in precise theological terms? Does it mean the divinization of creation; the pantheistic experience of nature; the mystical empathy with the universe? At what point is man addressed personally in terms of law and Grace, judgement and forgiveness? How does this text fit into the radical biblical dichotomy between creation and Creator, man and God?[117]

The God in general is essentially a mystical concept. Here the subjective experience of the beholder who is left free to interpret his experience according to his predilections is the basic rule. The beholder is the interpreter and the inner voice the last instance of appeal. In the end the God in general is the god of man's imagination: The God I want.[118]

4. The Biblical Structure of Theology

It is obvious even to a superficial reader that the principles governing biblical revelation: historicity, uniqueness and ultimacy play no part, or only an incidental part, in three approaches we have tried to outline. For our knowledge of the inferred God, the unknown God, or God in general, we need not, in fact we cannot, depend upon these restrictive principles. Revelation in general terms is by its very nature a-historical, universal and dependent upon the process of time. The gnostic character of abstract truth, exegetically distilled and doctrinally defined is here unmistakeable. "Loss of concreteness" writes Laeuchli, "leads to abstraction, and abstraction to negation."[119] Justin by identifying the Logos with reason and thus giving to reason a "hypostatic quality" introduced an impersonal and non-historical element into the Christian meaning of revelation which brought it close to Stoic pantheism.[120] By contrast Laeuchli points to Irenaeus whose Christocentric theology determined his concept of revelation as a concrete incarnate reality.[121] There can be little doubt that the Justinian generalization of the Logos-concept has played havoc with the concreteness of biblical revelation. The more recent appeal to the Justinian logos-theory on the part of writers who are bent upon religious compromise, bears out our contention.

The reason for the attractiveness of Justin's Logos doctrine lies in its universal application. Here all historical limitations are removed and reduced to general principles. God becomes the Nameless One, the *ens generalissimum*: the perfect being "formed synthetically."[122] The superlatives which are so characteristic for mystical theology are never more than metaphors. Hubert Box explains: "when we attribute personality to the Supreme-Being, we attribute it only in an analogical and supereminent way." John Baillie's criticism is here most pertinent: "what is false is the assumption that the comparison moves from man to God instead of from God to man."[123] This is exactly where the aberration lies.

The universalization of the Logos as an inherent principle helps to overcome the uniqueness of what the Germans call *Heilsgeschichte*, salvation history. Not only does this loosen the ties with the Old Testament but the importance of the New Testament itself becomes incidental.[124] Why should not the universal logos speak through the holy literature of the other religions? Indeed, if it were a matter of general truths, why not? It would be difficult to oppose Cantwell Smith's dictum: "wherever truth is stated, there God is speaking . . . Word of God."[125] In fact, Emil Brunner says almost as much.[126] On this basis the religion of the Dogon tribe of the Upper Volta is as true as any other, especially as according to Cantwell Smith truth and falsehood does not lie in the religion but in the person.[127] Their Logos theory is especially attractive; according to Ogotemmeli, the spokesman for the tribe: "The Word is for everyone in this world; it must come and go and be interchanged, for it is good to give and to receive the forces of life."[128] Beyond this even Justin could not go.

It is obvious that the Johannine Logos is centred upon an historic person: Jesus Christ. There is here a coalescence between Word and Person. Truth is what Jesus is: his life, his words, his deeds. Truth is centred upon God's concern for man. The process is here in reverse: we do not start with the concept of truth and then ask about God, but from an encounter with God in Jesus Christ we define the meaning of Truth. In the first instance truth is a static concept: in St. Thomas's words: "truth consists of the conformity of intellect and thing."[129] In the second instance: truth is a Person whose Voice is to be obeyed and His example followed.[130] From this decisive point in history, namely the Presence of the Son of God in the midst of time, can we attempt to answer the question: how does man know God?

The *via negationis* when stripped of its gnostic exaggerations,[131] is a wholesome reminder that man can only speak cautiously and with great reserve about Almighty God. Our knowledge of God, as John Baillie makes it so clear, can never be inferred knowledge.[132] But this does not mean that God is unable to make himself known to man. In fact, the whole meaning of the Bible falls to the ground if that were the case. If all we know about God rests upon a hunch, an intuition or a speculation then such a god is no more than a fiction. The assumption underlying the biblical record is exactly this: that the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth turns his face towards man and addresses him. This is how the biblical story begins. Biblical theology depends upon the supposition of a speaking God; it therefore begins not with an investigation but with a response: a response to the God who encounters man.

What does this mean?

a. The Faith-relationship

A useful distinction is made between fideism and faith. The first is the blind and superstitious will to believe anything as long as it brings comfort and is therefore nothing more than auto-suggestion. Faith is different: it is something which man cannot achieve for by nature he is the eternal doubter. It is an unfortunate misunderstanding to think of faith as something like the children's game: "Let us pretend."

Faith is different from the blind submission to authority as St. Thomas suggests. Faith, in biblical terms, is a gift of grace whereby man is made free to trust God (cf. Heb. 11:1). Faith is different from the faith in that it is never a noun but always a verb; it is not a position but a function; it is not a definition but a relationship.

Faith has been described as a dimension or perspective, or faculty, whereby the believer is kept in a responsive awareness of the Presence of the Invisible God.[133] Such a faith relationship leads on reflection, to some basic implications which are vital for theology:

1. The faith relationship implies non-immediacy in our encounter with God. This is the ground for biblical dualism. Every monistic effort to obliterate the distinction between God and man is a form of human arrogance and Promethian pride. This dualism safeguards the Invisibility of God (cf. Rom. 1:20; Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 11:27). A god exposed to man's inspection can only be an idol. Man as sinner cannot and dare not see God: "no man shall see me and live" (Ex. 33:20).[134] Indeed, only the pure in heart shall see God (Matt. 5:8) but this is a different kind of vision from physical sight.[135] For those who are still pilgrims the *visio Dei* remains the great eschatological hope. Here on earth, we only see as in a mirror, dimly (1 Cor. 13:12).

2. The faith-relationship preserves the distance between creature and Creator. It means that God is not just what man is but more so; and that man is not just god in miniature. Every form of the *unio mystica* whereby man loses himself in the divine is here excluded. Not only the mystical but also the intellective effort to by-pass the faith-relationship and to grasp God with the aid of reason is a form of *hybris*. Not even man's loftiest thoughts are sufficient to reach the majesty of the Most High (cf. Is. 55:8f). At no point is man able to break out of his creaturely limitations and storm the heavens. God remains past finding out: no pious endeavour or godless impudence can annul the difference between man and his Maker.

3. The faith-relationship is a quest: "seek ye the Lord and live" says the prophet (Amos 5:4, 6). But this is a different quest than the one pursued by the philosopher or the meta-physician. To seek God in the biblical context is to seek the good and to hate evil (Amos 5:14f). For the Hebrew "good" is not an abstract impersonal ideal, it is related to the holy will of YHWH and is enacted in daily life. To seek "good" means to establish justice in the gate.[136]

The notion that there can be a good apart from God is utterly foreign to the biblical writers: "I have no good apart from thee" says the Psalmist (Ps. 16:2; 73:25). The knowledge of God means "to know Him who practices kindness, justice and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, says the Lord" (Jer. 9:24).[137] There is no separation of the faith-relationship and the moral life. These two aspects coincide and are interdependent. To know God is to do His will and obey His commandments.

4. The faith-relationship derives from God's initiative: He chooses Israel; He establishes the Covenant; He makes the Promises. Man is apprehended by God and not God by man.

Scholastic theology begins with man's enquiry: is there a God? Biblical theology begins with man's response: "The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord has spoken; who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3:8) This being apprehended by God is the most characteristic of prophetic awareness. The prophet knows himself as a man upon whom God's hand has been laid (cf. Jer. 1:5; Amos 7:15; Ex. 3:14, etc.). This is the remarkable feature of biblical insight that the quest is God's and not man's: God is in search of man and man is the fugitive. In Rabbi Heschel's words: "The biblical consciousness begins not with man's but with God's concern. The supreme fact in the eyes of the prophets is the presence of God's concern for man and the absence of man's concern for God. It is God's concern for man that cries out

behind every word of their message.[138] Adam is the one who hides and YHWH is in search of him (Gen. 3:8f). The Bible is full of similar situations.

The classic example of the quickening of man's awareness that he is ineluctably in the Presence of God is Psalm 139. The whole Psalm is permeated by the awesome discovery: "Lord, thou hast searched me and known me! Whither shall I flee from thy presence?" God knows man's most hidden secrets and to Him man's heart and reins are wide open (Jer. 17:19f). He "searches all hearts and understands (knows) every plan and thought" (1 Chr. 28:9). He cleaves the reins asunder (Job 16:13).

This typical awareness of the Presence of YHWH is carried over to the New Testament. God knows all and there is nothing hid from him. Jesus tells his disciples not "to heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles who think that they will be heard for their many words: your heavenly Father knows your need before you ask him" (Mtt. 6:7f). Paul in his great paean of love (1 Cor. 13) gives expression to exactly this awareness: "Now I know in part but then I shall know even as I am known" (v.12).[139] There is however a difference between Paul's awareness of exposure to the penetrating eye of the Holy God and that of the Old Testament writers. The difference derives from his interpretation of the messianic event: the Christian believer does not appear before God in his own righteousness of which he has none; but in the righteousness which God grants through faith in Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:9). He now can live in God's Presence as a forgiven and reconciled sinner.[140]

The most revealing text in this connection is Gal. 4:8f: Paul is reminding his Gentile readers that there was a time when they knew not God but were in bondage to beings who by nature are no gods. However now, through faith in Jesus Christ, they have come to know the true God; but he suddenly corrects himself and reverses the order: "or rather to be known by God." (μᾶλλον δὲ γνωσθέντες ὑπὸ θεοῦ) Does this mean that they were unknown to God before their conversion?

Luther commenting on this text, explains: "our knowledge is rather passive than active; that is, it consists in this, that we are rather known of God, than we know Him. All our endeavour to know and to apprehend God, is to suffer God to work in us."[141] Luther interprets the text in accordance with the principle of justification by faith. Lightfoot takes the same position. He explains that Paul uses the parenthesis in order "to obviate any false inference, as though the reconciliation with God were attributable to man's own effort."[142] Lightfoot sees in 1 Cor. 8:1-3 a further elaboration of our text: "If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if one loves God, one is known by Him." It is obvious that in this context to be known by God means to be acknowledged, accepted, reconciled.[143] This is what salvation means; God knows everyone before and after conversion. But He "knows" those reconciled to Him by faith in Jesus Christ in a different way; he accepts them as sons. This is not a matter of intellectual apprehension but of a Father - son relationship. God in Christ lays hold of sinners and takes them to His bosom. Faith here means *fiducia*, affiance that this is really so.

b. The Faith-response

The working pattern of the faith-relationship requires more than mere passive endurance. A true personal relationship demands a responsive attitude. Faith means active response to God's gracious invitation through Jesus Christ.

To know God, in biblical terms, means to enter into a loving relationship with Him. The hands stretched out by Jesus Christ to sinners must meet with a ready and warm response. The cross only makes sense when it is sinners who are reconciled.[144] This is one of the major obstacles for the religions

which treat sin lightly: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, even Judaism. The doctrine of original sin is as unacceptable to Chinese intellectuals as it is to Jewish rabbis. Both hold to the traditional conviction of man's essential goodness.[145]

In Christian terms, knowledge of God means knowledge of His forgiving grace through the sacrifice upon the cross. It is man's answer to God's loving condescension. Such a response is more than religious: it involves the whole man with all his faculties, his rational powers, his religious instincts, his emotional life. There is nothing abstract about man's knowledge of God, it is a way of life in a personal relationship of encounter and response.

1. The concreteness of the faith-life requires a natural social background. No man can live his life in isolation; every man belongs to others and others belong to him. Social life means that every generation stands amid-stream between past and future; handing on the experience of the fathers to the next generation. The faith-pattern therefore bears in upon the continuing life of the community. Even negative attitudes are affected by the past. The Bible as a document, bears witness to the continuity of such a faith-pattern: Adam hears the voice of God; Enoch was with God; Elijah is the prophet of God; etc. etc. The New Testament situation is exactly the same: Jesus enters upon John the Baptist's work; the disciples continue the work of Jesus; Ananias instructs Saul in the meaning of discipleship; Saul and Barnabas are sent on their mission by the Church of Antioch; etc. etc. We may well ask: who first started this chain-reaction?

There are many possible answers to this question.The one widely accepted is that man is born with a sense for the divine. John Baillie speaks of "a primary and original mode of consciousness" which gives to our knowledge of God "an element of immediacy" intuitively apprehended.[146] But can there be such an immediacy in our relationship with God? Bailie argues that our knowledge of other people "is not merely a derivative from our knowledge of other bodies or of our own minds or of both together . . ." Yet we know people in an immediate experience. If we accept this view we will have to fall back upon mystical subjectivism in order to explain man's knowledge of God.

2. It would seem that no single element is sufficient to explain God's way with man. The historical, the personal, the transcendental aspects combine to create the background for the response of faith. In this situation the balance of these elements is of immense importance.

Lack of the historical perspective results in unbounded metaphysical speculation which is, as we saw, a characteristic feature of Gnosticism. An overemphasis upon personal experience ends in mystical subjectivism, the ultimate goal of all pious souls. The abandonment of the transcendental dimension produces a monistic perspective which leads either to materialism or pantheism. Man is a precariously balanced creature "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14). But the contextual equilibrium does not make the difference: the difference is made by the Word which reaches man in the threefold context of history, personal experience and transcendental or vertical thrust. This is what the Church means by her doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

In the context of historic revelation and personal experience the Holy Spirit uses the witness of the Bible and the exigencies of daily life to make God a reality to man.

3. This brings us to the most crucial question: does a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Jew or a Muslim, have to enter into the historical context of the Gospel for his knowledge of God? Is God's grace so limited to the

historic exigency of what happened in Palestine 2000 years ago to serve as the pre-condition for man's relationship to God?[147]

There is a positive and a negative answer to this question. First, the negative:

It is a perverse attitude and contradictory to the Christian faith that God favours those who happen to stand within a Christian tradition and has no regard for those outside it. Here the prophetic indictment of Israel and our Lord's clash with the Pharisees ought to dispel any such illusions. God is no respecter of persons and he cannot be monopolized even by the Church. Christian idols are no less idols because they carry Christian names. There can be no boasting in the sight of God (cf. Rom. 3:27). The Church has nothing to plead, except God's mercy in Christ. If Christian witness to the world means an exhibition of her achievements then she can only hang her head in shame. She has nothing to be proud of to vaunt before the nations. If missions means the propagation of the "Christian religion" then we would better desist. Paul did not preach religion either to Jew or Gentile. What he was telling them both was that no true religion nor false religion (circumcision nor uncircumcision; cf. Rom. 3:30) can save them: God extends his mercy to all who trust in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

The perversity of our situation lies in the fact that we have made religion a decisive issue and so turned it into an idol. No man is saved by reason of his true religion - no religion is true - only God is true. The difference between the Christian faith and the religions becomes visible at this point: there is no place where man can maintain a stand before God except underneath the Cross. But there he only stands because God stands with him and for him.

Now the positive answer:

The question regarding the religions is inseparable from the messianic event. It is here that the principles of historicity, uniqueness and ultimacy become the testing grounds of all religions, Christianity included.

The historical principle of revelation is the most effective barrier against all false subjectivity. It wards off the lapse into nature worship which is the perennial temptation of every religion. The historic pattern of biblical faith breaks into the cycle of repetitive continuity and gives direction and meaning to human destiny. Jesus Christ is not a symbol as Pittenger would have it but a real "intrusion" into time and space.[148]

Uniqueness is inseparable from the particularity of historic occurrence. Pittenger would turn Jesus into a paradigmatic figure: "Jesus is not the supreme anomaly," he maintains, "he is the classic instance." By this he means to say that in Jesus we are presented with the highest example of human achievement: "Jesus makes sense and gives sense to the existence of any and every man."[149] This is not what is meant by the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, nor for that matter by the uniqueness of persons irrespective of what role they play in history.

The Fathers expressed Christ's uniqueness in the paradoxical formulation of *homoousion*; true man but also true God. Any weakening of his paradox would reduce the meaning of the Gospel to religious symbolism. This is exactly where the offence lies: religion lives by symbols; the Gospel is tied to a concrete occurrence: the Word became flesh. Christmas, Good Friday, Easter Sunday are not parables but events: Jesus was born, he died. he was raised. As mythological expressions these festivals present no difficulty, it is only when they are taken literally that the offence occurs, not only for the outsider but for the Christian himself. Especially in our scientific age it comes as a shock to speak of the the Resurrection not as a metaphor but as a real event. The measure of revulsion we feel at the thought of a resuscitated corpse in the story of the Easter message is the measure of our proneness to docetic

Gnosticism. We find it difficult to credit God with such an act; it is too unusual, too unheard of, too much of a *paradoxon* to be credible. Such a thing could never happen.

Ultimacy as a category in the midst of time is equally difficult for a generation reared on the evolutionary principle. But the theological meaning of ultimacy does not deny the process of time, it only acknowledges God as the boundary. Once God becomes our beyond there can be no other beyondness. He is man's limit in the twofold sense: He sets the limit beyond which man cannot go;[150] He delimits himself to the point of man's limitation. This is what the Gospel is about: God meets man exactly where man is and uses human speech. Human language is the only language man can understand. There is a simplicity about the Gospel which strangely contrasts it with the mystification of religious sophistry. James Ferdinandez tells of a Gabon Benzie saying: "God is extremely complicated, much more complicated than you white men know."[151] The convolutions of mystics, metaphysicians and theologians were obviously unknown to him. But Christ offers the Kingdom of God to children (cf. Mtt. 18:1-4; Mtt. 11:25f.).

The Gospel can never be heard in a vacuum. Man can only hear it as a challenge to his religion, his ideological commitments, his chosen goals. Here the Christian theologian is as vulnerable as the most primitive animist. Their idols may be different but the challenge is the same. The call to *metanoia*, *teshubah*, change, turning, "repentance," is the most authentic call in the Bible.[152] Behind the Book is the Voice of the living God. The guarantee that this is not the voice of my conscience but the Voice from beyond, *extra nos*, is founded in the person of Jesus Christ.

The Church is only the Church of Jesus Christ at the point of her response to His Voice. Response in biblical terms means hearing responsibly. Christian mission derives from the sense of responsibility. Without mission the Church is left without a task and soon degenerates into a religious club. "The Church is either a missionary Church," writes Barth, "or it is no Church at all," and he continues: "And Christians are either messengers of God (with or without words) to both Jew and Gentile or else they are not Christians at all."[153] No one has truly heard Christ's voice who only heard it for himself and not for others. The question regarding the other religions is in Christian terms the question of missions, whether we like it or not. This does not mean that we deprecate their values, culture and insights; not at all. Conversion means total revaluation of all man's values and a question mark over his culture and insights. The tragedy of the Church was that she went to the nations with another religion and so found herself engaged in a religious contest. In this situation she was forced to prove the superiority of her religion over those of others. Once this happens pride and the lust for power enter the field. The very name "missionary" acquires a pejorative meaning. Missionaries frequently found themselves in association with enterprises only remotely, if at all, related to the Christian faith.[154]

The call for *metanoia* concerns the Church first of all.[155] She can never be anything but a repenting Church. But at the same time she must also be a witnessing and preaching Church. Paul's question is as relevant today as it was when originally uttered: How are they to hear without a preacher? And how are they to preach unless they be sent?" (Rom. 10;14f) Apostolicity means exactly this: the continuation of the historic mission begun by the Apostles. The battle-line extends on both fronts: within the historic Church and in the world. The struggle is always the same no matter in what century. It is a struggle between religious man and the living God. It spells refusal to stand in the dialectic tension between the Voice from Beyond and the call of this world. By reducing revelation to religion man tries to evade the tension and relate himself to God horizontally.[156] This is Tillich's greatest mistake. Those who criticize his use of religion, he argues, forget "that revelation must be received and that the name for the

reception of revelation is religion."[157] By this he means that man has to turn revelation into religion to make it operative. This we deny: revelation always remains what it is - God's Word; religion is always man's doing.

There can be no escape from the dialectic between religion and faith. Only a monistic view which denies the tension between Spirit and matter, law and grace, God and the world, can reduce faith to religion. Revelation is the judgement of religion because it is the judgement of man; but it is also the redemption of religion for it is the redemption of man. It is for this reason only that Barth could say: "The Church is the locus of true religion, so far as through grace it lives by grace."[158]

Man is never a unified entity; he is always both, lover and hater, believer and doubter, the man of religion and the man of faith. In our human polarity we stand between the living God and false gods. Escape into religious pietism or rebellious atheism are deceptive solutions. Man in time and space is in the ambiguous position of being and becoming. In such a situation the tension can only be relaxed at the cost of his humanity. Human life is not a condition but a movement in terms of response, decision and relationship. There are always two voices which reach our ears: the Voice of God and the voice of the jungle. We are always in danger of mistaking the one for the other; or of identifying the one with the other. It is for this reason that the God in general is never truly God. From this perspective the meaning of religion and the meaning of faith become clarified and separated: religion resolves the tension; faith intensifies it. To know God means to identify the Voice from amidst the voices so concretely that historicity, uniqueness and ultimacy become the only possible terms of reference.

It is only in this context that religious man truly meets with the living God. In this encounter the messianic event is the point of decision between religion and God.

Notes to Chapter VIII

[1] Herbert H. Farmer, Revelation & Religion, 1954, 26.

[2] S. Alexander, Space, Time & Deity, 1920, II, 432.

[3] W. P. Paterson, The Nature of Religion, 1928, 98ff.

[4] Cf. Charles Vereker, Eighteenth-Century Optimism; also the review of this book in The Times Lit. Suppl. Feb. 15, 1962, 163. On the subject of Deism see Deism & Natural Religion, ed. by E. Graham Waring, 1967, 107ff.

[5] The Times Lit. Suppl. Oct. 19, 1967, 995.

[6] The accuracy of this text is disputed. Some scholars hold that the phrase: Ἄγνωστος Θεός was deliberately put in the singular by the author of Acts in the interests of monotheism; originally it was in the plural. Against this cf. W. B. Stonehouse, Paul Before the Areopagus & Other N. T. Studies, 1957, l0ff; cf. also B. Gärtner, The Areopagus Address & Natural Revelation, E.T., 1955, 242. For a purely historical approach, see Paul Schubert, "The Place of the Areopagus Speech in the Composition of Acts," Transitions in Biblical Scholarship, ed. by J. C. Rylaardsdam, 1968, 235f.

[7] δεισιδαιμονεστέρους from "δειλός" to fear and "δαίμων" deity. AV translates "superstitious" but a more positive meaning is psychologically better justified (cf. G. Abbott-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the N. T., s.l; also TDNT, II, 20. Foakes Jackson rightly remarks: "The translation 'too superstitious' in the AV is misleading, though the word 'fearing demons' is used in this sense. (cf. Acts of the Apostles, 1931, 165).

[8] Luther's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, v. s.

[9] Cf. Edward A. Dowey, The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology, 1952, 56ff. Dowey however points to Calvin's *duplex cognitio Domini*: knowledge of God as Creator, and knowledge of God as Redeemer; a distinction which was not given sufficient prominence in the Brunner-Barth controversy. (cf. ib. 247ff)

[10] Cf. Hans Joachim Schoeps, Paulus, 1959, 236.

[11] Cf. Johannes Witte, Die Christus-Botschaft u. die Religionen, 1936, 37f.

[12] Published posthumously in 1536 under the title: Christianae fidei a Hulrico Zwinglio praedicatae brevis et clara expositio.

[13] The Latin is even more forceful: *homo in rebus divinis nihil habet quam tenebras, errores, malitias et perversitates voluntatis et intellectus*. (Gal. 1, 295)

[14] The Sages of antiquity according to Dante, because they lived before Christ and could not be admitted to the Christian paradise, were allotted a place in the first circle in the Inferno. Dorothy L. Sayers makes some very pertinent remarks regarding Dante's fine insights into this difficult theological question. Her conclusion is that "neither the Bible nor Catholic theology necessarily excludes the individual good person from heaven; and Dante himself set two pagans in Paradise." (Further Papers on Dante, 1957, especially the chapter on Dante's Virgil, 53ff). Virgil occupies a special position in Christian tradition and stands for the natural man and natural religion at their best. But both are inadequate for "without Grace, without Redemption cannot at their best attain any higher state than Limbo . . ." (ib. 60f)

[15] Cf. Commentarius de vera et falsa religione, 1525; German transl. by Fritz Blanke, Zwingli der Theologe, I, 94f, 17ff; on the subject of false and true religion see Wilfred Cantwell Smith, The Meaning & End of Religion, 1963, 27ff.

[16] In Blanke's translation 62f.

[17] Karl Barth, Ch. Dog. II/I, 63.

[18] ib. I/II, 306.

[19] ib. 307.

[20] ib. 207ff.

[21] ib. 180.

[22] "Die Wahrhaftigkeit unserer Erkenntnis Gottes ist die Wahrhaftigkeit seiner Offenbarung." ib. 235.

[23] ib. I/II, 282f.

[24] How easily the Christian faith can lapse into idolatry is amply proven by Church history. A description of Holy Week observance in contemporary Spain will disabuse us of the fond assumption that Christianity is immune. (cf. The Toronto Globe & Mail, Jan.11, 1969, 30: "Legionaries in religious parade sing of blood and glory" by David Searl); H. Kraemer, Why Christianity of all Religions? 1962 89: "The fact of the matter is that all religions - *Christianity as an 'historic' religion along with the rest* (Kraemer's italics) have been in the past and are still today a mixture of sublimity and perversion, of evil, falsehood and sheer absurdity."

[25] ib. 280, 298.

[26] ib.

[27] Emil Brunner, Revelation & Reason, 1947, 264f.

[28] ib. 259.

[29] ib. 265.

[30] ib. 270ff.

[31] Cf. Allen Grant, The Evolution of the Idea of God, 1904, Introduction.

[32] Cf. Gabriel Vahanian, The Death of God, 1961, 28.

[33] Cf. ib. 192.

[34] Dostoyevsky, The Possessed, (Everyman's Library) II, 253; I, 103f: Kirilov is forced to confess: "I am bound to believe that I don't believe."

[35] Fr. Nietzsche, The Joyful Wisdom (Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft), l886, III, 125.

[36] Cf. Thus Spake Zarathustra, 73. 2.

[37] Henry C. Link, The Return to Religion, 1941. The complete sentence runs: "Agnosticism is an intellectual disease, and faith in fallacies is better than no faith at all."

[38] Nietzsche, Beyond Good & Evil, 3. 53. Reinhold Niebuhr quotes Karl Marx: "The beginning of all criticism is the criticism of religion. For it is on this ultimate level that the pretensions of men reach their most absurd form. The final sin is always committed in the name of religion." (R. Niebuhr, Christian Realism & Political Problem's, 1953, 109). Unfortunately, this writer was unable to locate the passage in Marx.

[39] Nietzsche, op.cit 3. 54.

[40] Alasdair MacIntyre, Difficulties in Christian Belief, 1959, 78, 84. This book was written while MacIntyre was still professing himself a Christian. He has now reasoned himself out of an inferred god and has opted for an agnostic position. (cf. The Listener, June 29, 1967, 860; also New Theology ed. by Marty & Peerman, No.2, 61, n.6.

[41] Cf. John Hick, The Existence of God, 1964, 7lff.

[42] Cf. ib. 81.

[43] A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, The Idea of God in Light of Recent Philosophy, 1917, 15.

[44] Cf. ib. 207.

[45] David Hume (1711-76), Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, ed. by N. Kemp Smith, 1947, 21. The editor explains: "true religion" for Hume "consists exclusively in intellectual assent to the somewhat ambiguous, at least undefined position, God exists, but it is not the God as ordinarily understood . . ." ib. 24.

[46] ib. 38, cp. ib. 44.

[47] ib. 186f.

[48] ib. 189f.

[49] Cf. N. Malcolm, "The Ontological Argument," Philosophical Review, Jan. 1960.

[50] Edgar Sheffield Brightman, The Problem of God, 1930, 160f.

[51] Cf. C. E. Rolt, Dionysius the Areopagite on the Divine Names, 1940, especially the Introduction.

[52] Cf. ib. IV, 3.

[53] Cf. ib. IV, 22.

[54] ib. V, 1.

[55] Cf. The Mystical Theology I.

[56] The Divine Names, IV, 14.

[57] Cf. Henry Bett, Johannes Scotus Erigena, 1964, 23f.

[58] Cf. The Devine Names, I, 4ff.

[59] Cf. Samuel Laeuchli, The Language of Faith, 1962, 79: "Gnosticism systematically replaces realism with symbolism". cf. also ib. 58f, 80.

[60] T. F. Torrance, Theology in Reconstruction, 1965, 58.

[61] E. R. Dodds' Introduction to Proclus's Elements of Theology, 1963. There is some doubt in Dodds' mind whether the Unknowable One in the Enneads by Plotinus has any connection with the Unknowable God of later mysticism. For Plotinus the Unknown God can become known by means of the *unio mystica*; cf. ib. Appendix I (p. 310ff) also The Enneads, IV, 7, 36; 30; VI, 9, 4.

[62] Cf. Dodds, op.cit 265.

[63] Proposition 123.

[64] Augustine, De Trinitate, VIII, 2.

[65] De ordine, 16, (44) H. E. W. Turner credits Augustine with transmitting Neoplatonic thought to the West. (cf. op.cit 445)

[66] ib. 18 (47).

[67] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, Contra Gentiles, I, 14.

[68] Cf. Augustine, De beata vita, IV, 34.

[69] De Trinitate, IV, 34.

[70] Cf. De beata vita, IV, 34.

[71] Cf. J. Jocz, "The Invisibility of God & the Incarnation," Canadian Journal of Theology, July, 1958.

[72] Cf. John Lillenberger, God Hidden & Revealed, 1953, XVII.

[73] R. Hooker, The Reformation of the Laws, Book I, 2. 2.

[74] Hooker, Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Bk. I, II, 2; cf. also ib. III, VII, 11; cf. also E. Schillebeeckx's article "Active Silence about God," Theology, LXXI, 264ff .

[75] T. F. Torrance, op.cit 38. This is so utterly different from John E. Smith's answer to the question "In what sense can we speak of experiencing God?" He asks: "Why may it not be the case that God is actually ingredient both in the portion of the world experienced and in the experience itself in the form of *an actual power of coordinating* the many factors that must be meaningfully arranged if such an experience is to emerge at all?" (Smith's italics) The Journal of Religion, July, 1970, 229ff.

[76] Irenaeus, Adversus omnes haereses, Il, 28, 4.

[77] ib. IV, 20, 6f. Nicholas of Cusa is a case in point. Though deeply committed to "negative theology" and only conditionally accepting the "affirmative way," he nevertheless at the centre of his thought places revelation in Jesus Christ. Copleston regards his philosophy as "definitely Christocentric". cf. Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy, III, 1953, 246.

[78] ib. II, 28, 6f.

[79] ib. II, 26, 1.

[80] ib. II, 25, 4.

[81] ib. IV, 5, 4. For Irenaeus's Christocentric theology see Samuel Laeuchli, op.cit 191ff.

[82] The Cloud of Unknowing, ed. by Abbot Justin MccCann, 1952, XIII. In spite of John. E. Smith's denial that he relies upon the mystical possibility and only depends upon pure reasoning and the "classical conception of experience," it is difficult to see how he can be taken seriously when he makes the presence of God already an "ingredient" in our reflection and appeals to "the Presence of the Uncreated Light" op.cit 244.

[83] cf. ib. ch. 43; cf. also XIV.

[84] ib. ch. 17.

[85] ib. ch. 43.

[86] ib. ch. 70: "The most godly knowing of God is that which is known by unknowing." The sentence is a quotation from the Latin version of Dionysius's De divinis nominibus: *Et est rursus divinissima dei cognito quae est per ignorantiam cognita*; (cf. McCann, op.cit 93 n.1)

[87] T. F. Torrance, op.cit 92f.

[88] Cf. Paul Tillich, Syst. Theol. III, 1963, 283ff; 356ff; etc., cf. also I, 287f; II, 151ff. Sam Keen takes comfort that "Agnosticism and hope are not incompatible" (Apology for Wonder, 1969, 176). But the response to the Gospel requires a more positive attitude: "I know whom I have believed and am sure that He is able to guard until the Day what has been entrusted to me." (2 Tim. 1:12) Agnosticism can never be the answer!

[89] ib. I, 271.

[90] The "mood of reverence" and "mystical experience" are related terms. It is essentially "theology" without contents. Its function is described by F. Ferré: "It alerts us to the presently unknown depths of the human consciousness . . ." He therefore refuses to dismiss the mystical experience lightly. (op.cit 108)

[91] Cf. E. Graham Warring's Introduction to Deism & Natural Religion, 1967. Sam Keen expresses this need admirably: "If God exists all things are possible, and hope and wonder are appropriate attitudes and not tender-minded illusions. The religious impulse is founded upon the conviction that there is a perspective from which the apparent rule of necessity and death may be inserted into a broader context of freedom and ultimate possibility." (op.cit 176.) So there must be a God for He makes it possible to give meaning to wonder!

[92] E. Graham Warring, op.cit 9.

[93] ib. 150.

[94] Cf. T. F. Torrance, op.cit 34, 48, etc.

[95] Cf. S. Laeuchli, op.cit 53f, 60.

[96] Torrance, op.cit 33ff; 49ff; etc.

[97] It is this reversal of direction which makes Pittenger's process Christology and John A. T. Robinson's representation Christology unacceptable.

[98] Plato, Laws, 966e - 67c.

[99] Cf. ib. 896ff.

[100] Cf. Phaedo, 99f; Republic, 475d - 76d; 596.

[101] Cf. Laeuchli, op.cit 52f.

[102] Cf. Etienne Gilson, The philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, 1929, 64. Thomist epistemology has survived in a variety of systems, e.g. in Berkley's proofs of the existence of God. A. A. Luce says of Berkley: "his fine analogical argument (Principles 147-8) from effects, first to finite spirit and then to the infinite, occupies a special position in his system." (cf. Theology, July, 1957, 282.) This is exactly St.Thomas's method.

[103] Summa theol. Q 93, art. 4, answer to obj. 3.

[104] ib. art. 8, answer to obj. 3. T. F. Torrence also stresses reason but for a different purpose: "We apprehend God without a discursive process, but not without an act of conceptual cognition." (Theological Science, 1969, 14.) This sentence reveals the difference between the two Tomases. Torrance does not deny the function of reason but gives full and complete priority to God's initiative.

[105] Compendium theologiae, Ch. I, (E. T. by Cyril Vollert, 1949). Contrast this with Torrance's sentence: "To know the truth is to be in a right relation to Him, to be in the truth with the Truth"; it means "to do the truth and to live the truth, to be true". (Theological Science, 6.)

[106] Cf. De caritate, art. 2. 5 (E. T. by L. H. Kendzierski, 1960).

[107] Cf. M. Buber, Two Types of Faith, 1951.

[108] De caritate, art. 9. 1.

[109] ib. art. 13. 6 (at the end).

[110] St. Thomas regarded religion as given by God to those who were deficient of reason (*debilites rationis*) and were unable to philosophize. (cf. also W. T. Stace, Mysticism & Philosophy, 1960, 78ff.)

[111] Summa theol., Q 12, art. 13 a. 1 (E. T. by Anton C. Pegis, 1945).

[112] ib. Q 12, art. 13.

[113] The Journal Pastoral Psychology is full of psychological theology. Here is an example: "Resurrection and Mental Health" by Fred W. Reid, Jr.: "Resultant impact of the resurrection upon man's faith and religion will have definite bearing on his mental health. The resurrection gives dynamic to his hope - it removes the finality of death - it contributes purpose to his faith - in short, that which is mortal becomes immortal because of an individual's belief in the doctrine of the resurrection." (April, 1968, 39). This form of auto-suggestion is the new Gnosis. A more drastic emphasis upon self-deception is provided by Dr. John M. Dorsey: "In honoring my own divinity, I discover my will has always been and continues to be divine will, my self-sovereignty is ever theocratic, my instinctive wishing motivates my ethics, my whole make up constitutes divine ordination, my distinctively religious Higher Power is my patent reminder of my long ignored infant-hood, innocent wholeness and allness." etc. etc. (ib. 30ff)

[114] Cf. the well-known apocryphal logion: Oxyrhynchus Papyri part I, logion 5; (New Sayings of Jesus & Fragments of a Lost Gospel, 1904, 36). cf. also Joachim Jeremias, Unknown Sayings of Jesus, E.T., 1958, 95ff. The contemporary Logos theologians from William Temple to Nels Ferré continue the Gnostic tradition. Ellis W. Hollon explains that for Temple the Logos is equivalent to the process of nature. (cf. "Temple & Barth on the role of the Logos," Angl. Theo. Review, July 1969, 220f. For Ferré the Logos is an universal principle afloat in the universe (cf. The Universal word, 165ff.)

[115] A. A. Luce, Theology, July 1957, 283f. An outstanding example of ontologistic theology is Vincenzo Gioberti (1801-52) for whom intuitive judgement was the first act of human knowledge. It is by intuition that God is present to our minds and his presence is of an archetypal nature both innately and universally. (For his writings see Oxford Dic. of Christian Church, 1958, 560). For the text in Acts 17:28 see Bertil Gärtner op.cit 222f, where he argues that St. Paul uses the quotation from a Greek poet in a different sense to a different purpose; cf. also ib. 164ff.

[116] Laeuchli, op.cit 36f.

[117] Cf. B. Gärtner, op.cit 190 where he argues that the quotation is from Aratus. But see Paul Schubert, "The Place of the Areopagus Speech in the composition of Acts," Transition in Biblical Scholarship, ed. by J. C. Rylaardsdam, 1968. Gärtner throughout argues that contrary to Stoic immanence the biblical position is to stress the radical difference between Creator and creature, cf. ib. 182ff.

[118] Cf. The God I Want, ed. by James Mitchell, 1967. Some of these essays are conditioned by Christian presuppositions, but are mainly characterized by adjustment to the human condition: "The God I want must be real . . . The God who is not real to me, revealing and operating all that is deepest and most personal in my being, is no God to me." (Bernardine Bishop, p. 141)

[119] Laeuchli, op.cit 181. This becomes especially evident in relation to the Person of Jesus Christ. Modern Gnosis which stresses man's ascent to God and Christian belief as "the heightening of the self-consciousness of man" (cf. Leslie Dewart, Foundations of Belief, 1969, 484) ultimately ends in philosophical abstraction.

[120] Cf. the important admission by T. R. Glover: "If Christianity had depended on the Logos, it would have followed the Logos to the limbo whither went the Aeon and Aporrhoia and Spermaticos Logos. But that the Logos has not perished is due to the one fact that with the Cross it has been borne through the ages on the shoulders of Jesus." (op.cit. 303f). This is a notable statement considering Glover's liberal theology.

[121] Laeuchli, 185; note what T. R. Glover says about Clement's identification of the Logos with the historic Jesus of Nazareth, in spite of his professed eclecticism, op.cit. 293.

[122] Cf. Hubert Box, The World & God: The Scholastic Approach to Theism, 1934, pp. 130, 47f, 205. Ferré lays it down as a rule "any revelation concerning the ultimate at its centre must constitute a universal word." (op.cit. 17) Erwin Valyi Nagy uses the phrase "universal word" but always in the strictly historic sense: the Word which became flesh (cf. E. V. Nagy & Heinrich Ott, Church as Dialogue, E.T. 1969. This is the difference. For Barth, the word of God is a man, (cf. Hollon's fascination with a formula which answers all problems and closes all gaps is understandable, but its very comprehensiveness makes it theologically unacceptable for it builds God into the Cosmos. (cf. E. W. Hollon, op.cit. 229)

[123] John Baillie, Our Knowledge of God, 1939, 254.

[124] Kaj Baago's criticism of *Heilsgeschichte* rests upon a misunderstanding. He sees in it a tendency to point to "something which **has** happened instead of a message about something that **is** happening." (IMR, April, 1966, 222f). But this overlooks the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the meaning of contemporaneity of the Word of God. For the importance of *Heilsgeschichte* as the necessary context for Fulfillment, see William A. Bardslee "The Motif of Fulfillment in the Eschatology of the Synoptic Gospels," Transitions in Biblical Scholarship, ed. by J. C. Rylaardsdam, 1968, 187f.

[125] Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Questions of Religious Truth, 1967, 85.

[126] Emil Brunner, Revelation & Reason, E.T., 1947, 318f. But to give Brunner his due, for him Truth in Christian terms is essentially personal and relates to the historic fact of Jesus Christ; ib. 28, 36, 148ff; cf. also The Word & the World, E.T., 1931, 27. His mistake lies in extending the Logos concept to cover every function of the intellect.

[127] For the religion of the Dogon tribe see Marcel Griaule, Conversations with Ogotemmeli: An Introduction to Dogon Religious Ideas, E.T., 1965.

[128] ib. 137; cf. Ib. 204.

[129] De caritate, 9. 17.

[130] Cf. T. F. Torrance, op.cit. 130ff.

[131] Cf. Laeuchli, op.cit. 84f and notes. "It is both deceitful and inconsistent," writes Gordon D. Kaufman, "on the one hand to justify talk about God on the grounds of our limitedness, and then, on the other, to transcend those limits in order to spell out in some detail the structure of reality that lies beyond them." Theology, he points out, is frequently guilty of this contradiction. (On the meaning of "God," New Theology, No. 4, 1967, 78f).

[132] "We cannot reach the Divine merely by way of inference, not even if the inference be analogical in character. By no idealization of the creaturely can we transcend the creaturely." (M. Kemp Smith, Is the Divine Existence Credible, 13f, quoted by J. Baillie, op.cit. 254).

[133] Cf. Karl Heim, Christian Faith & Natural Science, 1953, 239f.

[134] Cf. J. Jocz, "The Invisibility of God & the Incarnation" CJT, July 1958.

[135] Cf. Augustine's exposition of the text in The Lord's Sermon on the Mount.

[136] Cf. Interpreter's Commentary, s.v. Except for his typical American pragmatism which inevitably leads to anthropocentrism, Prof. Sellers' insistence upon human action as the only valid test of faith has a genuine prophetic ring about it. (Cf. James Sellers, Theological Ethics, 1966). For the American cult of success see M. K. Thomas, Revolution & Redemption, 1955.

[137] Gärtner rightly understands Old Testament knowledge of God as "covenant knowledge" cf. op.cit. 85ff.

[138] Abraham J. Heschel, God in Search of Man, 1955, 127f; cf. ib. 136ff.

[139] The RSV is less felicitous in its rendering: "I shall understand . . . as I have been understood." This psychologism introduces a nuance which is more Greek than Hebrew. For the Hebrew "to know" is more than "to understand."

[140] Tillich experienced the all-powerful and the all-knowing God as an oppressive Presence; (cf. The Courage To Be, 184f) but for the Apostle Paul this a source of comfort. This is the difference between the Christian man and the post-Christian man.

[141] Luther, Comm. on the Ep. to the Gal., (ed. by J. P. Fallows) n.d. 260.

[142] J. B. Lightfoot, St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, 1966, s.v.

[143] C. S. Lewis in a sermon on the Weight of Glory rightly understands 1 Cor. 8:3 as being "noticed" by God: "For glory means good report with God, acceptance by God, response, acknowledgement, and welcome into the heart of things." (Screwtape Proposes a Toast & Other Pieces, 1965, 105).

[144] Niebuhr well criticizes the modern version of Christianity: "a God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgement through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross." (H. R. Niebuhr, The Kingdom of God in America, 1956, 193).

[145] For the Chinese see W. T. Chan, "The Concept of Man in Chinese Thought," The Concept of Man, ed. by S. Radhakrishnan & P. T. Raju, 1960, 163. For the Jewish position see: The Encycl. of the Jewish Religion, 1965, 141; also C. G. Montefiore & H. Loewe, A Rabbinic Anthology, 1938, 689 n. 96.

[146] John Baillie, op.cit. 213.

[147] This is the essential question for liberal theology. von Harnack asks: "When all history seems to be a ceaseless process of growth and decay, is it possible to pick out a single phenomenon and saddle it with the whole weight of eternity, especially when it is a phenomenon of the rest?" (Christianity & History, E.T., 1896, 18.) He proceeds to quote Lessing's objection: "historical truth, which is accidental in its character, can never become the proof of the truths of Reason, which are necessary" (ib. 19f). Glick comments on this: "From this principle it was deduced that all historical religions are in reality only the one, true, natural religion in disguise, whose content is Reason." (The Impact of Church Upon its Culture, ed. by J. C. Brauer, 1968, 369.

[148] Cf. Norman Pittenger, God in Process, 1967, 101. Alex Martin rightly connects the ultimacy of the Gospel with the messianic function of Jesus as the Judge (cf. The Finality of Jesus for Faith, 1933, 183ff).

[149] ib. 106. The Christological result of Pittenger's theology leads him into a strange situation where he is left with the Holy Trinity plus a minor god called Jesus; cf. ib. 27, 44, 48, 75. This is the inevitable outcome of an adoptionist position as Barth has so poignantly pointed out. (cf. Church Dog. I/2, 149f, 161. For a further deviation from the Christological centre, cf. John Robinson's article: "In what sense is Christ unique?" He accepts Dorothée Sölle's definition of the "implicit Christ," the "greater Christ" by which is meant "the education of the consciousness" (The Christian Century, Nov. 25/70.

[150] Gordon D. Kaufman rightly insists that God is the reality which limits us on all sides: "Only on the ground that God had in fact revealed himself could it be claimed he existed; only if there were and is some sort of movement from beyond the limit to us, making known to us through the medium of the limit the reality of that which lies beyond, could we be in a position to speak of such reality at all; only if God actually 'spoke' to men could we know there is a God." (New Theology, No. 4, 97); cf. also John Hick, Christianity at the Centre, 1968, ch. 2, which deals with the question: How do we know?

[151] IMR, July, 1964, 284.

[152] H. R. Niebuhr very aptly said: “Revelation is not a development of our religious ideas but their continuous conversion. God’s self-disclosure is that permanent revolution in our religious life by which all religious truths are painfully transformed . . .” The Meaning of Revelation, 1966, 182).

[153] Ch. Dog. III/3, 64f.

[154] Cf. Edmund S. Wehrle, Britain, China & the Anti-missionary Riots, 1891-1900, 1966; also the review in IMR Jan. l967, 113ff.

[155] “Faith in God” writes Schillebeeckx, “is not banally self-evident, but demands essentially a fundamental metanoia, a conversion," Theology, LXXI, 266.

[156] Cf. Leslie Dewart’s plea for a transformation from apologetic Christianity to ecumenical Christianity in the widest sense based upon the experience of religious consciousness. (The Foundations of Belief, 1969, 16ff).

[157] P. Tillich, Biblical Religion & the Search for Ultimate Reality, 1955, 3. Peter L. Berger regrets that he ever made the distinction between religion and Christianity - he thinks he knows better now. Religion to him is both a projection of man (Feuerbach) and also a reflection of man’s awareness of the supernatural world of the spirit - the beyond. For him there is thus no difference between the Christian faith and religion. (cf. A Rumour of Angels, 1969, 55 & note; cf. 64f). By contrast cf. Schillebeeckx’s distinction between the “God of Religion” and the “God of Faith," op.cit. 266f.

[158] K. Barth, Ch. Dog. I/2, 280ff.

Chapter IX - The Dividing Line

From the New Testament categories of historicity, particularity and ultimacy the transition to the ongoing process of history constitutes a major theological problem.

Ernst Troeltsch in Die Absolutheit des Christentums u. d. Religionsgeschichte is concerned with this very question. He points to the more recent Christian apologists who adopt the principle that Christianity is the normative religion. The essential elements inchoate in the other religions are supposed to be present in the Christian faith to the fullest measure. This was the position of Schleiermacher and Hegel. Troeltsch describes this method as "*evolutionistische Apologetik.*" It means that "all religion is truth from God, depending upon the state of spiritual evolution, but there must also be the highest and last stage," this is reached by Christianity.[1] Troeltsch is only too aware of the inconsistencies involved in this view.

The evolutionary principle ill fits the Christian pattern on two counts: traditionally, the Church has never regarded herself as the end result of a gradual process but rather as the miraculous result of the messianic event. But what is even more important is the implied contradiction between ultimacy and evolution. Furthermore, the ancient Church was not concerned with the religions and refused to take them seriously.[2] For these and similar reasons Troeltsch rejects the the idea that Christianity is to be presented as the religious norm. He sees the main obstacle of identification in the principle of historicity.[3] For Troeltsch the historical contingency which produces the individual and the unique is not something which can be related to what already exists, it rather emanates from the transcendental depths of history as a new creation (*Neuschöpfung*).[4] This however is a difficult solution: first, because there can be nothing new which is completely detached from the old; second, because it lacks the quality of ultimacy after which we are striving.

Troeltsch's main difficulty derives from his nineteenth century idealism which is essentially anthropocentric: the religions reveal a universally-valid normative goal of a transcendental nature which "breaks out" from the depths of the human soul and points to "the absolute values of reality founded in the inward life of man."[5] In order to detach the absolute from the transient Troeltsch differentiates between culture as an ongoing process and religion which is an experience of the divine and therefore points to an eternal and enduring reality. Troeltsch thus tries to have it both ways: history deals with the individual and the unique; but at the same time the individual and the unique reveal what is universally valid (*das Allgemeingiltige*).[6] On this premise he is able to retain both the validity of the religions and the special position of Christianity, not as the acme (*Hohepunkt*) but as the point of convergence (*Konvergenzpunkt*) of all the valid events within the religion.

In the end, Troeltsch finds it impossible to sustain the claim to ultimacy on the part of Christianity: the possibility of supersession cannot be excluded. It is possible "that a higher revelation will uncover yet profounder postulates."[7] The effort to anchor the absolute to one single point in history Troeltsch sees both as a logical contradiction and an historical impossibility. It is an illusion (*wahn*) which we must not hesitate to surrender.[8] Christians need not be frightened when they discover that their religion is nourished by earlier religions, syncretistic compromise, Hellenistic ethics and religious philosophy. All these are equally valid revelations and come from God. Plato, Epictetus and Plotinus are as authentic as are the biblical bearers of revelation. All of these make their contribution in the ongoing process of history towards the highest and the best.[9]

We have made use of Troeltsch for he is a typical example of a philosophical theologian who tries to cope with the problem of ultimacy as a Christian supposition. In the case of Newman we meet a similar attempt though the latter is motivated by a different objective.

Newman's purpose was to prove to Protestant critics that Roman Catholic doctrinal accretions are a natural and inevitable development from the original message of the Gospel. To make his point he starts with the assumption that Christianity is first and foremost an "idea." By "idea" he does not mean an abstract concept, but rather a powerful spiritual influence upon the human mind. But because it is an "idea" it is inevitably open to a variety of interpretations.[10] For this reason Christianity appears under a variety of aspects: it can be considered from the point of view of philosophy, ethics, politics, etc. Under all these aspects it is exposed to development and growth. This is the very nature of ideas; like physical organisms they germinate and grow until they reach perfection. This process Newman understands more as a biological analogy than a matter of logical evolution.

Newman knows well enough that such a process may result in corruption. But he thinks this could only happen when the laws of normal development are disturbed. As long as there is a willingness to follow the natural lines of growth, ideas will develop in the right direction. To verify his theory, he sets up seven tests of true development. For our purpose we are especially interested in the fifth test which deals with the question of assimilation. The life of an idea depends upon growth; growth depends upon the ability to assimilate all that is congenial to it. This is the rule of life: "The stronger and more living is an idea, that is, the more powerful hold it exercises on the minds of men, the more able is it to dispense with safeguards" and to follow its natural line of development.[11] Christianity, therefore, as an idea "will in course of time develop in a series of ideas connected and harmonious with one another, and unchangeable and complete."[12] And this, according to Newman, is exactly what happened in the case of the Roman Church.

It is unfortunate that Newman's effort was mainly apologetic, directed towards justifying accretions in Roman doctrine. But he touches upon several vital issues which concern us; ideas do undergo change; assimilation is an historic fact; theology is an ongoing discipline and is in constant flux. In this situation, as pointed out by Vernon Storr, Newman had to make his choice. Traditionally theology assumes three postures: either it denied development altogether; or it took the position that the Church only made explicit what was already implicit in its original message; or else it maintained that new light was vouchsafed from God as an additional Grace.[13] Newman was dissatisfied with all these views; he preferred the principle of organic development. In doing so he anticipated Darwin's Origin of Species by about fifteen years.[14]

The weakness in Newman's theory is not just its inconsistency as urged by V. F. Storr. His vacillation from biological to logical evolution is only a methodological flaw. His real weakness lies in the basic premise that revelation is definable in terms of truth. For him "Christianity" is first and foremost an "idea." Though Newman's meaning of "idea" is expanded to cover a spiritual and potent reality yet it is and remains conceptual. He thus fails to anchor the Gospel more securely in the historic event. But the Jesus of the Gospels is not a preacher of a new philosophy. In the last resort, His greatest achievement is the life He lived. True enough, that life can be viewed from different perspectives and interpreted in a variety of ways. But there is the peculiarly Christian interpretation upon which hangs the meaning of the Gospel.

Our ideas about Jesus may vary from age to age but the historic fact remains unalterable: there was this man of Nazareth who lived in Palestine and died under Pontius Pilate. It is the significance we

ascribe to this Person as a decisive factor in our relationship to God which directly bears upon the question of ultimacy. The *dogmata* of the Church serve no other purpose than to test and to guard the unique importance it attaches to this Man.[15] There are other assessments of the "Nazarene" such as that of Jews, Muslims, and Humanists but these are of quite a different nature. It is not so much the doctrine, as the fixity of revelation to a point in history which determines the Christian position. For the outsider it makes little difference whether the man Jesus is an historic person or not, what counts is His teaching. If there never were such a man there would be other teachers, heroes and prophets who could fill the gap.

Even within the historic Church there is a wide range of opinion concerning this man. Ebionite Christology, Arian Christology, Sabellian Christology, etc., are expressions of theological variants of the Christian faith. These all have one point in common: the historic reality of the messianic Event. In as far as this Event is seen as the breaking in of the New Age, ultimacy is the implied assumption. In this sense heretical Christianity still moves within the area where the messianic Event is taken seriously. It would seem therefore that the real test of Christianity is not in its orthodox formulation of doctrine but in respect to God's ultimate dealing with humanity in and through the Person of Jesus Christ. The "growth of legal doctrine" with all its syncretistic accretions is only a manifestation of the groping uncertainties of the human mind. From this human condition there can be no escape. Man will always see as in a mirror dimly; only *in patria* shall we see face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). There is however, a fixed point in history, namely the messianic Event. All religious truth, from the Christian point of view, must be tested and measured in relation to this Event. Any "truth" which obscures or displaces the Person of the Messiah is false. "Truth" which makes Jesus Christ redundant is nothing but error. In the last resort Christian truth is not dogma but the Christ Himself. Any Church dogma which does not measure up to this standard is heresy. To the Christian, Jesus is both the origin and source of man's only knowledge of God. We do not say that the religions have no knowledge at all, but we do say that both in content and quality it is different knowledge and rests upon different assumptions.

The difference is not merely a matter of degree. It is not so that the religions just lack what Christ came to augment. The difference is radical: the religions must recognize the ambiguity of all human endeavour and listen to the call of repentance. This is the only condition the Gospel imposes. By repentance we mean what the bible means: *teshubah* - turning, returning, *metanoia*, change of direction. It means surrender of the religious mood for the living God. Such openness for God demands self-denial and surrender. It spells willingness to abandon fortified positions and to listen afresh. This is what the reformers meant by justification by grace alone. The Church dare not demand this attitude from others unless she is willing to lead the way: "The symbol of the Cross" says Tillich, "stands against the self-elevation of a concrete religion to ultimacy including Christianity." He regards "this radical self-criticism of Christianity" as the condition of a universal appeal.[16] What Prof. John McIntyre demands of theology, "open-ness," implies in equal measure to the Church.[17] But this open-endedness must be vertical before it is horizontal - it must be openness to the Gospel before it is openness to the world.[18]

Openness on the part of the Church does not abolish the exclusiveness of the Gospel. If we accept the messianic Event as a fixed point in history we cannot pretend that there are equally valid events. We thus are faced with a major difficulty: "if one is concerned that there is no salvation except in the name of Christ, how many untold millions or even billions are bound to be lost before the last man has at last learned of Him?" asks Charles Braden.[19] He goes on to say that at least two thirds of the human race have probably never even heard the name of Jesus through no fault of their own. What is the Christian answer?

Let it be said at once that no answer is Christian unless it is informed by genuine compassion and true love. Too many "Christians" were and still are too quick to consign the rest of humanity to hell. No Christian can afford to sit in judgement upon others and pronounce the ultimate verdict which remains God's prerogative. Be it remembered that the Master after whom whey are called refused to judge (cf. John 12:47; cf. Mtt. 7:1). Salvation is not for man to dispense and how God deals with others is His own secret. But this does not absolve the Church from her commitment to the Gospel. What Berkouwer said in respect to divided Christendom[20] applies with even greater force to the Christian attitude regarding the other religions: "pluriformity" must not be used as an excuse to relieve our conscience from the responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel to the world - and primarily to the religions.

1. The Dialogue

Man is frequently tempted to withdraw to himself and to fall into a monologue. This happens when he refuses to listen to others and is only willing to hear his own voice. We know however from experience that our intellectual and spiritual life depends upon genuine encounter with other people. This is more than a social necessity, our very humanity depends upon it. We may be tempted to seek the company of likeminded people but true dialogue requires meeting the other-minded, i.e. those who disagree with us. Such meeting in question and answer is both an enrichment and a challenge.

No two people are alike; man always learns from the other man. The teacher is at the same time a learner and the learner has something to teach. To pretend that one is only either teacher or learner falsifies the human condition and stultifies meaningful encounter. Prof. Slater has posed the question: Can Christians learn from other Religions?[21] The answer is in the positive: they certainly can. Indeed, Christians not only can but must be willing to learn from others. The posture of teacher without the humility of learner is unbecoming of a Christian believer. At the human level man is always both receiver and giver; any other relationship is self-defeating.

The opposite to an open encounter is neutrality. The neutral attitude is marked by indifference: "no give - no take" is here the motto, "I will leave you alone if you leave me alone" is a subhuman attitude. The truly human attitude is the acknowledgement of co-responsibility: each man is the other man's keeper. This means dialogical encounter in which both parties are willing to share. Such an encounter requires an open attitude devoid of all suspicion. Here persons meet as equals in the business of revealing to each other their innermost concerns. Intellectual honesty and human warmth are prerequisites for a meaningful dialogical exchange.

Unfortunately, Christian missionaries have not always lived up to this high ideal. They frequently displayed a spirit of "triumphalism" with the will to conquer.[22] This lack of humility is not reminiscent of the Master who only came to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mtt. 20:28). The present lull in the missionary enterprise of the Church affords a God-given opportunity for re-examination as to our motives and objectives in this enterprise. There is a real need for a radical re-appraisal of the meaning of missions. Such rethinking is not a matter of strategy but of theological restatement as to the meaning of Church.[23]

The alliance of Christianity with Western civilization has proved a major obstacle to a genuine encounter with the Eastern nations. The Church has too often been used as a political instrument to allay the suspicion that the missionary is not the agent of a foreign power who uses religion as a cover for less honourable designs. With the fall of colonialism Western influence has faded and Christianity is looked

upon as the religion of the former conquerer. With opposition to Christian influence goes hand in hand a revival of native culture and national sentiment. In this atmosphere no true dialogue is possible. We now have a false situation where pseudo-dialogue is taking place. The Church still desires to continue her former endeavour but not any more in the direct service of the Gospel. Instead of missionaries she is now sending specialists: physicians, agriculturalists, technicians. The new policy is supported by something like the following argument: Our less-fortunate brethren are in need of help. We are under obligation to act in the spirit of the Good Samaritan, asking nothing in return. Let Christian service bear witness to our faith and let us leave it at that. Service rendered in the name of Christ is self-explanatory.

This is not to belittle the excellent self-denying service rendered by dedicated men and women. All we want to say is that their position is not conducive to dialogue. Christian visitors to foreign lands have certainly many opportunities for witness to their faith both directly and indirectly. But in the eyes of the native population these people are first and foremost representatives of western civilization and the fact that they happen to be Christian is only incidental. Their base of operation is strictly limited and they can only speak in a private capacity; they do not represent the Church but their profession.[24] It is with this new situation in view that we have to reconsider the theological foundation of mission.

a) It is an odd fact that those who advocate religious neutrality are also the advocates of religious dialogue. They want it both ways: do not disturb the other man's views but at the same time keep on talking. The principle of religious neutrality rests on the conviction that in essence the different religions are only variations of Religion as such. There is thus a common denominator which links the different cults. In Hocking's words: "The several universal religions are already fused, so to speak, at the top."[25] We have already seen that some writers go much further and relate the religions not only at the "top" but at the bottom. The only difference they see is in name but not in essence. Charles Braden recounts his experience at a service in a Buddhist temple. While listening to the sermon it occurred to him that he could have said all this himself "with only slight changes of proper names."[26] But if the difference is only a matter of nomenclature what justification can there be for a missionary approach?

Strange to relate, Braden is not too happy about the abandoning of the missionary motive, but it is difficult to see on what grounds. His godly counsel to the religions is the working out of an amicable coexistence on the basis of mutual appreciation and understanding.[27] Does this mean a neutral attitude of tolerance without dialogue?

It is a fact that true dialogue requires conviction and not neutrality.[28] Men ought to be able to speak to each other from where they stand, yet without envy, jealousy and disrespect. If we dare not challenge each others' views so as not to come to blows, we have failed in mutual trust which is the very prerequisite of human encounter. It is at this point that our true humanity is tested.

Vladimir Solovyov (1853-1900), the well-known Russian philosopher-theologian, cites the case of a certain abbot who expressed the hope that he would live to see Huguenots, Masons and Jews made into cheap carpets, so that he, a good Christian, would have the privilege of trampling upon them.[29] In his discussion of War and Christianity Solovyov gives expression to quite a different spirit which is more in keeping with the spirit of Christ. We quote one short passage to show the meaning of Christian tolerance: "Everyone who believes and at the same time is free from an excess of stupidity, faint-heartedness and heartlessness must look with sincere goodwill on every adversary and denier of religious truth who is frank, open, and, in short honest. At the present time this is such a rarity that it is difficult for me to tell you with what special pleasure I look upon a declared enemy of Christianity. I am

almost prepared to see in every one of them a future Apostle Paul, while in some zealots of Christianity I involuntarily seem to see Judas the traitor."

Solovyov was writing against a different background. Times have changed since World War One; today it would seem that the problem is not so much bigotry as indifference. But at rock-bottom we still resent people with views different from our own. Yet we do not treat the other man seriously unless we concede him the right to be wrong. R. Hamilton regards this as the mark of the Protestant ethos.[30] It is unfortunate that tolerance is frequently taken for indifference: a *laissez-faire* attitude that one view is as good as another. To quote Ninian Smart again, there is no clear-cut way of "this is true and this is false."[31] But tolerance need not mean compromise; it ought to mean love and forbearance. The answer to a multiform society is neither indifference nor uniformity but a challenge to dialogical engagement. True dialogue is kept alive by opposing views, not for the sake of opposition but for the sake of conscience. Men without convictions have nothing to talk about. There is also no point in talking if the prior agreement is to differ. Only when people truly differ have they something to say to each other. Conviction is thus a prerequisite to the meeting of persons.

Like-minded people meet to confirm what they already accept. This we call edification not dialogue. Only partners of differing views can create a dialogical situation. In a true sense the missionary task is strictly dialogical: men of conviction speak to each other in open conversation. On Christian suppositions such conversation, if it is carried on in the Presence of God, carries salvific meaning.

God uses human speech for mutual blessing. In between the human words, interposing, disrupting and vivifying, is the Word of eternal Life. In the last resort, all Christian witness depends upon this conviction.

b) The problem regarding the interpenetration of civilization and religion must be accepted as a fact. There can be no separation of the one from the other. In history these two phenomena go together. Only complete secularization could break the tie; and even this is doubtful. Nations live by the sanction of religion and the religions guard the sanctity of the nations. In the course of time, ethnic traditions acquire religious importance and a religion acquires national significance. An outstanding example is the role of Judaism in the life of the Jewish people. Here the identification between religion and nation is so absolute as to form an indivisible unity. What is called "Jewish culture" is to a large extent ethnic separateness sanctioned by religious custom. Separatism is the means of ethnic survival and religion serves as the protecting wall. Assimilation sets in at the moment the wall is pierced and the individual finds himself unprotected. It is no exaggeration to say that Judaism exists for the preservation of the nation and the nation for the preservation of Judaism.[32]

We have used the case of Judaism because of its close proximity to the Church. The other religions are similarly rooted in ethnic tradition. Even in the case of Ghandi, in spite of his respect for Jesus, his admiration of the Sermon on the Mount and his love of some of the Christian hymns, he was profoundly motivated by ethnic tradition (*swadeshi*).[33]

The principle of *swadeshi* somewhat corresponds to the German: *Artgemässigkeit*. This was the term widely used by the so-called German Christians in Hitler's Reich. It was meant to express suitability for German consumption: Christianity so formulated as to conform with the demands of racial philosophy. All Semitic "accretions" had to be removed and Jesus presented as a typical Aryan hero. There is thus a certain analogy between *Artgemässigkeit* and the concept of *swadeshi*.

Ninian Smart, Raymond Penikkar, Charles Braden and many others, argue that the Gospel is not wedded to Western culture. Why should not other cultures be allowed to develop a form of Christianity more in keeping with their own traditions and thought-forms? they ask. It ought to be possible, they say, to speak of Hindu Christians, Buddhist Christians, Muslim Christians, as we already speak of Jewish Christians.[34] Western Christianity is itself a compromise and the same allowances ought to be made to others. How justifiable is this point of view?

Braden rightly points to the fact that history knows of no radical break with the past. No matter how great the upheaval we always carry over the inheritance of past ages: Christianity itself is the result of a synthesis of several traditions. He asks: why should not the same principle be allowed to operate "in the present age as contact is made with a new set of religions such as Shintoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, etc., in their numerous forms?"[35] There are two difficulties with this proposition. The first one Braden admits himself: the syncretistic process in history is never deliberately planned; "ordinarily" he observes, "syncretism occurs at the unconscious level." Braden therefore has some hesitation about a premeditated compromise.

But there is another flaw to the argument that is much more serious: how justified is it to compare the early accommodation with Greek philosophy to a compromise with the world religions? We have already seen that the early Church though friendly towards philosophy was adamant in the case of pagan religion. On this score there was no weakening whatsoever. To become a Christian meant to renounce and abjure the pagan gods. It is only on the more recent assumption that all religion, no matter of what provenance, expresses genuine revelation, that the suggestion has become possible. Be it noted that Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, etc. are not ethnic designations but adjectival nouns. One can see how a man or woman of Indian blood can be a Christian, but how a Hindu can be a Christian is difficult to understand, except by a compromise. If "Jewish Christianity" stands for a hybrid amalgam of Judaism and Christianity it is equally objectionable.[36] In a more subtle way the same problem arises with "cultural Christianity" when the synthesis between culture and faith neutralizes faith and elevates culture to a religious dimension.[37]

There is however a biblical answer to our dilemma. The parable about the merchant in search of costly pearls was told with a view to this very situation. The Kingdom of God is a challenge to both religion and culture. The demand of the Gospel calls for a break with tradition. The pearl of great value demands a sacrifice: when he found the pearl of great value, the merchant went and sold all that he had and bought it (Mtt. 13:45). In biblical terms one can only serve one master at one time (Mtt. 6:24). The Gospel calls for radical decision: "he who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me . . ." (Mtt. 11:37). Christians were confronted with this choice from the very beginning. Paul had to surrender not only his Pharisaism but his religious respectability before he could follow the crucified Lord. The Letter to the Hebrews calls upon Jewish believers to go outside the camp and to bear the shame for Christ's sake (Heb. 13:13). Any other solution is cheap grace and unworthy of the Master. He who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is unfit for the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:62). The Gospel places before man a radical choice; as long as the Kingdom is only a second option we trifle with it. In this sense the revelation of God in Christ is indeed "discontinuous" even with "what is best in the 'other' religions" and in all cultures. The Gospel calls for the re-valuation of all our values.[38]

There will always be tension between our cultural heritage and the Gospel challenge: it is in this context that the decision of faith is made. In this respect the mission-field serves as a wholesome challenge to a sluggish and compromising Church.

2. The Nature of Grace

There are two concepts of grace which run parallel in Christian tradition. The one was defined by St. Augustine and the other by St. Thomas. Both of these have their roots in the Bible: on the one hand grace is understood as a gift to the undeserving; on the other hand grace is understood as a favour in return for merit. There are sufficient texts in the Old Testament and the New Testament to support both these views. Only theological predilection will decide which is the more genuinely befitting the Gospel message. The Augustinian interpretation moves in the direction of radical grace: *gratia nisi gratis est, non est gratia*.[39] St. Thomas stands for the cooperation of grace and nature: *gratia non tollit naturam sed perficit*.[40]

From a theological point of view the questions raised by the validity of religion will be ultimately decided by one of the two concepts of grace. If grace is reward for merit as Pelagius insisted then man need never appear before God empty-handed. He can always fall back upon his moral and religious achievements. His cultural values, spiritual insights, aesthetic aspirations can lift him to a higher plane than mere physical existence. As the bearer of the *imago Dei* he can appear before the Judge of all the earth with something to show in his favour. If there is at all meaning in growth and development of persons, man may point to the talent he has received from the hands of his Maker and give account how he has made use of it (cf. Mtt. 25:14ff).

There is much that we may be proud of: we entered upon history as savages with crude ideas and primitive morals. Anthropologists suspect that the higher religions evolved from ancestor worship and cannibalistic rites.[41] But man has refined his religion, organized society, developed culture, art and science and built up mighty civilizations. He has harnessed the forces of nature and is on the verge of conquering outer space. True, he is still far from perfect but he thinks himself well on the way towards ultimate fulfilment. Having reached the limit of biological evolution he is now moving up the ladder of "psycho-social" evolution.[42] This remarkable achievement Huxley attributes to two factors: chance and self-determination. More pious souls would argue differently: man is God's creation; he is the bearer of His Image; he has been endowed with special gifts by his Maker. Religion, philosophy, culture, science, art, are all the result of God-given potentials and are therefore fruits of His Spirit. To deny this is not only to debase man but to insult his Maker. In this perspective grace spells co-operation between God and man. There is here an implied partnership where God helps those who help themselves.[43] Grace is conceived as an additional help in man's noble effort to achieve the ultimate. Grace does not disrupt nature but assists it. No radical break is necessary.

The other concept of grace is different *in toto*. It starts with the premise that man is a rebel at heart. He is God's fugitive hiding from justice. Man is bent upon entrenchment in order to secure his position. Religion, culture, science, art, yes, even his moral values, are fortifications in his struggle for autonomy. He needs these citadels to defy his Maker and to make a bid for ultimate power. There is a demonic streak in his make-up which propels him towards the Promethean attempt to challenge God. What man really wants is to set himself up as a god, in fact he is already playing this role in the terrestrial arena.[44]

In this perspective grace is not continuous with nature but disrupts it. It is not to be interpreted horizontally but vertically. A rebel never cooperates unless he becomes reconciled. True enough, man has been given talents but he uses these for selfish and unworthy ends. History bears grim witness to the fact that man has squandered his heritage and has used his advantages for fratricide, destruction and self-aggrandizement.[45]

The radical aspect of grace is already the operative principle in Paul's theology. From the fact that Christ died for sinners the Apostle concludes that there can be no other justification for God's mercy except His unbounded grace. It is in the light of that grace that man discovers himself what he really is: a blasphemer, a murderer, a rebel. As such he stands condemned before the Righteous God. Even at his best all his righteousness are but filthy rags (cf. Is. 64:6). If he be honest with himself he has to admit that he has nothing to plead except mercy.

The Gospel means exactly this: God stooping down to the sinner's level in order to stand by him and with him. Paul summed it up in one striking sentence: God in Christ justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5). Such grace is an offence, a *skandalon* to the religious man who puts his trust in his religion. The ancient proverb says: he who justifies the wicked and condemns the righteous is an abomination unto the Lord (Prov. 17:15). But the Gospel says: the Son of Man came to seek the lost (Mtt. 18:11).[46] Paul is even more explicit: in his view no one is righteous in the Presence of God (cf. Rom. 3:9ff). In fact the pious Pharisee is worse off than the contrite publican (Luke 18:l0ff). It was publicans and harlots who entered the Kingdom while the pious and good condemned the Son of Man (Mtt. 21:31f).

Grace in the Gospel context takes on an extreme character. Already in the Old Testament the Hebrew noun *hesed* frequently carries the same connotation. The RSV saw fit to paraphrase *hesed* with "steadfast love" for no single word could convey its true meaning. *Hesed* here means undeviating love for those who least deserve it. God extends his loving-kindness to sinners not because of their merit but because of His love. "'Steadfast love" means that God is not swayed from His determination to be our Father in spite of our waywardness. This is magnificently dramatized in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11ff). God does what Jesus expects his followers to do: He loves His enemies (Mtt. 5:44) and He loves them as sons. This is what the Bible means by the Covenant.[47]

Grace in the radical sense demands an acknowledgement of the true fact about man: he is helpless (ἀσθενής) and godless (ἀσεβής) (Rom. 5: 6). That Christ should die for such contradicts the usual values of society where only merit counts. This is how Paul reasoned: some people may be prepared to die for a righteous man, no one would even consider dying for sinners, but this is exactly what Jesus Christ did (Rom. 5:7). If the Cross is taken seriously all human values become questionable. Grace only becomes the key to history and man's destiny becomes tied up with the faithfulness of the Covenant-keeping God. Paul's vocabulary is significant: χάρις, χάρισμα, are variations of the same theme - God's free and unmerited grace (cf. Rom. 5:15ff).

It would be an easy solution to compromise and say that grace is both: horizontal and vertical; that it operates on both levels, in creation and in the Gospel; that religion is grace and that the Gospel is grace; that these are complementary; that the Gospel achieves what religion is about. But this is only a verbal solution, in life the situation is different. Here man lives in tension between religion and Gospel; between sin and forgiveness; between idols and the living God. Faced with the facts of history we always have to say two things: the Cross is judgement and the Cross is grace. Judgement means judgement of the whole man his religion included, in fact, especially his religion.[48] Jesus Christ was judged by religion and declared wanting; Jesus Christ is the judgement upon religion and declares it godless. This is the paradox of the Gospel. The solution is not "religionless" Christianity as suggested by some.[49] It is part of the human condition that man cannot help being religious: he is beset by religion and confronted by grace. It is in this dialectical situation that the decision of faith is made. Only at the point where he can say with St. Paul: "whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for Christ's sake" (Gal. 3:7), does he take the Gospel seriously. Any other response spells autonomy, self-righteousness and human pride.

In the existential context of human realities the controversy is not between Christianity and the religions, but between God and man.

Notes to Chapter IX

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[1] Ernst Troeltsch, Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religions-geschichte, 1901, 13.

[2] ib 20. Note Troeltsch's interesting remark: Christianity looked upon itself as "Offenbarung un nicht Religion." For Justin "the pagan gods are actively malevolent demons." (The Cambridge History of Later Greek & Early Medieval Philosophy, ed. by A. H. Armstrong, 1967, 165.)

[3] Cf. ib. 27, 29, 34, 39, etc.

[4] ib. 52. The Greeks were spared this problem by reason of their circular view of history. Aristotle asked: "How shall we define ,the terms 'before' and 'after'?" Here is his answer: "As (therefore) in the movement of the heavens and of each star there is a circle, what is there to prevent birth and death of the mortal from being of this nature? So that mortals are born and destroyed again? So they say there is a cycle in human affairs . . . If then, there is a circle, and a circle has neither beginning nor end, men would not be 'before' because they are nearer the beginning, nor should we be 'before' them, nor they 'before' us." (Problems, XVII, 2-3; Loeb Classical Lib., E.T. by W. S. Hett .

[5] The German sentence reads: "die unbedingte Werte des inneren Menschen begründete wirklichkeit." (ib. 64)

[6] ib. 72. 1n Hegelian terms it means "the super sensible, the eternal whatever we care to call it, (is) devoid of selfhood." Religion says Hegel "is consciousness of Absolute Being in general." (The Phenomenology of Mind, E.T. 1931, 685.)

[7] "dass eine höhere Offenbarung noch tiefere Postulate aufdecken möchte" (ib. 81; cf. 90). This is the hallmark of liberal theology; it cannot allow ultimacy within history. Lessing's problem is here repeated all over again: events cannot prove truths; truths belong to the non-event category; history is relative, divine revelation must be timeless. (Cf. Henry Chadwick, Lessing's Theological Writings, 1956, 31ff). D. F. Strauss repeated Lessing's objections to the uniqueness of a single historic event as of ultimate significance. The development of the human species rather than the perfection of one man, Jesus, is what really counts. (The Life of Jesus, 1835; cf. Das Leben Jesu, 1895 ed., 386ff) Pannenberg rightly sees that without the eschatological perspective of the Gospel the uniqueness of Christ is difficult to maintain within history. Only if in Jesus is the end anticipated can there be no further revelation from God. (cf. Revelation as History, E.T. 1968,142f).

[8] ib. 180

[9] ib. 90ff; cf. Dillenberger, God Hidden & Revealed, 1953, 161. "Where revelation is experienced, whether in the history of religions or in the experience of Christ, it must be taken seriously." Pittenger allows "finality" in a limited sense. The "event of Jesus Christ" he tells us, is not different from all other events: "there is continuity here, as elsewhere in the cosmos, there is also a place for novelty consisting in the fact that Jesus started something which had consequences but the word 'final' must be used with caution" ("Process Christology," Exp. Times, Oct. 1970, 8ff).

[10] John Henry Newman, An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, (n.d.) 21, mostly written before his conversion to Rome, cf. Encycl. of Rel. & Ethics, IX, 358b.

[11] ib. 40f.

[12] ib. op.cit. 49.

[13] Cf. V. F. Storr, The Development of Christian Doctrine in the Nineteenth Century, 1913, 305.

[14] op.cit. 295. Storr describes Newman's treatise as the first English attempt to apply the principle of evolution to theology. In the wider field of science Darwin was anticipated by several Christian writers, notably by Robert Chambers, the editor of Chambers' Journal, with his Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation (1844); cf. Robert E. D. Clark, Darwin: Before and After, 1948,. 46ff. For Newman, see J. Lewis May, Cardinal Newman, 1929, 55ff.

[15] Visser't hooft rightly sees a distinction "between fundamental decisions concerning the nature of the Christian faith and the doctrinal development of such decisions in the categories available at a particular moment of history" (S. E. Asia. J. of Theol., Jan. 1967, 15) But in practice such a distinction is exceedingly difficult to maintain.

[16] Paul Tillich, The Dynamics of Faith, 1957, 122, 125; H. Kraemer: "Christianity in toto is itself far from being a revelation of God. But where it shows at any rate some self-understanding, it looks towards the centre in Jesus Christ, who is God's revelation. That is the essential difference between Christianity and the rest of the religions." (Why Christianity of all Religions? 1962, 91; cf. also ib. 114ff).

[17] Cf. John McIntyre, "The Open-ness of Theology," New College Bulletin, Autumn, 1965. cf. also Heinrich Ott's remarks on "The Principle of Universal Intelligibility" in his article on "Language and understanding," New Theology, No. 4, 136ff.

[18] von Balthasar calls for complete fearlessness in the Christian encounter with the world - even to the point of the idols. But this can only be a valid call on the basis of his main thesis that God's revelation is not grounded in the world or in human nature. Whether "*universalismus von oben*" can avoid a dichotomy between history and revelation apart from the incarnate word, has yet to be shown. (cf. Balthasar, op.cit. 260f, 271).

[19] Charles Braden, "The Christian Encounter with the World Religions," Journal of Church & State, Autumn, 1965, 392f.

[20] Cf. G. C. Berkouwer, The Second Vatican Council & the New Catholicism, 1964, 218.

[21] Cf. Robert Lawson Slater, Can Christians learn from Other Religions? 1963. It is unfortunate that Prof. Slater's complete lack of dialectical perception prevents him from recognizing the tension between faith, religion and the religions. "Coming together of believers," no matter what they believe, seems to be his guiding principle.

[22] Cf. the unfortunate title of the book by James M. Thornburn, The Christian Conquest of India, 1906. As it happens Bishop J. M Thornburn was an American Episcopalian and not a British Anglican. But cf. the important work by Bishop Stephen Neill, Colonialism & Christian Missions, 1966, especially 412ff. Bp. Neill denies a deliberate connection between colonialization and the missionary enterprise. On the question of opposition to mission work and the martyrdom of missionaries, see John R. Crawford, "Protestant Missions in the Congo, 1960-65" IRM, Jan. 1966, especially pp. 94f; for the other side of the picture see Kaj Baago, "The Post-Colonial Crisis of Missions" ib. July 1966, 322ff; also Josef Glazik, 'The Meaning & Place of Missiology Today," ib. Oct. 1968, 459ff.

[23] Bp. Stephen Neill's excellent book: Call to Mission, 1970, raising the question of missions all over again. Though not a theological work it well states the ever present challenge for the Church.

[24] Cf. Stephen Neill's pertinent remarks on this subject, ib. 98f.

[25] W. E. Hocking, The Coming World Civilization, 1956, 51; see also his Hibbert Lectures: Living Religions & a World Faith, 1940, 190ff. For a summary of his views and criticisms see Gerald Cook, As Christians Face Rival Religions, 1962, 121ff, 142ff.

[26] Cf. Charles Braden, op.cit. 395.

[27] ib. 40.

[28] fC. David M. Gile, "The Secularization Debate Foreshadowed. Jerusalem 1928," IRM, July 1968, 357: "The missionary perspective requires fidelity to the Church's historic faith . . ." cf. also Henry Siegman, "Dialogue with Christians: A Jewish Dilemma," Judaism, Winter, 1971, 97.

[29] Cf. Vladimir Solovyov, War & Christianity, E.T. 1915, 41. The abbot's pious hopes have been tragically fulfilled in the case of the Jews. In Hitler's concentration camps their skin was used for making lampshades and their body-fat for the manufacture of soap.

[30] Kenneth Hamilton, The Protestant Way, 1956, 126.

[31] Soundings, 109. T. H. Huxley is credited with the sentence: "Their tolerance is large because their belief is small" (Cyril Bibby, The Essence of T. H. Huxley, 1967.

[32] In modern Israel matters appertaining to personal status are governed by rabbinic law. Here ethnic origin and religious coherence are so intertwined that those who fail with regard to the racial aspect of Judaism find themselves at grave disadvantage. For details see Abraham Carmel's essay: "The Proselyte - a Blessing or a Curse?" (Confrontation with Judaism, ed. by Philip Longworth, 1966, 113ff). Abraham Carmel (formerly Kenneth Charles Cox was a Roman Catholic priest converted to Judaism; see his autobiography: So Strange My Path, 1964).

[33] Cf. H. Kraemer, World Cultures & World Religions, 1960, 141f. Peter L. Berger derides "theological ethnocentrism" and favours "ecumenical consciousness" but at the same time does not advocate "theological Esperanto in which all traditions will be dissolved" (op.cit. l00ff) - so where do we go from here? Leave each other alone?

[34] Cf. Charles Braden, op.cit. 402; also Soundings, 249f.

[35] ib. 393ff.

[36] Judenchristen (lit. Jewish-Christians) is the German way of describing Christians of Jewish origin. But this is an ethnic and not a religious description. In English the phrase Hebrew Christian is the more acceptable designation in order to distinguish between ethnicity and religion. (cf. J. Jocz, "The Significance of the Hebrew Christian Position," The Hebrew Christian Quarterly, April 1945, 11. For the theological justification of the phrase "Hebrew Christian," see H. L. Leuner, The Hebrew Christian Quarterly, Autumn 1965, 82ff; see also J. Jocz, Theology of Election, 1958, 179ff.

[37] Cf. J. Jocz, Christians & Jews: Encounter & Mission, 1966, 24ff. Joan Metge discussing the question of "Christ & Culture" wisely remarks: "What we are really talking about - or should be - is not the relationship between Christ and culture, but between Christ and men-in-culture." (The S. E. Asia J. of Theol., Jan. 1967, 24).

[38] Cf. H. Kraemer, Why Christianity of All Religions?, 96. Heinrich Ott points out that the Christian faith is misunderstood when the 'claim to exclusiveness' is taken away from it. Such claim belongs to its essential structure; cf. New Theology, No. 4, 137. Cf. Berger's opposite view: God is not tied to "the particular historical events reported in the N. T." (op.cit. 115)

[39] Enchiridion, 107; cf. also De gratia et libero arbitrio, 19; Retractationes, 8: 1ff; 14:8, passim. The whole controversy with the Pelagians turned on this issue.

[40] Summa Theologica, Pt. i Q. 1 art. 8 reply 2. Etienne Gilson discusses the relation of nature to grace in relation to ethics: "Thomism does not ask us to choose between nature and grace, but to perfect nature by grace." (The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, 1956, 343). But it is the coordination of nature with grace which makes the difference. Not that Thomas knows nothing of the gratuity of grace. He frequently quotes Augustine. It is the general drift of his theology which distinguishes him from the Bishop of Hippo.

[41] Cf. Grant Allen, The Evolution of the Idea of God, 1904, 338ff.

[42] Cf. Julian Huxley's article in Sunday Times, "Man's place in Nature" reprinted by Eric Duthrie, Wild Company, Penguin ed. 1965, 33lff.

[43] This proverb occurs in Benjamin Franklin's Poor Richard's Almanack, (1757) as one of the maxims, but is already quoted by George Herbert, (1593-1632) and undoubtedly has a long history.

[44] Bertrand Russell, Power. A New Social Analysis, 1938, 9: "Every man would like to be God, if it were possible; some few find it difficult to admit the impossibility." This craving for ultimate power was Alfred Adler's basic principle in his psychology (cf. Understanding Human Nature, E.T., 1949). Russell selects four men in history whom he is prepared to trust with power: Buddha, Christ, Pythagoras and Galileo. (op.cit. 284)

[45] Cf. Robert Eisler, Man Into Wolf, 1951; Robert S. de Ropp, Science & Salvation, 1962; C. E. M. Joad, God & Evil, 1942. Karl Rahner's concept of "Implicit Christianity" though based upon the gratuity of grace fails to take account of the precariousness of the human condition. His distinction between "positive atheism" and "guilty atheism" makes no allowance for the more basic fact that man is essentially a rebel who refuses to be reconciled. Cf. K. Rahner, "Atheism & Implicit Christianity" Theology Digest, op.cit. 43ff.

[46] The RSV has put this text in the margin but it undoubtedly belongs to well-attested ancient tradition as can be seen from the parallel passage in Luke 19:10.

[47] Cf. J. Jocz, lhe Covenant, 1968, 54ff.

[48] Cf. Emil Brunner: “The original sin of man breaks out first of all, and mainly in his religion.” op.cit. 264. Seen in this light the effort by Dr. Kathleen Bliss is more than inadequate. The essential Christian note which relates the human condition to the condescension of God in Christ is unfortunately missing. (cf. Kathleen Bliss, The Future of Religion, 1969).

[49] Cf. C. B. Armstrong, "Christianity Without Religion" reprinted in New Theology, No. 2 (ed. by M. E. Marty & G. Peerman, 1965, 17ff).