Themelios

THE
GOSPEL
COALITION

Contents

Editorial: Scripture and Truth

Theological studies can be an intensely uncomfortable experience. Many Christians take up the study of theology because of their keen Christian commitment and because they want to serve the Lord and Saviour that they love. But they find that their studies, far from strengthening their faith, seem to undermine it, and that things that were once precious and exciting to them, such as prayer and Bible study, become difficult and dry. They find that their old confidences, for example in the Bible as the Word of God, seem to be replaced by intellectual doubts.

Some such discomfort in theological studies is no bad thing. It is good, but not always pleasant, to have one's mistaken ideas challenged and changed. It is good to go beyond a superficial understanding of the Christian faith and to have to struggle honestly with the questions and doubts of unbelievers. It is good to learn to trust God when things are not easy. But it is not good if theological study has the effect of turning enthusiastic believers into mixed-up agnostics. It is not good if theological study turns us from being true ministers of the Word of God into false or muted prophets.

How can we prevent this happening in ourselves and in others? The most vital thing is to be fully aware of the dangers and prayerfully dependent on God for his protection and guidance. Theological studies are often made out to be a 'historical' or 'scientific' subject which can be approached with detached neutrality. In fact we need to be aware that in our theological studies, no less than in other areas of our Christian life, we are engaged in a deadly struggle against superhuman powers of evil, and that one of the devil's most effective methods of attacking Christ's church is by subtly weaning potential Christian leaders away from Christ in the course of their theological training.

That does not mean that we should treat every theologian who questions a cherished belief as a devil in disguise and refuse honestly to examine his ideas. It does mean that we must examine ideas presented to us critically and carefully, being aware that some ideas are certainly devils in disguise!

Take the question of the Bible. It is easy for the theological student who has to read a lot of critical studies of Old and New Testaments to get the impression that the Bible is a purely human work, containing numerous historical errors and plenty of theological imperfections and contradictions; sometimes it seems academically impossible to hold to the traditional Christian view of the Bible as the true and authoritative Word of God. But such a conclusion, despite its plausibility, is theologically disastrous and academically unjustified. It is theologically disastrous, first, because it puts in question the authority of Jesus, since he regarded the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God: it thus cuts at the heart of the Christian faith. It is disastrous, secondly, because it leaves the Christian

preacher and prophet with no authoritative message to preach: Christianity is essentially a religion of revelation, but without an inspired Bible we have no sure access to God's revelation, and we are left to pick and choose those bits of the Bible *we* think to be true. The view is also academically unjustified, since there are good reasons for believing the Bible to be the Word of God, which outweigh the possible contrary arguments. For example, there is the fact that Jesus—whom we have good reason to trust—saw it as such; there is also the Christian experience of the power and relevance of the Bible's teaching. On the other side, the critical problems are not as weighty objections to the authority of the Bible as they sometimes seem.

The academic argument for the authority of the Bible is restated in two recent books. Professor Howard Marshall's *Biblical Inspiration* is reviewed elsewhere in this *Themelios*, and here we simply quote one significant comment of Professor Marshall: 'Nothing that I have discovered in close study of the New Testament over a quarter of a century has caused me to have any serious doubts about its entire trustworthiness for the purposes for which God has given it' (p. 91). The other book *Scripture and Truth*[1] is a collection of essays related to biblical authority. As interesting as any is Paul Helm's essay considering how and why the Christian is convinced that the Bible is the Word of God. It is not just that the Bible makes that claim for itself, nor is it just an intuition inspired by the Holy Spirit; it is rather that the contents and message of Scripture (which includes teaching about Scripture) prove convincing to the believer. There are also historical essays showing that the idea of an inerrant Bible is not the invention of modern evangelicalism, but goes right back through church history. There are essays on the New Testament use of the Old Testament (by Moises Silva) and on hermeneutics (by James Packer), and Don Carson contributes two useful essays on questions of New Testament criticism, one on redaction criticism and one on unity and diversity in the New Testament, showing that common critical ideas about the New Testament are not above criticism.

The authors of the books mentioned have differing opinions about how exactly biblical authority or inerrancy is to be understood, and it is helpful to be reminded that scholars who accept the Bible as the authoritative Word of God can and do hold differing views on plenty of issues of criticism and interpretation; if scholars are still actively wrestling with issues, it is not surprising if theological students find the same issues perplexing. But more significant than their disagreements is their agreement that the Bible, although it is very clearly the words of men, is also the authoritative and reliable Word of God, which can be confidently proclaimed and which our world needs to hear.

Many parts of the Christian church are being starved through the ministry of clergy and teachers who do not know where the Word of God is to be found and who as a result have no gospel to preach. It is vitally important for the future of the church that today's theological students beware of being turned into muddled agnostics, and that instead we hold fast to the gospel and to the truth of God in Scripture.

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[1] D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge (eds.) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Leicester: IVP, 1983), 446pp. £6.50 pb. On the authority of Jesus and his view of Scripture see J. W. Wenham, *Christ and the Bible* (Leicester/Downers Grove: IVP, [2]1984).

A guide to the study of the prophets

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This essay is intended as a 'guide' for those commencing, or perhaps revisiting, the study of the Old Testament prophets. It is not an introduction to the prophetic literature, nor a survey of the phenomena associated with the prophets and their activity. Rather, this essay is an attempt to acquaint the student with those trends and concepts which pervade contemporary study of the prophets and which the student will encounter both in the lecture hall and in the literature. It is hoped that the student will thus be enabled to follow scholarly discussion of the prophets with greater ease and critical insight.

The prophetic corpus is one of the most extensive portions of the Old Testament. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve ('minor prophets') comprise nearly one fourth of the Old Testament canon. However, in the Hebrew Bible these are called 'Latter Prophets' while the historical books from Joshua through Kings are styled 'Former Prophets'. Thus, almost one half of the Old Testament is regarded as 'prophetic' in some sense. Many of the psalms are also clearly the work of prophets. Moreover, Moses is set forth in Deuteronomy 18:15 as the archetypal prophet of Israel, indicating that the study of the prophets must embrace the greater portion of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Learned discussion of the prophets is embodied in a literature that is correspondingly vast, indeed bewilderingly so![1] There are few works (especially in English) that set out to be comprehensive, given the scope of the subject-matter. Instead, one is confronted with numerous and diverse lines of investigation, written up in journals, *Festschriften*, monographs, commentaries, and books treating specific themes. Yet one must make a beginning and seek some order in the diversity. I would suggest that modern study of the prophets may be usefully approached through three closely related categories:(1) criticism of the prophetic literature, (2) description of the prophetic ministry, and (3) exposition of the prophetic message. The first is obviously concerned with the exegesis of the texts, the second with prophecy as a phenomenon or institution in Israel. The third deals with what might be called the 'theology' of the prophets. In the actual course of study, the student will quickly realize that conclusions in any one of these areas will depend on insights from the other two.

1. Criticism of the prophetic literature

The greater part of the literature on the prophets is devoted to issues of literary criticism. Klaus Koch estimates that 'publications dealing with points of literary criticism must outnumber those investigating a prophet's ideas by about ten to one'.[2] This apparent preoccupation is not surprising, though, since the precise relationship of the canonical form of the prophetic literature (*i.e.*, the form in which we have it in the Bible) to the original preaching of the prophets is not entirely clear. The oracles were obviously collected and edited – by whom, we do not know. The consensus of critical scholarship is that the canonical form of the prophetic books does not derive from the prophets, but from the tradents who collected and passed on the oracles, and that these oracles were also supplemented and expanded in the course of transmission.[3] Hence, literary criticism is not pursued out of indifference to the prophets' ideas, but precisely because it is seen as an essential step towards elucidating their ideas. One must know as accurately as possible what the prophets said, and something of the context in which they said it, before their message may be confidently expounded. It is the aim of literary criticism to isolate individual oracles within the larger collections, to reconstruct original literary unities from the text, and to differentiate, so far as possible, the original sayings of the prophets from alleged secondary accretions. This work is foundational to the study of the prophetic message and ministry. Hence, it has become the major area of scholarly debate.

Of course, not all scholars share the generally optimistic aims of literary criticism. Critical scholarship is

agreed that the process of transmission has reshaped the original prophetic message to a greater or lesser degree. However, not all critics agree that the original words may be recovered from the texts. Some have argued that the message of the prophets was handed down by means of a primarily oral, rather than written, tradition. On this view, the canonical form represents the written fixation of the oral tradition, behind which tradition one recognizes the preaching of the prophets. However, one can only hope to identify the principal themes of the preaching, not the prophets' actual words.[4] On the other hand, some hold that literary criticism reveals such an extensive reworking of written traditions that one must realistically abandon the attempt to discover the prophets' very words.[5] In the main, though, distinguishing the words of the prophets from secondary material within the tradition is still regarded as an important and valid objective.[6]

The literary-critical attempt to differentiate primary and secondary material in the prophetic traditions is foundational to the method known as *redaction criticism*. A redactor is simply one who revises and edits literary words. Hence, redaction criticism seeks to identify editorial stages in the collection and transmission of a prophetic corpus.[7] However, this process of editing is not theologically 'neutral'. Combining oracles into a series gives them a new *context*. Arranging oracles into a framework may suggest an overarching theme. James M. Ward, for example, points out that the oracles in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are roughly organized in this sequence: (1) oracles of judgment against Judah and Jerusalem, (2) oracles of judgment against foreign nations, and (3) promises of restoration to Israel and Judah.[8] This arrangement clearly suggests an interpretation of the prophetic ministry. Likewise, the juxtaposition of secondary materials places primary materials in a new context and affects their interpretation accordingly. Hence, redaction criticism is concerned not only to identify editorial stages, but seeks to characterize the perspective of each stage.

Redaction criticism *per se* is not a new development in literary criticism. Critics have long asserted the presence of later, editorial expansions in the prophetic collections. What is new, though, is the estimation of the *worth* of this secondary material in the eyes of Old Testament scholars. Earlier criticism tended to identify secondary materials and then dismiss them as of secondary importance, laying great stress on the *ipsissima verba* as the truly significant data for research. While not abandoning the quest for the prophets' very words, contemporary criticism, however, tends to regard the secondary material as a continuation of the traditions inaugurated by the original prophets. In fact, the secondary expansions are said to *actualize* the original message (*i.e.*, to interpret and reapply it to new situations in an equally prophetic way).[9] Hence, the canonical form of a prophetic book comes to be regarded as the full flowering of a continuous tradition, not as a shell which must be stripped away to get at the true kernel of the message. The original words are important, but the canonical form also proclaims a message in its own right which deserves to be heard and studied. Not surprisingly, many scholars

prefer to use the term *canonical criticism* to describe this relatively new attitude toward the application of redaction criticism. Although conservative students might have reservations about the need sharply to differentiate stages in the growth of the traditions, the emphasis on the value of the canonical form of the tradition ought to be welcomed and pursued as an area of common interest.

The interpretative character which modern criticism attributes to so-called secondary material is worthy of note. Klaus Koch states that 'according to this (*i.e.* prophetic) tradition, it was a sacred duty to link the transmission of the prophets' words with explanations and topical allusions designed to give them contemporary significance'.[10] Robert Coote argues that the process of interpretation preserved the original messages and that, in fact, 'our scriptures *came into being in the process of interpretation*'.[11] R. E. Clements claims that the secondary elements are a kind of early exegesis of prophetic sayings and are 'the strongest guidelines we have to what those sayings really meant'.[12]

Conservative students should find this perspective on the nature of the prophetic literature both stimulating and challenging. Conservative scholarship could justly give more attention to the whole process by which the prophetic books were collected and transmitted. The concept that the prophetic books embody their own commentary is a fascinating one which deserves careful study, particularly by those interested in the history of exegesis. However, there are serious difficulties to be overcome in asserting the interpretative or exegetical character of alleged secondary elements.

First, there are no textual indicators to mark out the material as commentary. In an interpretative document like the Qumran Habakkuk Commentary, for example, exposition is clearly introduced by phrases such as 'the interpretation concerns . . .', *etc*. There are few avenues of independent verification by which to test the theory, such as extensive manuscript variation that might show a different treatment of secondary, interpretative elements. Coote suggests the analogy of Carl Sagan's expansive translation of I. S. Shklovskii's *Intelligent Life in the Universe* to illustrate the method of redactional interpretation.[13] But though it aptly illustrates the theory, the analogy simply highlights the subjective character of the model, since the prophets lack precisely the sort of indicators which Sagan uses to distinguish his commentary from the text.

Secondly, one may justly ask about the sense in which the secondary elements actually interpret or exegete the original material, since scholars usually assert a tension in the perspectives of the editorial stages. For example, the original Amos is regarded as a prophet of unconditional doom.[14] Hence conditional sayings which hold out the possibility of forgiveness to the repentant are held to be secondary. Yet, these secondary elements were apparently placed beside the original proclamations, creating a new context and re-interpreting them. In point of fact, they mitigate the absolute character of the original doom sayings, supposedly to make them relevant to people living after the fall of Samaria. Yet, if this

was the reinterpretation which took place, it was essentially a false interpretation – a misinterpretation. Unconditional sayings are held to be conditional, contrary to the original intention of the prophet.

A similar observation could be made regarding R. E. Clements' masterfully presented case for a Deuteronomic redaction of the prophets. Clements argues, for example, that the original preaching of Amos and Hosea was not affected by a covenant tradition in Israel. Hence, the infrequently appearing covenantal language in these prophets is held to reflect a Deuteronomic interpretation of the prophetic indictments.[15] Now if these secondary Deuteronomic terms are actually significant indications of the geniuine meaning, then it follows that the Deuteronomists understood the words of Hosea and Amos to refer to violations of the covenant. But since, according to Clements, these prophets did not have a covenant theology as such, the Deuteronomists were mistaken in their interpretation. Their exegesis was defective.

These observations, of course, prove nothing about the method of redaction criticism. They do show, though, that the characterization of secondary materials as interpretative is open to question. It would appear to be more accurate to say that the redaction model presents stages of eis-gesis and revision, rather than of exegesis and reinterpretation in the growth of the prophetic traditions. It is also difficult to see how critics can seriously value the secondary material as guidelines to the original meaning of prophetic sayings when (1) they have already decided on the meaning using other considerations and (2) when they consistently reject the meaning suggested by the alleged secondary materials, *e.g.* that Amos could have held out hope or that eighth century prophets knew a covenant tradition.

Literary criticism in the prophets, and elsewhere, proceeds on the basis of a number of considerations. A characteristic style, or a preference for a particular vocabulary help to identify redactional stages. Differences of historical or theological perspective are also put forward as indicators of different strata in the texts. For purposes of isolating or reconstructing original oracles from larger collections, the discipline of *form criticism* is seen as especially important. Form criticism seeks to classify prophetic oracles according to their genre, or *Gattung*. Two of the most basic prophetic genres are the 'threat' and 'reproach' (Gunkel), also known as the 'announcement' of judgment' and 'accusation' (Westermann). Each form has characteristic conceptual, linguistic, and life-setting (*Sitz im Leben*) features.[16] A knowledge of these forms may enable one to delimit or reconstruct individual oracles and, at the same time, to perceive extraneous material. But, though form criticism has literary-critical applications, it is normally pursued in order to move beyond literary criticism to insights into the nature of the prophetic ministry.

2. Description of the prophetic ministry
One of the most challenging aspects of the study of the prophets has been the attempt to construct a unified picture of the phenomenon of prophetism. In many ways the prophets are enigmatic figures. They have an independent air about them, yet nonetheless stand in a close relationship to the institutions of Israelite society. It is virtually an axiom of Old Testament scholarship that the prophets were the major creative force in the development of Israel's faith, and yet it is also recognized that they were indebted to earlier, well-established traditions. Indeed, debate about the relationship of the prophets to Israel's religious institutions and the traditions associated with them has dominated prophetic study for the past century.

The attempt to describe the means by which a prophet receives a word from God, and the context in which he communicates that message to others is complicated by the nature of the biblical sources. Except for Isaiah and Jonah, there is virtually no mention of the literary prophets in the historical books of the Old Testament. Our knowledge of their personalities and activities is confined to the biographical material in the collections and to contextual indications within the oracles. Yet, in the case of Jeremiah, such material is extensive. Incidents from the lives of Hosea and Amos also provide valuable insights into the range of prophetic experiences and tasks. Above all, the call narratives in Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are regarded as crucial points of reference for understanding their self-perception as prophets, and often their message as well. Still, the silence of the historical books respecting so many of the writing prophets means that much of our knowledge of their work must be reconstructed indirectly.

The historical books are aptly named 'Former Prophets', for they convey a striking impression of both the power, frustration, and faith which characterized these men of God. The consensus of scholarship today seems to be that the literary prophets are of the same basic mould as the pre-literary prophets. Hence, in a general way, the activities of men like Nathan and Gad, or Elijah and Elisha may provide a model for understanding the roles of later prophets. Klaus Westermann argues that the prophetic speeches recorded in the 'Former Prophets' evince, in their brevity, the original form of prophetic discourse, which form may then be observed in developed ways in the 'Latter Prophets'.[17] The historical books also illustrate early developments in prophetism, reflected in the terminological shift from 'seer' to 'prophet' (*nabi*),[18] which seems to correspond in some way to the increasing involvement of these men in affairs of kingship. In general, scholarship distinguishes the pre-literary prophets from their literary successors on the basis of their message, not a characteristic activity or psychological state.[19]

The conviction that the 'Former Prophets' evidence a thorough Deuteronomic editing imposes some restraint on the critical use of these books as sources of information about the prophets. On this view, the description of prophetic speech and activity found therein may not be authentic, but merely the way the Deuteronomic editor imagined, or felt it ought to be. But, while critical scholarship may attempt to identify particular narratives, or aspects thereof, as reflections of the views of

later eras,[20] the picture of prophetic activity on the whole is regarded as trustworthy.

The disciplines of comparative religion, psychology, and sociology have also been brought to bear on the prophetic phenomenon. Increasing interest is being generated by references to prophecy, or at least oracular statements, in diverse ancient Near Eastern texts. This type of activity was apparently so wide-spread that Koch ventures to speak of prophecy as an *international movement*.[21] The proposition that the prophets received their revelations in a state of ecstasy has been extensively debated, ever since Gunkel suggested that the earliest form of prophetic speech was ecstatic.[22] Lindblom argues that the 'prophetic type' (*e.g.* ecstatic) is a universal religious phenomenon, yet the attempt to fit all Israelite prophecy into this mould has not been widely accepted.[23] More recently, David L. Petersen has argued that the traditional debate about the prophets proceeds on the false assumption that an independent spirit (charisma) and institutional ties (office) are polar extremes. He instead tries to move away from these categories, presenting a helpful analysis of the contextual dimension of prophetic activity by means of sociological role theory.[24]

All of these disciplines help to construct a fuller picture of the prophetic ministry by showing points of contact with similar phenomena, both in the age of the prophets and throughout history. However, it is fair to say that such comparative studies do not provide a basis for assessing the theological uniqueness and worth of Old Testament prophecy.[25] It is precisely because this issue is felt to be at stake that the more traditional argument about independence versus institution will continue.

It was the view of early critics that the prophets stood in independent opposition to the institution of priesthood and cult. This view, however, was strongly challenged by form criticism with its interest in the life-setting of prophetic oracles. Drawing attention to oracular passages like 2 Chronicles 20:14-17 or Psalm 60:6-8, form critics argued that the basic types of prophetic speech, such as the threat or promise, were best understood when one supposed that the prophet spoke as a functionary of the cult. S. Mowinckel, for example, posited a Babylonian-type new year festival in Israel celebrating the enthronement of Yahweh and the subduing of the cosmic forces of chaos. The prophets were said to function as divine spokesmen in this cult-drama.[26] Later, others argued on the basis of parallels between prophetic speech and ancient Near Eastern treaty forms that the prophets were connected with a covenant renewal ceremony in which they functioned as mediators of divine law.[27] Such form-critical conclusions have exerted a profound influence on the last quarter century of biblical scholarship.

These conclusions, though, have not gone unchallenged. It has been correctly pointed out that forms do not necessarily point to the *Sitz im Leben* of the one using it. Forms may be taken over into new contexts and employed for rhetorical purposes. The degree to which Israel and Judah were influenced by Babylonian festivals or Hittite suzerainty covenants has been vigorously debated. Characteristic turns of speech have been explained apart from an appeal to dependence on specific genres. In recent years, even attempts to relate prophetic genres to the prophet's concept of his task have been strongly challenged. For example, Westermann's concept of the 'prophetic judgment speech' has been criticized on the grounds that it posits a legal background in which the prophet sees himself functioning as an advocate of Jahweh, a legal background which some feel cannot be demonstrated.[28] But, while conclusions about the life-setting of the oracles and its implications for the nature of the prophetic ministry are put forward with greater reserve today, the fact remains that clear links have been established between the prophets and institutional religion.[29] Recognizing the debt of the prophets to these institutions is now seen as crucial to a proper understanding of the prophetic message.

3. Exposition of the prophetic message

The interpretation of the prophets is affected not only by one's views of the state of the text and the nature of prophetic activity, but also by the theological and philosophical presuppositions of scholars themselves. This diversity of presuppositions becomes especially clear when discussion turns to the nature of the revelation conveyed through the prophetic word. Here, views about the possibility of genuine communication between God and man, or even the existence of a transcendent God who can communicate at all come quickly to the fore. These presuppositions need to be understood in order to know the sense in which a given writer regards the prophetic word as a word of God.

Form criticism claims to find a distinction in the texts between the word of God and the word of the prophet. The revelation from God is said to consist of the essential threat or promise. The prophet reflected on this revelation and formulated his own explanation of why God had purposed to do this or that. These prophetic reflections appear in the form of reproaches or encouragements which make God's threats or promises more intelligible, urgent, etc., to the people, but they are not to be confused with the word of God itself, with a 'Thus says Yahweh . . .'. For example, in Amos 7:16-17, form criticism would identify v.16 as a reproach, a statement of the reason for punishment, formulated by Amos. The threat, or announcement of punishment in v.17, however, is held to be the essential word of God. It must be stressed that this is the form-critical judgment based on the assumption, drawn largely from the historical books, that the essential prophetic word was a threat or a promise (*e.g.* 1 Ki. 17:1; 2 Ki. 20:1, 5-6). It is a weakness of the theory that so few passages in the literary prophets approximate to the ideal form. Moreover, one should not think that since a scholar identifies a text as having the form of a message from God, that he therefore regards it as a message from God in truth.

Others, however, hold that the revelatory experience was a totally ineffable event. The prophetic word in some way grows out of the event with genuine power and conviction, but the experience itself lies beyond

articulation.[30] It is a question whether or not the prophetic word corresponds to all the essence of the revelation, but since the experience is ultimately non-rational, the question itself is inappropriate. The fact that God has 'spoken' is an encouragement to faith, but the content of the prophetic word is purely human in origin. It has no intrinsic authority, except in so far as it reflects or conforms to the authority of human reason.[31] Koch seems to regard prophetic language about God as referring essentially to historical processes. Hence, no real systematic theology of the prophets is possible, at least in a metaphysical sense, because their concept of God was undergoing continual modification with each new turn of events.[32]

It is precisely at this point that conservative students will find their keenest tensions with some aspects of critical scholarship respecting the prophets. The Old Testament Scriptures strongly suggest that God communicated to men in such a way that the concepts of 'speaking' and 'hearing' are true approximations of what happened.[33] Though we may say with Calvin that God 'lisps' to us to illustrate the great gap bridged in the process of revelation,[34] we have clear biblical grounds for affirming that this gap has been genuinely (though not exhaustively) bridged. The greatest issue at stake in prophetic studies is not 'what did God say through the prophets?,' but 'What does it mean for a prophet to claim that God had spoken to him at all?'

Discussion of the theology of the prophets requires a return to the question of independence versus institution. While most scholars would recognize that the prophets inherited traditional ideas, some stress the dominance of these ideas in the formation of the message. Gerhard von Rad, for example, developed the very influential thesis that Isaiah's preaching was deeply dependent on a tradition about Jahweh's defeat of the nations at Mount Zion – a tradition held to go back to a pre-Israelite cult-myth about the victory of the high god over the waters of chaos.[35] Hence, explaining the prophetic message becomes a matter of tracing out the traditional themes which the prophet inherits, and then reapplies, revises, or expands in the light of his own circumstances. This study, known as tradition criticism, thus seeks to find a unifying theme to the preaching in well-established ideas long associated with important cult centres.

This approach to the message, however, tends to be unacceptable to those who wish to emphasize the creativity and originality of the prophets. Thus, while the presence of traditional ideas may be recognized, and even a close connection with the cult, the prophets are seen as either critical of old traditions, or independent in their handling of these traditions. The hypothetical character of the germinal traditions, as well as the difficulty of relating stages in the development of the traditions to the historical careers of the prophets, have also been pointed out.[36]

All types of scholarship agree that the prophetic message concerns the future. However, critical scholarship tends to limit this futuristic concern to the prophets' foreseeable future. Often, this tendency is motivated by naturalistic presuppositions which exclude the possibility of divine revelation respecting the future. On this view, prophets 'predicted' the future on the basis of their exceptional insight into the signs of the times. On the other hand, this tendency also arises from an interest in the social comment of the prophets, joined to the conviction that the prophets primarily addressed the future of immediate concern to their hearers, and this is a perspective which must be appreciated. The prophets certainly did speak of the distant future, as was recognized by David in 2 Samuel 7:19. Likewise, Isaiah told Hezekiah of the coming Babylonian captivity, an event 100 years in the future. However, it is worth noting that Hezekiah's response (2 Ki. 20:19) was not one of vexation for the future of the nation, but gratification that his own days would be undisturbed. No such ambivalence is possible when Amos proclaims the downfall of Samaria, when Isaiah encourages Ahaz to look for God's deliverance from the Syro-Ephraimite coalition, or when Jeremiah intimates the impending success of the Babylonian siege!

Of special importance to our understanding of predictive prophecy are the messianic prophecies. Isaiah 7 is illusrative of the interpretative challenge presented by these texts. Here, the promise of Immanuel appears as the ground of hope in the face of the Syro-Ephraimite threat. The prophecy clearly suggests that a child born in the days of Ahaz would be a sign of God's presence with his people. Yet, while the birth of one like Hezekiah might indeed function as such a sign and thus constitute a fulfilment of the prophecy, the New Testament enables us to see that such a prophecy is capable of a more exhaustive fulfilment in the birth of one who is truly all that 'Immanuel' signifies (Mt. 1:22-23). In dealing with such texts one does well to remember the words of Peter (1 Pet. 1:10-11), who indicates that the prophets themselves did not thoroughly understand how these prophecies were to be fulfilled. Hence, it seems a sound principle to see those prophecies which find their ultimate fulfilment in Christ as nonetheless relating to the hopes of the prophets for the Davidic line in their own day.

It is generally recognized that predictions of coming disaster are related by the prophets to particular social or political evils which are bringing on the judgment. Those who stress the dependence of the prophets on tradition, particularly covenant tradition, see this message as based on an appeal to authority,[37] while those who stress the creativity of the prophets in things ethical see it as a direct appeal to the conscience, which the prophets, after discovering it for themselves, were seeking to awaken in their hearers.[38] Conservatives would not wish to draw a sharp distinction between an appeal to authority and an appeal to the conscience, as if the authority of law could not serve as a basis for stirring up the conscience. Nor is it true that dependence on a tradition, particularly a legal one, inhibits creativity. Our Lord's own ethical teaching, e.g. the Sermon on the Mount, is firmly grounded in the tradition of Mosaic law, and yet expounds and applies that tradition to the conscience in a powerful and highly creative way, not unlike the Old Testament prophets!

At present, however, the classical critical canon that the prophets discovered the conscience (and thus were the precursors of 'Mosaic' law) still predominates Old Testa-

ment scholarship, having received an enthusiastic new defence from the discipline of redaction criticism. However, as Koch observes, a satisfactory explanation of why or how the prophets should have developed this keen ethical sensitivity has yet to be formulated.[39] In contrast to such a serious 'Achilles heel', one may observe that it is not uncommon among sinful men to witness large-scale departures from ethical standards of previous generations. Hence, the interpretation of the prophetic ministry suggested by the canonical form of the Old Testament – that the prophets summoned a rebellious people back to the standard of Mosaic law in the power of the Spirit of God – is still worthy of a thoughtful defence by biblical scholars.

[1]For a sense of the breadth of the literature see G. Fohrer, 'Zehn Jahre Literatur zur alt. Prophetie', *Theologische Rundschau* NF 28 (1962), pp. 1-75, 234-97, 301-74; James Limburg, 'The Prophets in Recent Study: 1967-1977', *Interpretation* 32 (January 1978), pp. 56-68; R. L. Alden, 'Study of the Prophets since World War II' in J. Barton Payne (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Old Testament* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1970), pp. 131-145.

[2]Klaus Koch, *The Prophets*, 2 vols., trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1982-83), vol. 2, p. 189.

[3]J. Scharbert, 'Die Prophetische Literatur: Der Stand der Forschung', in H. Cazelles (ed.), *De Mari a Qumran* (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1969), p. 59.

[4]*Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

[5]See, *e.g.*, Robert Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant* (London: SCM, 1981).

[6]William McKane, 'Prophecy and the Prophetic Literature', in G. W. Anderson (ed.), *Tradition and Interpretation* (Oxford: OUP, 1979), p. 186.

[7]See the very helpful explanations of redaction criticism in Robert Coote, *Amos Among the Prophets* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), pp. 2-6; R. E. Clements, *Prophecy and Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975), p. 6.

[8]James M. Ward, *The Prophets* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), p. 27.

[9]Coote, p. 3.

[10]Koch, vol. 2, p. 189.

[11]Coote, p. 4.

[12]Clements, p. 7.

[13]Coote, p. 6.

[14]*Cp.* Coote, p. 19; Koch, vol. 1, pp. 36ff.

[15]Clements, pp. 8-27.

[16]See the very useful survey of the development of form criticism by John H. Hayes, 'The History of the Form-Critical Study of Prophecy', in G. MacRae (ed.), *Society of Biblical Literature 1973 Seminar Papers*, vol. 1, (Cambridge, Mass.: SBL, 1973), pp. 60-99.

[17]Robert R. Wilson, 'Form-Critical Investigation of the Prophetic Literature: The Present Situation', in G. MacRae, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105.

[18]1 Sam. 9:9.

[19]McKane, p. 165.

[20]See, *e.g.*, R. E. Clements, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), pp. 52ff.

[21]Koch, vol. 1, p. 12.

[22]*Cp.* Hayes, p. 64; see also, G. Hölscher, *Die Profeten: Untersuchungen zur Religionsgeschichte Israels* (Leipzig: J. Heinrichs, 1914); J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962); A. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

[23]Lindblom, pp. 1-46.

[24]David L. Petersen, *The Roles of Israel's Prophets* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), pp. 9-15.

[25]*Cp.* McKane, p. 167.

[26]Hayes, pp. 76-79; Koch, vol. 1, p. 24.

[27]See, *e.g.*, G. E. Wright, 'The Lawsuit of God: A Form-Critical Study of Deuteronomy 32', in B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson (eds.), *Israel's Prophetic Heritage* (London: SCM, 1962), pp. 26ff.

[28]Wilson, p. 118.

[29]See Aubrey R. Johnson, *The Cultic Prophet and Israel's Psalmody* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1979); Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).

[30]McKane, p. 168.

[31]*Cp.* Ward, pp. 15-20.

[32]Koch, vol. 1, pp. 13, 14.

[33]*Cp.* Nu. 12:6; 1 Sa. 3:4-14, *etc.*

[34]See Calvin's sermon on Dt. 5:22 in G. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss (eds.), *Corpus Reformatum Ioannis Calvini: Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia* (Brunswick: C. A. Schwetschke and Sons, 1883), vol. 27, p. 387.

[35]Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols., trans. D. M. G. Stalker, vol. 2, *The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965), pp. 155-159.

[36]Clements, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem*, pp. 72ff.

[37]Richard Victor Bergren, *The Prophets and the Law* (Cincinatti: Hebrew Union College, 1974), pp. 80-150, 204-220.

[38]Koch, vol. 2, p. 190.

[39]*Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 193.

Curriculum for credo: the content and aim of the church's teaching task

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I. THE CONTENT

Even the title of these talks is not neutral, for by proposing a teaching programme for the church, one is making a theological statement of profound significance. Such a role for the church, in recent years, has more often been renounced in favour of social and political activity. The church's *religion*, left to fend for itself, has become a thin and irrelevant shadow of that to be found in the New Testament. It has consisted in just that which can *not* be communicated, whether it be the Buberian I-Thou encounter or the 'event-disclosure' or 'the experience of the numinous'.

By taking up a 'curriculum for faith' we transcend this ruinous divorce and affirm that the church's role, whilst inextricable from social and political responsibilities, is much more than activism; it is the sharing of a divine message. What is more, we understand this message in the following terms:

1. It is an intelligible, propositional message which, by eliciting intelligible assent and response reconciles human life to God and his will.

2. It is not only propositional but is a rich *complex* of propositions so vast and exhaustless that its exposition can easily occupy the life's labour of one man.

3. It is such that these propositions facilitate and articulate a full Christian experience enhancing all human life, and by 'experience' we mean nothing less than full Christian *existence* in relation to God, oneself and one's neighbour.

4. The Christian experience which this message generates may be *objectified*, *individualised* and *shared*.

5. The propositions of this message, moreover, cross both times and cultures, and were divinely designed to do so by being set in universal and therefore translatable, human situations.

6. Such transmission of this message is appropriately assisted by dogmatic definitions and symbols which distinguish the anchor points, or to put it another way, the pillars of belief. These definitions are useful models but they are not the propositions themselves, nor are they merely the enshrining of 'timeless' truths somehow buried in the propositions. They are simply the servants of the message itself, giving it resonance and recognition. However, the more these definitions stand the test of time, the more useful they are and the greater is the burden of proof required to overthrow them.

Given these features, we are led to some practical conclusions:

a. The content of the church's teaching task is the message itself, namely God-breathed Scripture. It is the pulsating living Word, breathed out by God and made permanent in writing. It is the whole thing with all its richness of human experience and expression. It is not bare proposition, but the throbbing biography of tragedy and salvation imperatively written by God himself.

b. This content is served and enhanced, however, by its presentation within the discipline of a particular dogmatic shape or model, especially a proven one. The advantages of such a framework are to highlight unity and therefore coherence, to aid mastery of the material, to impose sanctions against speculative and unwarranted inferences from, or apart from, the biblical material and to exclude more explicitly ideas which undermine or oppose Scripture.

c. This propositional approach means that no amount of 'piety' or 'spirituality' can be a substitute for understanding the *message* and cherishing it by repentance. This has its consequences for preaching. Preaching cannot be elevated into a sacrament where the means of grace centres upon the event itself instead of upon the message it conveys. We can do this in subtle ways where the 'liberty' or 'excitement' or even 'glory' of preaching is exaggerated.

d. On the other hand, since the content itself has the character of 'good news proclaimed' we cannot make preaching a mere intimation. There is no biblical ground for belief in the *ex opere operato* of the sermon. New Testament accounts make it quite clear that the content was delivered with commitment and conviction with all patience. This must be true in all media commandeered for the good news but especially in preaching where the chief channel of communication is individual personality publicly scrutinized for sincerity.

e. We claim that these propositions (and models of them) issue in the common but individualized possession of a scripturally defined experience. The authenticity of the content is therefore in some measure made evident by practical result, by the emergence of a shared, biblically informed life-style and of common governing values, an identifiable Christian existence, not just a repeated devotional experience, important as that is.

This leads us irresistibly to the conclusion that no teaching is faithful to Scripture which does not have a practical aim, issuing in changed attitudes and actions in respect of self, others and God.

When we turn to the curriculum itself we find, of course, all the great historic doctrines of the faith. For the most part it will be enough to remind ourselves of the essential importance of each.

The *doctrine of God* must emerge because the people of God must know *whom* they serve. Reconciliation with him is the distinctive Christian offer. Moreover, when reconciled, we need to know how to love, appreciate and worship him. Essentially, however, we must know the doctrine of God because he has many unworthy aspiring rivals, and the church itself with its activities, organization, loyalties and powers can become as a rival to him.

The *doctrine of man* is indispensable because it affirms the individual's value, and therefore answerability, and thereby explains a person's *real* dilemma to him. Moreover by defining the social nature of humankind it furnishes the basis for real practical response to our tragic world.

As for the great *doctrine of Christ's person and work*, we all know that he is the living Lord, the only Saviour, our religion and unique mediator, to be worshipped without reservation. The doctrine, however, assumes a new significance in a freshly pluralizing society where the implied exclusiveness of Christ is once again a scandal.

Of the many reasons for underlining the *doctrine of the Holy Spirit* we mention only two of pressing importance. Firstly this doctrine, after that of the incarnation, emphasizes within Trinitarian bounds the dynamic immanence of God. The Spirit of God is still working in the world, testifying that it is *his* world and even more emphatically that it is his church in his world. Secondly, only the fact of the Holy Spirit delivers to the world the authentic Christian existence of which we were earlier speaking.

Lastly, and appropriately, we champion the place of *eschatology*, in the full, not the emasculated modern, sense of the word. It condemns and curbs human rebellion and cruelty. It both denies the weary cyclic perception of human history and affirms the inevitability of consummation. It not only speaks of hope and perfection, but upholds the lasting *value* of creation, precluding that creeping suspicion that we are an interim body with an interim message struggling with an interim ethic. To concentrate on an eschatology which majors wholly on the chasm between Now and Then is therefore to undermine this doctrine completely.

In addition to these general doctrinal needs, however, we wish to suggest two pressure points of particular importance.

1. The law-penalty framework of the human condition

We do not have in mind here the sometimes too stylized evangelism associated with the great Puritan preachers and their distinguished successors in which law preaching leads to perceptible stress followed by application of the gospel. Of much more basic importance is the law framework within which these preachers worked, and indeed within which Scripture itself places us all. According to Scripture the origins of the human dilemma are explained as follows:

a. Man's destiny was made his own selection according to response to moral law. To this end he was especially addressed by God and made answerable to him. Whatever views one may hold on the idea of biological evolution, this arrangement was the starting point for the present human situation.

b. The moral law then given by God was objective in its specific requirements, though written directly 'upon the heart'.

c. The emergence of cursedness and alienation in the world was therefore the consequence of a moral event, namely the 'fall'.

d. The human dilemma is thus a *moral* one. It has to do with law and curse *in that order*, and it requires a moral solution with an ensuing moral expression in conversion experience.

e. Redemption is most naturally understood in this light as effected through a law-curse discharge of penalty. It is a *moral* or *legal* form of redemption.

The main reason for abandoning this biblical framework today is the rise of the evolutionary model in Christian theology. Such reverses the law-curse order. It makes the 'curse' somehow a natural feature of human life through the 'reptilian' nature or recalcitrant material of the cosmos and the human dilemma is no longer a moral one but a material one.

It is, however, impossible to do justice to the great Christian doctrines without the law framework, for it is exclusively to the moral framework, as opposed to the material, that the credit goes for upholding the *scandal* of evil. On this view alone, evil is not merely 'primitive', 'un-natural' or 'bad'. It is, rather, blameworthy, punishable and wrong. This framework alone makes practicable an instrument by which the real human tragedy can be divined and corrected. A moral, even legal, explanation of our universal distress may not be welcome, but it is coherent, and with great conviction it rings true because, tragically, it is true.

Bound up with a sound framework, then, should be a clear doctrine of judgment. The doctrine is obligatory material for several reasons:

i. It was a major feature of New Testament preaching for decision. Paul introduced it on the one occasion where we find him actually labouring for a point of contact with the pagan ethos, namely at the Areopagus in Acts 17. Jesus himself often spoke of coming judgment, and it is of course at the heart of Paul's message as depicted by him in Romans.

ii. It is inseparable from Christology. Judgment is a power which Jesus reserves for himself. It is impossible to exalt Christ without upholding also this aspect of his dignity.

iii. The New Testament treats final judgment as an issue before believers. In Romans 14:10ff. and 2 Corinthians 5:9-11 the fact of judgment casts a tone of gravity across all of life and compels a sense of urgency for obedience and witness.

iv. The doctrine of judgment in the New Testament provides the ultimate anchor point of the story of man and evil. Modern theology emphasizes the open-ended dynamic of world processes. Even Moltmann sees the 'history of the future' as an opening up and releasing of the present 'experimental' open history. The New Testament, however, envisages a closing down, a gelling, a day for shutting up all systems and discharging all debts. Things will not go on and on simply because they are. There will be, according to apostolic doctrine, a 'burning up', in a word, a judgment. People, in fact, need such an anchorage point if the biblical call for moral obedience is to be their life's quest and not simply an appendage to Christian joyousness.

2. The bodily resurrection of Christ

Our neglect of preaching about the resurrection of Christ, outside of Easter day, has now to be remedied for several reasons. In the first place, the lordship of Jesus was known only through the resurrection (Rom. 1:3,4); that is to say, all the features of his life and ministry which pointed to his exalted status were summed up with immense power by the resurrection. Secondly, in consequence, our faith actually hangs upon a single thread, that of Christ's resurrection as Paul clearly shows in 1 Corinthians 15. The resurrection of Jesus is not just one more area of doubt to be dispelled by Christian apologetic – it is, to change the metaphor, the very cornerstone of our faith. Thirdly, it so happens that although the resurrection of Christ provokes more doubt than possibly any other doctrine apart from the incarnation itself, it also furnishes an unshakable and rational offensive for the faith. The attempts to account for the

historical evidence in a way contrary to traditional resurrection belief have proven to be specious, speculative, mutually contradictory and on occasion even eccentric. If, as alleged, the conventional received account of Christ's resurrection is so obviously invalid, it is remarkable that no alternative explanation has universally commended itself, particularly amidst such passion to abolish the old path.

We cannot turn from this keystone of Christian faith without briefly reminding ourselves of its doctrinal significance in the curriculum of faith. It upholds the apostolic conviction of Christ's deity and confirms the success of his redemptive mission. It provides a base for Christ's present lordship and for the church's obedience. It affirms the unity of the human constitution and is thus a pattern of human resurrection-destiny, whilst pointing also to new life present now as a basis for holiness and social concern. It endues the church's message with a supernatural yet historical character without which all its teaching is impotent.

In closing, we recognize that our discussion of the content of the teaching task has, in apparent perverseness, focused on the very tenets of the faith the most rejected. But it is the rejection of them which emphasizes both their importance and the urgent requirement to communicate them. The question, ultimately, is not whether we dare assert so persistently things so difficult to receive, but whether we can afford *not* to so assert them.

II. THE AIM
The apostle Paul in particular defines the aim of *his* teaching work in terms of the three major ideas of worship, holiness and mission. His 'curriculum' has for its object the strengthening of faith (Rom. 1:11), the inward formation of Christ in the believer (Gal. 4:19), the unity of the faith and the church's maturity (Eph. 4:13), an appreciation of holiness and 'the kingdom of God with power' (1 Cor. 4:17-20), a striving together for the gospel (Phil. 2:27) and the presentation of every man mature (Col. 1:28). Such persistently practical conceptions of the teaching goal explain why we find in 1 Timothy 1:9,10 that the enemy and betrayer of sound doctrine is not just *unsound* doctrine but also wrong behaviour and wrong relationships both amongst one's fellows and towards one's God.

The aims of the teaching task are therefore very wide ranging, embracing the divinely ordained *latreia* on at least three fronts (*cf.* Heb. 9:1; Rom. 12:1 with Rom. 1:9; Heb. 13:10 and 13:6). On the other hand it is a very narrow aim, namely *the authentication in both communicator and hearers of the message proclaimed.*

Just how costly a teaching programme like this is, may be discerned in Paul's account of his own ministry in Acts 20. Here 'teaching' is total communication of message and messenger, entailing a life lived (v.18), a humility (v.19), a sensitivity (v.19), trials endured (v.19), courage (v.20), thoroughness in content (v.27) and application (v.20), commitment (v.24), purity of motive (v.32) and example in caring (v.35).

When evangelical theologians of non-western churches met in Korea, considerations such as these constrained them to criticize the western theological enterprise as,

> rationalistic, moulded by Western philosophies, preoccupied with intellectual concerns, . . . theology as a purely academic discipline is something we must neither pursue nor import. . . . Biblical theology has to be actualised in the servanthood of a worshipping and witnessing community called to make the Word of God live in our contemporary situations.[1]

One can, of course, sense over-reaction and, some would say, even over-simplification in this protest. We must recognize that whether we like it or not the human society is largely shaped, directly or indirectly, by *ideas*. Yet we are, by the Declaration, rightly alerted to an almost imperceptible but remorseless ascendancy of philosophy over biblically informed theology which has now almost annexed the whole field in our universities. This cold, conceptual and generally incommunicable syllabus should no longer be accepted without interrogation and protest. Of course, theology in the universities (indeed in the market place of general debate), must accept strict academic regulation and be prepared for interface with other disciplines, but without becoming *purely* academic. The practical aims of the church's teaching task, underlined by the last phrase in the Declaration, are compatible only with a theology of intelligible, propositional and applicable concepts. It so happens that these values are prominent in the evangelical tradition, however much, regretfully, the initiative has been lost to other schools of thought by default.

The advantages of evangelical thought are nevertheless plain enough. In the first place, the propositional conception of the church's task is indispensable for intelligible statements about the individual's responsibility in community. It is one of the striking features of much dialectical theology that it cannot easily jump from, say, an I-Thou encounter, or 'event-disclosure' to a generalised social and applicable principle. The Christ of faith is imprisoned in the vertical. Secondly, the *absolute* nature of the Christian message provides the only grounds for truly *binding* judgments. True, it is this allegedly distasteful feature which repels critics, convinced as they often are of the dissolution of binding moral law. And yet no-one fully dispenses with this apparatus of obligation. Sooner or later a furtive 'ought' creeps into all theological talk. The evangelical has a formidable and coherent rationale in which to root such inevitable language. In the third place, once these two principles are conceded we find ourselves in the realm of objective statements about God and man and therefore transmittable statements. Without these no coherent pronouncement on corporate standards of behaviour can be made, let alone a common philosophy of responsibility in worship and obedience towards God himself. Lastly, the wholehearted commitment of the evangelical to the full authority of Scripture imparts a comprehensive (though not, as sometimes alleged, an exhaustive) deliverance upon the conduct of our lives in sensitive concern for what is compassionate, true and meaningful. This rich wholeness of Scripture,

moreover, is far more thoroughly tested and vindicated than the experiments that now nervously confront us.

There is more to the evangelical case than even this, for we might add that it has a distinctive pervasive moral spirit which has proven to be a remarkable spring of action. It is easy to dispense such epithets as 'legalistic', but a good deal more difficult to find anything quite so powerful as a generator of commitment to commonly held virtues such as selflessness, integrity and social concern in people initially devoid of them. Alternative frameworks, evolutionary, existentialist, or even experiential must prove themselves over a very long period of time and show that they can uphold the *scandal* of human misdeeds before aspiring to displace the traditional approach.

In addition to this fundamental feature of the 'conventional' perception of things, there is the disquieting fact that categories such as sin, fall, penalty and forgiveness have tended to free rather than legalistically to enslave, illustrating once again a remarkable renovating power.

We observed earlier that a consideration of the 'teaching task of the church' presupposes that there is a message to be communicated. Conversely, it presupposes that there is an identifiable, even definable, entity called 'the Church' to which this task is committed. In doctrinal studies as a whole no single 'figure' or image of the church has achieved dominance, but it may be said that heirs to the Protestant evangelical tradition have in the main seen no reason for discarding, in favour of some other model, the New Testament description of the Church as the 'people of God'. This is not just one more example of traditionalism. There are reasons for the choice.

In the first place, this representation focuses upon the relationship of the Christian community to *God*. It lays down as a ground rule that nothing may be said about the church which violates that first consideration. The emphasis is not on 'people' but upon 'God'. The Greek of 1 Pet. 2:9 suggests 'a people for (God's) possession' (*laos eis peripoiesin*). The church is first of all a people for God. This does not relieve in any way the church's obligation to humanity in general but rather intensifies it, since the world belongs to the God whom the church serves, and God has undertaken to load responsibility for service to his world upon the shoulders of those who claim allegiance to his Messiah.

Secondly, in the Petrine passage which concerns us the *communal* dimension of the people of God is underscored by such phrases as 'a chosen *race*' and 'a holy *nation*', with all their abiding Old Testament overtones of solidarity.

Thirdly the notion of *service* to fellow humans is, in this same passage, established as a primary function of the people of God. They are nothing other than a 'royal priesthood'. What is more, the demands of this priesthood are stringently conditioned by allegiance to Christ as their example.

Lastly, the whole pattern is animated by a sense of gratitude: 'once . . . but . . . *now* God's people . . . *now* received mercy.

We may say then, that far from obscuring the 'horizontal', this notion of the church provides the only *compelling* basis for serving one's fellows. Once it is established that the community of the faith are a people for God, they not only *must*, but they *will* share his vision and outrage at human suffering and perplexity.

Does this mean that other representations of the church have nothing to teach us? Amongst some of the more popular current options are the following:

The sacramental. It is virtually impossible for churches faithful to the Protestant tradition to embrace the idea of the church as 'primal sacrament' without surrendering its non-negotiable perceptions of both church and sacraments. Nevertheless the approach does remind us that the church is the most tangible embodiment of Scripture's message accessible to the unbelieving world. How do we measure up to that expectation?

The mystical communion. Here the emphasis falls upon the invisible and the *in*tangible, the mystical unity shared by believers with each other and with Christ their head. It might with justice be said that evangelicalism is quite mystical enough, but it will do no harm to remind ourselves that our church unity will be no greater than the sum total of our personal, loving loyalty-devotion to the head of the church. No assembly, synod, presbytery or conference can achieve the former without the latter.

The servant. The failure of this prototype, as we have hinted, is that it starts with the horizontal instead of the vertical. Moltmann might be cited as an exception, but we are not yet convinced that even he has us *serving* God; he seems rather to see us 'helping' God. Yet we are humbled before this image of the church also, for it witnesses powerfully against our triumphalism. 'Privilege', biblically understood, is debt-laden. We are chained by our privilege to the service of the world rather than the conquest of it.

Before we leave this matter of the teaching task of the church it is worth pointing out that whilst Scripture pinpoints a specific teaching office we find this teaching mission to be also the task of the whole church. In Romans 12 the proclamation of truth does not strike out alone. It is accompanied and confirmed by authenticating forms of selfless service issuing in a lifestyle which takes the world by surprise. No preacher of the message, or theological educator, stands alone. His success will be deemed no greater than the practical evidence which confirms his message as real and authentic. The burden falls, therefore, upon the whole church whose life and value will either strengthen the message or betray it. By this route we are brought to another consideration, namely the world-context of our teaching task.

It was never expected that the church's theology would remain private. Paul in 1 Corinthians 14 fully expected even the regular in-teaching of the congregation to attract and overwhelm the outsider. In the first two centuries of the church's life (and arguably beyond that) Christian theology was developed almost exclusively in interaction with hostile elements. Granted, this 'apologetic theology' was not always of the highest

quality but this is no condemnation of the enterprise in itself.

The *content* of the church's teaching programme should once again respect this high aim. Christians should be fitted to articulate in a compelling and winsome way the faith once and for all handed on. In the process of achieving this we will not be able to avoid the exclusiveness of Christ. We are often happy to teach this idea only indirectly, but we can thereby leave many witnessing Christians unfitted for certain conflict. We may as well face the possibility now that Christians in a pluralistic society will face intense hostility for simply saying 'Christ and Christ alone'.

This same content should, moreover, breed a deep sensitivity to suffering and oppression. Although this field has gone by default to political theology it is in fact only evangelical theology which offers a theological basis for an authentic struggle against wrongs. Only in the great doctrines of man, sin and redemption, derived directly as authoritative communicable judgments of God, can we find a starting point for Christian activism.

With this consideration we are brought to the reminder that the teaching task should foster a global concern. This concern will not simply grow of itself and apart from teaching stimulus, any more than other forms of true holiness will grow without the input of Scripture. A true teacher will take an axe to the roots of parochialism and a true theological teacher moreover will welcome the enlargement of theological endeavour across national barriers. This is already happening. What started with the Servant-theology of Moltmann, Metz and Bonhoeffer has flourished ultimately as the liberation theology of Latin America. It is vital, then, that the great evangelical tradition takes seriously the growing impact of secular and social theologies on its mission target countries and be prepared to set aside resources for the theological service of overseas churches.

In the light of these immense challenges those of us specifically engaged in Christian education will have to learn to live more and more each day with the sober words, 'we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness' (Jas. 3:1).

[1]The Seoul Declaration, August 1982, in *Missiology*, vol. X, no. 4 (Oct. 1982), p. 491.

Secularization: the fate of faith in modern society

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It is a commonplace that western society – and other parts of the world influenced by the west – is secular society. Many people routinely assume that modern society tends to squeeze out religion. In fact, some think religion is so irrelevant that it could never again have the influence on society that it is once said to have had. Modernity sounds religion's death-knell. Both in popular speech and in more academic discourse such assumptions hold sway. But much confusion reigns as soon as one attempts to unpack these taken-for-granted ideas. Yet the effort is worth while, for much hangs on an understanding of secularization. The term points to a crucially significant aspect of our social context in the so-called advanced societies.

This essay focuses on the debate over secularization as it has appeared in the literature of the past twenty years. We shall comment first upon attempts to clarify the meanings of the term. Then, as some of the sociological disputes have their origin in theological statement, we shall take a specific look at the 'theology' of seculariza-

tion. Needless to say, the implications of this topic for theology are tremendous. Thirdly, we describe what I call the 'strong secularization thesis', the idea that religion declines with the onset of modernity, and then consider the various forms that criticism of the 'strong thesis' have taken. We conclude by tracing some 'new directions' in secularization studies. My emphasis falls mainly on the social analysis of secularization, but part of my message is that *theological* understanding tends to be embedded in sociological explanation.

Clarifying the concept

There is little doubt that Larry Shiner's article 'The concept of secularization in empirical research'[1] is the best-known attempt to unravel and disentangle secularization's diverse threads. He argues that five different meanings of the term may be distinguished. They are as follows. First, secularization may be defined as 'the decline of religion'. 'The previously accepted symbols, doctrines and institutions lose their prestige and influence'. On this argument, one would end up with a religionless society. The difficulties with this definition are twofold: when was society *really* religious anyway and, how does one measure such a decline? The second

definition of secularization is 'conformity with this world'. In this case attention is said to turn from the supernatural and towards an exclusive concern with 'this world'. Eventually, the 'pragmatic tasks of the present' would become paramount and religion would cease to have any distinguishing identity. Again, the problem with this, says Shiner, is the ambiguity involved in measuring such secularization. Are not theological definitions intruding into social science? Who is to say that concern for this world is not the authentic culmination of faith?

A third, more specific understanding of secularization is the 'disengagement of society from religion'. Society increasingly distances itself from religion, especially in political life, but also in spheres such as education and welfare. Religion is relegated to the private domain, having no effect on public life. Take, for example, Luther's doctrine of the calling. He argued that all, not only priests, work in 'callings'. Does this apparent demotion of priests to the level of everyman count as an instance of secularization? Talcott Parsons, who prefers the term 'differentiation' to 'disengagement', thinks not. Rather, secular life is being endowed with religious legimation. That is, the opposite of secularization is occurring. Clearly, secularization is more subtle than it appears at first sight.

'The transposition of religious belief and institutions' is Shiner's fourth definition. Obvious examples of this include seeing a Marxist revolutionary vision as a 'secular transposition' of Jewish-Christian eschatology. 'Obvious' it may be to some, but this example highlights the main difficulties of secularization as transposition. How does one prove that some functional parallels are really related to one another in a causal fashion? Shiner is confident that he has sniffed out another illegitimate theological assumption here.

Shiner's fifth definition of secularization is 'the desacralization of the world'. He takes as his key example the work of Max Weber, who argued that the increasing rationalization characteristic of modern society spelled its 'disenchantment'. (*Entzauberung*)[2] The gradual loss of a sense of the sacred (as Mircea Eliade puts it[3]) is closely related to the matter-of-fact approach to the world associated especially with the rise of modern science. Of course, one immediately has to make qualifications about this definition. For instance, was it not the very desacralizing tendencies within Protestantism (in asserting that nature is not itself infused with magic or mystery) which helped foster the early development of modern science?[4] Of these five definitions, Shiner says (and I largely agree) that the ideas of disengagement, disenchantment, and transposition are the most helpful. They are complementary to one another, and also have the advantage of referring to society in general not just the church. Although the two are connected, it makes sense to distinguish secularization of society from the inner secularization of the churches.

Several notable attempts have been made by others to refine the definition(s) of secularization. Mention might be made of David Martin's *The Religious and the Secular*,[5] Peter Glasner's *The Sociology of Secularization*[6] and Karel Dobbelaer's *Secularization: a Multi-dimensional Concept*.[7] Martin alerted us to the use of secularization by 'counter-religious ideologies'. The term has been wielded as a weapon in a war against religion on more than one occasion. This raises again the question of how 'neutral' the word can ever be. Exploring such issues is of perennial importance for social science. Peter Glasner's contribution takes Martin's suggestion somewhat furtther, showing that secularization may have the status of a 'social myth' by which people come to understand the world. (This theme is echoed in a slightly different way by the more recent book by Harry Ausmus, *The Polite Escape*.[8]) Glasner's demolition work is more useful than his constructive efforts, however, and his book ends in what, for many, is a blind alley. He says that we cannot comment, sociologically, on the effects of the *social* process of secularization on religious vitality today.

This situation is redeemed to some extent by Dobbelaere, whose teasing out of the 'dimensions' of secularization is not dissimilar from Shiner's. Dobbelaere places together 'disengagement, desacralization and transposition' and refers to them collectively as 'laicization'. So society becomes progressively split-off from religion, and as this happens, 'secular' functions of religion are taken over by society. Thus a process of 'disenchantment' (or desacralization) spells an ever-increasing social reliance on technology and calculation. Dobbelaere proposes further refinement by distinguishing between other dimensions of secularization; namely 'religious involvement' and 'religious change'. The former (roughly parallel with Shiner's 'decline of religion' or 'dechristianization') focuses on the extent to which people really take seriously and live out the beliefs, morals, and so on, of religious groups. The latter (roughly parallelling 'conformity with this world') expresses changes occurring in the posture of religious organisations. For a current example, many churches are moving from unconcern to awareness or involvement over issues such as the world rich-poor gap, or the nuclear debate.

What then are we left with, by way of a definition of 'secularization'? Patently, we are left with problems, especially those relating to the interpretation of history, and the nature of 'religion'. There is also the issue of social scientific 'neutrality'. Then there are clearly several distinguishable dimensions of secularization, so single, blanket definitions are unobtainable. That secularization acts as a bridging concept between religion and society is true, but does not take us very far. That it might have to do with 'temporality' (as recently suggested by Richard Fenn[9]) takes us further, but still leaves loose ends.

In Fenn's view, secularization could be thought of as the process in which greater concern with the 'passing age' is evidenced. There are several gains to make from this, some of which carry us another step further than where Dobbelaere leaves us. For example, 'conformity with the world' still leaves open the question of what *is* the 'world'? From a Christian perspective, an ambiguity lurks here. Concern with the world as 'created order' is

mandatory, but when such a concern lacks a transcendent dimension – that is, failing to see it as *God's* world – it is a seductive concern, to be resisted.

Enough of the definitional problem for the present. The concept of secularization on its own explains nothing. The term is a 'problematic', in Philip Abrams' sense of 'a rudimentary organisation of a field of phenomena which yields problems for investigation'.[10] The agenda for investigation is, I believe, clarified by the work of Shiner, Martin, Dobbelaere and Fenn, but the issues raised by them and others are by no means dead. They emerge especially in the work of Bryan Wilson, to which we turn in a moment. Before that, however, we must note one other muddying of the waters achieved by the 'theology of secularization'.

The theology of secularization

Rather like the sociological debate, the theological debate over secularization appears at first glance to be passé, out of fashion. But the similarity continues, in that the assumptions surrounding the debate are still invoked, implicitly or explicity, nearly quarter of a century after the debates began. Although the most spectacular moments for secular theology were probably the publication of John Robinson's *Honest to God* and Harvey Cox's *The Secular City*,[11] it could well be argued that books like Don Cupitt's *Taking Leave of God* and some productions of the liberation theology school follow the same trail.[12] Each of these, in their way represents an attempt to come to terms with modernity, with the social conditions of the mid- and later twentieth century. Perceiving the possible benefits of some aspects of secularization, they try to recast Christianity in this mould. Even secular*ism* may become, in this view, a truly Christian option.

It must be quickly conceded that, at base, some of this secular theology had a good point. Friedrich Gogarten, for instance, argues that secularization in the sense of humans taking responsibility for the world (rather than just being in bondage to it) is the goal of the biblical tradition.[13] There was a 'secularizing tendency' within the Puritanism which insisted that nature is not imbued with magical forces. But it is clear that Gogarten and friends wished to travel a very different road from the Puritans!

In 'taking responsibility' for life, human beings were frequently said to be 'coming of age'. Possessing the technological means to control nature seemed to mean that an older reference to the transcendent God of traditional religion could happily be jettisoned. *Homo religiosus* was dead. He died when he realised that prayer would not mend the spindle or repair the computer. Many secular theologians took the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer as their starting point. He it was who had popularised the phrase 'religionless Christianity'[14]. His objection was to various aspects of Christian 'religion' which seemed to him (and to most Christians, one would imagine) inimical to Christianity. In particular, he singles out individualism, the concern with the metaphysical, the putting of religion in a separated 'compartment' of life,

and the idea of a God who steps in to rescue, rather than always being at the centre of life. But Bonhoeffer wished to assert that *no* religion of any sort need be involved in Christianity. As Leon Morris points out in his sensible evangelical critique of 'religionless Christianity', however much his admirers wish to deny that Bonhoeffer meant what he said at certain points, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that what begins as a useful attack on Christian deficiency ends as a repudiation of some basic Christian truths.[15]

Hence it comes as no surprise that Robinson, who frequently refers to Bonhoeffer, takes religionless Christianity to what many felt to be an atheistic conclusion. Robinson mistook Paul Tillich and Bonhoeffer to be saying more or less the same thing, which was that 'secular man' has no need of God, as traditionally conceived, and that Christianity must adapt itself accordingly. To use our earlier terminology, Robinson was trying to hasten 'religious change'. Such secularization was desirable, as far as Robinson was concerned.

But secularization was also seen in a rosy hue by Harvey Cox, who wrote in praise of *The Secular City*. He began in much more sociological vein than Robinson: 'The rise of urban civilization and the collapse of traditional religion are the two main hallmarks of our era . . .'.[16] But Cox and Robinson shared the same mentor, Bonhoeffer. Only for Cox, 'man comes of age' in the 'secular metropolis'. He takes 'secular' to mean 'temporality', but rather than seeing this in terms of the difficulties it raises, as Fenn does, Cox applauds it. Religion has been outgrown: 'Secularization is man turning his attention away from the worlds beyond and towards this world and this time'.[17] Cox discerns a (progressive?) shift through history, first through 'tribal' and then through 'town' stages. He announces the arrival of a third stage, 'technopolis', and devotes the book to an examination of this theme. Of course, the processes of urbanization and secularization are closely linked together, although the nature of the relationship is a matter for debate and empirical study.[18]

In a sense, as I suggested, there is a connection between a Robinson and a Cupitt; between Cox and some liberation theology. On the one hand there is the idea that in a scientific world there is no room for a 'traditional' image of a creating and providential God. On the other, and partly as its mirror image, is the view that the world is very much in human hands. Although this is not by any means the theme of all liberation theology, the notion that we take matters into our own hands – the self-liberation of the poor for instance – echoes the tones of Cox's secular theology. It comes as little surprise then, when an Edward Norman launches a critical campaign against what he sees as the 'politicization' of faith, or when James Childress and David Harned ask 'Is secularization really as hospitable to Christian faith as Christian faith seems hospitable to secularization?'[19]

Of course, the answers to such critiques and queries must be ambiguous. Aspects of secularization, as we have seen, are important for the survival of authentic Christianity. Others may be inimical to it. Again,

political awareness and responsibility are an aspect of New Testament Christian discipleship; *exclusive* concern with the temporal, the political, is the denial of discipleship. Peter Berger put his finger on an important point when he described the 1960s trends as the *product* of secularization; this was the 'secularization of theology'.[20] That is, theological development clearly does not take place in a social vacuum. Rather, said Berger, secular theology has to be seen against the backdrop of wider social processes such as the decline of Christendom, the competition offered to Christian faith by 'imported' alternatives from other cultures, increased geographical and social movement, and the pervasive influence of the mass media.

Berger is here engaging in one of his favourite sports; 'relativizing the relativizers'. For if the voguish theologians' declarations of the redundance of religion could be seen as being in part a reflection of their peculiar historical-social milieu, then in time their declarations might themselves prove redundant. Of course, this could also be seen as a tail-chasing exercise, but it does highlight a crucial issue: is secularization primarily an intellectual or a social process – or both? If intellectual, then the mere 'history-of-ideas' approach is sufficient, if social, then presumably a discipline like sociology should be able to grapple successfully with it.[21]

Christian apologetes, raised within a western mindset, have often operated as if the intellectual problem is the key. The defence of the faith may be seen in exclusively cognitive terms. For all his fine contributions, a person like Francis Schaeffer[22] sometimes leaves the impression that social changes tend always to follow intellectual ones rather than *vice versa*.[23] But the study of secularization has given fresh impetus to those who long suspected that *social* factors might be rather significant. For example, it provides a leading motif to the work of two authors who tried in the 1970s to initiate a dialogue between theology and sociology: Robin Gill and Gregory Baum.[24] Gill, an Anglican, argued in *The Social Context of Theology*, that effective Christian communication with the 'outside world' is severely hampered without some grasp of the social dimension of secularization. Baum, a Catholic, similarly uses the debate over secularization as a bridge for discussing the interaction between theology and society. In more popular vein, Os Guinness has articulated for an evangelical audience another version of the same conviction. In *The Gravedigger File*[25] he warns against the social subversion (and unwitting churchly-collusion in this) of Christianity.

All this returns us to where we began, the *social analysis* of secularization. For all the optimism of the secular theologians, can Christianity really survive in a secular society? This is the issue addressed in the 'strong secularization thesis' encapsulated in the writings of Oxford sociologist Bryan Wilson.

The strong secularization thesis
The strong secularization thesis is that the modern world pushes traditional religion to the margins of society, leaving it no role to play at the centre of social life. It is a process, says Bryan Wilson, 'by which religious institutions, actions and consciousness, lose their social significance'.[26] (He has stuck with more or less this definition since his mid-sixties' work: *Religion in secular society*.[27] A calculating rationality, concerned for the best means rather than the best ends, has corroded old beliefs and morality, not just in an intellectual sense, but by becoming the very basis of society. Who now needs a religious legitimation of the power of the state, when democracy is the order of the day? And who needs personal morality when 'electronic eyes and data-retrieval systems have largely supplanted interpersonal concern and the deeply implanted virtues of honesty, industry, goodwill, responsiblity and so on'?[28]

This strong thesis is derived above all from the work of Max Weber, on 'rationalization'. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*[29] he tried to show not only how Puritanism had an indirect connection with early capitalism, but also how the values embodied in that Puritanism became submerged in the process of capitalist development. The 'fate of the times', he lamented, is to live in a society characterised by 'mechanized petrification'. Weber gave us the image of a rationalized society as an 'iron cage' to picture what the spread of science, bureaucracy, and capitalism was doing to people in the modern world. Weber also agonised over the encroachment of 'rationalization and disenchantment' in a speech to students in 1918. One aspect of this can be traced to the rapid rise of double-entry accounting in the fourteenth and fifteenth century. Numbers and quantitive thinking displaced qualitative, aesthetic and moral values according to Weber. As he said 'precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life . . .'[30] He saw little hope of their revival.

Wilson catches Weber's wistfulness. He clearly regrets the passing of a kind of society in which the 'salt of the earth' is still able to 'sustain the social order'. But equally clearly, he believes that such a society is virtually irretrievable.[31] The cityscape of an earlier era *does* teach us something about the dominance of religion, in the soaring spires which cast their shadow over home-and-workplace. Not that this necessarily means that all *believed*. Rather, religion was socially significant in a deep way. Nor does Wilson ignore massive regional variation in the modern societies once touched by Christianity. The indicators may be different from place to place, and the pace may be sudden or slow.[32]

But however it has happened, according to Wilson, something he calls 'societalization' has occurred. Communities, as local, persisting, face-to-face groups, have fragmented or disappeared. Human life is lived in a *societal* (especially the nation-state) context rather than communally. As religion had its strength in the local group, decline in the latter means decline in the former. Whereas once upon a time the processes of production, consumption, co-ordination, control, and knowledge (possession and dissemination) were under religious direction, now this is patently not the case. Religion is consigned to socially irrelevant private spaces, away from where 'real' life is lived. Thus for Wilson, loss of

community is loss of religion. Local points of reference are no longer germane, he insists, in industrial society.

Wilson sees religion in terms of its contribution to social morality. Hence his stress on factors like the quest for personal gain as the symbol of what dominates modern life. We now live in a technical, not a moral order. The transmission of moral values to each succeeding generation is rendered obsolete in the transitory world of commuting, migrating, and the separation of home and work. The emphasis is on individual liberty to do one's own thing, the only checks on which are (rationally negotiated) laws. What with natural explanations of events, technical control of everyday life (traffic lights to conveyor belts), and with existence geared to individual advantage, no space is left for any conception of ultimate salvation. Nor is there any guarantee of social cohesion and continuity (and it is this which seems to be the bigger worry for Wilson). Even those revivals of traditional religion, or the flowering of new religious movements, are powerless in the face of societalization and secularization. What is left is religion reduced to a residual remnant, a reminder of a world we have lost.

Needless to say, there are other versions of a 'strong secularization thesis'. Early sociologist Emile Durkheim believed that religion declined in social significance in industrial society. The separating out of different spheres of life rendered religion less able to maintain its overarching legitimacy.[33] Durkheim, however, saw new social forms of religion emerging within industrial society, a possibility about which Wilson is less than convinced. Wilson prefers to think of religion in more conventional terms. Karl Marx was another who perceived the demise of traditional religion. The secularizing effects of the progression of capitalism had, he believed, 'drowned the most heavenly ecstacies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy waters of egoistic calculation'.[34] Although debate continues on Marx's own stance towards religion,[35] his followers have done much to promote the impression that secularization should be seen as a positive policy strategy, as well as a feature of the modern world.

I shall limit myself to brief comment on two contemporary secularization theorists who also follow a fairly 'strong' thesis, but from very different standpoints. Vernon Pratt, in his *Religion and Secularization*[36] is sure that religion has had its day, and that this is no bad thing. Modern people have 'lost a concept of the supernatural' and, in a scientific milieu, such loss is permanent. He discusses sociologists, theologians, and philosophers to make a case for what might be called a 'secularist' interpretation of secularization. It amounts to secularization with no regret.

Sabino Acquaviva sticks more closely to empirical evidence about church-related activity (mainly) in continental Europe in his *The decline of the sacred in industrial society*.[37] He accepts that industrialisation does bring about a crisis of faith, from which there appears to be precious little exemption. As he sadly concludes, 'From the religious point of view, humanity has entered a long night that will become darker and darker with the passing of the generations, and of which no end can yet be seen. It is a night in which there seems to be no place for a conception of God, or for a sense of the sacred, and ancient ways of giving significance to our own existence, of confronting life and death, are becoming increasingly untenable'.[38] This is secularization with regrets.

A third theorist who deserves mention at this point is Peter Berger. His immensely stimulating studies of religion and secularization have served to orient a generation of students in the sociology of religion. He sees secularization as a product of modernization[39] and thus as a process which affects people in contemporarily industrializing societies in similar ways to those which are already 'advanced'.[40] But Berger cannot neatly be slotted into the strong thesis camp, not least because his view of secularization has been changing over the last decade.[41] His view is in fact softening to the point at which he is drawing attention not only to the 'crisis of religion' in the modern world, but also to the 'crisis of secularity'.

We can see that the strong secularization thesis may be held both by those sympathetic to religion and by those who for some reason may wish to hasten the decline of religion or some aspect of it. It is generally stated in terms of the *disengagement* of religion and society, and of *desacralization* or *disenchantment*, the supposed concomitant of *rationalization*. The fragmentation of society into different spheres as industrialism expands accounts for the former, while the rise of science, capitalism, and a rational-calculating approach to life is the social background to the latter. The process of secularization, according to the 'strong' theorists, seems to lead only in one direction, and in an apparently irreversible fashion. Without for a moment wishing to cast doubt on the notion that the social setting of industrial capitalism (in its state and its market form) *does* make a difference to the way that religion may be practised, we now must turn to an examination of some of the main forms of criticism which may be brought against the strong thesis.

Criticising the strong thesis

The main trouble with the strong thesis is that it is too simple. Its strength is in fact its weakness. The view that in time past people were somehow more religious, and that modernity systematically rots religion, is spurious. In what follows we shall only give the flavour of the discussion, and direct the reader to some relevant sources.

Probably the most devastating critique comes from anthropologist Mary Douglas, who berates students of religion for having their eyes 'glued to those conditions of modern life identified by Max Weber as antipathetic to religion'.[42] Mary Douglas herself works out of a predominantly Durkheimian tradition which, it must be said, frequently seems to explain (away?) religious belief in terms of its supposed social function.[43] However, Douglas targets a key assumption which appears false to her. She fears that too many theorists have assumed that religion is 'good for you' (even if it is not in some sense

'true'). Definitions of religion laden with good values reflect this, and since modernization is bad for religion, we are in an unprecedented cultural crisis.[44] Douglas is unhappy with such bias towards the assumed 'goodness' of 'religion' on several counts, but most generally because blanket definitions obscure rather than clarify both what religion does for people (integrate them into society?) and what religion most people actually hold (superstition, luck?).

The most celebrated version of the latter objection, that the definition of religion is too narrow, comes from Thomas Luckmann.[45] Conventional religion may well have receded from the centre of modern life, but are there not new social forms of religion which have taken over some of the traditional functions of religion? Such 'invisible religions' could be seen in today's family-centredness, sexuality, or individualism. Christian authors, writing more popularly, have come right out and argued that we are really talking about modern forms of idolatry.[46] The gradual collapse of Christendom is an undisputed historical fact, they would say, but it is a mistake to confuse this with the decline of religion as such. Christian instincts may favour this approach, certainly over against that which suggests that humans may be somehow quite devoid of religious inclination.[47] It also makes mandatory what Douglas calls for, namely an evaluation of the different claims and effects of different religions: they are not all the same. Biblically distinctions are often made between sham religions and pure ones. But at the same time it must be said that for the purposes of discussing secularization as *disengagement*, a more conventional institutional definition is required. Above all, this criticism shows that it is imperative to be clear about what is included under the 'religion' rubric.[48]

So secularization has been a Procrustean bed. A sociological theory has been imposed on historical data in a very contrived fashion. For example, many (who should know better) have fallen into the trap of imagining that once-upon-a-time society was 'really' religious.[49] Such a moment is taken to be the baseline from which secularization begins. Most secularization theorists have to concede that they are referring to a time when ecclesiastical and political power were closely linked.[50] This could then in fact be seen as a distortion of Christian faith (whose 'kingdom is not of this world') thus putting this kind of secularization in a more favourable light.

The related idea that moderns are utterly different from everyone else because of modernization is also attacked by Mary Douglas. This, she says, is a case of tribal myopia. Have science, technology and bureaucracy really 'quenched the sources of religious feeling and undermined religious authority'? Douglas doubts it. The marvels of modern science are at least *as* awe-inspiring as discoveries of a previous era. And the vast impersonal bureaucratic machine may indeed provoke crises of identity, but are such not the very stuff of the religious quest, since time immemorial? She wishes to show that many 'primitive' groups are and have been just as 'secular' as moderns; secularity is not a phenomenon peculiar to the post-Victorian epoch.

The historical issue has several other dimensions. Secularization studies have in the past ridden roughshod over historical specifics in different societies. David Martin is the champion of historical carefulness at this point. His *General Theory of Secularization* examines the variety of patterns which secularization takes in different settings. He shows how the situation in the USA is quite different from, say, Scandinavia, because of the different church-state relations obtaining before modernization. It comes as little surprise to him that Sweden, which still has a state church, should in fact have very low attendance, whereas the opposite situation is found in the USA. In fact, too many secularization theorists have been naive with regard to historical data. The welcome publication of specific historical studies can only benefit attempts to theorise secularization. One major advantage conferred by such studies is that the role of human action is brought more clearly into the scene than in many standard sociologies of secularization (which tended to be weighted towards 'the massive social force' view).[51] The result of a proper integration of history and sociology of secularization should be that notions of secularization being irreversibly one-directional are jettisoned. History is much messier; the tide of secularization ebbs and flows.

This leads to another criticism of the strong secularization thesis, which is that it fails properly to account for evidence which seems to call the theory in question. The so-called new religious movements which have blossomed since the mid-century, for example, even if they have no direct effect on the running of society, can scarcely be written off as being of no religious significance.[52] The resurgence of traditional Christian religion (especially Evangelicalism in the USA, but also its persistence in the UK[53]) is as yet unarticulated within a modest secularization theory. This would not necessarily have to go to the lengths of Andrew Greeley's blunderbuss defence of *Unsecular Man*.[54] Rather, what is required is a sober assessment of what is actually happening in the contemporary world, without special pleading either on behalf of religious persistence or decline.

Secularization as a concept is unlikely to be abandoned because of the various criticisms just mentioned. The strong, or perhaps simplistic, version of secularization, though taken for granted by some, is used only with great caution by others. As a problematic, it still serves the useful purpose of alerting us to a cluster of issues which deserve serious investigation in our day, issues at the crossroads between religion and society. The process of rethinking secularization[55] should yield positive benefits for clarification of the present religious situation in societies which *do* evidence 'disengagement' and 'rationalization'. But it is appropriate to conclude with a few observations on possible new directions discernible in current research.

New directions in secularization studies
An obvious implication of the critique of the strong secularization story is that more care must be taken to ensure that the 'fit' between the 'facts' and the 'theory' is

good. The confident assumption (whether coming from 'theologians' or 'sociologists') that we are entering a 'religionless society' will not stand up. So theory requires modification, in the light of rigorously sifted data. But that data, which gives us the empirical constraint required, still needs a theory to hold them together.

Specific studies, such as some of those already mentioned, help fill out the picture of religion-in-society. One might also refer, as an example, to Hugh McLeod's recent work on *Religion and the People of Western Europe*.[56] He has paid special attention to religion among the working classes. Investigations like these can eventually lead to new insights into the secularization process. For instance, it has often been argued that there is a basic incompatibility between the work of David Martin and Bryan Wilson. The latter suggests that religion was once socially dominant, whereas the former maintains that there has always been a strong and widespread rejection of official religion in favour of folk or common religion and superstition in Europe. Bryan Turner now proposes that each is right, in a limited way, but they are focusing on different class levels. A social elite may well at times use religion to legitimate their position, but that does not mean that those in more lowly social echelons are in any strong sense affected by the supposedly dominant religion.[57]

In fact, the whole question of where authority resides in modern societies is an important one for secularization studies. Richard Fenn has followed a significant trail in examining the way in which the courtroom may become the place of 'ultimate authority', sometimes overruling that of sincere religious conviction. (One of his most interesting examples is of a Catholic woman whose wish to have her life-support machine switched off was discounted by the court.)[58] Scientific authority is another area of interest, and again I shall refer readers to just one fascinating study. Eileen Barker has shown how, despite the diversity of theological persuasion, persons involved in cosmological debates (over 'origins') all appeal to *scientific* authority to make their case.[59]. It seems to me that important work could be done in relating the current growth and diffusion of information technology to secularization. Is it possible, for example, that we are further abandoning the authority of properly formed human judgment in favour of mere 'calculation'?[60] Or will computers be treated only as *aids* to decision-making, rather than as somehow possessing that capacity?

Another new direction, if it may be so termed, is to find clues about secularization outside of the sociology of religion. Following the work of Michel Foucault, for example, it has been proposed that in the secularization process, various forms of moral restraint, asceticism, and so on, are replaced by secular practices such as dietary control.[61] Again, increased concern with cultural symbols also enhances our understanding of how phenomena – such as rock music – may be symptomatic of a secularizing tendency.[62] (Moves like this also serve to help put religion back on the sociological map after what some might have interpreted as the disciplinary suicide of being obsessed with a concept (secularization) which

seemed to bid farewell to the subject-matter of the sociology of religion!)

The theological response to secularization must clearly become more sophisticated than that exhibited in the excesses of the 1960s secular theology fad. To talk in bland blanket terms about 'secular society' is not on. Thankfully, some hopeful signs are emerging, which demonstrate an awareness of the complexity and ambiguity of 'secularization'.[63] For instance, the secularization of thought, regretfully documented by various Christian commentators, ought not to be confused (though the connections should be displayed) with social secularization or 'disengagement'. An aspect of the secularization of thought is what is often called the 'loss of a Christian mind'. From a Christian viewpoint this is properly deplorable, in a way that, for example, the prising apart of Church and State is not. The latter may not be such a bad thing for the church which now has to find its feet in a situation of greater cultural confrontation, rather than enjoying the dubious privilege of state support. In such a context certain New Testament passages about Christian 'citizenship' take on a fresh significance!

One last note. I am in no way implying that careful empirical study will sort out all the problems connected with this slippery secularization concept. Indeed, I see no way in which 'theological' assumptions can finally be eradicated from definitions of religion and secularization. The point is to be clear as to what we do *mean*, and as to what the implications of this view seem to be. For historical sociology (which is where secularization concepts are properly located and assessed) is ever a matter of *rhetoric*.[64] That is, we are engaged in the task of constructing an argument, in this case, to explain some of the relationships between religion and society, by using a suitably qualified concept. Theology may actually contribute insights to this argument, for instance as we test out whether the biblically-derived notion of 'temporality' is illuminating for secularization studies. There is no excuse for allowing secularization studies themselves to become a secular pursuit by default.

So does 'secularization' tell us anything about the 'fate of faith in the modern world'? The answer I have given is yes, in a limited way it helpfully alerts us to some significant dimensions of the religion-and-society problem. It raises some important questions, rather than explaining anything as such. It indicates some connections between modern life and religious practice, although in itself it tells us little about related notions such as 'pluralism', the retreat of religion to the private sphere, or the rise of 'surrogate religions'.

But the concept of secularization is inevitably bound up with questions which no sociology can resolve on its own. For they are also theological questions, in the sense that one's understanding of 'religion' or of 'historical interpretation' is reflected in the kind of secularization theory produced. So the onus is on those who care about relating social science to a Christian world-view (as distinct from some other) to enter the socio-theological dialogue in the quest of better understanding in *both* areas.[65]

The result of such dialogue will probably lead well beyond 'secularization' itself, away from the narrower ecclesiastically-based definition of religion, into wider cultural analysis. The trend to be welcomed, in my view, is that which treats our own society as anthropologists have treated 'alien' societies. This is much more likely to provide a realistic picture of the 'signs of the times' – including those forms of symbol to which people *really* refer as guides to life. Coupled with new opportunities in social science to be explicit about one's presuppositions, such understanding could yet become the vitally-needed complement to responsible Christian mission in the modern world.

[1]Larry Shiner, 'The Concept of Secularisation in Empirical Research', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 6, 1967, pp. 207-20.

[2]Max Weber, 'Science as a Vocation' in H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays on Sociology* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948).

[3]Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961).

[4]The sixth definition of secularization, referring as it does to a general process of social change, is not relevant to our present discussion.

[5]David Martin, *The Religious and the Secular* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).

[6]Peter Glasner, *The Sociology of Secularization: the Critique of a Concept* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul).

[7]Karel Dobbelaere, *Secularization: a Multi-dimensional Concept* (Current Sociology) (Monograph) 29:2, summer 1981).

[8]Harry Ausmus, *The Polite Escape: the Myth of Secularization* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 1982).

[9]Richard Fenn, *Liturgies and Trials: The Secularization of Religious Language* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), p. 8.

[10]Philip Abrams, *Historical Sociology* (Shepton Mallet: Open Books, 1982), p. xv.

[11]J. A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (London: SCM, 1963); Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (London: SCM, 1965).

[12]Don Cupitt, *Taking Leave of God* (London: SCM, 1980).

[13]Friedrich Gogarten, *The Reality of Faith* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959).

[14]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: Fontana, 1959).

[15]Leon Morris, *The Abolition of Religion* (London: IVP, 1964).

[16]Harvey Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

[17]*Ibid*, p. 2.

[18]See the rather different treatment of, *e.g.*, Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976).

[19]E. R. Norman, *Christianity and World Order* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978); James Childress & David Harned (eds.), *Secularization and the Protestant Prospect* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), p. 19. Bryan Wilson, whose work is examined in the next section, sees secularization as systematically excluding Christian faith.

[20]Peter Berger, 'A Sociological View of the Secularization of Theology', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 6:3-16, 1969.

[21]See, *e.g.*, Owen Chadwick's important *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975) and David Lyon 'Secular Minds and Secular Societies', *Fides et Historia* (forthcoming).

[22]This comes across in many of his writings. See, *e.g.*, *How should we then live?* (Old Tappan: Revell, 1976).

[23]The contrary view is explored interestingly by Alasdair MacIntyre in *Secularization and Moral Change* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1967).

[24]Robin Gill, *The Social Context of Theology* (Oxford: Mowbrays, 1975), Gregory Baum, *Religion and Alienation: a Theological Reading of Sociology* (New York: Paulist, 1975).

[25]Os Guinness, *The Gravedigger File* (London. Hodder & Stoughton, 1983).

[26]Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1982), p. 149.

[27]Bryan Wilson, *Religion in secular society*, p. 149 (London: Watts, 1966).

[28]Wilson (1982), p. 42.

[29]Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Scribners, 1976).

[30]Max Weber, in Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *op. cit.*, p. 155. See also the comments in David Lyon, *Sociology and the Human Image* (Leicester and Downers Grove: IVP, 1983) pp. 74-77.

[31]Ernst Gellner is quite convinced there can be no return or revival. See his *The Legitimation of Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1974) especially the final chapter.

[32]He refers to David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978) on this. See below for further comment.

[33]Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society* (New York: Free Press, 1964).

[34]Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Harmondsworth: Penguin).

[35]The most recent evidence is in José Miranda *Marx against the Marxists* (London: SCM, 1980). It is probably true that Marx was less virulently anti-Christian in *practical policy* than many of his followers, but it is doubtful that 'enforced secularization' is inconsistent with Marx's position.

[36]Vernon Pratt, *Religion and Secularization* (London: Macmillan, 1970).

[37]S. S. Acquaviva, *The decline of the sacred in industrial society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979).

[38]*Ibid*, p. 202.

[39]Peter Berger, *The sacred canopy* (New York: Anchor, 1967) (UK: *The Social Reality of Religion*, Harmondsworth: Allen Lane).

[40]Peter Berger *et al.*, *The Homeless Mind* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974). See also David Lyon, 'Secularization and Sociology: the History of an Idea', *Fides et Historia* (13:2, 1981), pp. 38-52.

[41]Peter Berger, *The Heretical Imperative* (New York: Anchor, 1979).

[42]Mary Douglas summarizes her views in 'The effects of Modernization on Religious Change', *Daedalus*, 111:1, 1982, pp. 1-19.

[43]Of course, the dividing line between 'explaining' and 'explaining away' is a thin one. Douglas' work is highly suggestive and helpful, *e.g.*, in trying to explain Old Testament food prohibitions. See, *e.g.*, R. K. Harrison's comments in *Leviticus* (Leicester: IVP, 1980) pp. 27-29.

[44]Mary Douglas (1982), p. 6.

[45]Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion* (New York: MacMillan, 1967).

[46]Jacques Ellul, *The New Demons* (Oxford: Mowbrays, 1975); J. A. Walter, *A Long Way from Home* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980; published as *Sacred Cows*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, in the USA).

[47]This was Bonhoeffer's position, it seems. He could conceive of moderns as religionless.

[48]See Robert Towler *Homo Religiosus* (London: Constable, 1974), chapter 8. Other candidates for inclusion as 'religion' include 'common' or 'folk' religion which is that constellation of beliefs and practices associated with luck, magic, and superstition. These are on occasions combined with (or grow in symbiotic relation with) official religion. David Martin picturesquely refers to 'subterranean theologies' (in *A Sociology of English Religion*, London: Heinemann, 1967). Beyond this is 'civil religion', a term made famous by Robert Bellah, and referring to the association of certain religious themes with nationality and civic identity. (See his *The Broken Covenant*, New York: Seabury, 1975). References to God in American presidential speeches are the classic example of this. Yet another possible evidence that religion is not altogether dead is perceived by some in the persistence of ritual in advanced societies, be they

capitalist (Robert Bocock, *Ritual in Industrial Society*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1974) or (officially atheistic) state socialist (Christal Lane). Harry Ausmus (*op. cit.*) has brought the argument about secularization round full circle by proposing that 'secularization' is *itself* a form of 'religious' explanation of the world, a 'theodicy' to which people cling.

[49] Martin Goodridge, 'Ages of Faith: Romance or Reality?' in *Sociological Review* 23:2, 1975, pp. 381-396, or George Marsden, America's 'Christian Origins': Puritan New England as a Case Study, in S. Reid (ed.), *The Influence of John Calvin on History* (Grand Rapids. Eerdmans, 1983).

[50] Recent examples include: Jeffrey Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society* (New York: Oxford UP, 1982), Alan Gilbert, *The Making of Post-Christian Britain* (London: Longman, 1980), or George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford UP, 1980).

[51] Richard Fenn's *Toward a theory of Secularization* (Storrs, Conecticut: U of Connecticut, 1978) makes this point well.

[52] For a survey from several different perspectives see Eileen Barker (ed.), *New Religious Movements* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1982).

[53] On the UK see Steven Bruce, 'The Persistence of Religion', *Sociological Review* 1983.

[54] Andrew Greeley, *Unsecular Man* (New York: Dell, 1974).

[55] See further comments on this in David Lyon, 'Rethinking Secularization: retrospect and prospect', *Review of Religious Research* (forthcoming).

[56] Hugh McLeod, *Religion and the People of Western Europe* (New York. Oxford UP, 1982).

[57] Bryan Turner, *Religion and Social Theory* (London: Heinemann/New York: Humanities Press, 1983). Such theorizing also has implications for some liberation theologians who blithely assume that religion can represent a 'dominant ideology'.

[58] Richard Fenn, *Liturgies and Trials. the Secularization of Religious Language* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982).

[59] Eileen Barker, 'In the beginning: the battle of creationist science against evolution' in R. Wallis (ed.), *On the Margins of Science* (Sociological Review Monograph 27).

[60] See, *e.g.*, Joseph Weizenbaum, *Computer Power and Human Reason: from Judgement to Calculation* (Cambridge: MIT, 1976/Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984).

[61] See Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

[62] See *e.g.*, Bernice Martin, 'The Socialisation of Disorder: Symbolism in Rock Music', *Sociological Analysis* 40:2, 1977, pp. 87-124.

[63] *E.g.*, Os Guinness, *op. cit.*, and Williamson and Perrota (eds.), *Christianity confronts Modernity* (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1981).

[64] See David Bebbington, *Patterns in History* (Leicester and Downers Grove: IVP, 1979) and David Lyon, 'Valuing in Social Theory: Postempiricism and Some Christian Objections', *Christian Scholar's Review* (XII: 4, 1983), pp. 324-338.

[65] On this, see David Lyon, *Sociology and the Human Image* (Leicester and Downers Grove. IVP, 1983) especially chapter 2.

Pre-Christian Gnosticism, the New Testament and Nag Hammadi in recent debate

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I. Introduction
a. *Recent publications*
In the past decade numerous international conferences have focused on Gnosticism: at Stockholm (1973),[1] Strasbourg (1974),[2] Oxford (1975),[3] Cairo (1976),[4] New Haven (1978),[5] Quebec (1978),[6] Oxford (1979),[7] Louvain, (1980),[8] and Springfield (1983). Papers from all but the last are now available in print.

Festschrifts have been published in honor of three giants in the field of Gnostic scholarship: Hans Jonas,[9] Gilles Quispel,[10] and R. McL. Wilson.[11] Two valuable collections of essays have been edited by K.-W. Tröger, one on Gnosticism and the New Testament,[12] and the other on Gnosticism, the Old Testament and Early Judaism.[13]

Invaluable are the annual bibliographical surveys since 1971 (except for 1976) published by D. Scholer in *Novum Testamentum*. In his original monograph, *Nag Hammadi Bibliography 1948-1969* (Leiden: Brill, 1971) Scholer had listed 2425 items. In his latest supplement (XII) to his indispensable 'Bibliographia Gnostica', *Novum Testamentum*, 25 (1983), pp. 356-81, Scholer has listed the 5345th publication. In other words nearly 3,000 books, articles and reviews on Gnosticism have been published in the last decade!

From time to time articles have appeared which have attempted to assess current trends and interpretations of Gnosticism in general, and its relations to the New Testament and Christianity in particular. I would single out as especially valuable two recent essays. The first was the presidential address given by R. McL. Wilson to the Studiorum Novi Testamenti

Societas in Rome in 1981.[14] The second is an analysis by R. van den Broek of the salient trends as culled from over a hundred essays from recent conference papers and *Festschriften*.[15]

The major synthetic work is *Die Gnosis* published by K. Rudolph in 1977,[16] of which an English translation has just appeared. Also noteworthy as destined to serve as a standard textbook is the two-volume *Introduction to the New Testament* published by H. Koester in 1982.[17]

b. *Defining Gnosticism*

Scholars continue to experience difficulty in agreeing upon a definition of 'Gnosticism'.[18] Some such as H.-M. Schenke, K. Rudolph and G. Strecker have objected to the distinction urged at Messina in 1966 between 'proto-Gnosticism' and 'Gnosticism'.[19] They would prefer what I call the 'broad' definition of Gnosticism, emphasizing links of continuity over stages of development.[20]

On the other hand, Hans Jonas has insisted that an anti-cosmic dualism is the essential ingredient of Gnosticism. The same point has been stressed recently by K.-W. Tröger: 'Primarily the Gnostic religion is an *anti-cosmic religion*'.[21]

To underline the distinction between the apparently inchoate phenomena in the first century and the fully articulated systems in the second century Wilson has been urging that we use the term 'Gnosis' for the former and reserve 'Gnosticism' for the latter.[22]

2. New Testament exegesis on the basis of pre-Christian Gnosticism

a. *No pre-Christian documents*

When I first published *Pre-Christian Gnosticism* in 1973,[23] reviewers understandably reserved judgment as all of the Nag Hammadi tractates had not yet been published. But apart from the 'Trimorphic Protennoia' (see below) there have been no unexploded 'bombshells' in the Nag Hammadi corpus. Hence even the most ardent proponents of a Gnosticism earlier than or contemporary with the New Testament acknowledge that there are no Gnostic texts which date with certainty from the pre-Christian era.

J. M. Robinson declared at the congress at Yale in 1978, 'At this stage we have not found any Gnostic texts which clearly antedate the origin of Christianity'.[24] In his 1981 presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature Robinson conceded, 'pre-Christian Gnosticism as such is hardly attested in a way to settle the debate once and for all'.[25] In a similar fashion G. W. MacRae declares, 'And even if we are on solid ground in some cases in arguing that the original works represented in the (Nag Hammadi) library are much older than the extant copies, we are still unable to postulate plausibly any pre-Christian dates'.[26]

Nevertheless there seems to be no lack of scholars who, undeterred by the lack of pre-Christian Gnostic documents, proceed to interpret the New Testament against a backdrop of a developed or developing Gnosticism. The view that Gnosticism is an essential element in the hermeneutical circle to understand the New Testament is maintained by MacRae,[27] Rudolph,[28] Koester,[29] and Schmithals.[30]

Following the concept of 'trajectories', which he and Professor Koester introduced,[31] Robinson in his SBL presidential address sketched two diverging trajectories which arose in primitive Christianity, both equally ancient and equally worthy of consideration. According to Robinson's schematization the 'orthodox' trajectory led from the pre-Pauline confession of 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 and the account of the empty tomb in the gospels to the Apostles' Creed in the second century. The 'left-wing' trajectory led from Paul's view of the resurrected Christ as a 'luminous appearance' and from Easter 'enthusiasm' to Gnosticism in the second century.[32] A further trajectory led from the Sayings Collection (Q) and the Gospel of Thomas to the Gnostic dialogues with the resurrected Christ.[33]

b. *The Gospel of John*

There is an emormous literature on this gospel and its possible relations with Gnosticism.[34] In spite of doubts about Bultmann's reconstruction of Gnostic sources, many interpreters take the gospel either as a transformed Gnostic document or as an anti-Gnostic work.[35] For example, K. M. Fischer believes that one can understand John 10:1-18 *only* against the background of a Gnostic myth such as is found in the Nag Hammadi *Exegesis on the Soul*.[36]

Other scholars, however, have opposed this trend. Bultmann's reconstruction of a Gnostic background from Mandaean sources is sharply criticized by W. A. Meeks.[37] E. Ruckstuhl refutes Schottroff's recent Gnostic interpretation.[38]

Bultmann's formulation that the Johannine prologue was a pre-Christian Gnostic baptist hymn has not convinced even his own students – H. Conzelmann and E. Käsemann.[39] Most recently another former student, W. Schmithals, has repudiated his master's theory quite categorically: 'The hymn does not betray direct Gnostic influences. . . . The concept that the hymn was pre-Christian is rash. Bultmann's guess that it concerned an original baptismal hymn has rightly found no reception.'[40]

c. *1 and 2 Corinthians*

Because Paul speaks about *gnosis* and *sophia* and uses terminology found in later Gnostic literature in his letters to Corinth, the possibility of a Gnostic heresy looms the largest here. That this was the case has been most fully developed by W. Schmithals.[41] Rudolph believes that Schmithals' interpretation has thus far not been seriously refuted.[42]

But as a matter of fact an impressive number of scholars have now rejected the view that Gnosticism must be presupposed to understand Paul's opponents at Corinth. As Wilson points out, Rudolph is unaware that even U. Wilckens, whom he cites for support,[43] has recently changed his mind on this issue.[44]

S. Arai concluded his study on the subject as follows: 'The opponents of Paul in Corinth had therefore been inclined to be "Gnostic", they were, however, not yet Gnostic.'[45] This view has now been given considerable support by H. Conzelmann in his recent Hermeneia commentary on 1 Corinthians.[46] Wilson has come to very similar conclusions: 'What we have at Corinth, then, is not yet Gnosticism, but a kind of *Gnosis*.'[47]

In a series of articles R. A. Horsley has attempted to illuminate the 'gnosis' of Paul's opponents from Hellenistic Judaism as illustrated by Philo and the Wisdom of Solomon rather than from Gnosticism.[48] He argues, 'What Paul responds to, therefore, is not a Gnostic libertinism, as derived from Reitzenstein, elaborated on by Schmithals and still presupposed by commentators such as Barrett, but a Hellenistic Jewish *gnosis* at home precisely in the mission context'.[49]

d. *The Johannine epistles*

Because of the anti-Docetic polemic in the Johannine epistles the view is widespread that the opponents condemned were certainly Gnostics.[50]

But Docetism may have arisen from a Hellenistic prejudice against the body without necessarily implying a fully developed Gnostic theology.[51] Thus Wisse believes that 1 John is 'a tract dealing with the arrival of the eschatological antichrists rather than with a group of docetic Gnostics'.[52] K. Weiss also feels that 'The usual conclusion that these opponents there were Gnostics, however, goes too far.'[53]

3. The patristic evidence on Simon Magus

In view of the unanimous patristic view that Gnosticism began with Simon Magus, some scholars have continued to seek the roots of Gnosticism in Samaria. Jarl Fossum stresses the links of Simon to Dositheus,[54] and I. P. Culianu avers that Simon Magus borrowed the idea of a second Creator from the Magharians.[55] Unfortunately for such theories, the link with Dositheus is questionable[56] and the sources for the Magharians are quite late.[57]

As for whether or not we can take Simon Magus as an early Gnostic, there is a clear conflict between Acts 8, our earliest

source which depicts him simply as a *magos*,[58] and the patristic accounts which depict him as a Gnostic.

Rudolph accepts the latter, dismissing Acts as a 'blur of contradictions and an idealization of primitive Christianity'.[59] Here he follows the lead of E. Haenchen who regarded the Acts account as untrustwrothy.[60] J. W. Drane, on the assumption that an early Gnosticism must have been current, suggests that Luke 'has deliberately omitted details in order that Simon may be seen as a sincere, if somewhat confused, believer in the Christian message'.[61]

But it makes more sense to recognize the accuracy of Acts [62] and to question the patristic accounts [63] as many scholars have done.[64] Two major studies which have recently upheld the view that the church fathers transformed Simon into a Gnostic are monographs by K. Beyschlag[65] and G. Lüdemann. Other scholars who have questioned the patristic accounts of Simon and Simonianism include S. Arai,[67] C. Colpe,[68] M. Elze,[69] and F. Wisse.[70] W. Meeks concludes his excellent summary of recent research on Simon by declaring, 'The use of reports about Simon Magus as evidence for a *pre*-Christian gnosticism has been effectively refuted'.[71]

4. The Gospel of Thomas

The Gospel of Thomas, which is preserved among the Coptic Nag Hammadi texts, and of which Greek fragments were found at Oxyrhynchus, is believed to have been composed *c.* AD 140 in Edessa, Syria.

There is still sharp disagreement as to whether the Gospel of Thomas represents an independent gospel tradition related to Q, as advocated by Koester and Robinson, or whether Thomas is essentially dependent upon the synoptic gospels. On the one hand, MacRae declares, 'It now appears that a majority of scholars who have seriously investigated the matter have been won over to the side of Thomas' independence of the canonical Gospels. . . .'[72] On the other hand, Kaestli writes, 'Today, the most widely accepted position is that of the dependence of the Gospel of Thomas on the canonical Gospels. . . .'[73]

Recently Quispel, who has written more prolifically on the Gospel of Thomas than any other scholar, has set forth his conclusions as to the sources of the Gospel of Thomas. Though maintainng that Thomas is independent from the synoptics, Quispel does not now agree with Koester that it represents a primitive tradition: 'The Gospel of Thomas, far from being a writing older than Q, is an anthology based upon two second-century apocryphal Gospels, and moreover a Hermetic writing which gave "Thomas" a seemingly Gnostic flavour.'[74]

Also opposed to the idea that the Gospel of Thomas represents pristine traditions of the Aramaic-speaking Christians in Palestine is Drijver's recent assessment. He would prefer to date the Gospel of Thomas about AD 200 on the assumption that the author knew and used Tatian's Diatessaron.[75]

If either Quispel or Drijvers is correct, we must relocate the Gospel of Thomas at a position much later on the trajectory from Palestine to Edessa than that assumed by Koester and Robinson.

5. The Coptic Evidence

a. *The Nag Hammadi Corpus*

The exciting story of the discovery of the Nag Hammadi texts[76] and the equally fasinating story leading up to their translation and publication in 1977[77] have been recounted in detail by J. M. Robinson, whose persistence and skill saw the task to its completion.[78]

It is probable that the codices were buried after the paschal letter from Athanasius in AD 367 banned such heterodox writings.[79] The books were discovered at the base of the Jabal at-Tarif cliffs north of the Nile river where it bends west to east, actually on the other side of the river from Nag Hammadi. B. Van Elderen was led to excavate the great basilica of Pachomius in the plain below Jabal at-Tarif beginning in 1975.[80] Scholars still debate about the nature of the library and the kind of monastic community which may have preserved it.[81]

b. *The Apocalypse of Adam*

The Apocalypse of Adam (ApocAd) continues to be touted by Robinson as an early, non-Christian Gnostic text which can help us understand the Gospel of John.[82] Rudolph asserts that the ApocAd 'certainly forms a witness of early Gnosticism' and that it has 'no Christian tenor'.[83] MacRae, who supports the non-Christian interpretation of ApocAd,[84] at least concedes that a Christian interpretation is possible.[85]

On the other hand, there has been an increasing number of scholars who have interpreted the ApocAd either as a Christian document or as a product of late rather than early Gnosticism. The Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften notes that the figure 'upon whom the Holy Spirit descends' is clearly Jesus.[86] W. Beltz contends that the series of thirteen kingdoms and the kingless generation are all explanations for the birth of Jesus.[87] G. Shellrude presented evidence for a Christian provenance of the ApocAd at the 1979 Oxford conference.[88]

Hedrick suggests a redaction of the ApocAd 'in Palestine, possibly in Transjordan, before the second half of the second century AD'[89] He was not aware of my attempt to date the ApocAd on the basis of the allusion to the well-known Mithraic motif of the 'birth from a rock' (CG V, 80.24-25) in a paper which I presented at the IInd International Congress of Mithraic Studies at Teheran in 1975.[90] On the basis of the epigraphic and iconographic evidence collected by M. J. Vermaseren, I sought to demonstrate that this topos was not known before the second century AD and that the probable provenance for knowledge of such a motif for a Gnostic writer was Italy.

c. *The Paraphrase of Shem*

The Paraphrase of Shem (ParaShem) along with the ApocAd is one of the basic supports of the pre-Christian Gnosticism envisioned by Robinson.[91] MacRae believes that the ParaShem provides us with a striking example of a non-Christian heavenly redeemer who deceives the ignorant powers.[92] Koester assigns the work to 'a Jewish gnostic baptismal sect' since it contains 'no references to specific Christian names, themes, or traditions'.[93]

In my earlier expositions I had interpreted F. Wisse as holding that the ParaShem could provide us with evidence for a pre-Christian Gnosticism. As recently as 1977 he had written in the preface of his translation for the *NHL*: 'The tractate proclaims a redeemer whose features agree with those of New Testament Christology which may very well be pre-Christian in origin.' But Professor Wisse has recently written me, 'I still think it is basically non-Christian though most probably not pre-Christian.'[94]

Other scholars would emphatically disagree with the judgment that the ParaShem is without any trace of Christian influence. After analyzing the Coptic text, Sevrin concludes:

> Several features of this portrait of the redeemer have a Christological appearance: his origin in the light, of which he is the son, the ray and the voice, makes us think of the pre-existent Logos and of the Son of the Gospel of John, or also of Christ 'reflecting the glory of God' in Heb. 1:3; his descent 'into an infirm place' corresponds quite well to the coming of Christ into this world. . . .[95]

Fischer likewise concurs. 'Soldas seems once again to be a code name for Jesus, with whom the heavenly Christ (Derdekeas) is associated.'[96]

d. *The Trimorphic Protennoia*

Both at the international conference at Yale in the spring of 1978,[97] and at the fall conference of the Society of Biblical Literature at New Orleans that same year [98] Professor Robinson called attention to the views of the Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften[99] and especially of Gesine Schenke,[100] regarding *The Trimorphic Protennoia* (TriProt). He also noted that Carsten Colpe had listed striking parallels in this tractate to the prologue of the Gospel of John.[101]

In the case of the parallels between the TriProt and the Johan-

nine prologue, the Berlin group suggests that the light falls more from the former on the latter, that is, they believe that the setting of the same elements in the TriProt demonstrates its logical priority over the prologue.[102] It is quite clear that these scholars are working within a Bultmann framework.[103] Other scholars who do not share such presuppositions will have different perceptions of these parallels.[104]

Janssens, who has translated the work into French,[105] has argued that the TriProt reflects the priority of John's prologue.[106] The most striking parallel is that between John 1:14, 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt (*eskenosen*) among us' and (47, 14f.) 'The third time I revealed myself to them [in] their tents (*SKENE*)'.[107] As Helderman has demonstrated in detail, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the word *SKENE* in TriProt reflects the word *eskenosen* 'tented, tabernacled' of John 1:14.[108]

Janssens, Helderman, and Wilson are able to detect numerous New Testament allusions in the TriProt not only to John but to the other Gospel and Pauline texts. Wilson therefore concludes:

> In the light of all this it may be suggested that the Christian element in the text as it now stands is rather stronger than the Berlin group have recognised. This would in turn tend to weaken any theory of influence on the Fourth Gospel.[109]

6. The Jewish Evidence
a. *A Pre-Christian Jewish Gnosticism?*
Impressed by the great number of 'Jewish' elements such as the use of the Old Testament and midrashic interpretations in the Nag Hammadi texts a number of scholars are now maintaining the thesis of a pre-Christian 'Jewish' Gnosticism, that is, a Gnosticism which somehow developed from within Judaism itself. B. Pearson, the scholar who has been most effective in ferreting out traces of Jewish traditions in the Nag Hammadi texts, is convinced that Friedländer was correct in postulating 'that Gnosticism is a pre-Christian phenomenon which developed on Jewish soil'.[110]

Kurt Rudolph believes that Gnosticism proceeded from the sceptical and cynical Jewish wisdom tradition of Ecclesiastes, which he dates to *c*. 200 BC on the assumption that it had been influenced by Greek rationalism and early Hellenstic popular philosophy.[111] Pearson is quite impressed by Rudolph's arguments for a Jewish origin from Syro-Palestine Jewish circles.[112] MacRae believes that 'Gnosticism arose as a revolutionary reaction in Hellenized Jewish wisdom and apocalyptic circles'.[113]

B. *Doubts about an Early Jewish Gnosticism*
Opposed to scholars who presuppose a pre-Christian Jewish Gnosticism are others who have questioned the existence of such 'an animal' at least in the New Testament era. According to Gruenwald, 'Thus the views which hold that there was a Jewish Gnosis from which Gnosticism arose, or that Gnosticism arose from within Judaism, appear to me to infer too much from too little.'[114] Maier believes that the case for a Jewish Gnosticism has been prematurely presumed and that it cannot as yet be proven.[115] According to van Unnik one cannot find the origins of Gnosticism in Judaism.[116] Perkins doubts that there was 'a Jewish Gnosticism as such in the first century'.[117] Wilson concludes: 'In sum, the quest for a developed pre-Christian Gnosticism, even a Jewish one, which could be said to have influenced the Corinthians, or Paul himself, has not yielded any conclusive results.'[118]

A major difficulty in accepting an inner Jewish origin for Gnosticism is to account for the anti-Jewish use which most Gnostics seem to have made of the 'Jewish' elements. The anti-cosmic attitude of the Gnostics contradicts the Jewish belief that God created the world and declared it good. According to Tröger, 'But in my view, the hypothesis of a "revolt" *within* Judaism would hardly be sufficient in accounting for the fundamental and radical anti-cosmism in such a lot of Gnostic writings'.[119]

7. Conclusions
At the 1966 Messina conference on Gnostic origins Simone Petrément was almost the sole representative of the classical position which held that Gnosticism was none other than a Christian heresy.[120] In the last two decades the existence of a non-Christian Gnosticism has been amply demonstrated, but the existence of a pre-Christian Gnosticism in the first century or before, that is, a fully developed Gnostic system early enough to have influenced the New Testament writers, remains in doubt.

Gnosticism with a fully articulated theology, cosmology, anthropology, and soteriology cannot be discerned clearly until into the Christian era. According to Wilson, were we to adopt the programmatic definition of H. Jonas[121] 'then we must probably wait for the second century'.[122] Hengel would concur, 'Gnosticism is first visible as a spiritual movement at the end of the first century AD at the earliest and only develops fully in the second century.'[123]

At the Yale conference Barbara Aland emphasized the importance of Christianity for the understanding of Valentinianism. She would date the rise of Gnosticism in the first quarter of the second century.[124] Tröger would also underscore the role of Christianity for the development of at least certain branches of Gnosticism.[125]

Significantly, U. Bianchi, the editor of the conference volume from the Messina conference on the origins of Gnosticism,[126] has also come to the conclusion that Christianity is indispensable for understanding the full development of Gnosticism:

> In effect it is difficult to imagine in a purely Jewish environment, although penetrated by Greek thought, one would have been able to arrive at that extreme which is the demonization of the God of Israel. ... Only the perspective of a messiah conceived as a divine manifestation, as a divine incarnate person, already present in the faith of the New Testament and of the Church, but interpreted by the Gnostics on the basis of ontological presuppositions of the Greek mysteriosophic doctrine of *soma-sema* ('body'-'tomb') and of the split in the divine, could allow the development of a new Gnostic theology where the God of the Bible, the creator, became the demiurge. . . .[127]

[1]G. Widengren (ed.) *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism* (Stockholm, 1977).

[2]J.-É. Ménard (ed.) *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi* (Leiden, 1975), [*Strasbourg*].

[3]M. Krause (ed.) *Gnosis and Gnosticism* (Leiden, 1977), [*Oxford-*1].

[4]R. McL. Wilson (ed.), *Nag Hammadi and Gnosis* (Leiden, 1978).

[5]B. Layton (ed.) *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: I. The School of Valentinus* (Leiden, 1980), [*New Haven* I]; B. Layton (ed.) *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: II. Sethian Gnosticism*, (Leiden, 1981), [*New Haven* II].

[6]B. Barc (ed.) *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi* (Quebec/Louvain), 1981), [*Quebec*].

[7]M. Krause (ed.) *Gnosis and Gnosticism* (Leiden, 1981), [*Oxford-*2].

[8]J. Ries (ed.), *Gnosticisme et monde hellénistique* (Louvain-La-neuve, 1980), [*Louvain*].

[9]B. Aland (ed.), *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (Göttingen, 1978), [*Jonas*].

[10]R. van den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren (eds.) *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions* (Leiden, 1981), [*Quispel*].

[11]A. J. M. Wedderburn and A. H. B. Logan (eds.), *The New Testament and Gnosis* (Edinburgh, 1983), [*Wilson*].

[12]K.-W. Tröger (ed.), *Gnosis und Neues Testament* (Berlin, 1973), [*GNT*].

[13]K.-W. Tröger (ed.) *Altes Testament-Frühjudentum-Gnosis* (Gerd Mohn, 1980), [*ATFG*].

[14]'Nag Hammadi and the New Testament', *NTS*, 28 (1982), pp. 289-302.

[15]'The Present State of Gnostic Studies', *VigChr*, 37 (1983), pp. 41-71,

[16]*Die Gnosis* (Leipzig, 1977; Göttingen, 1978, 1980²). The English Translation by R. McL. Wilson was published at the end

of 1983. My references will be to the 2nd German edition, as I have not yet acquired a copy of the English version.

[17](Philadelphia, 1982).

[18]See my *Pre-Christian Gnosticism* (London/Grand Rapids, 1973), [*PCG*], pp. 13ff.; R. McL. Wilson, 'Slippery Words II.: Gnosis, Gnostic, Gnosticism', *ET*, 89 (1977/78), pp. 296-301; U. Bianchi, 'Le Gnosticisme: concept, terminologie, origines, délimitation', *Jonas*, pp. 33-64.

[19]See G. Strecker, 'Judenchristentum und Gnosis', *ATEG*, p. 265; K. Rudolph, '"Gnosis" and "Gnosticism" – the Problems of Their Definition and Their Relation to the Writings of the New Testament', *Wilson*, pp. 21-37.

[20]For a critique of Rudolph's position see R. McL. Wilson's review of his *Die Gnosis* in *Religion*, 9 (1979), pp. 231-33.

[21]'The Attitude of the Gnostic Religion towards Judaism as Viewed in a Variety of Perspectives', *Quebec*, p. 88.

[22]'Nag Hammadi and the New Testament', p. 292.

[23]For some reviews of the first edition see: W. H. C. Frend, *SJT*, 28 (1975), pp. 88-89; G. W. MacRae, *CBQ*, 36 (1974), pp. 296-97; E. H. Pagels, *TS*, 35 (1974), pp. 775-76; M. Peel, *JAAR*, 43 (1975), pp. 329-31; G. Quispel, *Louvain Studies*, 5 (1974), pp. 211-12; G. C. Stead, *JTS*, 26, (1975), p. 187; J. D. Turner, *JBL*, 93 (1974), pp. 482-84; and R. McL. Wilson, *ET*, 84 (1973), p. 379.

[24]J. M. Robinson, '*The Trimorphic Protennoia* and the Prologue of the Gospel of John', *New Haven* II, p. 662.

[25]J. M. Robinson, 'Jesus: From Easter to Valentinus (Or to the Apostles' Creed)', *JBL*, 101 (1982), p. 5.

[26]G. W. MacRae, 'Nag Hammadi and the New Testament', *Jonas*, pp. 146-47. *Cf.* van den Broek, 'The Present State', p. 67, 'There are no gnostic works which in their present form are demonstrably pre-Christian'.

[27]G. W. MacRae, 'Why the Church Rejected Gnosticism', in E. P. Sanders (ed.), *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition I.: The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries* (Philadelphia, 1980), [hereafter *JCSD*], p. 127.

[28]Rudolph, *Die Gnosis*, pp. 319ff., especially p. 329.

[29]Koester, *Introduction to the NT*, *passim*.

[30]W. Schmithals, 'Die gnostischen Elemente im Neuen Testament als hermeneutisches Problem', *GNT*, pp. 359-81; *idem*, 'Zur Herkunft der gnostischen Elemente in der Sprache des Paulus', *Jonas*, pp. 385-414.

[31]J. M. Robinson and H. Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1971).

[32]Robinson, 'Jesus: From Easter to Valentinus', pp. 6-10.

[33]*Ibid.*, p. 35. See P. Perkins, *The Gnostic Dialogue* (New York, 1980).

[34]See J. M. Lieu, 'Gnosticism and the Gospel of John', *ET*, 90, (1979), pp. 233-37; E. Yamauchi, 'Jewish Gnosticism? The Prologue of John, Mandaean Parallels, and the Trimorphic Protennoia', *Quispel*, pp. 467-86.

[35]Koester, *Introduction to the NT*, II, pp. 188-90; L. Schottroff, *Der Glaubende und die feindliche Welt* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1970).

[36]'Der johanneische Christus und der gnostische Erlöser', *GNT*, p. 256.

[37]'The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism', *JBL*, 91 (1972), p. 72.

[38]H. Baltensweiler and B. Reicke (eds.), 'Das Johannesevangelium und die Gnosis', *Neues Testament und Geschichte* [Oscar Cullman Festschrift] (Zürich/Tübingen, 1972), p. 155.

[39]See Yamauchi, 'Jewish Gnosticism?', p. 472.

[40]'Der Prolog des Johannesevangeliums', *ZNW*, 70 (1979), pp. 34-35.

[41]*Gnostics in Corinth* (Abingdon, 1971).

[42]*Die Gnosis*, p. 411, n. 131. E. Fascher, 'Die Korintherbriefe und die Gnosis', *GNT*, pp. 281-91, concludes that the identity of the opponents must remain disputed.

[43]M. D. Hooker and S. G. Wilson (eds.), R. McL. Wilson, 'Gnosis at Corinth', *Paul and Paulinism* [C. K. Barrett Festschrift] (London, 1982), p. 108.

[44]See U. Wilckens, 'Zu 1 Kor. 2.1-16', C. Andresen and G. Klein (eds.) *Theologia Crucis – Signum Crucis* [E. Dinkler Festschrift], (Tübingen, 1979), p. 537.

[45]S. Arai, 'Die Gegner des Paulus in I. Korintherbrief und das Problem der Gnosis', *NTS*, 19 (1972/73), p. 437.

[46]H. Conzelmann, *I Corinthians* (Philadelphia, 1975), p. 15.

[47]Wilson, 'Gnosis at Corinth', p. 112. *Cf.* also F. T. Fallon, *2 Corinthians* (Wilmington, 1980), p. 8; F. Wisse, 'The "Opponents" in the New Testament in Light of the Nag Hammadi Writings', *Quebec*, p. 108.

[48]R. A. Horsley, 'Wisdom of Word and Words of Wisdom in Corinth', *CBQ*, 39, (1977), pp. 224-39; *idem*, '"How Can Some of You Say That There Is No Resurrection of the Dead?": Spiritual Elitism in Corinth', *NTS*, 20 (1978), pp. 203-31.

[49]R. A. Horsley, 'Gnosis in Corinth: I Corinthians 8.1-6', *NTS*, 27 (1980), pp. 48-49. *Cf.* also G. Sellin, 'Das "Geheimnis" der Weisheit und das Tätsel der "Christuspartie" (zu 1 Kor 1-4)', *ZNW*, 73 (1982), pp. 69-96.

[50]Koester, *Introduction to the NT*, II, pp. 195-96; R. Bultmann, *The Johannine Epistles* (Philadelphia, 1973), p. 38.

[51]On Docetism, see E. Yamauchi, 'The Crucifixion and Docetic Christology', *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 46 (1982), pp. 1-20.

[52]F. Wisse, 'The Epistle of Jude in the History of Heresiology', M. Krause (ed.), *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Alexander Böhlig*, (Leiden, 1972), p. 142, n. 3.

[53]K. Weiss, 'Die "Gnosis" im Hintergrund und im Spiegel der Johannesbriefe', *GNT*, p. 356.

[54]J. Fossum, 'Samaritan Demiurgical Traditions and the Alleged Dove Cult of the Samaritans', *Quispel*, p. 160.

[55]I. P. Culianu, 'The Angels of the Nations and the Origins of Gnostic Dualism', *Quispel*, p. 86.

[56]S. Isser, *The Dositheans* (Leiden, 1976).

[57]See *PGCE*, pp. 158-59.

[58]On Simon as a magician, see J. D. M. Derrett, 'Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24)', *ZNW*, 73 (1982), pp. 52-68; see my 'Magic in the Biblical World', *TB*, 34 (1983), pp. 169-200, for examples of magic from biblical and extra-biblical sources.

[59]Rudolph, *Die Gnosis*, pp. 312ff.

[60]E. Haenchen, 'Simon Magus in der Apostelgeschichte', *GNT*, pp. 267-79.

[61]J. W. Drane, 'Simon the Samaritan and the Lucan Concept of Salvation History', *EQ*, 47 (1975), p. 137.

[62]W. W. Gasque, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles*, (Tübingen/Grand Rapids, 1975); M. Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1980).

[63]On the questionable value of the patristic accounts (with the exception of Irenaeus) see: F. Wisse, 'The Nag Hammadi Library and the Heresiologists', *VC*, 25 (1971), pp. 205-23; A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* (Leiden, 1973); K. Koschorke, *Hippolyt's Ketzerbekämpfung und Polemik gegen die Gnostiker* (Wiesbaden, 1975); R. M. Grant, 'Eusebius and Gnostic Origins', *Paganisme, judäisme, christianisme* [Marcel Simon Festschrift], (Paris, 1978), pp. 195-205; G. Vallée, *A Study in Anti-Gnostic Polemics* (Waterloo, 1981).

[64]See, *e.g.*, R. Bergmeier, 'Quellen vorchristlicher Gnosis?' G. Jeremias *et al.* (eds.), *Tradition und Glaube* [K. G. Kuhn Festschrift] (Göttingen, 1971), pp. 203-206.

[65]*Simon Magus und die christliche Gnosis* (Tübingen, 1974).

[66]*Untersuchungen zur Simonianischen Gnosis* (Tübingen, 1974).

[67]'Simonianische Gnosis und die *Exegese über die Seele*', *Oxford*-1, pp. 185-203; *idem*, 'Zum "Simonianischen" in *AuthLog* und *Bronté*', *Oxford*-2, pp. 3-15.

[68]'Gnosis', *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (Stuttgart, 1981), XI, col. 625.

[69]'Häresie und Einheit der Kirche im 2. Jahrhundert', *ZThK*, 21 (1974), p. 407.

[70]Wisse, 'The "Opponents"', p. 102, n. 13.

[71]'Simon Magus in Recent Research', *RelSRev*, 3 (1977), p. 141.

[72]MacRae, 'Nag Hammadi and the New Testament' (n. 26), p. 152.

[73]J.-D. Kaestli, 'L'évangile de Thomas', *Études théologiques*

et religeuses, 54, (1979), p. 383. Cf. J. Horman, 'The Source of the Version of the Parable of the Sower in the Gospel of Thomas', *NovTest*, 21 (1979), p. 326.

[74]Quispel, 'The *Gospel of Thomas* Revisited', *Quebec*, p. 223.

[75]Drijvers, 'Facts and Problems in Early Syriac-Speaking Christianity', *The Second Century*, 2 (1982), p. 173.

[76]J. M. Robinson, 'The Discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices', *BA*, 42 (1979), pp. 206-24.

[77]J. M. Robinson, (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library* (San Francisco, 1977), [*NHL*]. See my 'New Light on Gnosticism', *Christianity Today*, 23 (Oct. 6, 1978), pp. 36-40, 42-43.

[78]J. M. Robinson, 'Getting the Nag Hammadi Library into English', *BA*, 42 (1979), pp. 239-48.

[79]F. Wisse, 'Gnosticism and Early Monasticism in Egypt', *Jonas*, p. 437; C. W. Hedrick, 'Gnostic Proclivities in the Greek *Life of Pachomius* and the *Sitz im Leben* of the Nag Hammadi Library', *NovTest*, 22 (1980), p. 93.

[80]B. Van Elderen, 'The Nag Hammadi Excavation', *BA*, 42 (1979), pp. 225-31; P. Grossman, 'The Basilica of St. Pachomius', *BA*, 42 (1979), pp. 232-36; C. Walters, *Monastic Archaeology in Egypt* (Winona Lake, 1974).

[81]T. Säve-Söderbergh, 'Holy Scriptures or Apologetic Documentations?: The "Sitz im Leben" of the Nag Hammadi Library', *Strasbourg*, pp. 3-14. *Idem*, 'The Pagan Elements in Early Christianity and Gnosticism', *Quebec*, pp. 71-85; F. Wisse, 'Language Mysticism in the Nag Hammadi Texts and in Early Coptic Monasticism I: Cryptography', *Enchoria*, 9 (1979), pp. 101-20; *idem*, 'Gnosticism and Early Monasticism in Egypt', *Jonas*, pp. 431-40.

[82]Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codices* (n. 74), pp. 13-14.

[83]Rudolph, *Die Gnosis*, p. 148.

[84]G. W. MacRae, 'The Apocalypse of Adam Rediscovered', L. C. McGaughy (ed.), *1972 SBL Seminar Papers* (n.p., 1972), II, pp. 574-75; *idem*, 'Adam, Apocalypse', *IDBS*, pp. 9-10.

[85]G. W. MacRae, 'Seth in Gnostic Texts and Traditions', P. J. Achtemeier (ed.), *1977 SBL Seminar Papers* (Missoula, 1977), p. 21.

[86]*GNT*, pp. 46-47.

[87]W. Beltz, 'Bemerkungen zur Adamapokalypse aus Nag-Hammadi-Codex V', P. Nagel (ed.), *Studia Coptica* (Berlin, 1974), pp. 159-62.

[88]G. Shellrude, 'The Apocalypse of Adam: Evidence for a Christian Provenance', *Oxford*-2, pp. 93-94.

[89]C. W. Hedrick, *The Apocalypse of Adam: A Literary and Source Analysis* (Missoula, 1980), p. 213.

[90]E. Yamauchi, 'The Apocalypse of Adam, Mithraism and Pre-Christian Gnosticism', J. Duchesne-Guillemin (ed.), *Études Mithraiques*, (Acta Iranica IV; Leiden/Teheran/Liège, 1978), pp. 537-63. For suggestions that the Adam Apocalypse dates even to the third or fourth centuries see Beltz, p. 162; F. Morard, 'L'*Apocalypse d'Adam* de Nag Hammadi', *Oxford*-1, pp. 35-42; *idem*, 'Thématique de l'*Apocalypse d'Adam* du Codex V de Nag Hammadi', *Quebec*, pp. 288-94.

[91]Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codices*, p. 7; *NHL*, p. 7.

[92]MacRae, 'Nag Hammadi and the New Testament', *Jonas*, p. 154.

[93]Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, II, p. 211.

[94]In a personal letter, 25 Jan. 1980. Professor Wisse also adds, 'I agree with you on the Apocalypse of Adam'.

[95]J.-M. Sevrin, 'À propos de la "Paraphrase de Sem"', *Le Muséon*, 88 (1975), p. 87.

[96]K.-M. Fischer, 'Die Paraphrase des Seem', M. Kause (ed.), *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts* [P. Labib Festschrift], (Leiden, 1975), p. 266.

[97]J. M. Robinson, 'Sethians and Johannine Thought: The *Trimorphic Protennoia* and the Prologue of the Gospel of John', *New Haven*, II, pp. 643-62.

[98]'The Prologue of the Gospel of John and the Trimorphic Protennoia', *SBL 1978 Abstracts*, ed. P. Achtemeier (Missoula, 1978), p. 29; *idem*, 'Gnosticism and the New Testament', *Jonas*, pp. 128-31.

[99]'Die dreigestaltige Protennoia', *ThLZ*, 99, (1974), cols. 733-34.

[100]G. Schenke, 'Die dreigestaltige Protennoia (NHC XIII)',

unpublished dissertation for Ristock University in 1977. It is worth noting that though she speaks of the work as 'nichtchristlich', she also designates parts of it as 'antichristlich' and others as presupposing 'christliche Gnosis' (pp. 131, 146).

[101]C. Colpe, 'Heidnische, Jüdische und christliche Überlieferung in den Schriften aus Nag Hammadi III', *JAC*, 17, (1974), pp. 122-24. Colpe holds that both the TriProt and the Prologue go back to Jewish Wisdom traditions. Cf. C. A. Evans, 'On the Prologue of John and the *Trimorphic Protennoia*', *NTS*, 27 (1981), pp. 395-401.

[102]*ThLZ*, 99 (1974), col. 733.

[103]*Ibid*. On Bultmann's presuppositions, see R. Kysar, 'R. Bultmann's Interpretation of the Concept of Creation in Jo 1, 3-4', *CBQ*, 32 (1970), pp. 77-85.

[104]Van den Broek, 'The Present State', (n. 15). p. 67, comments: 'In reading the gnostic treatise (TriProt) I absolutely do not get the impression of the Berlin group....'

[105]Y. Janssens, 'Le Codex XIII de Nag Hammadi', *Le Muséon*, 87 (1974), pp. 341-413; *La Prôtennoia Trimorphe (NH XIII.1)* (Quebec, 1978).

[106]Janssens, *La Prôtennoia*, p. 82: 'As for us, we remain convinced that it is a matter of the reminiscences of the New Testament in the TriProt and not the contrary'. Cf. *idem*, 'Une source gnostique du Prologue?' M. de Jonge (ed.), *L'Évangile de Jean* (Gembloux/Louvain, 1977), pp. 355-58. In her latest contribution, 'The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Fourth Gospel', *Wilson*, pp. 229-44, she leaves 'the last word to specialists in the Fourth Gospel'.

[107]See Yamauchi, *Quispel*, pp. 482-83; contrast Robinson, *New Haven*, II, pp. 660-62.

[108]J. Helderman, '"In ihren Zelten . . ." Bemerkungen bei Codex XIII . . . .', T. Baarda, A. F. J. Klijn, and W. C. van Unnik (eds.), *Miscellanea Neotestamentica*, (Leiden, 1978), I, pp. 181-211.

[109]R. McL. Wilson, 'The *Trimorphic Protennoia*', *Oxford*-1, p. 54.

[110]B. A. Pearson, 'Friedländer Revisited', *Studia Philonica*, 2 (1973), p. 35.

[111]K. Rudolph, 'Sophia und Gnosis', *ATFG*, P. 232; *idem*, *Die Gnosis*, pp. 298-301.

[112]B. A. Pearson, 'Jewish Elements in Gnosticism and the Development of Gnostic Self-definition', *JCSD*, p. 151.

[113]MacRae, 'Nag Hammadi and the New Testament', p. 150.

[114]I. Gruenwald, 'Aspects of the Jewish Gnostic Controversy', *New Haven*, II, p. 720.

[115]J. Maier, 'Jüdische Faktoren bei der Entstehung der Gnosis?', *ATFG*, p. 243.

[116]W. C. van Unnik, 'Gnosis und Judentum', *Jonas*, p.84.

[117]Perkins, *The Gnostic Dialogue*, pp. 17-18.

[118]Wilson, 'Gnosis at Corinth', (n. 43), p. 111.

[119]Tröger, 'The Attitude', (n. 21), p. 93.

[120]S. Pétrement, 'Le Colloque de Messine et le problème du gnosticisme', *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 72 (1967), 344-73; *idem*, 'Sur le problème du gnosticisme', *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 85 (1980), pp. 145-77.

[121]H. Jonas, 'Response', J. P. Hyatt (ed.), *The Bible in Modern Scholarship* (Nashville, 1965), p. 293: 'A Gnosticism without a fallen god, without benighted creator and sinister creation, without alien soul, cosmic captivity and acosmic salvation, without the self-redeeming of the Deity – in short: A Gnosis without divine tragedy will not meet specifications.'

[122]Wilson, 'Gnosis at Corinth', (n. 43), p. 111; *idem*, 'From Gnosis to Gnosticism', *Mélanges d'Histoires des Religions offerts à Henri-Charles Puech* (Paris, 1974), p. 425.

[123]Hengel, *The Son of God*, p. 34.

[124]B. Aland, 'Gnosis und Christentum', *New Haven*, 1, p. 340.

[125]Tröger, 'The Attitude', (n. 21), p. 98.

[126]U. Bianchi (ed.), *Le Origini dello Gnosticismo* (Leiden, 1967).

[127]U. Bianchi, 'Le gnosticisme et les origines du Christianisme', *Louvain* (n. 8), p. 228.

The ecumenical quest for agreement in faith

Roger T. Beckwith

The 'ARCIC' and 'Lima' statements and reports have attracted much attention recently. In this review article the Rev. Roger Beckwith, warden of Latimer House in Oxford, introduces and reviews these reports and also the earlier report of the Anglican-Orthodox Commission, on which he was himself an Anglican representative.

The ecumenical movement (however one assesses it) has certainly been one of the outstanding phenomena of twentieth-century Christianity, and evangelicals (however much they may now protest) played a large part in bringing it into being. The example of international, interdenominational activity by evangelicals, particularly the founding of the Evangelical Alliance in 1846, provided an object-lesson of what was possible; and various other international and interdenominational societies, which were originally evangelical but afterwards became non-evangelical (such as the YMCA and YWCA) or anti-evangelical (such as the SCM), were more directly influential. John R. Mott, an evangelical who played a leading role both in the YMCA and in the SCM, and who was devoted to the cause of Christian missions, was mainly responsible for convening the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910, and it was from this that the modern ecumenical movement sprang.

The World Missionary Conference was only consultative in its agenda, but it aimed to be comprehensive in its membership. Its successor-bodies have followed the same policy. These were the International Missionary Council, the Faith and Order Movement and the Life and Work Movement, effectively formed at conferences in 1921, 1927 and 1925 respectively, after the delay caused by the First World War. The comprehensive aim (though never fully achieved owing to the refusal of the Church of Rome to send more than observers, and its later determination to have its own ecumenical movement) meant that the leadership was always likely to be taken out of evangelical hands. The fact that two of the three successor-bodies were unconcerned with missions, and that one of them was concerned with the weakest point of evangelicals, namely theology, made this likelihood a certainty. In 1948, after the interruption of the Second World War, the Movements of Faith and Order and of Life and Work combined in the World Council of Churches, and in 1961 the new body was able to swallow up the International Missionary Council and to conform it to its own pattern of thinking.

The consultative character of the ecumenical bodies proved in the event to be less significant than their comprehensiveness. Consultation is never satisfying (especially to non-theologians) if it does not issue in action. The activism of the ecumenical movement has become increasingly prominent in the years since the war, partly in promoting unions between different denominations (the most successful example being the Church of South India, formed in 1947), partly in relief work (organised by the department of Inter-Church Aid), and partly in more questionable political and social enterprises, such as the encouragement of rebellion against reactionary or racialist governments, and the promotion of feminism. In this flurry of fervent activity, all concern for faith and order (let alone for evangelical faith or order) seemed to be left far behind, and when it did surface it usually showed itself in secularist or syncretistic forms. The last World Conference on Faith and Order (the fourth), which like its predecessors followed a more conventional pattern, took place at Montreal as long ago as 1963.

There are those, however, who have been working within the World Council of Churches to bring questions of faith and order back into prominence on its agenda. Notable among these are the Eastern Orthodox, who are always rather out on a limb in the WCC because they make the same sort of exclusive ecclesiastical claims as the Church of Rome, but who have to be kept within it if there is to be any hope that Rome will one day join. Rome and the Orthodox both attribute ultimate significance to the outward denominational unity which they each already enjoy, and they are both therefore deeply concerned for outward unity with the rest of Christendom. Moreover, following the patristic conception of church unity, they rightly maintain that unity must be on a basis of agreement in doctrine. The Orthodox, therefore, from within the WCC have been advocating these aims, and Rome from outside has (since the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, which launched its own ecumenical movement) been doing the same. Rome has been appointing commissions to engage in doctrinal dialogue with particular denominations (such as the Orthodox themselves and the Anglicans) and the Orthodox have both been doing this and have been engaging as well in multi-denominational discussion of doctrine within the WCC. The Orthodox have also commenced a dialogue with the Lutherans, and Rome has been having discussions with Lutherans, Presbyterians and Methodists, but (at least on an international front) these other discussions are less advanced than those with Anglicans.

Three reports

Some results of the more advanced dialogues have now been published, notably *Anglican-Orthodox dialogue: the Moscow Agreed Statement* (London: SPCK, 1977), *Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission: the Final Report* (London: CTS & SPCK, 1982) and *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Faith & Order Paper 111, Geneva: WCC, 1982). The first two of these, as their titles indicate, are the result of bi-lateral discussions between denominations, while the third is the result of multi-lateral discussions within the WCC. The Anglican-Orthodox report is the first of at least two such, and so is the Anglican-Roman Catholic report, despite its unfortunate use of the word 'final'. It was only final in so far as the commission that produced it was concerned, but the report received a very rude rebuff from the Holy Office at Rome for not keeping more closely to the teaching of the Councils of Trent and Vatican I; and a second Anglican-Roman Catholic commission has in any case been appointed, to continue the work of the first and to deal with further issues. The WCC report (sometimes known as the Lima report, because of the place where the present text of it was produced) has a relative finality, in that it has been submitted in this form to the churches belonging to the WCC to see if they can agree to it; but if they suggest alterations, as some of them are likely to do, it will no doubt be revised again.

Each of these reports consists of brief theses, and relatively few of them. The Moscow Agreed Statement (to take the most extreme example), consists of 32 theses, occupying 10 small pages: the other 89 pages in the volume are introduction and appendices, to which the members of the commission are not committed. Brief theses are not in themselves objectionable, of course: the Chalcedonian Definition is brief, and so is the Nicene Creed. But what made it possible for the Fathers to express themselves adequately in such short compass was the fact that there was an agreed basis of authority for their statements. They were attempting to express the traditional teaching of the church, in a manner which fully accorded with the New Testament – the New Testament itself being understood as a reliable and harmonious body of inspired teaching. This approach to the New Testament is still accepted by most Orthodox, some Roman Catholics and a minority of Anglicans; but even those Orthodox

and Roman Catholics who accept it usually relate the New Testament, in a different way than the Fathers did, to the traditional teaching of the church, by ascribing to the latter an authority of its own. Thus, not only when teaching conforms to the New Testament, but also when it diverges from the New Testament, it is reckoned authoritative, and is normally described as an 'interpretation' of the New Testament (the only true interpretation), and never as a contradiction of it. Of course, some Roman Catholics and many Anglicans do *not* regard the New Testament as reliable, harmonious or inspired, and in their case there is an even more complete departure from the basis of authority recognized by the Fathers.

This being so, it is very difficult for Orthodox and Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Anglicans, or Orthodox and others in the WCC, to affirm very much in common. It is no wonder that their agreed theses are few, and big questions arise about what some of their theses mean. When one probes beneath the surface, one is sometimes confronted with the uncertainties of post-Enlightenment liberalism, at other times with the false certainties of post-Tridentine Roman Catholicism, and at still other times with the peculiar thought-forms of Orthodoxy, developed in their long isolation from the western church since the schism of the eleventh century. The divergent traditions of thought stemming from that schism, or from the Reformation schism of the sixteenth century, are not something that can be quickly or easily overcome. An effort of understanding, a willingness to learn, and a readiness to admit that one may sometimes be wrong, are all involved for all parties, and on top of these long patience and persevering prayer.

Two factors increase the problem. One is that the subjects on which agreed statements are being atttempted are not those on which there is thought to be agreement but those on which there is known to be disagreement. If the problems of disunity are to be overcome, this is where attention is inevitably centred. The other factor is that the divided bodies are not the same today as they were when the divisions took place. Sometimes this is a help: the friendlier relations fostered by the ecumenical movement predispose those discussing to think as favourably as possible of their opposite-numbers and their views, not as unfavourably as possible; and developments like the recent attention to the Bible in the Church of Rome tend to extend the area of common ground with the churches of the Reformation. On the other hand, the definition of new dogmas by the Church of Rome in 1854, 1870 and 1950, and the growth of doubt, since the Enlightenment, in the churches of the Reformation especially, on fundamental truths of the faith which all churches formerly held in common, have created large new obstacles in the way of any future agreement.

The subjects with which the recent reports concern themselves are, in the case of the Anglican-Roman Catholic report, Authority, Eucharist and Ministry; and in the case of the WCC's Lima report, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. Two topics are therefore common to the two reports, Eucharist and Ministry. The Lima report adds Baptism, because the WCC includes Baptists, while the Anglican-RC report adds Authority, partly because the doctrine of papal infallibility adds a new dimension to this question, and partly because the Anglican-RC commission began its work at a time when realism was beginning to force this question to the fore. The subjects of the Anglican-Orthodox report are more miscellaneous: the Knowledge of God, the Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture, Scripture and Tradition, the Authority of the Councils, the Filioque Clause, the Church as the Eucharistic Community, and the Invocation of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist. This is doubtless because the Anglican-Orthodox commission was more conscious that it was beginning its work from scratch. Nevertheless, it will be noted that here also two of the topics relate to the eucharist (or Lord's supper) and others to authority.

Ministry
A comparison of the treatment of Ministry in the two reports where it figures does not reveal many points of similarity. In the Anglican-RC report, the statement on Ministry is its vaguest and weakest part, and the following 'Elucidation' does little to clarify it. Two commentaries on the Ministry statement which were published at its separate first appearance by members of the commission responsible (Bishop Alan Clark and the Rev. Julian Charley, from the Roman Catholic and Anglican side respectively) were widely considered to give mutually exclusive interpretations. In the Lima report, on the other hand, the statement on the Ministry is its clearest and most biblical part, commendable both for what it says and for what it refrains from saying. It first emphasises that all Christians have divine gifts and a ministry, not just the ordained (p. 20, paras. 1–6). There has, however, always been an institutional ministry as well, though the apostles, as Christ's eyewitnesses, had a 'unique and unrepeatable' role within it (p. 21, esp. para. 10). The ordained have authority, but are not to lord it over the flock (pp. 22–23, paras. 15–16), and any priesthood that they have is related to the priesthood of the church (p. 23, para. 17). Women have a place in the ministry of the church, but not necessarily in the ordained ministry (p. 24, para. 18). The threefold ministry is not held to be an apostolic requirement (p. 24, para. 19), and the 'apostolic succession' is seen primarily in terms of orderly transmission (p. 29, para. 35), but the relationship of bishop to presbyter is left as an open question (p. 25, para. 24). Finally, there is a rather inconclusive discussion of mutual recognition of ministries, raising the question whether non-episcopal churches ought not to adopt episcopacy, but denying that differences of practice on the ordination of women is an obstacle (p. 32, esp. paras. 53, 54).

Eucharist
The treatment of the eucharist in the three reports does have certain significant points of contact. The statement in the Anglican-RC report is this time the clearest (though not the most acceptable) account, and insists that Christ's body and blood are present at holy communion not just in the reception of the sacrament but from the consecration of the elements onwards. There is a real presence of his body and blood in the consecrated elements, though faith is necessary if this presence is to benefit those who receive the elements (pp. 15f., 21). In the Lima report, a real presence in the elements is hinted at rather than asserted, but it is taken for granted that Christ's words 'This is my body . . . this is my blood' are to be understood literally (and not, as the Reformers held, in the sense 'This represents . . .'); and 'What Christ declared is true' (p. 12, para. 13). It is the Anglican-Orthodox report which seems to come nearest to a Reformed understanding of this question, stating that 'the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of the glorified Christ by the action of the Holy Spirit *in such a way that* the faithful people of God receiving Christ may feed upon him in sacrament' (p. 89, para. 25, italics added).

Another point on which the Anglican-RC and Lima statements on the Eucharist agree is in their insistence on the word *anamnesis* as some sort of breakthrough in the problems of eucharistic theology. The Lima statement uses it at least ten times, translating it 'memorial' and telling us that 'the biblical idea of memorial' is 'the present efficacy of God's work when it is celebrated by God's people in liturgy' and that 'Christ himself with all that he has accomplished for us and for all creation (in his incarnation, servanthood, ministry, teaching, suffering, sacrifice, resurrection, ascension and sending of the Spirit) is present in this anamnesis' (p. 11, paras. 5–6). The New Testament emphasis that the sacramental commemoration 'proclaims Christ's *death*' (1 Cor. 11:26) is here quite lost to view. Elsewhere we are once told that Christ's sacrifice was 'accomplished once for all on the cross' (p. 11, para. 5), but this is the only place where the cross is given any special emphasis.

The word *anamnesis* is derived from Luke 22:19 (longer text) and 1 Corinthians 11:24, 25, and is part of Christ's command at the last supper 'Do this in remembrance of me', or, more literally, 'Do this in commemoration of me', *i.e.* to *cause* me to be remembered; and hence Paul's explanation of the phrase, after he has twice quoted it, 'you *proclaim* (*katangello*) the Lord's death' (1 Cor. 11:26), *i.e.* to your fellow-Christians. There used to be much discussion whether it is man who is being reminded at

the holy communion, or God – a question which is really settled by Paul's explanation, and by the passover background of the last supper; for at the passover the main emphasis is certainly on a remembering of the exodus by Israel (Ex. 13:3, 9; Dt. 16:3). More recently, however, owing ultimately to speculation about the relationship between Christianity and the mystery religions by Dom Odo Casel, popularized in the English-speaking world by Dom Gregory Dix (in his *Shape of the Liturgy*) and by other liturgiologists and theologians, the theory has become widespread that *anamnesis* has really nothing to do with memory but is concerned with making the past present again. This pagan Greek notion has, quite incongruously, been read into the Jewish passover; but even in its original Greek context it is unconnected with the word *anamnesis*. The theory could never have become popular except by wishful thinking on the part of those who wanted to overcome the great theological and ecumenical problems caused by the notions of the bodily presence and the mass-sacrifice, conflicting as they do with the once-for-all finality of Calvary, as asserted by the New Testament (Acts 13:34; Rom. 6:9; Heb. 9:25-28; 10:1-4, 8-18; Rev. 1:18).

Interestingly enough, there is a discussion of the meaning of the word *anamnesis* in a Jewish work written in Greek in the first century AD. This is never referred to in the literature, but is of course of the first importance. It comes in Philo, *De Congressu* 39-44, and puts beyond any question the fact that, far from having nothing to do with memory, *anamnesis* has everything to do with it: 'Reminding (*anamnesis*) takes the second place to memory, and so with the reminded and the rememberer. The conditions of those two correspond to constant health and recovery from disease, for forgetting is a disease of memory . . .' and so on. This entirely accords with the occasional use of *anamnesis* elsewhere in biblical Greek, but completely excludes the modern interpretation.

Apart from its great (and misguided) play with the word *anamnesis*, the Lima statement on the eucharist is a very confused and confusing text. Like the Lima statement on baptism, it was originally brought together by the extraordinary method of collecting anything that the four World Conferences on Faith and Order and the first four General Assemblies of the WCC had said which related to the subject, and trying to arrange these scattered utterances in some sort of order. This was done at Louvain in 1971 (see *Faith and Order: Louvain 1971*, Faith & Order Paper 59, pp. 49-53, 71-77). The texts before us have been repeatedly revised, but originated in this unpromising way. The reason why the Lima Statement on the ministry is so much better is that it originated differently; but the statement on baptism is also somewhat better than that on the eucharist, because its source-material was better.

Authority

The difficulty mentioned earlier, of finding an agreed basis of authority for doctrinal statements, is naturally very apparent when the Anglican-RC report addresses itself to the topic of 'Authority' and the Anglican-Orthodox report to the topics of 'The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture', 'Scripture and Tradition' and 'The Authority of Councils'. On the infallibility of the pope and the other new Roman dogmas, the Anglicans and RCs agree to differ (*Final Report*, pp. 94-96). It is not far different with the Anglicans and Orthodox, when they deal with the authority of councils (*Moscow Statement*, pp. 85-87). As regards Scripture and traditional church teaching, both reports are reluctant to make them separate sources of doctrine, but neither is content to subject tradition unequivocally to Scripture (*Final Report*, p. 70f; *Moscow Statement*, pp. 83-85).

Practical consequences

To examine all the material in the reports, even where they do not overlap, would require a very long article indeed, but it is hoped that some flavour of them has been given in what it has been possible to include. It has already been indicated that Rome and the Orthodox are aiming at a union of the denominations of Christendom, so this is the practical outcome that they envisage for discussions with the Anglicans and others. Whether the doc-

trinal problems under discussion, with a view to this outcome, will ever be satisfactorily overcome, is another matter; and so is the question whether the sort of union which Rome and the Orthodox would favour (a virtual absorption) could ever be accepted by those with whom they are in dialogue.

The WCC was at one time similarly bent on unions of denominations, but after scores of local schemes fell to the ground they became somewhat disillusioned with the idea. The Lima report asks the churches to consider not only whether they can accept the report, but also how acceptance of it would affect their relations with other churches (p. x): this is a modest enquiry. It seems likely that acceptance of the Baptism statement might affect interdenominational relations most, since it asks Baptists to renounce the rebaptism of those baptised as infants, and paedo-baptists to renounce indiscriminate baptism (p. 4, para. 13; p. 6, para. 16). Reaction to this proposal will be interesting.

For further reading

There is a commendation of the Anglican-RC report by Julian Charley (a commission-member) and a discussion of the Lima report by Colin Buchanan, both published by Grove Books of Bramcote, Nottingham. More critical is the CEEC response to the Anglican-RC report (distributed by Grove Books), a study guide on it by the author of this article, and a study entitled *Sacraments and Ministry in Ecumenical Perspective* by G. L. Bray, which touches on the Lima report as well. The last two items are published by Latimer House (131 Banbury Road, Oxford).

Book reviews

Peter C. Craigie, **Ugarit and the Old Testament** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Exeter: Paternoster, 1983), vii + 110 pp., £4.80.

A ploughman's discovery in 1928 opened a new page in Near Eastern archaeology, giving birth to a new field of study, to an excavation continuing to the present through more than forty seasons, and to a multiplicity of books and articles. The ploughed-open tomb alerted officials of the French mandatory government, and C. F. A. Schaeffer was called from France to excavate in 1929. Rewards were immediate: richly furnished tombs and warehouses filled with pottery marked the site of a port that flourished in the 14th and 13th centuries BC. Nearby rose an impressive ruin-mound which Schaeffer soon began to explore. Here was a great city, violently destroyed. The ruined walls lay just below the surface, with them were pottery, metalwork and inscriptions. Very soon after the first trench was opened, clay tablets appeared. However important the sculptures, gold dishes and foreign pottery unearthed, written records always stand in a different category, and these proved to be very special. Their script was cuneiform, but it was not Babylonian (many Babylonian tablets came to light subsequently). Charles Virolleaud, Director of the Antiquities Service was invited to study them. Late in 1929 he published drawings of them, although he could not understand the writing. Other scholars worked on his article, and, by the end of 1930, the tablets could be read with assurance. Their script was a cuneiform alphabet of thirty signs, their language closely akin to Hebrew. The city was called Ugarit, so the language and script were named Ugaritic.

This is the story Peter Craigie relates in a matter-of-fact way in ch. II. Ugarit has long been his special interest, and he edits the valuable international *Ugaritic Newsletter*. His attention has centred on the theme of this book, the contribution of Ugarit