

# KING'S THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

Volume III Number 2

Autumn 1980

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**KING'S THEOLOGICAL REVIEW**

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

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Published twice yearly, spring and autumn.

*SUBSCRIPTION RATES (including postage)*

Individual subscribers: £1.50  
Institutional subscribers: £2.50

Orders to the business managers. Other correspondence should be addressed to the editors.

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# KING'S THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

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## WHAT THERE IS TO READ

### II NATURAL SCIENCE AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Daniel W. Hardy

Surprisingly enough, it is as difficult to get an overall view of science as it is of theology. Each is widely varied, each is complex, each is practised by many people, each of whom has a special experience of what it is. Each view of science and of theology seems natural, only common sense, to its practitioner. As is often said of the British and the Americans, a common language divides scientists and divides theologians as they use the same words to refer to different things. And these varying understandings and practices of science and of theology are only partially rationalized and organized by leaders and institutions, as any gathering of scientists or theologians would show.

The general public is usually a bystander to all this, to varieties of views about what science is and what theology is. It is often said that science (or theology) is too important to be left to the scientists (or theologians), and occasionally it is bravely said that everyone is a scientist (or theologian) even if he doesn't recognize it. But it is still true that what actually happens where concerted effort is put into science (or theology) is not much understood by the public, even those who, one way or another, support much that is done in the name of science (or theology). The public is left to enjoy the benefits—if such they be—which come, usually very indirectly, through applications of science (or theology), and 'make a difference' to life.

Peculiarly enough, the actual practitioner of some variety of science is most often simply a member of the general public, and correspondingly uninformed, so far as theology is concerned; and vice-versa, the theologian usually knows little more about science than most of

the public. And what a member of the public knows about either one is largely out-of-date theory and practice—traditional beliefs and techniques to make life 'better', and the production of special effects that 'make a difference'. So the scientist's view of theology (as a member of the general public) often concentrates on received traditions and practical changes ascribed to religion, and the theologian's view of science concentrates on supposedly accomplished, solid facts, and on the dramatic effects of 'science' on individuals and society as a whole.

This picture is, of course, one of complexity on both sides (within science and theology) and of stereotyping (of both by the general public). The situation is further complicated by accepted 'traditions' about the proper relation of the two. One of these is the view that science and theology are properly to be neatly demarcated, each firmly established in its own domain, quite distinct in subject-matter and method from the other, and each having an independent value for the public to which sensible people will be won over. This tradition, born of a split between reason and faith which dates (at least in this form) from the 17th century, is proving itself unworkable: science and theology are too closely intertwined *historically, culturally, and even ultimately*, to allow it.

Historically, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Christian theology has affected, and been affected by, the available science through the centuries; and the same would have to be said of science. A multitude of historical studies supports this view: John Dillenberger's *Protestant Thought and Natural Science* (Collins 1961), R. Hooykaas's *Religion and the Rise of Modern*

*Science* (Scottish Academic, 1972), Stanley Jaki's *Science and Creation* (Scottish Academic, 1974), C.G. Gillispie's *Genesis and Geology* (Harper 1965), as well as many more detailed studies such as Alexandre Koyre's *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Johns Hopkins 1957) and N.C. Gillespie's *Charles Darwin and the Problem of Creation* (Chicago 1979).

Equally, it seems an unavoidable conclusion that new scientific information regularly, and often radically, alters the ways in which we view the world. Though an earlier generation was much impressed by propaganda about the inevitable hostility of science and religion, and by the apparently constant erosion of Christian belief from different 'scientific' quarters, the result of this nowadays is—as we shall see—by no means necessarily detrimental to religion and theology. Indeed, theology may accord well with, and make a substantial contribution to, scientific thought. But new scientific information and technology, while not necessarily hostile to religion, still alters our understanding and situation in the world in such a way as to make theological understanding appropriate to other times and concepts seem rather dated and distant from present understanding. This provides a key problem for modern religious thought. For, if one thinks as a 'modern' person, what is the value and function to be ascribed to basic tenets of religious belief? Are they extra-scientific in nature and operation? If so, how are they related to 'ordinary' scientifically-influenced understanding? If different, allowing them to be different gives them their own integrity, but also licenses the detachment of each from the other: science becomes non-theological, and theology becomes culturally irrelevant. This problem is not discussed as much as it should be (at least not in Anglo-American thought), but William Austin's *The Relevance of Natural Science to Theology* (Macmillan 1978) gives a helpful assessment of it.

Lastly, there can be little doubt that very basic, even 'ultimate', issues in science are closely intertwined with those in theology: the search for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the Universe, even in the face of the deep divisions in man's understanding and life which were left by the loss of the mediaeval synthesis of science, philosophy and theology;

the attempt to establish canons of correct reasoning and standards for genuine knowledge; the attempt to determine the status of concepts and theories in relation to reality; and amongst the community of mankind, the attempt to discern the nature and reliability of experience; the correct use of language, etc. It is also a question how such issues of 'pure' science and theology are related to those of 'practical' science and theology, with which they are naturally intertwined: is there an *intrinsic* relation of the 'pure' and the 'practical', or only an *extrinsic* one (where they are brought into relation by someone)? The answer deeply affects the organization and right direction of scientific and religious activity—how they are managed, evaluated and redirected if need be.

In 'pure' questions, there has for a long time been a strong temptation to demarcate science and theology, allowing scientists (or scientists so inclined) to pursue epistemological, linguistic, cosmological and metaphysical questions, but debarring theologians from them. Not a few theologians have been frightened off such 'scientific' questions, and confined—partly because of a post-Reformation pietism—to insights derived from 'existence', 'religious experience', or 'revelation'. Hence, during an important era of questioning about the foundations of science, and indeed of all truth (of which R. Harré has produced very helpful analyses in such books as *The philosophies of Science* and *Scientific Thought 1900-60*, (Oxford 1969 and 1972), theological activity was on quite a different track, exploring the characteristics of personal existence, religious experience and (later) revelation, with rather little regard for the emerging scientific discussion. Important examples of this were, respectively, the works of Soren Kierkegaard, John Baillie's *Sense of the Presence of God* (Oxford 1962), and Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* (T. & T. Clark). In 'practical' issues, there was another kind of demarcation, which saw science as monopolizing objective knowledge and value-free truth, both natural knowledge and knowledge of people's activity and values, but not itself ascertaining value. This left science with a concern for knowledge and practical activity (e.g. research), but not with standards for evaluation of them. Such standards, if there were to be any, had to be drawn from and

exercised by extrascientific sources and methods, developed humanistically (for example by appeal to 'evolved' human nature, in Paul Kurtz, ed. *The Humanist Alternative* (Pemberton 1973) or religiously. That task corresponded nicely with a long-standing tendency in Western religion to protect itself against the supposed incursions of science into the religious realm (by its 'monopoly' of objective truth) by locating religion in the practical and subjective. Hence theologians were ready to be consulted in matters of morality; and one sees comment readily forthcoming from religious idealists and existentialists (see Karl Heim's, *Christian Faith and Natural Science*, Harper 1957, or Rudolf Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, SCM 1969).

It is to the ongoing discussion of these questions, seen in the literature of science and theology, that we must direct our attention in this article. For in this discussion science and theology are brought into relation most fruitfully during the twentieth century. This is not, of course, to say that the conclusions of scientific inquiry and of theology about all manner of things (cosmology, the physical order, evolution, culture, and so on) have not been brought into relation. But the most concerted discussion has been of the issue of how they, science and theology as disciplines, are to be related. This has often been the underlying issue where it has been difficult or impossible to reach agreement about the relation of specific scientific discoveries to theology.

The literature mentioned so far by no means represents the depth and extent of the changes (they are often called 'revolutions' by those who know them) which have been taking place in science and in theology, pure and practical, during the past fifty years and more. There is very little doubt that human understanding—scientific, social-scientific, theological—is undergoing a profound transformation whose exact consequences are not fully known as yet, but whose ramifications seem endless for all aspects of thought and life.

The very supposition that there *could* be a revolution in science and in theology has come as a shock. For it was not long ago that scientists took a very optimistic view of the history of science, seeing it as a success story of ever-increasing knowledge and progressive improvement of life. They assumed the virtual finality of

the scientific notions of the day, in fundamental matters if not in detail, and were as literalistic in their understanding of concepts and theories as some people were (and in a few places still are) in their understanding of religious statements. But there has been a gradual shift away from this literalism, as scientists have come to realize that science itself during its history has been affected by the surrounding culture. As religious people had done, particularly during the 19th century, scientists came to recognize the *dynamic* of their activity and their convictions, and this gradual recognition underlies much recent philosophy and history of science. But there are striking differences in what scientists make of this, of their own history and achievement, just as there are amongst theologians.

Reflection on the nature and pursuit of science, as scientists have considered it, has been of considerable importance in theology during the same period, throwing a good deal of light upon its nature and pursuit. The beneficiaries of this were not those who set aside science in their concern for personal existence, religious experience or revelation (e.g. the followers of Kierkegaard, Baillie or Barth), but those trained in a discipline with a strong interest in *knowledge* and its *criteria*, whether the discipline was traditional philosophy, Calvinism or modern natural science: Eric Mascall's *Christian Theology and Natural Science* (Longman 1956) is a notable example of the first, T.F. Torrance's *Theological Science* (Oxford 1969) of the second, and Ian Barbour's *Issues in Science and Religion* (SCM 1966) and Arthur Peacocke's *Science and the Christian Experiment* (Oxford 1971) of the third.

The differences between them are sharp and pervasive, and mirror similar ones to be found amongst scientists. Interestingly enough, all of them, and most scientists as well, would lay claim to the title 'realist', perhaps because such stigma still attaches to 'idealism', even if some are deeply convinced of the importance of the preconceptions of the observer for his observations, and also emphasize the importance of creative originality and intuition in the origin of theories. But the emphasis in their realisms is very different. In the case of Mascall and Torrance, for example, the emphasis is on finding the intelligibility inherent in the universe which we as intelligent human beings may grasp

if we know properly. To fulfil this responsibility requires an expansion of natural knowledge and of conscious mind through pursuit of natural science, enlightened epistemology and a transformed natural theology, in such a way as to allow the intrinsic rationality of the field we are investigating to appear. To achieve this, Mascall makes use of the work of Bernard Lonergan, particularly his *Insight* (Longman 1957), in *The Openness of Being* (DLT, 1971); Torrance uses current science and extends the work of Barth in *The Ground and Grammar of Theology* (Christian Journals 1980). Doing this, they say, allows accounts of the world given by natural science to be complemented, in a deepening coordination, by theological accounts of creation and creature. The ground on which science and theology are to be related is not that they are alternative frameworks constructed by mankind but that the universe of space and time as explored by natural science is the universe which God created and which he made man fit to understand; the unity between science and theology is in their disciplined response to God.

In the case of Barbour and Peacocke, the emphasis is also on 'finding out the way things are', on the intention to seek for intelligibility which is common to science and theology. Each is seeking for explanation which makes the most coherent sense of data; and each does so by means of 'models' which it considers to be candidates for reality. (This is a discussion which extends the work of Ian Ramsey as seen in *Religion and Science: Conflict and Synthesis*, SPCK 1964). But there is a difference in the *application* of the enterprises; for science, explanation is applied to prediction and control; in theology, explanation provides moral purpose and personal meaning, relevant primarily to personal and social life-situations. (This view is very clearly stated in Peacocke's *Creation and the World of Science*, Oxford 1979.) Hence for Mascall and Torrance, there is much more emphasis on the necessity of being open to the intrinsic intelligibility of reality, both in science and in theology; theology, as well as science, is directed at intelligibility. But for Barbour and Peacocke, science and theology function differently, one for prediction and control, the other for meaning and moral purpose. The differences between the two views involve different suppositions about the genesis of

knowledge and the nature and function of science and theology.

The proponents of these views are acutely aware of deep changes occurring amongst scientists in their conception of science. The logical positivism and logical empiricism in which many prominent scientists and theologians of today were immersed during their early years has by now met with damaging criticism, even if many of them behave as if such positions were still normative. Ironically, the problems of meeting logical-empiricist criteria, and of resisting them, have brought not a few theologians and scientists to dwell on the resemblances of their subject to culture-bound literary forms—in the use of myth and metaphor, for example—while logical empiricism has itself been undergoing challenge from within. But that is by no means the only, or even the best, way of responding to the changing situation.

The gradual emergence of the challenge to positivism and empiricism can be seen very well in some fairly informal documents coming from some participants. Karl Popper's *Unended Quest* (Fontana 1976) is a fascinating autobiographical account by a principal figure. P.B. Medawar's *The Art of the Soluble* (Methuen 1967) and John Ziman's *Reliable Knowledge: An Exploration of the Grounds for Belief in Science* (Cambridge 19 ) are good accounts of the new views. A more concerted overall view can be found in H.I. Brown, *Perception, Theory and Commitment* (Chicago 1979). But discussions of different aspects of the emerging 'new views' can be found in many places.

What exactly has happened? The simplest thing to say is that the basic assumptions used in logical empiricist understanding of science—the standard picture of science offered in many places even today (through books such as Ernest Nagel's *The Structure of Science*, Routledge 1961)—have been undermined by serious questioning, questioning which reveals this view as a view which cannot necessarily substantiate its claims. The 'planks' of this platform were (1) that there is an external world, (2) which can in principle be exhaustively described in a unified scientific language, (3) the language being a series of propositions in a one-to-one relation to factual data; (4) theories are descriptions of explanatory mechanisms of the world which can be inferred from observation,

and (5) man can experience and theorize about the world 'objectively' or dispassionately. 'One world, one ideal language, one sort of experience'—these basic assumptions have been challenged by those who maintain that there is no such firm connection between the external world and a unified scientific picture, of such a kind that theories can be dispassionately inferred from observed data. Theories, they say, are 'underdetermined' by observational data, as W.V. Quine suggests (*Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, Columbia 1969), there are many theories which fit the data, and they are deeply affected by the interests of those who develop them.

So many present-day attitudes have been fashioned under the influence of logical empiricism that it is difficult to see that there can be any other way of looking at things than the one it suggests, or any other kind of research programme than the one it provides. And there were such positive achievements under its aegis ('naturalism' as it is sometimes called) that no one wants entirely to deny them, except perhaps those who want to subsume all science within some other world-view (Marxism, for example). But the achievements now appear to have been based on convictions too naively held and on too restricted a view of what can be done scientifically. The view, it now appears, rationalized everything which was to be 'scientific'—from physics to biology to the human sciences—but at too great a price, providing a tight-fitting straitjacket of methodology. The view also detached science from its own sources in human creativity, from the humanities and history, and from political responsibility.

The reassessment of logical empiricism has come from within and without, from those who wish to liberalize it while in substantial agreement with it, and from those who wish to contain it within a wider picture, particularly one of the development of science. Though Karl Popper as a philosopher of science and T.S. Kuhn as an historian of science are vastly different, they are alike in their awareness of the historical development of science and its connection with other interests. Popper, who is a good spokesman for himself in *Objective Knowledge* (Oxford 1972) as well as having a good commentator in Bryan Magee (*Popper*, Fontana 1973), has carried on a running corrective to logical

empiricism from a standpoint that also embraces the social sciences, politics and history. This refusal to compartmentalize is one of the hallmarks of his view, even if he reintroduces some, together with his strong emphasis on the development of knowledge. Both are strikingly different from logical empiricism, even if Popper is sometimes claimed by it as an ally. He has repeatedly emphasized discovery and the growth of knowledge, analyzing how he considers that it occurs, rather than taking knowledge as a finished product to be analyzed and expressed logically. He has done so critically, and with an attempt to reduce interference by subjective and cultural factors, though he is ready enough to allow culture its place (see K. Popper and John C. Eccles, *The Self and Its Brain*, Springer 1977). He does not allow, however, that in each period of its history science has been governed by one dominant theory, or that the history of science consists in a sequence of dominant theories ('paradigm'), each supplanting its predecessor by a revolution; history is not so neat—there are many dominant theories competing. Nor does he agree with the tendency of some to relegate logic to a place of small importance.

While partly directed against logical empiricism, Popper's work, together that of Imre Lakatos (*The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes*, Cambridge 1978), sharply contrasted with that of some historians and social scientists. Thomas S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago 1962) sparked a controversy through which the divergent views became more clear (I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave, eds., *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, Cambridge 1970). The controversy was itself an indication of the reduced status of logical empiricism.

Popper's views were not so easily used by theologians. He had, of course, demarcated science from non-science by the criterion of falsifiability, which was a way of assuring that scientific statements had the highest information content. From this point of view, theology seemed non-informative; Popper himself admits to a 'lifetime's dislike of theorizing about God— theology is due to lack of faith.' But Kuhn's ideas became rather fashionable amongst theologians, probably because they coincided with a new awareness of religious pluralism (plurality of religions and plurality of views in particular

religious traditions) and the function of religions in cultures. This was engendered partly by study of the history of religions (cf. Ernst Troeltsch, *The Absoluteness of Christianity and the History of Religions*, dating from 1902 in German, but only translated into English in 1971, SCM) and partly by sociological analysis (e.g. Peter Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion*, Faber 1969, B.R. Scharf, *The Sociological Study of Religion*, Hutchinson 1970); They also coincided with certain aspects of current British philosophy, such as the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, which emphasized that the same thing can be seen by a single observer in either of two ways (the so-called gestalt switch) and that languages might function differently in different 'games'. Among theologians, John Hicks's *God and the Universe of Faiths* (Fount 1977) and Ian Barbour's *Myths, Models and Paradigms* (SCM 1974) shows the use to which Kuhn's and these other views are put; the view that history proceeds by paradigm-revolutions also can be seen in works of historical theology. The effect of these theological works is, it is claimed, to deemphasize the objectivity of science and the subjectivity of religion, and to show the crucial role played by the intellectual constructions of man in science and religion, as well as the consequent need for personal commitment, tolerance, dialogue and self-criticism. But, as was the case with Kuhn, rationality is the weakest part of these views: how evidence for particular views is offered and by what criteria it is judged.

Much of the emphasis in Popper's and Kuhn's work was on the process of scientific inquiry, rather than on its products (as with logical empiricism). This was continued in the writings of Stephen Toulmin (e.g. *Human Understanding*, Oxford 1972). Toulmin claims that the proper test of science is not its logical system but its openness to novel situations and its readiness to move beyond its former procedures; therefore we need a new theory of human understanding, and he attempts to develop one. His work sustains the view that neither the world we deal with, nor the concepts, methods and beliefs which we develop in dealing with the world, is invariant, and that the variety is to be welcomed because of the richness of questions and answers which it provides. (Paul Feyerabend takes a similar line in *Against Method*, NLB 1975,

claiming to be a 'Dadaist—one convinced that a worthwhile life will arise only when we start taking things *lightly* and initiate joyful experiments.') Such a view of science does not necessarily eliminate religious elements, as Langdon Gilkey shows in *Religion and the Scientific Future* (SCM 1970), but it does confine them to the status of myths introducing transcendent dimensions by which human cultures may understand themselves and their destiny.

It is a fairly consistent feature of these views—from Kuhn to Toulmin, and from Barbour to Gilkey—that they respond to logical empiricism by abandoning its pretensions to universal and necessary relevance, to being universally normative (with a heavy emphasis on logic), in favour of relativity and fallibility. But this is not the only possible response to the new situation, in science or in theology. There are those who suggest that one can still suppose an ideal unified, true and normative theory; hence questions about discovery and the construction of theories should be subordinated to the task of bringing understanding which is available into greater coherence with the nature of things. Of course, appropriate research, theory and studies of logic and language, are necessary to this task, even if they themselves require careful reworking. A notable example of such a programme is Mario Bunge's *Treatise in Basic Philosophy* (Reidel 1974- ). In theology, this is the intent of those who espouse 'transcendental method' such as Bernard Lonergan (*Insight*, Longman 1957; and *Method in Theology*, DLT 1972) or Karl Rahner (*Foundations of Christian Faith*, DLT 1978), even if they are primarily concerned with knowledge (Lonergan) or existence (Rahner). Integrating his theological views very much more closely with science, T.F. Torrance has been responsible for extending and elucidating this possibility in a way quite different from the transcendentalists. As mentioned earlier, he claims a fundamental similarity of science and theology in their faithfulness to things as they are in themselves, by 'onto-relational thinking'. What emerges from this is thinking which does not reduce everything to the same 'stuff' but allows a multiplicity of levels appropriate to the way things (and people and God) are; this view is very similar to Bunge's position (T.F. Torrance, *Ground and Grammar of Theology*, Christian Journals 1980). Michael Polanyi's



writings (particularly *Personal Knowledge*, Routledge 1964) have made an important contribution to this position, in science and in theology; a recent book of essays, *Belief in Science and in Christian Life* (Handsel 1980) explores this.

In the general movement away from a strict logical empiricism, some of the most interesting recent work has focused on the nature of scientific theory. As has already been seen, there is much stress placed on the fact that theories are 'undetermined' by data from observation. And the mere accumulation of data, converging in some kind of coherence, does not constitute a true theory: there are problems with the description of data (which is already affected by theory) and with the conditions for its coherence—problems of epistemology and history; things do not happen so simply. On the contrary, theories in science are much more closely tied to scientific practice. And the best which can be hoped for from this process are theories which are 'bundles' or 'networks' which are locally practicable and successful, even where they deal with the universe, ones which attract and focus the work of many scientists in research. Truth-claims cannot be universalizable or necessary. Two of the most interesting writers to explore this are Nicholas Rescher (*Conceptual Idealism and Cognitive Systematization*, Blackwell 1973 and 1979) and Mary Hesse (*Revolutions and Reconstructions in the Philosophy of Science*, Harvester 1980).

If theories are as Rescher and Hesse claim, the implications for theology are considerable, and any theologian should be aware of this work; it affects the derivation and status of theological formulations, and how they cohere. Moving as it does in the direction of relativism (though neither is a relativist), their view seems to challenge the possibility of achieving truth, in science or in theology; and it is important to understand the alternatives which they offer to an out-and-out relativism. In general, they argue that natural science should be integrated into a wider framework which embraces human purpose and the human sciences. Against this background, theological claims (as Hesse suggests; Rescher does not consider them) are seen to be comparable to comprehensive theories in the human sciences, which are

'ideological' because including fact-constrained (but not fact-determined) evaluations. Scientific cosmologies, where they serve as frameworks for social communication, are similar. Placing comprehensive theories which have a communicative function together—scientific, theological, antitheological—and seeing that they are not precluded by a monopolistic view of scientific truth, opens a debate between them as social creations; but there is no way to validate one ideology as opposed to another. There is no way to move beyond an ideological commitment (which is necessary for practical decisions) to asserting its truth for all. At many points, this view of theological claims resembles the position put forward by Arthur Peacocke which was described earlier (*Creation and the World of Science*, Oxford 1979).

This is perhaps the closest Anglo-American views of science have come to the long-standing discussions of science in Continental circles. There is a very different tradition there, much more the product of work in the human sciences and of reflection on it, and much more closely allied with political philosophy. Generally, therefore, Continental views of science are embedded in anthropology, and provide an anthropology of knowledge of such a kind as will be useful in guiding research which will be aligned with critical work and social practice.

From this point of view, it is important to establish the proper relation between the naturalistic approach (in the natural or human sciences) and proper understanding and interpretation between human beings; naturalistic knowledge is to improve understanding between human beings. There are those in Britain and America (e.g. J.M. Ziman in *Public Knowledge: The Social Dimension of Science*, Cambridge 1968) who argue that the goal of scientific research is to contribute to the consensus of universally accepted knowledge, and that the social process of communication is essential to this. But the claim advanced in Continental discussion is the reverse, that natural understanding serves human understanding. Moreover, empirical work is to serve a critical function: empirical work in the human sciences enables critical work in the natural sciences, and also enables the criticism of ideologies to take place. This criticism is pursued in order to emancipate human beings and societies from the dehumaniz-

ing structures and forces to which they have been captive. So the wider framework within which science is to be pursued is: empirical—interpretative—critical—ethical. And all elements of the framework interact with each other. Hence there is no stage at which 'interests' and 'communication' and 'practice' do not occur, even in the most 'empirical' research.

One hardly ever sees these perspectives fully expounded here, though fragments of them have come to view in the work of such people as Karl Popper and Michael Polanyi (see above), whose broad interests coincide with the Continental tradition. And the coherentist and pragmatist tendencies seen in Rescher, Hesse and others, are similar to certain aspects of the tradition too. Perhaps the proponent best known here is Jurgen Habermas (*Knowledge and Human Interests* and *Theory and Practice*, Heinemann 1972 and 1974), and the broader contours of the tradition become evident in such books as *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* (Heinemann 1976). The interpretation-theory of H.G. Gadamer (*Truth and Method*, Sheed and Ward 1976) is also important in this connection. Two particularly important extensions of the work have to do with what is called 'communicative competence', the attempt to discover the conditions for communication (J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, Heinemann 1979) and for the establishment of an ideal communication-community (K.O. Apel, *Towards a Transformation of Philosophy*, Routledge 1980). Why important? Because they have to do with establishing possibilities for universal agreement about truth and the norms of collective responsibility.

A full discussion of all this would take us beyond the rather restricted view of science which we have been considering, to include all the human sciences as well. Nonetheless, these views, and the Continental tradition, has strongly interacted with theology both indirectly and directly. In literary theory (especially where related to the nature and interpretation of texts) and in social theory (for example in sociology of knowledge), they have had considerable influence; and insofar as theology touches on these matters, these influences have come into play in the dialogue between these and theology. But more directly they are known through major theological work from Germany,

particularly that of Ebeling, Pannenberg and Moltmann. One sees this in Gerhard Ebeling's conception of theology (e.g. in *The Study of Theology*, Collins 1979). Even more, Wolfhart Pannenberg's *Theology and Philosophy of Science* (DLT 1976) shows a carefully worked out positioning of theology in relation to the natural sciences and the human sciences; when natural science and human understanding are emancipated from the spectre of scientific positivism, they regulate each other in a unified knowledge, and theology deals with the all-embracing totality of meaning which is implicit in them.

Pannenberg's position is somewhat reminiscent of the attempts to establish universal conditions for communication and ethics by Apel and Habermas. For him, theological statements, like other scientific propositions, belong within a framework of theoretical networks, and must be verified within the system of theological formulation. Where other scientific propositions have to do with *implicit* anticipations of the totality of meaning, theological statements are historical interpretations of *explicit* awareness of the total meaning of reality, particularly (for Christians) the explicit awareness by Jesus of the all-determining reality of God. Pannenberg's book both introduces the Continental discussion and argues for a scientific theology within this context.

If Pannenberg's work contains a sustained philosophical-theological response to this different tradition of science, Jurgen Moltmann's (best seen in *The Future of Creation*, SCM 1979) is a more confessional and political one, dwelling more on the practical tasks of understanding and transformation. Accordingly, the logic of his view is somewhat different from Pannenberg's, a logic of the future made present in promises, rather than one of the unity of knowledge in universal world-history. And Moltmann's view connects less with current debates in the sciences, except in their insistence on political transformation.

It is appropriate to conclude with the comment that the views we have been considering have arisen largely in reaction to varieties of positivism—logical positivism in natural science and positivism in the human sciences. It may be that such views are too much conditioned by the tendencies which they have sought to correct,

and that their place will be taken in the future by others which reflect more the *content* of modern science and theology and less its *form*. Perhaps, for example, the new understanding afforded by modern scientists such as Einstein on relativity or Prigogine on thermodynamics, will begin to affect our view of knowledge in science and in theology. That these are real

possibilities can be seen in the work of people like Gregory Bateson (*Mind and Nature*, Wildwood 1980) or Eric Jantsch (*Self-Organising Universe*, Pergamon 1979), or in the supposition that the way God is capacitates the knowledge which human beings may have in science and in theology.

## SOME REFLECTIONS ON INDIAN SPIRITUALITY

Friedhelm Hardy

### II RETURN TO THE WORLD

‘This body is without essence, born of the parents’ semen and blood, essentially impure, putrid and bad smelling. It is disturbed by the thieves of passion, hatred, delusion, fear and despair. It is subject to decay, and is filled with a hundred thousand diseases.’<sup>1</sup>

This is the driving force behind the long spiritual journey from *samsara* to *moksha*: the realization that man is contingent and not a lasting, self-contained entity. In the ‘application of mindfulness’, as the popular Buddhist meditation course is called from which the quotation is taken, the range of observation encompasses not only the body, feelings and mind, but the whole of empirical reality (in technical parlance: all conditioned *dharmas*). One could almost say that the stark negativism which pervades the characterizations of the body and so on, which are offered as objects for meditation, is designed to arouse a sufficiently strong energy (or ‘disgust’, as the Jains in particular like to phrase it) to propel the aspirant after liberation along his arduous path towards his final goal. Moreover, this brutal analysis of the human condition is meant to penetrate into the awareness of a maximum number of people—in the ideal *all* men are encouraged to become renouncers and set out to achieve *moksha*.

Someone asked: “What is the essential meaning of Buddhism?” The Master said: “Countless dead bodies fill all the chasms and valleys.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus logically, if everyone were to achieve liberation, humanity would be extinguished and only the corpses would remain.

This uncompromising ambition—which is by no means restricted to Buddhism—is clearly unrealistic and utopian. Even by the more optimistic reckonings, to achieve liberation will take many years of moral perfection and of meditation, years of depending on ordinary life by relying on alms for one’s nourishment and other elementary needs.<sup>3</sup> Thus inevitably the theoretical structure of *samsara:moksha* acquires the shape of a pyramid as its real-life form; its base is constituted by the mass of humanity vegetating in *samsara*, its tip represents the liberated ones, and each layer of aspirants for liberation is supported by the spiritually less advanced. Without farmers ploughing their fields and merchants accumulating wealth, the renouncers would neither receive food nor other elementary support; yet to kill living beings (and mosquitoes and worms are included in this category!) which is unavoidable in farming, and to strive after material gain which is equally unavoidable in the life of a businessman, constitute some of the most severe infringements of the ascetic style of life. The purpose of drawing attention to this discrepancy is not to accuse the ascetics of hypocrisy, but merely to demonstrate that even in the most radical world-negating drive the realities of *samsara* cannot entirely be shut out. In the history of Indian renunciation this resulted in a fascinating kaleidoscope of solutions to the fundamental problem of how to pursue one’s liberation while depending on society’s support of this pursuit. In the case of long-established ascetic traditions the necessary

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contact with ordinary life would be very indirect, thanks to large monastic endowments accumulated over the centuries through generous donations by pious and wealthy laymen. But India never ceased to give birth to new ascetic movements, each one adding itself to an increasingly long list. There had to come a point at which the ascetics could not simply take it for granted that their physical needs would be taken care of through the willingness of the general populace to give them alms. Frequently therefore they could make a living only by themselves providing some form of tangible service to the ordinary people in exchange for alms. The spectrum of such ways in which ascetics have catered for their needs is amazing. They have become astrologers, fortune tellers, doctors; they have resorted to public entertainment through song, dance and music; they have used public blackmail and intimidation; they have specialized in prostitution; and we hear about marauding hordes of thousands of ascetics terrorizing a region and battling with rival hordes... It is rarely that we hear of semi-domesticated ascetic communities that cultivate their own fields. One may also ask to what extent the recruitment to such ascetic groups has been based on the ideal, which is a conscious, mature decision to pursue liberation by joining one of them; in practice it might well be that infants were taken into their fold, because their parents had abandoned them or donated them in fulfilment of some vow. What is worth noting here are not the sensationalist details but the fact that a variety of social and economic factors clearly run counter to any full-scale uncompromising pursuit of liberation by a sizeable mass of people, and that in addition these factors maintain some form of hold over the relatively few who have set out on this path. It would appear to be a reasonable assumption that this 'hold' had some kind of impact on the understanding of, and the interpretation given to, the striving for *moksha*. But it would be a crude type of reductionism if we were to regard these factors as the primary or ultimate cause of the modifications of a simple dichotomy *samsara* (negative):*moksha* (positive) which will allow us to speak of a 'return to the world'.

\* \* \* \*

The normative power of the *moksha* ideal was sufficiently strong to prevent us from hearing much about its outright rejection. This in itself means only that our documents, which allow us to look into the history of the Indian traditions, themselves belong to this normative system, in other words, any hypothetical rejection of the ideal lies outside the discourse which found written documentation. Yet the participants in this discourse required their own symbol of antagonism: they needed a concrete, identifiable opponent with whom they could argue and whom they could reject. This function is fulfilled by groups like the Lokayatas. They are presented to us as specific philosophical schools of thought, and aphorisms like the following are attributed to them.

The universe consists of four elements only: earth, water, fire and air. It is from these that consciousness arises, in the same way as intoxication is produced by the grapes (and other ingredients of wine).

This crude form of materialism is the extreme antithesis to the *samsara:moksha* structure, which by rejecting any independent mental or spiritual faculty in man automatically thereby precludes the possibility of 'liberation' from physical existence. But 'schools' like the Lokayata are shrouded in mystery, and it might well be that a late-medieval author, commenting on this aphorism, is offering a much more plausible interpretation. To him 'Lokayata' means something like 'implied philosophy or belief of the masses':

It is called "Lokayata" because it is popular among ordinary people. This popularity arises from three facts: (i) it teaches matters which are relished by worldly people, like "One should live merrily as long as one's life lasts, since everyone will fall prey to death. Once the body has been turned into ashes, how could it return?" (ii) it is in full agreement with the Manuals on Sexual Pleasures in that it advocates wealth, power and sex as fundamentally rewarding, and (iii) all matters which lie outside the ordinary realm of reality are rejected.<sup>4</sup>

Whether this is a systematically presented doctrine of a specific school or an *ad hoc* paraphrase of 'what the mass of people are after', in this kind of attitude *samsara* is held on to in a physical and concrete way, and 'all that

has to be achieved' is here the pursuit of pleasures. That few if any people appear to have been adventurous enough to formulate convictions like these consciously and openly reveals the force of the *moksha* ideal as a norm, something which then was misunderstood to illustrate how 'spiritual' a country India has been.

Whilst outright rejections are rare, we do find a number of implied modes of circumventing the literal implications of the *samsara:moksha* dichotomy, without questioning the dichotomy itself. The attitude which underlies the variety of such approaches could be paraphrased as follows. There is indeed something basically wrong with *samsara*—ordinary reality is suffering. But by employing some special means, it can be transformed and thus be made to yield happiness and fulfilment. Such a remedy might be something very concrete: the Siddhas advocate the consumption of certain drugs, particularly mercury in various concoctions. The understanding of yoga as a method of keeping fit and healthy which was fashionable in the West ten, twenty years ago, was derived from the teachings of related groups of yogis; certain physical exercises and contortionist postures are here the means to transform *samsara*. It might be a particular occult ritual involving, for instance, the drinking of alcohol, eating meat, illicit sexual intercourse or even murder<sup>5</sup>. Popular Indian literature frequently tells us about the 'evil ascetic' who by ritually breaking the most fundamental taboos hopes to achieve extraordinary faculties, gathering as it were all the hidden powers from *samsara* in himself.

Another complex of ideas and practices can be related typologically to this. Drug-taking, physical exercises and occult rituals make use of some kind of latent power, a force built into *samsara*, or a hidden potential; but we also find sophisticated notions of a personal absolute (in other words, God) associated with this kind of attitude. Thus a number of theological schools and religious movements conceive of Vishnu as fully transcendental, beyond all limitations of space, time and matter, beyond human comprehension, infinite, eternal and the sole cause of the existence of man and the universe. But since anything would be unthinkable without him, he is also assumed to be *in* everything. the transcendental is immanent in the universe. In between these two poles, a variety of further

modes or stages is envisaged. Not only does he manifest himself time and again in some human or other form, becomes visible to man and acts towards their liberation or effects some redress of cosmic imbalance, he also makes himself available in the temple image. The theologians of Ramanuja's school have a neat simile for these different modes of divine existence. The transcendental Vishnu is like the ocean's water—remote and undrinkable; his immanence resembles the moisture in most things; and his human and other manifestations on earth during some past age are like the water of a river that has long since flowed away from any given spot. In other words, none of these three modes can quench one's thirst. But his presence in the temple images is like the fresh drinking water in a lake: available and nourishing here and now. On the popular level, this theology provides the rationale for temple worship; the divine presence sanctifies the here and now by transforming it. Just as the orthodox devotee will eat only food which has been rendered pure through the contact with the image, the same statue, when carried in procession through the villages and fields, infuses blessing into all that comes in contact with it<sup>6</sup>.

The same underlying attitude seems recognizable here; although the world as we experience it is contingent, deficient and unsatisfactory, it is possible to achieve a metamorphosis of it by means of the application of certain remedies. Whether this transformation is felt to be sufficient in an ultimate sense, or is still regarded as preliminary to *moksha*, would have to be judged for each individual case separately. This would moreover involve the possibility of distinguishing between what the exponents or practitioners 'really mean' and how they employ a conventional phraseology, and this is a complex and problem-ridden affair, because the notion of 'liberation' has certainly suffered a high rate of inflation in this area of discourse.

\* \* \* \*

Everything we have been looking at so far can be regarded as extraneous to the actual pursuit of *moksha*. The latter was rejected altogether by the adherents of the Lokayata, social and economic factors figured as external restraints on it, and the attitudes analysed in the last

section shy away from a straightforward rejection of *samsara* by maintaining that there exists some kind of positive potential in it. Now if this were all that the Indian traditions have to offer, we would be dealing here with no more than another example of the human predicament which is the conflict between a grandiose spiritual ideal and the lethargy of ordinariness, between 'the spirit' and 'the flesh'. But India offers more than this; it reveals that the full realization of *moksha* itself may not necessarily be equated with the full rejection of *samsara*, or in other words, that a 'return to the world' may follow even from the inner momentum of the liberating experience. As usual in India, this theme has a theistic and a non-theistic variation; we shall first look at the former.

As most readers of the *Bhagavadgita* must have noticed, Krishna's teaching to Arjuna is a most ambiguous and unsystematic, not to say a messy, affair. The number of different interpretations given to it, of different theories justified by reference to it, and of different systems derived from it, is legion. Yet in spite of all this, one point is common to most—whatever its relative importance may then be in the individual case—and that is that even after liberation has been achieved the world and an active role it demands from man are not cancelled. In my reading of the text, this theme is developed in the following way. Krishna teaches Arjuna all about the traditional means of achieving *moksha*, ethical perfection and meditational exercises—in a confusing variety of terminologies belonging to many separate school traditions. He then lets the point of final achievement, *moksha*, coincide with the full meeting or realization or revelation of himself, Krishna, as 'he really is'—the personal absolute God. This theistic turn to traditional yoga was remarkable enough at the time when the *Gita* was written, but the text goes further. Precisely because the liberated person encounters Krishna in his fullness, he must meet in him the whole cosmos which Krishna has created, keeps in being and in fact manipulates. This is envisaged not just as a passive vision, but as an active challenge: liberated, totally purified of self-will and ignorance, the person participates now in Krishna's cosmic pursuits. As a 'loyal servant' (*bhakta*) and obedient instrument, in harmony with and attuned to, Krishna's intentions, he carries out whatever must be done. In the *Gita*

this means to fight in a most devastating battle:

Long since have these men in truth been slain  
by Me: yours it is to be the mere occasion.<sup>7</sup>  
Yet the *Gita* sees this battle as no more than one minute facet of Krishna's 'working' in the cosmos; but we are told little if anything about the nature, motives and purpose of this work. It remains enshrined in the ultimate mystery of a God who needs nothing and yet has the world, and the most the *Gita* can tell us is that somehow Krishna's 'working' in the world is to the benefit of all beings.

If you consider the welfare of the world, then you should work.—In the three worlds there is nothing that I need do, nor anything unattained that I need gain, yet work is the element in which I move. If I were not to do my work, these worlds would fall to ruin, and I should be a worker of confusion, destroying these my creatures.<sup>8</sup>

What distinguishes this conception from the otherwise closely related theology of the divine presence in the temple image is the fact that here the emphasis is on an inner transformation in man himself, which is described in conventional terms as moving from *samsara* to *moksha* by means of all the traditional paraphernalia (ethical perfection and meditational exercises). But this transformation results not only in liberation, but also in a new mode of being active in the world. It is the theistic framework, the reference to Krishna as the locus of liberation and the totally other, transcendental absolute, which permits this rather fragile construction to maintain, on the one hand, a pronounced dichotomy of *samsara* and *moksha*, and on the other hand to envisage *samsara* nevertheless as not essentially negative since it is embedded in some positive divine design.

When turning now to the Buddhist variations on the theme, we can again begin with straightforward human considerations. The Buddha himself, after achieving enlightenment, spent the four decades of his remaining life preaching, teaching and gathering disciples. Hagiography tells us that this was the outcome of a conscious decision on his part, soon after his enlightenment. One component in this overwhelming experience suggested to him total isolation from the rest of society in some remote jungle, but another component was stronger and drove him back to society in order to let others share it with him.

In one of the major streams of the Buddhist tradition, the Mahayana or 'Great Vehicle', this legendary incident was developed into a grand spiritual ideal: the pursuit of personal liberation (styled 'the perfection of wisdom') is here intrinsically connected with the endeavour to draw others into it (appropriately called 'the perfection of compassion'). Because the realm in which man ordinarily lives is 'suffering', it would be totally irresponsible and egocentric, if one were to move towards *moksha* by forgetting about the suffering beings left behind. Here spiritual progress is seen as dependent on making every effort to assist others in achieving the same. One could easily derive this kind of reasoning from ordinary human psychology. The well-known simile of the ideal Buddhist, who has one foot in liberation and the other in the world (by being perfect both in his wisdom and compassion), belongs similarly to popular discourse.

He has gone beyond all that is worldly, yet he  
has not moved out of the world;

In the world he pursues his course for the  
world's weal, unstained by worldly taints.<sup>9</sup>

This is said about a Bodhisattva, a mythological type who for the Mahayana embodies the fullness of wisdom and compassion; yet it could equally well have been said about Arjuna—clearly on this level the *Bhagavadgita* and Mahayana Buddhism agree very closely<sup>10</sup>. But it would be a serious mistake—and there are enough examples of it in the literature—to regard this merely as a concession to popular religion and as a vulgar dilution of some other, 'original' Buddhism. What appears here as the 'perfection of wisdom' is a variation of the achievement of liberation from *samsara* through meditational exercises which here as elsewhere include the direct insight into the nature of reality. Thus it is really *qua* his wisdom that he becomes most fully aware of unenlightened, suffering beings, and that compassion is implied in the bliss, peace, or whatever other attributes are traditionally given to *moksha*. In other words, we could equally well say that the more this 'wisdom' is realized, the more 'compassion' gets stimulated, and thus the concern for suffering humanity is by no means extraneous to the pursuit of liberation, but arises spontaneously in it, by its inner momentum. A new awareness of, and responsibility for, the life on earth in society which is the

*outcome* of the pursuit of liberation, is primarily what is meant here as the 'return to the world'.

No doubt Indian characterizations of ordinary life and reality as 'suffering' strike us as extreme, and are meant to be; no doubt, the drive away from *samsara* towards *moksha* has constituted a most powerful spiritual stimulus in India. But it should also have become apparent that this *samsara:moksha* dichotomy implies many unexpected twists and turns, something that any 'armchair' speculation could hardly anticipate. More interesting than the external factors which restrained the literal move into *moksha* is the fact that the experience of liberation itself allows for a return to the world. This really means that we are dealing here not just with a move from *a* to *b*, but with a genuine dialectical tension as well. The present article has done no more than prepared the way for a closer look at how this tension has provided a fundamental spiritual stimulus for developments which might well be regarded as the most sophisticated and striking culminations of the Indian tradition.

#### NOTES

1. *Dharmasangiti-sutra*, quoted in *Shikshasamuccaya* XIII (translation C. Jamieson).
2. Quoted from *The Buddhist Tradition*, ed. W. de Bary, New York, 1972, p.238.
3. The exception to this is found in Jainism where at least in theory and in highly restricted circumstances suicide by starvation is regarded as a means of achieving liberation.
4. Both aphorism and commentary are translated (and slightly expanded) from the *Pramana-tirattu* on the *Itu*, vol.I, pp.31f.
5. Such rituals have recently acquired fame in Western circles thanks to the popularizers of what they call 'Tantrism'. Even when we distinguish the home-baked theories of these writers from what the Tantras have meant in India, it is essential furthermore to separate an archaic ritual practice from a variety of metaphysical systems in which they came to be embedded. Part III will briefly look at the latter, while the above remarks are restricted to the former.
6. The preconception of India as a 'spiritual' country is however so strong that even a recent work on *The Hindu Temple* (by G. Michell, London, 1977) can say: 'The Hindu temple serves as a reminder of impermanence, a notion that implies a turning away from the present illusory world in an effort to surmount and to transcend it.' (pp.67f.)
7. XI, 33; translation R.C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad-Gita*, Oxford, 1969.
8. *Ibid.* III, 20...24.



9. *Ratnagotravibhaga* I, 71, quoted in Conze, *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages*, i.a. New York, 1964, p. 130.  
 10. The affinity of the *Gita* with early Buddhism

is well-known but the striking similarity between the Bodhisattva ideal of Mahayana Buddhism and the *bhakta* in the *Gita* has not, to my knowledge, been emphasized.

## POLARITY AND PLURIFORMITY IN THE CHURCH

Paul D.L. Avis

It is not often that ecclesiology comes to the forefront of theological debate—though there is no department of Christian theology that does not bear in some way on the concept of the church and no theological question that does not have ecclesiological implications. In the thought of the sixteenth-century Reformers, for example, the question, 'How can I find a gracious God?' entailed the question, 'Where can I find the true church?' Soteriology led directly to ecclesiology: the two were bound together in the Reformers' understanding of the Christian gospel<sup>1</sup>.

In the opinion of some, the doctrine of the church is going to become dominant once again. For too long, ecclesiology has been the poor relation in Anglo-Saxon theology, regarded merely as a dispensable luxury, an inessential academic exercise. But now the Christian churches are faced with a fundamental challenge—a challenge not, for once, to their credal and confessional positions and to the credibility of the Christian faith, but to their actual existence as separate churches, to their ecclesiological integrity.

The various churches have always had to grapple with the question of what separated them from their sister churches and on what legitimate grounds they could take their stand *vis a vis* other ecclesial bodies. Superficially, they may appear to take up positions on such issues as adult baptism, adherence to the doctrinal standards laid down by Martin Luther, the Westminster Divines or John Wesley, or recognition of the primacy of the bishop of Rome. Beneath the surface, however, these ostensible criteria recede in importance and factors deriving from historical accident and the development of different styles of worship and diverse languages of Christian experience loom larger. To bring these underlying issues into the open and to

subject them to critical analysis is the proper task of ecumenical theology. Each church must be helped to take a dispassionate and critical look at those things that constitute its ecclesial identity. Each church must ask itself whether those things that are embedded so deeply in its tradition are mere accidents of history and culture, or whether, on the other hand, they are actually grounded on the one and only foundation of the Church of Christ—the nature of God, the person of Christ and the character of the Christian gospel (cf. I Cor. 3:11).

This question of ecclesial identity in what we may call the external forum, that is to say, in relation to other churches, has been given added point and complexity by the further question concerning ecclesial identity in what we may call the internal forum, that is to say, with regard to a church's own inherent unity, its individual integrity. In the external forum, the problem of ecclesial identity is the problem of the plurality of churches; in the internal forum, the problem of ecclesial identity is the problem of pluralism within a church. The issue is that of unity in diversity. The diversity is obvious: but where is the unity to be located? The diversity of doctrinal views represented within the major denominations raises acutely the problem of ecclesiological integrity.

Now just as every church needs to take a critical look at its ecclesial identity in the external forum, so too every church must take heed to its integrity in the internal forum. Both ecumenical considerations, as to where a particular church stands on a particular matter, and reflection on theological method, with its alertness to the hidden methodological axioms, good and bad, that underlie all theology, demand that the notion of unity in diversity be subjected to critical analysis. No church is without this problem and each must undertake the enquiry

for itself. But perhaps it is felt most acutely in Anglicanism and it is the Anglican form of unity in diversity, usually called comprehensiveness, that I now propose to discuss.

Comprehensiveness was once 'the glory of the Church of England'. The authors of the report *Catholicity* (1947) claimed that Anglican comprehensiveness opened the way for the Church of England to become 'a school of synthesis over a wider field than any other church in Christendom'. Not even the most fervent Anglican ecumenist would claim that this potentiality has been realised and the whole notion of comprehensiveness has recently been pilloried from within the Anglican fold as conceptually incoherent and as providing a refuge for woolly thinking, if not intellectual dishonesty. If comprehensiveness is to be rehabilitated within Anglicanism and unity in diversity defended as a permanent characteristic of the church catholic, constructive and positive proposals must be developed in a way that the critic of comprehensiveness, Professor Stephen Sykes, did not attempt except in the most allusive and tentative way<sup>2</sup>.

Anglican comprehensiveness has historical and contingent origins. During the sixteenth century a synthesis was attempted in the heat of controversy and under the pressure of political upheaval in which appeal to the fathers of the undivided church was combined with the stimulating humanism of the Renaissance and acceptance of the fundamental positions of the continental Reformers—all being held together by the relative continuity of parochial ministry. As a result, Anglican theology has an inbuilt pluriformity, an inherent openness to diverse sources of theological reflection. It draws together various threads of understanding and insight and trusts that out of the tensions that result some broadly based synthesis may emerge. Exponents of Anglicanism have upheld it as an attempt to combine elements which in other traditions have been cut adrift and left to fend for themselves.

In a world increasingly conscious of its own pluralism, we might suppose that a pluriform Anglicanism would at least exercise an initial attraction and invite a positive approach. Its significance might be indicated along the following lines.

(i) *Pluralism and transcendence*. A basic axiom of Christian theism provides the seed-bed for

theological pluralism: the doctrine of the transcendence of God implies that no one set of theological statements can adequately describe him, he transcends every attempt to grasp his nature. There thus arises the possibility of a plurality of approaches to the doctrine of God. These may in practice be hard to reconcile or they may appear to be mutually contradictory, but they cannot be ruled out of court simply on grounds of disagreement. Pluralism in the church may be a legitimate response to the mystery of God<sup>3</sup>.

(ii) *Pluralism and trinitarianism*. The bare notion of unity in diversity needs no further initial justification than to point to the presence of this principle in the trinitarian nature of God—whether conceived of in its highest objective form, three Persons sharing one Nature, or in its lowest subjective form, three modes in which one divine presence and action are experienced. Thus, it would appear, the principle of unity in diversity finds its incontestable mandate at the most axiomatic level of Christian discourse.

(iii) *Pluralism in the New Testament*. Here it is only necessary to mention without elaboration that biblical scholarship has exposed a plurality of theologies within the Bible itself, both in the Old Testament and the New. As C.F. Evans has remarked of the New Testament, its various contributory theologies may have to simply lie side by side, unreconciled, since they may be—and may have been intended to be—irreconcilable. And J.D.G. Dunn, drawing attention to the diverse *kerygmata* of apostolic preaching, and pointing out that one underlying *kerygma* can only be discovered in the New Testament by a process of abstraction, has concluded that 'If the New Testament is any guide, one can never say. This particular formulation is the gospel for all time and for every situation.'<sup>4</sup> The principle of unity in diversity is thus ineradicably imprinted on the foundation documents of Christianity.

(iv) *Pluralism and catholicity*. The richness provided by pluriformity helps the church to transcend cultural barriers and protects her from sinking into a culturally insular orthodoxy. Here the principle of unity in diversity reflects a central characteristic of the Christian gospel, namely its universality as a gospel that is to be preached to 'every creature' and to bring to God

a great multitude that no man could number 'of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues' (Mk 16:15, Rev. 7:9). At least one of the several facets of the church's pluriform message may appeal to individuals of diverse social, cultural and educational background. In this way, pluralism in the church can become an aspect of catholicity<sup>5</sup>.

(v) *Pluralism and development of doctrine.* If Christian theology is not primarily an ideology to be defended and propagated, but rather a venture of faith, an exploration into truth, it must always be open to the emergence of new and unsuspected factors that may point the way to fresh lines of enquiry or provide the tools for self-criticism and reconstruction. A.N. Whitehead has drawn attention to the enormous potentiality of the ideas that sleep in forgotten systems of thought. Pluralism within the church encourages the cross-fertilisation of ideas that may lead to new departures. As John Moorman and Howard Root remark, 'The very dynamism and inner life of Christian faith depends upon development and that means the recognition of the need for diversity, at any time, in theological method and exploration.'<sup>6</sup>

(vi) *Pluralism and the essence of Christianity.* The pluralism of Anglicanism merely mirrors the pluralism of Christianity itself. It is a microcosm of the world church. Ecclesiological work in the internal forum of the Church of England can constitute a pilot study for the whole ecumenical enterprise in the external forum. In this sense, the claim of the report *Catholicity* that Anglican comprehensiveness opens the way for the Church of England to become 'a school of synthesis' for the benefit of the church catholic should be taken seriously. The quest for unity in diversity is a quest for the essence of Anglicanism and the problem of the essence of Anglicanism parallels the problem of the essence of Christianity. We find that definitions of the essence of Christianity have a pluralism of their own, ranging from Schleiermacher through Troeltsch to modern students of this problem such as Professor Sykes. Are we then to seek to discover an essence of essences, an irreducible element in this pluriform phenomenon 'the essence of Christianity'? Such a process of boiling down could go on indefinitely, but what would it leave us with? Better surely to accept that there is a pluriformity inherent in the Christian

religion and reflected in the protean richness of its tradition. This is not, however, to say that no coherence principles are given us in the Christian tradition to counterbalance the radical openness and diversity of Christian theology. Nor is this perhaps the place to expound my own conviction that these coherence principles are dominantly formal or structural and concern the received polarities of Christian theism—transcendence and immanence, grace and nature, revelation and reason. I have attempted a detailed exposition elsewhere<sup>7</sup>.

(vii) *Pluralism and realism.* Its acceptance of pluriformity in the church denotes the eminent realism of Anglican theology. This is perhaps what Mandell Creighton was driving at in this rather triumphalist assertion:

We tend, I think, to make too many apologies for the supposed defects of the Church of England: its want of discipline, its absence of positive definition on many points; its large latitude of opinion. To me it seems that the Church of England is the only religious organisation which faces the world as it is, which recognises the actual facts, and works for God in God's own way . . . Its proudest boast is that it faces the world as it is<sup>8</sup>. In other words, Anglicanism is not seduced by utopian and perfectionist ecclesiologies. It takes seriously the fallenness of the world, the brokenness of the church and the weakness of human nature.

Perhaps I have already said enough to make out a *prima facie* case for comprehensiveness and to show that unity in diversity need not be merely a let out for lazy minds attempting to prop up corrupt churches. But the need to provide a theologically and philosophically sound account of exactly what we mean by this much abused notion remains. We are left with the question whether there is an understanding of pluriformity in the church open to us that does not seem to imply 'a plurality of Lords, a plurality of spirits and a plurality of gods' (Barth). I will suggest four possible senses in which the concept of comprehensiveness might be used in ecclesiology, the last of which is the view I wish to defend.

1. *Mere juxtaposition.* This is the interpretation of comprehensiveness raised by many writers on Anglicanism, only to disown it with contempt—while confessing that this is how Anglican claims

of comprehensiveness strike the observer from without (and even from within!).

The Church of England at the present time, remarked Hensley Henson forty years ago, 'exhibits a doctrinal incoherence which has no parallel in any other church claiming to be traditionally orthodox.' Compare this with a contemporary observation, E.L. Mascall's conviction, 'reached with reluctance and distress and after long and anxious thought, that the theological activity of the Anglican churches is in a condition of extreme, though strangely complacent, confusion, and that this is having a disastrously demoralising effect upon the life and thought of the church as a whole and of the pastoral clergy in particular.' Bishop Gore asserted that comprehensiveness envisaged as the mere juxtaposition of views gave us not a church but 'a mere concensus of jarring atoms'. Alec Vidler similarly rejects the sort of comprehensiveness that has been taken to mean (by whom, he does not say) that 'it is the glory of the Church of England to hold together in juxtaposition as many varieties of Christian faith and practice as are willing to agree to differ, so that the church is regarded as a sort of league of religions.' Vidler dismisses this as 'unprincipled syncretism'. The report *Catholicity*, observing that 'the possibilities of synthesis within the Anglican ideal are still largely unrealised', concludes with unnecessarily pronounced understatement that 'it is by no means true' that the mere juxtaposition of diverse elements in Anglicanism will produce the synthesis that is needed<sup>9</sup>.

The view we are considering here has probably never received attempted theological justification, but that does not prevent its being tacitly accepted by a wide section of theologically uninterested clergy and ecclesiologicaly bewildered laity. Those who are overtly party-minded render support to this view by adhering to the party that in their view enjoys a virtual monopoly of truth, while continuing as members of a church which tolerates opposed, and therefore erroneous, opinions.

2. *Compromise*. This is what the celebrated *via media* often amounts to—a halfway house, an Aristotelian golden mean, the pedestrian pursuit of a safe middle path through all extremes. This view of comprehensiveness goes back to the seventeenth century when George Herbert

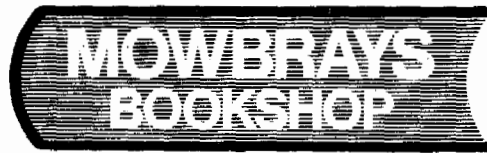
compared the charms of the Church of England—'A fine aspect in fit array, Neither too mean nor yet too gay'—with the allurements of Rome, the painted harlot on the hill, and the uncomeliness of the protestant churches, the slovenly wench in the valley, declaring, 'But dearest Mother, (what those miss) the *mean* Thy praise and glory is.' Or in Simon Patrick's memorable phrase: 'that virtuous mediocrity which our church observes between the meretricious gaudiness of the Church of Rome and the squalid sluttiness of fanatic conventicles.' The Preface (1662) to the Book of Common Prayer seems to echo these sentiments when it asserts: 'It hath been the wisdom of the Church of England, ever since the first compiling of her Publick Liturgy, to keep the mean between the two extremes, of too much stiffness in refusing, and of too much easiness in admitting any variation from it.' For George Savile, Marquess of Halifax, the Church of England was 'a Trimmer between the frenzy of fanatic visions and the lethargic ignorance of popish dreams.'<sup>10</sup>

'To this day', wrote Thomas Babington Macaulay in the 1840s, 'the constitution, the doctrines and the services of the church retain the visible marks of the compromise from which she sprang. She occupies a middle position between the churches of Rome and Geneva.' Her doctrinal standards 'set forth principles of theology in which Calvin or Knox would have found scarcely a word to disapprove', while her prayers, derived from the ancient breviaries, are 'such that Cardinal Fisher or Cardinal Pole might have heartily joined in them.' Similarly with the ministry: while Rome maintained the doctrine of apostolic succession and many protestants rejected episcopacy altogether, the Anglican Reformers took a middle course. They retained bishops without making episcopacy of the *esse* of the church or necessary to guarantee the efficacy of the sacraments. And, as Macaulay says, 'in every part of her system the same policy may be traced'.

Utterly rejecting the doctrine of transubstantiation, and condemning as idolatrous all adoration paid to the sacramental bread and wine, she yet, to the disgust of the Puritan, required her children to receive the memorials of divine love, meekly kneeling upon their knees. Discarding many rich vestments which surrounded the altars of the ancient faith, she

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yet retained, to the horror of weak minds, a robe of white linen, typical of the purity which belonged to her as the mystical spouse of Christ . . . She retained confirmation and ordination as edifying rites; but she degraded them from the rank of sacraments. Shrift was no part of her system. Yet she gently invited the dying penitent to confess his sins to a divine, and empowered her ministers to soothe the departing soul by an absolution, which breathes the very spirit of the old religion.<sup>11</sup>

William Temple, whose facility for devising reconciling formulae is well known, held this view of comprehensiveness. An exclusive loyalty to either the Reformation or the unreformed catholic tradition is not a viable option for Anglicans, he claimed. 'The Church of England has always bridged the gulf (or sat on the hedge, if you like) that divides "catholic" and

The understanding of comprehensiveness as compromise does attempt to do justice to one deep-seated and permanent element in Anglicanism—its moderation, its stress on sobriety, balance and the horror of 'enthusiasm', or as a critic might claim, its Laodicean lukewarmness, its propensity to muddle through, its dislike, as Hensley Henson put it, 'of pushing principles to their logical conclusions, its almost limitless acquiescence in anomalies which are practically convenient, its ready condonation of admitted abuses which serve material interests.'<sup>13</sup> This apparently ineradicable element acts as a useful check on hasty innovation and creates an ethos uncongenial to movements centred on charismatic individuals, but its drawbacks are precisely superficiality, complacency and lack of vision.

As the authors of *Catholicity* justly remark, to interpret comprehensiveness as compromise seems to presuppose that grey possesses the virtues of both black and white: the result is 'an insipid centrality which misses the truth of catholic and evangelical alike and is no more comprehensive than either of them.' The real trouble with this view of the *via media*, remarks Emmanuel Amand de Mendieta, is its 'chronic tendency towards complacency and mediocrity,' and he goes on to assert that 'in so far as central churchmen occupy this "moderate" position of compromise in matters of religion, they cannot show either the breadth or the depth of the

Anglican synthesis, of its meeting and merging of all the living values of catholicism and evangelicalism.' It often takes someone coming to Anglicanism from outside to tell us what it is all about. When de Mendieta speaks of the meeting and merging of the living values of catholicism and evangelicalism, he is anticipating the view that I shall shortly be advocating myself<sup>14</sup>.

3. *Eclecticism*. According to a third approach, albeit crudely put, Anglican comprehensiveness gives the freedom to pick and choose from the available theological options. 'I condemn not all things in the Council of Trent nor approve all in the Synod of Dort', declares Sir Thomas Browne in the *Religio Medici*. Anglicanism, claimed Gore, represents a combination which could become one of 'the most beneficent forces of catholicity in the world.'

It is the glory of the Anglican church that at the Reformation she repudiated neither the ancient structure of catholicism nor the new and freer movement. Upon the ancient structure—the creeds, the canon, the hierarchy, the sacraments—she retained her hold while she opened her arms to the new learning, the new appeal to scripture, the freedom of historical criticism and the duty of private judgement.

Put like this, it almost seems as though Anglicanism can both have its cake and eat it. As R.W. Church had pointed out a generation before Gore, this ideal seems to many to be 'an illogical and incomprehensible attempt to unite incompatible principles and elements.' It leaves the contributory elements lying side by side; it does not explain how they are to be combined.<sup>15</sup>

In Gore's case, though this ideal provided the impetus for an impressive effort of synthesis and reconstruction, it also sowed the seeds of conflict and contradiction. He ultimately failed to unify his thought. The doctrines of apostolic succession and the priesthood of all believers, the magisterium of the church and the duty of private judgement, the supremacy of scripture and the indefectability of (credal) tradition remained unreconciled. It was only sheer intellectual brilliance, prophetic power and force of personality that enabled Gore to take his attempted synthesis as far as he did. His very gifts prevented him from ever undertaking any significant revision of his position in the light of criticism<sup>16</sup>.

To this particular interpretation of comprehensiveness belongs the popular notion of complementarity of truths. Properly speaking, the principle of complementarity, formulated by Niels Bohr, is just one among several concepts of polarity, some highly esoteric, employed by modern physicists. The precise meaning and function of the principle of complementarity is often misunderstood by the layman, and it has been subjected to criticism by Einstein, Schrodinger and Popper, among others. While Bohr himself would have welcomed the extension of his principle to theological problems, we should not forget that, in itself, the principle of complementarity is a confession of failure, an expression of agnosticism about ultimate unified truth. Its use outside physics is only analogical, not inferential, and it provides no justification for the facile acceptance of dualisms or the abandonment of the search for synthesis. But, as Stephen Sykes has trenchantly shown, this is precisely what has often happened in Anglicanism. The availability of this notion has served as 'an open invitation to intellectual laziness and self-deception,' since 'lots of contradictory things may be said to be complementary by those with a vested interest in refusing to think straight.'<sup>17</sup>

4. *Polarity*. When Frederick Denison Maurice speaks of a union of positive principles and Michael Ramsey of a binding together of the gospel, the catholic church and sound learning, they are not envisaging a mere juxtaposition of elements, a compromise between competing claims or a fastidious selection of what appeals from among a broad range of theological possibilities. Nor are they advocating a view of comprehensiveness on the lines of complementarity—commonly understood in a way that approximates to the medieval idea of the 'double truth'. When they advocate 'an embracing of the positive truths of our tradition in their depth and vigour', they are speaking (in the case of Maurice, explicitly; in the case of Michael Ramsey, probably implicitly) from within a distinct and powerful epistemology which alone makes such a combination possible. It does this according to the mode of polarity<sup>18</sup>.

The doctrine of polarity has remote and recondite origins, shading off into mythology and the occult. But it is not this esoteric sense of polarity that is meant when, for example,

H.R. McAdoo asserts that polarity or a 'quality of living tension' is an over-all characteristic of Anglican theological method. It is in the weaker sense of truths-in-tension that polarity distinguishes the Anglican theology of the seventeenth century. 'Beneath the surface', writes McAdoo, 'was the feeling for the *via media* which was not in its essence compromise or an intellectual expedient but a quality of thinking, an approach in which elements usually regarded as mutually exclusive were seen to be in fact complementary. These things were held in a living tension, not in order to walk the tight-rope of compromise, but because they were seen to be mutually illuminating and to fertilise each other.' In this synthesis, he continues:

There was the centrality of scripture and the freedom of reason, the relation of revelation to reason and that of reason and faith, credal orthodoxy and liberty in non-essentials, the appeal to antiquity and the welcome to new knowledge, the historic continuity of the church and the freedom of national churches. Behind it all lies the healthy tension of freedom and authority, accepting neither authoritarianism nor uncontrolled liberty<sup>19</sup>.

In the early nineteenth century, however, under the influence of German idealist metaphysics, the notion of polarity became more explicitly defined. In our present context, it owes its formulation to Coleridge and is integral to the Platonic stream of philosophical theology that regards him as its presiding spirit.

As J.S. Mill remarked with Bentham in mind, 'Nobody's synthesis can be more complete than his analysis.' It was precisely with reference to philosophical and theological construction, proceeding by analysis and synthesis, that Coleridge stressed the importance of polarity. Analysis may *divide* or it may *distinguish*: the difference is crucial to Coleridge, for to divide is often to destroy, while to distinguish is often to discern a polarity. 'It is a dull and obtuse mind', Coleridge remarks, 'that must divide in order to distinguish; but it is a still worse that distinguishes in order to divide.' To divide is the work of a *keen* mind; to distinguish without dividing (i.e. in polarity), the achievement of a *subtle* mind<sup>20</sup>.

Turning from analysis to synthesis: the function of polarity here derives from Coleridge's belief that men are usually right in

what they positively affirm but wrong in what they negate. In the aphorism 'Extremes meet', he claimed, 'I bring . . . all problematic results to their solution and reduce apparent contraries to correspondent opposites. How many hostile tenets has it enabled me to contemplate as fragments of truth, false only by negation and mutual exclusion.'<sup>21</sup>

F.D. Maurice's doctrine of the union of opposites owed its passionate intensity to the circumstances of his upbringing in a household torn by sectarian strife and its paradoxical twist to Coleridge's teaching on polarity. Maurice's obsessive search for unity in diversity is symbolised by his transition from unitarianism to trinitarian orthodoxy—here too he was following Coleridge.

Maurice rejected the idea that the Anglicanism that emerged from the Elizabethan settlement of religion was a cowardly or cunning compromise which lacked the courage to ally itself either with the radical Reformers like John Knox or 'the bold reactionaries of the Council of Trent'. He believed that the secret of Elizabeth's success rested on her unique ability to unite in herself the reformed and catholic elements in the nation. 'The alkali and the acid produced a healthy effervescence; no neutral salt had as yet resulted from their combination.'<sup>22</sup>

Maurice had an equal horror of both systems and eclecticism. The catholic church was constituted by the union of positive living principles which, isolated by sectarian systems, had there lost their life and power. While the systems continued to witness to these principles, they at the same time tended to distort them. Maurice did not hold, as Stephen Sykes appears to suggest, that the systems as such could be reconciled, only that the positive, living principles to which each bore witness could form parts of a higher truth. 'There is a divine harmony, of which the living principle in each of these systems forms one note, of which the systems themselves are a disturbance and a violation.'<sup>23</sup> The constructive approach to opposing systems is 'not by yielding a jot to either but by satisfying the real cravings of the earnest spirits who are entangled in both.' Maurice is echoing Coleridge when he claims: 'It is not the negative parts of each opinion which have most tendency to coalesce but . . . the positive parts of these

opinions are always struggling towards each other and are kept apart only by the negative and contradictory elements with which they are mingled.' For example, the Tractarians were right to want to 'catholicise' the Church of England but wrong when they vowed to 'unprotestantise' it. Maurice does not mean by this that the church is to be half protestant and half catholic, but rather that she is to be 'most catholic when she is most protestant.'<sup>24</sup>

As I attempted to show at the beginning of this paper, the principle of unity in diversity is firmly anchored in the very structure of Christian theism and a degree of comprehensiveness is now a permanent feature, not only of the Anglican Church, but of all Christian churches. But the ecclesiological integrity of the churches hangs upon the way in which they understand and respond to this problem. We cannot with integrity accept comprehensiveness as mere juxtaposition, or as compromise, or as eclecticism: a deeper synthesis than these is required and I am suggesting that the notion of polarity may indicate the mode in which that synthesis can be achieved. The concept needs more justification than I am able to provide here (though I have attempted it elsewhere), but perhaps the citations from Coleridge and Maurice already indicate the lines on which the argument could be developed: learning to distinguish without dividing between, for example, protestant and catholic, individual and corporate, spiritual and formal, transcendent and immanent elements in the wholeness of Christian experience; being guided by the positive affirmations that different traditions have to offer, rather than being diverted by their negative denials; and, finally, looking beneath the surface for the spiritual aspirations and insights that may be veiled by historical or cultural forms.

In conclusion, there is one further point that needs to be stressed. When Coleridge speaks of distinguishing without dividing and Maurice of the craving of the spirit for truth and the tendency of positive truths to coalesce, almost to 'home in' on each other, they are presupposing a particular philosophy of mind, they are assuming the reality of what Polanyi has called the tacit dimension—the creative, constructive and heuristic power of thinking below the threshold of explicit consciousness.



The doctrine of polarity only appears to be an attempt to flout the law of contradiction and an open invitation to the analytical *tour de force* when it is considered in detachment from its context in a particular epistemological tradition, stemming from the Platonists of antiquity, and passing, through German idealism and the thought of Coleridge, into modern thought, where it has received reinforcement and restatement from philosophers of mind such as Whitehead, Polanyi, Popper and Lonergan. Polarity cannot be grafted on to a merely analytical and discursive mode of rationality. It grows out of and depends entirely upon a grasp of the power of intuition, the reality of tacit knowledge and the transcendent operations of insight whereby we may indeed have a real though inarticulate sense of 'the full orbit of Christian truth'.<sup>25</sup>

#### NOTES

1. On this see my article, '“The True Church” in Reformation Theology', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, xxx (1977), 319-345 and part one of my book *The Church in the Theology of the Reformers*, Marshall's Theological Library, London and John Knox Press, Atlanta.
2. *Catholicity: a study in the conflict of Christian traditions in the west*, London 1947, 49; S.W. Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism*, London and Oxford 1978.
3. Cf. J.R.H. Moorman and H.E. Root, 'Unity and Comprehensiveness', in Alan Clark and Colin Davey, ed., *Anglican/Roman Catholic Dialogue: the work of the Preparatory Commission*, London 1974, 79f; cf. Don Cupitt, *The Leap of Reason*, London 1976.
4. C.F. Evans, 'The Unity and Pluriformity of the New Testament', in *Christian Believing*, London 1976, J.D.G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, London, 30ff.
5. Cf. Moorman and Root, op.cit.
6. Ibid. On pluralism and development of doctrine see also Nicholas Lash, *Change in Focus: a study of doctrinal change and continuity*, London 1973, and *Voices of Authority*, London 1976, esp. ch.3; cf. also *Christian Believing*, 3f.
7. See my article, 'Polarity and Reductionism', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, xxix (1976), 401-413 and my book *Mind, Method and God. towards a new integration in theology* (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, London; forthcoming).
8. Cited G.W. Fallows, *Mandell Creighton and the English Church*, London 1964, 56, from Creighton, *University and Other Sermons*, 1903.
9. H.H. Henson, *The Church of England*, Cambridge 1939, 108; E.L. Mascall, *Theology and the Gospel of Christ*, London 1977, 1, Charles Gore, *The Basis of*

- Anglican Fellowship in Faith and Organisation*, London 1914; 4f; Alec Vidler, 'What is Anglicanism?', *Essays in Liberality*, London 1957, 165; *Catholicity*, 51;
10. P.E. More and F.L. Cross, ed., *Anglicanism*, London 1935, 11f; Halifax, *The Character of a Trimmer*, 1684, cited Henson, op.cit., 64.
  11. T.B. Macaulay, *The History of England from the Accession of James II*, Everyman edn, London 1906, I. 47f.
  12. William Temple, *Religious Experience and Other Essays and Addresses*, London 1958, 88.
  13. Henson, op.cit., 65.
  14. *Catholicity*, 51, E.A. de Mendieta, *Anglican Vision*, London 1971, 49f.
  15. Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, Oxford 1909, 8; Charles Gore, *The Mission of the Church*, London 1892, 36; R.W. Church, *Pascal and Other Sermons*, London 1896, 69.
  16. Further on Gore see my article 'Gore and Theological Synthesis', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, xxviii (1975), 461-476, my PhD thesis, 'Charles Gore and the Christian Polarities: a study in theological construction and conflict', submitted in the Department of Christian Doctrine, University of London King's College, 1976; and the book *Gore. Construction and Conflict*, with a Foreword by Lord Ramsey of Canterbury, James Clarke, Cambridge 1981.
  17. Sykes, op.cit., 19. On complementarity in its wider applications see W.H. Austin, 'Waves, Particles and Paradoxes', *Rice University Studies*, liii (1967); *The Relevance of Natural Science to Theology*, London 1976, I.G. Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion*, New York and London 1966; Jean Sharon, *Man in Search of Himself*, London 1967, ch.2; Christopher B. Kaiser's Edinburgh PhD thesis, 'The Logic of Complementarity in Science and Theology'.
  18. *Catholicity*, 52; A.M. Ramsey, 'What is Anglican Theology?', *Theology*, xlviii (1945); *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, London 1936; F.D. Maurice and the *Conflicts of Modern Theology*, Cambridge 1951, ch.2.
  19. H.R. McAdoo, *The Spirit of Anglicanism*, London 1965, 312f.
  20. S.T. Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, 5th edn, London 1843, I. introductory aphorism 26. For Mill's remark see F.R. Leavis, ed, *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge*, London 1950, 58.
  21. Coleridge, *Anima Poetae*, London 1895, 301.
  22. F.D. Maurice, *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*, London 1872, II. 138f; cf. *The Prayer Book and the Lord's Prayer*, London 1893, xiii, 1ff.
  23. Maurice, *The Kingdom of Christ*, ed. Vidler, London 1958, II. 322, cf. Sykes, op.cit., 19.
  24. Maurice, *On Right and Wrong Methods of Supporting Protestantism: a letter to Lord Ashley*, London 1843, 20, 12. (The same conviction informs Maurice's approach to other religions: see *The Religions of the World*, 4th edn, London 1861, esp. 210f); *Subscription No Bondage*, Oxford 1835, 104; *Three Letters to the Rev. W. Palmer*, London 1842, 16. See also *Reasons for not joining a Party in the Church: a letter to the Ven. Samuel Wilberforce*, London 1841. On the philosophical

tradition that lies behind the teaching of Coleridge and Maurice here see J. Coulson, *Newman and the Common Tradition*, London 1970; S. Prickett, *Romanticism and Religion: the tradition of Coleridge and Wordsworth in the Victorian Church*, Cambridge 1976; David Newsome, *Two Classes of Men: Platonism and English Romantic Thought*, London 1974; Owen Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, London 1972; Thomas McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*, London 1969; J.H. Muirhead, *The Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon*

*Philosophy*, London 1931; *Coleridge as Philosopher*, London 1930.

25. I have attempted to show the relevance of this tradition in epistemology to theology in *Mind, Method and God* and, in relation to ecumenical theology in my book *The Shaking of the Seven Hills: Romanticism, the Reformation and Philosophy of History*, on which I am currently working. May I also refer to my article 'Richard Hooker and John Calvin', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, (1980).

## STRUCTURALISM. AN INTRODUCTION

B.L.Horne

First some remarks of a general and historical nature. The word 'structuralism' operates in much the same way as the word 'existentialism'. It is not to be thought of as an autonomous school of thought; and just as there are philosophers, historians, theologians all calling themselves 'existentialist', so there are 'structuralist' psychologists, philosophers, literary critics, Biblical scholars. Whether structuralism can be spoken of as a 'philosophy' or 'ideology' at all is an issue which is hotly debated in structuralist circles. Robert Scholes, for instance, in the closing pages of his book *Structuralism in Literature*<sup>1</sup>, makes remarks which clearly show that his own understanding of structuralism is that of its being a philosophy, a 'Weltanschauung'. Raymond Boudun, on the other hand, in his book *The Uses of Structuralism*<sup>2</sup> is intent on demonstrating that structuralism can only properly be described as a method, and dismisses curtly, almost contemptuously, those who foolishly believe that structures exist in reality and that structuralism can offer a way of interpreting the world.

The fields in which structuralism has been developed, and is now a powerful force, are linguistics, anthropology, psychology, sociology and literary criticism. It is a relatively new discipline and can be traced back to the teachings of the Swiss philologist Ferdinand de Saussure at the beginning of this century. (I use the word 'teachings' because the substance of his thought is to be found in lecture notes collated by his students and published in 1916 under the title *Cours de linguistique generale*.) He viewed language as essentially a system of relations

between elements (words, sounds etc.) each of which owed its validity to its relation to the rest and could have meaning only in that context. He described language as a social system, a system of signifiers, and insisted on the arbitrariness of the verbal sign. He also drew a distinction between certain concepts whose French names are difficult to translate into English, but which have become part of the vocabulary of structural linguistics: *la langue*, *la parole*, *le langage*. *Langue* refers to the institution of a language; *parole* to particular and individual acts of expression. Together these elements constitute *le langage*. In English we use the single word 'language' to translate both *langue* and *langage*, but we use it in two different senses. For example, the English language (*langue*) and the language (*langage*) of philosophy, poetry etc. which is the *parole*—individual utterances after a particular manner—in the given instituted language (*langue*), English. Saussure tried to discover the key principles upon which language is constructed and came up with a complicated system of contrasts, distinctions, oppositions, which need not detain us here.

Of all the linguistic philosophers who have followed in the steps of the Swiss master, the one best known in English speaking countries is the American Noam Chomsky. Much controversy has surrounded his work, especially his belief in, and search for, a 'universal grammar', for those 'deep structures' of language which underlie the surface differences between spoken languages. He has even claimed that the principles which constitute the structure of language

are so specific and so highly articulated that they must be regarded as being biologically determined; that is to say, as forming part of what we call human nature, and as being genetically transmitted from parent to child.

My own quite tentative belief is that there is an autonomous system of formal grammar, determined in principle by the language faculty and its component Universal Grammar.<sup>3</sup>

This leads Chomsky on to argue strongly against both Behaviourism and also what he calls Empiricism, what we in England should probably call 'historical relativism', i.e. the belief that there is no non-trivial theory of human nature and that all behaviour, attitudes, thought patterns are determined historically. This belief in the existence of inherited structures tends to make Chomsky and many structuralist writers 'anti-historical'. I shall return to this point later.

The second important sphere of structuralist influence is that of anthropology, and here the figure of Claude Levi-Strauss has been dominant. He was born in 1908 and is still, as far as I know, teaching at the College de France in Paris. Most of his early work was done with Amerindian civilisations and he attracted a large following after the publication of his work on kinship in 1949. *Structural Anthropology* followed in 1958 and more recently he has published his *Mythologies*. Mary Douglas has pointed out that one of his novel departures (novel i.e. to the English empirical/historical tradition of anthropology and philosophy) is his treatment of all versions of a myth as equally authentic and relevant to his purposes<sup>4</sup>. There is no such thing as a 'corrupt' text. The original version, if it can be discovered, is simply a version. Again we should note the non-historical bias of this kind of thinking and the way in which many structuralists oppose synchronic and diachronic modes of procedure. Understanding is never increased by the discovery of 'wie es eigentlich gewesen'.

From being an empirical science much concerned with field work and the faithful recording of primitive custom, anthropology seemed to be becoming a speculative, almost a mathematical and abstract, activity—not without strong opposition in anthropological circles. In the opening pages of his book *Le Cru et le Cui* Levi-Strauss says that the object is to show how

simple empirical categories of social intercourse: raw/cooked, can be treated as conceptual tools to construct abstract ideas which can be interconnected in logical propositions. So, instead of the a, b, c, or x, y, z, of mathematics, we have jaguars, boars, chickens, related to each other in a formal sequence<sup>5</sup>. Like structural linguistics, Levi-Strauss's structural anthropology takes as axiomatic the belief that each element of social and psychological life has meaning only in its connection with the underlying system. If we lack knowledge of that system, the particular signs, however graphic, will yield nothing. Roland Barthes has stated that the aim of structuralism is to master the infinity of utterances (*paroles*) by describing the language (*langue*) of which they are products and from which they can be generated<sup>6</sup>.

At the mention of Barthes we move across into the field of literary criticism. It seems to me that the most influential figure here has been the French scholar, Roland Barthes, who died recently. He has been at the centre of the stage since the early nineteen fifties and his writings are gradually being translated into English. Of all the thinkers I have so far mentioned Barthes is, at least for me, the most attractive, though also, possibly, the most elusive. He would probably have denied the epithet 'structuralist', but, like all those we have been considering, he viewed human communication as, essentially, a system i.e. a collection of signs whose meanings can only be deciphered (decoded?) when they are read 'in relation' to each other. His essays are full of irony and provocation, as, for example, the article published by the *Times Literary Supplement* on 29 September, 1967, *Literature vs Science*, and he has gained a certain amount of notoriety by the eclecticism of the material he has chosen for analysis. He has scrutinised mythical material in the Bible, examined the semiotics of photograph, film and music, and found intricate sign-systems at work in the novels of Ian Fleming. A dominant motif of his writing has been his insistence that 'Literature is simply a language, a system of signs. Its being (*etre*) is not in its message, but in this system. Similarly it is not for criticism to reconstitute the message of the work, but only its system, exactly as the linguist does not decipher the meaning of a sentence, but establishes the

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formal structure which allows the meaning to be conveyed.<sup>7</sup>

I deemed it necessary to make some comments about Saussure, Chomsky and Levi-Strauss in order to fill in some of the background, but it is structuralist literary criticism, of whom I take Barthes to be the most stimulating and influential exponent, that touches us, whose working hours are spent in the scrutinising of texts, most deeply. So I will look more closely at two recent essays by Barthes: *The Death of the Author*, (*Manteia* V 1968) and *From Work to Text* (*Revue d'esthétique* 3 1971) both of which, if taken seriously, could, perhaps, affect the way in which we read our texts<sup>8</sup>.

First, however, the enunciation of a few basic principles of structuralism. Raymond Boudun, whom I have already mentioned, denies that it is possible to give a simple definition, yet he quotes the French educational theorist Jean Piaget as saying that a structural method entails envisaging the analysed object as a whole, as a set of interdependent elements whose coherence must be shown, and that a structure (in its most general sense) exists when elements are united in a whole which presents certain properties as a

whole and the properties of the elements are wholly or partially dependent on those of the whole<sup>9</sup>. So the essential qualities of the method lie in its attempt to study not, as in the cases of Source Criticism and Form Criticism, the separate elements from which the whole is constructed, but the complex network of relationships that link and unite these elements. But is not this similar to the practice of Redaction Criticism: the uncovering of the theological, philosophical and ideological plan of the author? No, it is not, as we shall see when we look more closely at Barthes's essay *The Death of the Author*. The structuralist is engaged in a much more 'mathematical' activity. So, Jean Calloud writes: 'the text is made up of units which are defined and classified and which can be defined by following a number of rules . . . the question is "What happens in the text?" NOT what is the life setting of its composition . . . NOT what has happened in the mind of author . . . NOT what has happened in the rest of his work but in a specific text under examination . . . . Logical operations, such as affirmations, negations, conjunctions, disjunctions, attributions, modalisations are, in their own

ways, happenings.<sup>10</sup> And so structuralism is opposed to what I shall call hermeneutics, which I interpret as the recovery of meaning.

The word 'grammar' is one which is used either analogically or unequivocally by nearly everyone who is a structuralist thinker and it is easy to see why structuralism is, after all, the application of the rules of communicative speech; and when one analyses grammatically, one is engaged in a process of determining, by rules to which one has given names: subject, object, predicate etc., the exact relationship of the elements of a sentence to each other. One is left with a description, and that description—purely formal, for one has said nothing about the meaning of the sentence—is its structure.

Once again we should take note of the non-historical bias of the structuralist approach. And once again we can trace this back to Saussure whose intention was to break away from the language studies of the nineteenth century which were almost a branch of historical studies with their emphasis upon the charting of the change and development of a language in time. Saussure emphasised instead, synchronic linguistics and treated extra-linguistic influences as irrelevant. For him (as for Levi-Strauss in his social anthropology) each language was complete at every stage of its development. There is no such thing as progress or regress, growth or decay in the structuralist canon, only change. What is important is the observable logic of present relations: the examination of the history of a language or a text will not help us to discover its structure. So it could be said that structuralism is a descriptive science with a formalist approach. Does it ignore meaning because it concentrates on system? Does it refuse to acknowledge the cultural world beyond and within which the literary work was created? Does it see works (texts) as closed, finished, autonomous objects? Robert Scholes in his book *Structuralism in Literature* is at pains to deny this, but I do not find his denials convincing, and I can see advantages as well as disadvantages in this methodology, though, as yet, I can see the advantages as having negative significance only.

Structuralism can be used effectively as an antidote to two of the most common diseases of textual criticism: Historicism and Intentionalism. First, Historicism: at its worst this interpretative

procedure leads to the dogma that the only way of understanding a text is to gather as much historical knowledge about it as possible. So, much energy is spent on discovering the date and place of composition; the outside influences on its production such as social or economic or personal factors; the audience for whom it was intended. Eventually, nothing is said about the text at all, or rather, if that is something of a caricature, the text is interpreted entirely in the light of its context. This can have the effect of locking away a text in its unreachable historical environment. Intentionalism is a very different procedure: it asserts that the proper way to read a text is to try to enter the mind of the author and discover what he intended. (I have noticed that redaction critics tend to lean in this direction.) W.K. Wimsatt in 1946 exposed the fallacies of this procedure in a famous essay called *The Intentional Fallacy*<sup>11</sup>. Unless the author has conveniently provided a commentary on what he has written, what he intended can only be perceived by the reader through the medium of the artefact 'itself. One can say what a poem means, says, is, or does, but one cannot, legitimately, say what the author intended the poem to say, mean, be, or do—that is sheer speculation. Wimsatt's essay deals, primarily, with poetry, but his argument is valid for other kinds of literature too, such as the documents of the Old and New Testaments. Structuralism, with its focus on the text itself and its disregard for provenance and authorship helps us to avoid these traps.

And now, I will look more closely at the two essays I mentioned earlier by Roland Barthes. In *The Death of the Author* Barthes's thesis is quite simple. Literature begins only when the author enters into his own death, and we, as readers, only respond to writing, as literature, when we have successfully killed the author. Barthes claims that the concept of 'the author' is a modern concept, the product of the discovery of the prestige of the individual following upon the Reformation, English empiricism and the French Revolution.

The image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions . . . the *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or

less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the *author* confiding in us.<sup>12</sup>

Needless to say, Barthes is opposed to this state of affairs and he maintains (though without offering us proof in this essay) that modern linguistics has demonstrated the foolishness of this kind of reading.

Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance writing, just as *I* is nothing other than the instance saying *I*: language knows a 'subject', not a 'person', and this subject, empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it, suffices to make language 'hold together'; suffices, that is to say, to exhaust it.<sup>13</sup>

In the old dispensation, in which most Biblical critics have lived, the author is seen as the past of his book and we, as readers, follow the line through the book back to the author: we are conscious of St Paul, St John, or Dante or Shakespeare or Dickens. When the author has been found the text is his and all is explained, the meaning has been discovered. We see a text as a unity: of words appearing on a page and author writing those words for us to read. The case of many documents of the Old Testament raises interesting problems because we are here working with documents which have no author but arise out of the folk lore of a society. Yet even here we tend to treat the tradition as though it were, itself, 'an author'. The Biblical critic never perceives that he himself has a part to play in the creation of the text he is reading, he is content that the text should be objectified and put 'out there' with its author, and that he will decipher the meaning by discovering as much as he can about author and text. Barthes challenges this method of reading.

... a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focussed and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations which make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination.<sup>14</sup>

Though I have much sympathy with this shift of focus from author to reader, I doubt whether, on these grounds, there can be any such thing as

true or false interpretation of a text. The intentions of the author (even if they could be discovered) are totally irrelevant, there is only valid and invalid procedure. All we can discover is something about ourselves and so, possibly, the old concept of the Bible as a source of revelation, with God, ultimately, as its author, is destroyed. Unfortunately Barthes does not, in this essay, investigate the question of the relationship between the validity of a procedure and the meaning of a work, but then I have not discovered, so far, any structuralist critic who satisfactorily examines this relationship.

The second of the two essays, *From Work to Text*, was published three years after *The Death of the Author* and is, really, an extension of the arguments of the earlier essay. It is more difficult; denser in style and more serious in tone, lacking the lightness and irony of *The Death of the Author*. He takes up the discussion of the unity of reader and what is read, and stresses the significance of that relationship rather than the relationship between the writer and what he has written. And he does so first by drawing a distinction between the work, *L'Oeuvre*, and the text, *Le Texte*.

The work is a fragment of substance ... the text is a methodological field: the one is displayed, the other demonstrated; likewise, the work can be *seen* (in bookshops, libraries, catalogues etc.), the text is a process of demonstration ... the text ... only exists in the movement of a discourse ... the text is experienced only in an activity of production.<sup>15</sup>

It is clear that Barthes is trying to forward the movement from work to text in order to promote the discovery of the text and here we notice not merely a non-historical stance, but a positively anti-historical approach to reading as an act of intellectual understanding.

The intertextual in which every text is held, it itself being the text-between of another text, is not to be compared with some origin of the text: to try to find the 'sources', the 'influences' of a work, is to fall in with the myth of filiation; the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*: they are quotations without inverted commas.<sup>16</sup>

Does this textualisation bring about fundamental changes in reading? I can find little here with

which F.R. Leavis or any school of Practical Criticism would disagree (though Dr Leavis would, undoubtedly, have expressed himself differently). Learning to read in a class of Practical Criticism is learning to respond to a text without foreknowledge. The very ignorance of literary and cultural history plays an important part; the direct effect of the text alone is felt, and attention is focussed upon grammatical structures, upon the interplay, within the given limits, of congruity and transformation patterns, symbols and repetitions etc. This I take to be very similar to Barthes's 'movement in a methodological field . . . from work to text'.

Barthes elaborates his argument by stating that there ' . . . is no vital "respect" due to the Text, it can be broken (which is just what the Middle Ages did with two nevertheless authoritative texts) . . . ' He is referring here to Holy Scripture and Aristotle. I must comment on a certain ambiguity in this statement (unless it is a fault of the translator, which seems unlikely, as he would hardly have translated *oeuvre* as text). By Barthes's own definition a text is not authoritative; it is, after all, a methodological field, not a fragment of substance; Holy Scripture and the writings of Aristotle must be *works*, not texts, and it is those works which can be broken by the exercise of textualising. Leaving aside this ambiguity, we can see how Barthes uses the possibility of 'breaking' works in his argument for the plurality of texts. Here he parts company with Dr Leavis, and indeed all the great literary critics: S.T. Coleridge, Matthew Arnold, T.S. Eliot, for it seems that the logical conclusion of Barthes's argument is that a text is whatever the reader makes of it, and that there can be no valid single meaning in any work which can be perceived and extracted. This could have serious consequences for the Church which is committed to the assumption that there is such a thing as truth and that it can be perceived; that the author of the Holy Scriptures is God, however plurally and idiosyncratically His word is mediated, and that the truth about Him can be discovered by intelligent readings of the writings. Barthes would have us all participate in a kind of game in which we knew all the rules, and played the game according to those rules, while acknowledging all the while that there was no significance in the game,

except as game. This, I suppose, is a perfectly valid philosophy of life, but it is fundamentally anarchic, and I do not see how it could ever be Christian.

Furthermore, such an approach to literature refuses to consider the question of evaluation and discrimination; two words sacred in the canon of Leavisite criticism. Barthes writes that the quality of the work is no concern of structural analysis, that is why so many of his own analyses are performed on trivia, like the novels of Ian Fleming, and not on established works of art. 'Structurally', he writes, 'there is no difference between "cultured" reading and casual reading on trains.' We are led to ask the question: Does it really not matter to us (and society) what we read and see? Is reading simply an activity like eating? I happen to dislike Baked Beans, you may enjoy Baked Beans, but the structures we employ in the consumption of the objects are identical. If structural analysis can do no more than test for a validity that is defined by a work's possessing a 'coherent system of signs' then there is no reason to believe that the system of signs is any less coherent, or interesting, in *Batman* and *Spiderwoman* than in *The Divine Comedy* and *The Tempest*. Values belong to ideologies not to methods. But even Barthes cannot avoid value judgements from time to time. Michael Lane has pointed out that Barthes, in his Foreword to *Sur Racine*, avers that 'without doubt Racine is the greatest French writer.' On what grounds? I suspect that structuralists, like logical positivists earlier in this century, will have to abandon some of their pristine, rigorist principles (as logical positivists abandoned the verification principle) and take more note of how human beings really behave.

#### NOTES

1. Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature*. New Haven, 1974.
2. R. Boudun, *The Uses of Structuralism*. Trans. M. Vaughan, London, 1971.
3. N. Chomsky, *Reflections on Language*. Fontana Books, 1976, p.43.
4. See her essay in *The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism*. Ed. E. Leach, London, 1967.
5. Ibid. Cf. G. Steiner, "Orpheus with his myths", *Language and Silence*, London, 1967.
6. R. Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*. Essays selected and



translated by Stephen Heath, Fontana Books, 1977.  
p.80.  
7. Quoted by M. Lane in his introduction to *Structuralism. A Reader*. London 1970.  
8. Both essays are included in *Image-Music-Text*.  
9. Boudun, p.20.  
10. J. Calloud, *Structural Analysis of Narrative*. Trans.

D. Patte, Philadelphia, 1976, p.9.  
11. W.K. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon*. Kentucky, 1954.  
12. *Image-Music-Text*, p.143.  
13. *Ibid.*, p.145.  
14. *Ibid.*, p.148.  
15. *Ibid.*, pp.156-157.  
16. *Ibid.*, p.160.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*THE TRIBES OF YAHWEH* by Norman K. Gottwald. SCM Press, London, 1980. £12.95.

The press opinions of *1066 and all that*, it will be recalled, included "this slim volume..." (*The Bookworm*). Such a verdict will not be passed on *The Tribes of Yahweh*, a historical study of a rather different order, which has 916 pages and weighs 3½ lb. The idea of the paperback has undergone a drastic change.

Some immediate estimate of the nature of Gottwald's work can be obtained from the sub-title, 'A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 B.C.E.'. The book draws heavily on sociological theories and uses much of their jargon, so that, for example, we find a section entitled 'Yahwism as a Societal "Feedback" Servo-mechanism'; the stress on liberation gives a clue to the Marxist standpoint of the author; and the way of describing the date makes it clear that religious neutrality will be a prime concern of the book.

In the eyes of some potential readers one or other of these features may be sufficient to discourage any further sampling, and that would be a pity. It may be appropriate, therefore, to consider some of the characteristics of the book in more positive ways, before attempting any assessment. Gottwald's basic concern, as set out in the Preface, is to evaluate afresh the information available to us from every type of source about the rise of Israel, and to examine it in the light of as wide a range of modern historical, sociological and anthropological theories as possible. This means that, while the traditional methods of biblical study are not neglected, the social sciences play a much larger role than has been usual in Old Testament study. Some shrewd points are made in this connection right at the outset, in regard to the way in which—perhaps because of their own social origins—many biblical scholars have failed to come to terms with Israel as an ordinary society subject to the usual stresses and strains found in all societies.

After these preliminary remarks the first third of the book is largely devoted to the traditional concerns of biblical scholarship: an

examination of the nature of the relevant biblical material; an assessment of the current debate about the relation between primarily 'historical' and primarily 'cultic' contexts for the preservation of the traditions of earliest Israel. Detailed consideration is given to Joshua and Judges, and so the question is raised which of the various models for understanding Israel's presence in Canaan is most appropriate—the 'conquest' model (Albright, Bright), the 'immigration' model (Alt, Noth), or the 'revolt' model (Mendenhall). The values and weaknesses of each model are clearly analysed, but it is the picture of an internal revolt which is held to come closest to the available facts and which underlies the subsequent discussion.

The next section is devoted to a consideration of what constituted 'Israel', and at this point valuable sociological insights emerge. Sociologists have paid a good deal of attention to what is sometimes called parametric terminology, that is to say, the appropriate means of classifying the social structure of societies distant from our own. Whatever one's view of other aspects of Gottwald's thesis, his discussion of the various terms translated 'tribe', 'clan', 'father's house' and the like will repay careful study. Its strength lies in its careful analysis rather than in its positive conclusion, that the twelve-tribe theme can specifically be traced to the period of the united monarchy.

Various indications are given in this section that the usual understanding of the character of Israel as nomadic or semi-nomadic in origin is going to be brought into question, and an extended and extremely important section of the book is devoted to this issue. Indeed this may well prove to be the specific point concerning which greatest controversy will rage. Gottwald is emphatic that a true understanding of Israel can only be grasped through an analysis of the class structure of Canaanite society and not by positing successive waves of nomads emerging from the fringes of the desert. This position had already been outlined by Gottwald in his article 'Nomadism' in the *Supplement to the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*; here, of course, it is developed much more fully, with detailed

consideration of the *apiru*, whose rebellions, as described in, for example, the Amarna letters, are seen as essentially similar to those which constituted Israel. It may, however, be worth noting that the tone of Gottwald's discussion here seems to shift as it proceeds; at first pastoral nomadism is apparently rejected as in any way significant as a part of Israel's background, whereas later it is allowed a significant secondary role.

The use of sociological insights continues in the last part of the book, where Gottwald is insistent that attempts to explain religious practice without reference to their social context are misguided. The section is entitled: 'A New Egalitarian Canaanite Society; Liberated Israel vis-à-vis Indigenous Peoples', and the implications of this are summed up thus: "Israel's vehement and tenacious identity as one people under one God has its indisputable axis around an anti-feudal egalitarian social commitment" (p.491). That is to say, though certain distinctive features of Yahwism (including the name of Israel's God) may have been introduced by immigrant elements, such as Levitical groups whose earlier history included a sojourn in Egypt, there are no grounds for assuming that Israel as such was a group already existing outside the land: "Israel was a mutation of major proportions within Canaan" (p.502).

If this be so, against whom were the constant wars of early Israel directed? In order to answer this question there is a detailed analysis of all the biblical texts relating to war which are usually held to be early, together with an examination of the term *yoshevim*, usually translated 'inhabitants' or the like, but given the meaning 'leaders' by Gottwald in many more cases than has been usual. All this strengthens the conclusion that Israel's wars were not those of one ethnic group against another, still less of invaders against the native inhabitants of the land, but rather involved the rebellion of one stratum of society against its leaders. It is then possible to go on to discover from other texts how some 'Canaanites' (exemplified by Rahab) were incorporated into Israel, others (the inhabitants of Shechem and Jerusalem) remained neutral, and yet others became Israel's allies (the Gibeonites and the Kenites). The whole reconstruction is undeniably a neat picture, though too often it assumes a more

detailed knowledge of the history and its implications than is legitimate, and this is a point to which we shall need to return.

The last two sections of the book are also likely to arouse keen controversy among those who have stayed the course thus far. Their concern is more specifically with religious practice. First, there are severe criticisms of the methods of earlier biblical historians (Bright, Fohrer, even Mendenhall), for their excessive reliance on idealistic methods lacking in any serious sociological consideration. Then the claim is made that 'sociopolitical egalitarianism' must be seen as the appropriate model for Israel's religious distinctiveness, and to isolate this more precisely insights based upon Durkheim, Weber and Marx are used. The section ends with an outline of some ways in which our knowledge of emergent Israel can be enhanced by disciplines whose potential contributions have rarely been realised: new types of archaeology, botany, demography, and so on. It is an impressive yet at the same time a daunting prospect, which raises in acute form the question whether the object of our study is a body of literature or the history of a particular people.

With this tension in mind we reach the final section, 'Biblical Theology or Biblical Sociology?'. It is scarcely surprising that Gottwald maintains that many of the features claimed by the 'biblical theology movement' as demonstrating Israel's uniqueness will not stand up to detailed examination. His own suggestions follow those of Morton Smith, 'The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East' (JBL, 1952). (It would be instructive to arrange a debate between Gottwald and J.D. Smart, whose *Past Present and Future of Biblical Theology*, published shortly after Gottwald's work, adumbrates as desirable almost all those features which Gottwald so severely condemns.) After drawing attention to Israel's distinctive use of the 'high God paradigm' his exposition of the uniqueness of Israel's religion is couched in sociological terms, with particular emphasis on its differentiation between religion and sexuality, its rejection of involvement with the underworld, and its limitation of the claims of the priesthood and the demands of the sacrificial system. Finally a plea is made that attempts to read off current religious norms and values from ancient Israel's experience should be abandoned; rather

Israelite Yahwism has most to teach us in the way that it illuminates contemporary struggles for human freedom. Thus the book ends, as it began, by drawing out links between Christianity and Marxism.

The text is followed by appendices: 90 pages of notes, 5 indexes, and an epilogue commenting upon various relevant contributions to Gottwald's theme which appeared up to 1978, with particular appreciation of C.H.J. de Geus, *The Tribes of Israel*, some of whose conclusions anticipate those of Gottwald.

There are many important issues which have not even been touched upon in this outline, and a choice of points for comment must be even more selective. Precisely because of the wide-ranging character of the book, it is important to try to pinpoint the central issues; otherwise, like the review of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in terms of game-keeping technique, some basic considerations will be overlooked.

It seems therefore that the most important points being made by Gottwald can be considered under two heads. One concerns content, the other method. In terms of content, the heart of the matter must surely be the assertion, here argued through in detail for the first time, that Israel's origins should not be sought in a nomadic or semi-nomadic background. There can be no denying that many scholars who have shown a considerable degree of scepticism with regard to other aspects of Israel's self-understanding have simply accepted the idea of a nomadic origin without further question, and it is undeniable that in this area many of Gottwald's strictures are valid, particularly when he shows how reluctant biblical scholars have been to apply the insights of other disciplines to their material. At the same time the question must remain open whether he has given an entirely satisfactory account of the overwhelming testimony which the biblical material itself provides. Both the deliberate placing of Israel's past and that of her God in the Egypt experience, and also the constant hostility to things Canaanite, point to an awareness of an origin outside the promised land; indeed, the very idea of 'promised land' takes on different nuances if that promise is made to those who are already inhabitants of that land. In this respect it is curious that Gottwald makes no more than the

barest allusion to a development in the study of the Pentateuch which would have supported his case; that is, the literary analysis which has reached the conclusion that the theme of promise is a late one, influenced by the experience of exile.

Two further comments need to be made in this area. First, it would seem advisable that Gottwald should spell out more precisely to what extent he is prepared to allow transhumant pastoralism to be a formative factor in Israel's self-identification. At this point his argument is less clear than it is elsewhere, and it is not apparent whether the references to this element of a different life-style are intended simply as a sociological fact to be noted or are to be seen as a significant factor in the pre-history of Israel. Secondly, greater clarification needs to be given to the existence (or absence) of links between the wilderness experience (which Gottwald questions along the lines already indicated) and the 'exodus from Egypt' traditions which are recognised as having played a formative part in building up Israel's self-understanding.

The second basic issue raised by this massive work concerns method. Gottwald is at his most trenchant when he is criticising 'idealistic' biblical theologians and when he is upholding the importance of sociology as a necessary element in the study of ancient Israel. On the other hand, there are scholars, themselves competent in sociological methods, who would question the applicability of sociology to such study. Thus C.S. Rodd has asked, "Should we not be well advised, then, to leave the past to the historian, albeit the historian who is aware of sociological factors, and limit the sociologist to explaining the present by means of the ever-advancing future?" ('Max Weber and Ancient Judaism', *SJT* 32, 1979, p.409). It may perhaps be held that Gottwald has effectively answered this doubt by the very scope and extent of his achievement; his use of sociological categories has indeed thrown light into some very obscure corners.

But then another question arises. What is the subject of study? Is it the body of sacred writings revered as 'Tanak' by Jews and as 'Old Testament' by Christians? Or is it the history of ancient Israel? Gottwald's study poses the problem in two ways. First, there is the difficulty which led to Rodd's doubts whether sociology could

properly be applied to the study of ancient Israel, that is, the paucity of our assured historical knowledge. Detailed though his study is, Gottwald never gives specific attention to the question of our historical knowledge of the period under discussion. If, as seems probable, our evidence concerning the 'judges period' (if that be an appropriate description) and of the early monarchy is that which was available to and seemed valuable to the purposes of the Deuteronomistic historian of the seventh or sixth century, is this adequate for the kind of detailed reconstruction we are offered here? To take but one example, Gottwald makes much of the Philistine threat as a major cause in the coming to statehood of Israel; yet the nature of the Philistine threat, highly 'theologised' in I Samuel, remains extremely elusive to detailed sociological and archaeological examination.

More basically, though, Gottwald's book raises the same issue as that posed by the Hayes-Miller volume, *Israelite and Judaeon History*, one which will no doubt come to the fore with increasing insistence. Detailed historical analysis, backed up as it is by a variety of related disciplines, inevitably takes us further and further away from the Bible as a collection of 'history-like' writings held sacred by religious communities. For a long time it seemed as if greater knowledge of history re-inforced our approach to the biblical texts, and lent weight to the conviction of Judaism and Christianity as 'historical religions'. But what has long been recognised for Genesis 1-11 and more recently for the rest of the patriarchal traditions, is now seen to be part of a much wider problem. The kind of analysis so successfully carried out by Gottwald throws great light on many aspects of ancient history; but the more successfully this is done, the more acute becomes the problem of the relation of such an achievement to the biblical inheritance.

Richard Coggins

*GROUNDWORK OF BIBLICAL STUDIES* by W. David Stacey. Epworth Press, 1979. 448pp. £6.

Authors and publishers always have reason for self-congratulation when they recognise a gap

and manage to fill it adequately. David Stacey has done just that. His book is aimed primarily at intending Methodist Local Preachers, but it will serve as an admirable introduction for anyone beginning the serious study of the Bible. Its genre is well represented in German by the type of book known as *Bibel-kunde*, but there appears to be nothing quite like it in English. Clearly organised sections, between which cross-reference is easy, introduce the student to such background information as is needed for the intelligent study of the Bible, outline the methods of biblical criticism, and provide brief introductions to the contents and characteristic problems associated with each book. Of 'Introduction' in the conventional sense there is deliberately not a great deal; that is envisaged as the next stage of more detailed study.

It would of course be easy to find criticisms of a book of this kind where clarity and conciseness may be more important than precise accuracy. Historical outlines present a particular difficulty when set out briefly, for the relevant background must be provided along with the recognition that much historical-type material in both testaments is highly stylised; and the reader may often get the feeling that the historical picture is presented more confidently than the evidence warrants. So too the brief presentation of the four-document theory of the Pentateuch could be misleading in some of its assertions. But this kind of comment is really excessively carping; the whole aim of the book is that it should be a groundwork, leading on to more detailed study. Readers already familiar with some aspects of biblical study will recognise the influence of David Stacey's wife, better known as Professor Morna Hooker, in some parts (e.g. the vigorous rejection of 'Paul's missionary journeys'), but on the whole the Old Testament section is more successful than the New; perhaps the material lends itself more readily to this type of treatment, whereas New Testament scholarship inevitably becomes involved in principles of interpretation. All told then a valuable introduction to a neglected field.

Only two criticisms remain: an excessive number of misprints has been allowed to slip through, most of them fortunately unlikely to cause confusion; and bibliographical information is excessively limited. Two or three suggestions for further reading in each main

## A SYSTEM OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

David S. Cairns

*Although this book was written more than thirty-five years ago, it is appearing at just the right moment. For this distinguished theologian, author of THE FAITH THAT REBELS, was one of the most positive thinkers Scotland has produced. After the years of Barth, Brunner, Pannenberg and Moltmann, the issues which engaged Principal Cairns are being discussed again with new enthusiasm. Limp edition. £3.75. ISBN 0 7152 0434 3.*



THE SAINT ANDREW PRESS: 121 George Street, Edinburgh.

section would have been a welcome addition. But overall, the tiro theological student will find this a valued and reliable companion in his early days of study.

Richard Coggins

*THE TEXT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT* by E. Wurthwein. SCM Press, 1980, pp.xviii, 244. £8.50.

The original edition of Wurthwein's *Der Text des Alten Testaments* dates from as long ago as 1952, when it was produced with the specific purpose of helping the student to use the third edition of Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (BHK). A translation by Peter Ackroyd of the book in its original form was published in 1957. Fresh discoveries and new insights, and in particular the publication of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) have led to successive revisions of the German original, which has now reached a fourth edition, and it is this which has been newly translated by E.F. Rhodes.

This outline seems necessary for the proper evaluation of the present book. It is essentially the same book as that of 1952, with the advantages and disadvantages which that implies. On the one hand it is helpful to have new discoveries placed in the context of existing viewpoints; on the other hand this can sometimes imply that fresh developments are recorded with less modification of the original text than might have been expected.

With due allowance made for these characteristics, it can safely be said that reference to this handbook will certainly help to initiate the Hebraist into the mysteries of BHK or BHS. The four main sections deal with the transmission of the Hebrew text, primary versions (LXX, Targums, Syriac), secondary versions and the principles of textual criticism. The whole enterprise is made vivid by the addition of 49 plates, some newly added in this edition, and all of a much improved quality of reproduction. In all, this can strongly be recommended as a valuable guide for those who have mastered the elementary grammar and are embarking on more

technical study of the Hebrew Old Testament.

Richard Coggins

*PAUL: CRISIS IN GALATIA. A STUDY IN EARLY CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY* by George Howard. (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 35). Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp.xii, 114. £5.95.

Paul's first enunciation of the doctrine of justification by grace was made in the context of a struggle in which the identity and beliefs of his opponents, and the exact nature of the issues over which he was at odds with them, remain uncertain. Professor Howard has examined, mostly in considerable detail, several of the less noticed grounds for this uncertainty. He has found a key to many of the problems underlying the text in a series of misunderstandings. The judaizing Jewish-Christians in Galatia (Howard underestimates the force of the objections of Munck, Mussner and others to this traditional identification) were not, in fact, 'opponents' of Paul at all, for they imagined that his message implied the circumcision of Gentile converts (5.11); Paul's failure to arrange this in the Galatians' case had been merely tactical and temporary. But this only reflected a much wider misunderstanding, for (and this is Howard's central thesis) it was not until the visit to Jerusalem recorded at 2.1-10 that Paul revealed to the 'pillar apostles' that his call had included a command to evangelize the Gentiles with a gospel free from reference to the Law. Again, Peter's behaviour at Antioch is explained as arising from his misunderstanding of directions from James (p.42).

Professor Howard has shown us how easy it is to read the evidence in terms of a preconceived confidence that one has grasped what must have happened, and to fail to ask questions which the text, carefully scrutinized, makes it imperative to answer if one can. But his own reading does not always convince. Few, for example, will agree that in chapters 1 and 2 of this letter Paul's relationship, of dependence or the reverse, with the 'pillar apostles' is at best of only secondary importance to him. And to say, further, that he was 'in all probability... 'disinterested' [*sic*; read 'uninterested'] in church

polity' (p.80) is to offer a somewhat curious assessment.

Most of what Howard has to say that is new is contained in the first two chapters, dealing with the reconstruction of events in Jerusalem, Antioch and Galatia. In the remaining two, on justification and the Law respectively, he gives the impression of straining to make (virtually) one new proposal: Paul saw Law as dividing and justification by grace as uniting the nations of mankind. No doubt the propositions Paul is held to have felt so strongly are true, but Howard heavily overemphasizes some parts of the text, and his arguments contain much special pleading.

The MS of this book was completed in 1976, and Howard had thus been unable to use J.W. Drane's *Paul. Libertine or Legalist?* (SPCK, 1975), which has material relevant to the discussion of the setting of Galatians; and Mussner's great commentary in the Herder series (1974; regrettably, no translation is yet available) has been only occasionally referred to. Delayed publication has also left the chapter on Law devoid of reference to E.P. Sanders' indispensable *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (SCM Press). Nevertheless, it is a pity that a work on this subject should appear without its author's having been able to make use of some significant recent contributions to Pauline research (another of which has now been published with the same date as Howard's book, namely Robert Jewett's *Dating Paul's Life*: this is a bold but well-documented proposal to arrive at a firm 'absolute' chronology on the basis of four datable events in Paul's career, and inevitably has some bearing on the history presented in Galatians).

C.J.A. Hickling

*STUDYING THE NEW TESTAMENT* by Morna D. Hooker. Epworth Press, 1979. 224pp. £3.25.

Most readers of this *Review* will welcome another new book from Professor Hooker; this time, not so much for themselves as for warm commendation to others. The book is an elementary introduction to the books of the NT designed for Methodist Local Preachers in training, and would make admirable reading for individuals or groups undertaking serious bible-

study with little or no previous preparation and not much time. Teachers should certainly also order this book for use, at least in the early stages, by 'A'-level candidates. With great clarity and some verve, and with occasional expressions of the kind once heard in 6C ('the evangelists did not work like stamp-collectors'), Professor Hooker sets out briefly what might be called the 'English consensus' view of each NT book (as opposed to the German or American one—Colossians is Pauline and the word 'gnostic' does not seem to appear); then, in each case, notes which provide *multum in parvo* are provided for selected passages. The introductory material on Paul as pastor (pp.141ff) and as theologian (pp.156ff) is particularly good, as might have been expected; but the level is consistent throughout (unless perhaps one might register a trace of disappointment over the Fourth Gospel). Occasionally we hear a little of another Morna Hooker (e.g. on the Transfiguration narrative in Mark as evincing a Moses-typology, p.52, and on the significance of the *lutron*-saying at Mk 10.45, p.58, while the inconsistency of the Lukan resurrection-appearance about the materiality of Christ's body is not often noted), but on the whole original or speculative material has rightly been excluded. Professor Hooker identifies Gal. 2 with Acts 11.30 and 12.25, which would not evoke universal agreement, and she seems interestingly reticent about Q: can she be a convert to Michael Goulder? However, nothing else suggests that this is so. Professor Hooker will have been vexed to find that, when reading her proofs, she overlooked (p.99) the charming description (anticipated, in a different form, by Billy Graham) of Lk 6.17-26 as 'beautitudes'.

C.J.A. Hickling

*THE EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS* by Jean-Francois Collange. Translated from the First French Edition by A.W. Heathcote. Epworth. 1979. pp.viii + 159. £5.

Paul's letter to the Macedonian believers is an epitome of the content and style of his letter-writing as a whole—intimacy of address, argument by persuasive appeal and personal

testimony, intolerance of error and faction, and a range of concerns running from mundane questions of financial policy to profound insights in theology and christology. This commentary by J.-F. Collange, translated with clarity and lucidity by A.W. Heathcote, is to be commended for its succinct but detailed exposition both of the letter itself and of the issues it raises in relation to Paul's achievement generally.

Perhaps in imitation of Paul, Collange does not shy away from controversy, arguing (a) that the letter as we have it is a compilation of three letters, (b) that the first two (i.e. 4.10-20 and 1.1-3.1a + 4.21-23) were written during an imprisonment in Ephesus (not Caesarea or Rome, the more common alternatives) and the third (i.e. 3.1b-4.1 + 4.8-9) after release from prison, and (c) that the first two letters, at least, were written relatively early, before 1 Corinthians, with the third letter ante-dating 2 Corinthians. In identifying Paul's adversaries at Philippi, particularly in the polemic of 3.2ff., Collange points to close parallels with 2 Corinthians (esp. 10-13), and argues that the opponents were Jewish-Christian itinerant preachers of the same ilk as the troublemakers (from Paul's point of view) in Corinth. Certainly, the recurrence of the issue of Paul's financial support—support which he had accepted (reluctantly?) from the Macedonians but refused from the Corinthians and Thessalonians—in both sets of correspondence, gives credence to this position.

Among numerous valuable suggestions, the following may be noted. (1) In the introduction (1.1), Paul does not refer to himself as *apostolos*, but links himself with Timothy as a *doulos* ('slave'), precisely the term of humiliation applied to Christ in 2.7. (2) the *episkopoi* and *diakono*i in 1.1 are best understood functionally. Paul 'was not thinking in terms of self-sufficient structures into which men could be fitted' (p.40). Their appearance here may be linked with the organization of support for Paul. In any case, an early foundation would explain the greater degree of rationalization at Philippi than elsewhere (cf. 4.15ff.), a point not made by Collange. (3) Underlying Paul's self-defence in 1.12-26 is an initiative he had taken to seek his liberation from prison by revealing his status as a Roman citizen (cf. Acts 16.37 ff.), an initiative

which had not met with a totally positive response amongst the Philippian Christians. 'Some may have accused him of cowardice and made it clear that the true vocation for a disciple of Christ was martyrdom.' (p.9). This is imaginative, but problematic: *ta kat' eme* in 1.12 refers more obviously to Paul's imprisonment and in the Acts narrative, which is strongly apologetic on questions of rights and citizenship (and therefore renders dubious the historicity of the events in 16.35-39), the issue of citizenship is raised only subsequent to Paul's release. Furthermore, it is anachronistic to appeal to a martyrdom-complex so early in Church history. (4) The interpretation of the famous hymn in 2.5-11 requires recognition of three factors: first, it must be seen as a unitary whole; second, it is primarily a Christian hymn; third, its position in the letter must be taken into account. On this basis, Collange suggests that Paul is not presenting an ethical pattern so much as he is reminding the disunited believers of the foundation which unites them as a community, namely Christ's Lordship under God, a lordship established by way of the crucifixion. (5) Finally, though by no means exhaustively, Collange recognizes Paul's application of sacramental terminology beyond the realms of cultic activity (cf. 2.17, 25, 30; 4.18). The implications of this are no less significant than those which can be drawn from Paul's description of the two women Eudia and Syntyche as his 'fellow-workers' (*synergoi*) in 4.3.

The commentary contains extensive bibliographies throughout (until 1973) and several valuable excursus. Its concise exposition makes it of particular value to students and teachers of Christian origins.

Stephen Barton

*HEBREWS AND HERMENEUTICS: The Epistle to the Hebrews as a New Testament example of biblical interpretation* By Graham Hughes. SNTS Monograph Series 36. Cambridge University Press, 1979. 218pp. £7.75.

The epistle to the Hebrews is an intellectually taxing document, and was probably intended to be so, for the author writes to stir up those

whom he deems to be intellectually immature (5.11-14). Dr Hughes believes that the author had already worked out his theology for his own satisfaction, and now comes to relate it to a particular situation. The key to his thought is found in his prologue, whose subject is God's speech: because God's, always the same; yet because spoken differently in different times, not the same. This pattern of continuity: discontinuity is reproduced in other congruous patterns. The author shares the characteristic New Testament eschatological tension between a sense of what is complete and fulfilled and what is unfulfilled and yet to come. Insofar as crisis still lies in the future, God's word remains the same: exhortation, warning and call for decision; but insofar as that crisis may be faced with confidence on the basis of promises received, God's word is different from what it has been in a past age. So Christians may be seen to stand with Israel, or over against Israel, depending upon the eschatological focus. Congruous too, and related, is the pattern of the author's presentation of Christ. He is both pioneer of faith, and priest. As pioneer, he belongs in the continuous history of the people of God who look forward believingly; as priest he brings in the eschatological realities in a new and once-for-all act. All this means that the author's appeal to the Old Testament may be to point to continuity or to discontinuity, but this is neither an inconsistent nor arbitrary use of it.

Or is it? For how is it decided which passages should be used in which sense? Dr Hughes rightly states that to read the Old Testament in relation to Christian affirmations is ultimately a matter of the faith of the interpreter, but he also propounds a notion of "permission". An interpretation that is not absolutely precluded by the text may be deemed to be permitted. Thus Hebrews' reading of the Old Testament in terms both of the continuity of expectation and the discontinuity of fulfilment is "permitted" because "the Old Testament writings manifest, and address themselves to, a situation which is predominantly one of expectation" (p.133). We are on shaky ground here. The ground is also shaky when Dr Hughes comes to relate his understanding of Hebrews' principles of interpretation to contemporary hermeneutical discussion, on the basis that this author has already faced the problem of interpretation over a



temporal and cultural gulf. The analogy will not do. The author of Hebrews sense of the past as different is not of it as different *qua* past, the sense that (rightly or wrongly) bedevils contemporary hermeneutics, but the sense of difference between those who look for a city (as in chapter 11) and those who have come to it (chapter 12).

To read Hebrews again through Dr Hughes's "frames", as he calls them, is a rewarding experience, but one it takes time to achieve. The argument is conducted with laborious painstaking, and it is worth reading at an early stage the review on pp.101ff. in order to discover where it is heading. 142 pages of text are followed by 54 pages of notes. It is presumably of no use to protest to publishers about the loss of the footnote, but if this is to be the format in future it is incumbent on authors to present any material or argument they deem to be important to the reader in such a way that he does not constantly lose the thread by cross-referring nor feel obliged (however good it may be for him) to read the book twice!

Sophie Laws

*ORIGEN: CONTRA CELSUM. Translated with an introduction and notes by Henry Chadwick.* Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, London, etc. First paperback edition 1980. xl + 531pp. £27.50 hardback, £9.95 paperback.

Chadwick's 1953 edition remains a classic, and cannot for English readers be superseded by Borret's Greek-French edition in *Sources chretiennes*. The corrected reprint of 1965 is now again corrected in the light of more recent scholarship and papyrus finds which affect the text. Bibliography and Introduction are unchanged. Readers are referred to Crouzel's bibliography and Borret's edition. The only significant changes to the text are listed on p.vi, and affect only four pages. Hard-pressed libraries will not think it necessary to get the new edition if they have the earlier. A paperback edition is welcome. This classic of Christian apologetic, enshrining a vital moment in the amalgam of Biblical and Platonic thought which constitutes Christian theology, ought to be widely read, especially when so lucidly and magisterially presented as Chadwick does it. But because a

book is worth almost any price, that does not mean that publishers should pitch it high. It was tactless to leave the £15.00 sticky label in my review copy when the publication price on the slip is £27.50. And even the paperback is scarcely cheap enough to tempt the student or lecturer with access to a photocopier. If publishers are to defeat unlawful copying, they ought to use modern technology to make books so cheap that it is not worth the effort to defraud them. Nevertheless, anyone with an ounce of theological interest will soon find he has invested his £9.95 well if he gets a copy.

S.G. Hall

*UNDERSTANDING EASTERN CHRISTIANITY* by George Every. SCM Press Ltd., London 1980. Pp. xviii + 137. £3.25.

George Every is the author of a well-known and standard study on *The Byzantine Patriarchate 451-1204* (2nd ed., London, 1962) and of a valuable smaller work entitled *Misunderstandings between East and West* (London, 1965). Both of these are required reading for students of Byzantine church history and of the schism between the Orthodox and Catholic churches. Students, or even more advanced scholars, who look for further enlightenment from his latest book may find themselves dazzled if not baffled. It began as a series of lectures delivered in 1977 at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome under the auspices of the newly-founded Centre for Indian and Inter-Religious Studies, and it comes equipped with an Introduction by A. Mundadan CMI, a specialist on the history of Eastern Christianity in India. In its first edition, published at Bangalore in 1978, much of what now constitutes Chapter 1 was reserved for an appendix on 'Rome and the Christian East'. It is hard to see why it now takes pride of place in the book since, interesting though it is, it is almost all to do with the Russian Orthodox Church since 1905, while the following chapters rarely venture beyond the early middle ages. The final chapter 9, on 'The Holy Places', describes the long and complex study of the agreements to disagree among the various Christian communions of Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The meat, or perhaps the haggis, of the book lies in Chapters 2 to 8

which treat of such topics as merchants, monks and missionaries in the Near and Far East, the Monophysite and Dyothelite controversies, Christians under Muslim rule and the Impact of the Crusades. The importance of Alexandria in the early church is emphasised in Chapter 3; and Chapter 4 has some fascinating observations on the different interpretations of the Kingship of Christ in Egypt and Babylon, in what are commonly, though the author believes misleadingly, called the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools. The book is wide-ranging, perhaps too much so, and its style is often Herodotean, enlivened by digressions. It is full of fresh insights, new evaluations and bright ideas. But it is doubtful whether all of them will be acceptable to those in the know; and those who are not in the know about the orthodoxy and heterodoxy of the early church may well wish that the author of this lively book had not so readily presumed that his readers would share his own fluency in the basic facts and sources on which to build an understanding of Eastern Christianity. It may be a *hortus deliciarum* for specialists but it is not a book for beginners.

D.M. Nicol, King's College, London

*THE CHURCH IN A SECULARISED SOCIETY*  
by Roger Aubert and others. xxxi + 63pp. of illustrations. Darton, Longman & Todd, 1978. £16.

This fifth and final volume in the collective international history of the Roman Catholic Church that has been appearing since 1964 under the general title *The Christian Centuries* covers the period from 1848 until the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council in 1965. Of the English edition it is the third volume to appear; volumes three and four are still to come. The three last volumes of Hubert Jedin's *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte* cover the same period in well over twice the number of pages; unless they find a translator, which seems unlikely, this one will stand as the most useful introduction for English readers in search of a survey of the period and a guide to further study. The remark of the general editor and principal contributor, Roger Aubert, in the introduction, to the effect that 'there is no question of our production's

serving as a university textbook' seems unduly modest; perhaps it indicates higher expectations of first-degree students in the continental part of the Old World than in off-shore and transatlantic places of learning.

The first part surveys the principal events and themes from 1848 to 1914, parts three to five deal respectively with the Anglo-Saxon world, Latin America, the missions and the Eastern Churches in communion with Rome, and a final part studies the general affairs of the Church from 1914 to 1965. The pages on England, which received the approval and benefited from the advice of the late Dom David Knowles, are particularly good on the nineteenth century, with their penetrating comments on some of the major personalities; those on the twentieth century are decidedly thin. Mgr Aubert is inclined to accept English Catholics' own rather negative view of themselves; one finds a more thorough appreciation in *Le Catholicisme en Angleterre* by S. Dayras and C. d'Haussy (Paris, 1970), mentioned in the bibliography. Continental interest in English Catholicism, long eclipsed, is now beginning to show signs of recovery. Catholicism in the U.S.A., in a chapter by John Tracy Ellis, receives deeper as well as more lively treatment.

In the context of the intellectual history of the period, attention should have been paid to the Constitution *Dei Filius*, on faith and reason, of Vatican I; papal infallibility has been allowed to overshadow the first part of the Council's work. Mgr Aubert's own masterly study of this theme, *Le Probleme de l'Acte de Foi* (1969<sup>4</sup>), deserved a mention, and could in fact have provided a unifying thread in the treatment of developments in thought.

The press photographs, cartoons and caricatures printed by way of illustration serve to show, with one or two honourable exceptions, how difficult it is to make elderly clergymen look appealing. But they provide a fascinating extra, absent from the French edition.

Specialists can always find points to criticize in a manual of this kind. It is neither a brilliant essay nor a work of research, changing our understanding. Its merit consists in its scope and in its information; as an introduction and a work of reference, enlarging horizons, it will no doubt long hold the field.

Michael Richards

*THE TWO HORIZONS. NEW TESTAMENT HERMENEUTICS AND PHILOSOPHICAL DESCRIPTION, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HEIDEGGER, BULTMANN, GADAMER AND WITTGENSTEIN* by Anthony C. Thistleton. Paternoster Press, 1980. xx + 484pp. £15.00.

It is a feature of contemporary theological studies that there occurs in them at least as much talk about doing theology, interpreting the New Testament, etc., as there is actual theology and interpretation. It is a sign of our current disorder and lack of confidence. But, given that this is the order of the day, it is important that we should be aware of what is at stake, and in this long study Anthony Thistleton, of the University of Sheffield, examines not only the major twentieth century contributions to the study of the theory of interpretation of the New Testament but also the work of philosophers he believes to be relevant to the issues. The book begins with five chapters which outline the scope of the study, argue for the need of interpreters to face philosophical questions, and sketch the historical background to the debate. This opening section already indicates the vast range of interests and learning that has gone into the book.

But the meat of the study is a detailed account of the four thinkers named in the sub-title. All are examined closely, with the latter two being argued to be of more positive assistance to the New Testament scholar than the former. Bultmann in particular receives much criticism for his dependence upon a Neo-Kantian dualism of fact and value, as well as for his limiting of the meaning of the texts to a world of private experience. (Here Wittgenstein's critique of private language is brought to bear with some effect). The last main chapters argue that Wittgenstein's insights can be used to understand the sort of questions that are involved in interpreting difficult passages from Paul, and thus the practical value of the exercise demonstrated.

The chief value of this study is its learning, and the sheer amount of information that can be obtained from it about a debate that has been continuing ever since the beginning of critical studies of the Bible. Its argument is clear, detailed and progressive, despite the fact that

inevitably there must be some doubt about the homogeneity of all the material that Dr Thistleton marshals. But the main question to be asked is not so much about the book as about the whole hermeneutical movement. In raising it, I do not wish to question either the importance of the basic concern to grapple with philosophical issues or the author's refusal to cut short the whole debate by appeal to the Holy Spirit: 'the Holy Spirit may be said to work *through* human understanding, and not usually, if ever, through processes which bypass the considerations discussed under the heading of hermeneutics' (p.92). Rather, the chief query is this. How far may we speak about language in almost total abstraction from the objects of that language? Admittedly, it is not the intention of this work to neglect the interrelation of language and reality, as, for example, when the author criticises Nineham's notion of the cultural setting of the Bible. But the discussion of Wittgenstein exposes the real nerve. Running through it is a distinction between 'grammatical' statements—i.e. those in which a biblical writer attempts to change the way his readers understand a word like 'faith' or 'justification'—and those which 'give information'. It can be argued that, here one Neo-Kantian dualism has been replaced by another, at least as questionable: that between cognitive and non-cognitive assertions. For while it can be agreed that many of the biblical passages he considers do serve the function of revising our understanding of concepts, is it not so that through them we may better know the object to which they point us, God and his ways toward us? Must there, in other words, always be a choice between understanding or insight and information?

The problem can be put in another way. Dr Thistleton at one point says that he 'cannot wholly accept C.E. Braaten's claim that the new hermeneutic is basically a return to Schleiermacher' (p.344), along with the subjectivism that it presumably involves. But the claim is likely to continue to be made, because the object of hermeneutics' concern is more the text than that to which the text is concerned to point us. Vague references to 'history' and 'life-context' do not obviate this central difficulty, particularly in view of the fact that both of these are often construed in a very subjectivist manner. That is to say, unless more attention is

paid to the theological question of *this* text all the talk about texts in general will mislead more than it will assist.

Colin Gunton

*A WORKING FAITH* by John Habgood.  
London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1980.  
xiv + 193pp. £4.95.

In the century since the appointment of Lightfoot to the Bishoprick in 1879, Durham has had an almost unbroken succession of bishops distinguished for scholarship and a creditable contribution to the thinking and active life of the nation. The present bishop, John Habgood, stands firmly in that succession. He turned early to Theology from an established academic career in physiology; he served his apprenticeship in moral reasoning in a small inter-disciplinary group, meeting in Westminster, of which Ian Ramsey—later to become himself Bishop of Durham—was the intellectual centre; now he draws on these combined experiences to continue the tradition, both as the centre of new inter-disciplinary groups meeting in the North East of England, and as teacher, writer, lecturer, preacher, and broadcaster in his own person. *A Working Faith* is a collection of twenty pieces, occasioned by this activity, on Science, Medicine and Ethics. If one looks in such matters for a perceptive selection and arrangement of relevant empirical features, for a firm indication of relevant theological and philosophical principle, for a calm and reasoned consideration of each in the light of the other, for balance and caution where facts, interpretation and inference are all matters on which serious commentators disagree, and, finally, for clarity of style, one could not find a better model in contemporary English writing, ecclesiastical or academic.

In Part I, Science and Faith, the outstanding pieces are one on what has happened to evolutionary theories since Darwin and “a rejected radio script” entitled “Computerized Values”. In the first, changes in the scientific understanding of evolution are shown to make compatibility with theological understanding easier, more credible: an evolutionary account of the origin of the soul—of man’s ability to respond to God—becomes possible; the concept

of randomness in evolutionary response seems to lessen the grounds for imputing evil to the Creator. Scientists and theologians are alike in their awed enquiry into “making all things new”. In the second piece, a review of *The Biological Origins of Human Values* in which G.E. Pugh argues that some basic human values are built into us biologically, below the level of choice or decision, Habgood explores how fact and value are to be assessed together, with some pertinent observations on the tradition of natural law.

In Part II, The Ethical Dimension in Science and Technology, the dominant theme is nuclear technology and energy policies studied in relation to a Christian understanding of the nature of man and of human society. The analysis of estimated social, cultural and political consequences of nuclear development is well done. There is every reason for caution; and though I do not share Habgood’s reluctance to see Britain advance as rapidly as may be to the fast breeder reactor—I believe the bolder way may be the safer in the end—there can be no disagreement with him on the ethical imperatives which must accompany the development of new energy potentials, whether fast or slow.

In Part III, on Medical Ethics, we can follow the Christian statesman at work where he ought to be, on platforms offered to him by such bodies as the Royal Society of Health, the Royal Society of Medicine, a Medical Group in a teaching hospital, or a working group set up by the local Regional Health Authority. The outstanding pieces—since we must select—are, first, an essay on The Christian Tradition in Medical Ethics written originally for the *Dictionary of Medical Ethics*<sup>1</sup>; it is a beautifully clear exposition of method in ethics, just to both empirical features and theological data. Going with it—and passing over the routine exercises in euthanasia, contraceptives for children, experiments on human beings, and the like—are the products of group work on Prolonging Life for the Defective Newborn, and Screening (i.e. routinely, not simply examining mothers at risk) for Neural Tube Defects. Here again the interplay of technical data with ethical theory and theological truth is exemplary. The paper on Cloning distinguishes usefully between fiction and foreseeable possibility; and the address on Social Attitudes Towards

Sexually Transmitted Diseases offers a firm challenge to a stance of professional neutrality which masks a timid indifference to that moral cohesion which constitutes a human society.

The book is ideal for those who want to begin to think seriously about social ethics, and for those who want to keep up. Both groups of readers will learn from it a method, and a persuasion to develop it, appropriate to whatever level of study or of teaching they may be called upon to pursue. The Bishoprick has not failed this generation.

G.R. Dunstan, King's College London

<sup>1</sup>A.S. Duncan, G.R. Dunstan & R.B. Welbourn. Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977. 2nd edn enlarged and revised, Spring 1981.

*LONGEST JOURNEY: NOTES ON CHRISTIAN MATURITY* by John Dalrymple. DLT 1979.

Nothing that flows from the pen of Jock Dalrymple can be ignored and its certain fruitfulness is built-in. The short autobiographical first chapter on *Conversion*—with the omission of the word “Catholic” from the phrase “a conventual Catholic schooling”—could have been written by an Evangelical and the centrality of an experience of Christ is the theme of the greater part of the book. The sections on *Prayer* and *Reflection* are quite admirable, although one wishes that he had eschewed such cacophonous words as “interiority” and “internalization”.

He avoids the use of the individualistic (pietistic?) expression “private prayer” and prefers “personal prayer”, which never loses sight of the community dimension, however

long the solitary journey inwards “to that still point in the centre where you are most simply yourself. We all have this still centre, but we do not often visit it consciously”. Yet God is already there waiting for us. His recommendations on the possibility of prayer at all sorts of odd times are excellent and, as with all illustrative material throughout, rich in appropriate “modern instances”.

All this is so splendid that it seems ungracious to criticise any part of a book which one would willingly give to many enquirers and with safety to most. But there is one serious reservation arising from the otherwise superb chapter on *Contemplation* as an aspect of mature prayer: his use of the word “passivity”—seven times in one paragraph (pp.39/40)! This could be a dangerous word to employ. It suggests, at least, the quietism which may be lurking behind the folded curtains of contemplation. True, he expounds it in the sense of “receptivity”, but perhaps that is not so much a synonym as a real differentiation, as Dr Mascall perceives in *Grace and Glory* (p.31): “In contemplation we are not strictly speaking *passive*, but *receptive*”.

The last chapter on *The Journey Outwards* is somehow less satisfactory than the others and seems to be written for a different audience or even a different book. The professional “pastoralia”—the “externalization”—does not flow easily from the previous six chapters and perhaps would have been better as Appendix B, with the last words of Chapter 6 as the conclusion of the whole matter: “Once we have entered upon union with God in our hearts both the journey outwards and the journey inwards become an endless song of wonder... Our whole life sings to God of his glory, because we have let go inside ourselves.”

Donald Nicholson

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### BOOKS RECEIVED

The SCM Press is re-issuing titles in the Old Testament Library series in limp covers. So far we have received *Ezekiel* by W. Eichrodt (£10.50), *Isaiah 13-39* by O. Kaiser (£7.95), *Micah* by J.L. Mays (£4.50) and *Introduction to the Old Testament* by J.A. Soggin (£8.50). Soggin's book is more than a reprint. It is, in fact, a revision of the 1970 publication with a number of amendments and additions and bibliographies which have been updated to 1979.

### OTHER BOOKS

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Barr, J.                           | <i>Explorations in Theology</i> 7. SCM Press. £4.50p.  |
| Barth, H.M.                        | <i>Fulfilment</i> . SCM Press. £2.50   |
| Brown, J.M.                        | <i>Men and God in a Changing World</i> . SCM Press. £5.95.   |
| Coventry, J.                       | <i>Faith in Jesus Christ</i> . DLT. £1.50  |
| Cupitt, D.                         | <i>Taking leave of God</i> . SCM Press. £4.95.   |
| Doyle, E.                          | <i>St Francis and the Song of Brotherhood</i> . George Allen & Unwin Ltd. £8.50  |
| Flood, E.                          | <i>Today's Catholic</i> . DLT. £2.75.  |
| Hagner, D.A. & Harris, M.J. (eds.) | <i>Pauline Studies</i> . Essays presented to F.F. Bruce. Paternoster Press. £10.00   |
| Heron, A.J.C.                      | <i>A Century of Protestant Theology</i> . Lutterworth Press. £6.95;  |
| Hudson, W.D.                       | <i>A Century of Moral Philosophy</i> . Lutterworth Press. £6.95  |
| Hughes, G.                         | <i>Moral Decisions</i> . DLT. £1.50  |
| Kasemann, E.                       | <i>Commentary on Romans</i> . SCM Press. £12.50  |
| Kee, H.C.                          | <i>Christian Origins in Sociological Perspective</i> . SCM Press. £4.95  |
| Kung, H.                           | <i>The Church Maintained in Truth</i> . SCM Press. £2.95   |
| Laws, S.                           | <i>A Commentary on the Epistle of James</i> . A. & C. Black. £5.95   |
| Moltmann, J.                       | <i>Experiences of God</i> . SCM Press. £2.95   |
| Torrance, T.F. (ed.)               | <i>Belief in Science and in Christian Life. The Relevance of Michael Polanyi's Thought for Christian Life and Faith</i> . Handsel Press. £5.25 |
- Enfolded in Love*. Daily Readings with Julian of Norwich. DLT. £1.50
- The Year of Grace of the Lord*. A Scriptural and Liturgical Commentary on the Calendar of the Orthodox Church. Mowbray. £5.95

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