

Point of Belief

ESSAYS IN LIBERAL RELIGION
EDITED BY JOHN ROWLAND

AC Adcock

Maurice Creasey

Bruce Findlow

Jeremy Goring

DH Lawrence

EG Lee

John Rowland

John Wren-Lewis



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*We turn from seeing thee afar
And in unwonted ways
To build from out our daily lives
The temples of thy praise.*
FL Hosmer

AC Adcock
Maurice Creasey
Bruce Findlow
Jeremy Goring
DH Lawrence
EG Lee
John Rowland
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The Lindsey Press

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The Lindsey Press, 1-6 Essex Street, London WC 2

© THE LINDSEY PRESS 1968

Designed by Grenville Needham

Set in Times New Roman

*Printed by LSG Printers (Lincoln), Chronicle Building,
Waterside North, Lincoln*

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Foreword

It may be that when the theological history of our time comes to be written the period from 1960 to 1970 will be registered as that of the greatest religious ferment for centuries. When the Bishop of Woolwich's *Honest to God* was published in 1963, it was greeted as the precursor of a complete revolution in theology; yet it seems likely that the corporate work, *Objections to Christian Belief* was, in actual fact, a much more revolutionary document. Names like Bultmann, Bonhoeffer and Tillich became very widely known, and the ideas of such leaders of Continental and American religious thought were fairly swiftly assimilated in Great Britain.

Most of these widely-publicised statements of belief (or unbelief), however, appear to have emanated from the ranks of the more orthodox churches. Few such documents have come from the broad section of what used to be called liberal opinion — that section which stretches from the theological left within the Anglican church to members of the Society of Friends and Unitarians. Yet it must surely be true that thinkers within this group have something to say, something to contribute to the religious dialogue of our day.

This book, the main contributors to which are two Anglicans, four Unitarians and a Quaker, has been broadly designed to see how far liberal thinkers have something to add to the great theological debate of our time. Some of them might even object to being called

liberals, but I think the percipient reader can have little doubt on this score. The contributors were given complete freedom as to choice of subject and treatment, though they were told that the idea behind the book was to obtain a group of essays on the state of religious thought in the mid-twentieth century. The result is clearly a very mixed volume, with very mixed points of view.

It is to be hoped, however, that a synthesis of the various points of view will be possible, and that, by the time the reader has finished, he will have an impression of what kind of thought is being developed by a group of alert minds from different religious and academic backgrounds. For, just as some of those writing are engaged in the day-to-day work of churches, so others are involved in the work of teaching — and not merely teaching religion. This should lead to a broad approach to the problems which religion would claim to be able to solve; it should make it possible for our chosen contributors to say something valuable and thought-provoking on some of the puzzling issues of our time.

It will be seen that the modern men deal with problems that are outwardly very diverse; Mr Wren-Lewis's interesting treatment of psychology and religion may appear to have little connection with Dr Creasey's discussion of secularism, yet there are underlying currents of thought which give a connection not immediately obvious. In similar fashion, Mr Lee's 'new symbolism' may have something to contribute to Mr Adcock's picture of the future of the idea of God.

This little book, in other words, may not be as epoch-making as *Objections to Christian Belief* or *Honest to God*; it will certainly not become a 'best-seller' in the way in which those two books somewhat surprisingly did. But it may go some way towards showing that liberal religious opinion in Britain is not as dead as some of its critics would say. Original thought on what may be called the religious left wing did not cease with James Martineau or LP Jacks, Sir Stanley Eddington or

Bishop Barnes. It still goes on, though it does not obtain the measure of publicity which it could secure in a former generation. It is not only in the measured tones of Rome and Canterbury that the religious leanings of the age are expressed. Sometimes light on a problem, whether of pure or applied religion, comes from unexpected quarters.

This book, too, may cast light on another tendency of our time — what is usually referred to as the ecumenical movement. A specifically Unitarian contribution to the problem of Christian unity (or unification) may be found in the late Arthur Peacock's little book *Christian Encounter* (1967); it may be that the pages which follow suggest a different kind of ecumenism which, in the next fifty years or so, will give us an approach towards unity which is far from being uniformity. When in time of war or national crisis we appeal for the unity of the nation, we do not mean that everyone leaves factories and offices and joins the armed forces; we mean that all are expected to do their best to help their country in her hour of need. May it not be that the flaw in the heart of the ecumenical movement, as we see it in action today, lies in the suggestion that all churches shall combine in one church — presumably (though this has rarely been stated explicitly) with one form of ministry, one form of service, one liturgy. It is not true that different people, from different backgrounds, of different temperaments, need different forms of religious service, from the colourful high mass of the Roman church to the simple meditative silence of the Quaker meeting?

This kind of moral may, perhaps, be drawn by some readers of this book. Others may feel that in saying this I am reading too much into these essays by men of varying beliefs. To those who feel that this is so, I would add only this: take the book as at least a proof that thoughtful men emerge from many places, that they can be found in all churches. Some modern thinkers, indeed, would even dispute the need for a church at all. Certainly some of them would not necessarily call them-

selves Christians.

Seven of the voices in this book are contemporary voices; but there is also included, as a kind of postscript, a voice from the past — the voice of DH Lawrence. Lawrence's essay, which was included in his posthumous volume *Pheonix*, is written in a style very different from that of our present-day contributors; but it reflects a position not wholly different from theirs — a position which shows both Christian and humanist leanings.

Modern humanists are not represented here, though this is not to say that they will necessarily be debarred from contributing to any future volumes that may follow. But if the present volume be taken as a collection of opinions on various important aspects of Christian belief in a period when religion is perhaps more discussed than ever before in history, it may have performed its task. It is not meant to be anything like the final word. It is more in the nature of an interim report than a balance sheet. Probably the contributors, if they were writing in ten years' time, would write very differently, just as they would have written very differently had they written ten years ago. But they are writing *now*; they have something to say in the religious climate of today. It is time that the editor got out of the way, and let them say it.

JOHN ROWLAND

Body, Mind and Spirit

Rev Bruce Findlow, BA

Minister of St Mark's Church, Edinburgh

WE BEGIN with the body because, whatever we may or may not believe about the spirit or soul, there is no escaping the fact that we have a material, physical self; we are flesh. What are we to say of this flesh — bones, blood, muscles, nerves, cells, glands, organs, limbs — so marvellously made, yet so likely to go wrong, sometimes demanding too much of us, sometimes failing to do what we demand of it. Is this body our real self? Should we value it most or value it alone? Or is it merely a shell, the house of something more important, more real than itself? Or is the body something to be ashamed of, a regrettable necessity, clumsy, ugly, unclean, the seat of desires and appetites we should deny rather than satisfy?

If we allow ourselves to accept the knowledge of our physical selves which the relevant fields of science have revealed to us we are no longer able to separate flesh from spirit, material from spiritual, to the detriment of the flesh, as traditional Christian theology has so often done. We ought to be able to see today that we are marvellously made, so marvellously that we do not yet understand the whole of it. Today we ought to be able to determine the proper places of reticence and openness with respect to the body. We ought to be encouraged by the knowledge of this generation to treat our physical selves much better than we do.

To take the last of these points first, it is my complaint against much traditional theology that through many

generations it has begotten in us attitudes of shame, disgust and regret towards the body which encourage us to treat it as unworthy of our care. This is not a conscious thing; it is built into our lives. Physical fitness is not generally prized. It is the special interest of sportsmen or fanatics; tolerable well-being suffices for the rest of us and medical care rests on expediency rather than pride in bodily health. Again, we dress the body as though it has no beauty of its own and sometimes we dress it to hide the beauty we cannot help but see. In this matter though, with the decline of traditional beliefs, we are seeing some change which we will rejoice in or regret according to how we value the flesh. It is said that the topless dress marks the last stage of the long reaction against puritanical attitudes towards the body. From that excessive shame which hid the flesh so thoroughly we have moved to some position of excessive pride which leads to the display of the body. Soon we may hope to arrive at some true valuation of the human form which will neither hide nor display it but give it its true place in our sight. Again, we do not do much to develop physical grace, though traditional religion speaks much of spiritual grace. We disregard or underrate capacities for harmony in the working and movement of our physical selves except where there is some special interest among the few. Finally, through our basic disregard of the body, we supply it with the wrong kind of fuel in the wrong quantities, and at the wrong intervals. If men serviced their cars as they do their bodies the roads would be free for pedestrians in a very short time.

If we have grown up in Christendom it is easy to assume that the traditional Christian separation of flesh and spirit to the detriment of the flesh is the universal religious view. But other traditions present a variety of views. In Hinduism there is a scale of values: great are the senses, greater than the senses is the mind, greater than the mind is the understanding; what is greater than the understanding is the Supreme Being.

Zoroastrianism, though very old, offers a view we might be willing to accept today; the pleasures which are superior to all pleasures are health of body, freedom from fear, good repute and righteousness. In Buddhism there is recognition that our whole self needs care and cultivation like a plant: beware of the anger of the body, control thy body; beware of the anger of the tongue, control thy tongue; beware of the anger of the mind, control thy mind. In Confucianism there is recognition that our bodily powers change with the years, present different temptations, need different controls. There are three things which the Superior Man guards against: in youth when the physical powers are not yet settled, he guards against lust; when he is strong and the physical powers are full of vigour he guards against quarrelsomeness; when he is old and the animal powers are decayed, he guards against covetousness. It is Confucianism which tells us also that the bodily organs with their functions belong to our Heaven-conferred nature. Taoism values the flesh; if you keep your body as it should be, and look only at the One Thing, the harmony of Heaven will come to you, the spiritual will come and lodge with you, you will have the simple look of a newborn calf! Taoism also tells us: complete in their bodies they are complete in their spirits. Islam has its own practical view of these things: live with your body in this world and with your faith and works in the next.

So there are many views of the body in itself and in relation to human wholeness and to divine origins and goals. A true view for today must take account of what we know now as well as of what has been thought and said before. It must take account of what we know in experience as well as what is written, whether it be in scientific papers or scriptures or the newspapers.

We know that our bodies are physically made, the making itself being a marvel if not a miracle. We know that our bodies need care to reach full development and that they need and have a controlling or guiding mechanism — the mind which is meant to be used.

We know that we are not perfectly made, that all our cleverness cannot make or guarantee perfect bodies for everyone, nor keep life for a full span of years in some imperfect ones. But we should be quite clear that there is nothing metaphysical about physical imperfection. It is never a punishment from God, never a cross to be borne for some pre-ordained spiritual end which we cannot see. It has to do only with some failure of human creativity. We know that good health is to be prized; we owe it to our bodies to look after them and we know that soundness of body and soundness of mind are related. We know also that there is pain and suffering related to our bodies sometimes, and need to remind ourselves again that this is not a divine visitation to punish or test us but a consequence of human activity, of physical, mental and emotional being. Not least, we know that the flesh is not isolated from thoughts and feelings and therefore that whatever we find in ourselves to call the spirit is necessarily bound up with the flesh, with physical pain and well-being, physical needs and satisfactions, physical organs and their functioning.

'Know ye not,' says Christian scripture, 'that ye are the temple of God? The temple of God is holy — which temple ye are.' If we can look at our bodies in that way and care for them as a devotee would care for the temple of his God, well and good. But if, in this generation, we are not sure that it is the temple of anything we can call God, we ought to take a good look at it as the temple of life. The body, our self here and now, is a created thing, created in love, not only a 'basket of necessities' but a creation of marvels and wonders to make the most of and the best of while we have it. Self, certainly; shell, perhaps. Shame, never, unless we ourselves treat our bodies shamefully.

It seems that we human beings, seeing that the body is the place, agent, seat or centre of various kinds of physical activity, have inferred the existence of something called the mind as the seat of some other kinds of

activity. We have for long believed in the body-mind dualism which has allowed and encouraged the belief that, while it is plain that the life of the body comes to an end, it may be true that the life of the mind continues after death. But the notion of these two aspects or entities becomes more difficult to hold as we see more clearly how closely related are the activities of the body and those of the mind. They seem too closely connected to permit the belief that though one dies the other lives on alone.

Once we do accept that there is a close connection between mind and body, between mental and physical activities, we are brought to a consideration of functions, activities, rather than the traditional discussion concerning two entities. We no longer need to ask where the mind is, what it looks like or what it is made of. Instead, we have to consider what we mean by mental activity and what place it has in our life as a whole. This is the field of psychologists, physiologists, biologists and others, who do not always agree with one another but whose work is perhaps of more significance than that of the philosophers and theologians today. But in the context of religion we have to find the valuation we place upon the mind in the light of the considerations others set before us.

There is, for example, the fact that a minor illness or even fatigue may dull the mind. This is to say that our physical condition affects the extent and quality of our mental activity. The mind is not a perfect machine in untroubled command of our whole self; it operates in some dependence on the body. Reason, upon which we place such value in modern life (and modern religion), is not its own master. Indeed, there are some arguments from psychology which say that our mental processes are determined by deep impulses, motives and conditions of which we are largely unaware. If this is indeed the case it means that when it is said that wars begin in the minds of men it means that wars begin in the minds of men with ulcers or arthritis or high blood pressure, or

men with unconscious hates and frustrations. And when the poet Hopkins cries in his despair 'Oh the mind, mind has mountains, cliffs of fall, frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed' it is not just the terrain of the reason which is being mapped but that of the temper and disposition of the despairing man.

My thought is that, while we continue to talk of the mind as something other than the body, as a separate entity, we are likely to give it more honour than it deserves, honouring it above the body and even honouring it with the gift of immortal life. But once we come down to the thought of mental activities bound up with the whole self we are likely to respect the mind less and the body more, and while according mental activities a wide role in human life, individual and collective, not assume their existence beyond this life.

If then, out of some religious aspiration or inward need we pray, as a hymn does, to be given a mind like that of Jesus, holy, quiet, patient, noble and constant, what are we asking for? Is it something which is unrelated to bodily health and emotional well-being, something which is simply a matter of mental effort, education, discipline, regardless of the rest of our nature? I think not. If we accept the relatedness of the parts to each other and to the whole of our living self, we may have to forgo belief in the immortality of the mind (or soul) but we will gain the understanding that heart and soul and mind and strength (to use the old words) make up a whole person, and that to pray for a holy, quiet, patient, noble and constant mind, is to pray to become that kind of a person all through, not in thought alone but in our very being and becoming. All this may seem to say that the mind is of little importance in religion or in life, but it is meant to suggest a much more limited conclusion than that, that by the traditional separation of mind and body we have over-rated the mind just as we have under-rated the body; we have over-rated the efficiency of thinking while under-rating the power of feeling.

When we talk about the spirit of man we are again in the area of activities rather than entities; we are talking about the spiritual life. When we say that man has a spirit as well as a body and a mind it means that we believe he has, along with his physical life and mental life, some area of experience which may be called his spiritual life. The first thing to be said about this spiritual life is that it is not self-evident in the way physical and mental life are. It has to be discovered, explored, developed, with some help, perhaps, from depths we cannot plumb or heights we cannot reach. Those who write about the spiritual life write as experts of a way they have travelled, of experience they have had, as any expert might write about his field. We learn from these writings of the possibility of the spiritual life in every man, but that we can also choose to neglect it. We learn also that our life without a developed spiritual activity does not rise to 'the final perfection above which there is nothing to wish for, and beyond which there is nowhere to go,' (from the *Philokalia*).

The life of the spirit, we are told (and can discover for ourselves), has to do with values, with the valuation of our whole experience in terms of goodness, truth and beauty, and with the discovery of some ultimate measure of goodness, truth and beauty which we recognise as the Divine or as of the Divine.

It is in this sense that we can say that the spiritual life is the area of human experience in which the human and divine meet and mingle. It has to do with the deepest or highest kind of fulfilment, traditionally 'the peace which passes all understanding'. Clearly there is some mystery in this part of our life, but we ought to be ready to accept that at the frontiers of our experience there is bound to be something unknown if not unknowable. And in this area of mystery we may find some answer to our questions about immortality — if we *seek* an answer.

Clearly all the arts may both feed and manifest the spiritual life of man for it involves our thoughts and

feelings and bodily health. Worship is both an exercise and expression of the spiritual life in a corporate way; personal devotion is the cultivation of it in private. Psychology, anthropology, history and theology (at least) offer useful bystander comment upon the life of the spirit, but the life is only really known by living it.

We will go on, no doubt, using terms like body, mind and spirit for their convenience, but our way is clearer if we understand by these words areas of activity rather than objects, activities which are sometimes separate from one another but often closely related within our whole being. In this understanding, then, spirit may mean soul inasmuch as it means the possibility of a quality of life in which death does not matter. Spirit may also mean the summit of human experience inasmuch as it means fulfilment, divine peace. Spirit may also mean self inasmuch as it relates to the highest possibilities of our nature expressed through the full range of our experience.

Psychology and Religion

John Wren-Lewis

HISTORY may very well come to judge that one of the greatest achievements of the science of psychology during the first half of the twentieth century was to help mankind recover an understanding of what religion is really about. This may seem a very surprising thing to say today, when probably the majority of psychologists take the view that religion has been shown by Freud, the great pioneer of psychoanalysis, to be a sort of disease — ‘the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity’. But I want to contend that until we have recognised this to be true for the majority of mankind’s religious beliefs and practices, we cannot understand what religion is really about.

Propagandists for and against religion alike tend to ignore the fact that most of the great religious pioneers and prophets have held that religion can, and normally does, become distorted into something which is practically the opposite of what it was meant to be. This is what was originally meant by ‘idolatry’ — ‘false religion’ — and the prophets held this to be precisely what Freud said religion was, a universal sickness preventing the human race from being really human. Moreover they attacked idolatry for the very same reasons that led Freud to describe religion as he saw it as neurotic. He spoke of an escape from the impact of love in human relationship, by the ‘projection’ of images of human relationships (for example, of universal fatherly

authority) into a fantasy-world; St John spoke of the false religion of those who say 'I love God' but fail to meet the challenge of love with their fellow-men, and behind St John lies the whole Hebrew tradition for which idolatry was actually defined, in the Second Commandment, as a process of image-making.

The Rabbinic commentators tell us that the Second Commandment was never intended merely to condemn crude idols of wood and stone; it was meant to go deeper and condemn the whole process of regarding mental images as representations of God — in fact it was a condemnation of the process of 'projection' itself, of which physical idol-making was seen as merely a crude expression. It is no wonder that Freud, in spite of his atheism, confessed to a strong sense of kinship with the prophets of his race. But where he saw only the need to condemn the religion of the world around him as a delusion, and to liberate people from its shackles, the prophets saw their denunciation of idolatry as the essential preliminary to discovery of the true God, and I believe Freud's work pointed in that direction even though he was too preoccupied with his iconoclasm to recognise it.

For if religious ideas and feelings are 'projections' into fantasy of aspects of personal experience we are afraid to face, then there must be aspects of personal experience that correspond to all the leading religious ideas and feelings, not only ideas like that of a protecting or law-giving father, with its obvious source in childhood experience, but also ideas like that of an all-pervading creative spirit, a 'divine ground' of human existence, a supreme sum of good, and, above all, that special feeling of awe which provokes the desire to worship. These things have no counterparts in relationships between persons as the biologist ordinarily understands them. It seems to me that they indicate that one of the aspects of experience from which people try to get away by indulging in religious fantasies is precisely a religious aspect, an actual experience of religious reality at the

heart of human relationships.

One of Freud's own pupils, the Swiss psychologist CG Jung, saw this implication of his master's argument quite clearly, and this was one of the main considerations that led him to break away and found a new school of 'analytical psychology', differing from Freud's psychoanalysis in many important respects. This comes out very clearly in one of Jung's most lucidly-argued writings, the *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology*, published in the mid-1920s. His new departure, he says, took its start from his inability to ignore the fact that patients under analysis tend to attribute mystical, priestly qualities to the analyst. Now it is well known that the special relationship that springs up between the patient and the analyst plays a key part in the process of psychological healing; it is generally known as 'transference', because all the repressed or unacknowledged thoughts and feelings that are causing the patient's illness become 'transferred' into this relationship. Freud interpreted the whole transference relationship in terms of repressed loves and hates carried over from early childhood, but Jung argued that these could give no possible grounds for the 'mystical' or 'priestly' feelings, unless our childhood relationships are themselves vehicles for experiences far bigger than we have any reason to expect in an ordinary biological family-situation. And in practice he found that patients seemed to need some sort of religious understanding of life, as well as a sorting-out of sexual or other early difficulties, if they were to get well. Jung expressed this latter conviction in a famous book called *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, published in the 1930s.

The effect of these announcements on the general educated European public was considerable. Many people took them — and many still do — as reasons for going back altogether on Freud's criticism of religion. I believe this does much less than justice to what Jung himself actually wanted, but he laid himself open to this misinterpretation because his largely intuitive way

of expressing himself was accompanied by a lack of logical criticism. In particular, he took up one of Freud's badly-framed concepts and expanded it to a point where it did him a positive disservice. Freud had been wont to refer to the repressed and unacknowledged feelings as the 'unconscious' of the patient. This was a misleading term, because it suggested a thing, like the liver or the heart, instead of certain aspects of experience, and another recalcitrant pupil of Freud's, Alfred Adler, once said that the concept of the unconscious in psychology was in danger of becoming merely an *asylum ignorantiae*, a magic word to be brought in to explain anything that could not be properly understood. But whereas Freud knew fairly clearly what he meant by it, it definitely began to get out of hand when Jung started to modify it to explain the puzzling fact of mystical feelings in the transference-relationship.

Because these feelings appear to be common to all sorts of different people with quite different psychological backgrounds and personal experiences, Jung suggested that there must be some powerful part of the unconscious that was common to the whole of humanity, and he called this the 'collective unconscious'. Now to begin with he too was fairly clear what he meant by this; he envisaged something like a common racial memory built into the brain-structure of all human beings, in terms of which their particular personal experiences would inevitably be evaluated. On this view patients would tend to see their analysts in terms of priestly figures because there is an age-old in-built tendency in the human mind to react to all authoritative guiding-figures in this way; the priest-image, or image of an infinitely wise old man or woman, is an archetype of all human reactions in certain situations, and some of the difficulties we get into with our parents, Jung argued, are not due to anything the poor parents actually do themselves at all — they are due to our tendency to react to our parents in this *archetypal* way.

There is a similar basic general reaction to members

of the opposite sex, which often causes 'crushes' or other fixations on other young people, or mothers or fathers, or Christ or the Blessed Virgin, or even on film stars — fixations which the actual people concerned have done nothing to invoke. This reaction Jung described in terms of an archetypal image of a woman in the male mind (called the *anima*) and a similar one (called the *animus*-figure) in the female mind. Jung called these great basic images, which occur again and again in the myths, legends and fairy tales of mankind, 'the archetypes of the collective unconscious', and I think there is little doubt that this will prove a most important general contribution to the science of psychology, even if Jung did perhaps let the idea run away with him sometimes, and find archetypes where there are really only coincidences. But unfortunately the concept in this form — basic inbuilt patterns in the brain which determine our general reactions to certain types of situation — does not really explain the thing Jung set out to explain, namely, the mystical or religious sense that overtakes the analyst-patient relationship.

It may be that the wise-old-man-or-woman archetype is a basic reaction of the mind, but why should it have a mystical character? An inherited shape of nose does not evoke 'numinous' or transcendental feelings, so why should an inherited reaction-pattern? And so the concept of the collective unconscious tended to broaden out, and become simply a name for a mysterious mental realm surrounding all human beings, out of which compelling mystical or religious images emerge. In other words, the collective unconscious ceased for many of Jung's followers (perhaps even for Jung himself) to be a scientific concept, and became something even more sinister than an *asylum ignorantiae* — it became a scientific-sounding name under which people might once again indulge in the vice of 'projection', weaving fantasies about mysterious realities beyond experience. In striving to go beyond Freud without proper logical criticism of his concepts, Jung actually went back on one

of Freud's most important achievements.

I have said that I think Jung himself always intended something other than this, but there is no doubt at all that his ideas have been seized upon by all sorts of people as means of re-establishing religion in the old sense. In the first place there are a number of professional religious apologists who have invoked Jung as proving scientifically that Freud was wrong and they were right all along. But in addition to these, there are many others who hold that Jung has revealed the scientific truth underlying the crude expressions of all previous religions, so that what we now have, in effect, is a new scientifically-based religion of psychological development according to Jungian principles. In place of the 'spiritual world' of traditional religion these people put forward the collective unconscious; in place of the gods and angels and demons, there are the archetypes; in place of the traditional religious practices of prayer, meditation and the like we have the process of putting oneself under the guidance of an analyst so that he may help the soul to become aware of the archetypes and their demands — particularly the archetype which Jung calls the Self, that corresponds to God.

Now Freud's own reaction to all this was very interesting. He did not, as many of his followers have done, just dismiss it as unscientific mumbo-jumbo; he donned the mantle of the Hebrew prophets with whom he had confessed a feeling of kinship. He said Jung made him wish he had not rejected the faith of his fathers, because then he could stand up and thunder 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain!'. And in this I think he spoke truer than he knew.

The religion which consists of interpreting experience in terms of mysterious realities beyond experience is idolatry, for it is a way of turning aside from the ordinary relationships between human beings where alone the true God is to be found — the God towards whom Freud pointed when he felt compelled to refer to the creative power of love as 'eternal eros' — the God

whose name is love, and who can actually be known in experience in relationships of love. People often speak of 'falling in love', and there is a hackneyed phrase which speaks of love being 'bigger than both of us'. Freud put himself on the side of experiences like these, as against all the common 'religious' attempts to dodge their implications for human life by interpreting them in terms of mysterious powers behind the scenes of experience — but in doing so I believe he spoke with the true voice of the prophets, like St John, who said that however much a man might say he loved God, he was a liar unless he loved his fellow-men.

And I suspect Jung himself knew this full well, whatever his followers have made of his work. A year or so before he died, he appeared on BBC television in a 'Face to Face' interview with John Freeman, and when he was asked if he believed in God, he gave a reply that has since become famous: 'I do not believe — I know!' This is either the voice of intolerable conceit or of genuine religious experience, and I think the fruits of Jung's life are such as to make it clear that it was the latter. I think he got muddled in his thinking, and was less aware of the dangers of idolatrous religion than Freud, whose Jewish ancestry stood him in good stead.

Having seen that the traditional religious symbolism of the world gave some expression to genuine religious experience, Jung tended to take the view that any expression was better than none, whereas the Jew in Freud recognised that a fantasy-expression is often worse than none at all, since God can perfectly well look after Himself and speak through the negations of an atheist.

But Jung himself knew where the true experience of God was to be found, as is indicated by his statement that in our age the vital energy of the collective unconscious is to be found in personal relationships. This is the same voice as that of the ancient Rabbi who wrote that the glory of God is between husband and wife, or another who said, 'God dwells in our togetherness,'

or St John who said categorically, 'God is love.' The truth of Jung's term 'collective unconscious' is that we live unhealthy lives in which we are unconscious of the power that is literally 'between man and man'; we repress this awareness along with, indeed as part of, our repression of our experience of personal relationships. The purpose of genuine religion is to make us aware of this so that our lives may acquire the direction of love, and we may 'have life, and have it more abundantly'.

Increasingly today, practical psychologists of all schools are becoming aware that they do not help neurotic people to get properly well unless they do indeed set them free in love — and child-psychologists know that there is a message here for society as a whole, not just for specially sick people. We are in a situation where there is great readiness to receive the message of genuine religion, that love is a real power active on behalf of all of us, to lead is to know him and enjoy him for ever, if only we will co-operate. In terms of this message, Jung's psychological discoveries have an enormous amount to teach us about the problems we have to face in finding love and enjoying him. That, in my view, is what the archetypes really are — important general facets in our experience of love, an experience which inevitably carries a mystical character because it is literally experience of God.

Jung's findings show us vast numbers of things that make it possible to distinguish love's true reality from human distortions like sentimentality. He has emphasised, for example, that what the energy of the collective unconscious ultimately always drives towards in individuation — the emergence of the personality as a complete individual, not compulsively dependent upon or anything else; and this is a most important truth about real love. Real love always makes people independent and free of each other; it is distorted love that sucks people down into the sort of unity where differences disappear.

But perhaps the most important of all Jung's findings

is that the biggest single obstacle standing between us and individuation is our unwillingness to accept the nastier sides of our own nature. Every man, Jung says, has his 'shadow-side', which appears in dreams, novels, poems and myths everywhere in the image of the shadow archetype — the very evil man, or the devil. At a superficial level, we live by restraining and repressing the shadow, but if we try to do this all the time we become superficial, and the repressed tendencies wreak their revenge by making us do hurtful things none of us want to do, ending perhaps in the destruction of war or persecution. The way to health, Jung found, lies through the acceptance of the shadow: what is this, but a recovery of the greatest of all Christian insights, that while morality is essential to keeping life going, the ultimate good of love can only be experienced by forgiving evil. This is certainly, again, the universal discovery of practical psychology in the treatment of sickness. I believe here the psychologists are carrying to our own age the really central message of the gospel for healing the sickness of all mankind, and Jung, for all his faults, was amongst the greatest bringers of this wisdom.

Footnote

I have tried to deal in greater depth with some of these subjects in my essay *Psychoanalysis Observed* (ed Rycroft: Constable, 1966) and in my book, *What Shall We Tell the Children?* which is due from Constable in 1969.

The New Christian Wavelength

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ON A WINTRY weekend in January 1967, thirty-five people, for the most part strangers to each other, came together for a conference in a large country house in Surrey. Men and women, most of them in their 30s or 40s, they came from all over England and from a wide variety of religious backgrounds — Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Unitarian, Jewish, agnostic, humanist. Some were active in the church; others had severed their connections. Some were trained theologians; others had made no systematic study of religion. But in spite of these differences there emerged a remarkable unanimity of spirit. As the weekend wore on and the level of talk deepened, so the theological ice-barriers melted and the denominational labels were forgotten. Persons related directly to persons and a community of the spirit — temporary, local, indefinable yet real — came mysteriously into being. At the close of the conference the gathering dispersed and people went their very different ways. 'We must meet again,' they said. But they have not done so yet, and probably never will. One cannot re-create a Pentecost.

The Blechingley conference was called for the purpose of discussing the 'non-church'. This negative-sounding term stands for a very positive viewpoint. It is the view point of those who, though thoroughly dissatisfied with present ecclesiastical structures, feel a deep com-

mitment to 'basic Christianity'. While hesitant to define their position too carefully for fear of creating new verbal barriers, while unwilling to organise themselves into a movement for fear of creating another church, while careful in short not to do anything that might frustrate the operations of the spirit, these people (whose number and whereabouts cannot be known) feel a need to communicate with others on the same wavelength.

What is the distinctive character of this 'new Christian wavelength', if such it may be called? Is it a common attitude to religious institutions, to ecclesiastical structures and liturgical forms? Is it a common approach to questions of ethics? Is it a common outlook on the traditional creeds and articles of faith? And if the answer to all these is 'yes', what is specifically new or Christian about those who think in this way?

While there is, of course, nothing new under the sun, there are some things which may be described as 'new' to distinguish them from others that have recently become 'old'. It is, for instance, valid and useful to distinguish 'new' Christian radicalism from 'old' Christian liberalism. The two have a certain superficial resemblance and are often confused, but in fact there are fundamental differences between them. One difference has to do with attitudes to the church. Whether they regard the church as a universal, divinely-ordained institution or merely as a man-made federation of local congregations, liberals as a rule accept the doctrine of the permanency of the church. The church may be misguided, corrupt and in dire need of reform, but, once short of imperfections, it will go on from strength to strength. James Martineau's majestic vision of a church that was truly catholic and free was not unconnected with his fervent desire to see a church that was vigorous, popular, influential and strong. The whole ethos of churches was sacred to him and he would have been scandalised by the idea that they should be allowed to disappear. Yet the disappearance of churches is

something that present-day radicals contemplate with equanimity and even with enthusiasm. For they believe that churches, instead of furthering the Christian cause, often frustrate it. In their view, churches suffer from the malaise that affects all institutions: people are subordinated to the institution and corporate self-perpetuation becomes an ideal in its own right. As Bonhoeffer put it:

Our Church, which has been fighting in these years only for its self-preservation, as though that were an end in itself, is incapable of taking the word of reconciliation and redemption to mankind and the world.

These words, written about the Confessing church in Nazi Germany, are true, to a greater or lesser extent, of all churches everywhere — even those most loosely-organised and ‘free’. The charge of self-centredness and self-aggrandisement, so often levelled at the Roman Catholic church — with its vast hierarchies and huge vested interests — may also be levelled at small, loose federations of local congregations. Indeed, it seems sometimes that the smaller the denomination the more inward-looking it tends to be, and the more pre-occupied with ‘building up numbers’ and preserving its corporate identity.

It could even be said that churches tend to encourage a kind of corporate selfishness that puts loyalty to the church before loyalty to the truth. Higher marks are awarded to the ineffectual individual who turns up twice a Sunday than to the man who comes once a month and disturbs everyone by his passion for truth. Churches are for the most part not greatly concerned about truth. They prefer ‘goodness’; it is so much less disturbing. Indeed churches sometimes attract people who are on the run from truth, particularly the truth about themselves. There are people who go to church to get away from the stress and strain of their relationships with others. The son who cannot get on with his father, the wife who cannot relate to her husband, the

parents with ‘problem’ children — such people, it seems, find in an ideal relationship with ‘God’ (or his earthly representative, the parson) a temporary solvent for their dilemma, a consolation for their failure to live an authentic personal life. Such people certainly need help, but it is doubtful if churches can provide it. They can provide ‘support’ for people, but because of a lack of psychological understanding, because of a tendency to collide with people’s fantasies, they cannot offer the truth that makes men free. Thus the churches can do more harm than good. They offer men substitutes for the real thing. Men ask for crutches and the churches give them freely. But what they really want is Christ, who made the lame to walk. Is it any wonder therefore that radicals despair of the churches? Can an institution so largely composed of the spiritually lame and blind ever be reformed?

The radicals’ unwillingness to spend time in reforming the institutions of Christianity is matched by a reluctance to rewrite its theology. Here again their attitude is in sharp contrast to that of the liberals. Liberals, one might say, seek to change men’s outlook on life by changing the words that they use to describe it. They are pre-occupied with the task of altering the wording of creeds, cutting out offending articles of religion and turning out an endless stream of new statements of faith. The ‘religion for modern man’, which the liberal hopes to see established, seems primarily to be a religion whose language, didactic or devotional, is clear, rational and acceptable to the contemporary in the street. Radicals, on the other hand, paying less heed to the words which come from men’s mouths and recognising the inadequacy of all words to convey the inner meaning of things, are often content to leave words very much as they are — provided always (and here they acknowledge a deep debt to liberalism) that the words are not used as a test of faith. Traditional doctrines therefore are regarded as parables pointing the way to truth rather than as final and comprehensive statements of faith.

Even the doctrine of the Trinity, the traditional Aunt Sally of liberal Christendom, may not be entirely without merit. It may seem to be a mass of illogicalities or even, as one bishop admitted, 'a supreme example of closed circuit thinking', but for all that it does at least represent a genuine attempt to come to terms with the paradox at the heart of things — with the truth, so contrary to 'common sense', that in spite of the diversity of the experienced world ultimate reality is one.

Radicals spend little time arguing about dogmas because they believe that dogmas (the rationalisation of experience) are always secondary to experience itself. 'The approach to truth for our generation,' writes John Robinson, 'starts from life rather than dogma.' In some ways, of course, it is so much easier to start from dogma. It is so much pleasanter to live in a world of ideas that we can manipulate at will, where good and evil can be safely compartmentalised, than to live in the real world where love and hate are inseparable and black inevitably shades off into white. As John Macmurray pointed out in a much neglected Essex Hall Lecture, *Idealism against Religion* (1944), men's preoccupation with ideas and ideals has prevented them from living creatively in the real world of persons. The greatest modern idealist, one might say, was Adolf Hitler, who failed to relate to anyone and rode roughshod over humanity. Contrary to popular supposition, idealism is often not the handmaid but the enemy of Christianity.

The liberal aim has been to find the ideas which will convey the meaning of Christianity in what the Hibbert Trust deed terms 'its simplest and most intelligible form'. It has thus attempted to reduce Christianity to a formula, simple to state and easy to understand. One very popular liberal formula is: the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man and the Leadership of Jesus. It is clear, direct and simple. Sunday school children can learn it by heart and even perhaps picture its meaning in their minds. It has the advantage of being

so much more simple and intelligible than the orthodox Trinity. Moreover, it is so inoffensive a statement that almost anyone can accept it. On hearing it quoted for the first time a man will say: 'Why, that's what I've always believed! I must have been a Christian without knowing it.' But can one say that such a statement contains the essence of Christianity? It is a plain enough statement admittedly, but what, in terms of the blood and sweat of life, does it mean? Though philosophically satisfying, it is psychologically naive. It seems to suggest that everything in the garden is (or at any rate ought to be) lovely: but such loveliness can only exist in the world of our own 'nice' thoughts — with everything 'nasty' shut out. By contrast, Christian 'orthodoxy', with its recognition of the hate that put love on the cross, often seems to come nearer to the facts of our paradoxical human situation.

We can present Christianity in a simple and intelligible form if we like, but we do so at the risk of robbing it of all existential significance. A generation which finds in its art and literature and folk songs a courageous willingness to face the truth — even the seamier side of the truth about oneself — will not be fobbed off with the clear, bright vision of 18th century rationalism (nor, for that matter, with the equally over-simplified world-view of its antidote, Methodism). We cannot hope to resurrect the 'simple and intelligible' gospel, because there is a sense in which the gospel must for ever remain complex and unintelligible. Even the statement 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' is complex and unintelligible. Liberals, reacting against the idea of self-love, have sometimes sought to change it to 'Love thy neighbour *more than* thyself'. 'We think that's what Jesus really meant', they say. But Jesus, it seems, meant no such thing. Modern psychology has restored the original insight of Jesus that if we do not first love ourselves we cannot love another. There is a strangeness about the Gospel which no amount of common-sense Platonism can ever quite dispel. Jesus spoke in parables which only a few

could understand. Those who could understand did so not because of any great capacity for logical thought, but because of their powers of intuitive understanding. In a word, they were 'tuned in' to his wavelength.

The 'teachings of Jesus', which feature so prominently in liberal propaganda, cannot therefore be taken out of their living context. 'Love thine enemies' might be regarded as mere sentimental idealism, were it not the words of one who, in his relationships with people, was always so unsentimental and at times seemingly so severe. The Gospel picture is not one of a 'great teacher', who by his eloquence and persuasiveness, demolished men's wrong ideas. Rather it is of a great healer, who by the power of his spirit liberated men from the bondage of fear and mistrust. The fear was cast out by the power of God which was shown to be infinitely and universally available. The power of God was real for all who wished to avail themselves of it. 'Do you *wish* to be healed?' Jesus asked the sick man by the Pool of Bethesda. What an extraordinary question to ask someone who for thirty-eight years had daily prayed for complete recovery! But Jesus 'knew what was in man'. Did the sick man really wish to be healed? Did he really want to exchange the security of his sick man's status for the freedom and uncertainty of abundant life? Jesus recognised the ambivalence in the situation; he saw the game, called the bluff, and the game was up. Something in the person of Jesus — the tone of voice, quiet yet authoritative, the countenance, compassionate yet stern — overcame the sick man's fear of freedom. He responded positively. Yes, he did want to be healed. 'Then take up your bed and walk.' And he did so.

Today, thanks to the pioneering work of a great modern Jew, Sigmund Freud, we are able to understand more about the so-called 'healing miracles' of Jesus. We know more about the causes of sickness. We realise how much of our sickness, physical and mental, has its origin in the unconscious mind. We realise how

many of our ills stem from disturbances in our intimate personal relationships — not simply (as Freud believed) our past relationships with parents and siblings but (as modern existential psychology is revealing) in our present relationships with those with whom we live and work. The sick man is seen to be the man who is isolated from others, the man who cannot communicate even with his wife, the man who can draw attention to his predicament only by being ill. Thus the psychotherapist, in helping to open the blocked channels of communication, in breaking down the barriers of fear and mistrust that separate man from man, is helping man to achieve that more abundant life of which the Gospel speaks. Today it is the psychotherapist rather than the priest who can help men to throw off their self-imposed limitations, to overcome their fear of growth and change and freedom, and to rise to their full stature as 'sons of the living God'.

This recognition of the practical, psychotherapeutic nature of Christianity seems to be characteristic of the new Christian radicalism. While liberals have generally stuck to the old pre-Freudian categories of thought (principles, ideals, values), radicals seem readier to live fully in the post-Freudian world. Liberals respond to a philosophical idealism that owes much to Plato, radicals to what Kathleen Nott calls the 'psychological realism' of the Gospels. This is another way of saying that for liberals the major influence is Greek, for the radicals it is Hebrew. The thinker who has probably exercised the most profound influence on radicals is Martin Buber, the author of *I and Thou*, who has revealed as only a Jewish poet could the essential Jewishness of Jesus. In particular he has shown what Jesus meant by 'faith'. Whereas official Christianity has tended to adopt the Greek view of faith, which was *pistis* or faith in the truth of a proposition, for Jesus, as for the great Hebrew prophets, faith was *emunah* or trust, trust in an ultimate purpose in the face of the apparent purposelessness of the experienced world. The 'men of little faith' rebuked by Jesus are thus to be found

in our day not among those who cannot recite the creeds but among those who live as though the universe were purposeless and human life pointless and absurd. The men of faith on the other hand are those who trust life, trust people, trust themselves.

'Trust' might be described as the key-word in the new Christian vocabulary. Ecclesiastical structures may be crumbling, morality may be in the melting-pot, 'God' (man's comfortable idea) may be dead — but in spite of this upheaval, or perhaps because of it, men can still trust the Holy Spirit. Men can trust the divine creative energy that is for ever at work in the world, bringing order out of chaos, good out of evil, life out of death. The real God whom men know as love is the same yesterday, today and for ever. Men may try to shut him out of their lives or pretend that he is not or, in their blindness, try to obstruct his purposes. But no power on earth can prevail against God. His kingdom *is*. Men don't have to go out and build it for him, as the old liberal 'social gospel' would have it. They have to stay where they are and realise that they are in the midst of the kingdom and it is in the midst of them.

Faith in the kingdom leads inevitably to commitment to the man who lived to proclaim it, Jesus Christ. 'Commitment to Christ' is a term which liberals tend to avoid, partly because it has been debased by centuries of evangelical bigotry and partly because it is thought to imply an intolerant attitude to non-Christian religions. Here, it seems, is a further point of difference between radicals and liberals. Liberals tend to be universalists, blending their Christianity with Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam; radicals, feeling the need of a focal point somewhere, focus their attention on Christ. They believe that truth is to be found not by covering the widest possible area of human experience, but by penetrating in depth at one particular place and time. And what place could be more appropriate than Palestine, the meeting-point of so many cultures, the scene of so much dramatic history, the homeland of the Jews?

And what time could be more significant than that century of new beginnings when that archetypal man, Jesus, walked the earth, creating an upheaval in the western world that will not (and cannot) be persuaded to subside? 'Commitment to Christ' does not mean a refusal to recognise other revelations in other places and at other times. It means a readiness to take time and place seriously — to take history seriously. If one is to be fully human one must take history seriously, for it is history and not in some metaphysical world of ideas that man has his being. To say that two thousand years ago 'God intervened in history' makes little metaphysical sense. But as a parable of man's encounter with the 'beyond in the midst of life' it points the way to truth.

Those who have an inkling of this truth will want others to share their vision, but will never want to impose it. So-called Christians, whose security demands that everyone else be made to hold the same opinions as they do, have brought shame upon themselves and the name of Christ by their noisy approaches to the 'unsaved'. Christianity is not a set of propositions to be thrust down men's throats. It is a way to be followed, a truth to be done, a life to be lived. As Bonhoeffer insisted, it is 'a silent and hidden affair'. Its presence is to be discerned in that quiet realm where faith issues in love and love leads inevitably to worship. Christianity is not a persuasion that people are 'of', nor a cause that people are 'for', nor an institution that people are 'in'. It is essentially non-exclusive. It is, one might say, a wavelength — invisible, indefinable yet unmistakable — which some people in some places at some times (whether they realise it or not) are 'on'.

But all this was said much more succinctly long ago by the author of the First Epistle of John: 'He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him.'

World Faiths and the Secular

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THE ARGUMENT I wish to develop may be baldly stated in the following four assertions: the world is now being dominated and transformed by the process of *secularization*; the spiritual source of this process is to be found in the Hebrew - Christian - Biblical faith; historically this process has found expression in the spread of 'western civilisation' throughout the world; these facts have important implications and consequences for the world religions and for our understanding of the aims and methods of inter-faith relationships.

There is now an extensive literature dealing with secularisation. Among recent small books I would mention Alan Richardson's *Religion in Contemporary Debate*, Leslie Newbigin's *Honest Religion for Secular Men* (SCM paperbacks) and Colin Williams's *Faith in a Secular Age* (Fontana). Two rather fuller treatments are Gibson Winter's *The New Creation as Metropolis* and Harvey Cox's *The Secular City*. In connection with the particular aspect of the subject with which I am now concerned, the most important book is, however, *Christianity in World History* by Arend Th van Leeuwen (Edinburgh House Press).

The meaning of secularization is thus defined by Harvey Cox: 'It is the losing of the world from religious and quasi-religious understandings of itself, the dispelling of all closed world-views, the breaking of all supernatural myths and sacred symbols. It represents

... the discovery by man that he has been left with the world on his hands, that he can no longer blame fortune or the furies for what he does with it. Secularization is man turning his attention away from worlds beyond and towards this world and this time' (op cit, pp 1-2).

In contrast secularism is defined by Gibson Winter as involving 'the claim that some institution or formula of truth is absolute, beyond historicity, beyond the limitations of human perspective. Secularism is secularization become profane or demonic' (op cit, p 43). 'If secularization designates to content of man's coming of age,' says Cox, 'urbanization describes the context in which it is occurring' (op cit, p 4). Newbigin calls upon us to recognise that secularization 'opens up the possibilities of new freedom and of new enslavement for men', and that 'it is in terms of shared secular hopes and a shared secular peril that we can speak today of the human race as a unity' (op cit, pp 19, 14).

It is quite possible to give an intelligible (and, for a good many purposes, an adequate) interpretation of secularization in more than one way. For example, from the point of view of the historian, secularization means that process of liberation from ecclesiastical and theological control which was signalled in the Renaissance and the Reformation. To the sociologist, on the other hand, secularization is simply the expression of the increasing and inevitable differentiation and specialisation that have marked the development of most human communities. And to the philosopher, secularization may be understood as denoting the third and final stage, succeeding the 'theological' and the 'philosophical', in an evolutionary schematization of history.

But, increasingly, it is coming to be recognized that this tremendous, dynamic movement of secularization which has the whole world in its grip cannot be adequately accounted for or understood apart from the faith, the insight and the vision of an otherwise incon-

siderable Semitic people of nearly three thousand years ago.

It is precisely such an interpretation that is maintained by van Loeuwen in the book I have already referred to. It was, he says, the 'theocratic' understanding of the Hebrews, with its radical distinction between God and the created order and its conception of man as called to live in creaturely responsibility for the world under God, that asserted itself against the 'ontocratic' understanding of the ancient religions and cultures. For these, the gods, mankind, the world, the social and political structures — all these formed a single changeless totality which it was impious to question and impossible to change. A strikingly parallel thesis is advanced in the Gifford Lectures for 1959-60 by CF von Weizsacker entitled *The Relevance of Science*. The author, a world-famous nuclear physicist, makes two assertions relevant to our subject. He argues that 'the modern world can largely be understood as the result of the secularization of Christianity' (op cit, p 162). He claims that 'only the religions of the Judaeo-Christian tradition seem to have the concept of an unrepeatable history of our world,' and he adds: 'I would not regard it as fortuitous that the modern concept of history has arisen in a Christian culture' (op cit, pp 49-50). But it is not only the conception of history that we owe to this tradition. Von Weizsacker sees in the Biblical creation myths the ultimate source of the outlook which has made possible modern science. 'The gods of nature,' he argues, 'have been vanquished by the God whom Christians call "our Father"; therefore man, as God's son, has received power over nature. As he is son and not servant, he is free, and his freedom includes the freedom to act against the will of his Father, the God of love'. Thus, says von Weizsacker, 'secularized reality is a word by which I try to describe the world which is delivered from the gods without belonging to the God of charity' (op cit, pp 178, 92-3). The paradox which lies at the heart of the concept of secu-

larization — that a 'theocratic' understanding of the world should in the end remove from the minds of men the very notion of the living God — is implied by von Weizsacker in the words 'God himself has deprived the world of its divinity' (op cit, p 93), and is expressed in his opinion that 'modern science would not perhaps have been possible without Christianity' (op cit, p 181).

It is an obvious fact of history that the cultural and material characteristics of European civilisation have been and are being disseminated throughout the world with ever increasing rapidity. The analogy which, for van Leeuwen, expresses the nature of this process most adequately is not that of mechanical 'impact' nor of military 'conquest' but rather that of 'virus infection', spreading rapidly and mysteriously and producing all kinds of unforeseeable reactions and consequences.

If we ask what is the spiritual source of this 'infection' the answer must be that it is the ambiguous liberation of men from the 'ontocratic' world view by the Hebrew-Christian faith, a liberation which, now in its secular phase, expresses itself more and more powerfully in terms of technology and urbanisation.

Without too seriously oversimplifying and so distorting the whole picture, we may perhaps distinguish four main forms which this 'infection' of the rest of the world by the 'revolutionary west' has taken. There is, first, exploration, conquest and colonization. With this, historically, has been closely related, as a second form, the work of Christian missions. Thirdly, there are the apparently irresistible forces of economic and technological exploitation, with all the social, political and cultural effects which follow. Lastly, there is the spread of a new ideology, that of communism, anti-religious in form and conscious intention yet essentially religious in its appeals to human idealism and self-sacrifice. Concerning all these forms, van Leeuwen has challenging things to say. Thus, referring to the first two he says: 'The expansion of the west is a very special instance and manifestation of the driving force

which carried the gospel from Hebrew to Greek and then from Greek to barbarian. At the same time this helped to produce and to release, in Greek and barbarian alike, dynamic impulses which were thereby multiplied in countless new ways' (op cit, p 263).

Of the third, van Leeuwen says: 'Whether they like it or not, the non-western civilizations are confronted now with a full scale invasion by technocracy, and it is not possible for them — even should they wish to do so — to dodge the impact of that intrusion or the relentless transformation it involved.' (op cit, p 407). Indeed, from the point of view of our special concern, the most important feature of this 'intrusion' is that it 'conserves within itself the lethal property of destroying, in the long run, the very roots of religion' (op cit, p 404).

But it is in his treatment of communism as 'the Islam of the technocratic era' (op cit, p 347) that van Leeuwen's thesis is most suggestive. At its deepest level it is, he claims, a product of, a reaction to and a judgement upon the Hebrew - Biblical - Christian faith. In communism, he argues, 'the most westerly outpost of Asia has discovered a highly effective defence against the threat of western domination, because it pursues a western ideology in an orientalised style' (op cit, p 346). But because communism is 'the prolongation . . . of the "ontocratic pattern" of the state,' it cannot hold out any 'genuine prospect of re-creation or of fundamental renewal (op cit, p 380). Thus, in both Russia and China, 'a pre-industrial society is transformed into a technocratic one, yet without any revolutionary change in the basic pattern of oriental despotism' (ibid).

The argument we have been following requires us to recognize two main consequences. The first is that the world-wide and ever accelerating process of secularization marks the end of the 'religious' period of human history, the period throughout which it has seemed obvious to most men that, beyond the visible and tangible world of sense experience, there is a spiritual realm to whose demands and offers it is vital that we

should learn rightly to respond. The second consequence is that this same process, in its technologic dimensions, is reaching what van Leeuwen calls a 'total impasse'. This shows itself on the one hand in the possibility of nuclear suicide, and on the other in the ever increasing imbalance between food supply and population.

It is obvious that this situation offers an unprecedented challenge to all the world faiths. It may also be agreed that Christians bear a special responsibility both to understand and also to respond creatively to this situation, since, as we have argued, it is the Hebrew — Christian world view which has been the originative cause and occasion of it. What, in conclusion, are the implications of all this for our understanding of the relations between the world faiths?

It seems to me clear, in the first place, that we must not think in terms of sharpening rivalry among them, of placing greater emphasis upon the conversion of individuals from one religion to another. In the second place, it seems to me no less obvious that to think in terms of trying to create some kind of 'common front' among the world faiths, ever against and in conscious opposition to the forces of secularization, is neither relevant nor possible. To think otherwise is, I believe, to ignore the deepest significance of secularization, and also to be blind to the radical philosophical and theological differences among the world faiths.

Nevertheless, it seems clear to me, in the third place, that there is a two-fold task in which the world faiths can and should collaborate. To express what I mean, perhaps I may make use of van Leeuwen's medical analogy and say that at the philosophical and theological level it is a task of *diagnosis*. This involves a deep and sustained collaboration in study which might well be focused upon the themes of man in Society, the meaning of history and the transcendence of God. These would need to deal in depth with such problems as the existentialist isolation of the individual, the Marxist sacrifice

of the individual to the collective and the development of a theological critique of man's responsibility for the use of natural resources and of wealth.

But at another level, and drawing upon the widest possible range of knowledge, experience and skill, there is a task of *treatment*. This might well be directed towards two main objectives. The first is the humanisation of the structures of urban, industrial and technological society — seeking to make it possible for men to achieve a fully human existence under the conditions of the modern world. The second is the effort to confront the twin dangers of global war and global poverty, which come to their sharpest expression in areas of rapid social change and of racial tension.

I shall conclude with some questions posed by Canon Max Warren in his book *The Missionary Movement from Britain in Modern History*. He asks: 'Can a religion be radically this - world - affirming without the - other - world - denying? Can we welcome material development without spiritual impoverishment? Can we develop an asceticism which says 'no' for the right reasons . . .? Can we discover an ethic for the affluent society? In a word, can a religious faith be the inspiring heart of the world that is coming to be?

We may well agree with Max Warren's own response when he says: 'anyone who imagines there is an easy answer . . . has not begun to think. At this point every resurgent religion, every sign of revival in any religion, stands under a huge question mark.'

The New Symbolism

EG Lee

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THE ABSOLUTISMS of the historic religions are being destroyed by the modern consciousness. The latter, now, is totally aware of events breaking into history that the old religions cannot assimilate or explain. One of these is the new human contiguity that has been created almost within a generation. It will soon be possible for a man to travel to any part of our planet within a day, and by television men can actually see what is happening in any part of the globe. The supposition under these circumstances that any part of the human race has a direct revelatory knowledge of the spiritual fate of the whole of humanity denied to others is becoming less and less acceptable. It is becoming less acceptable also when one of the living institutions of this new generation, without which it could hardly function at all, is the United Nations. Representatives of most of the nations of the world now meet regularly, in what very nearly must mean continuous session, to deal collectively with what are, in effect, common ethical problems. Political problems, no matter how nationally self-centred they may be, have to be judged collectively sooner or later by a common morality — otherwise settlement is not possible. Buddhists, Moslems, Hindus, communists and secularists of all sorts have to thrash out a common denominator of agreement, and not only for an occasion only, but for a permanent policy. This supposes a common ethical

base in all religions and the so-called non-religions. In terms of morality there is no vital difference in the ethical actions of men who are asked to judge what amount to the common problems of humanity.

Morality may be only a part of religion, but it lies deep enough in the roots of each to force questions about absolute revelatory claims when they all lead to much the same judgments upon political and humanitarian matters.

This is a new climate in religion, forced into being by new historic events that modern man has to receive into his consciousness. It is one of the forces shaking the old claims and certainties of the historic religions.

There is another force. It is readily recognised now that the symbols of religions are the creations of the human spirit to enable it to enter into communication with a reality other than itself — whatever that reality may be. The human spirit — at least in terms of religion — has to live in communication with an invisible being which sustains, underlies, and makes permanent what is called the material world. There is no communication, none whatever, between what a man is and the world to which he belongs without the creation of symbolic structures. Even a tool in his hand is a symbol; it is nothing in terms of its structure, unless it allows man to communicate in a vital way with a portion of the real world. A hammer is not a hammer unless it does its job, and a radio-telescope is not what it is called unless it makes possible communication with the stars.

Religious symbols enable man to communicate with the unseen reality which he believes sustains his world (no matter how that unseen reality is understood or regarded). They enable him to communicate with the invisible reality found within himself and within the visible facts of creation, and, in theistic religions and perhaps all religions, with the total transcendent being which is the focus and object of worship.

Religious symbols are the language of the spirit; they

allow a man to say momentarily and permanently what has been given to him by tradition and his own inner life about the secrets of being alive. They allow him to impose harmony and order upon what otherwise would be chaos (so little can he know about it), the chaos of the natural world through which he passes as a fugitive unless he can perceive order in it, and the chaos of his own interior life, plunged hither and thither by forces he cannot understand, unless he can grasp them in some way as Plato's charioteer grasped the reins of his horses in flight.

He believes too that these symbols have not been constructed by him alone but by the aid of the imperitive insight or light that reaches him from the chaos itself. They speak the language of the communication of spirit. The invisible reality *is* the chaos unless it sets moving in man the creative capacity to live with it. Just as the 'spirit brooded above the waters' in the old creation story, so the spirit of man broods above the unknown with which he is confronted; he is able to move to the creation, namely to the structure of his symbolic world, because in the chaos or the unknown there is a hidden spirit which forces him to do what he has to do in order to live, to create in communication with whatever he believes his world to be.

The symbolic world is the way to man's life and freedom. It enables him to apply an order of the spirit upon a material world that would otherwise hold him in thrall. He knows because he believes, and he believes because he hears the bells of truth and affirmation ringing in the symbols he inherits and creates.

But the symbols are not dead things, they are creations of the spirit. So frequently has it been pointed out that when symbols are worshipped for themselves, rather than for the reality to which they point, then the life has gone out of them. They are ghosts; they lie; they sham order and do not produce it: indeed in their sham they create a bitter disorder, they substitute death for life and induce a dark confusion of the spirit

rather than a harmony which produces light. Even a hammer lying on the ground is a useless object unless by its meaning it declares its function.

Now the symbolic world of man, as represented by the religions, has encountered an eruption of the spirit, beside which the new contiguity of humanity is a small matter. Man has inherited his symbolic world from the past. It did for the past what the past intended it should do. It lifted the spirit from the grip of the material world; it released the soul from the tomb of time, for time is a tomb if it means nothing more for the soul than three score years and ten; it enabled men to march heroically or serenely through the events that beat into their lives. But that past is no longer here. Save in memory and reflection it does not perform the function of uniting man's spirit with the invisible world. It has been exploded by the modern cosmology, by new philosophies of history, and by the consciousness of modern man forced to be united to the visible world in an entirely new way. Even a child now knows that light can pass through material objects — and that in itself is a far more marvellous fact than the ancient miracles.

Religion has to cope with the fact that its ancient certainty has gone because the ancient symbols no longer perform their task. They no longer express in terms that are real the relationship between man and invisible being. For masses of people they are no longer creatively alive, and this is as true for the ordinary people as for those who are supposed to be intellectually inquiring and troubled.

The point of breakdown within the Christian religion is at this point of symbolism, and no amount of attempted escape into some kind of moral or social solution will hide it. The breakdown is at the point of belief, in the relationship between what the spirit longs to say of what it knows, and what it is expected to say through symbols that are no longer relevant. The past, as the past, no longer communicates with or illuminates the unknown. It does not describe or explain Being in terms that are

real in the modern world.

This can be illustrated through the crucial symbolism of the Incarnation. Through this doctrine God was visibly united with the human race. Being was objectified in the human form of the person of Christ, and in that form lived for ever within humanity. God became visibly tangible in Christ. This symbolism did its job of enabling men to believe that God was not only transcendent but immanent as well. Being became operative in history and could be seen purposively existing there.

But philosophic history and the new cosmology has broken this imagery and taken from it all its power to explain the relationship between God and man. The history of man goes back so far in the dim imaginative past, and consequently stretches so far into the indeterminate and unknown future that it is impossible to fix a central point, as it were, where God supposedly intervened in the passage of human time. To choose a point some two thousand years ago, and an exact place, where this intervention took place, eliminating the untold millennia that preceded it and the unknown future that is to come, is to make nonsense of the doctrine of God 'stepping into history'. Where was he during the near enough timeless period of pre-history? What rationality can be attached to the fact that God visibly revealed himself, or choosed to do so, some two thousand years ago rather than three, four, or for that matter, ten thousand? Why to the Jews rather than the Chinese who two thousand years ago were on a relatively high level of civilisation, or to the Greeks, or for that matter — since culture and education were not all that important in carpenters and fishermen — to the ancient Britons?

A central point in time and a particular point in place in which the invisible God becomes visible for the first time are no longer conceivable in the modern imaginative idea of history and the new cosmology. The former notions no longer symbolise what is real.

The doctrine of the Incarnation no longer does its job of symbolically allowing the human spirit to live in communication with God. Its absolutism, that of explaining without a grain of doubt what happened in the past, is broken, and consequently its certainty is broken also. A new symbolism has to be created to allow man's spirit to be at home with the spirit of God. (This, of course, is within the Christian religion; there is little doubt that some similar creative act has to take place in the other religions also.)

How shall the new symbolism be created?

It would of course be presumptuous to give a ready-made answer. The whole nature of the creative act is involved and who would dare to be comprehensive about that? But since the act has to take place in persons, and since it is inevitably already taking place in every creak and cranny of the modern life — man seeking for the wherewithal of the spirit in which he can fulfil himself — it is not too presumptuous to suggest at which one particular point the form of change has to take place.

It should be inserted in parenthesis that it is unlikely that the Christian religion will fade out of any Western culture that can be seen ahead. In some form or other it is likely to remain. How much, for instance, is imbedded in a disguised form in the relevance of Russian communism, and the criticism it suggests in communism of the official Marxist doctrine? It is too near to the needs of the human spirit for anyone traditionally acquainted with it for it to vanish and some other religion, as yet unforeseen, to take its place. It is likely that the traditional symbolism will be re-created, as is all too evident in the conflict now taking place within the churches.

But the point of recreation can be suggested. The story of Gethsemene may be considered.

The story in the structural form in which it is recorded in the New Testament will not stand up to historic criticism. Leaving out the celestial visitant in the

form of an angel the old question must arise, as so often with regard to the Gospels: who was there to record what took place? Who knew so intimately what was taking place between Christ and God? Who had such a profound insight into the nature of Jesus' soul, as the Son of God, that he could record what took place there in a moment of trial never experienced in that way by any man before or since? For according to the suppositions of the story no man ever could be as Jesus was.

A miracle has to be accepted beyond all other miracles; that what was recorded was, as it were, written with the total knowledge of God, that the Bible is a holy book — and the gospels are particularly holy — in the sense of being beyond all criticism, examination or interpretation. This is no longer possible. This particular miracle at least cannot be accepted by modern culture. To stress in terms of the incredible that the incredible should be believed even when it defies every form of enlightenment is not faith or choice — it is desperately near the despair of faith losing itself in a quagmire of irrationality.

Such a story as Gethsemene — and what a wonderful story it is! — must say what it really says and not what it is supposed to convey in a past supernaturalism. It must penetrate into the very abyss of loneliness and doubt, where a man is alone in the night of the soul, so alone that his nearest friends cannot know what is happening, and decisions of consequence and horror have to come from him and from him alone. That such a despair of the soul and the triumph over it should be written down in symbolic form, introducing a man to the very foundations of his life, and bringing him through those into ultimate communion with God, is to be totally accepted and relied upon.

This happened, but in the soul of man. This happens, but always in the soul of man. This is no absolute unique event cut off from every other event. It is primary in its nature of belonging to a man. It belongs to the very nature of everyman. This is a permanent condition of being, to be experienced at some time or

other, at some place or other, wherever men are to be found. No matter how one expresses it, sooner or later, every man is left alone in various degrees of trouble and agony of the spirit. It is well to know that this is true. In symbolic form it is well to have it expressed. But this means the total transformation of the traditional interpretation of the story. This event happened to someone called Jesus of Nazareth, and because to him it can be buried in the memory and consciousness to be called upon when needed. But this means the transformation of the symbol from one of miracle, uniqueness, and supernatural isolation, to one that lives with in the experience of everyman and can be spoken of by everyman.

A new incarnation is reached through the profundities of the human spirit, and in these depths the re-created symbolism is no longer confined to one absolute religion but stretches far beyond its bounds to meet all men everywhere. It becomes a new communication of the nature of God within what is real in the contemporary consciousness. Men are not forsaken in their aloneness; it is the nature of aloneness to discover this. Through one of the basic human experiences, the finger of God, as it were, is felt, and a new reality is given to God in what has become real for contemporary man.

Similarly within the Christian symbolism of the Cross, through which so much that is vital to Christianity is interpreted. As in the story of Gethsemene there is a total truth imbedded that has to be extracted from the traditional symbolism. There is the fact, in so far as history can speak of fact, of a man being crucified on a cross. The fact is illuminated by profundities of insight that penetrate into mysterious depths of man's relationship with God. The alone man is innocent, totally good, and suffering senseless barbarity and pain. Symbolism is piled upon symbolism in the story — God involved in the suffering and death, the use of the scapegoat, the saviour for our sins, all involved in a structural account that apart from the probability of the

death will not stand up to modern scrutiny.

But buried in the structure again is a living truth that belongs to the human spirit everywhere and in all time. The unjust condemnation and suffering of innocence; the defeat of goodness when goodness ought to be triumphant; the living and the real held up to the derision of the sham and the trivial; the martyrdom of the eternal within the illusions of time; the apparent desertion by God of the sorrow and suffering in a world which longs to meet him. All these truths are buried in the story; they are universal.

The traditional symbolism confined in its very nature to an absolute religion, so crudely indeed that only the members of the religion can use it and find peace through it, must be recreated if any communication with reality is to be found through it. Again the traditional structure must be transformed from a supernatural symbolism dependent once more upon miracle, to the universalism of what a man may dare to find in his heart and share with others. Within the new philosophies of history and the new cosmology there remains the solitary heart beating with its own problems of suffering and the casual defeat of goodness — and these problems have to be transformed into symbols that will lead men to the very heart of the unknown world.

The Christian incarnation is transformed into a living interpretation of God's penetration of history from the absolutism of an historic religion to an infinite comprehension in terms of the modern consciousness of all men everywhere.

The future of religion is unknown to us, but one thing is certain: that future will rest upon what men can dare in the present. And perhaps there is no deeper test of truth than to ask imaginatively what will be true in a thousand year's time — and to look for the seeds of that in the present.

There is every reason to believe that the act of creation in religion is taking place now in the spiritual ferment of man. The one irreligious act perhaps to ignore the ferment.

The Future of God

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IT IS COMMONLY supposed, in the west at any rate, that religion is something to do with 'God'. The religious man is one who believes in God, worships him, seeks to understand and do his will, and to 'know him and enjoy him for ever'. In the Jewish-Christian tradition, man is made in the image of God out of the dust of the earth; he is a bridge between God and nature. Human love and creativity, however powerful and wonderful they may be, are our response to the grace of God.

'Loss of faith' has usually been supposed to mean 'loss of faith in the existence or the goodness of God'. The idea of a religion without God would seem to be a contradiction in terms. As Renan remarked in connection with Auguste Comte's Positivism: 'Religion sans Dieu? Mon Dieu, quelle religion!'

Different philosophers have approached the definition of 'God' in different ways. He has been pictured as a super-man who is the companion of ordinary men, or as the Greek or Hegelian Absolute. Christians have talked of him in simple stories, basing their 'models' on human fatherhood. They have also talked in terms of Necessary Being or the *Summum Bonum*. Some have found him chiefly, or even only, in the sacred history of the Hebrews. Other have looked for him in the spacious firmament on high. Some have taken their model from Jesus, in whom he was incarnate. Others have looked into the depths of their own being and found

divine spark there. A really 'Catholic' theologian like St Thomas Aquinas looked everywhere and found 'God' everywhere.

God is present or immanent wherever he acts. So, for Aquinas, God was the ultimate, the *summum bonum*. He took all the possible 'models', all the facets of the ultimately worshipful, and said that they all pointed to the same Being — 'which all men call God'. The monotheism of Aquinas was in the last resort a supreme act of faith in the unity, the coherence, the rationality, the goodness and the power of the *ratio sufficiens* of the universe. For Aquinas, there was meaning in reality as a whole, and 'God' was the key to this meaning as well as its source. What the Catholics were symbolising in their cultus and dogmas, what the church had received in its revelation, what Plato and Aristotle were talking about in their philosophy, however different their languages might be — this was in the last analysis 'God'. For Aquinas, all good, sensitive, and rational men were trying to express their insight into the nature of *one* transcendent reality. Unlike some of the modern existentialist solipsists, Aquinas did *not* believe that every individual man had his own private world of values and that the reconciliation of these private worlds was simply a matter for the politicians and the sociologists. He believed that all men were in their several ways responding to one Reality which transcended the individual experience of any of them. We may differ in our languages and our perspectives, but we are all trying to talk about that which transcends any of our private worlds. Our private goods can be rationalised and justified only in terms of the (public) *summum bonum* — 'which all men call God'.⁽¹⁾

In traditional western theology, 'God' cannot be defined, nor can he be represented by any one model of idol. It is not possible to take all the symbols which point to, or produce, revelation (or, in fashionable modern terminology, 'disclosure situations') and to synthesise them into one compendious and consistent

account of 'the divine'. But there are many symbols which point to the divine. They are by no means all verbal symbols — every form of art has been used for the stimulation and expression of worship. It is in the context of worship that 'God-talk' has its chief place. The function of God is to be transcendent as the object of worship. This does not necessarily mean that God is an occult being or a supernatural being. What it does mean is that when men are worshipping they are dominated by the 'Heavenly Eros' — they are looking up to whatever is most wonderful or worthwhile. God is the good, or whatever is ultimately valuable. Worship may be associated with ecstasy, aspiration, or the realisation of ideals. The traditional system of worship has been designed to confront men with the divine and to make them *capax dei*. As Whitehead argued, theology is the theoretical rationalisation of what men do in worship.

In order to be able to worship properly, one must, of course, be confronted with, and have a revelation of, something worth worshipping — something which appeals to the imagination and the reason and commands one's allegiance. We need to be receptive to the divine and capable of appreciating it, recognising it and imaginatively picturing it. That is why Dr J Estlin Carpenter, addressing Manchester College, Oxford, on 18 October 1898, introduced a course of lectures on Revelation by a discussion of 'The Education of the Religious Imagination'.⁽²⁾ To free and to train the imagination he regarded as the chief work of a theological college. He prefaced his lecture, when published, with a quotation from Wordsworth's poem, *The Recluse*:

By words

Which speak of nothing more than what we are,
 Would I arouse the sensual from their sleep
 Of death, and win the vacant and the vain
 To noble raptures; while my voice proclaims
 How exquisitely the individual Mind
 (And the progressive powers perhaps no less
 of the whole species) to the external world

Is fitted — and how exquisitely, too —
 Theme this but little hears of among men —
 The external World is fitted to the Mind;
 And the creation (by no lower name
 Can it be called) which they with blended might
 Accomplish: this is our high argument.

There is a great difference between reacting to a vision of a 'God' who *must* be worshipped, when truly known, and feeling that we would like to worship and must therefore look round for a suitable God whom we *can* worship. According to William James, modern man has a 'will to believe'. In more modern terms, he is looking for 'commitment'. But it is dangerous and futile to start with a will to believe something or other, or a desire to be committed to something or other. The approach is basically subjective. Those who succeed in such a quest may well fall into the hands of unworthy causes. Those who fail may take up a 'sour grapes' attitude, making a virtue out of existentialist *angst* or *nausée*, or rejoicing in 'the death of God'. A recent symposium, *The God I Want*,⁽³⁾ is a good example of this modern subjectivist approach. Let us look into the depth of our being and say what sort of God we should like the purveyors of god-products to make up for us! Who wants *ersatz* godlings made to measure? It is about as stupid as the attitude satirised by Isaiah in chapter 40.

Though we may sympathise with twentieth century man who has lost his traditional God and not yet found another, and who cannot as yet abandon the quest for some sort of God or achieve psychological integration without one, it is necessary to point out that the subjectivist approach is a fundamentally false one, which can lead only into a cul-de-sac. If we do not wish to worship, or if we cannot find anything really worth worshipping, let us drop all 'God-talk' and be thorough-going secular technologists. It is more honest and less confusing to say that there is no transcendent object that commands our worship, and therefore we must

drop all 'God-talk', than to say we should like to keep the word 'God', while abandoning not only its conventional usage but also all the cultic context in which the word has traditionally been used.

Yet the correspondence columns of *The Observer* (11 December 1966) would seem to suggest that the most anyone can say in favour of 'God' is that his *name* is not completely useless: it has deep psychological undertones and associations which no other word quite conjures up. Thus John Wren-Lewis says: 'I think it would be linguistically inexcusable merely to abandon the word "God" to what humanists believe to be its conventional usage.' On the other hand, in another letter in the same issue of the same paper, Dr JSL Gilmour argues that the dialogue between the humanists and the new theologians is made difficult by the fact that the theologians retain the word 'God' in the formulation of their views. 'Would not its elimination enable us to have a straight debate — unhampered by at any rate one source of semantic confusion — on the existence or non-existence of a "reality to whose grace and claim" human love "is but response"?' Mr Wren-Lewis's letter in which he declined to abandon the word 'God' as semantically redundant defined the difference between Dr Gilmour and his own 'new theologian' friends in these terms: 'We all want to say something *much* stronger about human values than we believe is possible within the limits of atheist humanism.' What he did wish to say so strongly was this: 'I believe that human creativity and love is the strongest thing in the universe, before which the whole of nature is merely plastic raw material if only we have the faith to pursue love ethically and to pursue human betterment technologically.'

Is human love and creativity the strongest thing in the universe, or is there a reality to which human love is but a response? Are human beings the sole initiators of creativity and love, or are they in some sense dependent on the grade of a 'God' above? Is the spirit of man at its best *all* that our forefathers meant by 'the Holy

Spirit of God'? Can the medieval hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, be fairly translated without remainder into a eulogy of our own human spirit? According to Mr Wren-Lewis, 'traditional religion is so uniformly diseased that nothing other than a complete break from it will serve either humanism or true Christian faith'. This may be true of a consistent humanism. But can anything properly called 'Christian faith' dispense entirely with all sorts of transcendent divinity? Though I am not a Barthian, I cannot help remembering a remark attributed to Karl Barth: 'You cannot turn the word of man into the Word of God by simply shouting.' If human creativity and love is the strongest thing in the universe, before which the whole of nature is merely plastic raw material, is it semantically legitimate for Mr Wren-Lewis to practise 'God-talk' in such a world? Surely the language of the humanists should suffice to express all that he wishes to say! If not, the language of humanism should be improved. Is it not taking the name of God in vain if we use this name simply in order to enable humanists to shout more loudly?

Who, or what, is the Being that possesses the name? If God-talk is associated with worship of something transcendent, and can only be understood in the context of worship, it is also clear that in the west at any rate it has been associated with personality. The preference for personal models, metaphors and analogies is not accidental. In *some* sort of way the world is the 'expression' of something that has to be symbolised in terms of personality or mind. Personality is logically prior to 'matter' and is the 'first cause' of all creatures. This may be expressed by Thomists in Aristotelian language, or by Augustinians in Platonic language or by Hegelians in the language of Absolute Idealism. It may also be connected with what Sir Alister Hardy calls 'the Living Stream' and 'the Divine Flame'. It may be what the simple believer is talking about when he claims to have enjoyed an experience of 'meeting God'. But whatever the theists are talking about, they have usually believed

it to be something transcendent, in the sense that it is not just a projection of their own selves or their own tastes. There is a great difference between the attitude of Mr Wren-Lewis and that of, say, Professor IT Ramsey, in *Religion and Science* (1964). When Wren-Lewis is doing science he seems to regard his material as just plastic raw material. Ramsey seems to find that his 'material' is making some sort of 'personal response', or something analagous to personal response. This, perhaps, is roughly the difference between the atheistic and the theistic attitudes.

It may, of course, be argued that Ramsey's sort of attitude is just a hang-over from old-fashioned thinking dominated by the old theistic models. Why should we go out of our way to defend and reformulate arguments of theistic metaphysics, many of which are so implausible, so forced, and so difficult to fit in with the evidence? Does the future of religion depend on the success of the theologians in refuting the arguments of a modern philosopher like Professor Anthony Flew?⁽⁴⁾ According to Flew it is not reasonable to believe in something so important as God simply because theism cannot be categorically refuted. The onus of the proof surely rests on those who claim that such an important being *does* exist and *does* act on a very big scale. We can hardly be expected to waste our time refuting ideas for which there is no adequate evidence anyhow. If there were a God of the traditional sort, acting in a big way as distinct from a mere godling or set of godlings, we might reasonably expect such a being to be much better evidenced than is in fact the case.

It is only fair to point out that the metaphysical arguments for God's existence are not completely independent of religious experience, or experience interpreted in religious categories. They are to some extent rationalisations of experiences and insights of many people, most of whom are not professional philosophers. It is not only a case of Professor Ramsey's finding it impossible to express the 'response' of the world except

in terms of personal encounter. It is also a matter of mystics, and other religious people, claiming to have 'met God' as a 'person'.

It may be possible to explain away religious experience and to show that it is purely 'subjective'. There are interesting discussions of this sort of problem in a BBC symposium *Religion and Humanism*, (1964). Professor Ninian Smart takes some of the important traditional religious experiences which have been rationalised, justified and explained in theological terms. He then turns to the humanists, of whom there are two main types. There are the 'crude' humanists who think there is 'nothing in' these experiences and insights, which can be safely dismissed by modern man. There are also the 'sensitive' humanists who regard such experiences as precious, but who seek to explain them in non-theological terms.

In the same symposium, there are the Stanton Lectures of Mr Renford Bambrough who examines the function of 'God-talk' in modern times. Traditional theists thought that God-talk really added something significant to our knowledge of reality, and helped to explain it; it said something that could not be said otherwise. The moderns use God-talk as just a 'manner of speaking'. He pictured Homer and a Classical don taking a walk along the beach on a windy day with a very rough sea. They agree that 'Poseidon is very angry today'. But they were really saying quite different things even though they were uttering the same sentence. When Homer referred to Poseidon he was saying something 'extra', something explanatory, about the rough sea. He was putting it into a theological context. But the Classical don was just using a pleasant metaphor. He may have been referring to the 'majesty', the 'power', the awfulness, of a superbly rough sea. In the same sort of way, when I am in love I may talk of my girl as 'divine' or call her a 'goddess'. I am not thereby quarrelling with, or adding to, the description proffered by the physiologist or the psychologist.

It really is very important to distinguish between the functions of God-talk in traditional theology and in the 'new theology.' Wren-Lewis thinks it would be semantically inexcusable to abandon the term 'God' to its traditional usage. He wants to keep God-talk in order to say much stronger things about human creativity and love than can be said in humanist language unaided by God-talk. On the other hand, it would be equally inexcusable to take such words and apply them to a completely different referent or to give them a completely different function. God-talk has usually referred to a transcendent being, regarded as personal. It has not been just a 'manner of speaking' (in Bam-brough's sense). Nor is the term 'God' a suitable term to apply to whatever 'ultimately matters to us' or 'makes us tick'. As Flew argues, theism is an interesting, identifiable and challenging form of world-view; the serious philosopher cannot get very interested in the watered-down and evasive 'god-substitutes' that some of our modern existentialist new theologians seem to be playing with. Dr Gilmour may be right in suggesting that we *first* consider seriously whether there *is* some sort of gracious reality to which our love is a response. When we have considered that, which is, after all, the substance of traditional theistic philosophy, then and only then can we discuss the semantic legitimacy of God-talk.

In his book *The New Reformation?* (1965), the Bishop of Woolwich suggests that 'God' is intellectually superfluous, emotionally dispensable and morally intolerable. He had previously said in *Honest to God* that it might be a good idea if we dispensed with the term 'God' for a quarter of a century, so that the term could be decontaminated and freed from all its phony and neurotic associations and functions. This is a strong argument: so many barbarous, superstitious, stupid, emotionally harmful and morally dangerous ideas have been tied up with the term that it really does stand in need of decontamination. Even so, it does not follow that

these evil effects follow from *any* sort of belief in a transcendent person or mind, with a world purpose in terms of which alone our own personal purposes can be made meaningful. There is in principle no reason why 'God' should be treated as occult, irrational, arbitrary, overwhelming, etc, so as to cause a paranoid mentality in all those who seek to worship him or do his will in a secular technological society. Theism and liberalism *can* be effectively and healthily combined. But if there *is* no referent to the term 'God', defined as the worshipful and transcendent person to whom we owe allegiance, the personality to which we can respond, then it is semantically confusing, and dishonestly so, to keep this sort of God-talk. As Aquinas pointed out several centuries ago, there is no point in using terms purely equivocally. Theological language may be very difficult and have a very 'odd logic': analogy may be very difficult in this realm of thought. But it seems to me that some of the new theologians *are* using words purely equivocally when they use terms like 'God' to refer to experiences which could easily and more conveniently be described in the language of humanism. This procedure may well lead to intellectual dishonesty and double-think and thus to spiritual neurosis.

This raises the question of the future of religion after the 'death of God' or after God-talk has been degraded to just 'a manner of speaking'. Some people have supposed that the new theologians were primarily concerned with the maintenance of Christian 'values', institutions and practices after their traditional theological and metaphysical foundations have been destroyed. How much of our traditional religion and its 'values' *can* we preserve in a post-Christian period which thinks on different lines?

What is the excuse for church-going by agnostics? How can we use our churches for the sake of psychological and social welfare, now that our theology is demoded?

This is not entirely a correct view of the situation.

The proposed revolution is more complete. Not only do we hear of the non-God. We also have non-religion and the non-church. We have a completely secularised version of the Gospel from Van Buren. We have the alleged duty to be atheists in a godless world, with our churches sold to feed the poor, with all the traditional techniques aimed at salvation completely jettisoned and with our souls handed over to the psychotherapists and sociologists for proper adjustment. And we have to put up with all this 'for Christ's sake', according to Professor Altizer.

But what does a writer like Professor Altizer mean by this phrase, 'for Christ's sake'? He has already made it clear that he is not talking of the historical Jesus or of the Christ of the Catholic church. Christ is seen in every human face. This, of course, has support from the historical Jesus himself: Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these my children you have done it unto me. But, as it is interpreted by Altizer, what this means is that 'Love' is the one thing left out of the Christian débâcle. With the aid of our technology, our cleverness, our creativeness, we need to experience and express 'love' without *any* of the aids offered by traditional religion. We have no sort of authority at all as to what 'love' means. Nietzsche and Blake are as good guides as Jesus, according to Altizer. In the age of the superman we are going it alone. *Hubris* is no longer a sin. If we say that we can only love God and our neighbour because God first loves us, then we are accused of looking up to a Nobodaddy — and this will make us into paranoiacs. Similarly, if we look for evidence of any transcendent purpose by which to judge our own personal ultimate concerns, we are offending against the light of the existentialists. In the new *Gospel of Christian Atheism* by Professor TJJ Altizer, who is described as the leader of the new theology in America, the death of God *has* been followed by the murder of everything traditionally associated with religion.

If we want religion to have any future, maybe we should not limit ourselves to the subjectivist moods of the fashionable existentialists. Would it not be better to keep our intellectual curiosity lively and seek to treat scientifically the 'evidence of religion' (ie, *inter alia*, the possible existence of the 'supernatural'), of non-human 'minds', or disembodied spirits, ways of non-verbal or non-physical 'thinking' or communication etc)? *Should* we close our minds to all such sorts of speculation and limit the possibilities of religion to the satisfaction of our current psychological and social needs according to the rules of the game laid down somewhat arbitrarily by the fashionable existentialists and dogmatic empiricists? In the presidential address to the Society for Psychical research, ⁽⁵⁾ Sir Alister Hardy found it extraordinary that modern man should be so indifferent to the problem of human survival of death. 'He is more interested in conditions on the moon and the other planets than he is in the possibility of his survival in another world. It shows how really deep is the materialism of twentieth-century civilisation.... I believe, given time, that psychical research will provide man with a fuller conception of the nature of mind and restore to him at least an inquisitiveness regarding the idea of its possible survival.' Similarly, in his Gifford Lectures, ⁽⁶⁾ Sir Alister Hardy had appealed for an open-minded, fresh and scientific study of religious phenomena and the 'natural history of religion'. It may be that with the aid of this sort of intellectual curiosity we shall learn much more about the possible scientific verification of religious statements. Unless we do expand our range of vision greatly in this sort of way, religion probably *has* no future. We shall just live in a cage with our own materialistic prejudices and our private and personal whims. God-talk is merely a precious and pointless affectation unless theological propositions can in some meaningful sense be scientifically verified.

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Upward Look

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IN THE MODERN world, religion (or at any rate organised religion) is not as highly thought of as it used to be. Many people appear to think that science, with its intellectual discipline and its tendency to turn theories into cast-iron certainties, can occupy the place that religion filled in a previous generation. Others (and not only the Marxists) have tended to elevate some form of political thinking to take the place of religion. Those of us who feel that religion is a very special way of looking at the world would in no way agree with either of those groups, even though our difference may be just a matter of semantics.

But *why*, we might be asked—and, indeed, we sometimes are asked—do we find some form of religious belief necessary, and why do we feel that membership and attendance at a church of some kind is valuable and helpful?

The most popular alternatives to religion, as I have said, appear to be science and politics, in some form or another. Yet there are those who feel as I do that these alternatives do not show themselves as being good enough to meet the situation, as it faces us now, in the twentieth century. They are just not good enough because they do not delve deeply enough into human motivation and human behaviour.

Those who criticise religion and the churches retort that when we put some things out of our minds, they do

not need to be replaced by substitutes of any kind. Many years ago I had a friend who was a genuine old-fashioned Victorian freethinker, and I recall that when I told him that I saw, in the rise of Stalin, Hitler, and the other dictators, a more or less inevitable result of the decline in religion, a filling of a void in men's minds that came from the disappearance of any belief in any sort of God, and a resultant worship of a human being, he retorted that this was utter nonsense. He used to say to me: 'I hold that all religious belief is false, involving a false attitude to the world and its problems. If you destroy something that is untrue, you do not need to put anything in its place.'

If we came to believe that all religion was a false interpretation of the facts, I suppose that there would be some sense in that. But it appears to me that the attitude is one that cannot be justified, if only that it seems that almost all men and women have a psychological need for something or someone to look up to and to admire. In politics there is the adulation of the leader, and many of those who are not over-impressed by the antics of the politicians tend to look up to the Queen or some other member of the royal family, or to a pop singer, an international footballer or a test match cricketer. All these things, in essence, are a debased form of worship.

Hero-worship, in some form, is a natural thing to very young people. Junior schoolboys and schoolgirls already feel the need to look up to someone whom they regard as so much more powerful and important than themselves. The more strongly this need develops, the more they have the urge—which, finally, is a religious urge—to think of that person as being utterly marvellous. This may be a parent, a teacher, or a sixth-former; but the feeling exists and its existence in childhood is impossible to deny.

This desire, I should say, is natural enough in childhood. Most boys and girls, at some stage in their development, know it. But what is not natural is a carrying-over of that feeling into adult life. When we

grow up we should come to realise that everyone in the world, no matter how exalted his position, is just a human being, with all the faults and follies of human beings. The worship of a Hitler, a Mussolini or a Stalin was an unhealthy affair, viewed from any angle. The totalitarian states were unhealthy states, and that is why their effects on the world of international affairs were evil.

All the same, they would not have lasted as long as they did if they had not met some human need. If the Germans and the Italians and the Russians had not felt the desire to look up to someone, to worship some human being of some sort, Hitler and Mussolini and Stalin would not have been able to establish their control over the minds and hearts of millions of their fellow-countrymen. For there can be no doubt that, in spite of all the apparatus of tyranny and misrule, the dictators of this century carried with them vast numbers of ordinary people.

I do not think that many people in this country will feel anything like that about our prime minister; the nearest approach to it in modern Britain was seen in the wartime ascendancy of Winston Churchill, but the 1945 election showed that this was by no means general and by no means unquestioned.

Yet the fact is that many (perhaps most) men and women have deeply ingrained in them this need and desire to look up at someone or something. All this probably started with primitive man, facing the many puzzling mysteries of existence. He saw storms which blew down his ill-built huts; he saw rivers, which had been peacefully-meandering streams, turn into raging torrents. Sometimes he dreamed of mighty chiefs who had died. The storms and the other powers of nature he felt to need some kind of propitiation; the dreams of great men he had known seemed to him to prove that they still existed somewhere, with all their strength and all their glory.

Out of these confused origins there was born a religion

of a sort. To begin with, it was a very primitive form of religion. It looked upon the god or gods as very capricious, capable of doing almost anything with the world. Any idea of a god of love, responsible for mankind, is a fairly late idea in history. In the early books of the Old Testament, for example, the idea of Jahweh as a God of War, looking after the interests of the Jews his chosen people, is general. He was worshipped because he would be able to compete with the gods of other peoples. It is only as we move over from the Old to the New Testament that we find this gradually changing, and even then there are distinct hangovers of the older attitude of mind to be discerned. Such hangovers, in fact, are still to be found in some religious quarters today.

A few years ago I attended a lecture given by Dr RW Wilde, a Unitarian minister, who was well qualified in psychology. During question-time, after the lecture, he was cross-examined by a member of his audience, who was clearly a dyed-in-the-wool fundamentalist. This man was intent to prove that the Christian God was concerned only to safeguard the wellbeing of Christians, and that those whom he called heathens were outside the realm of God's love. Dr Wilde said: 'Then you believe that all the devout Hindus and Muslims and Buddhists will go to Hell when they die?' The man from the audience said: 'Yes; of course they will.' The lecturer's retort, which put an end to that particular discussion, was: 'I'm sorry. If that is the sort of God that you believe in, then your God is not my God.'

The God of that fundamentalist was really the God of primitive man, the God who favours certain people and who attacks others. He is not the God in whom most people nowadays can possibly believe.

Yet there remains that need to look up to someone or something, to worship someone or something. It should be clear enough to all who ponder the matter at all deeply that this world in which we live our painfully ordinary lives is not and cannot be self-explaining. We cannot understand the world wholly, of course, no matter

what we believe. There must be some aspects of life which seem to us odd and mysterious. That will doubtless always be true. But if we think, as it would appear that materialistic people think, that the world explains itself, that it made itself and keeps itself going, then we shall find ourselves running into all sorts of difficulties and problems which most emphatically do not solve themselves. The philosophers of many schools of thought, who try to penetrate to the heart of the problem of knowledge, do for the most part admit that there are questions which we cannot answer. The Logical Positivists, it is true, would suggest that these are for the most part linguistic problems, arising from the wrongful use of words.

Yet even they, one would imagine, would find that there are unanswerable questions. Did time start at some instant in the past; if so, what was before time? Will time one day end; if so, what will come after time? Does space go on endlessly? That seems unthinkable. Or is there somewhere, countless millions of miles away, where space ends? That seems unthinkable too. In spite of the theories of expanding space or of a universe of endless size, and all the other problems over which the cosmologists argue endlessly, these matters, to a commonsense mind, seem to be hopelessly puzzling. How do mind and body react on each other? Such a set of questions could be considerably increased in number.

I am not suggesting that religion can necessarily provide snap answers to such questions. But what I am saying is that in some such cases a partial answer, or a hint towards a possible answer, can come from religious sources, whereas the popular alternatives of science and politics provide none at all.

One popular book on evolution, published a few years ago, stated: 'We need only to study our animal ancestry, in order to see why we are what we are.' Is it really as simple as all that? Do we explain a Beethoven or a Shakespeare, a Freud or a Rutherford, by a study of our animal ancestry? Of course we do nothing of the kind.

Religion, really, is an attempt to formulate some sort of answer to 'why we are what we are'. It says that there is behind the universe a kind of organising mind. It says, moreover, that living creatures have been created for a purpose. That organising mind and that purpose we shall never be able wholly to understand. But we shall sometimes be able to catch partial and tantalising glimpses. Churches, each in their own way, are trying to make those glimpses clearer, trying to draw aside the veil that seems to hide from us all knowledge of deeper things.

That is not quite all, either. Because the very organisations that are trying to gain some faint understanding of purpose are also the organisations that try to provide some outlet for that need for worship, that upward look, which I tried to outline at the beginning of this essay. Here, of course, is where some of us part company. The means and the methods of worship vary. Some people like much colour and symbolism in worship. They will be Roman Catholics and High Anglicans. Others will find that simplicity and severity are more attractive. They will be Quakers and Unitarians. Much of this is probably a matter of temperament.

What, then, of the question with which I started? Why do we feel that religion and churches play a part which no other organisation in the world can play in quite the same way? Is it not that all religions, all churches, provide men with a solution to a psychological need, the need to have something or someone to worship? And at the same time they provide glimpses, however imperfect, and however fragmentary, into the purpose of life. If there is any truth in that assertion, then religion is a necessary part of any human life which has pretensions to being complete.

Whatever church we attend, we shall find times when we are dissatisfied with it. There will be times when the prayers seem empty, the readings uninspiring, the sermons foolishness. But if this happens, we should do well not to let it put us off our allegiance. If one week the

whole service fails to have any impact, the next week this may all be changed, and we shall find that the service is illuminating and worth while. Because while what has been said here deals, inevitably, with the more intellectual side of religion, the intellect is not the whole of man. There are the emotions too. And it is one of the oddities of human nature that what is most intellectually satisfying often turns out to be emotionally satisfying as well.

So the worship, the fellowship, the social background of a church—they all have a part to play. Something to look up to—that has been the theme of this essay. If a church provides that, it does something very valuable indeed for its members and its friends. But in doing that it does many other things as well. The church of the open mind may also be the church of the open heart. And if it meets the needs of mind and heart alike, it has something to give the value of which cannot well be exaggerated. In the twentieth century it still has a part to play.

On Being Religious

DH Lawrence

THE PROBLEM is not, and never was, whether God exists or doesn't exist. Man is so made, that the word God has a special effect on him, even if only to afford a safety-valve for his feelings when he must swear or burst. And there ends the vexation of questioning the existence of God. Whatever the queer little word means, it means something we can none of us ever quite get away from, or at; something connected with our deepest explosions.

It isn't really quite a word. It's an ejaculation and a glyph. It never had a definition. 'Give a definition of the word God,' says somebody, and everybody smiles, with just a trifle of malice. There's going to be a bit of sport.

Of course, nobody can define it. And a word nobody can define isn't a word at all. It's just a noise and a shape, like pop or Ra or Om.

When a man says: 'There is a God', or 'There is no God', etc, or 'I don't know whether there's a God or not', he is merely using the little word like a toy pistol, to announce that he has taken an attitude. When he says: 'There is no God', he just means to say: 'Nobody knows any better about life than myself, so nobody need try to chirp it over me'. Which is the democratic attitude. When he says: 'There is a God', he is either sentimental or sincere. If he is sincere, it means he refers himself back to some indefinable pulse of life in

him, which gives him his direction and his substance. If he is sentimental, it means he is subtly winking to his audience to imply: 'Let's make an arrangement favourable to ourselves'. That's the conservative attitude. Thirdly and lastly, when a man says: 'I don't know whether there's a God or not', he is merely making the crafty announcement: 'I hold myself free to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, whichever I feel like at the time'. And that's the so-called artistic or pagan attitude.

In the end, one becomes bored by the man who believes that nobody, ultimately, can tell him anything. One becomes very bored by the men who wink a God into existence for their own convenience. And the man who holds himself free to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds doesn't hold interest any more. All these three classes of men bore us even to the death of boredom.

Remains the man who sincerely says: 'I believe in God'. He may still be an interesting fellow.

I: How do you believe in God?

He: I believe in goodness.

(Basta! Turn him down and try again.)

I: How do you believe in God?

He: I believe in love.

(Exit. Call another.)

I: How do you believe in God?

He: I don't know.

I: What difference does it make to you, whether you believe in God or not?

He: It makes a difference, but I couldn't quite put it into words.

I: Are you sure it makes a difference? Does it make you kinder or fiercer?

He: Oh! - I think it makes me more tolerant.

(Retro me. Enter another believer.)

He: Hullo!

I: Hullo!

He: What's up?

I: Do you believe in God?
 He: What the hell is that to you?
 I: Oh, I'm just asking.
 He: What about yourself?
 I: Yes, I believe.
 He: D'you say your prayers at night?
 I: No.
 He: When d'you say 'em, then?
 I: I don't.
 He: Then what use is your God to you?
 I: He merely isn't the sort you pray to.
 He: What do you do with him then?
 I: It's what he does with me.
 He: And what does he do with you?
 I: Oh, I don't know. He uses me as the thin end of the wedge.
 He: Thin enough! What about the thick end.
 I: That's what we're waiting for.
 He: You're a funny customer.
 I: Why not? Do you believe in God?
 He: Oh, I don't know. I might, if it looked like fun.
 I: Right you are.

This is what I call a conversation between two true believers. Either believing in a real God looks like fun or it's no go at all. The Great God has been treated to so many sighs, supplications, prayers, tears and yearnings that, for the time, He's had enough. There is, I believe, a great strike on in heaven. The Almighty has vacated the throne, abdicated, climbed down. It's no good your looking up into the sky. It's empty. Where the Most High used to sit listening to woes, supplications and repentances, there's nothing but a great gap in the empyrean. You can still go on praying to that gap, if you like. The Most High has gone out.

He has climbed down. He has just calmly stepped down the ladder of the angels, and is standing behind you. You can go on gazing and yearning up the shaft of hollow heaven if you like. The Most High just stands behind you, grinning to Himself.

Now this isn't a deliberate piece of blasphemy. It's just one way of stating an everlasting truth, or pair of truths. First, there is always the Great God. Second, as regards man, He shifts His position in the cosmos. The Great God departs from the heaven where man has located Him, and plumps His throne down somewhere else. Man, being an ass, keeps going to the same door to beg for his carrot, even when the Master has gone away to another house. The ass keeps on going to the same spring to drink, even when the spring has dried up, and there's nothing but clay and hoofmarks. It doesn't occur to him to look round, to see where the water has broken out afresh, somewhere else out of some live rock. Habit! God has become a human habit, and Man expects the Almighty habitually to lend Himself to it. Whereas the Almighty—it's one of His characteristics—won't. He makes a move, and laughs when Man goes on praying to the gap in the Cosmos.

'Oh, little hole in the wall; Oh, little gap, holy little gap', as the Russian peasants are supposed to have prayed, making a diety of the hole in the wall.

Which makes me laugh. And nobody will persuade me that the Lord Almighty doesn't roar with laughter, seeing all the Christians still rolling their imploring eyes to the skies where the hole is, which the Great God left when He picked up his throne and walked.

I tell you, it isn't blasphemy. Ask any philosopher or theologian, and he'll tell you that the real problem for humanity isn't whether God exists or not. God always is, and we all know it. But the problem is, how to get at Him. That is the greatest problem ever set to our habit-making humanity. The theologians try to find out: How shall Man put himself into relation to God, into a living relation? Which is: How shall Man *find* God? That's the real problem.

Because God doesn't just sit still somewhere in the Cosmos. Why should He? He, too, wanders His own strange way down the avenues of time, across the intricacies of space. Just as the heavens shift. Just as

the pole of heaven shifts. We know now that, in the strange widdershins movement of the heavens, called precession, the great stars and constellations and planets are all the time slowly, invisibly, but absolutely shifting their positions; even the pole-star is silently stealing away from the pole. Four thousand years ago, our pole-star wasn't a pole-star. The earth had another one. Even at the present moment, Polaris has side-stepped. He doesn't really stand at the axis of the heavens. Ask any astronomer. We shall soon have to have another pole-star.

So it is with the Great God. He slowly and silently and invisibly shifts His throne, inch by inch, across the Cosmos. Inch by inch, across the blue floor of heaven, till He comes to the stairs of the angels. Then step by step down the ladder.

Where is He now? Where is the Great God now? Where has He put His throne?

We have lost Him! We have lost the Great God! O God, O God, we have lost our Great God: Jesus, Jesus, Thou art the Way: Jesus, Jesus, Thou art the Way to the Father, to the Lord Everlasting.

But Jesus shakes His head. In the great wandering of the heavens, the foot of the Cross has shifted. The great and majestic movement of the heavens has slowly carried away even the Cross of Jesus from its place on Calvary. And Jesus, who was our Way to God, has stepped aside, over the horizon with the Father.

So it is. Man is only Man. And even the Gods and the Great God go their way, stepping slowly, invisibly across the heavens of time and space, going somewhere we know not where. They do not stand still. They go and go, till they pass below the horizon of Man.

Till Man has lost his Great God, and there remains only the gap, and images, and hollow words. The Way, even the Great Way of Salvation, leads only to the pit, the nothingness, the gap.

It is not our fault. It is nobody's fault. It is the mysterious and sublime fashion of the Almighty, who

travels too. At least, as far as we are concerned, He travels. Apparently He is the same today, yesterday, and for ever. Like the pole-star. But now we know the pole-star slowly but inevitably side-steps. Polaris is no longer at the pole of the heavens.

Gradually, gradually God travels away from us, on His mysterious journey. And we, being creatures of obstinacy and will, we insist that He cannot move. God gave us a way to Himself. God gave us Jesus, and the way of repentance and love, the way to God. The salvation through Christ Jesus our Lord.

And hence, we assert that the Almighty cannot go back on it. He can never get away from us again. At the end of the way of repentance and love, there God *is*, and *must be*. Must be, because God Himself *said* that He would receive us at the end of the road of repentance and love.

And He *did* receive men at the end of this road. He received our fathers even, into peace and salvation.

Then He must receive us.

And He doesn't. The road no longer leads to the Throne.

We are let down.

Are we? Did Jesus ever say: *I am the way, and there is no other way*? At the moment there was no other way. For many centuries, there was no other way. But all the time, the heavens were mysteriously revolving and God was going His own unspeakable way. All the time, men had to be making the road afresh. Even the road called Jesus, the Way of the Christian to God, had to be subtly altered, century by century. At the Renaissance, in the eighteenth century, great curves in the Christian road to God, new strange directions.

As a matter of fact, never did God or Jesus say that there was one straight way of salvation, for ever and ever. On the contrary, Jesus plainly indicated the changing of the way. And what is more, He indicated the only means to the finding of the right way.

The Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is within you. And

it is a Ghost for ever a Ghost, never a Way or a Word. Jesus is a Way and a Word. God is the Goal. But the Holy Ghost is for ever Ghostly, unrealizable. And against this unsubstantial unreality, you may never sin, or woe betide you.

Only the Holy Ghost within you can scent the new tracks of the Great God across the Cosmos of Creation. The Holy Ghost is the dark hound of heaven whose baying we ought to listen to, as he runs ahead into the unknown, tracking the mysterious everlasting departing of the Lord God, who is for ever departing from us.

And now the Lord God has gone over our horizon. The foot of the Cross is lifted from the Mound, and moved across the heavens. The pole-star no longer stands on guard at the true polaric centre. We are all disorientated, all is gone out of gear.

All right, the Lord God left us neither blind nor comfortless nor helpless. We've got the Holy Ghost. And we hear Him baying down strange darknesses, in other places.

The Almighty has shifted His throne, and we've got to find a new road. Therefore we've got to get off the old road. You can't stay on the old road, and find a new road. We've got to find our way to God. From time to time Man wakes up and realizes that the Lord Almighty has made a great removal, and passed over the known horizon. Then starts the frenzy, the howling, the despair. Much better listen to the dark hound of heaven, and start off into the dark of the unknown, in search.

From time to time, the Great God sends a new saviour. Christians will no longer have the pettiness to assert that Jesus is the only Saviour ever sent by the everlasting God. There have been other saviours, in other lands, at other times, with other messages. And all of them Sons of God. All of them sharing the Godhead with the Father. All of them showing the Way of Salvation and of Right. Different Saviours. Different Ways of Salvation. Different polestars, in the great wandering Cosmos of time. And the Infinite God,

always changing, and always the same infinite God, at the end of the different Ways.

Now, if I ask you if you believe in God, I do not ask you if you know the Way to God. For the moment, we are lost. Let us admit it. None of us knows the way to God. The Lord of time and space has passed over our horizon, and here we sit in our mundane creation, rather flabbergasted. Let us admit it.

Jesus, the Saviour, is no longer our Way of Salvation. He *was* the Saviour, and is not. Once it was Mithras; it has not been Mithras for these many years. It never *was* Mithras for us. God sends different Saviours to different peoples at different times.

Now, for the moment, there is no Saviour. The Jews have waited for three thousand years. They preferred just to wait. We do not. Jesus taught us what to do, when He, Christ, could no longer save us.

We go in search of God, following the Holy Ghost, and depending on the Holy Ghost. There is no Way. There is no Word. There is no Light. The Holy Ghost is ghostly and invisible. The Holy Ghost is nothing, if you like. Yet we hear His strange calling, the strange calling like a hound on the scent, away in the unmapped wilderness. And it seems great fun to follow. Oh, great fun, God's own good fun.

Myself, I believe in God. But I'm off on a different road.

Adios! and, if you like, au revoir!

Acknowledgement

This essay is published by arrangement with Laurence Pollinger Ltd and the estate of the late Mrs Frieda Lawrence.

Point of Belief

Recent years have seen a number of collective works on religion, but mostly from orthodox circles or from the radical movement within Anglicanism. This new collection contains essays on religious belief by Unitarians, a Quaker, and Anglicans. They write for the most part from what is loosely called a liberal religious point of view, and present considered statements on religion and its problems as viewed by modern men. The editor, Rev John Rowland, is minister of the Old Meeting House, Tenterden, and publications officer to the Lindsey Press. He has included, as a postscript to the volume, DH Lawrence's essay 'On Being Religious', a much-neglected statement by that controversial figure in which his religious beliefs find trenchant expression.

The Lindsey Press



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