

UNION SEMINARY QUARTERLY REVIEW

Special Issue

December 1960

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UNION SEMINARY QUARTERLY REVIEW

"To promote thought and action in the service of Christ"

Special Issue

December, 1960

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Published by

THE STUDENTS, FACULTY AND ALUMNI OF
UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

3041 Broadway, New York 27, N.Y.

Subscription Rate: \$2.00 per year, 60 cents per copy.

Published in November, January, March and May.

Requests for change of address by alumni should be sent directly to the Alumni Office

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Inauguration of

Robert McAfee Brown, B.D., Ph.D.

as Auburn Professor of Systematic Theology

Charles Roy Stinnette, Jr., B.D., Ph.D.

as Professor of Pastoral Theology

George Arthur Buttrick, D.D., LL.D.

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Harold Cooke Phillips, D.D., L.H.D., LL.D.

as Brown Visiting Professor of Homiletics

Union Theological Seminary

Wednesday, October 26, 1960

ORDER OF SERVICE

James Memorial Chapel

4:00 P.M

1. ORGAN PRELUDE: The Saint Anne Fugue, *J. S. Bach*
2. PROCESSIONAL HYMN No. 266 "A mighty fortress is our God"
3. SENTENCES AND INVOCATION PROFESSOR SAMUEL L. TERRIEN
4. SCRIPTURE: II CORINTHIANS 3:17-4:18 PROFESSOR WILLIAM D. DAVIES
5. ANTHEM: FESTIVAL TE DEUM, *R. Vaughan Williams*
6. INDUCTION OF
PROFESSOR ROBERT McAFEE BROWN
PROFESSOR CHARLES ROY STINETTE, JR.
PROFESSOR GEORGE ARTHUR BUTTRICK
PROFESSOR JAMES ALFRED MARTIN, JR.
PROFESSOR HAROLD COOKE PHILLIPS
Statement by the Chairman of the Board of Directors
MR. BENJAMIN STRONG
Reading of the Preamble by the President
DR. HENRY P. VAN DUSEN
Declaration by the Professors-Elect
Declaration by the Chairman of the Board of Directors
7. PRAYER
8. HYMN No. 481 "God of the prophets"
9. INAUGURAL ADDRESS PROFESSOR BUTTRICK
"The Nature of Truth"
10. PRAYER AND BENEDICTION DEAN JOHN C. BENNETT
11. RECESSIONAL HYMN No. 377 "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun"

Theology as an Act of Gratitude

Robert McAfee Brown

THE POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS in which an inaugural lecture can go are legion. Shall the lecturer be broad and comprehensive, displaying the wide scope of his knowledge, thereby impressing everyone? Shall he take a very narrow topic and examine it at depth, using an appropriate number of foreign quotations, thereby impressing his colleagues? Shall he isolate and discuss *the* crucial problem that faces his discipline in the coming generation? Or shall he (in forty-five minutes) outline his entire system of thought?

No one of these possibilities is a real possibility for me. The comprehensive cosmic utterances I make still sound thin. (God grant they will always sound thus.) Foreign quotations on my lips sound phony. (God grant they will not always sound thus.) It has not yet been revealed to me what *the* crucial problem is that faces my discipline in the coming generation, though I suspect that it may turn out to be the problem of tradition. Nor do I have an original theological system of my own to inflict upon you.

GRACE AND GRATITUDE

I SHALL USE THIS OCCASION, therefore, to engage in the more modest (but in my case at least more basic) task of reflecting upon the *attitude* that the theologian must bring to his work. If I am wrong in the way in which I approach the theological task, if my

Dr. Robert McAfee Brown joined the faculty of the Seminary in 1953. He was Assistant Professor of Philosophy of Religion and Systematic Theology, 1953-55; Associate Professor, 1955-58; and was appointed Auburn Professor of Systematic Theology in 1959.

attitude toward what I am doing is incorrect, the chances are that everything that follows will be incorrect. If, on the other hand, I am approaching the theological discipline in an attitude proper to it, there will at least remain the possibility that the mistakes I make along the way can be corrected.

11/27
✓ 11/27 ✓
Now in the years that I have taught theology, it has become increasingly clear to me that the distinctive word in the Christian vocabulary is the word *grace*. That God is gracious to us, that he loves us no matter how unlovable we may be, that he visits us in the midst of our distresses when we have no claim whatsoever upon his attentions, that he identifies himself wholly with us, that he changes our situation by what he does—all of this, it seems to me, is the heart and center of the Christian gospel, and all of it may be conveniently summed up under the word *grace*. God as revealed in Jesus Christ is a gracious God. This is the gospel we preach. It is also the gospel we teach.

✓ But if grace is the distinctively Christian word, within and underneath it there is also a distinctively *Protestant* word, a word that more than any other word characterizes both the Protestant heritage and the nature of the Protestant response. I will not try to determine what the distinctively Catholic word is, but the distinctively Protestant word, I believe, is the word *gratitude*. Gratitude is what must characterize our dealings with God because grace is what characterizes God's dealings with us.

Now like so many other confirmations of the meaning of the Christian faith, this conviction has been borne in upon me more from the time I have spent in James Chapel than from the time I have spent in my study. If the real test of a theological affirmation is whether or not it can be sung—and that may be the most important test—then the affirmation of gratitude is a particularly resonant Protestant affirmation. And there is one hymn that more than any other expresses this Protestant stance of gratitude. It is a hymn that seems to be the appropriate hymn for every occasion of Protestant worship. I find myself wanting to use it at the conclusion of every sermon I preach, so that it will confirm the fact of the good news, in case my own proclamation has been faulty. It is the hymn that seems most appropriate after a baptism. It is the hymn that gathers up our sense of gratitude after a wedding. It is the hymn *par excellence* to be sung after we have celebrated the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the eucharist, the very service of thanksgiving and gratitude. It is the appropriate hymn to sing before or after a meal, and was in fact originally written to be sung as a grace.

It is the hymn that I fervently hope will be sung at my funeral (let those here present take note, should any of you outlive me). It is the hymn that sums up what our reaction to the gospel must be, and describes what kind of people we must be because of the gospel. It is the hymn *Now Thank We All Our God*.

This hymn describes the Protestant stance. It describes what we must be: people who are grateful. And Protestant theology, I would urge this morning, must live and move and have its being in this atmosphere:

Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices,
Who wond'rous things hath done, in whom his world rejoices.
Who from our mothers' arms, hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in his grace, and guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills in this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given,
The Son, and Him who reigns with Them in highest heaven.
The one eternal God, whom earth and heaven adore
For thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.

Why is this so? Why are we people who must be grateful? Simply because God is the gracious God. Because, as the hymn puts it, he hath done "wond'rous things." Because in Jesus Christ he has visited and redeemed his people. Because "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." Because the world, this sorry world of ours, is a world into which God has come, a world that he has transformed, a world that is the scene of the victory he wrought over the powers of evil in the cross and resurrection. This seems to me truer and truer every day. The more I read the New Testament the more I find this the presupposition without which the New Testament would never have been written. The more I read the daily paper the more I realize that this is the only way in which the chaos and frightful ugliness and terror of modern life can be understood apart from bleak despair. It is not the burden of my lecture this morning to plead for the truth of this affirmation. I am simply stating it as the basis for my understanding of theology as an act of gratitude.

Now I am quite aware that to say that we live in a redeemed world, or that God in Christ has wrought a cosmic victory over

✓ the powers of evil, or that Jesus really meant it when he said not only, "In the world you have tribulation," but also really meant it when he went on to say, "But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world,"—I am aware that to say these things is not only on the face of it to sound naive, but also to involve oneself with a lot of tough theological problems: Why doesn't the world look more redeemed? Why is God's activity so hidden? How can we really believe that "the Lord our God is good, his mercy is forever sure," when all, or at least most, of the evidence seems to point in precisely the opposite direction? ² All I will say to this at the moment is that I would rather be saddled with problems of that sort, which arise because the gospel evokes confident affirmation, than be saddled with the dilemma of having no more to offer than the hesitant postulate that it may turn out that God will somehow possibly swing the balance of things in his favor more or less, though of course we're not yet sure. On those terms, it seems to me, there would be no gospel to preach.

✓ Consequently, the gospel I affirm is the good news that we live in God's world, a world which in Christ he has invaded and conquered. In this world we will surely have tribulation, but we can be of good cheer for he has overcome the world. The Christian is the one who believes that God's grace has made it so. Since this has happened, we can be grateful. All we really can do is to live lives of gratitude. Because God is gracious, we are to be grateful.

Charis always demands the answer of *eucharistia* [writes Karl Barth, i.e. grace always demands the answer of gratitude]. Grace and gratitude belong together like heaven and earth. Grace evokes gratitude like the voice an echo. Gratitude follows grace like thunder [follows] lightning.¹

Now there are many ways in which we can be grateful. We can pray. We can engage in politics. We can love our families. We can build buildings. We can be theologians. My particular way of trying to be grateful is to be a theologian. This is what it seems to me that the grace of God calls upon me to do—to show my gratitude by trying to think out loud, as it were, about what his grace means. I hasten to add that these ways of being grateful are not mutually exclusive ways. Theology is not an

¹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (New York: Scribners, 1956) Vol. IV, part 1, p. 41.

alternative to praying; the more I theologize the more I am convinced that it is hollow if it does not grow out of the attempt to pray. Theology is not an alternative to political responsibility; my own political convictions grow out of my theological conviction. Theology is not an alternative to loving one's family, though I must add that it often seems to cut into time that rightfully belongs to one's family. Nor does theology exempt one from trying to build buildings to the glory of God. So there are many ways of being grateful.

What attitudes, then, must be brought to the theological task if theology is indeed a response of gratitude for the gift of grace? Let me suggest four things that seem to flow from the basic consideration that theology is an act of gratitude.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AS A CONFSSIONAL THEOLOGY

FIRST OF ALL, CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY will be a *confessional theology*. The one who speaks is himself grateful. Better, I who speak am myself grateful. I do not as a theologian merely describe why other people are grateful. I also try to tell other people why I am grateful. As a Christian theologian, I am a believing theologian, a confessing theologian. I am not so much reporting at arm's length what "they" out there believe, as I am confessing where I stand. And I ought to be able to do this in such a way that the listener could at least respond, "Well of course if I could believe *that*, I would be grateful too." I may not be able to convince him that it is true—and nobody ever argued anybody else into the Kingdom of God—but at least he ought to be able to see why I am grateful, and realize that if grace is real, gratitude is every bit as real, and that both are real to me.

Now this first point may seem very obvious, but I stress it because it seems to be far from obvious to many people of my own theological generation, who apparently feel that it is cheating with the evidence and distorting its academic integrity if I indicate my own involvement in it. Consequently, I feel compelled to take issue with those who say that the theologian can legitimately disengage himself from his subject matter. I am dubious of the approach which says, "Where I stand theologically doesn't matter. I simply lay out the various options for the students." No, this is really to say that the subject matter of theology, while it may be very interesting stuff, isn't really a life and death matter for me, and therefore need not be a life

and death matter for you either. The alternative is not to sell a particular theological line—a point to which I shall return in a moment. The alternative is to make the student aware that the subject matter of theology really makes a difference, that I believe what I am talking about, that I stake my life on it, and that at the end of the day it forces a decision on him too. If theology is an act of gratitude, then, it must be a confessing theology, a theology with which I as a theologian proclaim my own involvement and therefore my own gratitude.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AS A CHURCH THEOLOGY

BUT TO SAY THIS IS NOT ENOUGH. For the faith I confess in gratitude is the faith of the Christian community to which I belong. It is not a faith I have invented, but a faith I have received; not a faith that is the response of my intellect, but a faith to which my intellect must make response. Theology as an act of gratitude is not my solitary act of gratitude, but an expression of the gratitude of the entire Christian community. Theology is not only confessional theology, it is also, in the second place, *a church theology*.

I have no right to preach or teach a faith that is simply *my* faith, but I have every right and duty to teach a faith that is the church's faith, a faith that I have received and appropriated as the gift of God to me through his church. Theology must be church theology, or, as we are likely to say today, dogmatics must be church dogmatics, imitating you-know-who. This point has been driven home, as we are all aware, by one of the most influential Protestant theologians since Calvin. His massive formulation of Protestant theology has already exerted an influence far beyond the European continent to which it was originally addressed. (One only wishes he had been willing to write more concisely for the sake of weak Anglo-Saxon readers who have trouble with ecstatic German.) However that may be, here is one excerpt from the lengthy prolegomenon to his major work, in which he stresses the fact that dogmatics must be church dogmatics:

Since Dogmatics is a theological discipline, and thus pertains solely to the Christian Church, we can only explain what it is when we have become clear as to the conception of the Christian Church. . . . The present work entirely disclaims the task of establishing on a foundation of general principles a Doctrine of God, or an Anthropology or Eschatology either, which should be used

in the Christian Church though it did not really originate there, or which should prove the propositions of the Christian Faith to be consonant with reason. . . .

Those words, as you are certainly aware, come from the opening pages of *The Christian Faith* by Friedrich David Ernst Schleiermacher.² Not all the winds of doctrine we sniff these days originate in Basel.

Now as far as Schleiermacher's intention goes, I must put myself entirely in his camp. I cease being a camp-follower when he begins to define what he means by the church, but that is neither here nor there for the moment. The point is that theology is not some self-sufficient discipline of some self-sufficient individual, i.e. me; theology is an activity of the church, an expression of the faith of the church, and therefore—no more but no less—the servant of the church. It is the church being grateful. The church's theology is not an end in itself, but merely a tool to help the church do its job better. So when I speak as a theologian, I am not speaking just for myself, though I must always take responsibility for what I say and for the fact that I may have corrupted what needs to be said because of my own deficiencies as a theologian. What I am called upon to do is to articulate the faith by which the communion of saints has lived, lives, and will continue to live. Since God has been gracious to his community, his community must live in grateful response, and theology is one of the niches within the total life of the church where this grateful response is expressed. When I theologize, then, I do so as a churchman trying to show why the church is grateful, and why I as a member of the church am grateful.

I can illustrate very simply, I think, why theology as church theology has become so important to me. I spent Pentecost this year in East Berlin. On that day, a German-speaking Swiss pastor and I conducted the service of Holy Communion in a Lutheran parish church behind the Iron Curtain. It fell to me to say before the bread was distributed to people living deep in the East Zone, "Take and eat this bread in the sure and certain faith that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith *with thanksgiving*." In gratitude! How could I, R. M. Brown, comfortable, well-fed, much-too-complacent Westerner, tell East Germans who live in constant danger of life

² Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928) Ch. 1, para. 2, p. 3.

and livelihood because they do such reckless things as coming to communion services, how could I tell them to be grateful? I, of course, as R. M. Brown, could tell them no such thing, but I, as an ordained minister of the church of Jesus Christ, was the appointed means through whom they could be told that because the promises of God are true, and Christ did die for them, they could live in the East Zone—in the East Zone!—with a song of gratitude on their lips. I had no right to say, “I tell you on my authority to be full of gratitude.” But I had every right, as the proclaimer and transmitter to them of the bread of life, to tell them that because it *was* the bread of life, they not only could and should, but must, be grateful. In a very special way I know, because of that celebration of the eucharist, that *charis* is answered by *eucharistia*, that grace is answered by gratitude. But this was not my insight; it was, and is, the very lifeblood of the church.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AS A LISTENING THEOLOGY

SINCE NEITHER I NOR THE CHURCH invented the faith we are called upon to share, a third thing must characterize theology as an act of gratitude. Christian theology is a confessional theology and a church theology but it is also a *listening theology*. Since it is not generated out of its own activity, theology must listen for the word it is to speak. And the theologian earns the right to speak only when he has subjected himself to the discipline of listening. He earns the right to continue speaking only as he continues to listen, and, indeed, listens much more than he speaks. There are at least three directions in which the theologian must listen if he is to be a faithful listener.

The Protestant theologian must listen first and foremost *to the Bible*. I stress this because even in the midst of a contemporary resurgence of Biblical theology we Protestants are also engaged in a kind of culture-jag that could get us into serious theological difficulties if we are not careful. (*Mea culpa*, I give a course on “Theology and Contemporary Literature.”) But if we believe that God has in fact acted decisively in Jesus Christ, then our starting point must surely be the place where we learn most directly that this is so. We always seem ready to admit that Christ is the Omega, the last, and that all sorts of theological and even philosophical trails can lead to him, however deviously they may wind before they get there. But we must also be more courageous about affirming that he is the Alpha as well, the

first as well as the last, and that if theology is to be *Christ-ian* theology, it must not only end with Christ but also start with him. This means, the minute we try to be the least bit specific, that we start with the Bible, since all other materials about Christ are derivative from the Biblical materials. Here is where those in the theological discipline must sit at the feet of those in the Biblical disciplines and be content to learn from them.

In addition to listening to the Bible—a Protestant conviction if there ever was one—the theologian must also listen to *the church*, or, just to make it sound very suspicious, to tradition. The time has come to disavow the notion that *sola Scriptura*, whatever it may have meant to the Reformers, is a totally adequate way of understanding the Protestant enterprise today. We must simply face the fact that we read the Bible in the light of various traditions—Lutheran, Reformed, sectarian, liberal, orthodox, or whatever—and recognize that we can never entirely disassociate ourselves from them. We can no more leap-frog over nineteen centuries to the New Testament, as though the intervening centuries had not occurred and conditioned the way we understand the Biblical materials, than we can be in two places at once. We do *not* start from scratch in every theological generation. We start as recipients of all that has come before, and we must examine *critically* all that has come before. Our forefathers could be wrong and frequently were. Sometimes they were brilliantly wrong, sometimes obstinately so—as useful a distinction as any, I suppose, between heretics and schismatics. But before we dismiss them as wrong we must listen to them gratefully, for at many points they were right. Before we dismiss them as wrong we must appropriate from them what was right. The burden of proof is not first of all upon the Christian heritage to prove itself to me, the burden of proof is first of all upon me when I reject some part of the Christian heritage that has consistently commended itself to others. This is merely an elaborate way of saying that the corporate convictions of the communion of saints over 2000 years are probably a little more mature than the individual convictions of this particular “saint” after forty years of sporadic reflection.

This sort of assertion may sound like a dead give-away to authoritarianism or Roman Catholicism. It seems to me on the contrary to be responsible Protestantism, since the corporate convictions of the communion of saints must always stand under the scrutiny and judgment of Scripture. That is why we listen first to Scripture and only second to the church. But it is

also why we listen not only to Scripture but also to the church, and why we never listen only to the church. Here, therefore, is where those in the theological discipline must sit at the feet of those in the historical disciplines and be content to learn from them.

(I must make a brief but important digression here. To listen to the church necessarily means listening to certain voices within the church. But I want to disavow the notion that to listen to the church means being an uncritical adherent of a particular tradition or a particular theological school or, worst of all, a particular theologian. I have no intention at Union Seminary of representing any particular theological "school" or parading the line of any particular theologian. I have learned from many people, first and foremost and most enduringly from Reinhold Niebuhr (though he must not be held responsible for anything contained in this lecture), but I have also learned from Karl Barth—however unhappy it may make either of those men to be lumped together in a single sentence. I have learned from Calvin but also from Schleiermacher, from Augustine but also from Bultmann, from Paul Tillich but also from John Bennett. I am not embarrassed if this sounds like eclecticism. It is not. It is part of being what a listening theologian means; that we listen first of all appreciatively and then, and only then, that we listen critically. Nothing is worse than the uncritical Barthian or Niebuhrian or Tillichian. The real sin is to disavow a theologian simply because he says a few things we don't like, or to accept him *in toto* simply because he says a few things we do.)

But in addition to listening to the Bible and the Church, theology must also listen *to the world*. (A lot of pseudo-Barthians are afraid to make this assertion because they fear that it will involve them in "natural theology." They therefore settle for what they assume to be the opposite of natural theology, a phenomenon that I can only describe as unnatural theology. Barth himself, of course, listens to the world all the time and it enriches his thought beyond measure, as an examination of *Church Dogmatics*, III,2, on the doctrine of man, will make clear.) Now to say just how we are to listen to the world would be the subject for another lecture, indeed a whole series of lectures. I would almost settle here for an overlooked passage in Calvin's *Institutes*, in which he says:

Whenever, therefore, we meet with heathen writers, let us learn from the light of truth which is admirably displayed in their works, that the human mind, fallen as it is, and corrupted from

its integrity, is yet invested and adorned by God with excellent talents. If we believe that the Spirit of God is the only fountain of truth, we shall neither reject nor despise the truth itself wherever it shall appear, unless we wish to insult the spirit of God.³

We must listen to the world, then, for at least two reasons. First of all, whatever else we are we are men of the world, and do not cease to be men of the world when we become theologians. If I ever have any minimal success in trying to communicate the gospel to twentieth century man, it will be in part at least because I, too, am a twentieth century man, because I too live with the doubts of my contemporaries, because I too keep being amazed at the incredible character of the Christian claim and have to fight the battle of unbelief within myself just as other men do. But this is not the most important reason why the theologian must listen to the world. The most important reason is simply because the world is God's world. Because he has been pleased to act within it in a life and a death and a resurrection, we must be confident that having set his mark upon it, he may also be acting within it at many other places too. Since we have seen him at work in the world of Jesus Christ, we must be prepared to see him at work in other places in the world that Jesus Christ redeemed. We must listen to the world because it is the world that God loved so much that he sent his only begotten Son into it. Our theology does not separate us from the world. It ties us more closely than ever to it.

And the fact that we must listen to the world means that those in the theological discipline must sit at the feet of those in the practical disciplines and be content to learn from them.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AS A MODEST THEOLOGY

THEOLOGY, THEN, AS AN ACT of gratitude must be a confessional theology, a church theology, a listening theology. Finally, it must be a *modest theology*, a theology always subject to correction. Because it is so overwhelmed by the magnitude of what it has heard, it must be humble in its own report of what it has heard. I am aware that there is nothing more arrogant than a statement in praise of humility. But at the risk of inverted arrogance, I must stress the point. Theology must never claim too much for itself. It is not the real thing. It is only the faintest echo of the real thing. The minute we focus too much attention

³ Calvin, *Institutes* (Philadelphia: Westminster, n.d.) II, ii, xv.

upon theology as such we do a fatal disservice to the gospel. For the theology that is supposed to illuminate the gospel will then obscure it by turning the searchlight away from the gospel and focussing upon itself. Commenting upon all the fuss that has been made about his *Church Dogmatics*, Karl Barth says,

The angels laugh at old Karl. They laugh at him because he tries to grasp the truth about God in a book of Dogmatics. They laugh at the fact that volume follows volume and each is thicker than the previous one. As they laugh, they say to one another, "Look! Here he comes now with his little pushcart full of volumes of the Dogmatics!" And they laugh about the men who write so much about Karl Barth instead of writing about the things he is trying to write about. Truly, the angels laugh.⁴

I am only trying to make the same point in another way when I say that Christian theology must always be *a theology of wonder*. If we are in the slightest degree aware of what grace is, then this not only induces gratitude, but a gratitude full of a deep sense of awe and wonder in the face of the incredible brightness of what God has done for us. In the face of that incredible brightness we can never claim very much for what we say about it, for we will realize the wide gulf that lies between what he has done and what we have said about it. If at all times as men we must say, "I believe, help thou mine unbelief," as theologians we must also say, "I believe, help thou my faulty words."

Thus no Protestant theologian has a right to be too impressed by his own theologizing.⁵ There is something comic, if not downright absurd, about the claim that a human creature can penetrate the veil of holiness surrounding the transcendent God, or describe with accuracy the events that took place when God penetrated that veil himself in the incarnation of his Son.

Rule One for every theologian ought therefore to be, "Don't take yourself too seriously." This is a very different thing from saying, "Don't take your faith seriously." It means that all our attempts to express our faith must include an echo of laughter. In this case it will not merely be the heavenly laughter of Barth's angels, but our own very human laughter as well. It will sometimes be the laughter of self-mockery at the notion that our fleshly words can encompass the Word made flesh. But it can also be

⁴ *Antwort, Karl Barth zum Siebzigsten Geburtstag* (Zollikon-Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag AG, 1956) p. 895.

⁵ In what follows I have slightly adapted material shortly to appear in *The Spirit of Protestantism*, Oxford University Press.

the laughter of delight and pure joy that through the disclosure of his Word in Jesus Christ God has seen fit to allow his creatures the audacity of forming words about him.

Authentic religious language is finally not the language of the classroom or the lecture hall, but the language of liturgy and prayer. Singing one of Luther's hymns is usually a deeper act of gratitude than reading *The Bondage of the Will*. Praying one of Calvin's prayers is usually a deeper act of gratitude than reading his *Letter to Cardinal Sadolet*. And Protestants, when all is said and done, express their gratitude more adequately in their hymns and prayers than in their theologizing. But if theology can help us to be grateful by teaching us to sing and pray, it will not have been in vain.

Some New Directions in Pastoral Theology

Charles R. Stinnette, Jr.

PASTORAL THEOLOGY IS THE THEOLOGICAL DISCIPLINE which is concerned with the caring function of the church. It is practical by virtue of the fact that its locale is the human experience of being and becoming; it is theological so far as this process is viewed in the light of revelation. If one is to take seriously the incarnational mode of revelation, it seems mistaken to regard pastoral theology exclusively either as "functional" or as "theological." It is always and necessarily both. It is theological truth re-authenticated and appropriated in action. Pastoral theology stands at the nexus between means and goals. It speaks to the church from within the church, but like Kierkegaard's fire chief it speaks with the insistent reminder that there is a job to be done, a crisis to be met.

As a discipline Pastoral theology refers not only to that which is taught but also to the process by which the specific means of communicating the faith are evaluated. Like philosophy it must be a critic of abstractions—whether theoretical or practical. At the center of a circle described by theological systems and the pastoral work of the church there exist the basic affirmations of the faith and the sacramental means of grace, which are given and constitutive of the church. Theologies change, and pastoral care must learn new duties to fit new occasions "provided," to use an

Dr. Charles Roy Stinnette, Jr., joined the faculty of the Seminary in 1956 as Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology and Associate Director of the Program in Psychiatry and Religion. In 1959 he was appointed Professor of Pastoral Theology.

expression from the *Book of Common Prayer*, "the substance of the faith be kept entire." Pastoral theology finds its vitality by being firmly rooted in the center of this circle and by remaining in touch with every point on the circumference.

What is new by way of direction in pastoral theology appears to manifest itself in a concerted effort to redefine its role. It will be recalled that Schleiermacher regarded practical theology as "the crown of all theological sciences." Like Kant's practical reason it goes beyond mere theoretical *determination* to the creative task of *making a thing real* in a given moment. It restores the person to wholeness through knowing *and* activity. For Schleiermacher science and piety, knowing and doing, belong together. Christian doctrines, he held, are verbal interpretations of religious consciousness, e.g. the feeling of absolute dependence. But this awareness is not merely psychological (if, indeed, anything can be "merely psychological") nor merely "coexistent with the world," but it is an awareness coexistent with God as the absolute undivided unity.¹ Even so, there is an implicit phenomenism in this view which, when combined with a primary emphasis upon the inductive method, prepared the way for a preoccupation with techniques in the practical field. The result, aggravated by the growing tensions of the ministry in a world of technology and a corresponding proliferation of practical courses, has been to produce a gulf in the theological curriculum which is an embarrassment in almost every seminary.

Autonomous technical knowledge is dangerous in any field of human endeavor. Cut off from its deep rootage in value and meaning, it tends to make activity an end in itself. In parish life it becomes not *practical* (in the sense of vital contact with persons whose integrity includes both who they are and what they do) but *abstract*, herding people in and out of one activity after another with only the vaguest relation to the identifying core of the Church. Indeed, the whole area of technical knowledge where means without ends become man's chief preoccupation is filled with sinister foreboding for man's freedom and integrity. For this reason, although I am in accord with his statement that practical theology is not a separate entity or field, I am surprised to find Paul Tillich describing the discipline as a "technical theory" which "describes," he explains, "the adequate means for a given end."² At a time when even psychotherapists are becoming restive with the apotheosis of technique and a "means dominated science"³ it seems inadvisable to encourage the development of a "technical theory" in pastoral care which will tend to widen the gap between means and ends. As a discipline, practical theology must bear in

mind the dictum: "The style is the man himself." Its methodology is implicit in its goal and its goal is explicit in its means. Both must be held in close proximity—and in creative tension.

Most contemporary efforts to redefine the role of pastoral theology begin by insisting that it must be an expression of the ministry (*diakonia*) which is itself rooted in the identity and mission of the Church. Some describe the discipline as "applied dogmatics" or "applied theology." Others like Reuel Howe describe its function as one of building "bridges between the Gospel and the meanings that men bring to it out of their human situation."⁴ Here the content of pastoral theology is the content of the dialogue between the perplexities of persons and the truth of the Gospel. Another view is expressed by Seward Hiltner, who proposes that ". . . pastoral theology is an operation-centered or function-centered branch of theology rather than . . . a logic-centered branch. . . ." As a further development of this assumption, Professor Hiltner proceeds to an examination of shepherding as "a perspective in the sense that it is one point of view from which all activities of church and clergyman are examined."⁵ He makes it clear that there are other perspectives from which these activities may be examined, and he suggests that two other cognate perspectives are those of communicating and organizing. Hiltner holds that pastoral theology is a discrete and formal branch of theology in the same sense as the biblical, doctrinal, or historical fields.

Each of these efforts to define pastoral theology is a relevant and timely reminder of the fundamental task of the ministry. They provide useful perspectives which the pastor himself may employ in judging his role as well as his self-image in relation to his vocation. But what they yield appears to be a discipline, a dynamic for self-understanding rather than a discrete theory or a formal branch of theology. Apart from equipping the pastor with critical disciplines and examined experience in his roles, I question the wisdom of attempting to construct a separate pastoral theology.

Whether it is the "bridge" concept or "theology applied" or "function-centered," an inherent danger in defining a pastoral theology seems to be the tendency to abstraction. It is disposed to seek validation prior to, apart from, or metaphorically rather than in the living appropriation of revelation itself. While it may be relevant at one time, its methodology involves a necessary removal from the action and the event itself. Nothing is more profane than the importation of shining transfigurations of yesteryear as if they were live options today. If they belong to this moment, they must be authenticated and personally appropriated in this moment. Otherwise they make Christianity into a borrowed

religion! Surely there is reason for caution in view of the ambiguity of a "practical" theology which has too often been given to arid abstractions and ossified rubrics—to what Kierkegaard decried as cribbing the answers to the problems of the age from the back of the book!

THEOLOGY AS ACTION

PASTORAL THEOLOGY IS CENTRALLY CONCERNED with the act of communication. If we have learned anything from the recovery of biblical theology it is as Brunner has put it that "genuine communication . . . remains bound to the act of communication."⁶ In biblical religion the Word of God and the event which conveys the action of God belong together. Professor Muilenburg in commenting on the recurring sentence, "I will be with you," writes,

The presence of Yahweh is characteristically expressed in action. It is made known by his action: by his speaking and hearing, by his calling and proclaiming, by his coming and going and sending.⁷

Surely the corresponding mode of Word and Event is supremely disclosed in the Word made flesh of the New Testament. Here it is revealed not only that God's presence is expressed in Word and Event but that in Christ He *is* what He does—even to the extent as St. Paul puts it,

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.⁸

Here, it seems to me, we encounter the primary modality which helps us to understand the work of the church and its ministry. The church as the Body of Christ reveals Christ by what it does. The fundamental task of the ministry is to be *servus servorum dei* ("servants of the servants of God"). It is to be as Christ to one's neighbor. If, like the pilgrim in John Bunyan's classic we keep this light ever before us, we shall be "operation" centered only to the extent that we are being transfigured as we mirror Christ in all we do. And pastoral care becomes not merely "dogmatics applied" but theological truth made alive in the living moment.

Pastoral theology is centered in the action of persons who are responding to the Act of God in Christ. It is person centered in that the person is in every moment a living unity—an integer—of being and doing, of meaning and function. As a discipline

pastoral care cannot remain true to its fundamental identity and at the same time reduce the person (in the manner of technical reason) to an abstract category. The whole point of Christian freedom is that the person acts in response to person—ultimately in response to God in the depths of the other person. His action, therefore, is an event which is to be understood not in terms of some impersonal force—*libido*, *elan vital* or the *will to power*—but as intention, choice, freedom. The unity of the acting person as understood in biblical terms appears to be confirmed in modern developments in the field of knowledge.

BEING, KNOWING AND REVELATION

REVELATION AS THE APPROPRIATION OF TRUTH in action has emerged as one of the major motifs and insights of biblical theology. A corresponding development in human knowing may be discerned in the growing conviction that there can be no separation from truth of what *is* from truth as *known*. "We can not make sense of a changing universe, writes Leonard Hodgson, "by expecting it to stand still to be looked at . . ." ⁹ Its meaning is first a meaning for action in which the traditional dichotomy between the knower-as-subject and the known-as-object is overcome.

The bifurcation of being and knowing is usually attributed to Descartes (*Cogito ergo sum*) but it is even more deeply rooted in the scientific tradition of Western philosophy. In a sense it could be said that this splitting off of knowing from being is the polemical result of a reaction against the excessive rationalism of the middle ages. Francis Bacon, like Goethe, scorned knowledge that does not lead to action. In the theatre of life he observed it is only for gods and angels to be spectators. Bacon also regarded knowledge as power (a source of many of our problems with technology!); but for him it is power rather than mere rhetoric. "It is not an opinion to be held," he wrote, "but a work to be done."¹⁰ The revolt against rationalism and the steady reduction of reason to empirical knowledge proceeded rapidly in philosophy until it reached the point of no return in Descartes and John Locke. Its methodology based on a necessary reduction is the foundation of Western technology. It has built an impressive monument. Yet for all its benefits it has left man's being—his integrity—suspended between two words, i.e. the one an extracted spirit, the other a physical body, "an angel driving a machine," as Maritain has described Descartes' view.

The recovery of dynamic knowledge where the person is more than the recipient of actions but also their source, is foreshadowed

in Leibnitz and in Kant. The latter was deeply influenced by the former's reply to John Locke. In response to the assertion that "there is nothing in the intellect except what was first in the senses," Leibnitz had added, "nothing, except the intellect itself."¹¹ It was still a long way to the contemporary excavations which are getting beneath the subject-object dichotomy, but this insistence upon *The Self As Agent* (to use John Macmurry's title) made possible another day in court for man's freedom.

One of the most significant factors in the recovery of the unity of being and knowing has been the methodological development of depth psychology—and particularly the refinement of psychotherapy. Here man has received concrete and inescapable feedback upon the disastrous consequences of trying to escape responsibility for his wholeness. Even a wish, Freud said, is a course of action. Nature, denied in intellectualism, strikes back in ambivalence and somatic hurts, and *being*, reduced to lust, whether of sex or of power or of sheer vitality, is as Shakespeare wrote,

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame . . .
Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight . . .

The depth of knowledge is moving us inexorably toward an acceptance of responsibility for ourselves. It is providing clinical validation for the reciprocal relation of guilt and freedom. It is reminding us that we cannot know anything by manipulation but only if we are willing to love and cooperate with it. Even more we are learning that we must believe in order to know and that the knower participates in and is shaped by all that he knows.

Knowledge in this deep sense is surely akin to revelation in mode if not in content. Knowing in the immediacy of self-knowledge is the shock of recognition—the profound discovery of saint Paul, "Then shall I know even as I also am known." If the real content of revelation is not "something" but God himself,¹² is not this shock of recognition an occasion for revelation? "O God who art ever the same," Saint Augustine prayed, "let me know myself, let me know Thee."¹³

Revelation is to be caught up again in the revealing event of God. It is to be shaken by its judgment, grasped by its unexpected holiness and surprised by its grace. It happens in the most unexpected common-place experiences—a Jacob in a desert night, an errant woman at a well in Samaria, or in someone's death. In all these it is to be engaged again in finding oneself as found in Him who inhabits all our occasions with both judgement and joy.

IMPLICATIONS FOR METHODOLOGY

IN PASTORIAL CARE WE ARE SAVED by those common-place revelations. A woman, grief stricken and bitter over the death of her unbaptised child, is withdrawn, tight-lipped and unwilling to tell her sorrow. As Pastor you wait with her—waiting also for questions. “Why, why, why!” Answers are of little help; waiting, being there, hearing are of more help. This forsakenness becomes unforsakenness not by anything that we do but in what God does through us.

Is this a methodology—a technique? It is in the sense that Eckhart must have had in mind when he said, “I see God with the same eye that God sees me.”¹⁴ God shapes our methodology by His own mode of Incarnation. Pastoral counseling has at least taught us that human needs cannot be met solely by verbal means but by a kind of companionship which knows not only *how* but also *when* to speak or not to speak. Our wisdom, as the poets tell us, must have a “loom, to weave it into a whole fabric.” The loom here is our participation in the concerns of our people. Having seen God with the same eye that God sees us, we communicate with others in and through participation. Like Robert Frost’s definition of a poem, Christian action is always a “risk” and a “venture in substantiation.” Perhaps this is what Kierkegaard called the “indirect method.” Inwardness, he insisted, cannot be directly communicated for this would be in fact externality. Nor is inwardness simply reproduction. This is echo. Inwardness is *resonance* in which “the thing said remains absent, like Mary when she *hid* the words in her heart.”¹⁵ Caring in the deepest sense remains hidden in our hearts. But if it is there because we know first that we are the recipients of care, it is communicated by resonance in the hearts of others.

This inwardness and resonance, then, is the primal mode of communicating pastoral care. Like language, it is meaning and gesture before it is words. But we must not give the impression that pastoral care is a passive mode of communication. The pastor is a priest as well as a shepherd. He is a prophet as well as a messenger. He is the representative man who must seek out, hear and absolve guilt and celebrate the mystery of the Eucharist as the renewing event of Christ is recalled in action. Our actions are rooted in God’s action and our incompletions are finished by his effectual grace. In the classic Reformation phrase: “to know Christ is to know his benefits.” Revelation is even more than summons and sending. It is the equipping of the saints for ministry and for freedom.

"The preacher, in sermon and sacrament," writes Daniel Jenkins, "is a messenger of the resurrection and not as one who retails a rumor he has overheard but as one who has received of the Lord that which he delivers unto us and who demonstrates, re-enacts, its inescapable truth and power in his proclamation of it before us. Something *happens* in church proclamation. It is not merely a meditation or a commentary upon the sacred history, but a continuation of the sacred history. . . ." ¹⁶

SUMMARY

AS A DISCIPLINE then, and not a system, pastoral theology is action centered—action centered in persons, action centered in methodology and action centered in aim and goal.

Pastoral care is more than counseling. We are ministers of the Word, which pierces the heart and wounds the conscience in addition to heralding the shepherd's comfort. Neither is meaningful in a Christian sense apart from the other. If Kierkegaard's "indirect method" is a means of establishing communion it is brought to fruit only to the extent that it moves one to the direct method, i.e. to witness. An imperative need in pastoral theology is the rediscovery of prophetic concern and witness in every area of the church's life. This is a *needed new direction* in pastoral theology. Somehow the notion has become current that pastors cannot be prophets—an idea, perhaps, uncritically assimilated from a "care-taker culture" where "welfare" rather than aims and purposes is a controlling motivation.

The Christian religion is not primarily concerned with comfort but with witnessing—with showing forth the power of God and the love of God in action and in deeds. Let us not be deterred by proscriptions against perfectionistic ethics. Proximate goals in the light of what is possible *now* must always be laid upon our conscience. Faith is always the affirmation and the act which binds eternal truth to what is possible in this moment. To know Christ is to know that there is always a cross in the shadows. That cross is planted in the heart of our churches and there the embarrassed, the hurt, the lost and the excluded are crucified anew.

I am concerned that a "remnant theory" of pastoral theology may too easily forget that the basic task of the church is mission—a spending of itself in reaching out beyond itself. Someone has said that the greatness of Job was his impatience! In Camus' great novel, *The Plague*, it is the doctor, not the priest, who is impatient with the "explanations" of inevitable suffering. This is what happens, it seems to me, when we become more concerned with

preserving an institution than in fulfilling our ministry; and in fulfilling our ministry we are very likely to be called to the kind of *dying to ourselves* involved in hearing a judgment spoken upon ourselves and the church. Neither as a church nor as a person shall we know the strange mixture of grace and judgment until, as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, we cease judging ourselves and permit ourselves to be judged from beyond ourselves.

I close with a parable from Martin Buber. Once there was a man who wished to speak with God and not with man. Inspired by God he went out into the great wastes seeking to find God. When he came to the gates of God's dwelling he knocked. "From within came the cry: 'What do you want here?' 'I have proclaimed your praise in the ears of mortals, but they were deaf to me. So I come to you that you may hear me and reply.' 'Turn back,' came the cry from within. 'Here is no ear for you. I have sunk my hearing in the deafness of mortals.'"¹⁷

¹ Robert Clyde Johnson, *Authority in Protestant Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959) p. 66.

² Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951) Vol. I, pp. 32-33. Professor Tillich justifies his description of practical theology as "the technical theory" in view of the fact that "the given end of practical theology is the life of the church. . . . It looks at them (i.e. the historical and systematic parts of theology) from the technical point of view, asking how to act most effectively." But later, in the same volume he warns that "technical reason, however, refined in logical and methodological respects, dehumanizes man if it is separated from ontological reason."

³ Karl Menninger, *Theory of Psychoanalytic Technique* (New York: Basic Books, 1958) p. 10. He writes: "In my opinion, the most important thing in the acquisition of psychoanalytic technique is the development of a *certain attitude or frame of mind*. . . ." Theodore Reik has written, "There are no techniques—only persons." Erich Fromm, Rollo May, Carl Rogers, and Clark Moustakas, in addition to many others, have expressed similar views with regard to the dangers of "means centeredness" in human relations training.

⁴ Reuel Howe, "The Crucial and Correlative Role of Pastoral Theology," *Pastoral Psychology*, Vol. II, Number 101 (February, 1960).

⁵ Seward Hiltner, "The Defining of Pastoral Theology," *Religion in Life*, Vol. XXVIII, Number 4 (Autumn, 1959). See also his *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (New York: Abingdon, 1958) and *The Christian Shepherd* (New York: Abingdon, 1959).

⁶ Emil Brunner, *Revelation and Reason* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1946) p. 370.

⁷ James Muilenburg, *The Ethical Implications of the Covenant* (unpublished) p. 5.

⁸ II Corinthians 5:21. Luther in commenting on this verse says that the extent of Christ being *made to be sin* is that he becomes the adulterer David, the denier Peter, and the thief on the cross in order that they and we may become the righteousness of God. See *Commentary on Galations*, ed. by Phillip Watson (New York: Fleming Revell, 1953) p. 270.

⁹ Leonard Hodgson, *For Faith and Freedom* (New York: Scribners, 1956) Vol. I, p. 181.

¹⁰ Francis Bacon, "Preface to Magna Instauration," *Novum Organum*.

¹¹ Wilhelm Windelband, *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1893) p. 464.

¹² E. Brunner, p. 25.

¹³ *Augustine Synthesis*, ed. by Pryzwara, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1936) II, p. 1.

¹⁴ Meister Eckhart, "Distinctions are lost in God," Sermon #25, *Meister Eckhart*, trans. by Blakney (New York: Harper, 1941) p. 206.

¹⁵ Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1944) p. 232.

¹⁶ Daniel Jenkins, *The Gift of Ministry* (London: Faber & Faber, 1947) p. 81.

¹⁷ Martin Buber, "Between Man and Man," *Four Existentialist Theologians*, ed. by Will Herberg (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1958) p. 168.

What is Truth?

George A. Buttrick

MR. PRESIDENT, FELLOW MEMBERS OF THE FACULTY, FELLOW STUDENTS AND FRIENDS IN UNION: My colleagues today well deserve your tribute, but how little I deserve it! The sense of undeservingness in me is matched, if it could be matched, by heartfelt gratitude. I do thank you for this signal honor, or I would if I could find words large enough in gratitude. You would need to take the journey I have latterly taken to understand the joy of being reunited with this community of faith. That is, you would need to go into great erudition, brilliant skepticism and noble stoicism, and there try to contend for the faith. Then returning, you would understand the joy in being once more in this home, which also has great learning, deepening into knowledge, as that into wisdom,

The Harry Emerson Fosdick Visiting Professorship was established in 1953 by a gift from Mr. John D. Rockefeller III in recognition of Dr. Fosdick's seventy-fifth birthday "to honor Dr. Fosdick for his distinguished contributions as teacher, preacher, writer and counselor, and to strengthen the training of the present and oncoming leaders of the Christian church so as to enable them in their generation, as Dr. Fosdick has in this generation, to interpret the abiding truths and experiences of Christian faith in terms relevant and compelling to contemporary life." Its incumbents have been Dr. George Fielden MacLeod, 1954-55; Dr. Henrick Kraemer, 1956; The Very Rev. John Baillie, 1956-57; The Right Rev. Rajah Bhushanam Manikam, 1957-58; The Rev. Daniel T. Niles, 1959 and The Right Rev. Johannes E. R. Lilje, 1960. Dr. George A. Buttrick, the current Harry Emerson Fosdick Visiting Professor, was formerly minister of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City. From 1954 to 1960 he was Preacher to the University, Harvard University, and Plummer Professor of Christian Morals.

and that resting on mutual trust and that rooted in trust in God—and that because God has first trusted us in Jesus Christ. It is joy to be here. I am not yet used to the title of “Professor,” despite six years at Harvard: I had four titles there, none of which meant very much in my case. One of them was a priggish-sounding title: “The Plummer Professor of Christian Morals.” I privately petitioned the University to change it to “The Moral Professor of Christian Plumbing,” but without avail. You know, as I know, that I am not a professor, but just a parish minister. The penalty for your goodness to me is that you must listen to me today. The penalty for me is that I must pretend to a learning that I do not claim. The comfort for me is that if I provide you a little sequence of notes, which is all I can give, you are Mozarts and can promptly compose the true and proper music. So a few notes—simple notes—on the nature of Truth.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

PILATE ASKED: “WHAT IS TRUTH?” and probably did not care. He was a third-rate Roman politician who had been granted a third-rate political appointment, the governorship of a fractious little land on the turbulent edge of Empire. His concern, because his job depended on it, was lest there should be insurrection. So the one question to Jesus was: “Are you a king?” “Are you a pretender to the throne?” When Jesus said in effect, “Yes, but my Kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight. For this cause, came I into the world . . . to bear witness to truth”; Pilate at once said, probably with mingled relief and scorn, “What is truth?” Swords and cash centrally matter, but not truth. Truth is the concern of fools. I need not say, certainly not in this presence, that the conversations in the Fourth Gospel are deliberately structured, even stylized, each of them revolving around a central theme: in this instance, truth. That is, you and I are also intended to ask Pilate’s question, and his conversation with Jesus is intended to provide an answer. ✓

THE WHOLE TRUTH

NOW THE MAN IN THE STREET, if he were asked about the nature of truth, would probably think at once of the police court. A witness stands there with a Bible in his hand, and swears to tell “the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.” In this instance truth is the strict correspondence of our subjective word with the objective event. Even Mr. Khrushchev said lately

that he would swear "on the Bible," (though why he was interested in the Bible, nobody knows) that what he said about Russia was "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." But it is notoriously a fact that if four men undertake to describe an automobile accident, there will be four different accounts, not because any one of the four is intent to falsify, but because we cannot trust eyes, or ears, or memory. So how do we propose to tell the whole truth? If we were to tell the whole truth about any fellow human being, we would have to unravel his life, his motives, his subconscious mind, back to the day of his birth. Maybe we would have to unravel all history. How can we tell the whole truth? As for nothing but the truth—that is to say, as to our telling the truth without any stain or tincture of egocentricity—this, I would think, is beyond even the angels in heaven. But we must try. Yet we must fail. So this description of truth falls short.

In the Arthur Miller play, "The Death of a Salesman," the hero is hardly heroic, for he tries to win life's battle on "a smile and a shoestring." Thus the tragedy is not great tragedy because the play's people are little people. But Willy Loman's wife rightly says of him: "I don't say he's a great man. Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be paid to such a person."¹ Everybody "is a human being." How do you tell truth about a human being? He asks, "Who am I?", enquiring thus about the whole mystery of origins; and, "Why am I," enquiring thus about the whole mystery of destiny. A human being "looks before and after, and pines for what is not."² A human being goes through the world, but sees himself going through the world. How can we tell the truth about a human being?

FRAGMENTS OF TRUTH

NOW ANOTHER DESCRIPTION—not definition, of truth, very popular in our time: we might label it "university truth." This description, I think, would not apply fully to philosophy. The philosopher might sound a different note, though philosophy nowadays tends toward empiricism. Nor would it, I think, apply to art,

¹ Arthur Miller, "The Death of a Salesman" (New York: The Viking Press), p. 56.

² Percy B. Shelley, "To a Skylark."

though modern art has become almost subjective, a starkly realistic portrayal, perhaps, of the tragedy and meaninglessness in which modern man finds himself. But over whole sections of academic life, I think, this description would apply.

The slogan is: "We must get at the facts." Truth is a distant land of total fact toward which the mind must press, and which perhaps one day it may reach, and which can then be organized into self-harmonious knowledge. To me, and I am sure to you, this is a moving description of truth. All of us would agree that a quest of this kind must not be thwarted. It is not the part of Christian faith to be anti-intellectual, to erect barriers against the scrutiny which the natural sciences must make of man's life in the natural order. It is rather the duty of the Christian fellowship to defend the rightful autonomy of each academic discipline. If we cannot know about the moon unless we go by rocket to the moon, that journey also should be encouraged. Man first dared the sea, then he dared the air, and now he proposes to dare the further sky. There is something pathetic in the proposal: how man is to establish a beachhead on the sun, for example, with its flames leaping five hundred thousand miles into space, is not yet clear. This inching about in a dusty little corner of the cosmos, in a tiny little sputnik home where all earth's conditions are simulated is pathetic; but there is also about it something grandly noble. The mind of man must not be made frustrate.

But there are questions that must be asked about this description of truth. This: Can we be sure of any facts? Can we be sure of the very words of Christ? They were spoken in Aramaic. If we had the words, could we reproduce the human complex in which they were spoken? Charles Kingsley resigned his chair in history because he said we cannot be sure of any facts. The next question concerns death. I knew professors here, whom most of you did not know. Their erudition is partly preserved for us in books, but it is not fully preserved. The shadow of sorrow rests heavily on the academic quest. The professor dies, and his place is taken by a babe one day old who must now embark on much the same arduous journey. Another question: Is not the mind of man finite? Can we ever claim more than our own little angle of vision? And shall we not in any event constantly drop a stitch, because the mind is finite? How then can the mind hope to attain infinite truth? Another question: Are not our facts already so multitudinous that they have fractured the whole academic community into schools and departments? In Harvard University the biochemistry department cannot easily understand the rapture of the poet, much less the language of the psychiatric department. Isn't it a

strange thing that our quest for facts should have left us with estrangement, with a chasmed community? Sometimes this atomization is a grim reminder of Babel with its confusion of tongues. When I was at Harvard, there were twenty erudite lectures every week; not only could I not have understood them had I been able to attend, but in many instances I could hardly pronounce the titles. So what of the multitudes of our facts?

Still another question: Is it true to say that we add fact to fact? The answer is "No, it is not true." We have a thousand facts, and then we have an extra fact, but the result is not one thousand and one facts, for the one fact obliges us to overhaul all the prior thousand facts. If the proverb in our Bible, "Cast thy bread upon the waters and it shall return to thee after many days,"—a proverb which has little meaning as it stands: a loaf floating downstream would probably not return, except perhaps on a tidal river, and if it returned it would be a soggy mess—if this proverb really comes from an Egyptian source, "Cast thy seed on the flooded Nile, and it shall come to harvest after many days," this is a new fact. But it promptly obliges us to ask how much Egyptian influence there is in the Old Testament. We must overhaul our prior knowledge. Or if the Gospel of Matthew was written in 95 to 97 A.D., not in Jerusalem but perchance in Syria, and if this is better knowledge than what I was taught in Seminary (that it was written in Jerusalem in 75 A.D.), then this is a new fact. But the questions then bristle. How far is the Gospel of Matthew colored by the church of two generations after Jesus? We do not add fact to fact. We are much like a man climbing a sand mountain who takes one giant step forward and then slips back in the sand, maybe nine-tenths of the way, maybe more than the stride. Who knows?

There are profounder questions. If we had all the facts in the world, would we be satisfied? No fact could give us any answer to the bleak enigma of suffering. No fact would satisfy us as to the blank misgiving of death. No fact could speak peace to a troubled conscience, we being aware that we have treated fellow human beings as objects rather than subjects. Surely the answers to these questions are part of the truth. It was reassuring for a preacher—pretending to be a professor—in Harvard to note that brilliant scientists would play with the quanta in the morning, and go home in the afternoon to play with their children. The second play seemed to me more important than the first. It also was the truth. That is to say, truth must be an answer to the whole longing which is the life of man.

MYSTERY AS TRUTH

NOW WE COME TO THE BIBLICAL DEFINITION. The word attributed to Pilate is *aletheia*, isn't it? The word is used also by Jesus. It is a compound word like a-theist. The "a" is *not*; not a theist. It is fascinating to note that an atheist cannot define himself except against that which he denies. So *aletheia* means "not a veil." Truth is the unveiling of the Mystery in which our little life is held. The "shaken mists a space unsettle"? and we glimpse "the hid battlements of Eternity."³ This definition seems to me to be true to the truth. This movingly echoes my own broken life and experience. Now we notice certain features. This definition of truth does not falsify police-court definition. It gathers it home. We are to tell about our fellow human beings what strikes through them into our life. Notice that it gathers into its proper home also the splendid scientific definition of truth. The scientist speaks about his discovery, but he could not make it if the thing were not there to be discovered. That is to say, every discovery in its initial instance is a gift, an outright gift, an unveiling of the Mystery. We begin to understand why the scientist is sure that he must never falsify his findings, why in the case of yellow fever he must be inoculated with the germs and bring them back to America that the cure may be found. Now we understand why a Voice always strikes from the findings of science, as in the case of nuclear fission. In this case the Voice says, "Look, thou man, use it properly, or you will perish." We did not invite the Voice. It is a break-through. It is *aletheia*. This definition in its massiveness, in its mystery, provides a home for other definitions.

Now notice that truth is axiomatic. That is to say, truth is never the logical sequence: it is in the axiom without which there would be no logical sequence. It is not in the argument. It is like light or music.

Your music's power your music must disclose,
For what light is, 'tis only light that shows.⁴

We can *argue* about truth only on second thought, and then we know that we are tinkering with a primal verity. Shall we take the instance of the two doctors⁵ who left Dartmouth College Hospital

³ Francis Thompson, "The Hound of Heaven."

⁴ Quoted by W. Macneile Dixon, "The Human Situation," (Longmans, Green and Company, 1937) p. 276.

⁵ Dr. Ralph F. Miller and Dr. Robert W. Quinn, lost on February 21, 1959, messages found May 7, 1959. See *Boston Daily Globe* and *New York Times* for May 7 and 8, 1959.

in Hanover, and flew over the mountains on an errand of mercy? They fulfilled the errand, but on the return journey their plane crashed and could not be seen against the mountain snow. When they were found the next spring, it was discovered that they had spent their last days, in increasing cold and increasing hunger, writing down the symptoms of people who die of cold and hunger, so that other doctors might the better care for people in cold and hunger. There is no argument, is there? This is life. This is axiomatic. This *is!*

One other feature of Bible truth is this: it speaks to the whole man. How could we have been so perverse as to think that truth is only something to be excogitated? That debate is the subtle temptation that rests on any academic community just because it *is* academic, which rests even on a seminary. Any truth is challenge. Paul Tillich's word is ecstasy. He does not use words as other people use them. One may need a glossary. Ecstasy to him does not mean the surcharge of emotion. It means what the Greek word means: *ecstasis*, to stand outside. Every unveiling of the mystery obliges us to stand outside ourselves, to exercise our strange power to view our own life, to speak to ourselves and say, "What do you propose to *do* about it?" Therefore the New Testament talks not about excogitating the truth, not about debating it, not about fashioning it into philosophies. It talks about *doing* it. It is something posed over against man's total life.

THE TRUTH OF JESUS CHRIST

IT REMAINS FOR US TO ASK about Jesus Christ. "For this cause came I into the world, for this end was I born, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who hears my voice"—who obeys it—"is of the truth." Where does Christ stand in the definition of truth? As Pilate judges Jesus, we know quite well that Jesus is judging Pilate. We know by whatever theology—if I may venture on theology, I who am no theologian: the Christological problem is not now one of nature, which is static, as life never is, but rather one of history—that Jesus stands outside our life, and yet shares it. He is with us, yet from beyond us. He is beyond us because he refuses to be included in any little circle of our pride, yet is well content to share our shame and pain. He asks no name, no reputation, no cash, no home at last, no army that he might lead, no law that he might frame, no monument that men might build, no righteousness because human righteousness so easily becomes self-righteousness. "Why do you call me good? None is good save God." Asking nothing, he consented to die upon the cross. He

stands beyond us, yet with us. Had he been included in any little circle of our pride, he could not have been our Savior, for he would have been involved in our strife. "My Kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight." Whatever happens in human affairs, the little circles of pride begin to clash. But Jesus refused to be caught within any one of them. Yet he shared the shame of all of them. So he is *aletheia*.

The other comment is this. Do we find in Christ the deeper truth—the answer to our guilty blundering? "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." They knew, and yet did not know. They did not know that they were caught in the entail of history. They did not know that they were parties to a vast struggle between Christ and satanic forces. They knew, and they did not know. "Father forgive them." Is there any word here about pain and suffering? Here a man died who deserved the best, and was killed by the worst. Calvary should be a place of obscene banners, but is not such a place. It is another place by the sheer onset of God. Bright men and women today read the existentialists. Why not? Surely Albert Camus is one of the nobler voices of our times. Perhaps existentialism after the manner of Albert Camus may provide a better opening for a revival of faith than our conventionalized churchianity. So at Harvard they staged existentialist plays, such as the Samuel Beckett play, *Waiting for Godot*.⁶ Waiting for God. It is not a godless play, but perceptive. Do we not all wait for God? Are we not all caught in the tension that exists between a felt Presence, and what would seem to be His frequent and utter absence? Is not the cry of the Church Universal a waiting?—"Even so, Lord Jesus come." It is not a godless play, but God did not arrive. From time to time, messengers would come saying God was about to arrive, and the one piece of property at the back of the stage, a fruit tree, shaped uncommonly like a cross, would break into blossom. But God did not arrive. Still they waited and waited. Suddenly there is a sequence without antecedent and without any consequent. It falls like a meteor on an alien field. One wonders why the playwright made this sudden change. The rain is falling, and one man is so footsore from waiting that he has taken off his shoes. They catch the rain. Perhaps the men had better make for shelter, though still they must wait. One man moves off, forgetting his shoes. So this conversation:

Vladimir: "But you can't go barefoot."

Estragon: "Christ did."

⁶ Samuel Beckett, "Waiting For Godot" (New York: Grove Press, 1954).

Vladimir: "Christ! What has Christ got to do with it? You're not going to compare yourself to Christ!"

Estragon: "All my life I've compared myself to him."

Vladimir: "But where he lived it was warm, it was dry."

Estragon: "Yes. And the crucified quick."⁷

They need not have waited. God had arrived.

CONCLUSION

IN HARVARD THE FINE MOTTO IS: "Veritas,"—"Truth." There are many men of faith in Harvard, but others translate "Veritas," "Truth," into a factualism. The Latin "Veritas" is the parallel of the Greek "*aletheia*"—"the unveiling of the Mystery." But occasionally in Harvard, in odd corners of certain old buildings, the original motto is there on the Harvard shield: "Veritas: Pro Christo et Ecclesia"—"Truth for and through Christ and his Church." Maybe the earlier motto was nearer to the mark! How can truth be anything less than God Himself? How can any creature know God except as God may be pleased to show Himself: *aletheia*—"the unveiling of the mystery"?

ALMIGHTY GOD, *in whose eternity our lives are held, whose will is our peace, who came among us in great humility in Jesus Christ our Lord, make us wise to wait for Thee, and to watch for Thee, and to wish for Thee, and to be found of Thee, and gladly to obey Thee, until the breaking of the day; in Christ's name.*
AMEN

⁷ *Ibid*, Act 1, p. 34.

Jerusalem and Athens Re-visited

James A. Martin, Jr.

WHAT IS THE RELATION of Christian faith to higher learning? Around the turn of the third century of the Christian era Tertullian phrased the question this way: "What is there in common between Athens and Jerusalem? What between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians?" Tertullian's way of putting the question has troubled Christians concerned with the role of their faith in higher education from his day to ours. Many answers have been given: some simple, some complex; some crude, some sophisticated. Many Christians have felt that none of the answers has been fully satisfactory. But a great many also feel that the question has never been more pertinent than in the middle of the twentieth century. It seems appropriate, therefore, to revisit Jerusalem and Athens today; to raise anew the question of Tertullian, and to see if we can discern any aspects of the Christian faith and of modern culture which must be taken into account in any attempt to arrive at a tenable answer.

CHURCH AND ACADEMY IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

AT THE OUTSET LET US NOTE that it may be that none of the answers to the question which have been offered has seemed fully satisfactory because none *can* be "fully satisfactory," in the sense of comprehensively including all the factors that must be considered in an answer, or in the sense of offering a neat, once-for-all formula. The relation of a living faith to a living culture

The Danforth Professorship of Religion in Higher Education was established in 1960 by a gift from the Danforth Foundation. Dr. James Alfred Martin, Jr., who is the first incumbent of this chair, comes to the Seminary from Amherst College where he has been Professor of Religion since 1950.

may always—and appropriately—elude neat formulation. Tertullian, of course, seems to imply a neat answer in his phrasing of the question. He seems to assume that the inhabitants of Athens and the Academy are automatically heretics, while those who dwell in Zion are Christians. The Academy, he suggests, seeks salvation through philosophy; the Church has heard the good news of salvation through revelation. Philosophy, he says, is “the subject-matter of this world’s wisdom, that rash interpreter of the divine nature and order. In fact, heresies are themselves prompted by philosophy. It is the source of ‘aeons’, and I know not what infinite ‘forms’, and the ‘trinity of man’ in the system of Valentinus. He was a Platonist. It is the source of Marcion’s ‘better God’, ‘better’, because of his tranquillity. Marcion came from the Stoics. Again, when it is said that the soul perishes, that opinion is taken from the Epicureans . . . Heretics and philosophers handle the same subject-matter; both treat of the same topics—Whence came evil? And why? Whence came man? And how? And a question lately posed by Valentinus—Whence came God? . . . Wretched Aristotle! who taught them dialectic, that art of building up and demolishing, so protean in statement, so far-fetched in conjecture, so unyielding in controversy, so productive of disputes; self-stultifying, since it is ever handling questions but never settling anything . . . Away with all projects for a ‘Stoic’, a ‘Platonic’, or a ‘dialectic’, Christianity! After Jesus Christ we desire no subtle theories, no acute enquiries after the gospel.”¹

Now we note at once Tertullian’s employment of the principle of guilt by association: some heretics derive their heresy from philosophies, hence the philosophical enterprise is heretical; philosophers and heretics “handle the same subject-matter”—*Q.E.D.* Open-ended inquiry that “is every handling questions but never settling anything” is called “self-stultifying.” Where the gospel has been heard there is no need for “acute enquiries.” There is, of course, an ironical note in all this, because Tertullian himself was more dependent than he knew on certain philosophical ideas in his communication of the gospel. Yet we should also remember that he spoke to a world in which many of the philosophical alternatives he mentions were aggressive and exclusivist faiths; at some point the line *had* to be drawn between Platonism, for instance, and Christianity. But the conviction remains that if one would abolish “*all* projects for a ‘Stoic,’ a ‘Platonic,’ or a ‘dialectic’ Christianity” the result might be the end of all projects for a *relevant* Christianity. Jerusalem cannot speak meaningfully to

¹ Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, viii. See Bessenson, *Documents of Christian Church* (London: Oxford, 1943) p. 7.

Athens, or the Church to the Academy, if the Church does not know the vocabulary of the Academy and is not willing to enter into genuine dialogue, *hearing* and *learning* as well as *proclaiming*. Dr. Niebuhr has often reminded us that nothing is so irrelevant as an answer to an unasked question; we might add that relevant answers to asked questions are themselves intelligible only if they speak the language of and make contact with the world of the questioner—appreciatively and not patronizingly. And we might also ask whether it is the case that the Academy has only questions and no answers; or the Church, only answers and no questions.

Fortunately, the path chosen by the Church more often than not in subsequent centuries followed the way of the Alexandrian school more closely than it followed the way of Tertullian. In Alexandria, Father John Courtney Murray writes, "Origen really came to grips with the problem of the day. Christianity, he knew, was not the Grecian art of being human, or a sentimental touch of universal brotherhood added to a Roman ideal of citizenship; still less was it an ineffable, incommunicable, self-authenticating, individual inner experience of 'salvation' that stood in no intelligible relation to what the Alexandrian Museum was thinking and saying. . . . Christianity of its essence presumed to occupy intellectual ground; and in third-century Alexandria it found the ground to no small extent already occupied. There was the ancient lore of Egypt and the East; there was the revealed wisdom and sacred law of the Jew; above all, there was Greek reason and 'all that the philosophers had said concerning truth.' The problem was not some rude dispossession of these tenants of intellectual territory. The Library of Alexandria was not to be burnt, as Justinian later thought, in a stupidity of zeal. . . . The question, as Clement of Alexandria had already put it, was whether there is 'one river of Truth'; whether the Logos, the Word, Who had come as Christ to be the Light of the world, was not somehow also the light that had beckoned to the soul of Egypt, burst upon the prophets, and illumined the intelligence of Greece. The question was whether Christianity, like Christ, was the Truth in which all truths are ultimately One."²

"This," continues Father Murray, "was the highest responsibility accepted by the School of Alexandria—a responsibility for establishing intellectual order, for constituting the unity of truth. . . . The tools for the achievement of this work of order and unity were philosophical, as the word itself was a work of intelligence.

² John Courtney Murray, *The Christian Idea of Education*, ed. by Edmund Fuller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957) p. 157.

Nevertheless, this intellectual work was profoundly religious. Its ultimate dynamism was what Gregory calls 'piety,' a piety of intellect as well as of will—a love of the truths that may be found amid all the chaos of philosophical opinion, and a will to subsume all these truths under 'the Holy Word, the loveliest thing there is' [in Gregory's exquisite phrase]. This love of the ordered wisdom of the Gospel, guiding intelligence—itsself greatly loved—in all its free ranging, was for Gregory the glowing heart of his school experience. It remains forever the heart of the school experience, when the school is Christian" ³

Many of us respond appreciatively to Father Murray's estimate of the Alexandrian ideal as he sees it. And yet we have troublesome reservations which tell us that Tertullian, after all, had a point too. Is the Gospel finally a "wisdom" only, or primarily; and is not the "ordered unity of truth" an ideal which is frequently served at the cost of blurred distinctions between modes and procedures of inquiry, and between forms of man's involvement with man, the world, and God? The painfully honest search for a way that would not blur distinctions, which is unfolded in St. Augustine's *Confessions*,—which is in some respects the most remarkable educational memoir of our heritage—seems closer to the situation in which many of us find ourselves. In the *De Ordine* Augustine could praise *ratio* as that gift of God which makes community possible, through language, and also praise number as the key to understanding and control in the diversity of experience. He, too, sought a unity or harmony of all art and knowledge; of faith and reason; of outer and inner worlds. He could follow the Neoplatonists a long way in their articulation of that harmony. But he knew also the disharmony of rebellious will and absolutized finitude, for which there was no remedy in Platonic truth, and which was resolved for him in principle only in personal acceptance of the accepting Truth-in-Person. In the *Retractions* he decided that he had perhaps overestimated the *saving* power of the liberal arts.

For centuries to come, however, there was little doubt in the minds of most Christian educators about the foundational and integrating *intellectual* power of the liberal arts in Christian higher education. Those who followed the way of St. Augustine could maintain a fruitful contrast between a predominantly universalistic and contemplative Hellenism and a predominantly concrete and activist Hebraism—a contrast which expressed itself sometimes in conflict, sometimes in reconciliation, and frequently

³ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

in that indefinite state of affairs which we are wont to call "productive tension." But most were agreed that the *trivium* and the *quadrivium* together comprise the basic languages by means of which all arts are intelligible and expressible, and that their perfection is necessary to man's perfection—necessary, if not adequate. Indeed, for most of the form and content of education the fathers relied on "secular" school training in the liberal arts. They simply took over a going concern; refined it and modified it at certain points—and from time to time damaged it at others—and let it serve the purposes of Christian education. Classification of the arts and sciences was relatively simple, and the relevance of the common language and common vision of the liberal arts to all the rest seemed to be fairly obvious and clearly articulated. Re-incorporation of the scientific works of Aristotle in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries created a problem for a time, but that problem was almost too neatly resolved in the Thomistic synthesis. Indeed, there was in the High Middle Ages a self-conscious attempt to work out once for all *the* Christian system of higher education; and there remain those who believe that we cannot go forward now without going back to the foundations then laid. But an independent secular humanism, on the one hand, and a more prophetically critical Protestantism, on the other hand, were soon to make the consolidation of the High Medieval program impossible.

REFORMERS AND HUMANISTS

MANY OF THE CLASSICAL REFORMERS, however, were no less appreciative of the liberal arts than were the non-Protestant Humanists. Indeed, they provided a new intensity of motivation and a broader scope of availability for them. While Luther could at times fall into the Tertullianist habit of imputing guilt by association, as when he excoriated "the damned pagan Aristotle" as the source of intellectual pride, because some Aristotelians exhibited that vice; and while he rejected the placing of even *Christian* tradition on a level with scripture; nevertheless he expressed the new Humanist sense of the irreducible individual-in-community, and of the fresh immediacy of experience. Along with Calvin he espoused universal education, for civic as well as for religious ends, and with Calvin and Anglican reformers he placed a classical curriculum at the heart of the system. The classic liberal arts, it was felt, are needed for the nurture of the Christian in the Church as well as for the enlightenment of the citizen in the state.

The *primary* purpose of their study was, to be sure, to ac-

quire a better knowledge of languages and literary criticism, in order that Scripture might be better understood. But Luther also saw value in literature as vicarious experience. The state rather than the Church would have institutional responsibility for the educational system, and one of its primary aims would be the training of Christian citizens for Christian community—in Geneva or in Germany or in England. The vocation of the teacher would receive a new and forceful emphasis as being equally “religious” as that of the pastor and priest—this teacher, be it noted, being the teacher of the classical arts and sciences as well as Christian Doctrine. Yet the wisdom of the arts and sciences was not thought to be a uniquely Christian creation or possession. Professor Roland Frye, to whose recent study-paper⁴ I am indebted for some of these remarks about the Reformers’ view of education, notes that most of the classical Reformers placed the liberal and practical arts in the realm of a *diaphora*—“the sphere of things indifferent”—not to indicate indifference towards them, or to suggest that they are of indifferent value—but rather as a way of saying that they are goods which, as Calvin put it, “happen to the godly and the ungodly alike”—of which neither the godly nor the ungodly have greater or less amounts simply because of godliness or the lack thereof. Furthermore, the Reformers were inclined to see *all* so-called “secular” learning as *negotium cum deo*. There was no distinction between the “sacred” and the “secular” so far as the approach to God through inquiry was concerned, though the Bible was uniquely the vehicle of divine revelation. And implicit in the “Protestant principle” to which all owed allegiance was a final freedom from idolatry of *any* educational philosophy or institutional form as unequivocally and finally “Christian.”

The Reformers’ practice, of course, often fell short of their principles. Academic freedom was not unlimited in such AAUP cases as that of Whitgift *vs.* Cartwright, and there was a tendency in many quarters to idolize the classical curriculum itself. Only the English Dissenters and later Puritans would dare to experiment creatively with the Baconian New Learning; begin to stress the significance of natural science as such; and examine English and modern European languages and literature alongside the Greek and Latin. And they did so, it may be noted, not only on the basis of a Calvinistic appreciation of the created order, but also because of the special social circumstances in which they found themselves.

⁴ Roland Frye, *Protestantism and Education: A preliminary study of the early centuries and some suggested principles.*

SCIENCE AND SECULARISM

THE SECULARIZATION AND FRAGMENTATION of higher learning in Western culture since the days of the Reformers is a fact much noted and commented on in recent years; it is neither necessary nor appropriate to attempt to trace here the history of the process. As scientific inquiry gained in precision and accomplishment there was a tendency to look to science as the model for all inquiry. Those aspects of reality most emphasized in particular scientific constructions were in turn elevated to the status of basic or normative reality, in various metaphysical systems. The success of mechanics suggested that the world is a machine; new breakthroughs in biology suggested that it is an evolving organism. In the name of science men could offer reductive views of reality to replace the broader and richer views of the earlier humanism. The social application of science through technology could produce a more complex and demanding civilization, requiring an indefinite multiplication of useful arts and practical sciences dedicated to the production and manipulation of material goods. The sophistication and refinement of scientific theory could necessitate more and more specialization of field and technique—and render more and more difficult any inter-disciplinary communication. Theistic—*or* humanistically-oriented goals of education could give way to narrower, hedonistic and materialistic utilitarian ends. Not only was the relevance of Jerusalem to Athens called radically into question, but the ancient ideal of the Academy itself seemed to be forgotten in the secular technical institute, the trade school, and even the teachers' college, and in the university of the so-called "free elective" system, in which, as Archbishop Temple once put it, the only connection between the many things going on therein was that of juxtaposition and simultaneity.

Yet such institutions have served to make higher education newly relevant to a variety of cultural needs. Their vocational interests need to be placed in the context of a broader doctrine of vocation, and the Church's word about Christian vocation may be relevant here. Academically, the Church may help to recall for them something of the deeper wisdom of the Academy. A way has been opened by the fact that in the past few decades institutions of higher education of all sorts have been having hard, second looks at the pre-war ideal of the academic service-station, and also at earlier "liberal" espousal of purely "objective" inquiry isolated in ivory towers from concrete social and cultural concerns. Oxford and Cambridge have moved somewhat nearer to Redbrick, and Redbrick has asked whether at least some elements of the classical

tradition are not necessary for the municipal and provincial school. The "general education" movement in the United States, ill-defined and ambiguously implemented though it may be, nevertheless serves to focus a growing concern on the part of American colleges and universities for some new center of common loyalties; for a recovery of foundations for all forms of inquiry; and for a basis of communication across the disciplines. No self-respecting institution in recent years has been without a committee on curricular reform, and many of these committees have in effect called for fresh study of the classics in the humanities, and of fundamental and germinal concepts and operations in natural and social sciences, as the starting-point of an integral and integrated education. Engineering schools have added divisions of Humanities; and some liberal arts colleges have begun to ask whether science itself, properly understood, may not be the most liberal of all the arts. On all sides there is growing concern over the gap between what C. P. Snow calls "the two cultures," the scientific and the humanistic; and the conviction grows that the gap will not be narrowed simply by adding more Humanities or more science. The fundamental problem would seem to lie in a certain narrowness of vision on the part of those who are preoccupied with the special approaches and limitations of one of the cultures. The results of methodological and disciplinary imperialism are plain to see. What is not so plain is the way to overcome the imperialism, and once again to fire the academic imagination with a broader and richer view of man and the world. There is a new openness on the part of many so-called "secular" educators to whatever insights the Church may bring to the Academy in this connection. And, while the Church may not and perhaps should not give her answers simply in terms of a return to the classical curriculum which served Christian higher education in the West for nineteen hundred years, the Church must not neglect the solid and suggestive fact that, as Professor Harbison has put it, "Christianity and the liberal arts have grown up together."⁵

THE WESTERN ACADEMY AND NON-WESTERN CULTURE

BUT THE ACADEMY TODAY is not only faced with the necessity for overcoming the gap between the scientific and the humanistic cultures of the West; it is also newly aware of other, inclusive non-Western cultures with their own histories and values. There is a new awareness of the fact that the university world

⁵ Fuller, p. 63.

comprises not only the Museum of Alexandria and the Academy of Athens, the tradition of Paris and Heidelberg and Oxford and the two Cambridges and New Haven and New York and Palo Alto; but also the tradition of Tokyo and Al-Azhar and Shantinketan—and Moscow. So every self-respecting college or university has added to its committee on curricular reform a committee on “Area Studies” or “non-Western cultures,” or “cross-cultural communication.” The result may be superficial floundering; or it may be the beginning of a new era in a genuinely global concept of higher education; in any case, the die is cast.

What, then has the Church to say to the Academy in these matters? With respect to the matter of intercultural communication she has the rich and inadequately-known and appreciated experience of centuries of missions. The Church was sending dedicated men from colleges and universities to non-Western lands before they were recruited by government, banking, and industry for other missions there. Many went with naive and narrow views of their tasks, but some learned rapidly from their mistakes, and a few operated within remarkably broad and sophisticated frames of reference from the beginning. A large percentage of those who call the universities to greater awareness of non-Western cultures are themselves products of the missionary movement, though many would no longer define their task in Christian evangelical terms.

In addition, the Church in conjunction with the Academy has acquired a modest amount of information about the religions of various cultures,—information which has never been more needed than today. The fact that there is not more information, and that it is not more widely known, is partly due to unclarity in the Church’s own thinking about religion as a cultural phenomenon in general, and about the non-Christian religions in particular. After an early wave of enthusiasm for the “comparative study of religions,” which moved on to a study of “the sciences of religion,” there was in some Christian circles a feeling that such study compromises the evangelical and apologetic task of the Church, and that efforts to achieve objectivity in such matters are intellectually misleading or dishonest. Some theologians would secure an exemption of the Christian faith as expressed in Christianity from the category “religion,” and would look upon all religions of the world as so many instances of man’s talking when he should be listening. It is hard to see just how the exemption is to be secured, even by divine grace . . . but then perhaps if it is by divine grace it should be hard to see! In any event, it seems clear that, whatever else religion may be, at least it is one of the most

revealing and intriguing manifestations of human cultures, and an important key to their understanding. Surely Christian scholars and teachers must join with others in more extensive, patient and sympathetic exploration of varying cultural-religious traditions, if either the Church or the Academy is faithfully to discharge its responsibility in an ever-shrinking world!

THE CHURCH'S REVELANCE TO THE ACADEMY—ITS APOLOGETIC TASK

THE RESULTS OF SUCH STUDY for the definition of the Church's apologetic task remain to be seen. So far as Jerusalem's dialogue with Athens in the re-appraisal of our Western cultural heritage is concerned, it would seem that there is at least a minimal common cause in the recovery and revitalization of a broader and richer humanism, in the face of the truncated humanisms and limited secularisms which have preoccupied us of late. There is a militant and narrow secularism abroad in the world, which infects our common life with hedonistic and materialistic values and concerns, expressed in the cult of expediency at the cost of principle, with which the Academy and the Church may be equally concerned. The struggle is not helped when either the Academy or the Church refuses to accept help from the other because of reservations about ultimate loyalties and the purity or effectiveness of specific techniques. Some of us find the more catholic non-theistic humanisms inadequate, not so much in their *affirmations* as in their *negations* or silences. We find the Christian world-view as we understand it roomier and more authentically human than its non-Christian alternatives. But there are important differences between forms of humanism, and it ill behooves the Church to engage in wholesale indictments or dismissals of the "merely humanistic" or "merely secular."

Indeed, if we understand the Bible and the Reformers aright, it may be that a chief task of the Church today is to proclaim to the Academy that there is no such thing as the "merely human" or the "merely secular." If the Reformers could affirm that all the goods of the liberal and practical arts "happen to the godly and the ungodly alike," the fact remains that the godly have special motives for pursuing them, and that they will seek to place them in a setting broader than that of the "merely" secular. What we usually mean by the "merely" secular is, I believe, really the *inadequately* secular—that which finds its origin and end in only a *part* of the secular. Against *truncated* secularism we correctly rebel. But we are told that the Bible knows no final hiatus between the historical and the natural, or indeed between the "sacred" and the

“secular” as we are likely to use these terms today. Perhaps Biblical religion is the most radical, free, and open form of secularism—offering broader vistas than, and standing in critical judgment on, lesser forms of secularism which would exalt a method or a province of human experience to the status of deity. If the Reformers could view all “secular” learning as *negotium cum deo*, it was because the secular was not for them “merely secular.”

The Reformers could make these judgements with respect to the classical humanistic heritage of the West; perhaps we will come also to make similar judgements with respect to the heritage of the East. Is there an Asian humanism, receiving different and contrasting emphases and expressions in Asian religions, with which both the Church and the Academy of the West must come to terms—affirmatively and creatively, rather than by easy dismissal or simple negation? Many of the universities of the Near and Far East are in ferment today. All too often, it seems, the tendency in many of them is merely to take over the technical and truncated-secular achievements of the West and adapt them to local purposes. Those who would incorporate the great visions and insights of the oriental classics in Eastern higher education would seem to be in the minority, or to be largely restricted to specialized if not exotic experiments outside the mainstream of Eastern university life. Has not Jerusalem a common concern with Cairo and Delhi and Kyoto for the maintenance of a minimal vision of man and the world which is more than materialistic and narrowly utilitarian?

Now surely Jerusalem has *more* than this to say to Athens today. The “more” is, specifically, the Good News—which stands in judgment on, even as it fulfills, the religious aspirations of culture. This uniquely Christian message must not be diluted or compromised in the interest of a “common front.” I simply wish to emphasize the conviction that we should not allow preoccupation with the “more” to hinder us in communicating the needed message of concern *common* to the Church and the Academy. If we return to Tertullian’s question and ask “What is there *in common* between Athens and Jerusalem . . . the Academy and Church?” we may reply that there is at least a common *humanity*, and a common concern for humanity’s freedom and dignity. Of course we must “let the Church be the Church” . . . and we must also let the Academy be the Academy. This means, I think, to let the Academy be not only the transmitter of cultural heritage, but also the free critic of that heritage, including the heritage of the Church—for the sake of the *Church*, as well as for the sake of culture. And the Church will request a fair hearing for the Christian

faith in the Academy, for the sake of the *Academy* and its integrity and scope, as well as for the sake of the Church. The Christian scholar in the Academy will, to the extent that he truly serves Him in whose service is perfect freedom, bring to his task a complete dedication to the pursuit of truth: a sense of grace—of gratitude and of humility (and of humor)—in the discovery of disclosure of truth; and a perspective of judgment upon all claims to absolute truth. His first duty *as* citizen of the Academy will be the enhancement of the life of the mind, in maximum, open communication with his fellow students and teachers. This will involve, Sir Walter Moberly has reminded us, “two things. . . . The first is a deeper and more resolute self-analysis than most of us have hitherto attempted or are likely to find at palatable; so that we may become aware of the real grounds of our thinking. . . . The second is a patient and sustained effort to enter into the minds of colleagues whose interests or philosophies of life are different from our own, in order to understand and appreciate, not only what they believe, but why they believe it. Neither of these tasks can be accomplished quickly or easily. Merely to find a psychological formula by which to interpret our own or other people’s minds, is not to perform but to evade them.”⁶

THE CHURCH’S PASTORAL TASK

FINALLY, THE CHRISTIAN IN THE UNIVERSITY will remember that the Academy is not the Church. Academic community is not the whole of community; the life of the mind is not the whole of life. As Dean Coburn reminded us in a little pamphlet published some years ago, “Professors are People.” *All* members of academic communities are *people*, and we need to be reminded of that fact often. The Church has not only an academic responsibility to the Academy, but also a priestly and pastoral responsibility. I am inclined to think that it is usually better not to try to combine these two responsibilities vocationally. The Christian teacher of science or history *or* religion will surely seek to reflect his broader Christian vocation, in the priesthood of all believers, in such relations with students and colleagues as may be uniquely and naturally his. But the Christian pastor or student worker in the university community has his own—as of now far from clearly articulated—function; and this function must be nourished and advanced by those most capable of this form of ministry, through worship,

⁶ Sir Walter Moberly, *The Crisis in the University* (London: SCM Press, 1949) p. 118.

study, counseling, and other avenues open to the explicitly Christian community within the university.

What, then, has Jerusalem to do with Athens, the Church with the Academy? Surely more than Tertullian thought, and perhaps less than some others have thought. There *is* no simple or easy answer. Those who would contribute to an answer must proceed with openness and patience. They must learn to speak the truth in love—and to remember that *their* truth is not The Truth; that “we hold these truths in earthen vessels.” They must learn to listen as well as to speak, and to speak in language that is relevant to their day. It is probable that most specific programs and policies which may be devised to meet the need will hinder as much as they will help, in the long-range search for better understanding of the relation of Christian faith to culture as it focuses in higher learning. But the search must continue, for the sake of Him who is Lord of both Jerusalem and Athens.

The God of Learning

Harold C. Phillips

“EVER LEARNING, AND NEVER ABLE to come to the knowledge of the truth.” That is an unfortunate situation! It is comparable to a man who is always traveling, always on the go, but never goes anywhere in particular; to an architect who is always producing blueprints but never having one of them embodied in a building. In short, it is being so preoccupied with means as to forget ends. “Ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

The apostle here sets in opposition “learning” and “the knowledge of the truth.” Let us then, first of all, say a word about learning. Educated man that he was, Paul was not opposed to learning. Nor, incidentally, is this seminary, for it has made this “solid learning” one of its aims. Nor, we may be sure, was Paul opposed to the new ideas or truths which are an inevitable part of the learning process, upsetting though they often are. How could he have been opposed to new ideas when his own life had been turned upside down by his experience of the new? No! It was not learning as such he criticized. It is rather that this learning seems to have made so little difference to life. It had brought its devotees no nearer to what he called “the knowledge of the truth.”

What is this truth? There are, no doubt, those who will in-

Established in 1865 by a gift from Messrs. James and John A. Brown, the Brown Professorship of Homiletics has had as its previous incumbents Dr. William Adams, 1873-80; Dr. Thomas Samuel Hastings, 1881-1904; Dr. Charles Cuthbert Hall, 1904-08; Dr. G. A. Johnston Ross, 1912-26; Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin, 1926-45; and Dr. Paul E. Scherer, 1947-60. Dr. Harold Cooke Phillips, who comes to this professorship as Visiting Professor for 1960-61, was for many years minister of the First Baptist Church, Cleveland, Ohio and Professor of Homiletics in the Oberlin Graduate School of Theology.

sist that St. Paul had a far too limited idea of truth. He was not thinking of truth in any abstract, metaphysical sense. By knowledge of the truth he meant knowledge of "God our Saviour" and of Jesus Christ "which is our hope." The question, then, is whether our learning here will lead us to a fuller knowledge of this seemingly too specific but actually all-embracing truth. I venture to suggest one or two guides to this goal.

For one thing, we should keep our minds open, but not open at both ends. This was what the late Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, meant when he said "The purpose of an open mind is to close it on something." It may well be that the "something" on which we close our mind may not seem too impressive. In his dark days of doubt and despair, Robertson of Brighton was able to close it only on what he called "The grand, simple landmarks of morality." But, when one stops to think about it, that is a considerable chunk!

It is wrong to belittle morality, to regard it as a sort of illegitimate child of dubious origin. Moralistic preaching is inadequate, but preaching that fails to relate our theological beliefs to moral and ethical realities is hardly less so. Surely such preaching will not lead us to an adequate knowledge of the God who speaks to us in the Bible, and supremely in Christ. Theology, like an airship, may soar into the blue yonder, but like an airship, it takes off from something that is quite down to earth. We must keep our eyes on the stars but we must meanwhile keep our feet on the ground.

Again, I believe our learning may lead us to the knowledge of God if we keep always in mind the purpose of our training here. We are not here just to improve our minds or enrich our lives, but to do this in order that we may the more effectively serve our fellow men. "Not to be ministered unto but to minister." The God of the Bible does not speak in the abstract but in the concrete. He is not the God of detachment but of involvement; not the God of the ivory tower but of the Cross. And that Cross is no mere symbol. It is life—life at its lowest worst and highest best. As we seek to minister to individuals or confront the burden of this bewildering world, we know that if our only contribution lies in our meager resources, we might as well "throw in the sponge." We are, therefore, if true to our purpose, compelled to lift our eyes to the everlasting hills, yea to the Cross, which we believe reveals both the wisdom and the power of God. Thus, our learning will help to bring us to the knowledge of God as we keep it in the context of His redemptive purpose for mankind, a purpose which, by His Grace, we share.

Finally, let us say that our learning leads to the knowledge of God as we heed the words of the Master, "Learn of *Me*." "Learn of me" cannot be identified with "learn about me." Knowledge about is never the key to Christian truth. That key is knowledge of. It is essential that in our studies we learn as much about the Christian faith as we possibly can. But the "Jesus whom Paul preacheth" or teacheth will be no more real to us or effective than he was to the seven sons of Sceva. I sometimes think that we ministers are peculiarly tempted to validate, if not indeed to identify, faith with what we have come to regard as a correct theological formula. That really is not the test.

Faith is "an affirmation and an act,
That bids eternal truth be present fact."

The Incarnation is more than knowledge about God or about man. Strictly speaking, it is not knowledge about anything. It is "the Word made flesh." It is truth in life and for life. Hence, in its truest sense, it is truth that can be known only in the living of it. "He that willeth to do . . . shall know."

And who is sufficient for this? Surely not we. "Our sufficiency is in God." "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to do. . . ."

ETERNAL GOD, who art able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, we pray that Thou who hast begun a good work in us will perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ.

And may Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. AMEN.

