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THEOLOGY AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS

JOHN AUSTIN BAKER

At the start of the debate on 10 February 1983 the General Synod of the Church of England was firmly reminded of the need for theological consideration of the issues relating to peace, disarmament and nuclear weapons.[1] Yet by the most generous computation only 8.5 per cent of the words spoken that day could be said to come under the head either of theology or of Christian ethics. The figure is even more startling when we reflect that almost one-third of that exiguous total came in one speech, that of the Archbishop of York,[2] who was the only member to contribute what could be called a connected theological argument. It is easier to ask for theology than to provide it.

All this is the more remarkable because the subject does raise a lot of quite fundamental theological questions. In the limited space available, I would like to try to identify one or two of these (in particular ones not covered in *The Church and the Bomb*), and tease them out just a little.

The best point from which to start is certainly that which was the centre of Dr. Blanch's presentation. "We do have a distinct theological position to represent," he said, "which could in the end be more important than the exact resolutions we may pass or may reject. We stand for the truth that it was a loving Creator who made the universe, that it is a loving Creator who presides over it, that it is a loving Creator who will determine the nature and the time of its end . . . Fear and faith cannot live together in the same heart and mind . . . Right political decisions, I believe, and right moral attitudes, are more likely to emerge against this background of the universal and unfailing providence of God."[3]

Amen to that – but the thinking and not unsympathetic observer will want us to say what we suppose such words to mean. In my postbag there have been quite a number of letters expressing the conviction that God is in control, and that therefore we must have faith. But some of the writers mean that God will intervene miraculously to prevent a nuclear holocaust; others, that if such a disaster comes it will be the will of God; others again that if we disarm God will protect us. From any one of these standpoints there is no need to lose sleep, whatever political or moral decisions are made; for whether we arm or disarm, whether we behave peaceably or menacingly, the end result will be what God intended.

Now such attitudes are not what Dr. Blanch had in mind; but they exist, and they show how hard it is to speak plainly on this doctrine of Providence. The Archbishop was urging, rightly and properly, that fear is a bad counsellor. We have to take decisions; and one of the ways in which God exercises his providential care is through the decisions of his human servants. In a matter like that of nuclear weapons we must try to do what is both right and wise – to do right, that is, in the wisest way – and we must not let our judgment of what is right be affected by understandable terror at the prospects if our best efforts fail, whether the prospect of nuclear devastation or the prospect of subjugation to tyranny.

When we have said this, however, all is, in one sense, still to say. We may be in a better frame of mind to think, but we are no nearer knowing what to think. The decisions and attitudes are, as Dr. Blanch said, yet to "emerge". Belief in the Providence of God is not vacuous. It means that when we have done our best, in the light of what God has shown us both of our own nature and of his grace and moral will, then the result will help forward his kingdom. That faith can and should give us serenity and steadfastness. But to find out what the "best" is that we have to do, we must look beyond the doctrine of Providence.

At this point it may be as well to take in a related topic which has come up frequently in public discussion: that of the end of the world, and in particular of that biblical image of the end loosely known as "Armageddon". An equation is regularly made between the possible extinction of life on earth by nuclear war and the 'End'. To quote the Archbishop of York just once more: "This debate is about the end of the world and about how we may prevent it or delay it. Of course, this is in remarkable contrast with our founders in the historic Church who fervently longed for the end of the world and eagerly awaited it";[4] and again, "From now on every generation will be aware that it could be the last generation on the earth."[5] It is in this context that many, including Dr. Blanch, have quoted the saying ascribed to Jesus in the Lukan version of the Synoptic 'Little Apocalypse': "When you see these things come to pass, lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near."[6]

The first question to be asked is whether this is not a misuse of the biblical and Gospel eschatology. The 'End' in Scripture is the end of the cosmos, the whole created order. Just because we happen to know that the universe is infinitely vaster than the biblical writers could imagine, we do not have the right to apply their words simply to the dissolution of the surface of our small planet. When they wrote that "the powers in the heavens will be shaken",[7] or that "the heavens will disappear with a great rushing sound, the elements will disintegrate in flames, and the earth with all that is in it will be laid bare" (or "burnt up"),[8] it was something far more fundamental that they had in mind. Scientists are divided in their speculations as to whether the universe yet contains other creatures of whom Christians would say that they are "in the image of God", but it may do so, nor can we rule out the possibility of "many crosses, still to come or long ago".[9] We are not the whole of God's creative story, nor is our end *the* End. Cosmological theory today does dimly glimpse, in a future far beyond the natural demise of this planet, something we could call the "end of the universe". Our antics with nuclear weapons will neither advance nor retard that by one micro-second.

There is, therefore, something ever so slightly megalomaniac about the demand from various Christian quarters that our theological reflection on nuclear weapons should take in the 'apocalyptic' dimension. To succumb to this demand is to exaggerate our own importance, and to diminish the scale of God's creative and redemptive concern. There is no fate we can bring upon ourselves which is not adequately covered by our belief in resurrection, judgment and eternal life.

If this is so, then Armageddon is equally irrelevant. This particular topic does, however, raise a rather different but

absolutely crucial issue. In General Synod the Bishop of London, Dr. Graham Leonard, said "I could have wished that we had all read the Book of Revelation before this debate, for it concentrates the mind wonderfully . . . . . . (Here) the vision and promise of the eternal peace, in which creation is redeemed and consecrated in Christ, is interwoven with the vision of the defeat of evil portrayed in all its horror and with which there can be no compromise. The victory of Christ, the Lamb that was slain, has to be implemented to the full before the End of the Ages when the peoples will dwell in peace in the City of God . . . We must not simply wait passively for Armageddon. Nor must we seek a peace which is no peace, in which evil could prevail unchallenged and unchecked."[10] Later, replying to a point made by the Dean of Durham, Dr. Peter Baelz, he amplified the last two sentences in the above quotation thus: ". . . we must not . . . use the expectation of (Armageddon) as a cloak for our idleness and sloth and lack of effort to work for peace. What I believe the Book of Revelation says to us is that we cannot expect the peace of God unless we are prepared to face the cost which it entails; and God is giving us a moment, and the question we face is how are we to use it?"[11]

At one point the Bishop's words are ambiguous but not, perhaps, irretrievably so. Referring to the Book of Relevation, he speaks of "the vision of the defeat of evil portrayed in all its horror and with which there can be no compromise." Is it evil or the defeat of evil which is portrayed in all its horror? The following clause about compromise seems to make reasonably certain that it is evil which is in mind. But, of course, the horror in the Book of Revelation comes in the portrayal not of evil but of the means which God adopts to defeat and destroy it. There is here an exultant piling of agony on agony for which the most charitable explanation would be that the writer was not quite sane. For theologically (and this is the crux) these chapters do not describe the appalling consequences of human folly and sin, which is how we in the light of modern technology might be tempted to interpret them. They are explicitly supernatural disruptions of the cosmos. God is doing these things; and his agents, though they include human forces, are primarily the angelic armies and Christ himself. We have no exegetical right to interpret these passages otherwise.

The Old Testament background to Armageddon is equally one of divine and miraculous destruction, though it includes a global battle between the godless nations, engineered by God himself and leading to their mutual extermination.[12] Such pictures do indeed concentrate the mind wonderfully, though not perhaps in the way the Bishop of London meant. The challenge which should stop us in our tracks cannot be put better than in his own words: "The victory of Christ, the Lamb that was slain, has to be implemented to the full . . . ." This, the obscene, sadistic fantasy of Revelation, Chapters 6–20, is the victory of "the Lamb that was slain."

I confess I do not see how any sound biblical exposition can apply these chapters to a nuclear war, or indeed to any other purely human conflict, however terrible. But that only brings out the real problem, the one from which the Christian churches persistently run away: that there are in the Bible incompatible pictures of God, and that we have eventually to make up our mind which of them is to be in control of our faith. The total personality-change in Christ from the Crucified Son of Man in the Gospel Passion narratives to the Rider on the White Horse in Revelation 19, 11–16, is not one that any honest person can accept as it stands. One has to be, at the very least, radically re-interpreted in terms of the other if the Christian faith is to have any coherence or credibility; and the same principle needs to be applied in a thoroughgoing manner throughout the Scriptures. The Bible does not give us *a* picture of God, one which however complex is yet internally consistent. It gives us several pictures of God which, even if they overlap, are at heart irreconcilable. The Holy Spirit, had we the courage to trust it, would re-expound the Scriptures for us in terms of Jesus, Crucified and Risen, as indeed the Easter Christ is himself said to have done. It is that re-exposition which alone can be a firm base for the Church's proclamation to the world and for the ordering of her own life. Personally I doubt whether such a re-exposition will allow us to use the image of Armageddon in the way it has been used in this nuclear weapons debate.

For how has it been used? Simply to say this: we must do everything we can to avert Armageddon, but if we fail then it is right to use even the most extreme and horrific forms of physical power to defeat the onslaught of evil. But this is an illegitimate use of the biblical imagery, where Armageddon is a cosmic cataclysm, visiting a sinful world with divine vengeance, part of which is the mutual execution of the nations. The survivors are, in the O.T., the people of Israel, in the N.T. the saints; and in neither case are they supposed to have taken any part in the battle. The 'holy war' model of the O.T. is here carried to its logical conclusion, with all the destruction wrought or engineered supernaturally by God.

We have here, I suggest, two key questions: first, whether we can accept any longer pictures of the divine action so foreign to all that God has shown us in Christ of his manner of working; secondly, and following naturally from that, in what sense such an event could be said anyway to be "the defeat of evil". On the first something has been said already. I would like now to explore the second.

One of the major criticisms levelled against *The Church and the Bomb"* was that it did not offer a "theology of power".[13] In what theological context are we to understand the use of power in this world? What are the Christian ethics of power, especially the power of the State?

Christians have recognised from the first that actions are allowed to the State which must be forbidden to individuals. The power of life and death, the power of imprisonment, the power of taxation, the power to limit personal liberty: all these are powers which not only are denied to the citizen, but must be denied if society is to survive. Equally, most of them must be permitted to the State in the same interest of making community life possible. If God made us creatures who need to live in community, then he must be believed to have willed these necessary means.

At the same time, the tradition has grown up in human civilisation that the power of the State cannot be unbridled. Different societies have expressed this conviction in different ways. Trial by jury; 'no taxation without representation'; the abolition of the death penalty, and of cruel punishments such as the cat, birching, or solitary confinement; the requirement of search warrants; recognition of the right of conscientious objection to military service; these are some of the obvious examples from our western world. The

whole area of 'human rights', and the attempt of the UN to define what rights all governments ought to allow to their subjects express the same principle. We do not accept that for the State "anything goes", any more than we do for individuals.

The same applies in relations between states, both in peace and in war. There is a whole corpus of material relating to the moral limitation of war, of which that body of thought, both Christian and humanist, known as 'Just War' theory is but one major example. It needs to be stated clearly and loudly, again and again, that nuclear weapons, except possibly for certain limited uses of the very smallest types, contravene all the international conventions on warmaking,[14] and have for this reason been condemned in unqualified terms by the United Nations General Assembly.[15]

When new technology creates the possibility of doing something that has never been done before, but which appears contrary to existing ethical standards, there is always a strong temptation to alter the rules. Today we face many problems of this sort in, for example, genetics, information technology, sexual morality, and so forth. It is rather easily assumed that such developments change the essential situation in a way which makes the old rules obsolete. This assumption has found its way into the nuclear weapons debate. Criticising the Report, *The Church and the Bomb*, the Bishop of London said of it: ". . . the doctrine of the Just War is examined in the form which it developed in the days of conventional weapons. *No consideration is given as to how far the principles which it sought to embody could and should be re-expressed in the light of modern weapons, biological and chemical as well as nuclear*"[15] (italics mine). Since the Working Party decided that the doctrine ruled out the use of nuclear weapons, the Bishop would seem to imply that the group ought to have tried to find a way of 're-expressing' the doctrine that would allow such use, at least in certain circumstances.

The method hinted at is familiar. One analyses the 'principles' underlying a particular moral position, stating them in the broadest terms, and then sets out from this re-statement along a different road of argument which arrives, naturally enough, at a different destination. There would have been no problem in doing this for war-fighting – in fact, to prove the point, I will do it now. We could easily have said: "The object of a Just War is to prevent the spread of some moral evil, such as an atheistic tyranny which has attacked one's country with a view to subjugating it. To be able to achieve this object it is necessary to deploy a force equal to that of the aggressor. If the aggressor is prepared to use a particular weapon – nuclear, chemical, biological or any other – then it is right to do the same. Just War principles in fact demand it."

Simple, isn't it? Indeed, not only is it simple, it is also the argument which is actually used by all those good people, outside the churches as well as within them, who are content that in the last resort the nuclear trigger should be pulled. What it ignores is, of course, that traditional Just War thinking, like all respectable moral reflection, is concerned not just that a righteous object should be achieved but that righteous methods should be used. Since, however, war cannot be regarded as wholly or ideally righteous (and, generally speaking, has been deplored in the best secular as

well as religious thought at most periods of history) the Just War doctrine finds itself from the start in a weak position as regards methods. Is there any difference of *principle* between killing in one way and killing in another? A counter-argument, stressing the horrific nature of modern conventional weapons, is a standard move in this debate. Again, 'ordinary' war kills non-combatants: what then is the difference in *principle* about nuclear weapons? This, too, is a regular riposte.

Our re-expression of principles is now, however, in danger of proving too much. Once set out along this line of argument, and no methods of war fighting are tabu. All restraints on war are compromises which are made in the light of particular circumstances. When new weapons are developed, new conditions have to be evaluated, and in the process old principles are inevitably re-expressed. The new considerations raised by nuclear weapons are, quite simply, the very long-term lethal damage to the environment, and the long-term genetic risks to all reproduction, not just human. There are no precedents for assessing the moral quality of these things. By analogy, however, from such traditional crimes as 'poisoning the wells', and from the horror expressed throughout human history at injury to the unborn child, one can say with reason that these are morally unacceptable as well as being, from a pragmatic viewpoint, potential collective suicide. By extension, therefore, not only from 'Just War' thinking but also from international conventions, there is a strong case for saying that nuclear weapons should be outlawed, and that this is an instance where clear restraints should be put on the exercise of State power. For Christians, this conclusion is reinforced by the biblical doctrine of human stewardship of God's creation. A 'theology of power' which pointed to a different conclusion would, in my view, be a deeply suspect theology.

Where, however, a theology of power could help a great deal would be in examining the very assumption on which readiness to fight a nuclear war is based. This, as we have already seen, is that force is justified in the last resort as a means to defeat evil. We come now to the heart of the matter. It has often been pointed out, not least in this debate, that Jesus gives little or no guidance to those who have to wield worldly power. The reason, I believe, is this. *Jesus was concerned with the defeat of evil: and evil cannot be defeated by the use of coercive power.* This is not to denigrate the State, nor to propose anarchy. It is simply to recognise an insuperable spiritual limitation. Evil can be 'defeated' only in the soul of an individual or in the souls of a community, and only if people are prepared not to retaliate, not to hate, not to pass the evil on to others, but simply to love and to forgive. If this is not the message of the story of Jesus, what message does he have?

The most that State violence can do is to restrain one evil by means of another. That is not to say that there are not many other, positive things which the State can do to promote good and diminish evil. Justice, social welfare, education, truth and fair dealing in international relations, generosity to poor nations – the list is endless. And where evil exists it has to be restrained lest it devour the good. But because coercion is not in itself a good, but only a necessary evil, we have to be exceptionally vigilant to ensure that the evil in coercion is not greater than the evil it is needed to restrain.

The idea in which we must never acquiesce is the belief that nuclear war, or any other war, is a means of 'defeating' evil. It is not. This is not just a matter of words. It is only by making this distinction that we can hope to evolve a Christian policy in respect of war. Non-violence is, I am sure, a call with which Jesus challenges all who would follow him. It demands from us not just the renunciation of force but the readiness to be crucified for love, truth, justice and forgiveness, and so to transmute the evil done to us into good by suffering as Jesus suffered. The world can never have too many people who accept this vocation. But it is essentially and exclusively a vocation for individuals and communities, not for States. The State as a corporate entity, however powerful, is impersonal, and cannot live or die sacrificially in this way.

The State, however, as Jesus and the primitive Church saw clearly, can within its own limits serve good and restrain evil. In particular, as regards violence and war, it has a special role to protect those who have not attained to Christ's vocation to non-violence. What is vital is that it should do this with as little counter-evil as possible. In this respect deterrence, which prevents war, is obviously better than war-fighting. But in both cases force must be minimum force; it must, to the limits of our ingenuity, be humane and just force; it must be manifestly defensive force.

It is, paradoxically, easier to apply these principles in nuclear weapons matters than to conventional military power, because *nuclear deterrence does not demand parity.* Provided you have an invulnerable means of inflicting on the other side more damage than it is prepared to endure, you have a sufficient deterrent. There is, therefore, no moral, military nor any other justification for either the variety or quantity of nuclear weapons in the world at the moment. But, equally, there is no reason why any one Super-Power or alliance should not independently reduce its weapons stocks by a very considerable percentage. To do so would not risk tempting any other nation to aggression nor fail in the State's duty of defence. The very term 'overkill capacity' shows that this is so. The policies of the UK and French Governments prove the same point. For if our tiny independent deterrent, or the only slightly larger one of France, are each sufficient to hold back a power as great as that of the Soviet Union, what possible need is there for such a gigantic nuclear panoply as that of NATO as a whole?

The proper mission of the Church to the secular State in this field seems to me to be that of encouraging the nations by wise practical advice to draw back from the brink. Only as they do this can there be scope for other peace-building measures, including those of justice for the world's poor, and of urgent programmes relating to resources and population. Ultimately we may hope to arrive at the outlawing not only of nuclear weapons but of war as such. To help initiate this process we need to put our whole weight of patient argument and loving concern behind two main immediate measures. First, a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, with its consequential freeze on the development of new weapons systems; and secondly, an independent *reduction* of nuclear weapons by the Western alliance, as large as may be without jeopardising a minimum but sufficient deterrent. This, I am sure, is in fact more practicable than negotiating balanced force reductions, and

more conducive to world security than repeated failures at the negotiating table. Moreover, by breaking the hypnotic spell of the arms race, it could transform the world's spiritual climate overnight.

For the reasons I have given, it seems to me that 'pacifism' alone can never be a sufficient Christian response in these matters. The world needs from the Churches both more and more individuals committed to carrying the cross of non-violence, and also understanding guidance of and support for the State when it ventures on the kind of course described above. It is, I hope and believe, along these lines that a Christian and human 'alternative consensus' will emerge in the next few years.

1 *The Church and the Bomb: The General Synod Debate* (hereafter referred to as *Debate*), CIO Publishing, London, 1983, p.4.

2 *Debate*, pp. 16-18.

3 *Debate*, p. 18.

4 *Debate*, p. 16.

5 *Debate*, p. 17.

6. Lk.21.28. This text was, for example, the theme of a contribution by Archbishop Antony Bloom to a theological consultation between representatives of the British Council of Churches and the visiting delegation of Soviet churchmen on the subject of "the Peace of God and the Peace of Man" at Addington Palace, January 11-12, 1983.

7 Mt 24.29 = Mk 13.25 = Lk 21.26.

8 2 Pet. 3.10.

9 Sydney Carter, 'Every star shall sing a carol', v.4.

10 *Debate*, pp. 8-9.

11 *Debate*, p.22.

12 The name Armageddon occurs in Scripture only at Rev. 16,16, where it is said to be a Hebrew word. The exact derivation has been much discussed. OT background for the general picture in Revelation is, however, not far to seek. In addition to eschatological battle-scenes such as Joel 3.9-16, there is a clear allusion to the destruction of Gog's horde in Ezek. 39 : cf. esp. Ezek. 39.17-20 and Rev. 19.17f.

13 For discussions of this theme with specific reference to nuclear weapons cf. The Rt Revd Dr Graham Leonard, in *Peace and the Bomb*, ed. Watson, London, 1983, pp. 10-14, and The Revd Richard Harries, 'The Morality of Nuclear Deterrence', *What Hope in an Armed World?*, ed. Harries, London, 1982, pp. 87-114.

14 Cf., eg Hague Convention (1899), art, 22; 23(e), and the corresponding clauses in the Convention of 1907; the Geneva Convention (1949) and Additional Protocol I (1977), arts. 50-58.

15 UN General Assembly, res. 1653 (xvi), 24.11.1961, and res. 36/100, 9.12.81.

16 *Debate*, p. 7.

THE PEACH PIE AND THE CUSTARD:

Two versions of Poetry in the poems of Wallace Stevens.

HAMISH F. G. SWANSTON

It is a temptation, when he is reading the poems of Wallace Stevens, for a Professor of Theology to concentrate attention on those moments in Stevens' work at which some reference is made to the activities of christian theologians, to Scotus, for example, in *The Man with the Blue Guitar*, or Aquinas in *Les Plus Belles Pages*. There must, however, be something a little special about a pleading that in these poems, the franciscan is more significant that the fertile grass, or the dominican than the milkman. It would, certainly, be possible to indicate the relevance of thomistic discussion of analogical predication to what Stevens intends by his talk of the interaction and inter-relation of reality and imagination. But, at the very moment when he most professedly enters upon this matter, Stevens is quick to remark that 'theology after breakfast sticks to the eye'.

No more acceptable to him of a morning than the theses of the subtle theologians are the beliefs of the generality of christians. He finds nothing at all attractive in 'an over-human god' who, having 'made himself a man', is not distinguishable from ourselves 'when we cry because we suffer'. Stevens is, if sympathetic at all to christians, sympathetic to those who toll 'the old Lutheran bells at home' and those who place 'the marguerite and coquelicot' upon the altar. He feels more comfortable yet with those who discern that the bells and the flowers reach beyond christian confines. 'Each sexton has his sect. The bells have none'. When she comes from the chapel to make 'an offering in the grass' the truant nun is a lover more attractive to the Lord of the garden than when she was in choir:

> He felt a subtle quiver
> That was not heavenly love,
> Or pity.

Stevens' rejection of established christian forms is, perhaps, most forcibly expressed in that fine poem *Ploughing on Sunday*. The reader is brought by the insistent rhythms of revolt from the respectabilities of New England religion to a celebration of animal and elemental vitality:

> Remus, blow your horn!
> I'm ploughing on Sunday,
> Ploughing North America.
> Blow your horn!
>
> Tum-ti-tum,
> Ti-tum-tum-tum!
> The turkey-cock's tail
> Spreads to the sun.

Stevens' early poems are replete with such mocks in magnificent measure of Regina of the clouds, the rising Venus, the God of the sausage-makers, and the faint, memorial gesturings of the Triton; these prepare for the delighted announcement of *Notes towards a Supreme Fiction* that 'Phoebus is dead' and the enlarging perception:

> The death of one god is the death of all.

It was, he remarked, 'one of the great human experiences to see the gods dispelled in mid-air and dissolve like clouds'. At the dissolving of the gods men had to create for themselves 'a style of bearing themselves in reality'. He had some hope that such a new style might be invented in the United States, in the Carolinas, where 'new-born children interpret love'; in Connecticut, where there had never been 'a time when mythology was possible'; and in Oklahoma, where among the clattering bucks and the bristling firecat, the farmers' daughters had reached back to the earliest forms of fertility cult:

> In Oklahoma
> Bonnie and Josie
> Dressed in calico
> Danced around a stump.
> They cried,
> "Ohoyaho,
> Ohoo" . . .
> Celebrating the marriage
> Of flesh and air.

He was, throughout his career, to resort to such primitive cries; they signify Stevens' conceit that the poet's verse could do in our society the job of the sacred ceremonies among our ancestors:

> The melon should have apposite ritual,
> Performed in verd apparel, and the peach,
> When its black branches came to bud, belle day,
> Should have an incantation.

The poet is to be acknowledged as the performer of that apposite ritual, the singer of that incantation, the celebrant of the marriages of the elements. Stevens entertains pretensions of Jungian magnificence. He expresses them in the several religious languages of our culture.

Those who celebrate the presence of their god are likely to provide, in the place, the gesture, the language of their rite, paradigms for others' announcement of the divine among us. This is certainly what is going on at the transference of liturgical language to the *Genesis* and *Ezekiel* meditations upon Creation and Fall, the *Exodus* narrative of Redemption, and the *Apocalypse* dream of Judgment. And Stevens was ready to make such transferences. Though his references to the images of the hebrew and christian traditions are rather fewer than is usual among educated men of his generation, being limited almost to the well-known stories of Adam and Lazarus, of Susanna and the Elders, he did make energetic employment of the Exodus narrative in several places. There is a powerful transference of liturgical use at the ceremony of *Tea at the Palaz of Hoon*.

Descending in the purple vestment of the old liturgy, the poet comes forward as the Aaron of a new order. He chants a versicle:

> What was the ointment sprinkled on my bread?
> What were the hymns that buzzed beside my ears?

The question is as confident as the demand of the half-choir at the Jerusalem festival:

> Who is this king of glory?

The versicle receives as confident a response:

> Out of my mind the golden ointment rained,
> And my ears made the blowing hymns they heard.

He has shifted out of the sacerdotal character into the divine. Such a response to the versicle must appal 'a high-

toned old christian woman', but it is for the poet a release into self-knowledge. The appropriation of the divine language has enabled him to be a creating god:

> and what I saw
> Or heard or felt came not but from myself;
> And there I found myself more truly and more strange.

The poet is now in a position to declare poetry to be 'the supreme fiction' in the primary sense of the supreme act of making. 'I believe', Stevens wrote in 1904 to the girl he was to marry, 'that with a bucket of sand and a wishing lamp, I could create a world in half a second that would make this one look like a hunk of mud'. I do not think that Stevens really supposed he needed either bucket or lamp. The poet is not the sorcerer's apprentice, he is not the sorcerer, he is the maker.

This is a claim most clearly articulated in *The Idea of Order at Key West*, published in *Alcestis* in October 1934. At the end of a hot Greyhound 'bus ride from Miami along the island highway, Key West seems now not much more than a straggle of waterfront bars, but in 1922, when Stevens first went there to settle a case for the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company, of which he later became vice-president, it appeared 'one of the choicest places I have ever been to'. And in the midst of what he called twenty years 'bumming around' the place, he made his most powerful statement of the poet as the creating god.

The girl, striding 'among the meaningless plungings of water and the wind', makes a world as every god makes a world, out of chaos:

> It was her voice that made
> The sky acutest at its vanishing,
> She measured to the hour its solitude,
> She was the single artificer of the world
> In which she sang. And when she sang, the sea,
> Whatever self it had, became the self
> That was her song, for she was the maker.

She is, like the divinity of Blakes's iconography, the geometer of space, 'fixing emblazoned zones and fiery poles', and, like most gods, happily solipsist:

> there never was a world for her
> Except the one she sang and, singing made.

Stevens suggests that, at their hearing of her song, others may live within the singer's world. An order was being established for them as she 'mastered the night and portioned out the seas'. Stevens has most evidently taken over a language of world-making that reaches back from the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel to the first verses of *Genesis*. As he wrote in a letter from Florida in 1935, it is 'God who seems a nuisance from the point of Key West', while the poet's rage for order is 'blessed':

> The maker's rage to order words of the sea,
> Words of the fragrant portals, dimly-starred,
> And of ourselves and of our origins,
> In ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds.

In this exultant poem Stevens invites other women and men to go through the portals the poet opens and enter upon the world his imagination has made.

Stevens may seem to be saying something of a sort with

Coleridge's remark about Imagination as 'a dim Analogue of Creation, not all that we can *believe* but all that we can *conceive* of creation'. He did not himself rejoice in Coleridgean reference. He thought Coleridge's writings generally to 'have so little in them that one feels to be contemporary, living', and he particularly insisted that 'my reality-imagination complex is entirely my own even though I see it in others'. Coleridge would at any rate have understood what Stevens meant by that disclaimer, and it is best here to advance Stevens' sense of imagination and its world in his own terms.

There are those whose words, as he said in his 1948 Bergen lecture at Yale on 'Effects of Analogy' 'have made a world that transcends the world and a life livable in that transcendence'. Stevens would be one of those. That lecture, delivered when Stevens was in his seventieth year, and the New York lecture three years later on 'The Relations between Poetry and Painting' in which he stated most clearly, 'in an age in which disbelief is so profoundly prevalent or, if not disbelief, indifference to questions of belief', his sense that 'poetry and painting, and the arts in general, are, in their measure, a compensation for what has been lost', lead into his happy announcement that 'our revelations are not the revelations of belief, but the precious portents of our own powers'. But Stevens could not always enjoy such confidence in himself and his creative power.

'If a fellow takes Peach Pie', Garrett Barcalow Stevens had written to his second son at Harvard in 1898, 'he often wishes he had chosen the Custard'. Stevens' reconsideration of the poet's creating power is articulated most famously in *The Man with the Blue Guitar*.

The poet is this time the old man of Picasso's disturbing picture, the shearsman of sorts bent over his guitar. The exuberant young singer at Key West had been heard at a respectful distance. The guitarist is confronted by familiar critics proposing a confident aesthetic which comes near to parodying Stevens' earlier assertions:

> Exceeding music must take the place
> Of empty heaven and its hymns

The shearsman is, at the start, as confident as the earlier figures of the poet. He replies in a forthright rhythm and rhyme scheme. But this soon declines into the admission:

> I cannot bring a world quite round
> Although I patch it as I can.

A fitful attempt to assert a surrealist world collapses at the uninhabitable language of

> sun's green,
> Cloud's red, earth feeling, sky that thinks,

and the shearsman has to acknowledge that he is native in a world he has not made. At this abandoning of the claim to be the maker of a world, Stevens is compelled to offer a new account of the poem.

The account he offers is couched in liturgical terms: the poem is

> like a missal found
> In the mud.

The figure of a service-book declares the poem to have had, before the poet came across it, a place in an already existing

order, but it is not in that liturgical world that Stevens immediately interests himself. He first considers what it means for a poem to be found. That is the theme of his *Notes toward a Supreme Fiction*. This sequence is largely concerned with the appropriate watchfulness of the poet. He is the note-maker among those who think themselves the rational assessors of the rational order they inhabit. He had already understood it to be his poet's privilege that he should appreciate the workings of creativity, and recognize that the supreme fiction of the world is a work of imagination. He was not to be persuaded into talk of *mens creatrix*:

> It could not be a mind, the wave
> In which the watery grasses grow.

In these *Notes* he allows himself some ferocious scope in the denunciation of those persons of energetic intellect who build capitols and set up lines of statues in their corridors, elevating men who were cleverer than the most literate owl and the most erudite of elephants. Against them Stevens proclaims the patient truth:

> to impose is not
> To discover. To discover an order as of
> A season, to discover summer and know it,
>
> To discover winter and know it well, to find,
> Not to impose, not to have reasoned at all,
> Out of nothing to have come on major weather,
>
> It is possible, possible, possible. It must
> Be possible.

In hope of that possibility being realised Stevens revised his figure of the poet.

He had in the days of his confidence likened the poet to a youth, a lover with phosphorescent hair, who overtook Mrs Alfred Uruguay on the road and proved himself the 'figure of capable imagination'. His later imagination presents the poet rather as the woman waiting for her lover, 'at daylight or before', and, as she combs her hair, meditating upon her incomplete existence. The woman of *Debris of Life and Mind*, who is the first fully-imagined figure of this poetic, speaks 'thoughtfully the words of a line', acknowledging to herself that she is 'not quite able to sing'. She entirely lacks the commanding energy of the woman who strode along the beach at Key West. But to her occurs the wondrous discovery that 'things sing themselves'.

Stevens' account of the occurrence of 'discovery' prompts a reference to that discussion of 'inspiration' initiated by F.D. Maurice, sometime Professor of English Literature at King's College, London, and then, until deprived for a remark about hell, Professor of Theology. Maurice esteemed it Coleridge's greatest distinction that he had made the 'discovery', or had been vouchsafed the 'revelation' that there was a 'keynote to the harmony of all creation'. He took Coleridge's case to be paradigmatic for all true 'discovers', Hutcheson and the discovery of a Moral Sense, for Faraday and Own and Darwin and the discoveries of Natural Science. None of these great men would ever say that he had found what he had first hidden. Each would allow that he had been shewn a truth. 'Discovery and revelation are, it strikes me, more nearly synonymous words than any which we can find in our language'. As with 'the discovery of a fixed star, or of any geological or mathematical principle', so, Maurice went on, with the making of a work of literature. Christians, like numbers of other religionists, are accustomed to talking of certain writings as 'communicating revelation', as 'given by God', as 'inspired'. Maurice enlarged the category of such writings:

> to say that inspiration is confined to the writers
> of the Bible is formally and directly to contradict
> those writers; to determine in what measures
> they or any other men have possessed inspir-
> ation, is to tell Him who breathes where He
> listeth how *we* suppose He must breath or ought
> to breathe.

Maurice attended to the poet as 'the great interpreter of nature's mysteries' who has received a divine revelation in the act of making a human discovery. He took it that poets knew themselves to be such seers. He managed his thesis by reference to 'the singers of the old world asking some divine power to inspire them', and his argument might be extended from Lucretius through Milton's invocation at the start of *Paradise Regained* as far as Wordsworth's celebration of the 'Presences' who presided over his education. It might, perhaps, touch upon A.E. Housman's remarking that he had to be a little out of sorts before he could compose a poem. And it might seem relevant to Stevens' talk of 'the mysterious spirit of nature' in Central Park.

That was a youthful experience, and, anyway, the spirit 'slipped away'; but the figure of the waiting woman does give him a language in which he can speak of those things that others include in doctrines of 'inspiration'.

In a complex poem, *The World as Meditation*, Penelope wakes on Ithaca with a sense of someone coming. The poem begins with a question to which there is no simple answer:

> Is it Ulysses that approaches from the east,
> The interminable adventurer?

Possibly.

> Someone is moving
> On the horizon.

All she can do is to compose a self in readiness for whomsoever may be coming. She has no assurance that anyone will arrive. The language of 'approach' and 'coming' in this poem is checked by that of 'interminable' and 'constantly'. The reader may, and Stevens was well aware of this and meant to check it, import an homeric resolution, bringing Ulysses home to his faithful wife; Stevens simply supplies her with the framework of an advent litany:

> She would talk a little to herself as she combed
>   her hair,
> Repeating his name with its patient syllables,
> Never forgetting him that kept coming constantly
>   so near.

But that name which she repeats is not entirely fit. The opening question is answered complexedly:

> It was Ulysses and it was not.

'Ulysses' is the name she uses. This particular name cannot suit the requirements of the rest of us as we make our call for a comer. But it comes, too, near to being a parallel of the line in *A Primitive like an Orb* about 'the essential poem':

> It is and it
> Is not, and therefore is.

In *The World as Meditation* Stevens supplies us with a

language at once as expressive of being and more imaginatively controlled. The savage presence awakening the world in which Penelope waits, the approach from the east, the enlivening warmth of morning, indicate the Stevens is willing that whatever influence encourages his discoveries should be figured by the sun. The witness of this poem is consistent with that of his wider enterprise. At the reverberation of 'Ti-tum-tum-tum', the turkey-cock's tail had spread to the sun as the source of animal vitality; on a green day the shearsman had observed 'it is the sun that shares our works'; and in old age the poet delighted to acknowledge that

> his poems, although makings of himself
> Were no less makings of the sun.

With those resonances of warmth, energy, and creativity, there goes, quite generally among men, one of divinity. The sun is often a god. And this, too, Stevens seems near to accepting. He declares in an obituary *Note* that "Phoebus" was 'a name for something that never could be named', insisting that

> The sun
> Must bear no name, gold flourisher, but be.

A theologian might wish to conect this hint of essence and existence with that revelation on *An Ordinary Evening in New Haven* when lights shone

> Like blessed beams from out a blessed bush;

the literary critic, not having such an interest in the peculiar tale of Moses, may concentrate attention on the way in which Stevens' use of the figure of the sun makes a difference in his account of the coming of a poem. This is most easily remarked in the *Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour*. The sun has come full course in this poem: it is evening, the day has been collected, the lover has kept his *rendezvous* with the woman. They are together within

> a warmth,
> A light, a power, the miraculous influence.

The introduction of 'light' to a sequence which echoes his earlier celebrations of the sun, indicates a development in Stevens' appreciation of how things are. The movement in the poem is from an opening insistence on 'light' through 'reason', 'think', 'thought', and 'knowledge' to 'mind'. Stevens now recognizes 'an order' as 'a knowledge'. In this he must appear to be settling into a language familiar in our culture. The line which hymns that knowledge,

> How high that highest candle lights the dark,

does indeed owe much to both *The Merchant of Venice* and the Johannine *Logos* texts. And there is much in our tradition akin to Stevens' talk in this poem of our inhabiting a world made 'out of this same light, out of the central mind'. But it is Stevens' peculiarity among us to halt before such talk is well begun. He does not think it profitable to enquire into the act of mind. As he had been wholly suspicious of the philosopher as 'the lunatic of one idea', and had hoped that 'one day at the Sorbonne' they would come to appreciate 'the fiction that results from feeling', so at this naming of 'mind' he withdraws from the discussion. He has his own version of Wittgensteinian silence.

In that silence, in deliberate confrontation with several kinds of theologian, Stevens forgoes all exercise of speculative intellect. There is, he asserts, 'the essential poem at the centre of things', but he does not, after this first line of *A Primitive like an Orb*, proceed to anything paralleling the structures of theodicy:

> We do not prove the existence of the poem.
> It is something seen and known in lesser poems.

He resorts to what may be thought a fideist contemplation:

> One poem proves another and the whole,
> For the clairvoyant men that need no proof:
> The lover, the believer and the poet.

These in 'the joy of language' may 'celebrate the central poem'. Their celebration is of that reunion personally desired in *The World as Meditation* and personally enjoyed in *The Final Soliloquy*, but in this poem, which has, too, its talk of 'her mirror and her look', brought to universal, almost indeed to a pan-poetic, fulfilment:

> It is
> As if the central poem became the world,
> And the world the central poem, each one the mate
> Of the other.

So that breakfast theology is displaced by 'trumpeting seraphs in the eye'.

Stevens never goes further than the language of imagination escorts him. The desire to go further has been, certainly, usual among theologians. The consideration of sense perception and intellectual apprehension which engages Aquinas in *Prima Pars* of *Summa Theologica* and Scotus' discussion of the relation of the image to intelligible species in the *Ordinatio* are relevant witnesses here. But such efforts to go further than the imagination allows occur only because, in Stevens' terms, the theologians have not engaged enough in the appropriate meditation. This is what he means by theology sticking to the eye. The theologians have not seen the wonder of the poem which is, and here Stevens skilfully employs the scholastic language, 'part of the *res* itself'.

If there are troublesome persons who would still ask him questions as if he had command of some analogue of creation, Stevens is likely to take some hint from the poet's wondering mediation upon the poems discovered to him, and suggest that we, like Penelope, are sustained within 'an inhuman meditation'. Accepting a phrase from Georges Eresco, he will even term that larger meditation 'an essential exercise' of composition. And will reconsider his earlier poems as occurring within that meditation, allowing in *A Primitive like an Orb* that 'the central poem' is

> The poem of the composition of the whole,
> The composition of blue sea and of green,
> Of blue light and of green, as lesser poems.

The hints here of Key West and the shearsman are plain as Stevens now finds his way to the composition of his entire enterprise within some large 'meditation of a principle'.

He will even on *An Ordinary Evening in New Haven*, compose, 'as part of the never-ending meditation', a sequence that runs from the language of an 'imagining of reality', through those of 'a new resemblance of the sun' and of 'a larger poem' to something very like the renewal of the Oklahoma celebration in 'a mythological form'. He can, in his new appreciation of what is going on in such ceremonies, allow the celebration of 'the hero of midnight' on 'a hill of stones', and of 'ancientest saint ablaze with ancientest truth'.

But with such allowances he places the insistent refusal to
indulge in speculation concerning the definition of being.
He will not entertain thoughts of a thorough searching of
reality. This refusal is precisely expressed in a rejection of
that aaronic image which he had once made his best. He will
have nothing to do now with

> the hierophant Omega
> Of dense investiture,

and those who appoint themselves 'the choice custodians' of
things as they are.

So if, at the last, he is presented with the question in
determinedly theological terms, he must, 'in the presence of
such chapels and such schools', simply return again the
poet's only answer:

> We say God and the imagination are one.

REMARKS ON WITTGENSTEIN'S 'REMARKS ON FRAZER'S *THE GOLDEN BOUGH*'

PHILIP DAVIES

A Malaysian native collects the nail-pairings, hair-clippings and spittle of his enemy, and with some beeswax he moulds them into the little figure of a man. For six successive nights he scorches it in a fire, all the while chanting, "It is not wax that I am scorching; it is the liver, heart and spleen of So-and-so that I scorch." On the seventh night he lets the fire consume the wax entirely. When asked what he is about, he replies that he wants his enemy to suffer and die. What are we to make of this strange and morbid ceremony, and of the native's reply to our enquiry? Sir James Frazer offers an explanation that sees in this practice an analogue to the applied natural sciences of our own culture. He argues that this moulding and burning of the little figure is simply an alternative to what we would consider more obvious ways of ridding oneself of an enemy, such as roasting him over a fire for seven successive nights or sticking his body with knives. What such a practice presupposes is a theory about the hidden causal connections that lie beneath the surface of nature. That there is a regular and impersonal order in nature in terms of which all the apparent chaos of phenomena can be accounted for, this belief is common to the outlooks of both 'savage' magician and modern natural scientist. Where the two diverge is in respect of the kind of causal connections they assert are to be found in nature. Unlike his modern counterpart, whose hypotheses are established upon a close observation of the way nature really does operate, the magician posits two types of causal connection which he fails to submit sufficiently to the test of experience. The first type is found in what Frazer calls 'homeopathic' magic; the principle here is that 'like produces like' (so that if rain is desired one thumps around and sprinkles everyone with water). The second is found in 'contagious' magic; here the idea is that whatever has been in contact with something provides a handle for manipulating it (to destroy one's enemy one should burn or mutilate some article of clothing or some detritus taken from his house). What we have here are "two different misapplications of the association of ideas. Homeopathic magic is founded on the association of ideas by similarity; contagious magic is founded on the association of ideas by contiguity."[1] A victim of a confusion of the order of thought with the order of reality, the magician employs a theory of the causal mechanisms of nature that can effect nothing of what he intends. The reason why it takes so long for men to reject such futile hypotheses is two-fold: first, it is unfortunately the case that it requires a long course of trial by experience before they come to see the falsity of hypotheses so fundamental to their practices; second, in the majority of cases the event desired is of such a sort that it is bound to occur, sooner or later, after the performance of the magical rite (the wind will always blow, the rain fall, one's enemy die, at some time or other).

In addition, Frazer offers an account of the evolution of man's inquiry into the structure of nature, an account of the progress of human understanding. This has three distinct phases which, though occasionally overlapping in transitional periods, are on the whole mutually exclusive. First is the magical phase; nature is viewed as an impersonal and ordered whole structured by certain laws, the character of which is, unfortunately, totally misconceived. With the passage of hundreds of years men realise what fools they have been; magic doesn't work after all. Then comes the phase of religion; the controlling powers of nature are spirits whom one must plead with and placate in order to achieve one's purpose. Again, with time, the inefficacy of the practices based on this hypothesis is apparent to all honest men. Thereupon dawns the third phase, that of science. Returning to what was true in magic, that in nature is to be found an impersonal causal sequence, the men of science formulate hypotheses as to what are the mechanisms in nature, taking care to subject these to a rigorous and controlled series of empirical tests. That magic is the historically earliest form of inquiry is said by Frazer to follow from the fact that the simpler idea, that of impersonal and lawful forces, must evidently be grasped before the more complex, that of personal and capricious spirits. Each phase is a necessary one in the development of man.

With this outline accomplished it is time to consider what seemingly fatal criticisms Wittgenstein has to offer.

Frazer, in Wittgenstein's estimation, suffers from a disease characteristic of a culture whose patterns of thinking are critically influenced by the methodology of natural science, the mania for explanation. If we construe all forms of understanding and all uses of language on the model of scientific practice then we arrive at the approach of Frazer. On this account, there is but one way in which natural phenomena can be meaningful for man and there is but one use of language, the representation of that meaning which is the unitary structure behind the particoloured façade of nature. In order to survive man needs to be able to manipulate natural processes at will, and to this end he must build up a picture of the hidden causal connections that determine natural processes, and this picture must take the form of a system of empirically cashable explanatory hypotheses. Like the 'savage' scientist of his book Frazer stands before the variety of social phenomena and seeks to understand them by constructing explanatory hypotheses, weighing up one against another to see which makes best sense of the material. He aims at disclosing those erroneous beliefs that mislead 'the savage' to engage in such blatantly futile attempts at manipulating the natural world, in the same way as the scientist treats his data by moving behind the phenomena to the hidden causal nexus in order to achieve that satisfaction which is characteristic of understanding. But it is this very confusion of natural and social realities that is the source of Frazer's error; analogous to the scientist's professional commitment to revealing the rational structure of nature, Frazer is determined to disclose the network of beliefs that justifies magical practice. Throughout his later philosophy Wittgenstein fought a running battle with the interminable search for justification, arguing instead that all demands for explanation or justification must terminate in the facts of socially determined habit: 'If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: "This is simply what I do." '[2]

At the foundation of the more complex forms of social activity are the elemental language-games, the habitual

forms of symbolic activity that are the given features of any form of social life; particular explanations or justifications are only possible by virtue of these language-games which collectively describe the limit of the world of the agents whose games they are. Thus it is senseless to ask for explanation or justification of those features of human life (including the language-games of justification and explanation) that are collectively the precondition for such rational activities. 'Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to look at what happens as "proto-phenomenon". That is, where we ought to have said: This language-game is played.'[3] The scientist's activity is possible only on the condition of his membership of a social institution incorporating such elemental language-games, and he is in no position to criticise kinds of activity that are grounded on different sets of language-games. And Wittgenstein is asking us to accept the magical rites of primitive society as language-games analogous to ones that we are all familiar with from our own social experience. (It should be said that what Wittgenstein is offering in his account of language is not a theory of meaning; indeed, he rejected the notion that it was any part of the business of philosophy to construct theories to be tested against the facts. Instead, what he offers are a series of sketches designed to draw attention to the very diverse ways in which language is actually employed. And my talk of 'elemental language-games' is an attempt to summarise what it is that these sketches show to be the dominant features of our linguistic landscape.)

With his scientific model Frazer produces a most bizarre picture of primitive life, the key feature of which is gross stupidity. The proto-scientists of Frazer's account share the modern scientists' assumption that a causal system of impersonal laws regulates nature, but unfortunately, through confusing the succession of ideas with the succession of natural phenomena, the 'savage' is systematically mistaken in the causal connections he posits. 'But,' objects Wittgenstein, 'it never becomes plausible that people do all this out of sheer stupidity.'[4] Frazer's attempt to show just how difficult it can be to locate the error in magical practices, by pointing out the inevitable eventuality of the natural occurrences whose instigation is the aim of magic, does nothing to mitigate this picture of primeval idiocy. 'Frazer says it is very difficult to discover the error in magic and this is why it persists for so long – because, for example, a ceremony which is supposed to bring rain is sure to appear effective sooner or later. But then it is queer that people do not notice sooner that is does rain sooner or later anyway.'[5] And if we accept magic as a misbegotten technical device for manipulating nature how do we account for the high degree of technology, requiring a well developed understanding of the actual causal connections, the 'savage' exhibits in other areas of his social life? 'The same savage,' comments Wittgenstein, 'who apparently in order to kill his enemy, sticks his knife through a picture of him, really does build his hut of wood and cuts his arrow with skill and not in effigy.'[6] Frazer's characterisation of these practices becomes still more untenable when we reflect that, for instance, the 'savage' makes no attempt to utilise the power that the rain-king and the rain-festival are presumed to have over the rain clouds so as to bring water to the parched soil in the periods of drought. One finds the rain festival only at the beginning of the rainy season. No such attempt is made because no such power is presumed. Again, the disanalogies between

science and magic become still more apparent when we consider the open and progressive character of experimental science; there is nothing parallel in the ritual practices to the successive framing and testing of hypotheses that is frequently held to be of the essence of modern science and the source of all that is valuable in it.

Frazer is doubly mistaken when he grounds the primitive comprehension in individual psychology; in neither science nor magic is it conceivable that the lone individual, from his observation of phenomena, spins theories out of his head according to which he proceeds to go to work on nature. Both scientist and magician presuppose in their work the presence of a communication community which constitutes the environment of meaning in which their activities can be read as 'observing', 'constructing hypotheses' and 'conducting instrumental tests' or as 'invoking a spirit to bring rain'. For the individual the kind of understanding of the world he is to live and work by is already given as embodied in the social institutions he is either born or educated into. However we are to understand magical rites it is impossible to view them as the handiwork of individuals working from the isolation of their own psyches; the meaning these rites possess is, as with the meaning of any form of behaviour, intersubjectively determined. Hence Wittgenstein says that he could imagine that if he were to invent a rite it would either fall into dissuetude with his death or be appropriated by his society in terms alien to his original intentions. He does not enlarge upon this in his remarks on Frazer but his later writings suggest that this notion of inventing a ritual presupposes a familiarity with the concept of ritual behaviour which the inventor has only because he belongs to a community in which talk of ritual as such has a place. It is an incoherent idea that an individual should invent an entirely distinct form of intentional behaviour unrelated to existing social practices, for the character of a form of behaviour as intentional is a function of its social setting whereas the suggestion has it that the practice has meaning, bestowed upon it by its inventor, and is then foisted upon a community for its use.

So how are we to understand magical practices and beliefs? The first thing is to disabuse ourselves of the idea that behind them is some general body of theory. One would only be justified in accusing the primitive magician of error if he was offering an opinion about what sort of states of affairs obtain in the world. But the beliefs we find associated with the practices are not a justification of these, they assert nothing and, accordingly, possess no truth value. They are as ritual in character as the non-verbal activities with which they are associated; whatever gave rise to the practice also gave rise to the belief, for they are but two different, though equivalent, symbols. (And one must be wary of the tendancy to think of symbols as the man-made substitutes for some independent reality; symbols, or language, may be used to refer to some feature of reality but there are many other uses of languages besides the referential. Frazer fell victim to the scientific prejudice that takes the paradigmatic use of language to be the picturing of reality; so too did the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* who also made the further mistake of assuming that there is only one way of picturing. 'When he explains to us, for example, that the king must be killed in his prime because, according to the notions of savages, his soul would not be kept fresh otherwise, we can only say: where that practice and these

views go together, the practice does not spring from the view, but both of them are there.'[7] Wittgenstein invites us to see the life of the king of the wood at Nemi as another way of expressing what we mean by the phrase 'the majesty of death'[8]; at most, explanation of such ritual may take the form of substituting a familiar symbol for the one that is new and strange to us. Yet the beliefs that accompany the practices are not without meaning in the way that one might say the rhymes accompanying a children's game are. In the case of the latter the significance of the rhymes lies entirely in the role they play in the game in question; their use in any one context is entirely independent of the use that might be made of them in any other. They are specimens of moves in a game rather than of language. However, the significance of the beliefs depends upon the use made of them not only in this or that, but in a wide range of contexts; to understand their meaning (something of which it is senseless to speak in connection with the rhymes) is to see the whole network of interrelated practices in which they are implicated. Thus unlike the rhymes it makes sense to regard them as forms of language rather than as rhythmic sound, empty of all conceptual content.

The correct point of departure for understanding these practices is the recognition of those features of our own social life that are their anologues. Wittgenstein cites the practices of burning in effigy, kissing the picture or name of the loved one, and the way Schubert's brother 'cut certain of Schubert's scores into small pieces and gave to his favourite pupils these pieces of a few bars each'[9] as a sign of piety. The ceremonial figures so prominently in our own lives that we have no difficulty in thinking up possible ritual practices. 'Just how misleading Frazer's accounts are, we see, I think, from the fact that one could well imagine primitive practices oneself and it would only be by chance if they were not actually to be found somewhere. That is, the principle according to which these practices are ordered is much more general than Frazer shows it to be and we find it in ourselves.'[10] When he attempts to translate practices Frazer has constant recourse to such terms as 'soul', 'shade' and 'ghost' with which he correctly assumes we are entirely familiar. The centrality of such language to 'civilised' discourse (the dialectical materialist is not being inconsistent when he gives vent to his feelings by saying that he fears the wrath of the gods) shows that we have far more in common with these primitive societies than Frazer would have us believe. And what we have in common is not stupidity, for ordinary use of these 'mythological' terms does not commit the user to belief in supernatural beings and the malevolent influence on human affairs of occult forces. Then what is the point of such practices? This could be a dangerous question, for we are tempted to think of the agents having some purpose in mind and then, on the basis of beliefs about the best means to achieve that, developing these customs. In a sense the practice, for instance, of kissing the picture of the loved one 'aims at some satisfaction and achieves it. Or rather, it does not aim at anything; we act in this way and feel satisfied.'[11] We act first and only then, on reflection, come to see some point in our action. These elemental modes of behaviour are the given in social life, and far from it being the case that some theoretical understanding generates these, the construction of explanatory hypotheses necessary for the development of such a theoretical understanding is itself one of these given social habits. In its own way the enterprise of explanation aims at some kind of satisfaction, that satisfaction we call understanding. But the forms of satisfaction appropriate to some modes of behaviour are not appropriate to others; 'for someone broken up by love an explanatory hypothesis won't help much – it will not bring peace.'[12]

Having raised the point that the task of explanation is itself motivated by a need to quell some inner turmoil, to achieve a state of satisfaction, we can now turn to Frazer's work and ask whether his explanatory hypotheses have anything to do with the satisfaction, that is, the sense of understanding however small, that comes with reading his descriptions of these practices. I have already noted the absurdity of the picture his explanations generate. Before venturing on to Wittgenstein's account of the source of this satisfaction that accrues merely from a contemplation of the data of primitive life, I would like to expand upon the redundancy of Frazer's hypotheses. Our response to the descriptions of ritual seem too strong and certain to be related to the explanatory power of the hypothesis and the historical evidence that may be available to back it up. When faced with one of these rituals in my own society I am struck by a depth it seems to possess and give spontaneous voice to this by saying, 'This practice is obviously age-old,' and this impression persists irrespective of the historian's hypothetical reconstruction of its origins. The key to understanding is our impression untutored by hypotheses; explanations are as little necessary as a fifth wheel on an automobile. By adopting the heuristic tools of the natural scientist Frazer also embraces his methodological ignorance in face of the shifting phenomena of the reality he wishes to explain. The rough and ready understanding of nature with which the scientist begins his researches is precisely what he aims to depart from. In his most characteristic work an understanding of the kind of entities the scientist is observing requires a prior mastery of the conceptual framework that forms the background facilitating his highly specialised research; correct identification, for instance, of electrons will imply a working knowledge of the body of established physical theory. Only on the basis of such a body of theory are entities of this sort available for inspection. This approach inverts the understanding necessary when considering social reality. Generally speaking, sociological theories are only comprehensible because one already has a practical understanding of the kind of relations and entities they are talking about; the understanding of social reality given with one's life as a social animal is not to be given up in favour of empirically tested theory, rather it is the criterion for assessing the adequacy of any account of society. The reason for this lies in the fact that social phenomena, unlike natural phenomena, do not exist independent of man's conception of them. It is senseless to suggest that men could have been obeying and giving orders, for example, long before they had any idea of such a form of activity. It is impossible to work from a ground of methodological ignorance towards an understanding of human behaviour as intentional, for the precondition for this behaviour being available for our attention is that very recognition of its intentional character; our identification of some form of behaviour as human is at one and the same time an understanding of its meaning. By treating social reality as analogous to natural reality Frazer is forced to give up his initial understanding that is implied in his identification of certain forms of behaviour as ritual, in favour of understanding grounded on explanatory hypotheses; consequently

he misses that wherein these practices are distinctive and misdescribes them, as proto-scientific.

Where Frazer wishes to cultivate his puzzlement as the point of departure for rendering intelligible, Wittgenstein wants to focus on the significance of our unreflective response to these customs. This response is itself a rudimentary understanding; what accounts of these practices should aim at is making explicit the understanding we already possess. The feeling of depth that these forms of behaviour convey to us is the key, and it is something that we bring to our contemplation of the material. 'No, this deep and sinister aspect is not obvious from learning the history of the external action, but we impute it from an experience in ourselves.'[13] It is only because we impute something from our own experience that we recognise those acts as meaningful, that is, see them for what they are; 'that which I see in those stories is something they acquire, after all, from the evidence, including such evidence as does not seem directly connected with them – from the thought of man and his past, from the strangeness of what I see in myself and in others, what I have seen and heard.'[14] Our self-involvement in understanding these practices means that elucidation of this understanding takes the form of indicating what features of human life make such things as understanding and meaning possible, for Wittgenstein has changed the question from 'How can we come to understand?' into 'How is it that we do understand?' An account of the conditions of meaning would have to start with the existence of a language-using community whose members agree in their use of language at a pre-theoretical level, and the given social habits that enable the man whose social life is constituted by these to mean something by his manipulation of sounds and gestures. What we bring with us is our membership of such a community.

It follows that the meaning of a particular custom is the part it plays in a form of social life. This is why Wittgenstein speaks of the 'environment of a way of acting'[15] which is also the inner nature of a practice. 'When I speak of the inner nature of the practice I mean all those circumstances in which it is carried out that are not included in the account of the festival, because they consist not so much in particular actions which characterise it, but rather in what we might call the spirit of people that take part, their way of behaviour at other times i.e. their character, and the other kinds of game that they play.'[16] If the meaning of these practices is a function of the meaning of the form of life in which they are embedded, then our understanding of them is at one and the same time an understanding of the sense this community makes of its life as a whole. Accordingly the kind of problems we run up against here are analogous not to those of the natural scientist but to those that face the man confronted by an alien language. 'What we have in the ancient rites,' says Wittgenstein 'is the practice of a highly-cultivated gesture language.'[17] Here the goal of satisfaction results from the translation of meaning from a foreign idiom into one with which we are familiar. And in so far as it is nonsense to elevate one language above another as superior in an absolute sense, so the world-view of another society, the way in which it makes sense of itself and the natural world, implied by its form of social life, is no worse and no better than our own. 'We might say "every view has its charm," but this would be wrong. What is true is that every view is significant for him who sees it so (but that does not mean "sees it as something other than it is"). And in this sense every view is equally significant.'[18]

These remarks about the incommensurability of ways of seeing have repercussions for Frazer's evolutionism. The ways in which we feel most comfortable in rendering something intelligible in large measure reflect our habitual ways of seeing, and the characteristic structure of our perception of reality determines, though not completely, the form our world possesses. There are no privileged ways of seeing that reveal the true essence of reality, for all human experience is in its very nature a 'seeing-as' the particular form of which represents the general character of reality. (However, our picture of the world is not entirely the work of human 'seeing-as'; to avoid the incoherences that extreme relativism entails one must allow something that acts as an independent check on that picture. That there is this something is essential to the concept of reality, a concept that is a sine qua non of language.) Thus, if Frazer employs the historical evolutionary model as a way of achieving satisfaction it is because this way of arranging the data of the field under scrutiny is the one he finds most perspicuous; that is to say, this arrangement makes it easiest for him to move from one piece of data to another without headache, which is what seeing the way things are connected or related amounts to. As a demonstration of formal connections without ontological implications Frazer's methodology could be helpful. But he goes further and offers his evolutionism as an account of the historical genesis and relations of science, magic and religion. This is to do precisely what he accuses his 'savage' scientist of doing, namely, confusing the order of thought with the order of reality. To demonstrate the formal relation between an ellipse and a circle is not to assert that at some time or other a particular ellipse actually evolved from a particular circle.

What we are faced with in these rites are language-games that are the component parts of a particular form of life. Outside of some set or other of such language-games the intentional behaviour that is distinctively human is impossible. That men find phenomena meaningful to them is not a contingent fact that needs explaining, but a grammatical remark; 'it is precisely the characteristic feature of the awakening human spirit that a phenomenon has meaning for it.'[19] The ways in which meaning can be found are as diverse as the forms of activity in which men engage. But no one of these ways, the scientific for example, can be made normative. All we need do in understanding primitive societies is to carry out that careful description of the reality made available for our attention on the basis of our own experience as beings who engage in meaningful activity, and the kind of satisfaction we require will come to us simply from looking. 'We can only describe and say, human life is like that.'[20]

1. J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Macmillan 1978 p. 15
2. L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Basil Blackwell, 1978 sec. 217
3. ibid. sec. 654
4. L. Wittgenstein, Remarks on Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, p. 1
5. ibid. p. 2
6. ibid. p. 4

7. ibid pp. 1 - 2

8. The ostensible purpose of Frazer's book is to throw light on the puzzling and barbaric rites associated in antiquity with the sacred grove of Diana at Nemi, rites involving the slaughter of the goddess's priest, known during his term of office as the king of the wood.

9. L. Wittgenstien, 'Remarks on Frazer's *The Golden Bough*' p. 5

10. ibid. p. 5

11. ibid. p. 4

12. ibid. p. 3

13. ibid. p. 16

14. ibid. p. 18

15. ibid. p. 16

16. ibid. p. 14

17. ibid. p. 10

18. ibid. p. 11

19. ibid. p. 7

20. ibid, p. 3

IS STRUCTURALISM CHRISTIAN?

GLENN FULCHER

As the use of structuralist techniques becomes more popular in the realm of biblical studies many voices are being raised in warning against a trend which is seen as a challenge to Christian scholarship, and a Christian understanding of the Bible. These warnings all take one theme as their starting point, the frequent claim of structuralist writers that 'meaning' can be nothing other than the 'structure' of the text which is being examined.[1] Not only is a new exegetical method imported into biblical studies, but an ideology and philosophy which a recent article in the King's Theological Review described as 'fundamentally anarchic' and un-Christian.[2] Seen also as a 'modern form of agnosticism' Paul Ricoeur (who has condemned the structuralist analysis of the New Testament) would join with Dr. Horne's assessment to claim that structuralists are 'in despair of meaning', and merely submit works of literature to structuralist analysis because, although they do not mean anything, they express their meaninglessness remarkably well.[3]

Two fundamental issues are at stake in the current debate about Structuralism and its relationship to Christian theology. In their treatment of structuralist hermeneutics many writers make absolutist claims which exclude the possibility of all non-structuralist interpretation. Secondly, within the structuralist interpretation the value of historical study is said to be so relativised that it becomes of no importance. Within these new assumptions the place of God can appear uncertain at the least.

1. Absolutism

Structuralism is a holistic system of interpretation which claims to possess the key to understanding not only language, history, and the biblical text, but all existence everywhere and at all time. If this is true, it is obvious that in biblical exegesis 'methodological eclecticism . . . is not compatible with structural analysis.'[4] All other tools of scholarship would have to be discarded. At the ideological level too, structuralism is not one theory among many, but the 'master-theory' by which all others must be interpreted. Consequently, Kovacs argues that 'one can elicit no argument in favour of structuralism, strictly speaking: its basis is the absurdity of non-structuralist assumptions.'[5] It has been pointed out on a number of occasions that structuralism is thus removed from the realm of debate about its 'truth' for it is not open to either verification or falsification;[6] it is a closed system, but according to Kovacs rightly so, for only in taking this particular position can its universal relevance and claims be maintained.

2. History

Structuralism is a 'synchronic' discipline; that is it operates without reference to history (the 'diachronic'), which separates it off from all the other tools of the biblical scholar.[7] This ahistorical approach makes Christian meaning impossible for Horne because of the essentially historical nature of Christianity.[8]

When structuralist critics have turned their attention to the issue of history a number of different approaches have been developed. Some have seen the abstract structural descriptions of the text, meaning itself, to be all that is relevant to understanding the literature of the bible in an 'aesthetic' way;[9] some have simply rejected the relevance of the historical-critical method without further comment,[10] whilst others have claimed that structuralism actually presents a new theory of history.[11] Admittedly, the latter view is not prominent amond biblical structuralists at the present, but as this issue comes to the fore more are slowly taking a more liberal and eclectic stance. However, if history is no longer relevant the Christian Church can no longer claim to find the meaning that it wishes to proclaim from its religious texts, and once again Christianity is said to suffer.[8]

Together, absolutist claims with an ahistorical approach are said to 'ban not only the possibility of the existence of the God of the bible, but also the possibility of meaningful discussion about him.'[12] For structuralism only deals in a complex semiotic of endless signifiers and signifieds with no 'absolute signified'. For scholars who follow Poythress God can have no place within such a model of the world.

At this stage it becomes necessary to point out that the 'structuralism' which is attacked by its critics is only one branch of the structuralist movement, albeit a branch which has the largest press. Structuralism is not a single discipline, nor do all practitioners have a common methodology or unified theory. For the present purpose only two broad trends need be distinguished. On the one hand there are those who hold the absolutist principles and reject the relevance of history, who may be said to come from the stable of Lévi-Strauss, and take inspiration from Chomsky's theory of universal grammar.[13] It is this position which is most often described in general introductions to structuralism and so has been taken as the norm.[14] However, another trend which may be perceived within the structuralist movement is potentially both much more useful and less offensive to those who do not wish to abandon either the historical-critical method or their Christian commitments. H.C. Kee correctly points out that whilst the universalistic approach of Lévi-Strauss tends to obliterate all other considerations, the structuralism espoused by Piaget allows for a variety of cultural forms and even contradictory structures.[15] Whilst Lévi-Strauss tries to find the universal pattern underlying the individual text or society, Piaget looks for a specific structure underlying each individual text or society. Indeed, history and sociology can even effect the structure, rather than the reverse always being the case.[16] For those who follow the Piagetian school, structuralism is neither absolute in its claims, nor a-historical in its approach. Structure and history interact. Thus, 'structure' can no longer be said to constitute 'meaning' on its own, and the charges of Ricoeur cannot be applied to this branch of structuralist thought.[17]

As such, it is misleading to ask whether or not the concentration on the 'code' rather than the 'message' leads away from the central concern with 'meaning',[18] because the increasing number of scholars who realise that the Piagetian line is much more fruitful acknowledge that the 'message' along with the historical criticism is just as important as the new discovery of the 'code'.[19]

A structuralist approach to the biblical text need not be incompatible with the more traditional methods of study and theological concerns (despite E. Güttgemanns). They are not mutually exclusive and no 'break' is necessary because whilst the questions posed by the structuralists are new and relevant they are also limited, and used alone can hardly do justice to the richness of the material with which it is concerned.[20] It is possible to benefit from a useful distinction drawn by Norman Peterson between extrinsic study of a text dealing with historical and sociological evidence, and intrinsic study which is concerned with a text-centred literary system.[21] The former is the world of potential proofs, and the latter the arena of the elucidation of the semantic world of the text. The question of 'truth' in this latter area has hardly been explored, except in that structuralists are producing analyses of texts, some of which are impressive (notably those of J.D. Crossan) and most of which are ingenious, but unconvincing.

To conclude, structuralism is not always done with mirrors, and its concerns are really nothing more than a logical extention of redactional-critical interests. The introduction of structuralism to biblical studies, received with a healthy critical attitude, will aid the scholar to read the bible as literature if only by expanding his horizon to include alien or unfamiliar aspects of modern literary hermeneutics. If such an alien method could be combined with the older ways, François Bovon is correct to say that then 'there is a way to give a sharper consciousness to our faith and a firmer foundation to our confession of faith.'[22]

1. Patte D. *What is Structural Exegesis?* Guides to Biblical Scholarship, (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1976). p. 15.

2. Horne B. L. 'Structuralism: An Introduction.' *King's Theological Review*, 3, (1980), 64-70. (p. 69).

3. Ricoeur p. Quoted from *Espirit* 31, (1963), in Johnson A. M. (Ed., and translator), *Structural Analysis and Biblical Exegesis: Interpretational Essays.* Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series 3, (Pickwick Press, Pittsburgh, 1974), pp. 6 - 7.

4. Kovacs B. W. 'Philosophical Foundations For Structuralism.' *Semeia*, 10, (1978), 85-105. (p. 86).

5. Ibid., p. 93.

6. Stancil B. 'Structuralism and New Testament Studies.' *South Western Journal of Theology*, 22, (1980), 41-59. (p. 56).

7. Van Iersel B. 'The Exegete and Linguistics.' *Concilium*, 15, (1979), 59-69. (p. 64).

8. Horne B. L. Op., Cit. p. 68.

9. Leech E. 'The Legitimacy of Solomon,' in Lane M. (Ed), *Introduction to Structuralism.* (Basic Books, New York, 1970), pp. 248-292.

10. Patte D. Op., Cit. pp. 15-16.

11. Johnson A. M. 'Structuralism, Biblical Hermeneutics, and the Role of Structural Analysis in Historical Research,' in Johnson A.M. (Ed., and translator), *Structuralism and Biblical Hermeneutics.* Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series 22, (Pickwick Press, Pittsburgh, 1979), pp. 1-28. Barthes R. 'Historical Discourse' In Lane M. (Ed), *Introduction to Structuralism.* pp. 145-155.

12. Poythress V. S. 'Philosophical roots of Phenomenological and Structuralist Literary Criticism.' *Westminster Theological Journal*, 41, (1978), 165-171. (p. 166).

13. Pettit P. *The Concept of Structuralism: A Critical Analysis.* (University of California Press, California, 1977). pp. 68-97.

14. Henry P. *New Directions In New Testament Study.* (S.C.M., London, 1980). pp. 60-61.

15. Kee H. C. *Christian Origins in Sociological Perspective.* (S.C.M., London, 1980), pp. 101-104.

16. Piaget J. *Structuralism.* Translated by C. Maschler, (Harper and Row, New York, 1970), pp. 114-127.

17. Henry P. Op., Cit. p. 67.

18. Thiselton A. C. 'Structuralism and Biblical Studies: Method or Ideology?' *Expository Times*, 89, (1978), 329-335. (p. 330).

19. Lategan B. C. 'Directions in Contemporary Exegesis: Between Historicism and Structuralism. *Journal of Theology for South Africa*, 25, (1978), 18-30. (p. 24).

20. Van Iersel B. Op., Cit. pp. 66-67.

21. Peterson N. R. *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics.* Guides to Biblical Scholarship Series, (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1978).

22. Bovon F. 'French Structuralism and Biblical Exegesis.' In Johnson A. M. *Structural Analysis and Biblical Exegesis: Interpretational Essays.* pp. 4-40 (p. 20).

A THEOLOGICAL FABLE

STEWART R SUTHERLAND

Two theologians once contemplated a ravine. The question was how to cross it without falling in. One theologian had left home some time ago and carried with him only a small knapsack which contained a few philosophical tools, gathered here and there but hardly constituting a complete set. Also in the bag were a few light strips and struts of a recently developed but relatively untried theological alloy. It was not clear whether the tools and the alloy had been manufactued in Birmingham or Banares, or perhaps in some continental conceptual factory. (In fact the other theologican thought that they had been manufactured in the Scilly Isles and regularly said so – but more of him anon).

The first theologian decided to try to cross the ravine by using his tools and alloy strips to build a foot-bridge capable of taking at least one person. Thus he set out to build such a bridge, anchored on this bank and gradually stretching out towards the other side. Since the light at that part of the gorge was a little hazy he wasn't quite sure how far it was to the other side. However he did not want to remain on this side so he decided that he would use his philosophical tools and theological alloys to build a bridge in the hope that he would have enough alloy to reach the other side.

Now the other theologian was also travelling light but he had with him a rather different set of tools, which were old, tried and trusty tools (indeed, 'too old to be any longer trusty', the first theologian thought) stamped with the hallmark 'Metaphysics'. In addition he had some old maps which indicated that the ravine has once been spanned by a single-arched medieval timber bridge of, for that time at least, rather grand dimensions.

His tactic was to try to find that bridge in the hope that it was still strong enough to act as as a main thoroughfare, and that even if it needed some remedial work done, the old tools, plus perhaps the new pen-knife and screwdriver which he had bought, would be adequate for that.

In fact he found the old bridge.It was roughly where the map predicted. Some wag had nailed a notice to it saying, 'Danger: No Longer in Use', but it was an old notice, almost as old as the bridge perhaps. In any case the notice had been published jointly in Edinburgh and Koenigsburg, and indeed may even have been the inferior later edition from Vienna and Oxford. Certainly it was not enough to deter him so he set about carefully repairing and crossing the bridge step by step.

When each had got about half-way across the mist and cloud lifted a little and the two theologians saw each other. For a moment each paused and laid down his tools, suddenly interested in what the other was doing. They each invited the other to come over to their bridge. Each refused. Then they began to shout advice and warnings about the foolhardiness of the other's enterprise.

Unbeknown to them, on the bank of the ravine from which they had started was a third figure who didn't know whether he was a theologian or not. So he did what such

scoundrels are likely to do, he decided to while away the time till the theologians either succeeded or fell in, by practising his hermeneutics. He consoled himself with the half-memory that he had once read in a rather advanced religious quarterly that such a solitary activity was, in the view of Whitehead at least, as near as one can get to true religion these days. However since in this case hermeneutics involves demythologization, in order to practise it he had to step out of the fable and prepare the following manuscript.

In 1980 the Revd. Don Cupitt, Dean of Emmanuel College, Cambridge published a book entitled *Taking Leave of God* (S.C.M. Press). In 1982 the Revd. Professor Keith Ward, F.D. Maurice Professor of Moral and Social Theology at King's College London, published a reply entitled *Holding Fast to God* (S.P.C.K.) which he concludes with the sentence

'We may take leave of an image of God,
but God himself will never let us go.'

This encapsulates most of the differences between these writers. They share much – both are academics, both are ordained clergymen in the Church of England, both teach in Faculties of Theology and Religious Studies – but they differ radically in their reading of the contemporary situation of the believer. Essentially the difference is that Professor Ward can and does make affirmations of the above sort whereas Mr. Cupitt has 'taken leave' of the God of whom Ward speaks. What are we to make of this?

First and foremost we must say that there is a real difference between the two. They might both be wrong, but they cannot both be right. They disagree on two essential and related matters – the content of Christian belief and the nature of Christian belief. It is a question of some importance whether if they do disagree so radically they can both be called Christian believers. The answer to that will have quite some significance for this discussion, for it is in part a question about both the nature and the content of Christian belief. At best some remarks *relevant* to answering it can be offered: fortunately the definitive answer is a matter not for me but for Ward's God – 'if he exists' (Cupitt)!

Perhaps the most important point to emerge from consideration of both these books is that what might appear to be a religious difference has in fact many dimensions to it. For example we could not find a clearer case of the interdependence of philosophical presuppositions and religious outlook – Cupitt and Ward may share a denominational affiliation but they diverge religiously because they diverge philosophically. It is here that I have the greatest affinity with Ward's views because I find that his most telling criticisms of Cupitt are those which show much of Cupitt's case to be stated in terms of bad arguments and weak philosophical foundations. I shall return to this point in due course.

The main theological divergence of opinion is over the question of God. In essence Ward is an objectivist who believes that there is a God who exists and who would exist even if there were no human beings who believed in him. Such a God transcends this world but is yet active in it. Ward claims that whatever Cupitt may say this is not the God of whom Cupitt has taken his leave, for Ward argues that the image of God whom Cupitt has undoubtedly rightly

abandoned is the image of a tyrannical capricious God in whom no 'sensible' or 'real' Christian believes.

Ward's objectivism then extends to regarding God as

'logically, a thing: that is, he can be referred to, identified and can possess various properties.'

Cupitt would deny that God is 'logically' a thing, and that therefore he is the bearer of properties.

Undoubtedly this disagreement is as fundamental as any theological difference can be. Its foundations, however, go even deeper for they are philosophical – at least according to Ward. His argument is that Cupitt is basing his view on bad philosophy, for as he points out, Cupitt's view is premissed on the acceptance of a naive version of logical Positivism. In fact I am inclined to believe that Ward's alternative diagnosis of the ill effects of a limited form of Kantianism, is nearer the truth.

The main problem for Cupitt is that his arguments do lend themselves to the severe mauling which they receive at the hands of a skilled professional philosopher such as Keith Ward. Ward is absolutely right when he points out that Cupitt's rejection of metaphysics, and therefore of meta-physical theism, itself is based on a rather narrow and dogmatic metaphysical view which he has taken over from others. He is again well justified in his insistence that Cupitt is dogmatic and mistaken in his account of what it is possible for modern man to think or believe, for as Ward points out, as a matter of fact, at the time of writing, three out of five Professors of Philosophy at Oxbridge believe in the sort of God of metaphysical theism whom Cupitt has abandoned and in whom he claims modern man *cannot* believe. Now, as Ward would agree, counting even such distinguished heads does not prove Ward right and Cupitt wrong on the substantive issue, but it does show Cupitt's account of 'modern man' to be wildly inaccurate.

The objectivist in Ward shows itself further in his insistence upon a view of salvation which requires the forgiving and healing activity of God, rather than one in which salvation is to be understood *completely* as an inner re-orientation. Ward also argues for the importance of historical beliefs about the figure of Jesus and about the resurrection of Jesus. These would be happily consigned by Cupitt to the language of symbol and myth.

A further point of considerable importance which shows the disagreement between these two to have even wider repercussions is Ward's insistence upon the grounding of moral belief in belief in God as against Cupitt's suggestion that belief in God can be morally harmful or distracting. Cupitt's worry is that to continually seek supernatural *imprimaturs* for our moral decisions is to remain at the level of moral immaturity. At one point (p.63) Ward rather unfairly juxtaposes this view to his own rejection of a rather different view 'that we . . . just *make up* what is right'. This latter is not a fair statement of Cupitt's view and if Ward believes it to be a logical consequence of Cupitt's 'metaphysics' then he should establish this by independent argument. He could do this if he could show that the existence of God is logically necessary for the objectivity of moral values, but in fact his more limited conclusion is that

'the objective existence of God provides the most adequate justification for moral beliefs.' (p.70)

This is a well-argued conclusion for Ward shows how the idea of the objective existence of God, of a consequent account of human nature, and of the 'fit' of moral values and ideals to that nature, all go well together. As such he does produce a solid counter-arguement to Cupitt's suggestion that belief in God can undermine moral beliefs.

In a summary Ward rejects Cupitt's views on the nature of God, and of religious language, and on the nature of moral beliefs and their relation to the order of things. His charges are that Cupitt relies on an unacknowledged set of metaphysical and philosophical presuppositions, which once examined are found to be narrow and limited. As a result many of the arguments offered by Cupitt to support his views are bad arguments. Sometimes they are bad because they rest explicitly on what is a weak premiss; sometimes they are bad because they are apparently unaware that premisses are being appealed to or are necessary. Equally often the arguments fail because they offer choices between false dichotomies e.g. between a God who is a capricious despot and no God at all.

This being said, what are we to make of it?

The first point is that Ward's bold and decisive argument has shown that and how an essentially traditional form of theistic belief, metaphysically based, is possible. Paradoxically it is a sign of the currency and force of the type of view to be found in Cupitt's writing which leads one to regard Ward's exposition as an 'achievement'. To find academic theologians willing to argue with such power, clarity and single-mindedness for traditional metaphysical theism is the exception rather than the rule. (It is almost as rare as finding Biblical critics who agree about what the text does mean as distinct from agreeing about what it doesn't mean!)

Against this however must be set Cupitt's achievement, for real achievement there is. What Cupitt has done – as is clear from both the enthusiasm and venom with which his work has been received in other quarters – is to touch several raw nerves in the consciousness of contemporary Christianity. In blunt and perhaps over-simplified terms, I believe that Culpitt has succeeded in forcefully asking many of the right questions, but that he has not provided adequate answers.

As is even more apparent in his most recent book, *The World to Come*, Cupitt is in many ways clothing himself with the mantle of the prophet. He is, in that book, enunciating a diagnosis of the state of religious belief and practice in our society. Of course there are good prophets and bad prophets, diagnoses full of insights and diagnoses which are a projection of inner fantasies. The problem with prophets is that it is sometimes difficult to tell 'in their own country' (or equally in their own age) whether their utterances are true or false.

It is not however, quite as simple as this – Ward the philosopher dissecting Cupitt the prophet – for Cupitt has dressed his 'message' in the language of philosophy and theology. (In fact it is almost as if he has rejected the idea of the *imprimatur* of God and replaced it with the idea of

imprimatur of academia). Ward has shown that this will not do, for philosophy drives a hard bargain and demands its pound of logical flesh.

Nonetheless this is not a one-sided argument, for although Ward has established the plausibility and consistency of a view which Cupitt has dismissed in a manner that is too simple and at times too flashy, we must still ask whether Ward's view *convinces* us. Ultimately this is Cupitt's question, and for all the ingenuity and skill with which Ward has undermined Cupitt's *formulation* of the question, the question still stands.

The difficulty of course is that Ward has set himself a specific and limited task in this book – 'a reply to Don Cupitt' – but as both he and Cupitt would agree the issues are larger than that. Thus at one level Ward may have (and indeed has) replied effectively to Cupitt, while at another he has made only limited reply to the questions of the many who have found in some sense that Cupitt speaks for them.

Ward has shown that if you do think about God in the general way which Cupitt rejects, then there is much more to be said for this than meets at least Cupitt's eye. But Cupitt's naive acceptance of some limited non-religious philosophies as the basis for an alternative view, should not blind us to the importance of the questions which still remain about Ward's God.

Just as, on closer analysis, Cupitt modified some of the firm and hard-edged claims which he makes, so too does Ward introduce subtle and possible *sotto voce* qualifications into his discussion. Thus for example, he would accept that our language about God is indeed complex and that anaology, symbol and myth must play their part. In his rejection of anthropomorphism he is at one with Cupitt, but what is not sufficiently clear is how the picture develops from there.

Certianly Ward believes in a personal God who exists whether or not human beings (or theologians and clerics!) care to admit it. His God also acts. But

> 'When we say that God acts, we mean that
> certain events happen, and that they are
> correctly interpretable in terms of an in-
> tention to bring about some end.' (p.93)

Further,

> 'a truly personal God must act in hidden or
> ambiguously interpretable ways'. (p.95)

Here Keith Ward the slayer of anti-metaphysical dragons becomes a little coy. Does God act or does he not?

The second quotation suggests, quite properly, that there are major epistemological problems. The first indicates, again quite properly, the immense difficulties facing a proper analysis of the status of the claim that 'God acts'. These difficulties lie at the root of the attractiveness of Cupitt's writings. It is not clear, even in Ward what we mean when we say that 'God acts' and as long as that is the case then Cupitt's questions have a most important purchase-hold on religious belief – namely that of the credibility of any attempt to clarify the basic elements of theism, belief in a personal God who acts.

The point is this: Ward has attacked Cupitt by showing that the words and concepts which he (Cupitt) uses have a logic. To make any affirmation is to entail and imply other claims, whether or not they are stated. Cupitt has made claims which commit him to espousing certain highly dubious philosophical assumptions. However, the same strategy must be applied to Ward's own affirmations and it is the awareness of this which leads him to, for example, the qualifications quoted above. Yet they do not fully satisfy, and that for two reasons.

On the one hand the first qualification quoted is itself based upon an assumption formulated thus:

> 'To ask about God's acts in history is to ask
> how particular parts of the world contribute
> towards the divine purpose, or how they
> themselves express it.'

With respect, I find this difficult to accept. One is asking more than this, for one is asking about the *special* relationship of God to that particular part of the world. If not, then the work 'act' is out of place, for although 'the whole world is the act of God' (*ibid.*) or the whole of history might conceivably be thought of as 'the act' of God, the idea of acts (plural) in history implies a specific relationship to particular parts of the world or segments of history.

In the second place, if we do regard some areas of the world and of history as correctly described ('interpreted' is too weak for the thoroughgoing theist surely) as 'acts of God', then we do have considerable problems of consistency and coherence in giving an account of the relationship of such a God to those elements of history which are not so described: whether because *prima facie* they seem too trivial to qualify for that description, or whether more seriously they cannot in any clear way be 'correctly interpretable in terms of an intention to bring about some (worthy) end.' The latter may be interpretable as 'unavoidable evils' but that is the point at issue. Is such a description compatible with the picture of God presented to us by Keith Ward?

Of course, these questions are not new for they have been a constant refrain to the history of theism. I am inclined to think that their force is more widely felt and that it is this pressure which moves a number of theologians, of whom Don Cupitt is perhaps the most extreme contemporary Anglican version, to question not simply the distorted image of God on the surface of *Taking Leave of God*, but also the rather different God to whom Keith Ward holds fast. The strength of Ward's book is the robust defence which it gives of that belief: the weakness, which does not much detract from what is a fine piece of polemic is that it does at times make holding fast seem easier than it is. Unfortunately this may give comfort to some whose need is perhaps better met in being disturbed by Cupitt. It is however a book which will amply re-pay careful and open-minded study.

BOOK REVIEWS

Process Theology and Political Theology.

John B. Cobb, jr. Manchester University Press, 1983. pp. 160. £6.50

'Process Theology' is little known in Britain, although in the last few years its name, and some vague idea of its general approach have become somewhat more familiar. I believe that I am the only representative of it in either Cambridge or Oxford, although elsewhere (as in Manchester, where the contents of this book were given as Ferguson lectures) it is better known thanks to Dr David Pailin, senior lecturer at the university there. But of course most British theologians are aware of 'Liberation Theology' or 'Political Theology' with its Roman Catholic and Protestant advocates in Europe, Latin America, and the United States. Professor John Cobb's book is an attempt to bring these two contemporary movements together. It is the third recent discussion with this intention. The others known to me are Schubert Ogden's *Faith and Freedom* (Christian Journals Press, Belfast) and Delwin Brown's *To Set at Liberty* (Orbis Books, USA). To my mind these two books do the job better than does Cobb's. But having said that, I commend his discussion to any who are interested in either or both of these conceptualities, since it is more readily available in the United Kingdom. Cobb is a professor at Clarement School of Theology.

It is Professor Cobb's belief that the two, 'Process' and 'Liberation', both illuminate each other and also provide a complementary approach to the nature and function of theology in our own day. Hence he gives a useful account of each of them before the chapters which relate them and seek to show their mutual relevance.

For those who know little if anything about Process Theology – a name which I have always thought unfortunate but which was suggested many years ago by Professor Bernard Loomer when he lectured in Whitehead's *Process and Reality* at the University of Chicago Divinity School – that portion of Cobb's book will be both interesting and helpful. He indicates the main emphasis on this kind of philosophical theology: a world which is 'in process', whose constituents are not 'substances' or 'things' but events or occasions having both an objective and a subjective quality; inter-relationship or sociality (the world is 'organismic', in Whitehead's word); the pervasive presence of freedom with responsibility for consequences, at all levels of creation but with varying degress of intensity and awareness; and the stress on persuasion (call it 'love') as more effectual in the long run than coercion or force. In this perspective, the linguistic veto (as well as the biblical theological veto) on philosophy in the grand style (or metaphysics) is rejected. There can be a 'natural theology' which is appropriate to the biblical and historical Christian witness and which is also more 'available' (or intelligible) today than older styles of metaphysical discourse. God, worshipful, dependable, and 'unsurpassable' is always related to and affected by the creation.

Professor Cobb writes well about the development in the United States of this mode of thought, from early days at Chicago to more recent and more general acceptance in many Christian circles, not least (and to some surprisingly) in

Roman Catholic ones both in the States and on the continent of Europe. He notes the invaluable contribution made by Charles Hartshorne, the leading American philosophical expositor of a generally Whiteheadian position. It is too bad that he does not give more attention to the Centre for Process Studies in Claremont, California, of which he himself is the director, with a brilliant younger theologian David R. Griffin as his associate.

When it comes to the 'liberationists', the author not only attends to the Latin American (and some European) representatives of the more socio-political side but also takes into account such movements as 'feminism', so vocal in the States these days, and the 'black theology' which is increasingly to the fore in North America. He does not speak of the 'gay' theology which is also part of the American scene, with its insistence that the 'gay experience', quite as much as the 'feminine' and 'black' experience, has something to say which may be of importance in theological re-conception.

I have commended this book because it provides a useful introduction to two significant theological movements today. But I have one somewhat negative comment. I do not see that Professor Cobb has made out his case that these two movements, 'Process' and 'Liberation', require one another. That case is much better argued, to my mind, in the two books already mentioned, by Ogden and Brown. What is more, in Ogden's book there is a valuable critique of 'liberation theology', which Ogden sees as both necessary and significant but which, as he also demonstrates, has far too easily taken either a more or less 'traditional' attitude to specific theological issues *or* has neglected the need for a metaphysical background and context by putting all its stress on *praxis* and by its centring attention entirely on action for liberation.

Since I am myself a supporter of Process Theology – and continually dismayed by the failure of its British critics to grasp its main points – I welcome this book. Since I am convinced that Christian theology must come to terms with the vigorous concern for liberation of oppressed men and women in all countries including our own, I am grateful that Professor Cobb and others are engaging in dialogue with its exponents. But I feel that we need a much more thorough investigation of the relationship of the two movements. The other thing which I find lacking in so much which my colleagues in this Process approach have written is a deep awareness of the long historical development of Christian thought, a keen sense of the significance of liturgy and especially of sacramental theology and practice, and a strong 'Church-consciousness.' Perhaps the Roman Catholic Process theologians will help here, although I wish that *Anglican* Catholic thought would also make its contribution.

Norman Pittenger.

The Archaeology of the Land of Israel.

Y. Aharoni. SCM Press, 1982. Pp.xx, 344. £12.50

The late Professor Yohanan Aharoni was a distinguished member of that first generation of Israeli scholars whose archaeological and literary work has done so much to revolutionise our knowledge of the Holy Land. His *Archaeology of the Land of Israel*, first published in Hebrew in

1978, represented a drawing together in convenient form of material previously available only in expedition reports and technical journals. Professor Aharoni himself died before the book was published; his widow was responsible for seeing it through the press, and she has entrusted another well-known Israeli archaeologist, A. F. Rainey, with the translation into English, which is clear and readable throughout. What is envisaged is, in effect, therefore, a replacement in the light of more recent work of such earlier textbooks of Palestinian archaeology as Albright's *Archaeology of Palestine* or Kenyon's *Archaeology in the Holy Land.*

It is almost inevitable that any worthwhile book dealing with the Holy Land will be controversial, and this is no exception. Such controversy can be observed at two quite distinct levels. Of the second more later; but offence will certainly be given by the astonishing assertion made in the Preface that 'Eretz-Israel' is used throughout the book rather than "the commonly accepted Palestine (because) Eretz-Israel is perhaps the only nonpolitical term in use today"! Equally remarkable is the claim that Israel is "the first and only people to make the country its natural habitat"; and similar unsupported assertions are found in the body of the book. "Eretz-Israel and Canaan are different from each other in an essential way . . . a deep and decisive break in the history of the land". The reader of this book must, therefore, always be on the alert for political propaganda of this kind.

Turning now to the contents, the first 90 pages or so relate to the pre- or proto-historic periods, and are very much an up-date of Kenyon's work, broadly sustaining her conclusions with various refinements and modifications. Aharoni's detailed knowledge of those sites which have been accessible to Israeli archaeologists is well in evidence; and this section of the book may be unreservedly welcomed as a clear survey of the current (i.e. c. 1976) state of knowledge. It is when the last and longest chapter ('The Israelite Period') is reached that problems emerge. Here is the second area of controversy.

The difficulty is a familiar one. To what extent is it legitimate to allow literary and archaeological evidence to influence one another, and to interpret each in the light of the other? At one extreme, it would clearly be absurd to evaluate the archaeological evidence from Iron Age Palestine as if there were no literary material that might be relevant, or to ignore the archaeological evidence when studying the book of Judges. At the same time the assumption that particular pieces of evidence of either kind relate to specific literary texts or archaeological finds is a highly dangerous procedure; and Aharoni seems rarely to give sufficient consideration to the problems.

Thus in the middle of his description of water cisterns found in various sites we have the note that "the tribes (i.e. of Israel) adapted themselves with amazing swiftness to the technological means prerequisite to settlement in the areas available to them" (p. 162). In fact the relevant archaeological evidence has nothing to do with 'tribes' or 'settlement', or even particular defined areas of the land. Perhaps even more remarkable is the assertion that "the penetration of the Hebrew tribes" into Palestine was part of a "great ethnic

movement for which there are few precedents in human history". It may be so; but it certainly cannot be established from archaeological evidence, and no indication is given of any acquaintance with the insights of social anthropology in questions of this kind. And, of course, the view of Gottwald and others, that one should not speak of movement of tribes into Palestine at all, is ignored. In addition to these examples of use of the literary evidence to interpret archaeological finds, there are occasions when the reverse process is found, and the archaeological evidence shapes the interpretation of the literary material, e.g. in the assertion that the well-digging of Beersheba described in Gen. 26 must be placed in the time of the conquest (pp. 168f).

The period treated ends – without explanation – at the time of the Babylonian invasion, and so nothing is said of the Persian or Hellenistic periods. The text is supported by a large number of figures (called 'plates') and of photographs; many of them very helpful, others not really clear as to their particular point of relevance. There is a select bibliography, but no footnotes, and the lack of references together with the very limited nature of the bibliography poses problems. Points are attributed to other scholars in an extremely allusive way, and it is virtually impossible to find out more detail. This becomes the more difficult because the references are likely to be to Israeli publications which are not readily available in Europe.

All told then this seems likely to be a book which will fulfil some but not all of the hopes associated with it. The accounts of archaeological work are clear and authoritative – not free from areas of contention, of course, but that is only to be expected. Where Aharoni goes beyond archaeology, much more serious reservations have to be expressed. The characteristic – and no doubt understandable – Israeli tendency to regard the 'historical' material in the Bible simply as evidence for the early history of their own land means that too often justice is not done either to the complexities of the historical process or to the problems posed by the inter-relation of literary and archaeological evidence.

R. J. Coggins

The Philosophical Frontiers of Christian Theology. Essays Presented to D. M. MacKinnon.

Edited by Brian Hebblethwaite and
Stewart Sutherland.
Cambridge University Press, 1982. Pp. ix + 252. £17.50

Donald MacKinnon has been and remains one of the most important philosopher-theologians of recent times. This rather expensive volume of essays is a tribute both to the range of his interests and to the respect in which he is held, containing as it does contributions from leading authorities in Biblical Studies, Patristic Studies, Philosophy, Philosophy of Religion and Systematic Theology. As a collection the book also represents a wide range of theological positions, including papers from C.D.F. Moule, Don Cupitt, Bernard Williams and T.F. Torrance.

There are four sections to the volume, each of them representing one of MacKinnon's varied interests. The first, 'Athens and Jerusalem', explores areas where New Testament and Patristic writings engage with the culture of the ancient world. In this section is to be found one of G.W.H. Lampe's last writings, an account of how the early church dealt with such problems as astrology. The embarrassments of Matthew's birth narrative are set alongside patristic wrestlings with the question. This is a very illuminating paper for those in the modern church who must engage in a way unprecedented since the first few centuries of our era with the relation between Christianity and a pagan environment.

Part Two, 'Theological Enquiry after Kant', contains papers centring on another of MacKinnon's interests. Readers of this journal who are members of King's College will find some food for thought in Stephen Sykes' paper, which deals with the place of theology in the modern university. When University College London was being founded, there was a proposal for an interdenominational faculty of theology. The idea was killed by Anglicans, who insisted that there be 'Church of England dominance or no presence at all.' How far has the relative weakness of theology in British academic life – in marked contrast to some other European countries – to be attributed to quarrels among Christians?

Part Three, 'Metaphysics and Morality', contains three good papers, the third of them by Stewart Sutherland of King's College. In it he attacks with characteristic penetration a received view about the relation between religious belief and ethics. It is widely held that ethical principles can be held or discussed independently of their rooting in religious belief, so that, for example, the distinctiveness of Christian ethics lies in the fact that it is 'secular ethics + X and that if one doesn't like X, then one may still be said to share a great deal if not almost all of what constitutes an ethic with a believer.' But, as he argues and illustrates, ethics is too closely bound up with attitudes, intentions, etc., for the thesis to be credible.

The final section, 'Truth and Falsehood in Theology' contains a remarkable piece by Roger White. In it he discusses how our words can be used analogically of God, ranging over and linking ideas drawn from apparently diverse fields: Aquinas and Barth on analogy; Plato and Wittgenstein on language; and the New Testament on power and the exercise of kingship. The context is a discussion of the apparently paradoxical claim that the primary meaning of analogical concepts is to be found in their theological use, in contrast to the view that we use words of God by first understanding them in their everyday sense and then altering the sense appropriately for theological application. The course and outcome of the reasoning is so subtle, surprising and illuminating that it would spoil things to say more, except to urge the reader of this review to get hold of this book in one of the several ways often recommended, if only to read this piece.

Colin Gunton

Metaphorical Theology Models of God in Religious Language.

Sallie McFague. SCM Press, 1983, Pp. xi + 225 £6.50.

Sallie McFague's essay on metaphorical theology comes out of a 'post-Enlightenment, Protestant, feminist perspective', to use her words, a perspective which stresses discontinuities felt between God and the world, rather than continuities, and which is characterised as sceptical, relativistic, prophetic and iconoclastic.

Dr. McFague points to current difficulties in religious language, its literalistic tendency towards idolatry and irrelevance which, she believes, can be revitallised by a metaphorical perspective. Such a perspective strives to maintain a tension between seeing "this" as "that", as opposed to a symbolical or sacramental approach to reality which tends to see "this" as a part of "that". She draws heavily on the theology of Paul Ricoeur in her unfolding of a metaphorical perspective and to a lesser extent on another Chicago theologian, David Tracy. Metaphorical thinking is taken to be fundamental to all thinking in that it is intrinsically perspectival, dealing with expression and interpretation, similarity and difference, discontinuity rather than identity. Metaphorical thinking does not deal with its non-metaphorical 'base' which lies beyond all words in the depths of human existence. Thus, metaphorical 'vision' is always 'bifocal' rather than unitary.

Dr. McFague goes on to apply these insights to the religious language of the Christian tradition showing how the parables and scripture as a whole function as metaphors and models (i.e. 'extended' organisational metaphors) and how these become theological language as models and concepts. She sees Jesus himself as the 'metaphor' of the New Testament insofar as his life is grasped, by the faith of the New Testament, as paradigmatic for understanding the divine-human relationship. Such a 'parabolic' christology leads her to view Jesus' parables and indeed his own life as essentially a focus on relational life, that between God and Man. The sort of theological language which begins to emerge (and which she sees in Paul and theologians down the ages) is open-ended, tentative and essentially relational, rather than a dogmatic account of metaphysical realities. Metaphorical thinking thus regards Jesus as a parable of God which provides us with a screen for understanding God's ways with us and which cannot be discarded after we have translated it into concepts. If we understand Jesus at all, as a parable of God, we shall understand in a new way and find ourselves with new horizons. Now this relational understanding of Jesus cuts across the orthodox christological debates about his personhood, in a metaphysical sense. What matters is the revitalisation of the divine-human relationship (expressed in the root-metaphor of 'The Kingdom of God') not the metaphysical person of Jesus, which Dr. McFague regards as idolatrous and even irrelevant in an age when the credibility of God is undermined.

Dr. McFague 'extends' her metaphorical perspective in her treatment of models. First, she looks at scientific models and their possible relevance to theological ones, noting that they provide intelligibility for the unintelligible, that they are not pictures of entities, but structures of relationships,

focused on behaviour. Furthermore, models are paradigm-dependent, always partial and operating against their literalisation, against the loss of metaphorical tension. Theological models, however, differ from scientific ones insofar as they are directed towards comprehensive ordering rather than discovery. They are related heirarchically, unlike scientific models, and effect feelings and actions in ways scientific models do not. The creeds of the Church exhibit these theological models insofar as conceptual and meta-phorical language lie side by side in them, evoking the divine-human relationship. Even so, such a metaphorical interpretation of the creeds as models, can easily be converted into literalism and idolatry. There is clearly a tension here between experience and interpretation (literalising the concept). But Dr. McFague, with Ricoeur, believes that the ultimate goal of interpretation (the conceptual component in metaphorical thinking) is to return us to the primary *experience* (the living God-Man relationship), which unites us to the ground of our being. Theological models are therefore primarily directed towards experience rather than systems of thought. They *redescribe* reality in the sense that they enable us to say something *new* about that reality precisely in the tension between what 'is and is not' expressed in the metaphorical reference. Dr. McFague concludes her essay by offering a feminist critique of the 'model' of God as Father, arguing for a multiplicity of models to do justice to the Christian paradigm.

This is not an easy book but it does reward careful reading. It raises fundamental philosophical issues and displays presuppositions which, on her own admission, are open to question and which could be usefully put into dialogue with different traditions of thought.

For instance, her contention that metaphorical thinking is to do with redescribing reality, or returning us to a primary experience which unites us to the ground of our being, could be interpreted in a way which implies a tendency towards identity and continuity (as in idealist traditions of thought) rather than a tendency towards relativity and discontinuity. This would be the case if there is an intrinsic convergence or 'mirroring' of experience and interpretation (or metaphor and concept) upon each other and a mutuality between them which intuits "this" as *a part of* "that" rather than "this" which *is and is not* "that". What is at issue here is the nature or quality of that primary experience (to which metaphorical thinking pertains) which unites us to the ground of our being. Dr. McFague insists that metaphorical thinking rules out identity or continuity here in a 'prophetic' sort of way. Other traditions, of a more symbolical or sacramental nature, may be prepared to risk so-called idolatry in the pursuit of "this" as *a part of* "that". Dr. McFague certainly provides cogent arguments for one side of the dialogue in this important area of theological and philosophical concern.

Martin Roberts

The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction.

Several recent books have drawn attention to the problems of reading Victorian literature without an adequate knowledge of the Bible. In two important studies of Biblical typology, George Landow has discussed the widespread application of Old and New Testament analogy in the work of a range of Victorian writers and artists, Charlotte Brontë, Browning, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Willian Holman Hunt and D.G. Rossetti among them. Barry Qualls' *Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction* turns to a related subject, the introduction into Victorian fiction of themes from devotional writings, whether by direct allusion or by typological analogy.

Professor Qualls' most inportant examples come from Puritan writings like Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Francis Quarles' *Emblems*, both of which provided a familiar range of religious imagery for generations of readers. Today, even students of English are apparently cut off from such reference. During a recent seminar on *The Mill on the Floss*, I found no student who had read either *Pilgrim's Progress* or Thomas A. Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, both of which are employed by George Eliot to expound the central themes of her novels. Professor Qualls also illustrates the way in which Dante's *Inferno* and Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* influenced her last novel, *Daniel Deronda*, a useful excursion into a wider interpretation of religious writing.

As well as supplying some of the gaps in the knowledge of the modern reader, *Secular Pilgrims* relates religious themes and patterns in the work of three novelists, Charlotte Brontë, Dickens and George Eliot, to specific sources in the work of Thomas Carlyle. Professor Qualls sees Carlyle as a seminal figure in the adaptation of religious imagery to the demands of moral humanism. Although the pessimism of Dickens' later years led him to reject Carlyle's more positive and visionary philosophies, the argument is most effectively applied to him. 'Esther Summerson and Amy Dorrit are the greatest of Dickens's good women' is a sentence which would bring any reader of Dickens up short, but Professor Qualls goes on to give a particularly sensitive and revealing account of the progress of the heroine of *Bleak House*, whose path leads her from the apparent 'dunghill' of her illegitimate birth towards the 'Grace Abounding' of the novel's conclusion, while her mother, Lady Dedlock, dies 'in the clutch of Giant Despair'. Esther has been a much maligned character, and such an interpretation of the novel can help us to place her in a new context. It is perhaps surprising, however, that the author has not considered the most Carlylean of all Dickens's novels, *Tale of Two Cities*, here, since the progress of Sidney Carton surely represents an even clearer path to salvation than Esther's own.

Charlotte Brontë, who did not encounter Carlyle until after *Jane Eyre* was written, presents what is in some ways a parallel case. The author describes it as 'a synthesis of Romanticism with inherited religious traditions'. Charlotte Brontë, however, was unable to endorse Carlyle's 'affirmation of the romantic impulse' in her quest novels, where the heroines learn to look out from the wilderness of self and to find freedom in a true sense of others and of a wider world.

As any careful reader of her novels will know, Charlotte Brontë's familiarity with the Bible was exceptional. In *Jane Eyre*, a novel usually seen as a love-story, she surprises us by ending with a quotation from the Revelation of St John. This anticipates the death of St John Rivers, the most ascetic of her characters, whom the heroine has rejected in marriage. The divine marriage of the Revelation is set against the earthly marriage of Rochester and Jane, and, as Professor Qualls aptly puts it: 'This contrast constitutes Brontë's retailoring of the scripture . . she asserts that the New Jerusalem can mean at once what St John 'sees' – the Celestial City – or it can be part of a 'New Mythus', can mean the 'natural supernaturalism' of this world'. All three authors are attempting to express this sense of the divine potential which lies in the human, and all three use the imagery most appropriate, that of religious and visionary experience.

This book is a challenging and revealing one, suggesting valuable lines of enquiry. It is noticeable, however, that few nineteenth century religious works are mentioned, and the emphasis on Carlyle is at times limiting. Professor Qualls' assertion that *Sartor Resartus* is 'the most famous' nineteenth century account of an 'orphan soul' is simply untenable in the discusssion of an age which produced *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*; *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*.

Leonee Ormond

Church Music and The Christian Faith

Erik Routley. Collins, 1980. Pp. 156. £4.00.

The Church of England does not take music seriously. If it did a musical training would be part of the preparation of every man for the priesthood, and books such as this would be made compulsory reading for every ordinand. Dr Routley took church music very seriously indeed and most of his 35 books deal with some aspect of that subject. Here we have the results of a life-time of thought and research and an attempt to find a theological justification for the kinds of music that we use in worship.

He assumes at the outset that theology cannot be irrelevant to any consideration of music designed to assist the worship of God, and argues that although in Old Testament times the 'Spirit' was given to but few, we now live in the days of universal dissemination of the Holy Spirit, and that therefore we cannot be sure that the Spirit will not make his presence felt in public opinion, even though in many ways the manifestation of the Establishment most to be feared by church musicians is the Christian congregation. The author then examines the Old Testament which, he claims, is an excellent source for moral teaching about the religious use of music and quotes some of the famous denunciations of music-making, uttered in sorrow against a 'corruptio optimi'. He takes the view that as we believe that God has renounced absolute omnipotence (in the sense that he has made mankind creatures of free will) so the artist's rights over his 'creation' are similarly limited. Further, that whereas in the Old Testament the teaching was concerned with the avoidance of error, the New Testament principle is

about the achieving of positive good. This, he points out, has always been the basis of serious musical criticism (right notes are to be expected as a matter of course; we demand something more of a performance than that). This section ends with some useful remarks on standards for judging church music and contends that, if a Christian's goal must be maturity in Christ, any church music which inhibits growth to maturity must be censured.

Having mentioned the Prophets, Dr Routley now considers the Law in relation to the work of the musician. The Law as such is sound, but needs the New Testament ethic of grace if it is to be liberating rather than restricting. Using this argument, he then examines the musical 'Law' concerning the use of consecutive parallel fifths and octaves and its treatment by various composers, and then what he calls 'musical fundamentalism' – an exaggerated respect for the written notes in a musical score and its effect on such things as the performance of plainsong, different versions of a carol tune and the accompaniment of hymns, all of which call for a certain freedom of interpretation of the Law. On the other hand, he castigates the contempt for the Law which can allow musical illiteracy of the type to be found in the notorious *Celebration Hymnal*.

Then follow chapters on Beauty (with a timely reminder that 'Beauty' is not a NT word and that artists pay little attention to it during the creative process), Romanticism, J S Bach, the Body (of Christ), Methods of Criticism, Good and Bad Music and Practical Matters – in all of which are to be found much sound advice, wise statements and thought-provoking judgments. However, as in some of Routley's other publications, the individual parts do not add up to a satisfactory whole. The content of one chapter frequently seems to spill over into another and because of his very exuberance the main tract of a scholarly argument is often abandoned temporarily, while the author wanders happily down a side path examining some of those practical matters of which he was so fond and on which he was such an authority. Perhaps the history of the book is in some way responsible for its defects. It is a complete revision of *Church Music and Theology*, published in 1959, and like many another revision, shows marks of surgery. For example, on page 79 there is a comment on the words 'sensationalism' and 'mawkishiness', but the passage in which they originally appeared has been removed. Generally, punctuation has been improved, a less colloquial tone adopted, spelling Americanised and infelicities such as 'the singing of the heavenly hosts in the book of Revelation' have been removed. A comparison of the two versions is instructive and reminds us of the immense changes that have come about in twenty years (for instance, there is no mention of Gellineau in the recent book).

The personality of Erik Routley leaps out from almost every page of this characteristic writing. How much we owe him. It is sad that he could not live to see what this book pre-supposes – a musically informed clergy.

E H Warrell

The Image of the Invisible God.

By A.T. Hanson. S.C.M. Press, 1982. Pp. 186. £6.50

In order to understand this book it is necessary to grasp first the christological views that the author (who is Professor of Theology in the University of Hull) propounded in his earlier book entitled *Grace and Truth*. There he maintained that although Jesus was a unique revelation of God he was not divine. 'I still believe', Hanson writes on p. 23, 'that the only satisfactory model for the union of God and man in Jesus is that which we meet in actual experience, God's mode of indwelling in the saints.' In this book he asserts that 'we ought not to claim that as a result of the incarnation humanity is more closely associated with the godhead or that Christians have access to God by means of Jesus' risen humanity' (p. 56). He concludes the chapter thus. 'I do not wish to exclude the risen Jesus from a continuing part in God's economy of salvation. He lives, king of saints, in the company of the blessed in heaven. We do not know what our relation to him will be hereafter because we do not know the conditions under which we may hope to exist then. But our relation now on earth is with God the Word known to us in the image of Jesus Christ' (p. 58). On p. 98 he states his thesis as follows. 'Traditional theologians have been accustomed to claim that ever since the incarnation mankind is integrally related to God: a new intimate relationship between God and man has been instituted. In so far as God the Son in traditional christology is still man his humanity can have no connection with Christians on earth, since it must be finite, or it would not be humanity.' However, Hanson affirms his belief in the Trinity (see p. 22) and Christ's bodily resurrection (see p. 55).

This book has many merits. Chiefly its author is to be commended for the frankness with which he states the extent to which his christology departs from tradition. Thus on p. 114 he admits that he teaches a doctrine of two Sons and so is vulnerable to the accusation that Cyril brought against Nestorius. Also if one grants the christological premise of his previous book the views he propounds in this one logically follow. If Jesus was merely human we cannot validly affirm that through him humanity was uniquely associated with the godhead or that we enjoy a present relation with him (any more than we can affirm these things of, for example, St Francis). So far Hanson's position is clear and consistent. Moreover this book contains valuable material (that is unaffected by Hanson's own christology) in chapters 1 (where he offers a survey of contemporary christological opinions), 2 (where he summarizes traditional accounts of the risen Christ's nature and power), and 3 (where I think he rightly criticizes Dunn for underestimating the New Testament's evidence for Christ's pre-existence). On the latter he affirms that both Paul and John 'consciously present a christology which relates Christ to God as a hypostasis within the godhead, to use later language' (p. 87). He concedes, therefore, that the New Tesament supports the doctrine of the Incarnation that he himself rejects. My criticisms of his position are, mainly, three.

First, Hanson wants to retain the traditional claim for Christ's absolute uniqueness. Hence he affirms that 'the teaching, service, suffering and death of Jesus Christ were

the unique, necessary and indispensable method by which the true character of God could be manifested to us men' (p. 104) and that 'the final and normative revelation of God was in Jesus Christ' (p. 113). I fail to see how these claims can be justified if one does not ascribe divine status to Christ. Secondly, I also fail to see what grounds we have for believing in God's triunity if we deny the doctrine of the Incarnation. Surely we can affirm distinctions within the godhead only on the basis of the incarnate Son's relation to the Father and the Holy Spirit. However, my last objection that is most relevant to this book (in contrast with Hanson's previous one) is that the denial of any present relation between believers and Christ is no less contrary to tradition than the denial of Christ's deity in the first place. From the Pauline and Johannine writings onwards Christianity has been governed by the experientially based beliefs that we can know the risen Christ and that he communicates to us the life of his glorified humanity. Obviously these beliefs raise theological questions that I cannot discuss here but that have, I think, been insufficiently discussed in recent years. Perhaps the chief value of this book rests simply in the fact that it raises these questions afresh and in a generally christological form that must precede any answer to the particular question of the relation between the risen Christ and the eucharist. But of course Professor Hanson's own christology does not help us to answer the questions because through its denial of the hypostatic union it immediately invalidates the beliefs from which the questions arise.

H.P. Owen

Charles Lowder and the Ritualist Movement

L. E. Ellsworth. Darton, Longman & Todd, 1982. £17.95.

> When the history of the Catholic revival in the Church of England comes to be written, not the least honoured name amongst those who won back for us her forfeited inheritance will be the name of Charles Lowder.

These words were spoken by W. H. Cleaver at Lowder's Requiem on Friday, 17 September 1880, and there can be no doubt that Lida Ellsworth has written a sort of history of the Catholic Revival that centres on Charles Lowder. Perhaps she could have done the same for A. H. Mackonochie of St Alban's, Holborn, who plays a supporting role here, or T. T. Carter, or the many others who promoted ritualism, founded religious communities, societies and confraternities, and worked unstintingly to bring Catholic Christianity into the most depressed and, by our standards, disgusting areas of the Victorian cities of England. There is, however, something particularly attractive about the figure of Lowder, and it is a shame that the only picture of him is on

the dust-jacket of this book. He appears throughout as a man with strong convictions and a mission. He is little concerned with 'optional extras' in worship. What he intends to do is to use outward and visible signs as a way of communicating most effectively the essential doctrines and practices of the Catholic faith. And he has no thought of doing it in some delightful middle-class area, but instead teaches the faith in exactly those situations where Christ's own ministry would surely have flourished.

His Mission was less than one and a half miles from St Paul's Cathedral. Dr Ellsworth tells us that "its poverty made it an unpleasant place to visit, while its notorious criminality made it unsafe". On the first day of 1866, 857 persons slept there in the workhouse; three times that number received out-relief. Jobs were few, poorly paid, and mostly in the docks. Life was unpredictable and irregular. A cold winter, like 1864–65 when the Thames froze, put men out of work and brought many families to absolute starvation. There were pubs and brothels everywhere. Prostitutes were 'the staple of the place' and all trade seemed to depend on them. Some streets were entirely inhabited by prostitutes; Bluegate Fields to the east of St George's church was 'nothing more or less than a den of thieves, prostitutes and ruffians of the lowest description', and of the 733 houses in the four streets around the church itself, 154 were houses of ill-fame.

After considerable work by Lowder, Mackonochie, and others, the mission chapels set up in the Parish of St George reached a regular congregation amounting to several hundreds. The daily and Sunday cycles of services were daunting by any standard. Complaints about the 'ultra-ceremonial form of the Service' started early, and in May 1857, the new Bishop of London, A. C. Tait, wrote to complain to Lowder of the 'foolish ritual observances which necessarily tend to confuse your ministrations with those of Roman Catholic priests'. At the same time he commended them for their good work and their perseverance in doing it. So began the long struggle over ritual, a struggle promoted by those, including the Church Association, who would rather not have the Gospel preached at all than have this 'mimicking popery'. On the whole neither bishops nor the evangelical opponents of ritualism come out from the struggle looking anything less than bigoted and impolitic. By 1877 the objections to Lowder's ritual practice include lighted candles, vestments, incense, a Gospel procession and kissing the Prayer Book, bowing at the *Incarnatus*, ceremonially kissing and putting on a stole before preaching, wearing a biretta, the eastward position, the use of sanctus bells, extra candles and bowing and prostration at the Consecration, non-communicating celebrations, giving notice of the times of confession, the existence and use of a second altar in the south aisle (!), and the stations of the cross! Indeed, very few churches today would escape without some censure by the standard. Lowder would not give up any of these, not because he was being difficult or stubborn but because, as he wrote in his book *Twenty-one Years in St George's Mission*, "the ritual of St Peter's is not a mere aesthetic embellishment but the outward expression of a great reality. It exactly meets the wants of those who have been taught to value their Lord's sacramental Presence; they rejoice to see His Throne made glorious, His priests ordering themselves as his representatives, and the whole arrangement typical of its heavenly counterpart." And he enjoyed a certain success in his ministry, with fifty communicants on ordinary Sundays, and at Easter as many as

280. Lida Ellsworth rightly says that St Peter's, London Docks, presented "the image of a church in which extreme ritualism seemed to work to a remarkable degree".

Even in his last illness, Lowder was not spared the attacks of his opponents, but we find here a hint of humour. Three men, Vile, Sallaway, and Sarfas, supported, perhaps, by the Church Association, made a complaint to Bishop Jackson about 'illegalities' in worship and asked him to use his 'Episcopal influence'. Lowder replied that, when he was recovered he would attend the Bishop, and meanwhile asked him if he would use his Episcopal influence 'with Mr Vile to withdraw from his dissenting Meeting Hall . . ., with Mr Sallaway to give up teaching in the Wesleyan Sunday Schools, and with Mr Sarfas to join the St Peter's branch of the Church of England Temperance Society"!

Dr Ellsworth has given us a well-documented and illuminating account of Lowder, his work and his principles; she has written part of the history of the Catholic Revival; but above all, she is to be congratulated on writing a thoroughly readable and enjoyable (if over-priced) book.

Martin Dudley

In Search of Humanity: A Theological and Philosophical Approach

John Macquarrie SCM Press, 1982 pp. vii+280 £8.50

Professor Macquarrie's twenty chapters do not form a metaphysical construct nor are they a theological axiomatic such as might be found in Karl Barth. They are an offering towards our greater understanding of what a Christian anthropology can or should be. At the same time the author keeps himself at a guarded distance from anything like a positivism of the empirically given. In his search for 'humanity' rather than say for 'man' Macquarrie makes it clear, as he says, that he intends to deal with the 'human' in an 'evaluating sense'. It then follows quite plausibly that we must speak rather of *becoming human* than merely of *being human*. The aim is not necessarily an exercise in simple or neat thinking. Anyone who merely desires to know what is man in that sense, will not use the term 'personal' in the way Macquarrie does. But anyone who is interested in recognizing himself somewhere in the effort to understand what humanity may mean in Christian reflection, will be given the chance to join in the effort.

The recognizable themes that belong to being human within the process of becoming human are in all conscience well and clearly presented in this book. The things that matter are stated in the chapter headings and the corresponding text fulfills the promise. Thus we have: Freedom, Transcendence, Egoity (in my view a useful neologism), Embodiedness (to get round dualism), Having, Commitment, Suffering. And rightly, as I think, it is in the last and not in the first chapter that Macquarrie comes to the question of Being. With such colours nailed to the mast it is not surprising that the ship's company includes Camus, Freud, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Sartre. Students of

Macquarrie would expect this. They would also expect him to eschew the instant answer to a problem and never to brush it aside as meaningless. They would, and certainly should, be prepared to join with him in taking more than one bite at the cherry when such a procedure enhances the quest.

The reader who holds much of the pattern of the old Augustinian anthropology in his head will find that now he is invited to a more subtle type of derived Augustinianism. Gone are the old out-of-hand anathemas either from Augustine or against Augustine. They had in any case become a waste of time. So the old language about the primal sin of origin is not to be found, nor are the laments upon its consequences. But in the way Macquarrie discusses sin and alienation the point of the old doctrine still lurks. Luther, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger were after all in Augustine's debt. So was Descartes. And when it comes to him Macquarrie does not strike me as wanting to throw out the now grown-up Augustininian baby with the useless bathwater. I also indulge the fantasy that Augustine would himself have enjoyed Macquarrie's use of Marcel. The *frui uti* distinction still has work to do.

It is beside the mark to ask how much of this book is philosophical and how much is theological. Macquarrie steps in and out of each mode as it pleases him. And why not? The paradoxes of freedom, especially for example in Luther, demand it. As to the paradoxes of transcendence in knowledge, thus in Lonergan's Augustinian-Thomism, they too demand that one should speak now in the theological and now in the philosophical mode. I find it a pity, if the reason was one of method, that there is little reflection on grace. In a silent or hidden way no doubt the topic abounds, but in the climate of an existentialist discussion one would think that the paradoxes of grace cry out for an airing. This should not have involved the author in any intolerable anthropologism. Mention of that danger recalls Schleiermacher, and this reviewer feels particularly grateful for Macquarrie's two-bite method in dealing with him.

Of course there will never be a definitive Christian anthropology. Macquarrie would be the last to suggest this. But thanks to his way of thinking, a profoundly Christian *Werde was Du bist* is nearer than heretofore. Its handy open-endedness is something that Macquarrie helpfully exploits. The work consists in a pleasant set of pieces to read, neither academic pop nor a tired academic conversation-piece. I am not sure that Moltmann gets a good run for his money. But we can't have everything. Most theologically-minded readers could make a reasonable list of topics they have found successfully treated.

B. R. Brinkman

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