

Anthology

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Authorised by Roger Beard

Prepared by Alice Jones

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Contents

Introduction	1
Acknowledgements	1
Textual sources for Unit 3: Developments	3
Buddhism	3
Christianity	17
Hinduism	21
Islam	65
Judaism	81
Sikhism	94
New Testament	107
Textual sources for Unit 4: Implications	119
Philosophy of Religion	119
Ethics	134
Buddhism	155
Christianity	174
Hinduism	194
Islam	214
Judaism	233
Sikhism	252
New Testament	267

Introduction

Within the GCE Religious Studies specification (publications code UA017309), *Unit 3: Developments* and *Unit 4: Implications* both refer to set texts.

Unit 3: Developments

In Unit 3, there are a number of set texts for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and the New Testament. The recommended translations for these texts have been reproduced in this Anthology by kind permission of the publishers.

Unit 4: Implications

In Unit 4, all questions will be based on a selection of textual sources, which have been reproduced in this Anthology by kind permission of the publishers.

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Textual sources for Unit 3: Developments

Buddhism

All extracts are taken from **Buddhist Scriptures** – editor Conze E (Penguin, 1959)
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The Questions of King Milinda (pages 146-162)

1 Introduction

In the land of the Bactrian Greeks there was a city called Sagala, a great centre of trade. Rivers and hills beautified it, delightful landscapes surrounded it, and it possessed many parks, gardens, woods, lakes and lotus-ponds. Its king was Milinda, a man who was learned, experienced, intelligent and competent, and who at the proper times carefully observed all the appropriate Brahminic rites, with regard to things past, future and present. As a disputant he was hard to assail, hard to overcome, and he was recognized as a prominent sectarian teacher.

One day a numerous company of Arhats, who lived in a well-protected spot in the Himalayas, sent a messenger to the Venerable Nagasena, then at the Asoka Park in Patna, asking him to come, as they wished to see him. Nagasena immediately complied by vanishing from where he was and miraculously appearing before them. And the Arhats said to him: 'That king Milinda, Nagasena, constantly harasses the order of monks with questions and counter-questions, with arguments and counter-arguments. Please go, Nagasena, and subdue him!' But Nagasena replied: 'Never mind just this one king Milinda! If all the kings of India would come to me with their questions, I could well dispose of them, and they would give no more trouble after that! You may go to Sagala without any fear whatever!' And the Elders went to Sagala, lighting up the city with their yellow robes which shone like lamps, and bringing with them the fresh breeze of the holy mountains.

The Venerable Nagasena stayed at the Sankheyya hermitage together with 80,000 monks. King Milinda, accompanied by a retinue of 500 Greeks, went up to where he was, gave him a friendly and courteous greeting and sat on one side. Nagasena returned his greetings, and his courtesy pleased the king's heart.

2 The Doctrine of Not-Self

2a The chariot

And King Milinda asked him: 'How is your Reverence known, and what is your name, Sir?' 'As Nagasena I am known, O great king, and as Nagasena do my fellow religious habitually address me. But although parents give such names as Nagasena, or Surasena, or Virasena, or Sihasena, nevertheless this word "Nagasena" is just a denomination, a designation, a conceptual term, a current appellation, a mere name. For no real person can here be apprehended.' But King Milinda explained: 'Now listen, you 500 Greeks and 80,000 monks, this Nagasena tells me that he is not a real person! How can I be expected to agree with that!' And to Nagasena he said: 'If, most reverend Nagasena, no person can be apprehended in reality, who then, I ask you, gives you what you require by way of robes, food, lodging, and medicines? Who is it that consumes them? Who is it that guards morality, practises meditation and realizes the [four] Paths and their Fruits, and thereafter Nirvana? Who is it that kills living beings, takes what is not given, commits sexual misconduct, tells lies, drinks intoxicants? Who is it that commits the five Deadly Sins? For, if there were no person, there could be no merit and no demerit; no doer of meritorious or demeritorious deeds, and no agent behind them; no fruit of good and evil deeds, and no reward or punishment for them. If someone should kill you, O Venerable Nagasena, he would not commit any murder. And you yourself, Venerable Nagasena, would not be a real teacher, or instructor, or ordained monk. You just told me that your fellow religious habitually address you as "Nagasena".'

What then is this “Nagasena”? Are perhaps the hairs of the head “Nagasena”? – ‘No, great king!’ ‘Or perhaps the hairs of the body?’ – ‘No, great king!’ ‘Or perhaps the nails, teeth, skin, muscles, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, serous membranes, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, stomach, excrement, the bile, phlegm, pus, blood, grease, fat, tears, sweat, spittle, snot, fluid of the joints, urine, or the brain in the skull – are they this “Nagasena”?’ – ‘No, great king!’ – ‘Or is form this “Nagasena”, or feeling, or perceptions, or impulses, or consciousness?’ – ‘No, great king!’ – ‘Then is it the combination of form, feelings, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness?’ – ‘No, great king!’

– ‘Then is it outside the combination of form, feelings, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness?’ – ‘No, great king!’ – ‘Then, ask as I may, I can discover no Nagasena at all. Just a mere sound is this “Nagasena”, but who is the real Nagasena? Your Reverence has told a lie, has spoken a falsehood! There really is no Nagasena!’

Thereupon the Venerable Nagasena said to King Milinda: ‘As a king you have been brought up in great refinement and you avoid roughness of any kind. If you would walk at midday on this hot, burning, and sandy ground, then your feet would have to tread on the rough and gritty gravel and pebbles, and they would hurt you, your body would get tired, your mind impaired, and your awareness of your body would be associated with pain. How then did you come – on foot, or on a mount?’

‘I did not come, Sir, on foot, but on a chariot.’ – ‘If you have come on a chariot, then please explain to me what a chariot is. Is the pole the chariot?’ – ‘No, reverend Sir!’ – ‘Is then the axle the chariot?’ – ‘No, reverend Sir!’ – ‘Is it then the wheels, or the framework, or the flag-staff, or the yoke, or the reins, or the goad-stick?’ – ‘No, reverend Sir!’ – ‘Then is it the combination of pole, axle, wheels, framework, flag-staff, yoke, and goad which is the “chariot”?’ – ‘No, reverend Sir!’ – ‘Then is this “chariot” outside the combination of pole, axle, wheels, framework, flag-staff, yoke, reins, and goad?’ – ‘No, reverend Sir!’ – ‘Then, ask as I may, I can discover no chariot at all. Just a mere sound is this “chariot”. But what is the real chariot? Your Majesty has told a lie, has spoken a falsehood! There really is no chariot! Your Majesty is the greatest king in the whole of India. Of whom then are you afraid, that you do not speak the truth?’ And he exclaimed: ‘Now listen, you 500 Greeks and 80,000 monks, this king Milinda tells me that he has come on a chariot. But when asked to explain to me what a chariot is, he cannot establish its existence. How can one possibly approve of that?’

The five hundred Greeks thereupon applauded the Venerable Nagasena and said to king Milinda: ‘Now let your Majesty get out of that if you can!’

But king Milinda said to Nagasena: ‘I have not, Nagasena, spoken a falsehood. For it is in dependence on the pole, the axle, the wheels, the framework, the flagstaff, etc, that there takes place this denomination “chariot”, this designation, this conceptual term, a current appellation and a mere name’. – ‘Your Majesty has spoken well about the chariot. It is just so with me. In dependence on the thirty-two parts of the body and the five Skandhas there takes place this denomination “Nagasena”, this designation, this conceptual term, a current appellation and a mere name. In ultimate reality, however, this person cannot be apprehended. And this has been said by our Sister Vajira when she was face to face with the Lord:

“Where all constituent parts are present,
The word ‘a chariot’ is applied.
So likewise where the skandhas are,
The term a ‘being’ commonly is used.”

‘It is wonderful, Nagasena, it is astonishing, Nagasena! Most brilliantly have these questions been answered! Were the Buddha himself here, he would approve what you have said. Well spoken, Nagasena, well spoken!’

2b Personal identity and rebirth

The king asked: 'When someone is reborn, Venerable Nagasena, is he the same as the one who just died, or is he another?' – The Elder replied: 'He is neither the same nor another'. – 'Give me an illustration!' – 'What do you think, great king: when you were a tiny infant, newly born and quite soft, were you then the same as the one who is now grown up?' – 'No, that infant was one, I, now grown up, am another'. – If that is so, then, great king, you have had no mother, no father, no teaching, and no schooling! Do we then take it that there is one mother for the embryo in the first stage, another for the second stage, another for the third, another for the fourth, another for the baby, another for the grown-up man? Is the schoolboy one person, and the one who has finished school another? Does one commit a crime, but the hands and feet of another are cut off?' – 'Certainly not! But what would you say, Reverend Sir, to all that?' – The Elder replied: 'I was neither the tiny infant, newly born and quite soft, nor am I now the grown-up man; but all these are comprised in one unit depending on this very body.' – 'Give me a simile!' 'If a man were to light a lamp, could it give light throughout the whole night?' – 'Yes, it could.' – 'Is now the flame which burns in the first watch of the night the same as the one which burns in the second?' – 'It is not the same.' – 'Or is the flame which burns in the second watch the same as the one which burns in the last one?' – 'It is not the same.' – 'Do we then take it that there is one lamp in the first watch of the night, another in the second, and another again in the third?' – 'No, it is because of just that one lamp that the light shines throughout the night.' – 'Even so must we understand the collocation of a series of successive dharmas. At rebirth one dharma arises, while another stops; but the two processes take place almost simultaneously (ie they are continuous). Therefore the first act of consciousness in the new existence is neither the same as the last act of consciousness in the previous existence, nor is it another.' – 'Give me another simile!' – 'Milk, once the milking is done, turns after some time into curds; from curds it turns into fresh butter, and from fresh butter into ghee. Would it now be correct to say that the milk is the same thing as the curds, or the fresh butter, or the ghee?' – 'No, it would not. But they have been produced because of it.' – 'Just so must be understood the collocation of a series of successive dharmas.'

2c Personal identity and Karma

The king asked: 'Is there, Nagasena, any being which passes on from this body to another body?' – 'No, your majesty!' – 'If there were no passing on from this body to another, would not one then in one's next life be freed from the evil deeds committed in the past?' – 'Yes, it would be so if one were not linked once again with a new organism. But since, your majesty, one is linked once again with a new organism, therefore one is not freed from one's evil deeds.' – 'Give me a simile!' – 'If a man should steal another man's mangoes, would he deserve a thrashing for that?' – 'Yes, of course!' – 'But he would not have stolen the very same mangoes as the other one had planted. Why then should he deserve a thrashing?' – 'For the reason that the stolen mangoes had grown because of those that were planted.' – 'Just so, your majesty, it is because of the deeds one does, whether pure or impure, by means of this psycho-physical organism, that one is once again linked with another psycho-physical organism, and is not freed from one's evil deeds.' – 'Very good, Nagasena!'

3 The Five Cardinal Virtues

The king said: 'Is it through wise attention that people become exempt from further rebirth?' – 'Yes, that is due to wise attention, and also to wisdom, and the other wholesome dharmas.' – 'But is not wise attention the same as wisdom?' – 'No, your majesty! Attention is one thing, and wisdom another. Sheep and goats, oxen and buffaloes, camels and asses have attention, but wisdom they have not.' – 'Well put, Nagasena!'

The king said: 'What is the mark of attention, and what is the mark of wisdom?' – 'Consideration is the mark of attention, cutting off that of wisdom.' – 'How is that? Give me a simile!' – 'You know barley-reapers, I suppose?' – 'Yes, I do.'

– 'How then do they reap the barley?' – 'With the left hand they seize a bunch of barley, in the right hand they hold a sickle, and they cut the barley off with that sickle.' – 'Just so, your majesty, the Yogin seizes his mental processes with his attention, and by his wisdom he cuts off the defilements.' – 'Well put, Venerable Nagasena!'

The king said: ‘When you just spoke of “the other wholesome dharmas” which ones did you mean?’ – ‘I meant morality, faith, vigour, mindfulness, and concentration.’ – ‘And what is the mark of morality?’ – ‘Morality has the mark of providing a basis for all wholesome dharmas, whatever they may be. When based on morality, all the wholesome dharmas will not dwindle away.’ – ‘Give me an illustration!’ – ‘As all plants and animals which increase, grow, and prosper, do so with the earth as their support, with the earth as their basis, just so the Yogin, with morality as his support, with morality as his basis, develops the five cardinal virtues, ie the cardinal virtues of faith, vigour, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom.’

‘Give me a further illustration!’

‘As the builder of a city when constructing a town first of all clears the site, removes all stumps and thorns, and levels it; and only after that he lays out and marks off the roads and cross-roads, and so builds the city. Even so the Yogin develops the five cardinal virtues with morality as his support, with morality as his basis.’

The king said: ‘What is the mark of *faith*?’ ‘Faith makes serene, and it leaps forward.’ – ‘And how does faith make serene?’ – ‘When faith arises it arrests the [five] Hindrances, and the heart becomes free from them, clear, serene and undisturbed.’ – ‘Give me an illustration!’ – ‘A universal monarch might on his way, together with his fourfold army, cross over a small stream. Stirred up by the elephants and horses, by the chariots and infantry, the water would become disturbed, agitated and muddy. Having crossed over, the universal monarch would order his men to bring some water for him to drink. But the king would possess a miraculous water-clearing gem, and his men, in obedience to his command, would throw it into the stream. Then at once all fragments of vegetation would float away, the mud would settle at the bottom, the stream would become clear, serene and undisturbed, and fit to be drunk by the universal monarch. Here the stream corresponds to the heart, the monarch’s men to the Yogin, the fragments of vegetation and the mud to the defilements, and the miraculous water-clearing gem to faith.’

‘And how does faith leap forward?’ – ‘When the Yogin sees that the hearts of others have been set free, he leaps forward, by way of aspiration, to the various Fruits of a holy life, and he makes efforts to attain the yet unattained, to find the yet unfound, to realize the yet unrealized.’ – ‘Give me an illustration!’ – ‘Suppose that a great cloud were to burst over a hill-slope. The water then would flow down the slope, would first fill all the hill’s clefts, fissures, and gullies, and would then run into the river below, making its banks overflow on both sides. Now suppose further that a great crowd of people had come along, and unable to size up either the width or the depth of the river, should stand frightened and hesitating on the bank. But then some man would come along, who, conscious of his own strength and power, would firmly tie on his loin-cloth and jump across the river. And the great crowd of people, seeing him on the other side, would cross likewise. Even so the Yogin, when he has seen that the hearts of others have been set free, leaps forward, by aspiration to the various Fruits of the holy life, and he makes efforts to attain the yet unattained, to find the yet unfound, to realize the yet unrealized. And this is what the Lord has said in the *Samyutta Nikaya*:

“By faith the flood is crossed,
By wakefulness the sea;
By vigour ill is passed;
By wisdom cleansed is he.”

‘Well put, Nagasena!’

The king asked: ‘And what is the mark of *vigour*?’ ‘Vigour props up, and, when propped up by vigour, all the wholesome dharmas do not dwindle away.’ – ‘Give me a simile!’ – ‘If a man’s house were falling down, he would prop it up with a new piece of wood, and, so supported, that house would not collapse.’

The king asked: ‘And what is the mark of *mindfulness*?’ – ‘Calling to mind and taking up.’

‘How is calling to mind a mark of mindfulness?’ – ‘When mindfulness arises, one calls to mind the dharmas which participate in what is wholesome and unwholesome, blameable and blameless, inferior and sublime, dark and light, ie these are the four applications of mindfulness, these the four right efforts, these the four roads to psychic power, these the five cardinal virtues, these the five powers, these the seven limbs of enlightenment, this is the holy eightfold path; this is calm, this insight, this knowledge and this emancipation. Thereafter the Yogin tends those dharmas which should be tended, and he does not tend those which should not be tended; he partakes of those dharmas which should be followed, and he does not partake of those which should not be followed. It is in this sense that calling to mind is a mark of mindfulness.’ – ‘Give me a simile!’ – ‘It is like the treasurer of a universal monarch, who each morning and evening reminds his royal master of his magnificent assets: “So many elephants you have, so many horses, so many chariots, so much infantry, so many gold coins, so much bullion, so much property; may your majesty bear this in mind!” In this way he calls to mind his master’s wealth.’

‘And how does mindfulness take up?’ – ‘When mindfulness arises, the outcome of beneficial and harmful dharmas is examined in this way: “These dharmas are beneficial, these harmful; these dharmas are helpful, these unhelpful.” Thereafter the Yogin removes the harmful dharmas, and takes up the beneficial ones; he removes the unhelpful dharmas, and takes up the helpful ones. It is in this sense that mindfulness takes up.’ – ‘Give me a comparison!’ – ‘It is like the invaluable adviser of a universal monarch who knows what is beneficial and what harmful to his royal master, what is helpful and what unhelpful. Thereafter what is harmful and unhelpful can be removed, what is beneficial and helpful can be taken up.’

The king asked: ‘And what is the mark of *concentration*?’ – ‘It stands at the head. Whatever wholesome dharmas there may be, they all are headed by concentration, they bend towards concentration, lead to concentration, incline to concentration.’ – ‘Give me a comparison!’ – ‘It is as with a building with a pointed roof: whatever rafters there are, they all converge on the top, bend towards the top, meet at the top, and the top occupies the most prominent place. So with concentration in relation to the other wholesome dharmas.’ – ‘Give me a further comparison!’ – ‘If a king were to enter battle with his fourfold army, then all his troops – the elephants, cavalry, chariots, and infantry – would be headed by him, and would be ranged around him. Such is the position of concentration in relation to the other wholesome dharmas.’

The king then asked: ‘What then is the mark of *wisdom*?’ – ‘Cutting off is, as I said before, one mark of wisdom. In addition it illuminates.’ – ‘And how does wisdom illuminate?’ – ‘When wisdom arises, it dispels the darkness of ignorance, generates the illumination of knowledge, sheds the light of cognition, and makes the holy truths stand out clearly. Thereafter the Yogin, with his correct wisdom, can see impermanence, ill, and not-self.’ – ‘Give me a comparison!’ – ‘It is like a lamp which a man would take into a dark house. It would dispel the darkness, would illuminate, shed light, and make the forms in the house stand out clearly.’ – ‘Well put, Nagasena!’

4 Emancipation and Nirvana

4a Problems of Nirvana

The king asked: ‘Is cessation Nirvana?’ – ‘Yes, your majesty!’ – ‘How is that, Nagasena?’ ‘All the foolish common people take delight in the senses and their objects, are impressed by them, are attached to them. In that way they are carried away by the flood, and are not set free from birth, old age, and death, from grief, lamentation, pain, sadness, and despair—they are, I say, not set free from suffering. But the well-informed holy disciples do not take delight in the senses and their objects, are not impressed by them, are not attached to them, and in consequence their craving ceases; the cessation of craving leads successively to that of grasping, of becoming, of birth, of old age and death, of grief, lamentation, pain, sadness, and despair – that is to say to the cessation of all this mass of ill. It is thus that cessation is Nirvana.’ – ‘Very good, Nagasena!’

The king asked: ‘Do all win Nirvana?’ – ‘No, they do not. Only those win Nirvana who, progressing correctly, know by their superknowledge those dharmas which should be known by superknowledge, comprehend those dharmas which should be comprehended, forsake those dharmas which should be forsaken, develop those dharmas which should be developed, and realize those dharmas which should be realized.’ – ‘Very good, Nagasena!’

The king asked: 'Do those who have not won Nirvana know how happy a state it is?' – 'Yes, they do.' – 'But how can one know this about Nirvana without having attained it?' – 'Now what do you think, your majesty? Do those who have not had their hands and feet cut off know how bad it is to have them cut off?' – 'Yes, they do.' – 'And how do they know it?' – 'From hearing the sound of the lamentations of those whose hands and feet have been cut off.' – 'So it is by hearing the words of those who have seen Nirvana that one knows it to be a happy state.' – 'Very good, Nagasena!'

4b The nature of Nirvana

King Milinda said: 'I will grant you, Nagasena, that Nirvana is absolute Ease, and that nevertheless one cannot point to its form or shape, its duration or size, either by simile or explanation, by reason or by argument. But is there perhaps some quality of Nirvana which it shares with other things, and which lends itself to a metaphorical explanation?' – 'Its form, O king, cannot be elucidated by similes, but its qualities can.' – 'How good to hear that, Nagasena! Speak then, quickly, so that I may have an explanation of even one of the aspects of Nirvana! Appease the fever of my heart! Allay it with the cool sweet breezes of your words!'

'Nirvana shares one quality with the lotus, two with water, three with medicine, ten with space, three with the wishing jewel, and five with a mountain peak. As the lotus is unstained by water, so is Nirvana unstained by all the defilements. As cool water allays feverish heat, so also Nirvana is cool and allays the fever of all the passions. Moreover, as water removes the thirst of men and beasts who are exhausted, parched, thirsty, and overpowered by heat, so also Nirvana removes the craving for sensuous enjoyments, the craving for further becoming, the craving for the cessation of becoming. As medicine protects from the torments of poison, so Nirvana from the torments of the poisonous passions. Moreover, as medicine puts an end to sickness, so Nirvana to all sufferings. Finally, Nirvana and medicine both give security. And these are the ten qualities which Nirvana shares with space. Neither is born, grows old, dies, passes away, or is reborn; both are unconquerable, cannot be stolen, are unsupported, are roads respectively for birds and Arhats to journey on, are unobstructed and infinite. Like the wishing jewel, Nirvana grants all one can desire, brings joy, and sheds light. As a mountain peak is lofty and exalted, so is Nirvana. As a mountain peak is unshakeable, so is Nirvana. As a mountain peak is inaccessible, so is Nirvana inaccessible to all the passions. As no seeds can grow on a mountain peak, so the seeds of all the passions cannot grow in Nirvana. And finally, as a mountain peak is free from all desire to please or displease, so is Nirvana.' – 'Well said, Nagasena! So it is, and as such I accept it.'

4c The realization of Nirvana

King Milinda said: 'In the world one can see things produced of karma, things produced from a cause, things produced by nature. Tell me, what in the world is not born of karma, or a cause, or of nature?' – 'There are two such things, space and Nirvana.' – 'Do not, Nagasena, corrupt the Jina's words, do not answer the question ignorantly!' – 'What did I say, your majesty, that you speak thus to me?' – 'What you said about space not being born of karma, or from a cause, or from nature, that was correct. But with many hundreds of arguments has the Lord proclaimed to his disciples the way to the realization of Nirvana – and then you say that Nirvana is not born of a cause!' – 'It is true that the Lord has with many hundreds of arguments proclaimed to his disciples the way to the realization of Nirvana; but that does not mean that he has spoken of a cause for the production of Nirvana.'

'Here, Nagasena, we do indeed enter from darkness into greater darkness, from a jungle into a deeper jungle, from a thicket into a denser thicket, inasmuch as we are given a cause for the realization of Nirvana, but no cause for the production of that same dharma (ie Nirvana). If there is a cause for the realization of Nirvana, we would also expect one for its production. If there is a son's father, one would for that reason also expect the father to have had a father; if there is a pupil's teacher, one would for that reason also expect the teacher to have had a teacher; if there is a seed for a sprout, one would for that reason also expect the seed to have had a seed. Just so, if there is cause for the realization of Nirvana, one would for that reason also expect a cause for its production. If a tree or creeper has a top, then for that reason it must also have a middle and a root. Just so, if there is a cause for the realization of Nirvana, one would for that reason also expect a cause for its production.' 'Nirvana, O king, is not something that should be produced. That is why no cause for its production has been proclaimed.' – 'Please, Nagasena, give me a reason, convince me by an argument, so that I can understand this point!'

‘Well then, O king, attend carefully, listen closely, and I will tell you the reason for this. Could a man with his natural strength go up from here to the Himalaya mountains?’ – ‘Yes, he could.’ – ‘But could that man with his natural strength bring the Himalaya mountains here?’ – ‘No, he could not.’ – ‘Just so it is possible to point out the way to the realization of Nirvana, but impossible to show a cause for its production. Could a man, who with his natural strength has crossed in a boat over the great ocean, get to the farther shore?’ – ‘Yes, he could.’ – ‘But could that man with his natural strength bring the farther shore of the great ocean here?’ – ‘No, he could not.’ – ‘Just so one can point out the way to the realization of Nirvana, but one cannot show a cause for its production. And what is the reason for that? Because dharma, Nirvana, is unconditioned.’ – ‘Is then, Nagasena, Nirvana unconditioned?’ – ‘So it is, O king, unconditioned is Nirvana, not made by anything. Of Nirvana one cannot say that it is produced, or unproduced, or that it should be produced; that it is past, or future, or present; or that one can become aware of it by the eye, or the ear, or the nose, or the tongue, or the body.’ – ‘In that case, Nagasena, you indicate Nirvana as a dharma which is not, and Nirvana does not exist.’ ‘Nirvana is something which is. It is cognizable by the mind. A holy disciple, who has followed the right road, sees Nirvana with a mind which is pure, sublime, straight, unimpeded and disinterested.’ – ‘But what then is that Nirvana like? Give me a simile, and convince me by arguments. For a dharma which exists can surely be illustrated by a simile!’

‘Is there, great king, something called “wind”?’ – ‘Yes, there is such a thing.’ – ‘Please, will your majesty show me the wind, its colour and shape, and whether it is thin or thick, long or short.’ – ‘One cannot point to the wind like that. For the wind does not lend itself to being grasped with the hands, or to being touched. But nevertheless there is such a thing as “wind”.’ – ‘If one cannot point to the wind, one might conclude that there is no wind at all.’ – ‘But I know, Nagasena, that there is wind, I am quite convinced of it, in spite of the fact that I cannot point it out.’ – ‘Just so, your majesty, there is Nirvana, but one cannot point to Nirvana, either by its colour or its shape.’ – ‘Very good, Nagasena. Clear is the simile, convincing is the argument. So it is, and so I accept it: there is a Nirvana.’

4d The saints and their bodies

The king asked: ‘Does someone who is no more reborn feel any unpleasant feelings?’ – The Elder replied: ‘Some he feels, and others not.’ – ‘Which ones does he feel, and which ones not?’ – ‘He feels physical, but not mental pain.’ – ‘How is that?’ – ‘The causes and conditions which produce feelings of physical pain have not ceased to operate, whereas those which produce feelings of mental pain have. And so it has been said by the Lord: “Only one kind of feelings he feels, physical, and not mental.”’ – ‘And when he feels a physical pain, why does he not escape into final Nirvana, by dying quickly?’ – ‘An Arhat has no more likes or dislikes. Arhats do not shake down the unripe fruit, the wise wait for it to mature. And so it has been said by the Elder Sariputra, the Dharma’s general:

“It is not death, it is not life I cherish.
I bide my time, a servant waiting for his wage.
It is not death, it is not life I cherish.
I bide my time, in mindfulness and wisdom steeped.”

‘Well put, Nagasena!’

The king asked: ‘Is the body dear to you recluses?’ – ‘No, it is not.’ – ‘But why then do you look after it, and cherish it so?’ – ‘Has your majesty somewhere and at some time in the course of a battle been wounded by an arrow?’ – ‘Yes, that has happened.’ – ‘In such cases, is not the wound anointed with salve, smeared with oil, and bandaged with fine linen?’ – ‘Yes, so it is.’ – ‘Is then this treatment a sign that the wound is dear to your majesty?’ – ‘No, it is not dear to me, but all this is done to it so that the flesh may grow again.’ – ‘Just so the body is not dear to the recluses. Without being attached to the body they take care of it for the purpose of making a holy life possible. The Lord has compared the body to a wound, so the recluses take care for the body as for a wound, without being attached to it. For the Lord has said:

“A damp skin hides it, but it is a wound, large, with nine openings,
All around it oozes impure and evil-smelling matter.”

‘Well answered, Nagasena!’

The king asked: 'What is the difference between someone with greed and someone without greed?' – 'The one is attached, the other unattached.' – 'What does that mean?' – 'The one covets, the other does not.' – 'As I see it, the greedy person and the one who is free from greed both wish for agreeable food, and neither of them wishes for bad food.' – 'But the one who is not free from greed eats his food while experiencing both its taste and some greed for tastes; the one who is free from greed eats his food while experiencing its taste, but without having any greed for it.' – 'Very good, Nagasena!'

The king asked: 'For what reason does the common worldling suffer both physical and mental pain?' – 'Became his thought is so undeveloped. He is like a hungry and excited ox, who has been tied up with a weak, fragile and short piece of straw or creeper, and who, when agitated, rushes off, taking his tether with him. So, someone whose thought is undeveloped, gets agitated in his mind when a pain arises in him, and his agitated mind bends and contorts his body, and makes it writhe. Undeveloped in his mind he trembles, shrieks, and cries with terror. This is the reason why the common worldling suffers both physical and mental pain.' – 'And what is the reason why Arhats feel only one kind of feelings, physical and not mental?' – 'The thought of the Arhats is developed, well developed, it is tamed, well tamed, it is obedient and disciplined. When invaded by a painful feeling, the Arhat firmly grasps at the idea of its impermanence, and ties his thought to the post of contemplation. And his thought, tied to the post of contemplation, does not tremble or shake, remains steadfast and undisturbed. But the disturbing influence of the pain, nevertheless, makes his body bend, contorts it, makes it writhe.'

'That, Nagasena, is indeed a most wonderful thing in this world, that someone's mind should remain unshaken when his body is shaken. Tell me the reason for that!' – 'Suppose, your majesty, that there is a gigantic tree, with trunk, branches, and leaves. If it were hit by the force of the wind, its branches would shake, but would the trunk also shake?' – 'No, Venerable Sir!' – 'Just so the thought of the Arhat does not tremble or shake, like the trunk of the gigantic tree.' – 'Wonderful, Nagasena, most admirable, Nagasena!'

5 Conclusion

The king, as a result of his discussions with the Venerable Nagasena, was overjoyed and humbled; he saw the value in the Buddha's religion, gained confidence in the Triple Jewel, lost his spikiness and obstinacy, gained faith in the qualities of the Elder – in his observation of the monastic rules, his spiritual progress and his general demeanour – became trusting and resigned, free from conceit and arrogance. Like a cobra whose fangs have been drawn, he said: 'Well said, well said, Nagasena! You have answered my questions, which would have given scope to a Buddha, you have answered them well! Apart from the Elder Sariputra, the supreme general of the Dharma, there is no one in this religion of the Buddha who can deal with questions as well as you do. Forgive my transgressions, Nagasena! May the Venerable Nagasena accept me as a lay-follower, as one who takes his refuge with the Triple Jewel, from to-day onwards, as long as I shall live!'

The Deer Park Sermon (pages 186-187)

Wisdom

The four Holy Truths

What then is the Holy Truth of Ill? Birth is ill, decay is ill, sickness is ill, death is ill. To be conjoined with what one dislikes means suffering. To be disjoined from what one likes means suffering. Not to get what one wants, also that means suffering. In short, all grasping at any of the five Skandhas involves suffering.

What then is the Holy Truth of the Origination of Ill? It is that craving which leads to rebirth, accompanied by delight and greed, seeking its delight now here, now there, ie craving for sensuous experience, craving to perpetuate oneself, craving for extinction.

What then is the Holy Truth of the Stopping of Ill? It is the complete stopping of that craving, the withdrawal from it, the renouncing of it, throwing it back, liberation from it, non-attachment to it.

What then is the Holy Truth of the steps which lead to the stopping of Ill? It is this holy eightfold Path, which consists of right view, right intentions, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

Part of the Lotus Sutra (pages 197-211)

Mahayana polemics against the Hinayana

The Lord thereupon emerged mindful and self-possessed from his trance, and he addressed the Venerable Sariputra as follows: 'Profound, hard to understand is the Buddha-cognition to which the Tathagatas have awoken. All Disciples and Pratyekabuddhas must find it hard to discern. And why? Because the Tathagatas in the course of their career have honoured countless Buddhas, and from innumerable Buddhas have they learned how to course towards the supreme enlightenment. They have arrived from afar, they have shown immense vigour, they are endowed with wonderful and astonishing dharmas that are hard to discern, and they also enjoin dharmas which are hard to discern.

'Hard to discern, Sariputra, is the hidden teaching of the Tathagatas. And why? Because they reveal dharmas and their causes by employing various skilful means, based on their cognition and vision. They show up causes, adduce reasons, give explanations, point to objective facts, define their terms, and use various concepts. These are the kind of skilful means they employ to release beings who have got stuck here or there. The Tathagatas have reached the highest perfection in vision, cognition, and skill in means. They are endowed with such wonderful dharmas as the unfettered and unobstructed cognition and vision, the ten Powers, the four Grounds of Self-confidence, the eighteen special Buddhadharmas and they possess all the cardinal virtues, even to the highest degree, all the limbs of enlightenment, the trances, the deliverances, the concentrations and Transic attainments. And manifold are the dharmas which they reveal. Greatly wonderful, truly astonishing are the Tathagatas. Enough, Sariputra let us be content with saying that the Tathagatas are supremely wonderful! And a Tathagata will naturally demonstrate a Tathagata's dharmas, those dharmas which a Tathagata cognizes. In fact, a Tathagata will demonstrate all dharmas, for he cognizes them all. What these dharmas are, how they are, of what kind they are, what mark they have, what own-being they have – all that the Tathagata alone sees before his own eyes and it is manifest to him.'

Thereupon it occurred to the great Disciples in that assembly, to Ajnatakaundinya and the others, to the 1,200 Arhats who were freed from the outflows and in full control of themselves, and to the others who belonged to the vehicle of the Disciples, whether they were monks, nuns, laymen, or laywomen, and also to those who had set out in the vehicle of the Pratyekabuddhas: 'What may be the cause, what the reason, why the Lord so excessively extols the skill in means of the Tathagatas? Why should he tell us that the dharma to which he has awoken is profound, and that for all Disciples and Pratyekabuddhas it is hard to discern? So far the Lord has proclaimed only one kind of emancipation. Should we then also acquire the Buddhadharmas, even after we have won Nirvana? We just do not understand the meaning of what the Lord has said'.

The Venerable Sariputra, reading the mind of the assembly, knew of the doubts and uncertainties present in it; he himself also had become perplexed about the Dharma, and so he said to the Lord: 'What, O Lord, is the cause, what the reason why the Lord repeatedly so greatly extols the demonstration of Dharma by the Tathagatas, their vision, cognition, and skill in means? Why does he say so emphatically that "this Dharma which I have known is very profound", that "my hidden teaching is hard to discern"? Never before have I heard such a discourse on Dharma from the Lord. Many in this assembly have their doubts and uncertainties. It were good if the Lord were to explain what the Tathagata has in mind when he so emphatically extols the profundity of the Tathagata's Dharma.' Three times the Venerable Sariputra asked the Lord. Then the Lord replied: 'Listen well, Sariputra, and be attentive! I will explain it to you!'

Scarcely had the Lord spoken when in that assembly five thousand conceited monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen rose from their seats, saluted the Lord's feet with their heads, and left the assembly. It was the bad trait of conceit which made them believe that they had attained what in fact they had not yet attained, that they had already achieved what in fact they had not yet achieved. At heart, however, they knew their shortcomings, and so they decided to leave the assembly. And the Lord said to the Venerable Sariputra: 'My congregation is now free of chaff. Freed from the rotten wood, its core now stands firmly established in unwavering faith. It is good, Sariputra, that those conceited people have left. Now I will explain my meaning.' 'Well said, O Lord,' said the Venerable Sariputra, and listened to the Lord in silence.

'Hear from me, son of Sari, how this Dharma has been fully known by the best of men, and how the enlightened leaders teach it through many hundreds of skilful means. Of innumerable living beings, so varied in their inclination, I know the dispositions and conducts, for I have a knowledge of the various deeds they have done in the past, and of the merit they then acquire. With manifold explanations and reasonings I cause these beings to reach a greater spirituality; with hundreds of arguments and illustrations I gratify all beings, some in this way, some in that. At one time I have taught them the nine-fold Scripture, which is composed of the "Sutras", the "Verses", the section called "Thus was it said", the "Birth-stories", the "Marvels", the "Origins", the sections consisting of mingled prose and verse, the "Expositions", and hundreds of Similes in addition. Therein I exhibit Nirvana to those kinds of people who are content with inferior things, who are relatively ignorant, who have not for very long practised under the Buddhas of the past, and who have got stuck in the Samsaric world and suffer greatly from it. This is really only a skilful device by which the Self-Existent wishes to prepare them for the day when he can awake them to the cognition of a Buddha. But nevertheless, in these Scriptures he never tells them directly that they also ought to become Buddhas in this world. And why did he not do so? Because the Saviour speaks only after he has paid attention to the proper time for doing so, and when he has perceived that the right moment has come. To-day for some reason the moment has arrived when I can teach the real final truth. The nine-fold Scripture adjusted the teachings to those who are none too strong; I revealed them as a device by which I hoped to lead people on to the cognition of a Boon-giver, of a fully enlightened Buddha.

'But there are now here before me sons of the Buddha, who are pure in all ways, wise, virtuous, and gentle, and who have done their duties under many millions of Buddhas. To them I now teach Sutras more advanced than the nine-fold Scripture. For they have become so perfect in their resolution and so pure in their whole being that I can announce to them that in a future period they shall become Buddhas, for the benefit and out of compassion for the world. On hearing that they shall become Buddhas who will work the weal of the world they are filled with radiant joy. When I perceived their reaction to my announcement, I am further encouraged in revealing to them new, more advanced, Sutras. Those are the true disciples of the Great Leaders who have learnt this highest Scripture of mine. One single stanza of it, learnt and borne in mind, suffices to lead them all to enlightenment. That permits of no doubt.

'There is only one single vehicle. A second does not exist, and there is no third anywhere in the world. It is only through a device of the Supreme Persons that a multiplicity of vehicles has been exhibited. It is for the purpose of revealing the cognition of a Buddha that the Saviour of the World has risen in the world. This is his one and only task, and he has no other. The Buddhas never guide anyone to an inferior vehicle. Wherein the Self-Existent himself is established, in that very position he also establishes other beings – so that they may cognize that which he cognized, and just as he cognized it, so that they may have his powers, his trances, his deliverances, and his faculties. I would be guilty of the vice of niggardliness if, after winning the spotless supreme enlightenment, I established even one single being in an inferior vehicle. That would not be the proper thing for me to do. No niggardliness whatsoever can be found in me, no envy either, and the urge of greed has ceased in me. All evil dharmas have in me

been cut out. Therefore I am a Buddha, and I have comprehended the world. When I illuminate this entire world with the splendour of my thirty-two Marks, attended by many hundreds of living beings, then I show, by what I am, the true stamp of the own-being of dharmas. And, Sariputra, I think to myself, "How can all beings be made to become bearers of the thirty-two Marks, self-luminous, knowers of the world, self-existent?" And as I look around, and reflect about this intention of mine, then, after my vow has been accomplished and I have won enlightenment, I nevertheless do not proclaim the supreme enlightenment as the aim others should strive for. Because, if I would urge beings to strive for supreme enlightenment, they would all in their ignorance become quite perplexed about my advice, and they would never grasp what I had said, however well said it might be. I must always consider what kind of people I know them to be: they have not practised for long in their past lives, they are perpetually bent on sense-pleasures and attached to sense-objects, and their minds are full of craving and stupefied by delusion. As a result of their sensuous enjoyments they tumble into the States of woe; in all the six States of existence they are perpetually harassed; again and again they augment the cemeteries; they are oppressed by ill, and their merit is but small. They are invariably entangled in the thickets of false views, and believe of something that "it is" or "is not", that "it is so" or that "it is not so". Relying on the sixty-two Heretical Views, they accept falsehood as true reality, and persist in their convictions. They are nearly incorrigible, conceited, deceitful, crooked, dishonest, badly informed, and foolish. Even in the course of countless births they could never hear and appreciate the call to Buddhahood. To them, Sariputra, I say by way of a skilful device, "Make an end of ill!" It was because I saw beings oppressed by ill, that I held out Nirvana to them, the state where ill has ceased.

'But now I teach you the real truth which is that all these dharmas have been quite calm from the very beginning, that they are at peace at all times! And the son of the Buddha who completes his practice, in a future period he shall become a Jina! It is only my skill in means which made me exhibit three vehicles. In fact, there is only one single vehicle, only one single method, and there is only one single instruction by the Leaders. Leave all doubts and uncertainties behind! And if any of you should still feel doubts, remember that the Guides of the World unfailingly speak the truth: There is only one single vehicle, and a second there is not.'

The Buddha now predicts Sariputra's future Buddhahood (see *Buddhist Texts*, 122). The Venerable Sariputra then says: 'Free from doubt I am now, O Lord, free from perplexity, now that I have heard from the Lord himself that I also am destined for the supreme enlightenment of a Buddha. But there are these 2,000 self-controlled disciples, whom the Lord has in days gone by placed on the stage of those who are in training, and they were then instructed and admonished that "this My Dharma and Discipline terminates in the meeting with a Nirvana which has utterly transcended all birth, ageing, sickness and death". And all these two thousand monks, whether they are still in training or whether they are already adepts, are the Lord's disciples, who have all of them abandoned all kinds of false views, have abandoned the view of a self, the view of becoming, the view which looks forward to the cessation of becoming. They had formed the idea that they themselves had stood on the level of Nirvana. Now they have heard from the Lord this new Dharma, which they had not heard before, and in consequence they have been assailed by doubts. Do, O Lord, please speak to these monks, so as to dispel their regrets about having misunderstood you. In that way these four classes of the assembly will become free from hesitations, free from doubts.'

The Lord replied to the Venerable Sariputra: 'Have I not explained to you before, Sariputra, that the Tathagata demonstrates Dharma in such a way that he first notes the capacities and intentions of beings, who differ so greatly in their dispositions and inclinations. Then he employs, by way of his skill in means, various methods for demonstrating his meaning, and uses many arguments, reasons, definitions, and explanations. But it is precisely the supreme enlightenment that all his demonstrations of Dharma are concerned with, and he instigates all people to use the vehicle of the Bodhisattvas. It will be best for me to tell you a parable, so that this matter might become clearer. For comparisons often help discerning people to understand the meaning of what is being taught.

'In some village, city, market town, country district, province, kingdom, or capital there lived a householder, old, advanced in years, decrepit, weak in health and strength, but rich, wealthy, and well-to-do. His house was a large one, both extensive and high, and it was old, having been built a long time ago. It was inhabited by many living beings, some two, three, four, or five hundred. It had one single door only. It was thatched with straw, its terraces had fallen down, its foundations were rotten, its walls, matting-screens, and plaster were in an advanced state of decay. Suddenly a great blaze of fire broke out, and the house started burning on all sides. And that man had many young sons, five, or ten, or twenty, and he himself got out of the house.

‘When that man saw his own house ablaze all around with that great mass of fire, he became afraid and trembled, his mind became agitated, and he thought to himself: “I, it is true, have been competent enough to run out of the door, and to escape from my burning house, quickly and safely, without being touched or scorched by that great mass of fire. But what about my sons, my young boys, my little sons? There, in this burning house, they play, sport, and amuse themselves with all sorts of games. They do not know that this dwelling is afire, they do not understand it, do not perceive it, pay no attention to it, and so they feel no agitation. Though threatened by this great mass of fire, though in such close contact with so much ill, they pay no attention to their danger, and make no efforts to get out.”

‘And this man, being strong, with powerful arms, further thinks to himself: “With my strong arms I can carry all these little sons of mine in one bunch against my chest out of that house.” But then he had second thoughts: “This house has only one single door, and that is a narrow one; these boys, thoughtless, fickle, and childlike as they are, are sure to flutter about all over the place, and that way they may well come to misfortune and disaster in this great mass of fire.” So he decided to warn them, and called out: “Come here, my boys, come out of the house! It is burning fiercely. If you do not come soon, you will all be burned in that great mass of fire, and come to misfortune and disaster!” But the young boys paid no heed to the words of that man who had only their welfare at heart. They did not become agitated, frightened, alarmed, or terrified; they did not think about their lot, they did not try to run out. They could not even appreciate or understand what the word “burning” meant. Instead, they just ran here and there, and in their foolishness repeatedly looked out at their father.

‘Then this man thinks again: “This house is all ablaze, the great mass of fire is burning it down. How can I prevent further disaster for myself and my boys? Perhaps with my skill in means I can drive these boys out of the house.” And that man knows the dispositions of his boys, and is aware of their interests. Now these boys have many toys to play with - beautiful, attractive, lovely, pleasing, delightful, and costly toys. And, knowing the disposition of his boys, the man said to them: “Listen, my boys! Think of your beautiful and wonderful toys, without which you would be very unhappy! Think of all the various things you love so much, carts, goat-carts, and deer-carts, which you love so much, which are so dear, pleasing, and precious to you! All of them I have put outside the door of the house, so that you can play with them. Come here, run out of the house! To each one of you I will give whatever he wants and asks for. Come out quickly, run out so that you can get them!” Thereupon those boys, when they heard their father speak of those attractive, lovely, pleasing, and delightful playthings which they delighted in, and which were what they wished for and fancied, quickly ran out of that burning house with a determined effort and in one great rush, and they pushed each other out of the way and showed little consideration for one another, because each one wanted to get there first.

‘When that man saw that his boys had escaped, and were safe and sound, and knew that there was nothing to fear for them any more, he took a walk to the village square, and sat down there, jubilant and rejoicing, freed from his sorrows, worries, and fears. But the boys ran up to their father, and said: “Daddy, give us those various beautiful things to play with, those bullock-carts, and deer-carts!” Thereupon, Sariputra, that man gives to all his sons, in his love for his own children, the very finest of all carts, that is to say, ox-carts, swift as the wind, built of the most precious substances, with railings all round, hung with a net-work of small bells, lofty and high, adorned with rare and wonderful gems, embellished with jewel wreaths, decorated with garlands of flowers, carpeted with cotton mattresses and woollen coverlets spread over with fine cloth, both sides padded with red pillows, yoked to white oxen, snow-white and fleet of foot, which were driven along by a multitude of servants. To all his boys he gives ox-carts with fluttering banners, swift as the wind, all of the same kind, all of the same sort. And why? Because that man is wealthy and very rich, with an abundance of gold, silver, and treasures stored away, and he would not think it right to give second-rate carts to these boys. “For they all are my own sons, they are all dear and precious to me. And since I own all these fine carts, I should treat all the boys equally, and not prefer one to the other. I have so great wealth and such vast possessions that I could well give such fine carts to all beings, how much more so to my own sons!”

‘Meanwhile the boys, amazed and astonished, have climbed on their fine carts. What do you think, Sariputra; could one say of that man that he spoke falsely when he first held out three kinds of carts to these boys, and later on gave all of them the finest kind of vehicle only, the most magnificent kind of vehicle?’

Sariputra replied: 'Not so, O Lord! Not so, O Well-Gone! That man cannot be charged with speaking falsely, since it was only a skilful device by which he managed to get his sons out of that burning building, and to present them with life. And it was only because their own bodies were first rescued that they could later on receive all those toys to play with. Even if the man had not given any carts at all to the boys, even then, O Lord, he could not be charged with falsehood. It was because he had merely considered how to save the boys by some skilful device from that great mass of fire that he was not guilty of falsehood. And in addition he has drawn on his abundant wealth and possessions, and in his fondness for his sons and in celebration of their release he has given them all vehicles of one kind, that is to say, the finest kind of vehicles. That man, O Lord, is certainly not guilty of falsehood!'

The Lord thereupon said to the Venerable Sariputra: 'Well said, Sariputra, well said, so it is, Sariputra, so it is as you say! And this is the meaning of the parable I have just told you: The Tathagata has himself escaped from all dangers, he is entirely and in all ways set free from all that smothers other people, from the darkening and obscuring membrane of ignorance which blinds others, and from all misfortunes, perturbations, calamities, pain, and sadness. The Tathagata is endowed with gnosis, with the ten Powers, the four Grounds of self-confidence, and the eighteen Special dharmas of a Buddha. As a result of his miraculous powers he is the world's exceedingly powerful father, great in his skill in means, and he has reached the greatest possible perfection in his cognition and vision; he is greatly compassionate, and his mind never wearies of bestowing benefits, so great is his pity. He appears in the Triple world, which is like a generally decayed old house with an old thatched roof, and aflame with the fire of a vast mass of physical and mental suffering. His purpose is to set free from greed, hate, and delusion the beings in the world who are blinded by the darkening and obscuring membrane of ignorance, and who are smothered by birth, old age, sickness, death, grief, lamentation, pain, sadness, and despair; and furthermore it is his purpose to rouse them to the highest enlightenment. When he has appeared in the world, he sees beings inflamed by the fire of birth, and so on, and cooked, scorched, and tormented by it; and he sees how they have to endure many kinds of suffering, from their efforts to acquire property as well as from the promptings of their sensuous desires. As a result of what they have sought and acquired in this life they experience manifold ills in a future life – in the hells, in the animal world, in the world of Yama; they suffer such ills as poverty among gods and men, association with undesirable things, deprivation of what they wish for. And yet, in spite of the fact that they revolve in this mass of ill, they play, sport, and amuse themselves, they are not frightened, alarmed, or terrified, they do not understand their situation, they do not try to escape, but are quite contented with this Triple world, which is like a house on fire, and they run about in it here and there. Although hemmed in on all sides by this vast mass of ill they do not pay any attention to the fact of ill.

'Seeing all this, the Tathagata thinks to himself: "I am indeed the father of these beings. It is I who must set them free from this vast mass of ills, it is I who must give to them the infinite and inconceivable happiness of the Buddha-cognition, which shall be their play, sport and amusement." And he further reflects that "If I, strong in cognition and magical power, but without skill in means, should promise to these beings the cognition and vision of a Tathagata, his ten Powers and his four Grounds of self-confidence, they will never set out for the sake of these dharmas. For they are bent on the five kinds of sense-objects, they are not yet freed of their fondness for the Triple world, and they will continue to be burned, boiled, scorched, and tormented by the fires of birth, and so on. Before they have run out of the Triple world, which is like a badly decayed house all in flames, they cannot possibly understand what this Buddha-cognition means." As that man in the parable, without using the strength of his arms, induces by his skill in means these boys to get out of the burning house, and thereafter gives them the finest, gives them truly magnificent vehicles; just so the Tathagata, without using a Tathagata's Grounds of self-confidence, Powers and cognition, employs his skill in means coupled with deep insight to drive beings out of the Triple world, which is like a burning house, and he holds out three vehicles to them, ie the vehicle of the Disciples, the vehicle of the Pratyekabuddhas, and the vehicle of the Bodhisattvas. And with the help of these three vehicles he entices beings away from the world, and he says to them: "Do not, Venerable Sirs! be satisfied in this Triple world, which is like a house on fire, with those ignoble, low and contemptible sight-objects, sounds, smells, tastes and contacts! For as long as you delight in this Triple world, for so long you burn with the thirst which accompanies the five sense-objects, you are scorched and tormented by it. Flee from this Triple world, reach out for the three vehicles, ie the vehicle of the Disciples, the vehicle of the Pratyekabuddhas, the vehicle of the Bodhisattvas. I give you my word on this point, I shall give you these three vehicles; climb on them so that you may escape from the Triple world!" And so as to entice them further, he adds: "These vehicles, my friends, are noble, lauded by noble men, and very lovely: play, sport and amuse yourselves with them, Venerable Sirs! and that will be a high-class form of amusement for you! You will

then experience the great delight of the cardinal virtues, the powers, the limbs of enlightenment, the trances, emancipations and Transic attainments, and you shall find much happiness and joy!”

‘And the more intelligent people have faith in the words of the Tathagata, who is the world’s father. In their faith they apply themselves to the Tathagata’s religion, and make efforts to carry out his advice. Some of them prefer to hearken (*srava*) to the authoritative voice of a teacher, and by a thorough understanding of the four holy Truths, hope to win final Nirvana for themselves. They are the ones who escape from the Triple world in the expectation of the vehicle of the Disciples (*sravaka*), and they correspond to the boys who ran out of the burning building in the hope of getting the smallest of all carts, those drawn by deer. Others again prefer to strive for a cognition which brings self-discipline and calm, owes nothing to a teacher, and by a through understanding of causes and conditions (*pratyaya*) they hope to win final Nirvana for themselves. They are the ones who escape from the Triple world in the expectation of the vehicle of the Pratyekabuddhas, and they correspond to the boys who longed for the medium kind of carts, those drawn by goats. Others again prefer to strive for the condition of the all-knowing, the cognition of a Buddha, the cognition of the Self-Existent, a cognition which also dispenses with a teacher, and by a thorough understanding of a Tathagata’s cognition, Powers and Grounds of self-confidence they hope to win final Nirvana for all beings – for the sake of the many, for their welfare and happiness, out of pity for the world, for the weal, welfare and happiness of a great mass of people, be they gods or men. They are those who escape from the Triple world in the expectation of the great vehicle, and for that reason they are called “Bodhisattvas, great beings”. And they correspond to the boys who longed for the finest carts, for bullock-carts.

‘Just as, Sariputra, that man, when he saw that his sons had escaped from the burning house, when he knew that they were safe and sound, that they were set free and that there was nothing to fear for them any more, and when he considered his own great wealth, gave them all just one kind of vehicle, the best kind; just so, Sariputra, the Tathagata sees many millions of beings set free from the Triple world, freed from pain, fear, terror, and calamities. It is because they escaped by the door provided by the Tathagata’s religion that they were freed from all pain, danger, calamity, and vexation, and that they have won the happiness of a Nirvana, which is, however, only provisional. In addition the Tathagata thinks of his vast and abundant store of cognitions, Powers, and Grounds of self-confidence, and he recollects that all these beings are his own sons, and so further leads them on to final Nirvana by the Buddha-vehicle. But he does not urge anyone to win a private Nirvana just for himself; on the contrary, he leads all those beings to a final Nirvana which is all-embracing, which is the Tathagata’s own Nirvana. And, Sariputra, to all the beings who have been set free from the Triple world the Tathagata gives lovely toys of the same kind, he gives them the trances, emancipations and Transic attainments to play with, which are noble and conducive to the highest happiness. And, Sariputra, just as that man told no falsehood when, after holding out three kinds of vehicles, he gave all his boys just one kind of vehicle, a great vehicle, built of the most precious substances, adorned with all kinds of ornaments, just the best and finest vehicle of all - just so the Tathagata also has spoken no falsehood when, after first, in his skill in means, holding out the three kinds of vehicles, afterwards he leads beings to final Nirvana by the great vehicle alone. For the Tathagata, endowed with an abundant store of cognitions, Powers and Grounds of self-confidence, has the capacity to exhibit to all beings the Dharma which is connected with the cognition of the all-knowing. It is in this manner that we should understand how the Tathagata, with his consummate skill in means, demonstrates one vehicle only, ie the great vehicle.’

Christianity

Cyprian of Carthage, quoted in *The Christian Theology Reader* – editor McGrath A (Blackwell, 1995), page 261

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In this discussion of the unity of the Church written in 251, Cyprian stresses the indivisibility of the catholic church and its essential role in obtaining salvation. Salvation is not possible outside the church. It is not possible to have God as your father unless you have the church as your mother.

This unity we ought to hold and preserve, especially the bishops who preside in the Church, so that we may demonstrate that the episcopate itself is united and undivided. Let no one deceive the brotherhood with falsehood or corrupt our faith in the truth by faithless transgression. The episcopate is one, and each [individual member] has a part in the whole. The Church is one, and by her fertility she has extended by degree into many. In the same way, the sun has many rays, but a single light; a tree has many branches but a single trunk resting on a deep root; and many streams flow out from a single source. However many spread out from the source, it retains its unity. Cut off a ray from the orb of the sun; the unity of light cannot be divided. Break off a branch from the tree, and the broken branch cannot come into bud. Sever the stream from its source, and the severed section will dry up. So it is also with the Church. She is flooded with the light of the Lord, and extends her rays over all the globe. Yet it is the one light which is diffused everywhere, without breaking up the unity of the body. She stretches forth her branches over the whole earth in rich abundance; she spreads widely her flowing streams. Yet there is but one head, one source, one mother, abounding in the increase of her fruitfulness. We are born of her womb, we are nourished by her milk, and we are given life from her breath.

The bride of Christ cannot be made an adulteress; she is undefiled and chaste. She has one home, and guards with virtuous chastity the sanctity of one chamber. She serves us for God, who enrolls into his kingdom the Children to whom she gives birth. Anyone who cuts themselves off from the Church and is joined to an adulteress is separated from the promises of the Church, and anyone who leaves the Church of Christ behind cannot benefit from the rewards of Christ. Such people are strangers, outcasts, and enemies. You cannot have God as father unless you have the Church as mother.

This sacrament of unity, this inseparable bond of peace is shown in the gospel when the robe of the Lord Jesus Christ was neither divided at all or torn, but they cast lots for the clothing of Christ ... so the clothing was received whole and the robe was taken unspoilt and undivided... That garment signifies the unity which comes 'from the part above' that is, from heaven and from the Father, a unity which could not be torn at all by those who received and possessed it, but was taken undivided in all its unbreakable entirety. Anyone who rends and divides the Church of Christ cannot possess the clothing of Christ.

Thomas Aquinas, quoted in *The Christian Theology Reader* – editor McGrath A (Blackwell, 1995), page 264

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Concerning the third point, it is known that the church is catholic, ie universal, first with respect to place because it is throughout the entire world, ... See Romans 1:8 'your faith is proclaimed in the whole world'; Mark 16:15 'go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.' In ancient times God was known only in Judea, but now throughout the entire world. This church, moreover, has three parts. One is on earth, another is in heaven, and the third is in purgatory. Secondly, the church is universal with respect to the condition of people, because no-one is rejected, whether master or slave, male or female. See Galatians 3:28: 'There is neither male nor female.' Thirdly, it is universal with respect to time. For some have said that the church should last until a certain time, but this is false, because this church began from the time of Abel and will last to the end of the world. See Matthew 28:20 'And I am with you always to the close of the age.' And after the close of the age it will remain in heaven.

Martin Luther, quoted in *The Christian Theology Reader* – editor McGrath A (Blackwell, 1995), pages 265-266

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First, this holy Christian people is to be recognised as having possession of the holy word of God, even if all do not possess it in equal measure, as St Paul says [1 Corinthians 3:12-14]. Some possess it completely purely, others not so purely. Those who possess it purely are called those who ‘build on the foundation with gold, silver and precious stones’, those who do not possess it purely are those who ‘build on the foundation with wood, hay and straw,’ and yet will be saved through fire. More than enough was said about this above. This is the main thing, and the most holy thing of all, by reason of which the Christian people are called holy; for God’s word is holy and sanctifies everything it connects with; it is indeed the very holiness of God [Romans 1:16] ‘It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith,’ and 1 Timothy 4:5 ‘Everything is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.’ For the Holy Spirit himself administers it and anoints or sanctifies the Christian church with it, and not with the pope’s chrism, with which he anoints or consecrates fingers, clothes, cloaks, chalices and stones. These objects will never teach one to love God, to believe, to praise, or to be pious. They may adorn this bag of maggots, but afterwards they fall apart and decay, along with the chrism and whatever holiness it contains, and the bag of maggots itself.

Yet this holy thing is the true holy thing, the true anointing that anoints with eternal life, even though you may not have the papal crown or the bishop’s hat, but will die bare and naked, just like children [as we all are] who are baptised naked and without any such adornment. But we are speaking of the external word, preached orally by people like you and me, for this is what Christ left behind as an external sign, by which his church, or his Christian people in the world, should be recognised. We also speak of this external word as it is sincerely believed and openly confessed before the world, as Christ says, ‘Everyone who acknowledges me before people, I also will acknowledge before my Father and his angels’ Matthew 10:32. There are many who know it in their hearts, but do not profess it openly. Many possess it but do not believe in it or act on it, for the number of those who believe in it and act on it is small. The parable of the seed [Matthew 13:4-8] says that three sections of the field receive and contain the seed, but only the fourth section, the fine and good soil, bears fruit with patience.

Now, anywhere you see or hear such a word preached, believed, confessed, and acted upon, do not doubt that the true *ecclesia sancta catholica*, ‘a holy Christian people’ must be there, even though there are very few of them. For God’s word ‘shall not return empty’ [Isaiah 55:11] but must possess at least a fourth or a part of the field. And even if there were no other sign than this alone, it would be enough to prove that a holy Christian people must exist there, for God’s word cannot be without God’s people and conversely, God’s people cannot be without God’s word. For who would preach the word, or hear it preached, if there were no people of God? And what could or would God’s people believe, if there were no word of God?

The Barmen Declaration, quoted in *Resistance and Conformity in the Third Reich* – Housden M (Routledge, 1997), pages 48-49

© Resistance and Conformity in the Third Reich by Martyn Housden, Taylor and Francis Group

1 'I am the way and the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.' John 14:6

Jesus Christ, as he testified to us in the Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God, which we are to hear, which we are to trust and obey in life and in death.

We repudiate the false teaching that the church can and must recognise other happenings and powers, personalities and truths as divine revelation alongside this one Word of God, as a source of her preaching.

2 'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' 1 Corinthians 1:30

Just as Jesus Christ is the pledge of the forgiveness of all our sins, just so, and with the same earnestness – is he also God's mighty claim on our whole life; in him we encounter a joyous liberation from the godless claims of this world to free and thankful service to his creatures.

We repudiate the false teaching that there are areas of our life in which we belong not to Jesus Christ but another lord, areas in which we do not need justification and sanctification through him.

3 'But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body is fitly joined together and compacted...' Ephesians 4:15-16

The Christian Church is the community of the brethren, in which Jesus Christ presently works in the word and sacraments through the Holy Spirit. With her faith as well as her obedience, with her message as well as her ordinances, she has to witness in the midst of the world of sin as the Church of forgiven sinners that she is his alone, that she lives and wishes to live only by his comfort and his counsel in expectation of his appearance.

We repudiate the false teaching that the Church can turn over the form of the message and ordinances at will or according to some dominant ideological and political convictions.

4 'Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.' Matthew 20:25-26

The various offices of the Church establish no rule of one over the other but the exercise of the service entrusted and commanded to the whole congregation.

We repudiate the false teaching that the Church can and may, apart from this ministry, set up or accept special leaders equipped with powers to rule.

5 'Fear God, honour the king!' 1 Peter 2:17

We repudiate the false teaching that the state can and should expand beyond its special responsibility to become the single and total order of human life, and also thereby fulfil the commission of the Church.

We repudiate the false teaching that the Church can and should expand beyond its special responsibility to take on the characteristics, functions and dignities of the State, and thereby become itself an organ of the State.

6 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' Matthew 28:20 'The word of God is not bound' II Timothy 2:9.

We repudiate the false teaching that the Church, in human self-esteem, can put the word and work of the Lord in the service of some wishes, purposes, and plans or other, chosen according to desire.

The primary task of the Church, as we have said, is to celebrate with joy the salvific action of the Lord in history. In the creation of fellowship implied and signified by this celebration, the Church, taken as a whole, plays a role which is unique, but varies according to historical circumstances.

In Latin America to be Church today means to take a clear position regarding both the present state of social injustice and the revolutionary process which is attempting to abolish that injustice and build a more human order. The first step is to recognise that in reality a stand has already been taken the Church is tied to the prevailing social system. In many places the church contributes to creating 'a Christian order' and to giving a kind of sacred character to a situation which is not only alienating but is the worst kind of violence – a situation which pits the powerful against the weak. The protection which the Church receives from the social class which is the beneficiary and defender of the prevailing capitalist society in Latin America has made the institutional church into a part of the system and the Christian message into a part of the dominant ideology. Any claim to non-involvement in politics – a banner recently hoisted by the conservative sectors – is nothing but a subterfuge to keep things as they are. The mission of the Church cannot be defined in the abstract. Its historical and social coordinates, its here and now, have a bearing not only on the adequacy of its pastoral methods. They also should be at the very heart of its theological reflection.

The Church – with variations according to different countries - has an obvious social influence in Latin America. Without overestimating it, we must recognise that numerous facts have demonstrated this influence, even up to the present day. This influence had contributed and continues to contribute to supporting the established order. But this is no longer the entire picture. The situation has begun to change. The change is slow and still very fragile, but in this change are involved growing and active minorities of the Latin American Christian community. The process is not irreversible, but is gradually gaining strength. It is still afflicted with many ambiguities, but the initial experiences are beginning to provide the criteria by which these ambiguities can be resolved. Within these groups – as might have been expected – there has arisen a question; on its answer will depend to a large degree the concrete path to be followed. The question is: Should the change consist in the Church using its social influence to effect the necessary transformations? Some fear a kind of 'Constantinianism of the Left', and believe that the Church should divest itself of every vestige of political power. This fear is opportune because it points out a genuine risk which we must keep in mind. But we believe that the best way to achieve this divestment of power is precisely by resolutely casting our lot with the oppressed and exploited in the struggle for a more just society. The groups that control economic and political power will not forgive the Church for this. They will withdraw their support, which is the principal source of the ambiguous social prestige which the church enjoys in Latin America today. Indeed, this has already begun... Rather, the question is in what direction and for what purpose is it going to use its influence: for or against the established order, to preserve the social prestige which comes from its ties to the groups in power or to free itself from that prestige with a break from these groups and with genuine service to the oppressed.

Hinduism

Katha Upanishad, from Hindu Scriptures – Zaehner, R (J M Dent & Sons, 1966),
pages 169-183

© Hindu Scriptures, J M Dent, R C Zaehner, 169-183

I

§ 1. [A certain] Uśan, son of Vajaśravas, gave away all his property. He had a son called Naciketas;

§ 2. And as [the kine to be distributed as] the fee for the sacrifice performed were being brought near, faith entered into him, boy though he was, and he thought:

§ 3. ‘They drink water, eat grass, give milk, insensitive:
Joyless the worlds to which the giver of these must go!’

§ 4. He said to his father, ‘Daddy, to whom will you give *me?*’ [And he said it] a second and a third time. [His father] said to him, ‘I’ll give you to death.’

[Naciketas speaks:]

§ 5. Of many the first to go,
Of many the middlemost,
What is Yama (Death) to do with me,
For today I’m his concern?

§ 6. Look back, [how fared] the first,
Look forward, [how fare] the last:
Like corn a man grows up,
Like corn he’s born again.

§ 7. Like fire a Brāhman guest
Enters a house:
To appease [his fiery anger],
Bring water, [Yama] Vivasvat’s son.

§ 8. Hope and expectation, conviviality and good cheer,
Sacrifice, its merit, sons, cattle,—all of this
The Brāhman wrests away from the man of little wit
In whose house he, nothing eating, dwells.

[Yama, the god of death, returning after three days’ absence and finding that Naciketas has not received the hospitality due to Brāhmans, says:]

§ 9. Since for three nights, O Brāhman, thou hast dwelt
In [this] my house, an honoured guest, [yet] nothing eating,
I now salute thee, Brāhman, may it go well with me.
Three boons [I grant] thee, choose [what thou wilt].

[Naciketas speaks:]

§ 10. Let my father’s ill-will (*samkalpa*) be stilled, let him be well disposed,
Let his anger with me melt away, O Death:
Let him greet me kindly, dismissed by thee;
Of the three boons this the first I choose.

[Yama speaks:]

§ 11. Thy father, Auddālaka Āruni, as before
Will be well pleased [with thee] dismissed by me;¹
His anger spent, how sweet his sleep at night will be,
When he [again] beholds thee from the jaws of Death set free!

¹ Reading *prasṛṣṭe*.

[Naciketas speaks:]

§ 12. In paradise there's no [such thing as] fear;
Thou art not there, nor shrinks one from old age.
Hunger and thirst, these two transcending,
Sorrow surpassing, a man makes merry in paradise.

§ 13. O death, thou understandest the fire that leads to paradise;
Declare it [then] to me, for I have faith:
The heavenly worlds partake of (*bhaj-*) immortality;
This do I choose as my second boon.

[Yama speaks:]

§ 14. This [too] will I declare to thee,—take note of it;
The fire that leads to paradise, I know it well.
Know that [this fire] can win [thee] worlds unending,
It is the ground (*pratiṣṭhā*) [of all], hidden in secret places.

§ 15. [And so] he told him of [this] fire, the world's beginning,
[He told him] of the firebricks, how many and how to be disposed.
And [Naciketas] repeated [all] just as he had said it:
Well satisfied with him Death spake again.

§ 16. [So] great-souled [Death] well pleased, spake to him [again]:
'To thee again today I grant another boon:
This fire shall bear thy name, no other;
Accept this garland² variously contrived.

§ 17. Who thrice performs the Nāciketa rite,
With the three [Vedas] concludes a pact,
And performs the three works [prescribed],
He transcends both birth and death:
Knowing that God adorable who knows
What is from Brahman born,
And realizing Him,
He attains to peace and what is absolute.³

§ 18. Who thrice performs the Nāciketa rite,
And understands all three,
Who, knowing them, builds up the Nāciketa fire,
He thrusts afar Death's fetters, sorrow surpassing,
And makes full merry in the heavenly world.

§ 19. This is the Nāciketa fire, thy very own,
Leading to paradise;
This didst thou choose as thy second boon:
This fire will men proclaim as thine indeed.
Naciketas, [now] thy third boon choose!

[Naciketas speaks:]

§ 20. When a man is dead, this doubt remains:
Some say, 'He is,' others again, 'He is not.'
This would I know, by thee instructed,—
This is the third of the boons [I crave].

[Yama speaks:]

§ 21. Of old the gods themselves this doubt assailed,—
How hard is it to know! How subtle a matter (*dharma*)!
Choose thou another boon, O Naciketas;
Insist not overmuch, hold me excused in this.

² Translation uncertain.

³ Or, 'absolutely'.

[Naciketas speaks:]

§ 22. 'Of old indeed the gods themselves this doubt assailed,—
How hard is it to know!' So, Death, hast thou declared.
Thou alone canst tell it forth; none other is there like thee:
No other boon is there equal to this in any wise.

[Yama speaks:]

§ 23. Choose sons and grandsons to live a hundred years,
[Choose] wealth in cattle, horses, elephants and gold,
Choose wide property in land, and thou thyself
Live out thy years as many as thou wilt.

§ 24. Or shouldst thou think this a boon [at all] equivalent,
Choose riches and long life;
Be thou of the great ones in the land:
I grant thee enjoyment of all thou canst desire!

§ 25. Whatever a man could possibly desire
In [this] the world of men,
However hard to win,
Ask anything thou wilt at thy good pleasure,—
Fair women, chariots, instruments of music.
The like of these cannot be won by [other] men;—
All these I give thee, bend them to thy service.
O Naciketas, ask me no further concerning death.

[Naciketas speaks:]

§ 26. The morrows of a man, O Death, wear down
The power of all the senses.
A life though [lived] entire is short indeed;
Keep [then] thy chariots, keep thy songs and dances!

§ 27. With riches can man never be satisfied:
When once we've seen thee, [how] shall we riches win?
So long we'll live as thou [for us] ordainest;
This, then, is the only boon that I would claim.

§ 28. What mortal man, grown old and wretched here below,
Could meet immortals, strangers to old age,
Know them, and [still] meditate on colours, pleasures, joys,
Finding [some] comfort in this life however long.

§ 29. Wherein men, puzzled, doubt, O Death, [that tell us];
What [happens] at the great departing tell us!
That is the boon that's hidden in secret places:
Therefore no other [boon] doth Naciketas choose.

II

[Yama speaks:]

§ 1. The better part is one thing, the agreeable another;
Though different their goals both restrict a man:
For him who takes the better of the two all's well,
But he who chooses the agreeable fails to attain his goal.

§ 2. 'Better' and 'agreeable' present themselves to man:
Considering them carefully the wise man discriminates,
Preferring the better to what only pleasure brings:
Dull men prefer the 'agreeable',—
For the getting and keeping⁴ [of what they crave].

⁴ Reading *yogaksemād*.

§ 3. Thou, Naciketas, has well considered [all objects of] desire,
[All] that's agreeable in form,—thou has rejected them;
Thou wouldst not accept this garland of wealth compacted
In which how many a man has been [dragged down,] submerged!

§ 4. Different, opposed, wide separated these,—
Unwisdom (*avidyā*) and what men as wisdom know:
Wisdom [it is that] Naciketas seeks, I see;
Not thou to be distracted by manifold desire!

§ 5. Self-wise, puffed up with learning, some
Turn round and round [emprisoned] in unwisdom[’s realm];
Hither and thither rushing, round they go, the fools,
Like blind men guided by the blind!

§ 6. No glimmering have such of man’s last destiny,—
Unheeding, childish fools, by wealth deluded:
‘This world alone exists, there is no other,’ so think they;
Again and ever again they fall into my hands.

§ 7. Many there are who never come to hear of Him,⁵
Many, though hearing of Him, know Him not:
Blessed (*āścarya*) the man who, skilled therein, proclaims Him, grasps Him;
Blessed the man who learns from one so skilled and knows Him!

§ 8. How difficult for man, though meditating much,
To know Him from the lips of vulgar men:
[Yet] unless another tells of Him, the way (*gati*) to Him is barred,
For than all subtleties of reason He’s more subtile,—
Logic He defies.

§ 9. No reasoning, [no logic,] can attain to this Idea;
Let another preach it, then is it easily cognized.
[And yet] hast thou achieved it, for steadfast in truth art thou:
May there never be another like thee, Naciketas, dear,
To question [me about it].

§ 10. I know that what’s called treasure is impermanent,
For by things unstable the Stable cannot be obtained.
Have I, then, builded up the Nāciketa fire,—
By things impermanent have I the Permanent attained?

§ 11. The winning of desires is the foundation of the world,
The unending fruit of sacrifice is the bourn of fearlessness:
[All this] hast thou rejected, wise and steadfast,
For thou hast seen that this foundation broadly based
Is [Brahman,] worthy of great praise.

§ 12. Let a wise man think upon that God,
Let him engage in spiritual exercise (*yoga*) related to the Self (*adhyātma*):
[Let him think upon that God,] so hard to see,
Deep hidden in the depths, dwelling in a secret place,
Firm-fixed (*-stha*) in the abyss, primordial;
Then will he put behind him both sorrow and [unstable] joy.

§ 13. Let a man hear this and understand,
Let him take hold upon this subtile [God],
Let him uproot all things of law,⁶—rejoice,
For he has won That in which [alone] he should find joy:
A house wide open is Naciketas [now], I see.

⁵ ie the Self.

⁶ Reading *dharmyam*. Var. *dharmam*: ‘Having attained to this subtile matter, let him uproot [all else]’.

[Naciketas speaks:]

§ 14. Other than righteousness (dharma), other than unrighteousness,
Other than what's done or left undone,
Other than what has been and what is yet to be,—
This that thou seest, tell it forth!

[Yama speaks:]

§ 15. The single word⁷ announced by all the Vedas,
Proclaimed by all ascetic practices,
[The word] in search of which men practise chastity,
This word I tell [thee now] in brief.
Om—this is it.

§ 16. The Imperishable Brahman this,
This the Imperishable Beyond (*para*):
Whoso this Imperishable comes to know,—
What he desires is his.

§ 17. Depend on This, the best;
Depend on This, the ultimate (*para*):
Who knows that on This [alone all things] depend,
In the Brahman-world is magnified.

§ 18. This wise one is not born nor dies;
From nowhere has He [sprung] nor has He anyone become;
Unborn is He, eternal, everlasting and primeval,—
He is not slain when the body is slain.

§ 19. Should the killer think 'I kill',
Or the killed 'I have been killed',
Both these have no [right] knowledge:
He kills not, is not killed.

§ 20. More subtle than the subtle, greater than the great,
The Self is hidden in the heart⁸ of creatures [here]:
The man without desire (*kratu*), [all] sorrow spent, beholds It,
The majesty of the Self, by the grace of the Ordainer.⁹

§ 21. Seated he strides afar,
Lying down he ranges everywhere:
This God is joy and joylessness,¹⁰ —
Who but I can understand Him?

§ 22. In bodies bodiless,
In things unstable still, abiding,
The Self, the great Lord all pervading,—
Thinking on Him the wise man knows no grief.

§ 23. This Self cannot be won by preaching [Him],
Not by sacrifice¹¹ or much lore heard;
By him alone can He be won whom He elects:
To him this Self reveals his own [true] form (*tanū*).

§ 24. Not he who has not ceased from doing wrong,
Nor he who knows no peace, no concentration (*asamāhita*),
Nor he whose mind is filled with restlessness,
Can grasp Him, wise and clever though he be.

⁷ Or, 'state' or 'goal'.

⁸ Elsewhere translated as 'secret place'.

⁹ Or, 'Creator', cf. *Śvetāsvatara*, III. 20. Var. 'with his elements serene'.

¹⁰ Or, 'perpetually joyful'.

¹¹ Or, 'intellect'.

§ 25. [Though some there be] for whom the dignity
Of both Brāhman and prince are as a dish of rice
With death its sauce [and condiment],—
[Yet] where He is,— [this] who really knows?

III

§ 1. [Like] light and shade [there are] two [selves]:
[One] here on earth imbibes the law (*rta*) of his own deeds:¹²
[The other,] though hidden in the secret places [of the heart],
[Dwells] in the uttermost beyond.
So say [the seers] who Brahman know,
The owners of five fires and of three Nāciketa fires.

§ 2. May we master the Nāciketa fire,
[Sure] bridge for men who sacrifice,
Seeking to reach the [further] shore
Beyond the reach of fear,—
[The bridge that leads to] Brahman,
Imperishable, supreme.

§ 3. Know this:
The self is the owner of the chariot,
The chariot is the body,
Soul (*buddhi*) is the [body's] charioteer,
Mind the reins [that curb it].

§ 4. Senses, they say, are the [chariot's] steeds,
Their objects the tract before them:
'What, then, is the subject of experience?
'Self, sense and mind conjoined,' wise men reply.

§ 5. Who knows not how to discriminate (*avijñānavat*)
With mind undisciplined (*a-yukta*) the while,—
Like vicious steeds untamed, his senses
He cannot master,—he their charioteer.

§ 6. But he who does know how to discriminate
With mind [and] disciplined,—
Like well-trained steeds, his senses
He masters [their charioteer.

§ 7. But he who knows not how to discriminate,
Mindless, never pure,
He reaches not that [highest] state (*pada*), returns
To this round of never-ending birth and death (*samsāra*).

§ 8. But he who does know how to discriminate,
Mindful, always pure,
He gains [indeed] that [highest] state
From which he's never born again.

§ 9. The man whose charioteer is wisdom (*vijñāna*),
Whose reins a mind [controlled],
Reaches the journey's end [indeed],
Vishnu's final state (*pada*).¹³

§ 10. Higher than the senses are the [senses'] objects,
Higher than these the mind,
Higher than mind is soul (*buddhi*),
Higher than soul the self, the 'great'.

¹² Var. of his deeds well done'.

¹³ Or, 'step, pace' referring to Vishnu's pacing out of the universe.

§ 11. Higher than the 'great' the Unmanifest,
Higher than that the 'Person':
Than 'Person' there's nothing higher;
He is the goal, He the All-highest Way.¹⁴

§ 12. This is the Self, deep-hidden in all beings,
[The Self that] shines not forth, –
Yet it *can* be seen by men who see things subtile,
By the subtile soul (*buddhi*), [man's] noblest [part].

§ 13. Let the wise man hold tongue and mind in check,
Submit them to the intellectual (*jñāna*) self;
Let him submit this intellect to the self [called] 'great',
And this to [that] Self which is [forever] still (*śānta*).

§ 14. Arise! Awake! Your boons you've won!
[Awake and] understand [them]!
A sharpened razor's edge is hard to cross, –
The dangers of the path, –wise seers proclaim them!

§ 15. Beyond the 'great', abiding, endless, beginningless,
Soundless, intangible, It knows not form or taste or smell,
Eternal, changeless, – [such It is,] discern It!
[For only so] can ye escape the jaws of death.

§ 16. Wise men who hear and utter forth this deathless tale
Concerning Naciketas, told by Death, –
These shall win greatness in the Brahman-world.

§ 17. Whoso, well versed therein, shall spread abroad
This highest mystery
Among assembled Brāhmans or at the commemoration of the dead,
He is conformed to infinity, –
To infinity he's conformed!

IV

§ 1. The self-existent [Lord] bored holes facing the outside world;
Therefore a man looks outward, not into [him]self.
A certain sage, in search of immortality,
Turned his eyes inward and saw the self within.

§ 2. Fools pursue desires outside themselves,
Fall into the snares of widespread death:
But wise men, discerning immortality,
Seek not the Stable here among unstable things.

§ 3. By what [one knows] of form and taste and smell,
Sound, touch and sexual union,
By that [same thing] one knows:
'What of all this abides?'

This in truth is That.

§ 4. By what one sees these both –
The state of sleep, the state of wakefulness,
'That is the self, the "great", the lord,'
So think the wise, unsorrowing.

§ 5. Who knows this honey-eating self,
The living [self] so close at hand,
Lord of what was and what is yet to be,
He shrinks not from him.

¹⁴ Or, 'refuge'.

§ 6. Who descried him¹⁵ from among contingent beings
As first-born of fervid penance (*tapas*),¹⁶
As entering into the secret place [and there] abiding,
He is the first-born of the waters.

This in truth is That.

§ 7. Who comes to be by the breath of life (*prāna*),
Who entered into the secret place [and there] abodes,
Aditi, pregnant with divinity,
Was born from among contingent beings.¹⁷

This in truth is That.

§ 8. The all-knowing [fire] concealed between the fire-sticks,
Like an embryo well nurtured by a woman with child,
Should every day be revered by wakeful men,
Bearing their offerings to him, the fire.

This in truth is That.

§ 9. From whence the sun arises,
To whither it goes down,
Thereon are all the gods suspended;
None passes beyond this.

This in truth is That.

§ 10. What [we see] here is also there beyond;
What there, that too is here:
Death beyond death does he incur
Who sees in this what seems to be (*iva*) diverse!

§ 11. Grasp this with your mind:
Herein there's no diversity at all.
Death beyond death is all the lot
Of him who sees in this what seems to be diverse.

§ 12. Of the measure of a thumb, the 'Person'
Abides within the self,
Lord of what was and what is yet to be:
No need to shrink from Him.

This in truth is That.

§ 13. Of the measure of a thumb, [this] 'Person',
Resembling a smokeless flame,
Lord of what was and of what is yet to be:
He is today, tomorrow He.

This in truth is That.

§ 14. As rain that falls in craggy places
Loses itself, dispersed throughout the mountains,
So does the man who sees things (*dharma*) as diverse,
[Himself] become dispersed in their pursuit.

§ 15. As water pure into pure [water] poured
Becomes even as (*tādr̥g*) [that pure water] is,
So too becomes the self of him, –
The silent sage who knows.

¹⁵ Sc. the 'Golden Embryo'.

¹⁶ Or, 'as being born before heat'.

¹⁷ The grammar of this section is peculiar and the translation uncertain.

V

§ 1. Whoso draws nigh to the city of eleven gates¹⁸
Of him who is not born, whose thought is not perverse,
He grieves not, for he has won deliverance:
Deliverance is his!

This in truth is That.

§ 2. As swan he dwells in the pure [sky],
As god (*vasu*) he dwells in the atmosphere,
As priest he dwells by the altar,
As guest he dwells in the house:
Among men he dwells, in vows,
In Law (*ṛta*) and in the firmament;
Of water born, of kine, of Law (*ṛta*),
Of rock— [He], the great cosmic Law (*ṛta*)!

§ 3. He leads the out-breath upward
And casts the in-breath downward:
To this Dwarf seated at the centre
All gods pay reverence.

§ 4. When the embodied soul whose dwelling is the body
Dissolves and from the body is released,
What then of this remains?

This in truth is That.

§ 5. Neither by breathing in nor yet by breathing out
Lives any mortal man:
By something else they live
On which the two [breaths] depend.

§ 6. Lo! I will declare to thee this mystery
Of Brahman never-failing,
And of what the self becomes
When it comes to [the hour of] death.

§ 7. Some to the womb return,—
Embodied souls, to receive another body;
Others pass into a lifeless stone (*sthānu*)
In accordance with their works (*karma*),
In accordance with [the tradition] they had heard (*śruta*).

§ 8. When all things sleep, [that] Person is awake,
Assessing all desires:
That is the Pure, that Brahman,
That the Immortal, so they say:
In It all the worlds are established;
Beyond it none can pass.

This in truth is That.

§ 9. As the one fire esconced within the house
Takes on the forms of all that's in it,
So the One Inmost Self of every being
Takes on their several forms, [remaining] without [the while].

§ 10. As the one wind, once entered into a house,
Takes on the forms of all that's in it,
So the One Inmost Self of every being
Takes on their several forms, [remaining] without [the while].

¹⁸ ie the body.

§ 11. Just as the sun, the eye of all the world,
Is not defiled by the eye's outward blemishes,
So the One Inmost Self of every being
Is not defiled by the suffering of the world,—
[But remains] outside [it].

§ 12. One and all-mastering is the Inmost Self of every being;
He makes the one form manifold:
Wise men who see Him as subsistent in [their] selves,
Taste everlasting joy (*sukha*),—no others.

§ 13. Permanent among impermanents, conscious among the conscious,
The One among the many, Disposer of desires:
Wise men who see Him as subsistent in [their] selves,¹⁹
Taste of everlasting peace,—no others.

§ 14. 'That is this,' so think [the wise]
Concerning that all-highest bliss which none can indicate.
How, then, should I discern It?
Does It shine of itself or but reflect the brilliance?²⁰

§ 15. There the sun shines not, nor moon nor stars;
These lightnings shine not [there], — let alone this fire.
All things shine with the shining of this light,
This whole world reflects its radiance.

VI

§ 1. With roots above and boughs beneath
This immortal fig tree [stands];
That is the Pure, that Brahman,
That the Immortal, so men say:
In it all the worlds are established;
Beyond it none can pass.

This in truth is That.

§ 2. This whole moving world, whatever is,
Stirs in the breath of life (*prāna*), deriving from it:
The great fear [this] the upraised thunderbolt;
Whoso shall know it [thus] becomes immortal.

§ 3. For fear of It the fire burns bright,
For fear [of It] the sun gives forth its heat,
For fear [of It] the gods of storm and wind,
And Death, the fifth, [hither and thither] fly.

§ 4. Could one but know It here [and now]
Before the body's breaking up...!
[Falling] from such [a state] a man is doomed
To bodily existence in the 'created' (*sarga*) worlds.

§ 5. In the self one sees as in a mirror,
In the world of the ancestors as in a dream,
In the world of the heavenly minstrels as across the waters,
In the world of Brahman as into light and shade.

¹⁹ Or, 'self-subsistent'.

²⁰ Var. 'Does It shine or does It not?'

§ 6. Separately the senses come to be,
[Separately] they rise and fall,
Separately are they produced,—so thinking
The wise man grieves no more.

§ 7. Higher than the senses is the mind,
Higher than mind the soul (*sattva*),
Higher than soul, the self, the 'great',
Higher than [this] 'great' the Unmanifest.

§ 8. Higher than [this] Unmanifest the 'Person',
Pervading all, untraceable (*alinga*):²¹
When once a creature knows Him, he is freed (*muc-*),
And goes on to immortality.

§ 9. His form is not something that can be seen;
No one beholds Him with the eye;
By heart and mind and soul (*manīṣ*] is He conceived of:
Whoso knows this becomes immortal.

§ 10. When the five senses (*jñāna*) stand, [their action stilled,]
Likewise the mind; and when the soul (*buddhi*)
No longer moves or acts,—
Such, have men said, is the all-highest Way.²²

§ 11. 'Yoga,' this is how they think of it,—
[It means] to check the senses firmly, still them:
Then is a man freed from heedlessness,
For Yoga is origin and end.

§ 12. [This Self] cannot be apprehended
By voice or mind or eye:
How, then, can He be understood,
Unless we say—HE IS?

§ 13. HE IS—so must we understand Him,
And as the true essence (*tattva*) of the two:²³
HE IS—when once we understand Him thus,
The nature of his essence is limpidly shown forth.

§ 14. When all desires that shelter in the heart
Of [mortal] man are cast aside (*pramuc-*),
Then mortal puts on immortality,—
Thence to Brahman he attains.

§ 15. When here [and now] the knots [of doubt]
Are all cut out from the heart,
Mortal puts on immortality:
Thus far the teaching goes.

§ 16. A hundred veins (*nāḍī*) and one pervade the heart;
Of these [but] one extends up to the head:
By ascending this [a self] fares on to immortality;
The rest, at death (*utkramana*) are dissipated everywhere.

²¹ Or, 'sexless'.

²² Or, 'goal', or 'state', or 'refuge'.

²³ Sc. the absolute and the relative.

§ 17. Of the measure of a thumb is [this] Person,
The Inmost Self, in the heart of creatures abiding ever.
Stand firm! and from thy body wrench Him out
Like pith extracted from a reed.
Pure and immortal He: so know Him!
So know Him: pure and immortal He!

§ 18. So did Naciketas learn this [holy] science
By Death declared, and all the arts of Yoga.²⁴
Immaculate, immortal, to Brahman he won through;
And so shall all who know what appertains to Self.

May he bring aid to both of us, may He bring profit to both of us. May we together make a manly effort;
may this lesson bring us glory; may we never hate each other. Om. Peace—peace— peace.

²⁴ Or, 'all the ways of putting it into practice'.

The Bhagavad-Gītā, from Hindu Scriptures – Zaehner, R (J M Dent & Sons, 1966),
pages 249-270, 294-300, 317-325
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I

Dhritarāshtra said:

§ 1. On the field of justice, the Kuru-field,
My men and the sons of Pāndu too
Stand massed together, intent on war.
What, Sanjaya, did they do?

Sanjaya said:

§ 2. Then did Duryodhana, the king,
Surveying the host of Pāndu's sons
Drawn up in ranks, approach
His teacher (Drona) saying:

§ 3. 'Teacher, behold this mighty host
Of Pāndu's sons
Drawn up by the son of Drupada,
Thine own disciple, wise and skilled.

§ 4. Here are men, brave and mighty archers,
Equals of Bhīma and Arjuna in [the art of] war,—
Yuyudhāna, Virāta,
And Drupada, the mighty charioteer,

§ 5. Dhrishtaketu, Cekitāna,
And Kāshī's valiant king,
Kurujit, Kuntibhoja,
And the Shibi's king, foremost of fighting men,

§ 6. High-mettled Yudhāmanyu
And valiant Uttamaejas,
Subhadra's son and the sons of Draudapī,—
All of them mighty charioteers.

§ 7. Listen too, thou best of Brāhmans,
To [the list of] those outstanding on our side,
Leaders of my army.
Of these I speak to thee that thou mayst know.

§ 8. Thysself, Bhīshma, and Karna too,
And Kripa, victor in the fight,
Ashvatthāman and Vikarna,
And Somadatta's son as well.

§ 9. Many another hero too
Will risk his life for me.
Various are their arms and weapons,
And all of them are skilled at war.

§ 10. Imperfect are those our forces
Which Bhīshma guards,
But perfect these their forces
Under [great] Bhīma's care.

§ 11. So stand firm in all your ranks
Each in his appointed place;
Guard Bhīshma above all others,
Every one of you!

§ 12. [And] (Bhīshma,) the aged grandsire of the Kuru clan,
To give him cheer,
Cried out with a loud cry like lion's roar
And undaunted blew his conch.

§ 13. Then conches, cymbals, drums,
Tabors and kettledrums,
Burst into sudden sound;
Tumultuous was the din.

§ 14. Then too did (Krishna,) Madhu's son and Pāndu's [third-] born (Arjuna,)
Standing erect on their great chariot
Yoked to [snow-]white steeds,
Their godly conches loudly blow.

§ 15. [The conch called] Panchajanya did Krishna blow,
[The conch called] Devadatta Arjuna;
The mighty conch [called] Paundra
Blew Bhīma of dreadful deeds.

§ 16. [The conch called] Anantavijaya
Blew Kuntī's son, Yudhishtira, the king:
Sughosha and Manipushpaka
[Blew] Nakula and Sahadeva.

§ 17. And Kāshī's king, archer supreme,
And Shikandin, the great charioteer,
Dhrishtadyumna, Virāta too,
And unconquered Sātyaki,

§ 18. Drupada and the Sons of Draupadī,
And Subhadrā's strong-armed son,
Blew each his conch
[Resounding] from every side.

§ 19. At the din [they made] the hearts
Of Dhritarāshtra's sons were rent:
And heaven and earth it made
Tumultuously resound.

§ 20. Then (Arjuna,) whose banner is an ape,
Gazed upon the serried ranks
Of Dhritarāshtra's sons. The clash of arms
Began. He lifted up his bow.

§ 21. To Krishna then
These words he spake:
'Halt thou my chariot [here]
Between the armies twain,

§ 22. That I may see these men drawn up,
Spoiling for the fight,
[That I may see] with whom I must do battle
In this enterprise of war.

§ 23. I see them [now] intent on strife,
Assembled here;
All eager they to please by waging war
[Old] Dhritarāshtra's baleful son.'

§ 24. Thus Arjuna: and Krishna,
Harkening to his words,
Brought that splendid chariot to a halt
Between the armies twain.

§ 25. And there in front of them Bhīshma and Drona stood
And all the [assembled] kings;
And Krishna said: 'Arjuna, behold
These Kurus gathered [here].'

§ 26. And Arjuna beheld
Fathers, grandsires,
Venerable teachers, uncles, brothers, sons,
Grandsons and comrades,

§ 27. Fathers-in-law and friends
Standing there in either host.
And the son of Kuntī, seeing them,
All his kinsmen thus arrayed,

§ 28. Was filled with deep compassion
And, desponding, spake these words:
'Krishna, when these mine own folk I see
Standing [before me], spoiling for the fight,

§ 29. My limbs give way [beneath me],
My mouth dries up, and trembling
Takes hold upon my frame:
My body's hairs stand up [in dread].

§ 30. [My bow,] Gāndīva, slips from my hand,
My very skin is all ablaze;
I cannot stand, my mind
Seems to wander [all distraught].

§ 31. And portents too I see
Boding naught but ill.
Should I strike down in battle mine own folk,
No good therein see I.

§ 32. Krishna, I hanker not for victory,
Nor for the kingdom, nor yet for things of pleasure.
What use to us a kingdom, friend,
What use enjoyment or life [itself]?

§ 33. Those for whose sake we covet
Kingdom, delights and things of pleasure,
Here stand they, arrayed for battle,
Surrendering both wealth and life.

§ 34. They are our venerable teachers, fathers, sons,
They too our grandsires, uncles,
Fathers-in-law, grandsons,
Brothers-in-law, kinsmen all;

§ 35. These would I nowise slay
Though they slay [me] my friend,
Not for dominion over the three [wide] worlds,
How much less for [this paltry] earth.

§ 36. And should we slaughter Dhritarāshtra's sons,
Krishna, what sweetness then is ours?
Evil, and only evil, would come to dwell with us,
Should we slay them, hate us as they may.

§ 37. Therefore have we no right to kill
The sons of Dhritarāshtra, our own kinsmen [as they are].
Should we lay low our own folk, Krishna,
How could we find any joy?

§ 38. And even if, bereft of sense by greed,
They cannot see
That to ruin a family is wickedness (doṣa)
And to break one's word²⁵ a crime,

§ 39. How should we not be wise enough
To turn aside from this evil thing?
For the annihilation of a family
We know full well is wickedness.

§ 40. Annihilate a family, and with it
Collapse the eternal laws that rule the family.
Once law's destroyed, then lawlessness
Overwhelms all [we know as] family.

§ 41. With lawlessness triumphant, Krishna,
The family's [chaste] women are debauched;
From debauchery of the women [too]
Confusion of caste is born.

§ 42. Yes, [caste-]confusion leads to hell—
[The hell prepared] for those who wreck
The family and for the family [so wrecked].
So too their ancestors fall down [to hell],
Cheated of their offerings of food and drink.

§ 43. These evil ways of men who wreck the family,
[These evil ways] that bring on caste-confusion,
[These are the ways] that bring caste-law to naught
And the eternal family laws.

§ 44. A sure abode in hell there is
For men who bring to naught
The laws that rule the family:
So, Krishna, have we heard.

§ 45. Ah, ah: so are we [really] bent
On committing a monstrous evil deed?
Coveting the sweet joys of sovereignty,
[Look at us,] all poised to slaughter our own folk!

²⁵ Or, 'injury to a friend'.

§ 46. O let the sons of Dhritarāshtra, arms in hand,
Slay me in battle, though I,
Unarmed myself, will offer no defence;
Therein were greater happiness for me!

§ 47. So saying Arjuna sat down
Upon the chariot-seat [though] battle [had begun],
Let slip his bow and arrows,
His mind distraught with grief.

II

Sanjaya said:

§ 1. To him thus in compassion plunged,
His eyes distraught and filled with tears,
[To him] desponding Krishna spake
These words.

The Blessed Lord said:

§ 2. Whence comes this faintness on thee?
[Now] at this crisis-hour?
This ill beseems a noble, wins none a heavenly state,
But brings dishonour, Arjuna.

§ 3. Play not the eunuch, son of Prithā,
For this ill beseems thee:
Give up this vile faint-heartedness,
Arise, O scorcher of the foe.

Arjuna said:

§ 4. Krishna, how can I in battle
With Bhīshma and Drona fight,
Raining on them my arrows?
For they are worthy of respect.

§ 5. For better were it here on earth to eat a beggar's food
Than to slay preceptors of great dignity.
Were I to slay here my preceptors, ambitious though they may be,
Then should I be partaking of blood-sullied food.

§ 6. Besides we do not know which is the better part,
Whether that we should win the victory or that they should conquer us.
There facing us stand Dhritarāshtra's sons:
Should we kill them, ourselves would scarce desire to live.

§ 7. My very being (*svabhāva*) is assailed by compassion's harmful taint.
With mind perplexed concerning right and wrong (*dharma*) [I turn] to thee and ask:
Which is the better course? Tell me, and [let thy words be] definite and clear;
For I am thy disciple: teach me, for all my trust's in thee.

§ 8. I cannot see what could dispel
My grief, [this] parching of the senses,—
Not though on earth I were to win an empire,—
Unrivalled, prosperous,—or lordship over the gods themselves.

Sanjaya said:

§ 9. So speaking Arjuna, scorcher of the foe,
To Krishna said:
'I will not fight':
And having spoken held his peace.

§ 10. And Krishna faintly smiled
Between the armies twain,
And spake these words to Arjuna
In his [deep] despondency.

The Blessed Lord said:

§ 11. Thou sorrowest for men who do not need thy sorrow,
And speakest words that [in part] are wise.²⁶
Wise men know no sorrow
For the living or the dead.

§ 12. Never was there a time when I was not,
Nor thou, nor yet these lords of men;
Nor will there be a time when we shall cease to be,—
All of us hereafter.

§ 13. Just as in this body the embodied soul
Must pass through childhood, youth and age,
So too [at death] will he take another body up:
In this a thoughtful man is not perplexed.

§ 14. But contacts with the world outside
Give rise to heat and cold, pleasure and pain:
They come and go, impermanent;
Arjuna, put up with them!

§ 15. For wise men there are,
The same in pleasure as in pain
Whom these [contacts] leave undaunted:
Such are conformed to immortality.

§ 16. Of what is not there is no becoming;
Of what is there is no ceasing to be:
For the boundary-line between the two
Is seen by men who see things as they really are.

§ 17. Indestructible [alone] is That,—know this,—
By Which this whole [universe] was spun.²⁷
No one at all can bring destruction
On This which passes not away.

§ 18. Finite, they say, are these [our] bodies
[Indwelt] by an²⁸ eternal embodied soul,—
[A soul] indestructible, incommensurable.²⁹
Fight then, O scion of Bharata!

²⁶ Var. 'Thou dost not speak as a wise man would'.

²⁷ Or, 'pervaded'.

²⁸ Or, 'the'.

²⁹ Or, 'unfathomable'.

§ 59. Who thinks that he³⁰ can be a slayer,
Who thinks that he is slain,
Both these have no [right] knowledge:
He slays not, is not slain.

§ 20. Never is he born nor dies;
Never did he come to be, nor will he ever come to be again:
Unborn, eternal, everlasting he—primeval:
He is not slain when the body is slain.

§ 21. If a man knows him as indestructible,
Eternal, unborn, never to pass away,
How and whom can he cause to be slain
Or slay?

§ 22. As a man casts off his worn-out clothes
And takes on other new ones [in their place],
So does the embodied soul cast off his worn-out bodies
And enters others new.

§ 23. He cannot be cut by sword,
Nor burnt by fire;
The waters cannot wet him,
Nor the wind dry him up.

§ 24. Uncuttable, unburnable,
Unwetable, undryable
Is he,—eternal, roving everywhere,
Firm-set, unmoving, everlasting.

§ 25. Unmanifest, unthinkable,
Unchanging is he called:
So realize that he is thus
And put away thy useless grief.

§ 26. And even if thou thinkst that he
Is constantly [re-]born and constantly [re-]dies,
Even so, [my] strong-armed [friend],
Thou lamentest him in vain.

§ 27. For sure is the death of all that comes to birth,
Sure the birth of all that dies.
So in a matter that no one can prevent
Thou hast no cause to grieve.

§ 28. Unmanifest are the beginnings of contingent beings,
Manifest their middle course,
Unmanifest again their ends:
What cause for mourning here?

§ 29. By a rare privilege³¹ may someone behold him,
And by a rare privilege indeed may another tell of him,
And by a rare privilege may such another hear³² him,
Yet even having heard there's none that knows him.

³⁰ ie the embodied soul.

³¹ Or, 'As a marvel'.

³² Or, 'hear of'.

§ 30. Never can this embodied soul be slain
In the body of anyone [at all].
And so for no contingent being
Hast thou any cause for sorrow.

§ 31. Likewise consider thine own (caste-)duty (dharma),
Then too hast thou no cause to quail;
For better than a fight prescribed by duty
Is nothing for a man of the princely class.

§ 32. Happy the warriors indeed
Who become involved in war, –
[A war] like this presented by pure chance
And opening the gates of paradise!

§ 33. But if thou wilt not wage this war
Prescribed by thy (caste-)duty,
Then, by casting off both honour and (caste-)duty,
Thou wilt bring evil³³ on thyself.

§ 34. Yes, this thy dishonour will become a byword
In the mouths of men in ages yet to come;
And dishonour in a man well-trained to honour
[Is an ill] surpassing death.

§ 35. 'From fear he fled the battlefield,' –
So will they think, the mighty charioteers.
Greatly esteemed by them before,
Thou wilt bring upon thyself contempt.

§ 36. Many a word that is better left unsaid
Will such men say as wish thee ill,
Disputing thy competence.
What could cause thee greater pain than this?

§ 37. If thou art slain, thou winnest paradise;
And if thou gain the victory, thine the earth to enjoy.
Arise, then, son of Kuntī,
Resolved to fight the fight.

§ 38. [First learn to] treat pleasure and pain as things equivalent,
Then profit and loss, victory and defeat;
Then gird thyself for battle.
Thus wilt thou bring no evil on thyself.³⁴

§ 39. This wisdom (*buddhi*) has been revealed to thee in theory (*sāmkhya*);
Listen now to how it should be practised (*yoga*):
If by this wisdom thou art exercised (*yukta*),
Thou wilt put off the bondage inherent in [all] works (*karma*).

§ 40. Herein no effort goes to seed,
Nor is there any slipping back:
Even a little of this discipline (*dharma*)
Saves from the monstrous terror [of rebirth].

³³ Or, 'incur guilt'.

³⁴ Or, 'incur [no] guilt'.

§ 41. The essence of the soul (*buddhi*) is will (*vyavasāya*),
If it is single here [on earth]:
But many-branched and infinite
Are the souls of men devoid of will.

§ 42-4. The essence of the soul is will, –
[The soul] of men who cling to pleasure and to power,
Their minds seduced by [flowery words],
Are not equipped for ecstasy (*samādhi*).

Such men give vent to flowery words,
The fools,
Delighting in the Veda's lore,
Saying there is naught else.

Desire their essence, paradise their goal, –
[Their words] tell of [re-]birth as fruit of works,
Expatriate about the niceties of ritual
By which pleasure and power can be achieved.

§ 45. [All nature is made up of] three 'constituents' (*guna*)
These are the Veda's goal. Have done with them:
Have done with [all] dualities (*dvandva*), stand ever firm on Goodness;³⁵
Think not of gain or keeping the thing gained, but be thyself.

§ 46. As much use as there is in a water-tank
Flooded with water on every side,
So much is there in all the Vedas
For the Brāhman who discerns.

§ 47. Work alone is thy proper business,
Never the fruits [it may produce];
Let not your motive be the fruit of work,
Nor your attachment to [mere] worklessness (*akarma*).

§ 48. Stand fast in Yoga, surrendering attachment;
In success and failure be the same,
And then get busy with thy works.
Yoga means 'sameness' and 'indifference' (*samatva*).

§ 49. For lower far is the [path of] active work [for its own sake]
Than the Yoga of the soul (*buddhi*).
Seek refuge in the soul!
[How] pitiful are they whose motive is the fruit [of works]!

§ 50. Whoso is integrated by [the Yoga of] the soul
Discards both good and evil works:
Brace thyself (*yuj-*) then for [this] Yoga!
Yoga is skill in [performing] works.

§ 51. For those wise men who are integrated by [the Yoga of] the soul,
Who have renounced the fruit that's born of works,
These will be freed from the bondage of [re-]birth
And fare on to that region that knows no ill.

³⁵ Or, 'courage' or 'truth'.

§ 52. When thy soul shall pass beyond
Delusion's turbid quicksands,
Then wilt thou learn disgust
For what has been heard [ere now]³⁶
And for what may yet be heard.

§ 53. When once thy soul, by Scripture (*śruti*) once bewildered,
Stands motionless and still,
Immovable in enstasy,
Then shalt thou win [the prize which is] Yoga, [integration].

Arjuna said:

§ 54. [Tell me,] Krishna, what is the mark of the man of steady (*sthita*) wisdom,
The man immersed in enstasy?
How does he speak,—this man of steadied thought?
How sit? How walk?

The Blessed Lord said:

§ 55. When a man puts from him all desires
That prey upon the mind,
Himself (*ātmanā*) contented in the self alone,
Then is he called a man of steady wisdom.

§ 56. Whose mind is undismayed [though beset] by [many a] sorrow,
Who for pleasure has no further longing,
From whom [all] passion (*rāga*), fear, and wrath have fled,
Such a man is called a sage of steadied thought.

§ 57. Who has no love (*abhisneha*) for any thing,
Who rejoices not at whatever good befalls him,
Nor hates the bad that comes his way,
Firm-established is the wisdom of such a man.

§ 58. And when he draws in on every side
His senses from their proper objects,
As a tortoise might its limbs,
Firm-established is the wisdom of such a man.

§ 59. For the embodied soul who eats no more
Objects of sense must disappear,—
Save only the [recollected] flavour,—and that too
Must vanish at the vision of the Highest.

§ 60. And yet however much
A wise man strive,
The senses' tearing violence
May seduce his mind by force.

§ 61. [Then] let him sit, curbing them all,—
Integrated (*yukta*)—intent on Me:
For firm-established is that man's wisdom
Whose senses are subdued.

§ 62. Let a man [but] think of the things of sense,—
Attachment to them is born:
From attachment springs desire,
From desire is anger born.

³⁶ Meaning the Veda.

§ 63. From anger comes bewilderment,
From that the wandering of the mind (*smṛti*),
From this the destruction of the soul:³⁷
With soul destroyed the man is lost.

§ 64. But he who roves among the things of sense,
His senses subdued to self, from hate and passion free,
And is self-possessed [himself]
Is not far off from calm serenity (*prasāda*).

§ 65. And from him thus becalmed
All sorrows flee away:
For once his thoughts are calmed, then soon
Will his soul (*buddhi*) stand firmly [in its ground].

§ 66. No soul (*buddhi*) has he who knows not integration (*ayukta*);
In him there's no development (*bhāvāna*):
For the undeveloped there is no peace.
Whence should there be joy (*sukha*) to a peaceless man?

§ 67. Hither and thither the senses rove,
And when the mind is attuned to them,
It sweeps away [whatever of] wisdom a man may possess,
As the wind a ship at sea.

§ 68. And so, whose senses are withheld
From the objects proper to them,
Wherever they may be,
Firm-established is the wisdom of such a man.

§ 69. In what for all [other] folk is night,
Therein the man of self-restraint is [wide-]awake.
What time all [other] folk are awake,
That time is night for the sage who sees.

§ 70. As the waters flow in to the sea,
Full filled, unmoving in its depths,
So too do all desires flow into the [heart of] man:
And such a man wins peace,—not the desirer of desires.

§ 71. The man who puts off all desires
And roams around from longing freed,
Who does not even think, 'This I am,' or 'This is mine,'
Draws near to peace.

§ 72. This is the fixed, still state (*sthiti*) of Brahman;
He who wins through to this is nevermore perplexed.
Standing therein at the time of death
To the Nirvāna that is Brahman too³⁸ he goes!

³⁷ *Buddhi*: or 'intellect'.

³⁸ Or, 'the Nirvāna of Brahman'.

III

Arjuna said:

§ 1. If, Krishna, thou think'st that wisdom (*buddhi*)
Is a loftier [course] than [the mere doing of] deeds,
Then why dost thou command me
To do a hideous deed?

§ 2. Thou dost confuse my intellect, or so it seems,
With strangely muddled words:
So tell me with authority the one [simple way]
Whereby I may attain the better part.

The Blessed Lord said:

§ 3. Of old did I proclaim the twofold law (*niṣṭhā*)
[That] in this world [holds sway],—
For the men of theory (*sāmkhyas*) wisdom's Yoga,
For men of action (*yogin*) the Yoga of works (*karma*).

§ 4. Not by leaving works undone
Does a man win freedom from the [bond of] work,
Nor by renunciation alone
Can he win perfection[’s prize].

§ 5. Not for a moment can a man
Stand still and do no work;
For every man is powerless and forced to work
By the ‘constituents’ born of Nature.

§ 6. Whoso controls his limbs through which he acts
But sits remembering in his mind
Sense-objects, deludes himself:
He’s called a hypocrite.

§ 7. How much more excellent he all unattached,
Who with his mind controls [those] limbs,
And through those limbs [themselves] by which he acts
Embarks on the Yogic exercise (*yoga*) of works!

§ 8. Do thou the work that is prescribed for thee,
For to work is better than to do no work at all;
For he who does not work will not succeed
Even in keeping his body in good repair.

§ 9. This world is bound by bonds of work
Save where that work is done for sacrifice.
Work to this end, then, Arjuna,
From [all] attachment freed.

§ 10. Of old the Lord of Creatures (Prajāpati) said,
Emitting creation (*prajā*) and with it sacrifice:
‘By this shall ye prolong your lineage,
Let this be to you the cow that yields
The milk of all that ye desire.

§ 11. With this shall ye sustain the gods,
So that the gods may sustain you [in return]:
Sustaining one another [thus]
Ye shall achieve the highest good.

§ 12. For, so sustained by sacrifice, the gods
Will give you the food of your desire.
Whoso enjoys their gift, yet gives nothing [in return],
Is a thief, no more nor less.'

§ 13. Good men who eat of the leavings of the sacrifice
Are freed from every taint;
But evil are they, and evil do they eat
Who cook [their food] for their own [selfish] sakes.

§ 14. From food [all] contingent beings are born,
And food from rain;
And rain derives from sacrifice,
And sacrifice from works (*karma*).

§ 15. From Brahman³⁹ work arises, know thou this,
And Brahman from the Imperishable⁴⁰ is born;
Therefore is Brahman, penetrating everywhere,
Forever based on the sacrifice.

§ 16. So was the wheel in motion set;
And whoso fails to match his turning [with the turning of the wheel],
Living an evil life, the senses his pleasure-ground,
Lives out his life in vain.

§ 17. Nay, let a man take pleasure in self alone,
In self his satisfaction find,
In self alone content:
[Let him do this, for then]
There is naught he needs to do.

§ 18. In works done and works undone
On earth what interest has he?
What interest in all contingent beings?
On none of them does he depend.

§ 19. And so, detached, perform unceasingly
The works that must be done
For the man detached who labours on (*karma*),
To the Highest must win through.

§ 20. For only by working on (*karma*) did Janaka
And his like attain perfection.
Or if again for the welfare⁴¹ of the world thou carest,
Then shouldst thou work [and act].

§ 21. [For] whatever the noblest does,
That too will others do:
The standard that he sets
All the world will follow.

§ 22. In the three worlds there's nothing
That I must do at all,
Nor anything unattained which I have not attained;
Yet work [is the element] in which I move.

³⁹ Meaning 'manifest Nature'.

⁴⁰ Or, 'the syllable Om'.

⁴¹ Or 'control'.

§ 23. For were I not tirelessly
To busy myself with works,
Then would men everywhere
Follow in my footsteps.

§ 24. If I were not to do my work,
These worlds would fall to ruin,
And I should be a worker of confusion,
Destroying these [my] creatures.

§ 25. As witless [fools] perform their works
Attached to the work [they do],
So, unattached, should the wise man do,
Longing to bring about the welfare of the world.

§ 26. Let not the wise man split the mind (*buddhi*)
Of witless men attached to work:
Let him encourage⁴² all [manner of] works,
[Himself,] though busy, controlled and integrated (*yukta*).

§ 27. It is Nature's [three] 'constituents'
That do all works wherever [works are done];
[But] he whose self is by the ego fooled,
Thinks, 'It is I who do.'

§ 28. But he who knows how 'constituents' and works
Are parcelled into categories, seeing things as they are,
Thinks thus: 'Constituents on constituents act,'
[And so thinking] remains detached.

§ 29. By the constituents of Nature fooled
Are men attached to the constituents' works:
Such men, dull-witted, only know in part.
Let not the knower of the whole
Upset [the knower of the part].

§ 30. Cast all thy works on Me,
Thy mind in self withdrawn (*adhyātmacetas*);
Have neither hope, nor thought that 'This is mine':
Cast off this fever! Fight!

§ 31. Whoso shall practise constantly
This my doctrine, firm in faith,
Not envying, [not cavilling,]
He too shall find release from [the bondage that is] work.

§ 32. But whoso refuses to perform my doctrine,
Envious [yet, and cavilling],
Of every [form of] wisdom fooled,
Is lost, the witless [dunce]! Be sure of that.

§ 33. As is a man's own nature,
So must he act, however wise he be.
All beings follow Nature:
What can repression do?

⁴² Or, 'cause them to enjoy'.

§ 34. In all the senses passion and hate
Are seated, [turned] to their proper objects:
Let none fall victim to their power,
For these are brigands on his road.

§ 35. Better one's own duty (*dharma*) [to perform], though void of merit,
Than to do another's well:
Better to die within [the sphere of] one's own duty:
Perilous is the duty of other men.

Arjuna said:

§ 36. By what impelled does [mortal] man
Do evil,
Unwilling though he be?
He's driven to it by force, or so it seems to me.

The Blessed Lord said:

§ 37. Desire it is: Anger it is:
Arising from the 'constituent' of Passion,—
All-devouring, fount of wickedness:
Know this to be thine enemy on earth.

§ 38. As fire is swathed in smoke,
As mirror [fouled] by dust,
As embryo all covered up by the membrane-envelope,
So is this [world] obscured by this.

§ 39. This the wise man's eternal foe;
By this is wisdom overcast:
Whatever form it will it takes,⁴³—
A fire insatiate!

§ 40. Senses, mind and soul (*buddhi*), they say,
Are the places where it lurks;
Through these it fences wisdom in,
Leading astray the embodied soul.

§ 41. Therefore restrain
The senses first:
Strike down this evil thing!—
Destroyer [alike] of what we learn from holy books
And what we learn from life.

§ 42. Exalted are the senses, or so they say;
Higher than they the mind;
Yet higher than the mind is soul (*buddhi*)
What is beyond the soul is he.⁴⁴

§ 43. Know him who is yet higher than the soul;
And of thyself (*ātmanā*)⁴⁵ make firm [this] self.
Vanquish the enemy, Arjuna!
[Swift is he] to change his form,⁴⁶
And hard is he to conquer!

⁴³ Or, 'in the form of desire'.

⁴⁴ ie the 'self'. Some have referred it to desire.

⁴⁵ Or, 'by means of the self'.

⁴⁶ Or, 'in the form of desire'.

IV

The Blessed Lord said:

§ 1. This changeless way of life (*yoga*) did I
To Vivasvat [once] proclaim;
To Manu Vivasvat told it,
And Manu to Ikshvāku passed it on.

§ 2. Thus was the tradition from one to another handed on,
The Royal Seers came to know it;
[But] in the long course of time
The way of life (*yoga*) on earth was lost.

§ 3. This is the same primeval way of life (*yoga*)
That I preach to thee today;
For thou art loyal, devoted (*bhakta*), and my comrade,
And this is the highest mystery.

Arjuna said:

§ 4. Later thy birth,
Earlier Vivasvat's:
How should I understand thy words,
That in the beginning thou didst proclaim it?

The Blessed Lord said:

§ 5. Many a birth have I passed through,
And [many a birth] hast thou:
I know them all,
Thou knowest not.

§ 6. Unborn am I, changeless is my Self;
Of [all] contingent beings I am the Lord!
Yet by my creative energy (*māyā*) I consort
With Nature—which is mine—and come to be [in time].

§ 7. For whenever the law of righteousness (*dharma*)
Withers away, and lawlessness (*adharma*)
Raises its head
Then do I generate Myself [on earth].

§ 8. For the protection of the good,
For the destruction of evildoers,
For the setting up of righteousness,
I come into being, age after age.

§ 9. Who knows my godly birth and mode of operation (*karma*)
Thus as they really are,
He, his body left behind, is never born again:
He comes to Me.

§ 10. Many are they who, passion, fear and anger spent,
Inhere in Me, making Me their sanctuary:
Made pure by wisdom and hard penances,⁴⁷
They come [to share in] the manner of my being.

⁴⁷ Or, 'by the hard penances of wisdom'.

§ 11. In whatsoever way [devoted] men approach Me,
In that same way do I return their love (*bhaja*).
Whatever their occupation and wherever they may be,
Men follow the path I trace.

§ 12. Desiring success in their (ritual) acts (*karma*),
Men worship here the gods;
For swiftly in the world of men
Comes success, engendered by the act [itself].

§ 13. The four-caste system did I generate
With categories of 'constituents' and works;
Of this I am the doer, know thou this:—
And yet I am the Changeless One
Who does not do [or act].

§ 14. Works can never affect Me.
I have no yearning for their fruits.
Whoso should know that this is how I am
Escapes the bondage [forged] by works.

§ 15. This knowing, the ancients too did work,
Though seeking [all the while] release [from temporal life]:
So do thou work [and act]
As the ancients did in the days of old.

§ 16. What is work? What worklessness?
Herein even sages are perplexed.
So shall I preach to thee concerning work;
And once thou hast understood my words,
From ill thou'lt win release.

§ 17. For a man must understand
[The nature] of work, of work ill-done,
And worklessness, [all three]:
Profound, [hard to unravel,] are the ways of work!

§ 18. The man who sees worklessness in work [itself]
And work in worklessness,
Is wise among his fellows,
Integrated (*yukta*), performing every work.

§ 19. When all a man's emprises
Have neither motive nor desire [for fruit],—
His works burnt up in wisdom's fire,—
Then wise men call him learned.

§ 20. When he's cast off [all] attachment to the fruit of works,
Ever content, on none dependent,
Though he embark on work [himself],
In fact he does no work at all.

§ 21. Nothing hoping, his thought and mind (*ātman*) restrained,
Giving up all possessions,
He only does such work
As is needed for the body's maintenance,
And so avoids defilement.

§ 22. Content to take whatever chance may bring his way,
Surmounting all dualities (*dvandva*), knowing no envy,
The same in failure and success,
Though working [still], he is not bound.

§ 23. Attachments gone, deliverance won,
His thoughts are fixed on wisdom:
He works for sacrifice [alone],
And all the work [he ever did]
Entirely melts away.

§ 24. The offering is Brahman, Brahman the sacrificial ghee
Offered by Brahman in Brahman's fire:
Who fixes all his thought (*samādhī*) on this sacrificial rite (*karma*)
[Indwelt by] Brahman, to Brahman must he go.

§ 25. Some Yogins offer sacrifice
To the gods as their sole object,
In the fire of Brahman others
Offer sacrifice as sacrifice
[Which has merit in itself].

§ 26. Yet others offer the senses, –hearing and the rest,–
In the fires of self-restraint;
Others the senses' proper objects, –sounds and the like,–
In the fires of the senses.

§ 27. And others offer up all works of sense,
All works of vital breath, In the fire of the practice (*yoga*) of self-control
By wisdom kindled.

§ 28. Some offer up their wealth, some their hard penances
Some spiritual exercise (*yoga*), and some again
Make study and knowledge [of Scripture] their sacrifice,–
Religious men whose vows are strict.

§ 29. Some offer the inward breath in the outward
Likewise the outward in the inward,
Checking the flow of both,
On breath control intent.

§ 30. Others restrict their food
And offer up breaths in breaths.
All these know the [meaning of] sacrifice
For by sacrifice all their defilements are made away.

§ 31. Eating the leavings of the sacrifice
The food of immortality,
They come to eternal Brahman.
This world is not for him who performs no sacrifice,–
Much less another [world].

§ 32. So, many and various are the sacrifices
Spread out athwart the mouth of Brahman.
They spring from work, all of them; be sure of this,
[For] once thou knowest this, thy deliverance is sure.

§ 33. Better than the sacrifice of wealth
Is the sacrifice of wisdom.
All works without exception
In wisdom find their consummation.

§ 34. Learn to know this by humble reverence [of the wise],
By questioning, by service,
[For] the wise who see things as they really are
Will teach thee wisdom.

§ 35. Once thou hast known this, wilt thou never again
Be perplexed [as now thou art]:
By [knowing] this thou wilt behold [all] beings
In [thy]self, –yes, everyone of them, –and then in Me.

§ 36. Nay, though thou wert the very worst
Among all evil-doers,
[Yet, once thou hast mounted] wisdom's bark,
Thou wilt surmount all this tortuous [stream of life].

§ 37. As a kindled fire
Reduces its fuel to ashes,
So does the fire of wisdom
Reduce all works to ashes.

§ 38. Nothing on earth resembles wisdom
In its power to cleanse [and purify];
And thus in time a man may find himself
Within [him]self, – a man perfected in spiritual exercise (*yoga*).

§ 39. A man of faith, intent on wisdom,
His senses [all] restrained, will wisdom win;
And, wisdom won, he'll come right soon
To perfect⁴⁸ peace.

§ 40. The man, unwise, devoid of faith,
Doubting at heart (*ātman*), must perish:
No part in this world has the man of doubt,
Nor in the next, nor yet in happiness.

§ 41. Let a man in spiritual exercise (*yoga*) all works renounce,
Let him by wisdom his doubts dispel,
Let him be himself (*ātman*) and then
[Whatever his works [may be], they will never bind him [more].

§ 42. And so, [take up] the sword of wisdom, cut
This doubt of thine, unwisdom's child,
Still lurking in thy heart:
Prepare for action⁴⁹ [now], stand up!

⁴⁸ Lit. 'highest'.

⁴⁹ Or, 'resort to Yoga'.

XI

Arjuna said:

§ 1. Out of thy gracious favour to me Thou
Hast uttered the all-highest mystery
Called 'what appertains to Self',
And by that word [of thine] banished is my perplexity.

§ 2. For I have heard of the coming-to-be
And passing away of contingent beings;
[This hast Thou told me] in detail full,
As well as the majesty of [thine own] Self which passes not away.

§ 3. Even as Thou hast described [thy] Self to be,
So must it be, O Lord Most High;
[But fain would I see the [bodily] form
Of Thee as Lord, All-Highest Person.

§ 4. If, Lord, Thou thinkest that I can
Thus see Thee, then show Thou forth,
Lord of creative power (*yoga*),
[This] Self that passes not away.

The Blessed Lord said:

§ 5. Son of Prithā, behold my forms
In their hundreds and their thousands;
How various are they, how divine,
How many-hued and multiform!

§ 6. Ādityas, Rudras, Vasus, the Aśvins twain,
The Maruts too—behold them!
Marvels never seen before, —how many!
Arjuna, behold them!

§ 7. Do thou today this whole universe behold
Centred here in One, with all that it contains
Of moving and unmoving things;
[Behold] it in my body,
And whatsoever else thou fain wouldst see.

§ 8. But never canst thou see Me
With this thy [natural] eye.
A celestial eye I'll give thee:
Behold my creative power (*yoga*)⁵⁰ as Lord!

Sanjaya said:

§ 9. So saying Hari,⁵¹
The great Lord of Yogic power,
Revealed to the son of Prithā
His all-highest sovereign form,—

§ 10. [A form] with many a mouth and eye
And countless marvellous aspects;
Many [indeed] were its divine adornments,
Many the celestial weapons raised on high.

⁵⁰ Var. 'form'.

⁵¹ A name of Vishnu-Krishna.

§ 11. Garlands and robes celestial He wore,
Fragrance divine was his anointing:
[Behold] this God whose every [mark] spells wonder,
The infinite, facing every way!

§ 12. If in [bright] heaven together should arise
The shining brilliance of a thousand suns,
Then would that [perhaps] resemble
The brilliance of that God so great of Self.

§ 13. Then did the son of Pāndu see
The whole [wide] universe in One converged,
There in the body of the God of gods,
Yet divided out in multiplicity.

§ 14. Then filled with amazement Arjuna,
His hair on end, hands joined in reverent greeting,
Bowing his head before the God,
[These words] spake out:

Arjuna said:

§ 15. O God, the gods in thy body I behold,
And all the hosts of every kind of being;
Brahmā, the Lord, [I see], throned on the lotus-seat,
Celestial serpents and all the [ancient] seers.

§ 16. Arms, bellies, mouths and eyes all manifold—
So do I see Thee wherever I may look,—infinite thy form.
End, middle or beginning in Thee I cannot see,
O Monarch Universal, [manifest] in every form.

§ 17. Thine the crown, the mace, the discus,—
A mass of glory shining on all sides,
So do I see Thee,—yet how hard art Thou to see,—for on every side,
There's brilliant light of blazing fire and sun. O, who should comprehend it?⁵²

§ 18. Thou art the Imperishable, [thou] wisdom's highest goal,
Thou, of this universe the last prop and resting-place,
Thou the changeless, [thou] the guardian of eternal law (*dharma*),
Thou art the eternal Person; [at last] I understand!

§ 19. Beginning, middle, end Thou knowest not,—how infinite thy strength!
How numberless thine arms,—thine eyes the sun and moon!
So do I see Thee,—thy mouth a flaming fire
Burning up this whole [universe] with its blazing glory.

§ 20. For by Thee alone is this space between heaven and earth
Pervaded,—all points of the compass [by Thee pervaded too];
Gazing on this, thy marvellous, frightening form,
The three worlds shudder, All-Highest Self (*mahātman*)!

§ 25. Lo, the hosts of gods are entering into Thee:
Some, terror-struck, extol Thee, hands together pressed;
Great seers and men perfected in serried ranks
Cry out, 'All hail,' and praise Thee with copious hymns of praise.

⁵² Lit. 'immeasurable', or 'incomprehensible'.

§ 22. Rudras, Ādityas, Vasus, Sādhyas,
All-gods, Āsvins, Maruts and [the ancestors] who quaff the steam,
Minstrels divine, sprites, demons and the host, of perfected saints,
Gaze upon Thee, all utterly amazed.

§ 23. Gazing upon thy mighty form
With its myriad mouths, eyes, arms, thighs, feet,
Bellies, and sharp, gruesome tusks,
The worlds [all] shudder [in affright],—how much more !!

§ 24. Ablaze with many coloured [flames] Thou touch'st the sky,
Thy mouths wide open, gaping, thine eyes distended, blazing;
I see Thee, and my inmost self is shaken:
I cannot bear it, I find no peace, O Vishnu!

§ 25. I see thy mouths with jagged, ghastly tusks
Reminding [me] of Time's [devouring] fire:
I cannot find my bearings, I see no refuge;
Have mercy, God of gods, Home of the universe!

§ 26. Lo, all these Sons of Dhritarāshtra
Accompanied by a host of kings,
Bhīshma, Drona and [Karna,] son of the charioteer,
And those foremost in battle of our party too,

§ 27. Rush [blindly] into thy [gaping] mouths
That with their horrid tusks strike [them] with terror.
Some stick in the gaps between thy teeth,
See them !—their heads to powder ground!

§ 28. As many swelling, seething streams
Rush headlong into the [one great] sea,
So do these heroes of this world of men
Enter thy blazing mouths.

§ 29. As moths, in bursting, hurtling haste
Rush into a lighted blaze to their destruction,
So do the worlds, well-trained in hasty violence,⁵³
Pour into thy mouths to their own undoing.

§ 30. On every side thou lickest, lickest up,—devouring,—
Worlds, universes, everything—with burning mouths;
Vishnu! thy dreadful rays of light fill the whole universe
With flames of glory, scorching [everywhere].

§ 31. Tell me, who art Thou, thy form so cruel?
Homage to Thee, Thou best of gods, have mercy!
Fain would I know Thee as Thou art in the beginning,
For what Thou workest (*pravritti*) I do not understand.

The Blessed Lord said:

§ 32. Time am I, wrecker of the world's destruction,
Matured, [grimly] resolved (*pravrtta*) here to swallow up the worlds.
Do what thou wilt, all these warriors shall cease to be,
Drawn up [there] in their opposing ranks.

⁵³ This is the same phrase in Sanskrit as that translated as 'in bursting, hurtling haste' two lines above.

§ 33. And so arise, win glory,
Conquer thine enemies and enjoy a prosperous kingdom!
Long since have these men in truth been slain by Me,
Thine it is to be the mere occasion.

§ 34. Bhīshma, Drona, Jayadratha,
Karna and all the other men of war
Are [as good as] slain by Me. Slay them then—why falter?
Fight! [for] thou shalt conquer thine enemies in battle.

Sanjaya said:

§ 35. Hearing these words of Krishna, [Arjuna,]
Wearer of the crown, hands joined in veneration, trembling,
Bowed down again to Krishna and spake again
With stammering voice, as terrified he did obeisance.

Arjuna said:

§ 36. Full just it is that in praise of Thee
The world should find its pleasure and its joy,
That monsters by terror [tamed] should scatter in all directions,
And that all who've won perfection should do Thee homage.

§ 37. For why should they not revere Thee, great as is thy Self,
More to be prized art Thou than Brahmā,⁵⁴ [Thou] the first Creator,
Gods' Lord, the world's [abiding] home, unending.
Thou art the Imperishable, Being, Not-Being and what surpasses both.⁵⁵

§ 38. Thou art the Primal God, Primeval Person,
Thou of this universe the last prop and resting-place,
Thou the knower and what is to be known, [Thou our] final home (*dhāma*),
O Thou whose forms are infinite, by whom the whole [universe] was spun.⁵⁶

§ 39. Thou art [the wind-god] Vāyu, Yama [the god of death],
The god of fire (Agni) and water (Varuna) and the moon:
Prajāpati art Thou, and the primordial Ancestor:
All hail, all hail to Thee, [all hail] a thousandfold,
And yet again, All hail, all hail!

§ 40. All hail [to Thee] when I stand before Thee,
[All hail] when I stand behind Thee,
All hail to Thee wherever I may be,
[All hail to Thee], Thou All!
How infinite thy strength, how limitless thy prowess!
All dost Thou bring to consummation,⁵⁷ hence art Thou all.

§ 41. How rashly have I called Thee comrade, for so I thought of Thee,
[How rashly said,] 'Hey Krishna, Hey Yādava, Hey comrade!'
Little did I know of this thy majesty,
Distraught was I, . . . or was it that I loved Thee?

§ 42. Sometimes in jest I showed Thee disrespect
As we played or rested or sat or ate at table,
Sometimes together, sometimes in sight of others:
I crave thy pardon, O Lord, unfathomable, unfallen.

⁵⁴ Or, 'Brahman'. The whole phrase could mean 'Most reverend creator of Brahmā (or Brahman)'.
⁵⁵ Or, 'that All-Highest' with some MSS.
⁵⁶ Or, 'pervaded'.
⁵⁷ Or, 'comprisest'.

§ 43. Thou art the father of the moving and unmoving world,
Thou its venerable teacher, most highly prized;
None is there like Thee,—how could there be a greater?—
In these three worlds, O matchless is thy power.

§ 44. And so I bow to Thee, prostrate my body,
Crave grace of Thee, [my] Lord adorable;
Bear with me, I pray Thee, as father [bears] with son,
Or friend with friend, or lover with the one he loves.

§ 45. Things never seen before I've seen, and ecstatic is my joy;
Yet fear and trembling possess my mind.
Show me, then, God, that [same human] form [I knew],
Have mercy, Lord of gods, Home of the universe!

§ 46. Fain would I see Thee with [thy familiar] crown and mace,
Discus in hand, just as Thou used to be;
Take up again thy four-armed form,
O Thousand-armed, to whom every form belongs.

The Blessed Lord said:

§ 47. Because I desired to show thee favour, Arjuna,
By my Self's mysterious power (*ātmayoga*) I showed thee this my All-Highest form,—
Glorious, all-embracing, infinite, primeval,—
Which none has seen before save thee.

§ 48. Not by the Vedas, not by sacrifice,
Not by [much] study or the giving of alms,
Not by rituals or grim ascetic practice,
Can I be seen in such a form in the world of men:
To Thee alone have I revealed it.

§ 49. Thou needst not tremble nor need thy spirit be perplexed,
Though thou hast seen this form of mine, awful, grim.
Banish all fear, be glad at heart: behold again
That same [familiar human] form [thou knewest].

Sanjaya said:

§ 50. Thus speaking did the son of Vasudeva
Show his [human] form to Arjuna again,
Comforting him in his fear.
For once again the high-souled (*mahātman*) [Krishna]
Assumed the body of a friend.

Arjuna said:

§ 51. Now that I see [again] thy human form,
Friendly and kind,
I have returned to my senses
And regained my normal state.

The Blessed Lord said:

§ 52. Right hard to see is this my form
Which thou has seen:
This is the form the gods themselves
Forever crave to see.

§ 53. Not by the Vedas or grim ascetic practice,
Not by the giving of alms or sacrifice
Can I be seen in such a form
As thou didst see Me.

§ 54. But by worship of love (*bhakti*) addressed to Me alone
Can I be known and seen
In such a form and as I really am:
[So can my lovers] enter into Me.

§ 55. Do works for Me, make Me thy highest goal,
Be loyal in love (*bhakta*) to Me,
Cast off [all other] attachments,
Have no hatred for any being at all:
For all who do thus shall come to Me.

XVIII

Arjuna said:

§ 1. Krishna, fain would I hear the truth
Concerning renunciation,
And apart from this
[The truth] of self-surrender.

The Blessed Lord said:

§ 2. To give up works dictated by desire,
Wise men allow this to be renunciation;
Surrender of all the fruits [that accrue] to works
Discerning men call self-surrender.

§ 3. '[All] works must be surrendered, [for works themselves are] tainted with defect':
So say some of the wise;
But others say that works of sacrifice, the gift of alms
And works of penance are not to be surrendered.

§ 4. Hear then mine own decision
In [this matter of] surrender:
Threefold is [the act of] self-surrender;
So has it been declared.

§ 5. Works of sacrifice, the gift of alms and works of penance
Are not to be surrendered; these must most certainly be done;
It is sacrifice, alms-giving and ascetic practice
That purify the wise.

§ 6. But even those works should be done [in a spirit of self-surrender],
For [all] attachment to what you do and [all] the fruits [of what you do]
Must be surrendered.
This is my last decisive word.⁵⁸

§ 7. For to renounce a work enjoined [by Scripture]
Is inappropriate;
Deludedly to give this up
Is [the way] of Darkness. This [too] has been declared.

§ 8. The man who gives up a deed simply because it causes pain
Or because he shrinks from bodily distress,
Commits an act of self-surrender that accords with Passion's way;
Assuredly he will not reap surrender's fruit.

⁵⁸ Lit. 'thought'.

§ 9. But if a work is done simply because it should be done
And is work enjoined [by Scripture],
And if [all] attachment, [all thought of] fruit is given up,
Then [that work is done] in Goodness' way, I deem.

§ 10. The self-surrendered man, suffused with Goodness, wise,
Whose [every] doubt is cut away,
Hates not his uncongenial work
Nor cleaves to the congenial.

§ 11. For one still in the body it is not possible
To surrender up all works without exception;
Rather it is he who surrenders up the fruits of works
Who deserves the name 'a self-surrendered man'.

§ 12. Unwanted—wanted—mixed:
Threefold is the fruit of work,—
[This they experience] at death who have not surrendered [self]
But not at all such men who have renounced.

§ 13. In the system of the Sāmkhyas
Five factors are laid down;
By these all works attain fruition.
Learn them from Me.

§ 14. Material basis, agent,
Instruments of various kinds,
The vast variety of motions,
And fate, the fifth and last:

§ 15. These are the five factors
Of whatever work a man may undertake,
Of body, speech or mind,
No matter whether right or wrong.

§ 16. Since this is so, the man who sees in self alone
The agent, does not see [at all].
Untrained is his intelligence,
And evil are his thoughts.

§ 17. A man who's reached a state where there is no sense of 'I',
Whose soul (*buddhi*) is undefiled,—
Were he to slaughter [all] these worlds,
Slays nothing. He is not bound.

§ 18. Knowledge—its object—knower:—
[These form] the threefold instrumental cause of action (karma).
Instrument—action—agent:
[Such is] action's threefold nexus.

§ 19. Knowledge—action—agent:—
[These too are] three in kind, distinguished by 'constituent'.
The theory of 'constituents' contains it [all]:
Listen to the manner of these [three].

§ 20. That [kind of] knowledge by which one sees
One mode of being, changeless, undivided
In all contingent beings, divided [as they are],
Is Goodness' [knowledge]. Be sure of this.

§ 21. But that [kind of] knowledge which in all contingent beings
Discerns in separation all manner of modes of being,
Different and distinct, –
This thou must know is knowledge [born] of Passion.

§ 22. But that [kind of knowledge] which sticks to one effect
As if it were all, –irrational,
Not bothering about the Real as the [true] object [of all knowledge],
This trifling [knowledge] is Darkness' own. So is it laid down.

§ 23. The work (*karma*) of obligation, from [all] attachment free,
Performed without passion, without hate,
By one who hankers not for fruits,
Is called [the work] of Goodness.

§ 24. The work in which much effort is expended
By one who seeks his own pleasure and desire
And ever thinks, 'It is I myself who do it,'
Such [work]'s assigned to Passion.

§ 25. The work embarked on by a man deluded
Who has no thought of consequence, nor cares at all
For the loss and hurt [he causes others] or for the human part
He plays himself, is called [a work] of Darkness.

§ 26. The agent who, from attachment freed,
Steadfast and resolute,
Remains unchanged in failure or success,
And never speaks of 'I', is called [an agent] in Goodness' way.

§ 27. The agent who pursues the fruits of works,
Passionate, greedy, intent on doing harm, impure,
A prey to exultation as to grief,
Is widely known [to act] in Passion's way.

§ 28. The agent, inept (*ayukta*) and vulgar, stiff and proud,
A cheat, low-spoken,⁵⁹ slothful,
Who's subject to depression, who procrastinates,
Is called [an agent] in Darkness' way.

§ 29. Divided threefold too are intellect (*buddhi*) and constancy
According to the constituents. Listen [to Me,
For I shall] tell it forth in all its many forms,
Omitting nothing.

§ 30. The intellect that distinguishes between activity
And its cessation, between what should be done and what should not,
Between danger and security, bondage and release,
Is [an intellect] in Goodness' way.

§ 31. The intellect by which lawful right (*dharma*) and lawless wrong,
What should be done and what should not
Are untruly understood,
Is [an intellect] in Passion's way.

⁵⁹ Or, 'dishonest'.

§ 32. The intellect which, by Darkness overcast,
Thinks right is wrong, law lawlessness,
All things their opposite,⁶⁰
Is [an intellect] in Darkness' way.

§ 33. The constancy by which a man holds fast
In check the works of mind and breath and sense,
Unswerving in self-discipline (*yoga*),
Is constancy in Goodness' way.

§ 34. The constancy by which a man holds fast
[In balance] pleasure, self-interest and righteousness,
Yet clings to them, desirous of their fruits,
Is constancy in Passion's way.

§ 35. [The constancy] by which a fool
Will not let go sleep, fear or grief,
Depression or exaltation,
Is constancy in Darkness' way.

§ 36. Threefold too is pleasure:
Arjuna, hear this now from Me.
[That pleasure] which a man enjoys after much effort spent,
Making an end thereby of suffering,

§ 37. Which at first seems more like poison
But in time transmutes itself into what seems to be
Ambrosia,—is called pleasure in Goodness' way,
For it springs from that serenity which comes from apperception of the self.⁶¹

§ 38. [That pleasure] which at first seems like ambrosia,
Arising when the senses meet the things of sense,
But in time transmutes itself into what seems to be
Poison, that pleasure, so it's said, is in Passion's way.

§ 39. [That pleasure] which at first
And in the sequel leads the self astray,
Which derives from sleep and sloth and fecklessness,
Has been condemned⁶² as pleasure in Darkness' way.

§ 40. There is no existent thing in heaven or on earth
Nor yet among the gods,
Which is or ever could be free
From these three constituents from Nature sprung.

§ 41. To Brāhmans, princes, artisans and serfs
Works have been variously assigned
By [these] constituents,
And they arise from the nature of things as they are (*svabhāva*).

§ 42. Calm, self-restraint, ascetic practice, purity,
Long-suffering and uprightness,
Wisdom in theory as in practice, religious faith,—
[These] are the works of Brāhmans, inhering in their nature.

⁶⁰ Or, 'all things contrary [to truth]'.

⁶¹ *ātma-buddhi-prasāda*: Or, 'of one's own intellect (soul)' or 'of intellect and self'.

⁶² Lit. 'declared'.

§ 43. High courage, ardour, endurance, skill,
In battle unwillingness to flee,
An open hand, a lordly mien,—
[These] are the works of princes, inhering in their nature [too].

§ 44. To till the fields, protect the kine and to engage in trade,—
[These] are the works of artisans, inhering in their nature;
But works whose very soul is service
Inhere in the very nature of the serf.

§ 45. By [doing] the work that is proper to him [and] rejoicing [in the doing],
A man succeeds, perfects himself.
[Now] hear just how a man perfects himself
By [doing and] rejoicing in his proper work.

§ 46. By dedicating the work that is proper [to his caste]
To Him who is the source of all beings' activity (*pravr̥tti*),
By whom this whole universe was spun,⁶³
A man attains perfection and success.

§ 47. Better to do one's own [caste] duty, though devoid of merit,
Than to do another's, however well performed.
By doing the works prescribed by his own nature
A man meets with no defilement.

§ 48. Never should a man give up the works to which he's born,
Defective though they be;
For every enterprise is choked
By defects, as fire by smoke.

§ 49. With soul (*buddhi*) detached from everything,
With self subdued, all longing gone,
Renounce: and so thou'lt find complete success,
Perfection, works transcended (*naiṣkarmya*).

§ 50. Perfection found, now learn from Me
How Brahman thou mayst reach.
This briefly [will I tell thee],
It is wisdom's highest bourn.

§ 51. Let a man be integrated by his soul (*buddhi*), now cleansed,
Let him restrain [him]self with constancy,
Abandon things of sense,—sound and all the rest,—
Passion and hate let him cast out;

§ 52. Let him live apart, eat lightly,
Restrain speech, body, mind,
Let him practise meditation constantly,
Let him cultivate dispassion;

§ 53. Let him give up all thought of 'I', force, pride,
Desire and hatred and possessiveness,
Let him not think of anything as 'mine', at peace,—
[If he does this,] to becoming Brahman he's conformed.

⁶³ Or, 'pervaded'.

§ 54. Brahman become, with self serene,
He grieves not nor desires;
The same to all contingent beings,
He gains the highest love and loyalty (*bhakti*) to Me.

§ 55. By love and loyalty he comes to know Me as I really am,
How great I am and who;
And once he knows Me as I am,
He enters [Me] forthwith.

§ 56. Let him then do all manner of works,
Putting his trust in Me;
For by my grace he will attain
To an eternal, changeless state (*pada*).

§ 57. Give up in thought to Me all that thou dost;
Make Me thy goal:
Relying on the Yoga of the soul (*buddhi*),
Think on Me constantly.

§ 58. Thinking on Me thou shalt surmount
All dangers by my grace,
But if through selfishness thou wilt not listen,
Then wilt thou [surely] perish.

§ 59. [But] if thou shouldst think, relying on thine ego,
'I will not fight,'
Vain is thy resolution,
[For] Nature will constrain thee.

§ 60. Bound art thou by thine own works
Which spring from thine own nature;
[For] what, deluded, thou wouldst not do,
That wilt thou do perforce.

§ 61. In the region of the heart of all
Contingent beings dwells the Lord,
Twirling them hither and thither by his uncanny power (*māyā*)
[Like puppets] fixed in a machine.

§ 62. In Him alone seek refuge
With all thy being, all thy love (*bhāva*);
And by his grace shalt thou attain
An eternal state, the all-highest peace.

§ 63. Of all mysteries most mysterious
This wisdom have I told thee;
Ponder on it in all its amplitude,
Then do whatever thou wilt.

§ 64. And now again give ear to this my all-highest Word,
Of all the most mysterious:
'I love thee well.'
Therefore will I tell thee thy salvation (*hita*).

§ 65. Bear Me in mind, love Me and worship Me (*bhakta*),
Sacrifice, prostrate thyself to Me:
So shalt thou come to Me, I promise thee
Truly, for thou art dear to Me.

§ 66. Give up all things of law (*dharma*),
Turn to Me, thine only refuge,
[For] I will deliver thee
From all evils; have no care.

§ 67. Never must thou tell this [Word] to one
Whose life is not austere, to one devoid of love and loyalty (*bhakta*),
To one who refuses to obey,
Or one who envies Me.

§ 68. [But] whoever shall proclaim this all-highest mystery
To my loving devotees (*bhakta*),
Showing the while the highest love and loyalty (*bhakti*) to Me,
Shall come to Me in very truth.

§ 69. No one among men can render Me
More pleasing service than a man like this;
Nor shall any other man on earth
Be more beloved of Me than he.

§ 70. And whoso shall read this dialogue
Which I and thou have held concerning what is right (*dharmya*),
It will be as if he had offered Me a sacrifice
Of wisdom: so do I believe.

§ 71. And the man of faith, not cavilling,
Who listens [to this my Word],—
He too shall win deliverance, and attain
To the goodly worlds of those whose works are pure.

§ 72. Hast thou listened, Arjuna, [to these my words]
With mind on them alone intent?
And has the confusion [of thy mind]
That stemmed from ignorance, been dispelled?

Arjuna said:

§ 73. Destroyed is the confusion; and through thy grace
I have regained a proper way of thinking (*smṛti*)
With doubts dispelled I stand
Ready to do thy bidding.

Sanjaya said:

§ 74. So did I hear this wondrous dialogue
Of [Krishna,] Vasudeva's son
And the high-souled Arjuna,
[And as I listened,] I shuddered with delight.

§ 75. By Vyāsa's favour have I heard
This highest mystery,
This Yoga from [great] Krishna, Yoga's Lord himself,
As he in person told it.

§ 76. O king, as oft as I recall
This marvellous, holy dialogue
Of Arjuna and Krishna
I thrill with joy, and thrill with joy again!

§ 77. And as often as I recall that form of Vishnu—
Utterly marvellous—
How great is my amazement!
I thrill with joy, and thrill with joy again!

§ 78. Wherever Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, is,
Wherever Arjuna, Prithā's son,
There is good fortune, victory, success,
Sound policy assured. This do I believe.

Islam

All extracts are taken from **The Meaning of the Glorious Koran – an explanatory translation** – Pickthall M (published as a Mentor Book by arrangement with George Allen and Unwin Ltd).

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Sûrah 1 (page 31)

THE OPENING

Revealed at Mecca

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds,
2. The Beneficent, the Merciful.
3. Owner of the Day of Judgment,
4. Thee (alone) we worship; Thee (alone) we ask for help.
5. Show us the straight path,
6. The path of those whom Thou hast favoured;
7. Not (the path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray.

Sûrah 2 (pages 34-60)

THE COW

Revealed at Al-Madînah

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1. Alif. Lâm. Mîm.⁶⁴
2. This is the Scripture whereof there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who ward off (evil).
3. Who believe in the unseen, and establish worship, and spend of that We have bestowed upon them;
4. And who believe in that which is revealed unto thee (Muhammad) and that which was revealed before thee, and are certain of the Hereafter.
5. These depend on guidance from their Lord. These are the successful.
6. As for the disbelievers, whether thou warn them or thou warn them not it is all one for them; they believe not.
7. Allah hath sealed their hearing and their hearts, and on their eyes there is a covering. Theirs will be an awful doom.
8. And of mankind are some who say: We believe in Allah and the Last Day, when they believe not.
9. They think to beguile Allah and those who believe, and they beguile none save themselves; but they perceive not.
10. In their hearts is a disease, and Allah increaseth their disease. A painful doom is theirs because they lie.
11. And when it is said unto them: Make not mischief in the earth, they say: We are peacemakers only.
12. Are not they indeed the mischief-makers? But they perceive not.

⁶⁴ Three letters of the Arabic alphabet. Many sûrahs begin thus with letters of the alphabet. Opinions differ as to their significance, the prevalent view being that they indicate some mystic words. Some have opined that they are merely the initials of the scribe. They are always included in the text and recited as part of it.

13. And when it is said unto them: Believe as the people⁶⁵ believe, they say: Shall we believe as the foolish believe? Are not they indeed the foolish? But they know not.
14. And when they fall in with those who believe, they say: We believe; but when they go apart to their devils they declare: Lo! we are with you; verily we did but mock.
15. Allah (Himself) doth mock them, leaving them to wander blindly on in their contumacy.
16. These are they who purchase error at the price of guidance, so their commerce doth not prosper, neither are they guided.
17. Their likeness is as the likeness of one who kindleth fire, and when it sheddeth its light around him Allah taketh away their light and leaveth them in darkness, where they cannot see,
18. Deaf, dumb and blind; and they return not.
19. Or like a rainstorm from the sky, wherein is darkness, thunder and the flash of lightning. They thrust their fingers in their ears by reason of the thunder-claps, for fear of death. Allah encompasseth the disbelievers (in His guidance).
20. The lightning almost snatcheth away their sight from them. As often as it flasheth forth for them they walk therein, and when it darkeneth against them they stand still. If Allah willed, He could destroy their hearing and their sight. Lo! Allah is Able to do all things.
21. O mankind! Worship your Lord, Who hath created you and those before you, so that ye may ward off (evil).
22. Who hath appointed the earth a resting-place for you, and the sky a canopy; and causeth water to pour down from the sky, thereby producing fruits as food for you. And do not set up rivals to Allah when ye know (better).
23. And if ye are in doubt concerning that which We reveal unto Our slave⁶⁶ (Muhammad), then produce a sûrah of the like thereof, and call your witnesses beside Allah if ye are truthful.
24. And if ye do it not—and ye can never do it—then guard yourselves against the fire prepared for disbelievers, whose fuel is of men and stones.
25. And give glad tidings (O Muhammad) unto those who believe and do good works; that theirs are Gardens underneath which rivers flow; as often as they are regaled with food of the fruit thereof, they say: This is what was given us aforetime;⁶⁷ and it is given to them in resemblance. There for them are pure companions; there for ever they abide.
26. Lo! Allah disdaineth not to coin the similitude even of a gnat. Those who believe know that it is the truth from their Lord; but those who disbelieve say: What doth Allah wish (to teach) by such a similitude? He misleadeth many thereby, and He guideth many thereby; and He misleadeth thereby only miscreants;
27. Those who break the covenant of Allah after ratifying it, and sever that which Allah ordered to be joined, and (who) make mischief in the earth: Those are they who are the losers.
28. How disbelieve ye in Allah when ye were dead and He gave life to you! Then he will give you death, then life again, and then unto Him ye will return.
29. He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth. Then turned He to the heaven, and fashioned it as seven heavens. And He is Knower of all things.
30. And when thy Lord said unto the angels: Lo! I am about to place a viceroy in the earth, they said: Wilt Thou place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood, while we, we hymn Thy praise and sanctify Thee? He said: Surely I know that which ye know not.
31. And He taught Adam all the names,⁶⁸ then showed them to the angels, saying: Inform me of the names of these, if ye are truthful.
32. They said: Be glorified! We have no knowledge saving that which Thou hast taught us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Knower, the Wise.
33. He said: O Adam! Inform them of their names, and when he had informed them of their names, He said: Did I not tell you that I know the secret of the heavens and the earth? And I know that which ye disclose and which ye hide.
34. And when We said unto the angels: Prostrate your selves before Adam, they fell prostrate, all save Iblîs. He demurred through pride, and so became a disbeliever.

⁶⁵ ie the people of Al-Madînah, most of whom were Muslims, vv. 8 to 19 refer to the “Hypocrites,” or lukewarm Muslims of Al-Madînah, whose leader was Abdullah ibn Ubeyy. They pretended that their aim was to make peace between the Muslims and the Jewish rabbis, but they only embittered the controversy.

⁶⁶ To be the slave of Allah is the proudest boast of the Muslim, bondage to Allah liberating from all other servitudes. In the Koran mankind are often called God’s slaves or bondmen, a stronger and more just expression than the word “servants” generally substituted in translations.

⁶⁷ The joys of Paradise will recall, in a rapturous degree, the joys the righteous tasted in their life on earth.

⁶⁸ Some, especially Sûfîs, hold “the names” to be the attributes of Allah; others, the names of animals and plants.

35. And We said: O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden, and eat ye⁶⁹ freely (of the fruits) thereof where ye will; but come not nigh this tree lest ye become wrongdoers.

36. But Satan caused them to deflect therefrom and expelled them from the (happy) state in which they were; and We said: Fall down,⁷⁰ one of you a foe unto the other! There shall be for you on earth a habitation and provision for a time.

37. Then Adam received from his Lord words (of revelation), and He relented toward him. Lo! He is the Relenting, the Merciful.

38. We said: Go down, all of you, from hence; but verily there cometh unto you from Me a guidance; and whoso followeth My guidance, there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve.

39. But they who disbelieve, and deny Our revelations, such are rightful owners of the Fire. They will abide therein.

40. O Children of Israel! Remember My favour wherewith I favoured you, and fulfil your (part of the) covenant, I shall fulfil My (part of the) covenant, and fear Me.

41. And believe in that which I reveal, confirming that which ye possess already (of the Scripture), and be not first to disbelieve therein, and part not with My revelations for a trifling price, and keep your duty unto Me.

42. Confound not truth with falsehood, nor knowingly conceal the truth.

43. Establish worship, pay the poor-due,⁷¹ and bow your heads with those who bow (in worship).

44. Enjoin ye righteousness upon mankind while ye yourselves forget (to practise it)? And ye are readers of the Scripture! Have ye then no sense?

45. Seek help in patience and prayer; and truly it is hard save for the humble-minded,

46. Who know that they will have to meet their Lord, and that unto Him they are returning.

47. O Children of Israel! Remember My favour wherewith I favoured you and how I preferred you to (all) creatures.

48. And guard yourselves against a day when no soul will in aught avail another, nor will intercession be accepted from it, nor will compensation be received from it, nor will they be helped.

49. And (remember) when We did deliver you from Pharaoh's folk, who were afflicting you with dreadful torment, slaying your sons and sparing your women: That was a tremendous trial from your Lord.

50. And when We brought you through the sea and rescued you, and drowned the folk of Pharaoh in your sight.

51. And when We did appoint for Moses forty nights (of solitude), and then ye chose the calf, when he had gone from you, and were wrongdoers.

52. Then, even after that, We pardoned you in order that ye might give thanks.

53. And when We gave unto Moses the Scripture and the Criterion (of right and wrong), that ye might be led aright.

54. And when Moses said unto his people: O my people! Ye have wronged yourselves by your choosing of the calf (for worship) so turn in penitence to your Creator, and kill (the guilty) yourselves. That will be best for you with your Creator and He will relent toward you. Lo! He is the Relenting, the Merciful.

55. And when ye said: O Moses! We will not believe in thee till we see Allah plainly; and even while ye gazed the lightning seized you.

56. Then We revived you after your extinction, that ye might give thanks.

57. And We caused the white cloud to overshadow you and sent down on you the manna and the quails, (saying): Eat of the good things wherewith We have provided you— We wronged them not, but they did wrong themselves.

58. And when We said: Go into this township and eat freely of that which is therein, and enter the gate prostrate and say: "Repentance."⁷² We will forgive you your sins and will increase (reward) for the right-doers.

59. But those who did wrong changed the word which had been told them for another saying, and We sent down upon the evil-doers wrath from Heaven for their evildoing.

60. And when Moses asked for water for his people, We said: Smite with thy staff the rock. And there gushed out therefrom twelve springs (so that) each tribe knew their drinking-place. Eat and drink of that which Allah hath provided, and do not act corruptly, making mischief in the earth.

⁶⁹ Here the command is in the dual, as addressed to Adam and his wife.

⁷⁰ Here the command is in the plural, as addressed to Adam's race.

⁷¹ *Az-Zakâh*: A tax at a fixed rate in proportion to the worth of property, collected from the well-to-do and distributed among the poor Muslims.

⁷² According to a tradition of the Prophet, *Hittatun* is a word implying submission to Allah and repentance. The evil-doers changed it for a word of rebellion— ie they were disobedient.

61. And when ye said: O Moses! We are weary of one kind of food; so call upon thy Lord for us that he bring forth for us of that which the earth groweth—of its herbs and its cucumbers and its corn and its lentils and its onions. He said: Would ye exchange that which is higher for that which is lower? Go down to settled country, thus ye shall get that which ye demand. And humiliation and wretchedness were stamped upon them and they were visited with wrath from Allah. That was because they disbelieved in Allah's revelations and slew the prophets wrongfully. That was for their disobedience and transgression.

62. Lo! those who believe (in that which is revealed unto thee, Muhammad), and those who are Jews, and Christians, and Sabaeans—whoever believeth in Allah and the Last Day and doeth right—surely their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve.

63. And (remember, O children of Israel) when We made a covenant with you and caused the Mount to tower above you, (saying): Hold fast that which We have given you, and remember that which is therein, that ye may ward off (evil).

64. Then, even after that, ye turned away, and if it had not been for the grace of Allah and His mercy ye had been among the losers.

65. And ye know of those of you who broke the Sabbath, how We said unto them: Be ye apes, despised and hated!

66. And We made it an example to their own and to succeeding generations, and an admonition to the Godfearing.

67. And when Moses said unto his people: Lo! Allah commandeth you that ye sacrifice a cow, they said: Dost thou make game of us? He answered: Allah forbid that I should be among the foolish!

68. They said: Pray for us unto thy Lord that He make clear to us what (cow) she is. (Moses) answered: Lo! He saith, Verily she is a cow neither with calf nor immature; (she is) between the two conditions; so do that which ye are commanded.

69. They said: Pray for us unto thy Lord that He make clear to us of what colour she is. (Moses) answered: Lo! He saith: Verily she is a yellow cow. Bright is her colour, gladdening beholders.

70. They said: Pray for us unto thy Lord that He make clear to us what (cow) she is. Lo! cows are much alike to us; and lo! if Allah wills, we may be led aright.

71. (Moses) answered: Lo! He saith: Verily she is a cow unyoked; she plougheth not the soil nor watereth the tilth; whole and without mark. They said: Now thou bringest the truth. So they sacrificed her, though almost they did not.

72. And (remember) when ye slew a man and disagreed concerning it and Allah brought forth that which ye were hiding.

73. And We said: Smite him with some of it. Thus Allah bringeth the dead to life and showeth you His portents so that ye may understand.⁷³

74. Then, even after that, your hearts were hardened and became as rocks, or worse than rocks, for hardness. For indeed there are rocks from out which rivers gush, and indeed there are rocks which split asunder so that water floweth from them. And indeed there are rocks which fall down for the fear of Allah. Allah is not unaware of what ye do.

75. Have ye any hope that they will be true to you when a party of them used to listen to the Word of Allah, then used to change it, after they had understood it, knowingly?

76. And when they fall in with those who believe, they say: We believe. But when they go apart one with another they say: Prate ye to them of that which Allah hath disclosed to you that they may contend with you before your Lord concerning it? Have ye then no sense?

77. Are they then unaware that Allah knoweth that which they keep hidden and that which they proclaim?

78. Among them are unlettered folk who know the Scripture not except from hearsay. They but guess.

79. Therefore woe be unto those who write the Scripture with their hands and then say, "This is from Allah," that they may purchase a small gain therewith. Woe unto them for that their hands have written, and woe unto them for that they earn thereby.

80. And they say: The fire (of punishment) will not touch us save for a certain number of days. Say: Have ye received a covenant from Allah—truly Allah will not break His covenant—or tell ye concerning Allah that which ye know not?

81. Nay, but whosoever hath done evil and his sin surroundeth him; such are rightful owners of the Fire; they will abide therein.

82. And those who believe and do good works: such are rightful owners of the Garden. They will abide therein.

⁷³ The old commentators tell various stories by way of explaining vv. 72 and 73; one of them concerning a miracle that happened at Al-Madīnah. For Maulvi Muhammad Ali's exposition of them as referring to the martyrdom of Jesus Christ (on whom be peace) see the footnote to v. 72 in his translation.

83. And (remember) when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel, (saying): Worship none save Allah (only), and be good to parents and to kindred and to orphans and the needy, and speak kindly to mankind; and establish worship and pay the poor-due. Then, after that, ye slid back, save a few of you, being averse.

84. And when We made with you a covenant (saying): Shed not the blood of your people nor turn (a party of) your people out of your dwellings. Then ye ratified (Our covenant) and ye were witnesses (thereto).⁷⁴

85. Yet ye it is who slay each other and drive out a party of your people from their homes, supporting one another against them by sin and transgression⁷⁵ – and if they came to you as captives ye would ransom them, whereas their expulsion was itself unlawful for you—Believe ye in part of the Scripture and disbelieve ye in part thereof? And what is the reward of those who do so save ignominy in the life of the world, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be consigned to the most grievous doom. For Allah is not unaware of what ye do.

86. Such are those who buy the life of the world at the price of the Hereafter. Their punishment will not be lightened, neither will they have support.

87. And verily We gave unto Moses the Scripture and We caused a train of messengers to follow after him, and We gave unto Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs (of Allah's sovereignty), and We supported him with the holy Spirit.⁷⁶ Is it ever so, that, when there cometh unto you a messenger (from Allah) with that which ye yourselves desire not, ye grow arrogant, and some ye disbelieve and some ye slay?

88. And they say: Our hearts are hardened. Nay, but Allah hath cursed them for their unbelief. Little is that which they believe.

89. And when there cometh unto them a Scripture from Allah, confirming that in their possession—though before that they were asking for a signal triumph over those who disbelieved—and when there cometh unto them that which they know (to be the Truth) they disbelieve therein. The curse of Allah is on disbelievers.

90. Evil is that for which they sell their souls: that they should disbelieve in that which Allah hath revealed, grudging that Allah should reveal of His bounty unto whom He will of His bondmen.⁷⁷ They have incurred anger upon anger. For disbelievers is a shameful doom.

91. And when it is said unto them: Believe in that which Allah hath revealed, they say: We believe in that which was revealed unto us. And they disbelieve in that which cometh after it, though it is the truth confirming that which they possess. Say (unto them, O Muhammad): Why then slew ye the Prophets of Allah aforetime, if ye are (indeed) believers?

92. And Moses came unto you with clear proofs (of Allah's sovereignty), yet, while he was away, ye chose the calf (for worship) and ye were wrongdoers.

93. And when We made with you a covenant and caused the Mount to tower above you, (saying): Hold fast by that which We have given you, and hear (Our Word), they said:

We hear and we rebel. And (worship of) the calf was made to sink into their hearts because of their rejection (of the Covenant). Say (unto them): Evil is that which your belief enjoineeth on you, if ye are believers.

94. Say (unto them): If the abode of the Hereafter in the providence of Allah is indeed for you alone and not for others of mankind (as ye pretend), then long for death (for ye must long for death) if ye are truthful.

95. But they will never long for it, because of that which their own hands have sent before them. Allah is Aware of evil doers.

96. And thou wilt find them greediest of mankind for life and (greedier) than the idolaters. (Each) one of them would like to be allowed to live a thousand years. And to live (a thousand years) would by no means remove him from the doom. Allah is Seer of what they do.

97. Say (O Muhammad, to mankind): Who is an enemy to Gabriel! For he it is who hath revealed (this Scripture) to thy heart by Allah's leave, confirming that which was (revealed) before it, and a guidance and glad tidings to believers;

98. Who is an enemy to Allah, and His angels and His messengers, and Gabriel and Michael! Then, lo! Allah (Himself) is an enemy to the disbelievers.

99. Verily We have revealed unto thee clear tokens, and only miscreants will disbelieve in them.

⁷⁴ v. 83 is generally taken as referring to the Biblical covenant and v. 84 as referring to the solemn treaty which the Jews of Al-Madinah made with the Prophet in the year 1 AH.

⁷⁵ The reference is to the wars between the Arab tribes of Al-Madīnah in which the Jews used to take part as allies of one and the other, Jew waging war upon Jew.

⁷⁶ "The holy Spirit" is a term for the angel of Revelation, Gabriel (on whom be peace).

⁷⁷ See V. 23, footnote.

100. Is it ever so that when ye make a covenant a party of you set it aside? The truth is, most of them believe not.

101. And when there cometh unto them a messenger from Allah, confirming that which they possess, a party of those who have received the Scripture fling the Scripture of Allah behind their backs as if they knew not,

102. And follow that which the devils falsely related against the kingdom of Solomon. Solomon disbelieved not; but the devils disbelieved, teaching mankind magic and that which was revealed to the two angels in Babel, Hârût and Mârût. Nor did they (the two angels) teach it to anyone till they had said:

We are only a temptation, therefore disbelieve not (in the guidance of Allah). And from these two (angels) people learn that by which they cause division between man and wife; but they injure thereby no-one save by Allah's leave. And they learn that which harmeth them and profiteth them not. And surely they do know that he who trafficketh therein will have no (happy) portion in the Hereafter; and surely evil is the price for which they sell their souls, if they but knew.⁷⁸

103. And if they had believed and kept from evil, a recompense from Allah would be better, if they only knew.

104. O ye who believe, say not (unto the Prophet): "Listen to us" but say "Look upon us,"⁷⁹ and be ye listeners. For disbelievers is a painful doom.

105. Neither those who disbelieve among the People of the Scripture⁸⁰ nor the idolaters love that there should be sent down unto you any good thing from your Lord. But Allah chooseth for His mercy whom He will, and Allah is of infinite bounty.

106. Such of Our revelations as We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, we bring (in place) one better or the like thereof. Knowest thou not that Allah is Able to do all things?

107. Knowest thou not that it is Allah unto Whom belongeth the sovereignty of the heavens and earth; and ye have not, beside Allah, any friend or helper?

108. Or would ye question your messenger as Moses was questioned aforetime? He who chooseth disbelief instead of faith, verily he hath gone astray from a plain road.

109. Many of the People of the Scripture long to make you disbelievers after your belief, through envy on their own account, after the truth hath become manifest unto them. Forgive and be indulgent (toward them) until Allah give command. Lo! Allah is Able to do all things.

110. Establish worship, and pay the poor-due;⁸¹ and whatever of good ye send before (you) for your souls, ye will find it with Allah. Lo! Allah is Seer of what ye do.

111. And they say: None entereth Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian. These are their own desires. Say: Bring your proof (of what ye state) if ye are truthful.

112. Nay, but whosoever surrendereth his purpose to Allah while doing good, his reward is with his Lord; and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve.

113. And the Jews say the Christians follow nothing (true), and the Christians say the Jews follow nothing (true); yet both are readers of the Scripture. Even thus speak those who know not. Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that wherein they differ.

114. And who doth greater wrong than he who forbiddeth the approach to the sanctuaries of Allah lest His name should be mentioned therein, and striveth for their ruin? As for such, it was never meant that they should enter them except in fear. Theirs in the world is ignominy and theirs in the Hereafter is an awful doom.

115. Unto Allah belong the East and the West, and whithersoever ye turn, there is Allah's countenance. Lo! Allah is All- Embracing, All-Knowing.

116. And they say: Allah hath taken unto Himself a Son. Be He glorified! Nay, but whatsoever is in the heaven and the earth is His. All are subservient unto Him.

117. The Originator of the heavens and the earth! When He decreeth a thing, He saith unto it only: Be! and it is.

118. And those who have no knowledge say: Why doth not Allah speak unto us, or some sign come unto us? Even thus, as they now speak, spake those (who were) before them. Their hearts are all alike. We have made clear the revelations for people who are sure.

⁷⁸ The reference is to the occult science practised by the Jews, the origin of which was ascribed to Solomon.

⁷⁹ The first word which the Muslims used to call the Prophet's attention respect fully, Râ'ina, the Jews could change into an insult by a slight mispronunciation.

⁸⁰ ie Jews and Christians.

⁸¹ *Az-Zakâh*, a tax at a fixed rate in proportion to the worth of property, collected from the well-to-do and distributed among the poor Muslims.

119. Lo! We have sent thee (O Muhammad) with the truth, a bringer of glad tidings and a warner. A thou wilt not be asked about the owners of hell-fire.
120. And the Jews will not be pleased with thee, nor will the Christians, till thou follow their creed. Say: Lo! the guidance of Allah (Himself) is Guidance. And if thou shouldst follow their desires after the knowledge which hath come unto thee, then wouldst thou have from Allah no protecting friend nor helper.
121. Those unto whom We have given the Scripture, who read it with the right reading, those believe in it. And whoso disbelieveth in it, those are they who are the losers.
122. O Children of Israel! Remember My favour wherewith I favoured you and how I preferred you to (all) creatures.
123. And guard (yourselves) against a day when no soul will in aught avail another, nor will compensation be accepted from it, nor will intercession be of use to it; nor will they be helped.
124. And (remember) when his Lord tried Abraham with (His) commands, and he fulfilled them, He said: Lo! I have appointed thee a leader for mankind. (Abraham) said: And of my offspring (will there be leaders)? He said: My covenant includeth not wrongdoers.
125. And when We made the House (at Mecca) a resort for mankind and a sanctuary, (saying): Take as your place of worship the place where Abraham stood (to pray). And We imposed a duty upon Abraham and Ishmael, (saying): Purify My house for those who go around and those who meditate therein and those who bow down and prostrate themselves (in worship).
126. And when Abraham prayed: My Lord! Make this a region of security and bestow upon its people fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day, He answered: As for him who disbelieveth, I shall leave him in contentment for a while, then I shall compel him to the doom of fire—a hapless journey's end!
127. And when Abraham and Ishmael were raising the foundations of the House, (Abraham prayed): Our Lord! Accept from us (this duty). Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Hearer, the Knower.
128. Our Lord! And make us submissive unto Thee and of our seed a nation submissive unto Thee, and show us our ways of worship, and relent toward us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Relenting, the Merciful.
129. Our Lord! And raise up in their midst a messenger from among them who shall recite unto them Thy revelations, and shall instruct them in the Scripture and in wisdom and shall make them grow. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Mighty, Wise.
130. And who forsaketh the religion of Abraham save him who befooleth himself? Verily We chose him in the world, and lo! in the Hereafter he is among the righteous.
131. When his Lord said unto him: Surrender! he said: I have surrendered to the Lord of the Worlds.
132. The same did Abraham enjoin upon his sons, and also Jacob, (saying): O my Sons! Lo! Allah hath chosen for you the (true) religion; therefore die not save as men who have surrendered (unto Him).
133. Or were ye present when death came to Jacob, when he said unto his sons: What will ye worship after me? They said: We shall worship thy God, the God of thy fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, One God, and unto Him we have surrendered.
134. Those are a people who have passed away. Theirs is that which they earned, and yours is that which ye earn. And ye will not be asked of what they used to do.
135. And they say: Be Jews or Christians, then ye will be rightly guided. Say (unto them, O Muhammad): Nay, but (we follow) the religion of Abraham, the upright, and he was not of the idolaters.
136. Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered.
137. And if they believe in the like of that which ye believe, then are they rightly guided. But if they turn away, then are they in schism, and Allah will suffice thee (for defence) against them. He is the Hearer, the Knower.
138. (We take our) colour from Allah, and who is better than Allah at colouring. We are His worshippers.
139. Say (unto the People of the Scripture): Dispute ye with us concerning Allah when He is our Lord and your Lord? Ours are our works and yours your works. We look to Him alone.
140. Or say ye that Abraham, and Ishmael and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes were Jews or Christians? Say: Do ye know best, or doth Allah? And who is more unjust than he who hideth a testimony which he hath received from Allah? Allah is not unaware of what ye do.
141. These are a people who have passed away; theirs is that which they earned and yours that which ye earn. And ye will not be asked of what they used to do.

142. The foolish of the people will say: What hath turned them from the qiblah⁸² which they formerly observed? Say: Unto Allah belong the East and the West. He guideth whom He will unto a straight path.

143. Thus We have appointed you a middle nation, that ye may be witnesses against mankind, and that the messenger may be a witness against you. And We appointed the *qiblah* which ye formerly observed only that We might know him who followeth the messenger, from him who turneth on his heels. In truth it was a hard (test) save for those whom Allah guided. But it was not Allah's purpose that your faith should be in vain, for Allah is full of pity, Merciful toward mankind.

144. We have seen the turning of thy face to heaven (for guidance, O Muhammad). And now verily We shall make thee turn (in prayer) toward a *qiblah* which is dear to thee. So turn thy face toward the Inviolable Place of Worship,⁸³ and ye (O Muslims), wheresoever ye may be, turn your faces (when ye pray) toward it. Lo! those who have received the Scripture know that (this Revelation) is the Truth from their Lord. And Allah is not unaware of what they do.

145. And even if thou broughtest unto those who have received the Scripture all kinds of portents, they would not follow thy *qiblah*, nor canst thou be a follower of their *qiblah*; nor are some of them followers of the *qiblah* of others. And if thou shouldst follow their desires after the knowledge which hath come unto thee, then surely wert thou of the evil-doers.

146. Those unto whom We gave the Scripture recognise (this revelation) as they recognise their sons. But lo! a party of them knowingly conceal the truth.

147. It is the Truth from thy Lord (O Muhammad), so be not thou of those who waver.

148. And each one hath a goal toward which he turneth; so vie with one another in good works. Wheresoever ye may be, Allah will bring you all together. Lo! Allah is Able to do all things.

149. And whencesoever thou comest forth (for prayer, O Muhammad) turn thy face toward the Inviolable Place of Worship. Lo! it is the Truth from thy Lord. Allah is not unaware of what ye do.

150. Whencesoever thou comest forth turn thy face toward the Inviolable Place of Worship; and wheresoever ye may be (O Muslims) turn your faces toward it (when ye pray) so that men may have no argument against you, save such of them as do injustice—Fear them not, but fear Me!—and so that I may complete My grace upon you, and that ye may be guided.

151. Even as We have sent unto you a messenger from among you, who reciteth unto you Our revelations and causeth you to grow, and teacheth you the Scripture and wisdom, and teacheth you that which ye knew not.⁸⁴

152. Therefore remember Me, I will remember you. Give thanks to Me, and reject not Me.

153. O ye who believe! Seek help in steadfastness and prayer. Lo! Allah is with the steadfast.

154. And call not those who are slain in the way of Allah “dead.” Nay, they are living, only ye perceive not.

155. And surely We shall try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and crops; but give glad tidings to the steadfast,

156. Who say, when a misfortune striketh them: Lo! we are Allah's and lo! unto Him we are returning.

157. Such are they on whom are blessings from their Lord, and mercy. Such are the rightly guided.

158. Lo! (the mountains) As-Safâ and Al-Marwah are among the indications of Allah. It is therefore no sin for him who is on pilgrimage to the House (of God) or visiteth it, to go around them (as the pagan custom is). And he who doeth good of his own accord (for him), lo! Allah is Responsive, Aware.

159. Those who hide the proofs and the guidance which We revealed, after We had made it clear in the Scripture: such are accursed of Allah and accursed of those who have the power to curse.

160. Except such of them as repent and amend and make manifest (the truth). These it is toward whom I relent. I am the Relenting, the Merciful.

161. Lo! those who disbelieve, and die while they are disbelievers; on them is the curse of Allah and of angels and of men combined.

162. They ever dwell therein. The doom will not be lightened for them, neither will they be reprieved.

163. Your God is One God; there is no God save Him, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

164. Lo! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of night and day, and the ships which run upon the sea with that which is of use to men, and the water which Allah sendeth down from the sky, thereby reviving the earth after its death, and dispersing all kinds of beasts therein, and (in) the ordinance of the winds, and the clouds obedient between heaven and earth: are signs (of Allah's sovereignty) for people who have sense.

⁸² ie the place towards which the face is turned at prayer. The first *qiblah* of the Muslims was Jerusalem which gave rise to a misunderstanding on the part of the Jews of Al-Madīnah, who wished to draw the Muslims into Judaism. This was the cause of the Prophet's anxiety mentioned in the next verse but one.

⁸³ The Ka'bah at Mecca.

⁸⁴ See Abraham's prayer, v. 129.

165. Yet of mankind are some who take unto themselves (objects of worship which they set as) rivals to Allah, loving them with a love like (that which is the due) of Allah (only)— Those who believe are stauncher in their love for Allah—Oh, that those who do evil had but known, (on the day) when they beheld the doom, that power belongeth wholly to Allah, and that Allah is severe in punishment!

166. (On the day) when those who were followed disown those who followed (them), and they behold the doom, and all their aims collapse with them.

167. And those who were but followers will say: If a return were possible for us, we would disown them even as they have disowned us. Thus will Allah show them their own deeds as anguish for them, and they will not emerge from the Fire.

168. O mankind! Eat of that which is lawful and wholesome in the earth, and follow not the footsteps of the devil. Lo! he is an open enemy for you.

169. He enjoineth upon you only the evil and the foul, and that ye should tell concerning Allah that which ye know not.

170. And when it is said unto them: Follow that which Allah hath revealed, they say: We follow that wherein we found our fathers. What! Even though their fathers were wholly unintelligent and had no guidance?

171. The likeness of those who disbelieve (in relation to the messenger) is as the likeness of one who calleth unto that which heareth naught except a shout and cry. Deaf, dumb, blind, therefore they have no sense.

172. O ye who believe! Eat of the good things wherewith We have provided you, and render thanks to Allah if it is (indeed) He whom ye worship.

173. He hath forbidden you only carrion, and blood, and swineflesh, and that which hath been immolated to (the name of) any other than Allah. But he who is driven by necessity, neither craving nor transgressing, it is no sin for him. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

174. Lo! those who hide aught of the Scripture which Allah hath revealed, and purchase a small gain therewith, they eat into their bellies nothing else than fire. Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He make them grow. Theirs will be a painful doom.

175. Those are they who purchase error at the price of guidance, and torment at the price of pardon. How constant are they in their strife to reach the Fire!

176. That is because Allah hath revealed the Scripture with the truth. Lo! those who find (a cause of) disagreement in the Scripture are in open schism.

177. It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteous is he who believeth in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Scripture and the Prophets; and giveth his wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free; and observeth proper worship and payeth the poor-due.⁸⁵ And those who keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the God-fearing.

178. O ye who believe! Retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the murdered; the freeman for the freeman, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. And for him who is forgiven somewhat by his (injured) brother, prosecution according to usage and payment unto him in kindness. This is an alleviation and a mercy from your Lord. He who transgresseth after this will have a painful doom.

179. And there is life for you in retaliation, O men of understanding, that ye may ward off (evil).

180. It is prescribed for you, when one of you approacheth death, if he leave wealth, that he bequeath unto parents and near relatives in kindness. (This is) a duty for all those who ward off (evil).

181. And whoso changeth (the will) after he hath heard it— the sin thereof is only upon those who change it. Lo! Allah is Hearer, Knower.

182. But he who feareth from a testator some unjust or sinful clause, and maketh peace between the parties, (it shall be) no sin for him. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

183. O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, even as it was prescribed for those before you, that ye may ward off (evil);

184. (Fast) a certain number of days; and (for) him who is sick among you, or on a journey, (the same) number of other days; and for those who can afford it there is a ransom: the feeding of a man in need— But whoso doeth good of his own accord, it is better for him: and that ye fast is better for you if ye did but know—

⁸⁵ See v. 43. footnote.

185. The month of Ramadân in which was revealed the Qur'ân, a guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the Criterion (of right and wrong). And whosoever of you is present, let him fast the month, and whosoever of you is sick or on a journey, (let him fast the same) number of other days. Allah desireth for you ease; He desireth not hardship for you; and (He desireth) that ye should complete the period, and that ye should magnify Allah for having guided you, and that peradventure ye may be thankful.

186. And when My servants question thee concerning Me, then surely I am nigh. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he crieth unto Me. So let them hear My call and let them trust in Me, in order that they may be led aright.

187. It is made lawful for you to go unto your wives on the night of the fast. They are raiment for you and ye are raiment for them. Allah is aware that ye were deceiving yourselves⁸⁶ in this respect and He hath turned in mercy toward you and relieved you. So hold intercourse with them and seek that which Allah hath ordained for you, and eat and drink until the white thread becometh distinct to you from the black thread of the dawn. Then strictly observe the fast till nightfall and touch them not, but be at your devotions in the mosques. These are the limits imposed by Allah, so approach them not. Thus Allah expoundeth His revelations to mankind that they may ward off (evil).

188. And eat not up your property among yourselves in vanity, nor seek by it to gain the hearing of the judges that ye may knowingly devour a portion of the property of others wrongfully.

189. They ask thee, (O Muhammad), of new moons. Say: They are fixed seasons for mankind and for the pilgrimage. It is not righteousness that ye go to houses by the backs thereof (as do the idolaters at certain seasons), but the righteous man is he who wardeth off (evil). So go to houses by the gates thereof, and observe your duty to Allah, that ye may be successful.

190. Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! Allah loveth not aggressors.

191. And slay them wherever ye find them, and drive them out of the places whence they drove you out, for persecution is worse than slaughter. And fight not with them at the Inviolable Place of Worship until they first attack you there, but if they attack you (there) then slay them. Such is the reward of disbelievers.

192. But if they desist, then lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

193. And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is for Allah. But if they desist, then let there be no hostility except against wrongdoers.

194. The forbidden month for the forbidden month, and forbidden things in retaliation. And one who attacketh you, attack him in like manner as he attacked you. Observe your duty to Allah, and know that Allah is with those who ward off (evil).

195. Spend your wealth for the cause of Allah, and be not cast by your own hands to ruin; and do good. Lo! Allah loveth the beneficent.

196. Perform the pilgrimage⁸⁷ and the visit (to Mecca) for Allah. And if ye are prevented, then send such gifts as can be obtained with ease, and shave not your heads until the gifts have reached their destination. And whoever among you is sick or hath an ailment of the head must pay a ransom of fasting or almsgiving or offering. And if ye are in safety, then whosoever contenteth himself with the Visit for the Pilgrimage (shall give) such gifts as can be had with ease. And whosoever cannot find (such gifts), then a fast of three days while on the pilgrimage and of seven when ye have returned; that is, ten in all. That is for him whose folk are not present at the Inviolable Place of Worship. Observe your duty to Allah, and know that Allah is severe in punishment.

197. The pilgrimage is (in) the well-known months, and whoever is minded to perform the pilgrimage therein (let him remember that) there is (to be) no lewdness nor abuse nor angry conversation on the pilgrimage. And whatsoever good ye do Allah knoweth it. So make provision for yourselves (hereafter); for the best provision is to ward off evil. Therefore keep your duty unto Me, O men of understanding.

198. It is no sin for you that ye seek the bounty of your Lord (by trading). But, when ye press on in the multitude from Arafât, remember Allah by the sacred monument. Remember Him as He hath guided you, although before ye were of those astray.

199. Then hasten onward from the place whence the multitude hasteneth onward, and ask forgiveness of Allah. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

⁸⁶ Until this verse was revealed, the Muslims used to fast completely from the evening meal of one day till the evening meal of the next, and if they fell asleep before they had taken their meal they had considered it their duty to abstain from it, with the result that men fainted and came near to death. Intercourse with their wives had been similarly restricted.

⁸⁷ See also S. XXII, vv. 26 ff.

200. And when ye have completed your devotions, then remember Allah as ye remember your fathers⁸⁸ or with a more lively remembrance. But of mankind is he who saith: "Our Lord! Give unto us in the world," and he hath no portion in the Hereafter.

201. And of them (also) is he who saith: "Our Lord! Give unto us in the world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and guard us from the doom of Fire."

203. Remember Allah through the appointed days. Then whoso hasteneth (his departure) by two days, it is no sin for him, and whoso delayeth, it is no sin for him; that is for him who wardeth off (evil). Be careful of your duty to Allah, and know that unto Him ye will be gathered.

204. And of mankind there is he whose conversation on the life of this world pleaseth thee (Muhammad), and he calleth Allah to witness as to that which is in his heart; yet he is the most rigid of opponents.

205. And when he turneth away (from thee) his effort in the land is to make mischief therein and to destroy the crops and the cattle; and Allah loveth not mischief.

206. And when it is said unto him: Be careful of thy duty to Allah, pride taketh him to sin. Hell will settle his account, an evil resting-place.

207. And of mankind is he who would sell himself, seeking the pleasure of Allah; and Allah hath compassion on (His) bondmen.

208. O ye who believe! Come, all of you, into submission (unto Him); and follow not the footsteps of the devil. Lo! he is an open enemy for you.

209. And if ye slide back after the clear proofs have come unto you, then know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.

210. Wait they for naught else than that Allah should come unto them in the shadows of the clouds with the angels? Then the case would be already judged. All cases go back to Allah (for judgment).

211. Ask of the Children of Israel how many a clear revelation We gave them! He who altereth the grace of Allah after it hath come unto him (for him), lo! Allah is severe in punishment.

212. Beautified is the life of the world for those who disbelieve; they make a jest of the believers. But those who keep their duty to Allah will be above them on the Day of Resurrection. Allah giveth without stint to whom He will.

213. Mankind were one community, and Allah sent (unto them) Prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and revealed therewith the Scripture with the truth that it might judge between mankind concerning that wherein they differed. And only those unto whom (the Scripture) was given differed concerning it, after clear proofs had come unto them, through hatred one of another. And Allah by His will guided those who believe unto the truth of that concerning which they differed. Allah guideth whom He will unto a straight path.

214. Or think ye that ye will enter Paradise while yet there hath not come unto you the like of (that which came to) those who passed away before you? Affliction and adversity befell them, they were shaken as with earthquake, till the messenger (of Allah) and those who believed along with him said: When cometh Allah's help? Now surely Allah's help is nigh.

215. They ask thee, (O Muhammad), what they shall spend. Say: That which ye spend for good (must go) to parents and, near kindred and orphans and the needy and the wayfarer. And whatsoever good ye do, lo! Allah is Aware of it.

216. Warfare is ordained for you, though it is hateful unto you; but it may happen that ye hate a thing which is good for you, and it may happen that ye love a thing which is bad for you. Allah knoweth, ye know not.

217. They question thee (O Muhammad) with regard to warfare in the sacred month. Say: Warfare therein is a great (transgression), but to turn (men) from the way of Allah, and to disbelieve in Him and in the Inviolable Place of Worship and to expel his people thence, is a greater with Allah; for persecution is worse than killing. And they will not cease from fighting against you till they have made you renegades from your religion, if they can. And whoso becometh a renegade and dieth in his disbelief: such are they whose works have fallen both in the world and the Hereafter. Such are rightful owners of the Fire: they will abide therein.

218. Lo! those who believe, and those who emigrate (to escape the persecution) and strive in the way of Allah, these have hope of Allah's mercy. Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

219. They question thee about strong drink and games of chance. Say: In both is great sin, and (some) utility for men but the sin of them is greater than their usefulness. And they ask thee what they ought to spend. Say: That which is superfluous. Thus Allah maketh plain to you (His) revelations, that haply ye may reflect

⁸⁸ It was the custom of the pagan Arabs to praise their forefathers at the conclusion of the Pilgrimage.

220. Upon the world and the Hereafter. And they question thee concerning orphans. Say: To improve their lot is best. And if ye mingle your affairs with theirs, then (they are) your brothers. Allah knoweth him who spoileth from him who improveth. Had Allah willed He could have overburdened you. Allah is Mighty, Wise.

221. Wed not idolatresses till they believe; for lo! a believing bondwoman is better than an idolatress though she please you; and give not your daughters in marriage to idolaters till they believe, for lo! a believing slave is better than an idolater though he please you. These invite unto the Fire, and Allah inviteth unto the Garden, and unto forgiveness by His grace, and expoundeth thus His revelations to mankind that haply they may remember.

222. They question thee (O Muhammad) concerning menstruation. Say: It is an illness, so let women alone at such times and go not in unto them till they are cleansed. And when they have purified themselves, then go in unto them as Allah hath enjoined upon you. Truly Allah loveth those who turn unto Him, and loveth those who have a care for cleanness.

223. Your women are a tilth for you (to cultivate) so go to your tilth as ye will, and send (good deeds) before you for your souls, and fear Allah, and know that ye will (one day) meet Him. Give glad tidings to believers, (O Muhammad).

224. And make not Allah, by your oaths, a hindrance to your being righteous and observing your duty unto Him and making peace among mankind. Allah is Hearer, Knower.

225. Allah will not take you to task for that which is unintentional in your oaths. But He will take you to task for that which your hearts have garnered. Allah is Forgiving, Clement.

226. Those who forswear their wives must wait four months; then, if they change their mind, lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

227. And if they decide upon divorce (let them remember that) Allah is Hearer, Knower.

228. Women who are divorced shall wait, keeping themselves apart, three (monthly) courses. And it is not lawful for them that they should conceal that which Allah hath created in their wombs if they are believers in Allah and the Last Day. And their husbands would do better to take them back in that case if they desire a reconciliation. And they (women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them in kindness, and men are a degree above them. Allah is Mighty, Wise.

229. Divorce must be pronounced twice and then (a woman) must be retained in honour or released in kindness. And it not lawful for you that ye take from women aught of that which ye have given them; except (in the case) when both fear that they may not be able to keep within the limits (imposed by) Allah. And if ye fear that they may not be able to keep the limits of Allah, in that case it is no sin for either of them if the woman ransom herself. These are the limits (imposed by) Allah. Transgress them not. For whoso transgresseth Allah's limits: such are wrongdoers.

230. And if he hath divorced her (the third time), then she is not lawful unto him thereafter until she hath wedded another husband. Then if he (the other husband) divorce her it is no sin for both of them that they come together again if they consider that they are able to observe the limits of Allah. These are the limits of Allah. He manifesteth them for people who have knowledge.

231. When ye have divorced women, and they have reached their term, then retain them in kindness or release them in kindness. Retain them not to their hurt so that ye transgress (the limits). He who doeth that hath wronged his soul. Make not the revelations of Allah a laughing-stock (by your behaviour), but remember Allah's grace upon you and that which He hath revealed unto you of the Scripture and of wisdom, whereby He doth exhort you. Observe your duty to Allah and know that Allah is Aware of all things.

232. And when ye have divorced women and they reach their term, place not difficulties in the way of their marrying their husbands if it is agreed between them in kindness. This is an admonition for him among you who believeth in Allah and the Last Day. That is more virtuous for you, and cleaner. Allah knoweth: ye know not.

233. Mothers shall suckle their children for two whole years; (that is) for those who wish to complete the suckling. The duty of feeding and clothing nursing mothers in a seemly manner is upon the father of the child. No one should be charged beyond his capacity. A mother should not be made to suffer because of her child, nor should he to whom the child is born (be made to suffer) because of his child. And on the (father's) heir is incumbent the like of that (which was incumbent on the father). If they desire to wean the child by mutual consent and (after) consultation, it is no sin for them; and if ye wish to give your children out to nurse, it is no sin for you, provided that ye pay what is due from you in kindness. Observe your duty to Allah, and know that Allah is Seer of what ye do.

234. Such of you as die and leave behind them wives, they (the wives) shall wait, keeping themselves apart, four months and ten days. And when they reach the term (prescribed for them) then there is no sin for you in aught that they may do with themselves in decency. Allah is Informed of what ye do.

235. There is no sin for you in that which ye proclaim or hide in your minds concerning your troth with women. Allah knoweth that ye will remember them. But plight not your troth with women except by uttering a recognised form of words. And do not consummate the marriage until (the term) prescribed is run. Know that Allah knoweth what is in your minds, so beware of Him; and know that Allah is Forgiving, Clement.

236. It is no sin for you if ye divorce women while yet ye have not touched them, nor appointed unto them a portion. Provide for them, the rich according to his means, and the straitened according to his means, a fair provision. (This is) a bounden duty for those who do good.

237. If ye divorce them before ye have touched them and ye have appointed unto them a portion, then (pay the) half of that which ye appointed, unless they (the women) agree to forgo it, or he agreeth to forgo it in whose hand is the marriage tie.⁸⁹ To forgo is nearer to piety. And forget not kindness among yourselves. Allah is Seer of what ye do.

238. Be guardians of your prayers, and of the midmost prayer,⁹⁰ and stand up with devotion to Allah.

239. And if ye go in fear, then (pray) standing or on horseback. And when ye are again in safety, remember Allah, as He hath taught you that which (heretofore) ye knew not.

240. (In the case of) those of you who are about to die and leave behind them wives, they should bequeath unto their wives a provision for the year without turning them out, but if they go out (of their own accord) there is no sin for you in that which they do of themselves within their rights. Allah is Mighty, Wise.

241. For divorced women a provision in kindness: a duty for those who ward off (evil).

242. Thus Allah expoundeth unto you His revelations so that ye may understand.

243. Bethink thee (O Muhammad) of those of old, who went forth from their habitations, in their thousands, fearing death,⁹¹ and Allah said unto them: Die, and then He brought them back to life. Lo! Allah is a Lord of Kindness to mankind, but most of mankind give not thanks.

244. Fight in the way of Allah, and know that Allah is Hearer, Knower.

245. Who is it that will lend unto Allah a goodly loan,⁹² so that He may give it increase manifold? Allah straiteneth and enlargeth. Unto Him ye will return.

246. Bethink thee of the leaders of the Children of Israel after Moses, how they said unto a Prophet whom they had: Set up for us a King and we will fight in Allah's way. He said: Would ye then refrain from fighting if fighting were prescribed for you? They said: Why should we not fight in Allah's way when we have been driven from our dwellings with our children? Yet, when fighting was prescribed for them, they turned away, all save a few of them. Allah is Aware of evil-doers.

247. Their Prophet said unto them: Lo! Allah hath raised up Saul to be a king for you. They said: How can he have kingdom over us when we are more deserving of the kingdom than he is, since he hath not been given wealth enough? He said: Lo! Allah hath chosen him above you, and hath increased him abundantly in wisdom and stature. Allah bestoweth His sovereignty on whom He will. Allah is All-Embracing, All Knowing.

248. And their Prophet said unto them: Lo! the token of his kingdom is that there shall come unto you the ark wherein is peace of reassurance from your Lord, and a remnant of that which the house of Moses and the house of Aaron left behind the angels bearing it. Lo! herein shall be a token for you if (in truth) ye are believers.

249. And when Saul set out with the army, he said: Lo! Allah will try you by (the ordeal of) a river. Whosoever therefore drinketh thereof he is not of me, and whosoever tasteth not he is of me, save him who taketh (thereof) in the hollow of his hand. But they drank thereof, all save a few of them. And after he had crossed (the river), he and those who believed with him, they said: We have no power this day against Goliath and his hosts. But those who knew that they would meet their Lord exclaimed: How many a little company hath overcome a mighty host by Allah's leave! Allah is with the steadfast.

250. And when they went into the field against Goliath and his hosts they said: Our Lord! Bestow on us endurance, make our foothold sure, and give us help against the disbelieving folk.

251. So they routed them by Allah's leave and David slew Goliath; and Allah gave him the kingdom and wisdom, and taught him of that which He willeth. And if Allah had not repelled some men by others the earth would have been corrupted. But Allah is a Lord of Kindness to (His) creatures.

252. These are the portents of Allah which We recite unto thee (Muhammad) with truth, and lo! thou art of the number of (Our) messengers;

⁸⁹ ie the bridegroom.

⁹⁰ Meaning, probably, the best amid all forms of prayer; but some authorities think the reference is to the 'asr (afternoon) prayer which Muslims are most apt to forget.

⁹¹ The reference is to the Exodus.

⁹² A loan without interest - ie without thought of gain.

253. Of those messengers, some of whom We have caused to excel others, and of whom there are some unto whom Allah spake, while some of them He exalted (above others) in degree; and We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs (of Allah's sovereignty) and We supported him with the holy Spirit.⁹³ And Allah had so willed it, those who followed after them would not have fought one with another after the clear proofs had come unto them. But they differed, some of them believing and some disbelieving. And if Allah had so willed it, they would not have fought one with another; but Allah doeth what He will.

254. O ye who believe! Spend of that wherewith We have provided you ere a day come when there will be no trafficking, nor friendship, nor intercession. The disbelievers, they are the wrong-doers.

255. Allah! There is no God save Him, the Alive, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep overtaketh Him. Unto Him belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Who is he that intercedeth with Him save by His leave? He knoweth that which is in front of them and that which is behind them, while they encompass nothing of His knowledge save what He will. His throne includeth the heavens and the earth, and He is never weary of preserving them. He is the Sublime, the Tremendous.

256. There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error. And he who rejecteth false deities and believeth in Allah hath grasped a firm handhold which will never break. Allah is Hearer, Knower.

257. Allah is the Protecting Friend of those who believe. He bringeth them out of darkness into light. As for those who disbelieve, their patrons are false deities. They bring them out of light into darkness. Such are rightful Owners of the Fire. They will abide therein.

258. Bethink thee of him who had an argument with Abraham about his Lord, because Allah had given him the kingdom; how, when Abraham saith, My Lord is He who giveth life and causeth death, he answered: I give life and cause death. Abraham said: Lo! Allah causeth the sun to rise in the East, so do thou cause it to come up from the West. Thus was the disbeliever abashed. And Allah guideth not wrong-doing folk.

259. Or (bethink thee of) the like of him who, passing by a township which had fallen into utter ruin, exclaimed: How shall Allah give this township⁹⁴ life after its death? And Allah made him die a hundred years, then brought him back to life. He said: How long hast thou tarried? (The man) said: I have tarried a day or part of a day. (He) said: Nay, but thou hast tarried for a hundred years. Just look at thy food and drink which have rotted! Look at thine ass! And, that We may make a token unto mankind, look at the bones, how We adjust them and then cover them with flesh! And when (the matter) clear unto him, he said: I know now that Allah is Able do all things.

260. And when Abraham said (unto his Lord): My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead, He said: Dost thou not believe? Abraham said: Yea, but (I ask) in order that my heart may be at ease. (His Lord) said: Take four of the birds and cause them to incline unto thee, then place a part of them on each hill, then call them, they will come to thee in haste. And know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.

261. The likeness of those who spend their wealth in Allah's way is as the likeness of a grain which groweth seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains. Allah giveth increase manifold to whom He will. Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing.

262. Those who spend their wealth for the cause of Allah and afterward make not reproach and injury to follow that which they have spent; their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve.

263. A kind word with forgiveness is better than almsgiving followed by injury. Allah is Absolute, Clement.

264. O ye who believe! Render not vain your almsgiving by reproach and injury, like him who spendeth his wealth only to be seen of men and believeth not in Allah and the Last Day. His likeness is as the likeness of a rock whereon is dust of earth; a rainstorm smiteth it, leaving it smooth and bare. They have no control of aught of that which they have gained. Allah guideth not the disbelieving folk.

265. And the likeness of those who spend their wealth in search of Allah's pleasure, and for the strengthening of their souls, is as the likeness of a garden on a height. The rainstorm smiteth it and it bringeth forth its fruit twofold. And if the rainstorm smite it not, then the shower. Allah is Seer of what ye do.

266. Would any of you like to have a garden of palm-trees and vines, with rivers flowing underneath it, with all kinds of fruit for him therein; and old age hath stricken him and he hath feeble off-spring; and a fiery whirlwind striketh it and it is (all) consumed by fire. Thus Allah maketh plain His revelations unto you, in order that ye may give thought.

⁹³ ie the angel Gabriel.

⁹⁴ Most of the commentators agree that the reference here is to Jerusalem in ruins, while the following words tell of the vision of Ezekiel.

267. O ye who believe! Spend of the good things which ye have earned, and of that which we bring forth from the earth for you, and seek not the bad (with intent) to spend thereof (in charity) when ye would not take it for yourselves save with disdain; and know that Allah is Absolute, Owner of Praise.

268. The devil promiseth you destitution and enjoineth on you lewdness. But Allah promiseth you forgiveness from Himself with bounty. Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing.

269. He giveth wisdom unto whom He will, and he unto whom wisdom is given, he truly hath received abundant good. But none remember except men of understanding.

270. Whatever alms ye spend or vow ye vow, lo! Allah knoweth it. Wrong-doers have no helpers.

271. If ye publish your almsgiving, it is well, but if ye hide it and give it to the poor, it will be better for you, and will atone for some of your ill-deeds. Allah is Informed of what ye do.

272. The guiding of them is not thy duty (O Muhammad), but Allah guideth whom He will. And whatsoever good thing ye spend, it is for yourselves, when ye spend not save in search of Allah's countenance; and whatsoever good thing ye spend, it will be repaid to you in full, and ye will not be wronged.

273. (Alms are) for the poor who are straitened for the cause of Allah, who cannot travel in the land (for trade). The unthinking man accounteth them wealthy because of their restraint. Thou shalt know them by their mark: They do not beg of men with importunity. And whatsoever good thing ye spend, lo! Allah knoweth it.

274. Those who spend their wealth by night and day, by stealth and openly, verily their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve.

275. Those who swallow usury cannot rise up save as he ariseth whom the devil hath prostrated by (his) touch. That is because they say: Trade is just like usury; whereas Allah permitteth trading and forbiddeth usury. He unto whom an admonition from his Lord cometh, and (he) refraineth (in obedience thereto) he shall keep (the profits of) that which is past, and his affair (henceforth) is with Allah. As for him who returneth (to usury) – such are rightful owners of the Fire. They will abide therein.

276. Allah hath blighted usury and made almsgiving fruitful. Allah loveth not the impious and guilty.

277. Lo! those who believe and do good works and establish worship and pay the poor-due, their reward is with their Lord and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve.

278. O ye who believe! Observe your duty to Allah, and give up what remaineth (due to you) from usury, if ye are (in truth) believers.

279. And if ye do not, then be warned of war (against you) from Allah and His messenger. And if ye repent, then ye have your principal (without interest). Wrong not, and ye shall not be wronged.

280. And if the debtor is in straitened circumstances, then (let there be) postponement to (the time of) ease; and that ye remit the debt as almsgiving would be better for you if ye did but know.

281. And guard yourselves against a day in which ye will be brought back to Allah. Then every soul will be paid in full that which it hath earned, and they will not be wronged.

282. O ye who believe! When ye contract a debt for a fixed term, record it in writing. Let a scribe record it in writing between you in (terms of) equity. No scribe should refuse to write as Allah hath taught him, so let him write, and let him who incurreth the debt dictate, and let him observe his duty to Allah his Lord, and diminish naught thereof. But if he who oweth the debt is of low understanding, or weak, or unable himself to dictate, then let the guardian of his interests dictate in (terms of) equity. And call to witness, from among your men, two witnesses. And if two men be not (at hand) then a man and two women, of such as ye approve as witnesses, so that if the one erreth (through forgetfulness) the other will remember. And the witnesses must not refuse when they are summoned. Be not averse to writing down (the contract) whether it be small or great, with (record of) the term thereof. That is more equitable in the sight of Allah and more sure for testimony, and the best way of avoiding doubt between you; save only in the case when it is actual merchandise which ye transfer among yourselves from hand to hand. In that case it is no sin for you if ye write it not. And have witnesses when ye sell one to another, and let no harm be done to scribe or witness. If ye do (harm to them) lo! it is a sin in you. Observe your duty to Allah. Allah is teaching you. And Allah is Knower of all things.

283. If ye be on a journey and cannot find a scribe, then a pledge in hand (shall suffice). And if one of you entrusteth to another let him who is trusted deliver up that which is entrusted to him (according to the pact between them) and let him observe his duty to Allah. Hide not testimony. He who hideth it, verily his heart is sinful. Allah is Aware of what ye do.

284. Unto Allah (belongeth) whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth; and whether ye make known what is in your minds or hide it, Allah will bring you to account for it. He will forgive whom He will and He will punish whom He will. Allah is Able to do all things.

285. The messenger believeth in that which hath been revealed unto him from his Lord and (so do) the believers. Each one believeth in Allah and His angels and His scriptures and His messengers—We make no distinction between any of His messengers—and they say: We hear, and we obey. (Grant us) Thy forgiveness, our Lord. Unto Thee is the journeying.

286. Allah tasketh not a soul beyond its scope. For it (is only) that which it hath earned, and against it (only) that which it hath deserved. Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget, or miss the mark! Our Lord! Lay not on us such a burden as Thou didst lay on those before us! Our Lord! Impose not on us that which we have not the strength to bear! Pardon us, absolve us and have mercy on us, Thou, our Protector, and give us victory over the disbelieving folk.

Sûrah 96 (page 445)

THE CLOT

Revealed at Mecca

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1. Read: In the name of thy Lord who createth,
2. Createth man from a clot.
3. Read: And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous,
4. Who teacheth by the pen,
5. Teacheth man that which he knew not.
6. Nay, but verily man is rebellious
7. That he thinketh himself independent!
8. Lo! unto thy Lord is the return.
9. Hast thou seen him who dissuadeth
10. A slave when he prayeth?
11. Hast thou seen if he (relieth) on the guidance (of Allah)
12. Or enjoineeth piety?
13. Hast thou seen if he denieth (Allah's guidance) and is froward?
14. Is he then unaware that Allah seeth?
15. Nay, but if he cease not. We will seize him by the forelock—
16. The lying, sinful forelock—
17. Then let him call upon his henchmen!
18. We will call the guards of hell.
19. Nay! Obey not thou him. But prostrate thyself, and draw near (unto Allah).

Sûrah 112 (page 454)

THE UNITY

Revealed at Mecca

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1. Say: He is Allah, the One!
2. Allah, the eternally Besought of all!
3. He begetteth not nor was begotten.
4. And there is none comparable unto Him.

Judaism

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Exodus 21

¹ "These are the laws you are to set before them:

Hebrew Servants

² "If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything. ³ If he comes alone, he is to go free alone; but if he has a wife when he comes, she is to go with him. ⁴ If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to her master, and only the man shall go free.

⁵ "But if the servant declares, 'I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,' ⁶ then his master must take him before the judges. ^[a] He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life.

⁷ "If a man sells his daughter as a servant, she is not to go free as menservants do. ⁸ If she does not please the master who has selected her for himself, ^[b] he must let her be redeemed. He has no right to sell her to foreigners, because he has broken faith with her. ⁹ If he selects her for his son, he must grant her the rights of a daughter. ¹⁰ If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first one of her food, clothing and marital rights. ¹¹ If he does not provide her with these three things, she is to go free, without any payment of money.

Personal Injuries

¹² "Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death. ¹³ However, if he does not do it intentionally, but God lets it happen, he is to flee to a place I will designate. ¹⁴ But if a man schemes and kills another man deliberately, take him away from my altar and put him to death.

¹⁵ "Anyone who attacks ^[c] his father or his mother must be put to death.

¹⁶ "Anyone who kidnaps another and either sells him or still has him when he is caught must be put to death.

¹⁷ "Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.

¹⁸ "If men quarrel and one hits the other with a stone or with his fist ^[d] and he does not die but is confined to bed, ¹⁹ the one who struck the blow will not be held responsible if the other gets up and walks around outside with his staff; however, he must pay the injured man for the loss of his time and see that he is completely healed.

²⁰ "If a man beats his male or female slave with a rod and the slave dies as a direct result, he must be punished, ²¹ but he is not to be punished if the slave gets up after a day or two, since the slave is his property.

²² "If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely ^[e] but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. ²³ But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, ²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

²⁶ "If a man hits a manservant or maidservant in the eye and destroys it, he must let the servant go free to compensate for the eye. ²⁷ And if he knocks out the tooth of a manservant or maidservant, he must let the servant go free to compensate for the tooth.

²⁸ "If a bull gores a man or a woman to death, the bull must be stoned to death, and its meat must not be eaten. But the owner of the bull will not be held responsible. ²⁹ If, however, the bull has had the habit of goring and the owner has been warned but has not kept it penned up and it kills a man or woman, the bull must be stoned and the owner also must be put to death. ³⁰ However, if payment is demanded of him, he may redeem his life by paying whatever is demanded. ³¹ This law also applies if the bull gores a son or daughter. ³² If the bull gores a male or female slave, the owner must pay thirty shekels ^[1] of silver to the master of the slave, and the bull must be stoned.

³³ "If a man uncovers a pit or digs one and fails to cover it and an ox or a donkey falls into it, ³⁴ the owner of the pit must pay for the loss; he must pay its owner, and the dead animal will be his.

³⁵ "If a man's bull injures the bull of another and it dies, they are to sell the live one and divide both the money and the dead animal equally. ³⁶ However, if it was known that the bull had the habit of goring, yet the owner did not keep it penned up, the owner must pay, animal for animal, and the dead animal will be his.

Footnotes

- a [Exodus 21:6](#) Or before God
- b [Exodus 21:8](#) Or master so that he does not choose her
- c [Exodus 21:15](#) Or kills
- d [Exodus 21:18](#) Or with a tool
- e [Exodus 21:22](#) Or she has a miscarriage
- f [Exodus 21:32](#) That is, about 12 ounces (about 0.3 kilogram)

Exodus 22

Protection of Property

¹ "If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.

"If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed; ³ but if it happens ^[a] after sunrise, he is guilty of bloodshed.

"A thief must certainly make restitution, but if he has nothing, he must be sold to pay for his theft.

⁴ "If the stolen animal is found alive in his possession—whether ox or donkey or sheep—he must pay back double.

⁵ "If a man grazes his livestock in a field or vineyard and lets them stray and they graze in another man's field, he must make restitution from the best of his own field or vineyard.

⁶ "If a fire breaks out and spreads into thornbushes so that it burns shocks of grain or standing grain or the whole field, the one who started the fire must make restitution.

⁷ "If a man gives his neighbour silver or goods for safekeeping and they are stolen from the neighbour's house, the thief, if he is caught, must pay back double. ⁸ But if the thief is not found, the owner of the house must appear before the judges ^[b] to determine whether he has laid his hands on the other man's property. ⁹ In all cases of illegal possession of an ox, a donkey, a sheep, a garment, or any other lost property about which somebody says, 'This is mine,' both parties are to bring their cases before the judges. The one whom the judges declare ^[c] guilty must pay back double to his neighbour.

¹⁰ "If a man gives a donkey, an ox, a sheep or any other animal to his neighbour for safekeeping and it dies or is injured or is taken away while no one is looking, ¹¹ the issue between them will be settled by the taking of an oath before the LORD that the neighbour did not lay hands on the other person's property. The owner is to accept this, and no restitution is required. ¹² But if the animal was stolen from the neighbour, he must make restitution to the owner. ¹³ If it was torn to pieces by a wild animal, he shall bring in the remains as evidence and he will not be required to pay for the torn animal.

¹⁴ "If a man borrows an animal from his neighbour and it is injured or dies while the owner is not present, he must make restitution. ¹⁵ But if the owner is with the animal, the borrower will not have to pay. If the animal was hired, the money paid for the hire covers the loss.

Social Responsibility

¹⁶ "If a man seduces a virgin who is not pledged to be married and sleeps with her, he must pay the bride-price, and she shall be his wife. ¹⁷ If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he must still pay the bride-price for virgins.

¹⁸ "Do not allow a sorceress to live.

¹⁹ "Anyone who has sexual relations with an animal must be put to death.

²⁰ "Whoever sacrifices to any god other than the LORD must be destroyed. [d]

²¹ "Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt.

²² "Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. ²³ If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. ²⁴ My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless.

²⁵ "If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not be like a moneylender; charge him no interest. [e] ²⁶ If you take your neighbour's cloak as a pledge, return it to him by sunset, ²⁷ because his cloak is the only covering he has for his body. What else will he sleep in? When he cries out to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

²⁸ "Do not blaspheme God [f] or curse the ruler of your people.

²⁹ "Do not hold back offerings from your granaries or your vats. [g]
"You must give me the firstborn of your sons. ³⁰ Do the same with your cattle and your sheep. Let them stay with their mothers for seven days, but give them to me on the eighth day.

³¹ "You are to be my holy people. So do not eat the meat of an animal torn by wild beasts; throw it to the dogs.

Footnotes

- a [Exodus 22:3](#) Or if he strikes him
- b [Exodus 22:8](#) Or before God ; also in verse
- c [Exodus 22:9](#) Or whom God declares
- d [Exodus 22:20](#) The Hebrew term refers to the irrevocable giving over of things or persons to the LORD, often by totally destroying them.
- e [Exodus 22:25](#) Or excessive interest
- f [Exodus 22:28](#) Or Do not revile the judges
- g [Exodus 22:29](#) The meaning of the Hebrew for this phrase is uncertain.

Leviticus 19

Various Laws

¹ The LORD said to Moses, ² "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.

³ " 'Each of you must respect his mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. I am the LORD your God.

⁴ " 'Do not turn to idols or make gods of cast metal for yourselves. I am the LORD your God.

⁵ " 'When you sacrifice a fellowship offering ^[a] to the LORD, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf. ⁶ It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it or on the next day; anything left over until the third day must be burned up. ⁷ If any of it is eaten on the third day, it is impure and will not be accepted. ⁸ Whoever eats it will be held responsible because he has desecrated what is holy to the LORD; that person must be cut off from his people.

⁹ " 'When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰ Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.

¹¹ " 'Do not steal.

" 'Do not lie.

" 'Do not deceive one another.

² " 'Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

¹³ " 'Do not defraud your neighbour or rob him.

" 'Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight.

¹⁴ " 'Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD.

¹⁵ " 'Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favouritism to the great, but judge your neighbour fairly.

¹⁶ " 'Do not go about spreading slander among your people.

" 'Do not do anything that endangers your neighbour's life. I am the LORD.

¹⁷ " 'Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbour frankly so you will not share in his guilt.

¹⁸ " 'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD.

¹⁹ " 'Keep my decrees.

" 'Do not mate different kinds of animals.

" 'Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed.

" 'Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material.

²⁰ " 'If a man sleeps with a woman who is a slave girl promised to another man but who has not been ransomed or given her freedom, there must be due punishment. Yet they are not to be put to death, because she had not been freed. ²¹ The man, however, must bring a ram to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting for a guilt offering to the LORD. ²² With the ram of the guilt offering the priest is to make atonement for him before the LORD for the sin he has committed, and his sin will be forgiven.

²³ " 'When you enter the land and plant any kind of fruit tree, regard its fruit as forbidden. ^[b] For three years you are to consider it forbidden ^[c]; it must not be eaten. ²⁴ In the fourth year all its fruit will be holy, an offering of praise to the LORD. ²⁵ But in the fifth year you may eat its fruit. In this way your harvest will be increased. I am the LORD your God.

²⁶ " 'Do not eat any meat with the blood still in it.

" 'Do not practice divination or sorcery.

²⁷ " 'Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard.

²⁸ " 'Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD.

²⁹ " 'Do not degrade your daughter by making her a prostitute, or the land will turn to prostitution and be filled with wickedness.

³⁰ " 'Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the LORD.

³¹ " 'Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God.

³² " 'Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD.

³³ " 'When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. ³⁴ The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

³⁵ " 'Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. ³⁶ Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah ^[d] and an honest hin. ^[e] I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt.

³⁷ " 'Keep all my decrees and all my laws and follow them. I am the LORD.' "

Footnotes

- a [Leviticus 19:5](#) Traditionally peace offering
- b [Leviticus 19:23](#) Hebrew uncircumcised
- c [Leviticus 19:23](#) Hebrew uncircumcised
- d [Leviticus 19:36](#) An ephah was a dry measure.
- e [Leviticus 19:36](#) A hin was a liquid measure.

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All Israel has a share in the world to come, as it is said in the Prophets (Isaiah 60: 21): ‘And your people shall all be righteous. They shall inherit the earth forever, the branch I planted, the work of My hands to bring Me glory.’

From Chapter 1

1. Moses received Torah on Sinai, and handed it on to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets handed it on to the men of the Great Assembly. They said three things, Be patient and careful in judgment, raise up many disciples, and make a fence to protect the Torah.
2. Simon the Just was one of the last survivors of the Great Assembly. He used to say, Civilisation is based on three things—on Torah, on service and on loving deeds.
3. Antigonos of Socho received tradition from Simon the Just. He used to say, Do not be like servants who serve their master in order to get a reward. Instead be like servants who serve their master with no thought of reward, and let the awe of heaven be upon you.
4. Yose ben Yoezer of Tseredah and Yose ben Yochanan of Jerusalem received tradition from those who came before. The former says, Let your house be a meeting-place for the wise, sit in the dust at their feet, and drink in their words thirstily.
5. The latter says, Let your house be open wide and the poor be members of your household.
6. Joshua ben Perachyah and Nittai the Arbelite received tradition from those who came before. The former says, Find yourself a teacher, get yourself a friend, and put the best construction on every man’s conduct.
7. The latter says, Keep away from a bad neighbour, do not associate with the wicked, and do not shrug off the thought of retribution.
8. Judah ben Tabbai and Simon ben Shetach received tradition from those who came before. The former says, Do not be like those who influence the judges in their favour. When the parties to a dispute are standing before you, consider them both equally guilty, but as soon as they have accepted the verdict consider them both equally innocent.
9. The latter says, Examine the witnesses thoroughly, and be careful what you say, for from your words they can learn to lie.
10. Shemayah and Avtalyon received tradition from those who came before. The former says, Love work, hate domination and do not get too familiar with a corrupt power.
11. The latter says, Wise men, watch your words! For your pupils may drink them up and die, and the name of heaven be despised.
12. Hillel and Shammai received tradition from those who came before. Hillel says, Be a disciple of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving His creatures and drawing them close to the Torah.
13. He used to say, A name made great is a name destroyed. Whoever does not increase his knowledge decreases it; whoever does not learn destroys his life. Whoever uses the crown of religion for his own worldly advantage must perish.
14. He used to say, If I am not for myself, who is for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?
15. Shammai says, Make Torah study a fixed habit. Say little and do much, and welcome everyone cheerfully.
16. Rabban Gamliel used to say, Find yourself a teacher and get rid of doubt, and do not get used to guessing your taxes.

17. Simon his son says, All my life I grew up among the wise and have found nothing better for anyone than silence. The main thing is not theory but practice, and one who talks too much causes sin.

18. Rabban Simon ben Gamliel says, Civilisation is preserved by three things: by truth, by justice and by peace.

From Chapter 2

1. Rabbi says, What is the upright course a man should choose? That which brings honour to the one who does it, and for which he is honoured by his fellow-men. Be just as careful with a light commandment as with a weighty one, for you do not know the reward given for each commandment. Reckon the loss incurred by fulfilling a commandment against the reward for it; and the profit gained by transgressing against the loss it entails. Consider three things and you will not come into the power of sin. Know what is above you—an eye that sees, an ear that hears, and that all your deeds are written in a book.

2. Rabban Gamliel, the son of Rabbi Judah the Prince, says, It is an excellent thing to combine the study of Torah with a trade or profession, for the labour necessary for both together puts sin out of mind. Study of Torah, however, which is not combined with work, ends in futility and becomes the cause of sin. Let all who work for the congregation do it for the sake of heaven. Then the merit of their fathers will come to their aid and their righteousness will last forever. (And God will say,) 'And as for you, I credit you with a great reward, as though you had done it all yourselves.'

3. Be careful of those in power! For they draw no man near them except in their own interest. They seem like friends when it is to their own advantage, but they do not stand by a man in his hour of need.

4. He used to say, Do His will as if it were your will, so that He may do your will as if it were His will. Destroy your will for the sake of His will, so that He may destroy the will of others for the sake of your will.

5. Hillel says, Do not separate yourself from the community. Do not trust in yourself until the day of your death. Do not judge your fellow-man until you have been in his position. Do not say anything which cannot be understood at once in the hope that it will be understood in the end. And do not say 'When I have leisure I will study', perhaps you will never have leisure.

6. He used to say, A crude man cannot fear sin, an ignorant man cannot be pious, nor can a timid man learn, nor a short-tempered man teach. A man who is too pre-occupied with business cannot grow wise. Where there are no men, try to be a man!

7. Also, when he saw a skull floating on the surface of the water, he said, Because you drowned others, they drowned you, and in the end those who drowned you shall themselves be drowned.

9. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai received tradition from Hillel and Shammai. He used to say, If you have learnt much Torah, do not congratulate yourself, for that is why you were created.

13. He said to his disciples, Go out and see the right course a man should adopt. Rabbi Eliezer says, A kindly eye. Rabbi Joshua says, A good companion. Rabbi Yose says, A good neighbour. Rabbi Simon says, One who foresees the consequences. Rabbi Elazar says, A good heart. He said to them, I agree with the words of Elazar ben Arach, for his words include yours.

14. He said to them, Go out and see the wrong course, one that a man should avoid. Rabbi Eliezer says, A grudging eye. Rabbi Joshua says, A bad companion. Rabbi Yose says, A bad neighbour. Rabbi Simon says, A borrower who does not pay back. It is the same whether he borrows from man or whether he borrows from God who is present everywhere. Rabbi Elazar says, A mean heart. He said to them, I agree with the words of Elazar ben Arach, for his words include yours.

15. Each of them said three things. Rabbi Eliezer says, Let the honour of your fellow-man be as dear to you as your own. Do not be quick to anger. Repent even one day before your death. Warm yourself at the fire of the wise, but beware of their glowing coals lest you be scorched. For their bite is the bite of a fox, and their sting the sting of a scorpion, and their hiss the hiss of a serpent, for all their words are like coals of fire.

16. Rabbi Joshua says, A grudging eye, the impulse to evil, and hatred of mankind drive a man out of the world.

17. Rabbi Yose says, Let the property of your fellow-man be as dear to you as your own. Train yourself to study Torah, for it is not yours by inheritance. And let all your actions be for the sake of heaven.

18. Rabbi Simon says, Take care when you say the *Shema* and the *Amidah*. When you pray do not make your prayer a fixed formal thing, but an appeal for mercy, a supplication before God. As it is said (Joel 2: 13): 'For He is gracious and merciful, long-suffering and full of love and ready to relent from threatened evil.' And do not consider yourself completely wicked.

19. Rabbi Elazar says, Be diligent in the study of Torah and know how to answer an unbeliever. Also realise in whose presence you toil, and who is the Employer who will give you the wages for your work.

20. Rabbi Tarfon says, The day is short, and the work is great, and the labourers are sluggish, and the wages are high, and the Master of the house is insistent.

21. He used to say, It is not your duty to finish the work but you are not free to neglect it. If you learn much Torah, you will be given much reward, and faithful is your Employer to pay you the reward of your labour. But know that the reward of the righteous is in the time to come.

From Chapter 3

1. Akavya ben Mahalalel says, Keep three things in sight and you will not fall into the power of sin. Know where you come from, and where you go to, and before whom you are destined to give an account and reckoning.

2. Rabbi Chanina, the deputy High Priest says, Pray for the welfare of the government, because but for the fear it inspires men would swallow each other up alive.

3. Rabbi Chananya ben Teradion says, When two people sit together, and words of Torah pass between them, the presence of God rests between them also.

6. Rabbi Nechunya ben Hakanah says, He who takes upon himself the yoke of Torah will find relief from the yoke of politics and worldly affairs. But whoever gets rid of the yoke of Torah will find the yoke of politics and worldly affairs weighing more heavily on him.

7. Rabbi Chalafta ben Dosa, of the village of Chananya, says, When ten people sit studying Torah, God's presence dwells among them, as it is said (Psalm 82: 1): 'God stands in the congregation of the godly.' How do we know that this even applies to one person only? Because it is said (Exodus 20: 21): 'In every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you.'

8. Rabbi Elazar of Bertota says, Give Him what is His, for what you are and what you have are His. Therefore in the case of David it is said (1 Chronicles 29: 14): 'For everything comes from You, and we have only given You what comes from Your hand.'

9. Rabbi Jacob says, If someone is studying as he walks along the road and interrupts his study and exclaims: 'How lovely is that tree! How lovely is this field!' Scripture considers that he had harmed his own soul.

11. Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa says, Everyone whose fear of sin comes before his wisdom, his wisdom will endure. And everyone whose wisdom comes before his fear of sin, his wisdom will not endure.

12. He used to say, Everyone whose deeds exceed his wisdom, his wisdom will endure. And everyone whose wisdom exceeds his deeds, his wisdom will not endure.

13. He used to say, Everyone who delights his fellow-creatures, God delights in him. And everyone who gives no delight to his fellow-creatures, God does not delight in him.

14. Rabbi Dosa ben Horkinas says, Sleeping late, mid-day drinking, childish chatter and attending meetings of ignorant people drive a man out of the world.

16. Rabbi Ishmael says, Be respectful to your senior, and be patient with your junior, and welcome everyone cheerfully.

17. Rabbi Akiba says, Joking and frivolity lead a man to immorality. Tradition is a safeguard around the Torah; giving regularly to charity is a safeguard to wealth; vows are a safeguard for self-restraint; a safeguard for wisdom is silence.

18. He used to say, Beloved is man for he was created in the image of God. Yet with even greater love it was revealed to him that he was so created in the image of God.

19. Everything is foreseen, yet free choice is granted. The world is judged with mercy, yet everything is according to the amount of work.

20. He used to say, Everything is given on pledge, and a net is spread for all living. The shop is open, and the shopkeeper gives credit, and the account is open and the hand writes, and whoever wishes to borrow may come and borrow. But the collectors go round every day, and exact payment from man with his consent or without it, and their claims are justified, and the judgment is a judgment of truth. Yet everything is prepared for the feast!

21. Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah says, Where there is no Torah there are no manners; where there are no manners there is no Torah.

Without wisdom there is no fear of God; without the fear of God there is no wisdom.

Without insight there is no knowledge; without knowledge there is no insight.

Without food there is no Torah; without Torah there is no food.

22. He used to say, A man whose wisdom exceeds his deeds is like a tree whose branches are many, but whose roots are few. Then the wind comes and uproots it and turns it over. But the man whose deeds exceed his wisdom is like a tree whose branches are few, but whose roots are many, so that even if all the winds in the world come and blow upon it, it cannot be moved from its place.

From Chapter 4

1. Ben Zoma says, Who is wise? He who learns from every man. Who is mighty? He who controls his passions. Who is rich? He who is happy with what he has. Who is honourable? He who honours mankind.

2. Ben Azzai says, Run to do even a small *mitzvah*, but run away from doing wrong. One good deed leads to another, and one sin leads to another. Virtue is its own reward, and the wages of sin are sin.

3. Hold no man insignificant and nothing improbable, for there is no man that has not his hour and no thing that has not its place.

4. Rabbi Levitas of Yavneh says, Be very humble, for the hope of mortal man is the worm.

6. Rabbi Ishmael says, He who learns in order to teach will be given the opportunity to learn and to teach. But he who learns in order to practise will be given the opportunity both to learn and teach, and to observe and practise.

7. Rabbi Zadok says, Do not use the Torah as a crown for your own importance, or a spade to dig with. Hillel also used to say, He who puts the crown to his own use shall perish. Here you learn that he who makes a profit from the words of Torah helps to destroy himself.

10. Rabbi Ishmael ben Rabbi Yose used to say, Do not judge alone, for no-one judges alone except One. And do not say 'You must accept my view!'—the choice belongs to your colleagues and you have no right to compel them.

12. Rabbi Meir says, Decrease your concern for business affairs, concern yourself rather with religious affairs, and be humble before all men. If you neglect Torah, you will find many reasons for doing so, but if you labour in it, He has a great reward to give you.

13. Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob says, He who does one *mitzvah* acquires a counsel for the defence, and he who commits one sin acquires a counsel for the prosecution. Repentance and good deeds serve as a shield against retribution.

14. Rabbi Yochanan the sandal-maker says, Every meeting which is for the sake of heaven will endure, and every meeting which is not for the sake of heaven will not endure.

15. Rabbi Elazar ben Shammua says, Let your pupil's honour be as dear to you as your own; and your colleague's honour be as your respect for your teacher; and your teacher's respect as the awe of heaven.

16. Rabbi Judah says, Take care when you study, for an error in teaching can do as much harm as a deliberate sin.

17. Rabbi Simon says, There are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood, and the crown of royalty. But the crown of a good reputation excels them all.

18. Rabbi Nehorai says, Search for a place of Torah and do not say it will search for you. For there you will find companions to help you grasp it, and you will not have to rely on your own understanding alone.
19. Rabbi Yannai says, Neither the prosperity of the wicked nor even the suffering of the righteous are in our hands.
20. Rabbi Mattitya ben Cheresh says, Be first to greet every man. Be a tail to lions rather than a head to jackals.
21. Rabbi Jacob says, The world is like a corridor to the world to come. Prepare yourself in the corridor so that you may enter the inner chamber.
22. He used to say, One hour of repentance and good deeds in this world is better than all the life of the world to come; and one hour of calmness of spirit in the world to come is better than all the life of this world.
23. Rabbi Simon ben Elazar says, Do not try to calm your fellow-man when he is angry; do not console him when his dead lie before him; do not cross-question him when he makes a vow; and do not try to see him at the time of his disgrace.
24. Samuel the younger says, 'Do not rejoice when your enemy falls and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles' (Proverbs 24: 17). 'For the Lord sees it and thinks it wicked and turns His anger from him' (Proverbs 24: 18).
25. Elisha ben Abuyah says, If someone learns as a child—what does he resemble? He resembles ink written on clean paper. If someone learns as an old man—what does he resemble? He resembles ink written on worn-out paper.
26. Rabbi Yose bar Judah of K'far ha-Bavli says, If someone learns from the young, whom does he resemble? He resembles a person who eats unripe grapes, and drinks wine straight from the vat.
If someone learns from the old, whom does he resemble? He resembles a person who eats ripe grapes and drinks mature wine.
27. Rabbi Meir says, Do not look at the bottle but at what it contains. You can find new bottles filled with old wine, and old ones in which there is not even new wine.
28. Rabbi Elazar Hakappar says, Envy, desire and ambition drive a man out of the world.
29. He used to say, Those who are born will die; those who are dead will live again; and those who live again will be judged, to know, to make known and to realise that He is God, He is the maker, He is the creator, He is the discerner, He is the judge, He is the witness, He is the plaintiff; and He will summon to judgment. Blessed be He, in whose presence there is no fault and no forgetfulness, who shows no favour and takes no bribe, for everything is His. Know that everything is according to the reckoning. Do not deceive yourself that the grave will be an excuse for you, for without your consent you were born, and without your consent you live, and without your consent you die, and without your consent you will have to give an account and a reckoning before the King above the kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.

From Chapter 5

10. There are seven characteristics of an uncultured man, and seven of a wise man. A wise man does not speak before someone greater than himself in wisdom.

He does not cut into his fellow's speech.

He does not rush to reply.

He asks what is relevant and answers to the point.

He speaks about first things first, and about last things last.

As to what he has not heard he says 'I did not hear it.'

He acknowledges the truth.

The reverse of all these applies to the uncultured man.

13. There are four types of man: One who says, What is mine is mine, and what is yours is yours—this is the average type. (Some say this is the selfishness of Sodom.)

One who says, What is mine is yours, and what is yours is mine—he is an ignoramus.

One who says, What is mine is yours, and what is yours is yours—he is a *chasid*.

One who says, What is yours is mine, and what is mine is mine—he is wicked.

14. There are four kinds of temperament: Easily angered, and easily pacified—his gain is cancelled by his loss.

Difficult to anger, and difficult to pacify—his loss is cancelled by his gain.

Difficult to anger, and easy to pacify—he is a *chasid*.

Easy to anger, and difficult to pacify—he is wicked.

16. There are four types of people who give to charity—One who wishes to give, but that others should not give—his eye begrudges what belongs to others.

One who wishes others to give, but that he himself should not give—his eye begrudges what belongs to him.

One who wishes to give, and others to give as well—he is a *chasid*.

One who does not wish to give, nor others to give—he is wicked.

19. If love depends on some selfish cause when the cause disappears love disappears; but if love does not depend on a selfish cause it will never disappear. What love depended on a selfish cause? Amnon's love for Tamar (2 Samuel 13). What love did not depend on a selfish cause? David's love for Jonathan (1 Samuel 18).

20. Every controversy which is for the sake of heaven will in the end lead to a lasting result. But one which is not for the sake of heaven will not in the end lead to a lasting result. What was a dispute for the sake of heaven? The dispute of Hillel and Shammai! And one which was not for the sake of heaven? The dispute of Korach and all his company (Numbers 16)!

21. When a man leads many to goodness no sin shall come through him. When a man leads many to sin he will not even have the means to repent. Moses was worthy and made many worthy, therefore the worth of many is linked to him. Jeroboam sinned and made many sin, and therefore the sin of many is linked to him.

23. Judah ben Tema says, Be strong as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a gazelle and strong as a lion to do the will of your father who is in heaven.

25. Ben Bag Bag says, Turn the Torah this way and turn it that way, for everything is in it. Look into it, grow old and grey over it, and do not turn away from it for you have nothing better than this.

26. Ben Hey Hey says, According to the labour is the reward.

From Chapter 6

The wise taught the following in the style of the Mishnah— blessed be He who chose them and their Mishnah.

1. Rabbi Meir says, He who labours in the Torah for its own sake merits many things. And not only that, the whole world is in his debt. He is called friend, beloved, one who loves God, one who loves mankind, one who gives joy to God and man. The Torah clothes him in humility and awe of God and fits him to be just, saintly, upright and faithful. It keeps him far from sin and draws him to virtue, and people benefit from his advice and knowledge, his understanding and strength. It gives him a royal dignity and power. The secrets of the Torah are revealed to him, and he becomes like an ever-growing stream, a river that does not cease. He becomes modest, longsuffering and forgiving. It gives him greatness and lifts him above all things.

2. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said, 'And the tables of the Law were the work of God and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tables' (Exodus 32: 16). Do not read '*charut*'—engraved, but '*cherut*'—freedom; for no man is free unless he labours in Torah.

3. If a man learns from his fellow a single chapter, a single rule, a single expression, or even a single letter, he should treat him with honour.

4. This is the way of the Torah! A piece of bread with salt you will eat, a ration of water you will drink, upon the ground you will lie, a life of hardship you will lead, and you will labour in the Torah. If you do this, 'happy shall you be'—in this world. 'And it shall be well with you'—in the world to come.

5. Seek no greatness for yourself, no honours, and let your deeds be greater than your learning. Do not long for the table of kings, for your table is greater than theirs, and your crown is greater than theirs. Faithful is your Employer to pay you the reward of your labour.

9. Rabbi Yose ben Kisma said, Once I was walking along the road and a man came up to me and greeted me. He said to me, 'Rabbi, where are you from?' I told him, 'I come from a great city of wise men and teachers.' He said to me, 'Rabbi, if you would care to settle among us in our place, I would give you thousands of gold dinars, and precious stones and pearls.' I told him, 'If you give me all the silver and gold and precious stones and pearls in the world, I would still only settle in a place of Torah. When a man dies neither silver nor gold nor precious stones nor pearls accompany him, only Torah and good deeds. For it is said (Proverbs 6: 22): "When you walk it shall lead you; when you lie down it shall watch over you; and when you awake it shall speak with you." "When you walk it shall lead you"—in this world. "When you lie down it shall watch over you"—in the grave. "When you awake it shall speak with you"—in the world to come.'

11. Everything that the Holy One, blessed be He, created in this world, He created for His glory alone, as it is said (Isaiah 43: 7): 'Everything that is called by My name, I created for My glory, it is I who formed it, I made it.' And it says (Exodus 15: 18): 'The Lord shall rule forever and ever.'

Rabbi Chananya ben Akashya says, It pleased the Holy One, blessed be He, to make Israel worthy. Because of this He gave them much Torah and many commandments, as it is said (Isaiah 42: 21): 'It pleased the Lord because of His righteousness to make the Torah great and glorious.'

Maimonides: the 13 Principles of Faith, quoted in **Prayer in Judaism** – Martin B (Basic Books, 1968), pages 116-117

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- 1 The living God we praise, exalt, adore
He was, he is, he will be evermore.
- 2 No unity like unto his can be
Eternal, inconceivable is he.
- 3 No form or shape has the incorporeal one
Most holy he, past all comparison.
- 4 He was ere aught was made in heaven or earth
But his existence has no date or birth.
- 5 Lord of the Universe is he proclaimed
Teaching his power to all his hand has framed.
- 6 He gave his gift of prophecy to those
In whom he gloried, whom he loved and chose.
- 7 No prophet ever yet has filled the place
Of Moses, who beheld God face to face.
- 8 Through him (the faithful in his house) the Lord
The law of truth to Israel did accord.
- 9 This Law of God will not alter, will not change
For any other through time's utmost range.
- 10 He knows and heeds the secret thoughts of man:
He saw the end of all ere aught began.
- 11 With love and grace doth he the righteous bless,
He metes out evil unto wickedness.
- 12 He at the last will his anointed send
Those to redeem who hope and wait the end.
- 13 God will the dead to life again restore.
Praised be his glorious name for evermore.

Sikhism

All extracts are taken from **Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism** – McLeod W
(Manchester University Press, 1984)
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Akal Ustat. In Praise of the Eternal One (pages 55-58)

The Eternal One is my Protector, all-powerful Lord in steel incarnate. || Master of Death and Lord of Steel, my Shield, my eternal Protector.

I bow before the Primal One, || Immanent in sea, in earth, in sky; || The Primal Being, formless and everlasting, || Whose light illumines all creation.

Dwelling within both elephant and ant, || Viewing alike both king and pauper; || The One unique, beyond our comprehending, || Yet knowing the secrets of every heart.

Ineffable, eternal, formless and thus devoid of raiment, || Devoid of passion, colour, shape or lineament, || Needing no sign to designate his caste, || The Primal One, alone, without spot or stain.

Immune from caste and the marks which proclaim it; || Neither father nor mother, friend nor foe; || Distant from all yet close beside them, || Immanent in sea, in earth, in sky.

Infinite his form and soundless his speech; || At his feet even Durga finds refuge. || Neither Brahma nor Vishnu encompass his bounds. || 'Not this, not this,' Brahma declares.

Thousands of gods has he created, thousands of Indras and deities of lesser power. || Brahma and Shiv are his creation, both of them created and both to be destroyed. || The fourteen worlds are the products of his pleasure, || All to be drawn within him again.

Countless demons, gods, divine serpents – all are the works of his creation || Celestial musicians and Kuber's attendants, wondrous examples of the beauty he confers. || All that can happen is known to him, the past, the present, the future yet to come. || All this he knows and all that lies within, reading the deepest secrets of every human heart.

He has no parents, neither caste nor lineage, || No single mood ordains the pattern of his deeds. || Present within the light which lightens every soul, || Behold him immanent in every place, visible to all.

Beyond the reach of death, immortal; || Beyond our comprehending, formless and detached; || Unmarked by symbols designating caste or family line, || the eternal Lord, for ever true.

Destroyer of all, Creator of all, || He who disperses illness, grief and guilt. || Reflect on him for a fleeting moment, || And thus escape death's snare.

If self-inflicted suffering leads to the Lord of peace and tranquillity, what then of the blows received by the wounded? || If repeating sacred words can bring one to the ineffable Lord, why not the warbler's constant *tuhi* cry? || If God be found by roaming the skies, what then of the bird which remains for ever on the wing? || If burning oneself is the means of liberation, freed is the widow who mounts her husband's pyre; and if it be attained by living beneath the ground then blessed indeed is the snake!

Some shave their heads and become sanyasis, others adopt the style of the yogi; some abstain from connubial pleasure, or claim to be totally chaste. || Some are called Hindus, others are Muslims, members of sects such as Shia or Sunni. Let it be known that mankind is one, that all men belong to a single humanity. || So too with God, whom Hindu and Muslim distinguish with differing names. Let none be misled, for God is but one; he who denies this is duped and deluded. || Worship the One who is Master of all; worship and serve him alone. See him present in all creation, a single form, an all-pervading light.

There is no difference between a temple and a mosque, nor between the prayers of a Hindu or a Muslim. Though differences seem to mark and distinguish, all men are in reality the same. || Gods and demons, celestial beings, men called Muslims and others called Hindus – such differences are trivial, inconsequential, the outward results of locality and dress. || With eyes the same, the ears and body, all possessing a common form – all are in fact a single creation, the elements of nature in a uniform blend. || Allah is the same as the God of the Hindus, Puran and Qur'an are one and the same. All are the same, none is separate; a single form, a single creation.

As sparks fly upwards in their thousands from a fire, each separate and distinct then reuniting with its source; || Or earth when pulverised to fine-ground dust ascends as a cloud of particles and then subsides again; || As waves rise endlessly in the ocean's vastness, their water one with all around them; || So from the natural world the living and inanimate emerge, and having thus appeared return to it again.

Countless tortoises and fish, with the predators which consume them; countless the birds which are born to fly. || Countless their enemies, seeking food, which snatch them on the wing; and countless more, hunting the hunter, which seize and eat those birds of prey. || Whether they live in water or on land, whether they fly in the air, all are created by the Master of Death and by him all are brought to destruction. || As light dawns from darkness and returns to it again, so does all proceed from God, its source and final destination.

Many cry as they wander the land, others wail themselves to death; many submerge themselves in water while others choose the agony of fire. || Many dwell by the Ganga, in Mecca or Medina; others follow the ascetic way, roaming the world as renunciants. || Many are sawn apart, others are buried, interred in the ground alive. Others prefer to be skewered on stakes, enduring the pain of impalement. || Many fly in the skies above, others live in the water. Vain is their effort without knowledge of the truth; fire is the fate which awaits them.

The gods have failed in their quest for perfection, the demons in their rebellion. Wise men have failed in their search for wisdom, the devout in their hope of contentment. || Preparing and dabbing on sandal paste, sprinkling the fragrance of attar, worshipping idols, offering sweets – all are futile and worthless. || Visiting graves, seeking comfort from tombs, piously smearing walls, plastering on them auspicious symbols – none can achieve its end. || The music-makers of the gods have failed, those who sing and those who dance. Pundits have failed; ascetics have failed; none knows the way to God.

He has no beginning, no middle, no end; no past, no present, no future. || He is the Master of all four ages, Lord of all that they span. || The deepest meditation of the noblest ascetics, the songs of the numberless heavenly host, || All have failed, all are defeated, for none can encompass the infinite.

Countless sages of mighty stature, the rishis Narad and Vyas, || Practised meditation and fearsome austerities, yet in the end tired of their task. || With them have failed the celestial musicians, those who sing and those who dance. || Mighty gods have struggled in vain, ignorant still of the answer.

Bachitar Natak. The Wondrous Drama (pages 58-63)

Reverently I salute the Sword with affection and devotion. || Grant, I pray, your divine assistance that this book may be brought to completion.

Thee I invoke, All-conquering Sword, Destroyer of evil, Ornament of the brave. || Powerful your arm and radiant your glory, your splendour as dazzling as the brightness of the sun. || Joy of the devout and Scourge of the wicked, Vanquisher of sin, I seek your protection. || Hail to the world's Creator and Sustainer, my invincible Protector the Sword!

When he takes up bow and arrow || Fear assails the proud; || When he wields the sword || Mighty warriors quail.

With the battle fiercely joined || He fights with deadly skill, || Treasure of kindness and mercy, || Giver of eternal grace.

If all the continents could serve as paper, the seven oceans as ink; || If all the trees on earth were felled and turned into pens for writing; || If for countless ages Sarasvati dictated, with every word recorded by Ganesh; || Without our submission nothing would please you, Lord of the death-dealing sword.

Frequent disputes took place amongst them, quarrels which no one could settle. And so the Almighty took action against them, depriving them of their land.

Shudras were acting as if they were Brahmans, and Vaishyas as if they were Khattris. Khattris behaved like Vaishyas, and Brahmans in the manner of Shudras.

Twenty villages remained to them, and there they tilled the soil. A lengthy period passed in this way until finally Nanak was born.

Nanak Rai was born a Bedi, born in that house and line; born to bring comfort to all his disciples, guidance both here and hereafter.

Here, to this Dark Age, he brought true belief, pointing the way for the pious to follow. He who sets out to follow this path shall never be troubled by sin.

He who chooses to follow this path is released by God from all sin and pain. Freed from all hunger and suffering, he is saved from the snare of death.

Nanak then entered the body of Angad, still spreading the truth far and wide. Next his name became Amar Das, successive lamps but a single flame.

When the time came for the promised blessing the title of Guru was conferred on Ram Das. Having fulfilled the ancient pledge Amar Das took the path to heaven.

Thus was Nanak known as Angad, and Angad was seen in Amar Das. Amar Das was transformed into Ram Das, as the pious know but never fools.

The foolish see them as separate persons; how few the wise who know them to be one! They who know it grasp the ultimate truth, the mystery which they alone can comprehend.

When Guru Ram Das went to God the succession passed to Arjan. When Arjan, in turn, proceeded to heaven Hargobind assumed his place.

Hargobind passed on to the realm of God, and Har Rai took his place; followed in turn by his son Han Krishan, and he by Tegh Bahadur.

For their frontal mark and their sacred thread he wrought a great deed in this Age of Darkness. This he did for the sake of the pious, silently giving his head.

For the cause of truth he performed this deed, giving his head in obedience to his resolve. Bogus tricks are for counterfeit conjurors, deceits which God's people must spurn.

Dashing himself on the ruler of Delhi, he departed for God's abode. Such was the achievement of Tegh Bahadur, the feat which he alone could perform.

At the death of Tegh Bahadur lamentation swept the earth. From below came anguished wailing, from heaven triumphant cries!

And my own story I tell, how from rigorous austerities I was summoned by God; called from the heights of Hem Kunt where the seven peaks so grandly pierce the sky.

Sapat Sring is the name they bear, the place where the Pandava king practised yogic rites. There I performed harsh austerities in service to the Almighty Lord.

Through constant practice of strict austerities my being had merged in the spirit divine. My parents too had followed this path, devoutly serving the ineffable Lord.

Such was the piety of the worship they performed that God was pleased [and heeded their cry]. Receiving thus the divine command I was born in this Age of Darkness.

God commanded, yet I was unwilling, for my mind was immersed in the bliss of contemplation. But God insisted that I must go, and speaking thus despatched me to this world.

You I now exalt as my chosen son; summon men to the path which all must follow. Preach to them the way of truth, and purge them of every evil way.

Reverently I stood with palms together, head respectfully bowed. 'With your gracious aid to sustain my endeavours I go into the world to preach the way of truth.'

This was the charge entrusted to me, despatched by God to take birth in this world. The words which he spoke are the words which I deliver, inspired by enmity to none.

If anyone should claim that I am God he shall burn in the fires of the fiercest hell. See me only as the slave of God. Let this be known without shadow of doubt.

I am the servant of the Master Supreme, here in this world to witness its drama. I speak to the world as God commands, cowed into silence by none.

When my father turned his steps to the east he visited places of pilgrimage, bathing in their waters. Travelling on he reached the sacred confluence and there spent many days performing pious rites.

There it was that my conception took place, and my actual birth in the city of Patna. From there I was taken back to the Punjab, nursed with affection by many attendants.

As I grew in stature my body was trained, and my mind was stored with understanding. It was when I had reached the age of responsibility that my father was summoned to heaven.

Summoned thus to the exercise of power I tried, as best I could, to spread the message of truth. Many the hunts which we followed in the wastelands, pursuing the bear, the antelope and the boar.

Eventually I left that area and transferred to the town of Paunta. Happily reposing on the banks of the Kalindri, I enjoyed all manner of amusement.

There I hunted and killed many tigers, and also antelopes and bears. Fateh Shah, the local ruler, angered by my presence, attacked me without cause.

When the arrow struck me it roused me to anger. Seizing the bow I returned the fire, loosing a hail of arrows.

The enemy turned and ran as the arrows showered upon them. Taking aim I shot again, despatching another of their number.

Han Chand was slain as his soldiers struggled to escape. So too the ruler of Kotlehar, his life cut short in battle.

And so they fled from the field of battle, running in fear of their lives. Victory was mine, the battle won, the enemy crushed by the grace of the Lord.

Having carried the day in battle we sang the songs of triumph. Rewards were showered on the victors as joy embraced us all.

The victory won we could scarce contain our exaltation. Returning now to Kahlur I there restored Anandpur town.

All who had shrunk from supporting my cause were refused admission to the town, whereas honour was bestowed on all those warriors who valiantly fought on my behalf.

Thus did a lengthy period pass, the pious sustained and the evil destroyed. The wicked were slain, rended limb from limb, dying like dogs the death they deserved.

Sikh Rahit Maryada (pages 79-85)

Definition of a Sikh

A Sikh is any person who believes in God (*Akal Purakh*); in the ten Gurus (Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh); in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, other writings of the ten Gurus, and their teachings; in the Khalsa initiation ceremony instituted by the tenth Guru; and who does not believe in any other system of religious doctrine.

A Sikh should rise early (3am to 6am) and having bathed he should observe *nam japan* by meditating on God. Each day a Sikh should read or recite the order known as the 'Daily Rule' (*nit-nem*). The Daily Rule comprises the following portions of scripture: Early morning (3am-6am): *Japji*, *Jap*, and the *Ten Savayyas*... In the evening at sunset: *Sodar Rahiras*... At night before retiring: *Sohila*. At the conclusion of the selections set down for early morning and evening (*Sodar Rahiras*) the prayer known as *Ardas* must be recited.

The influence of the Gurus' words is best experienced in a religious assembly (*sangat*). Each Sikh should therefore join in *sangat* worship, visiting gurdwaras and drawing inspiration from the sacred scripture in the *sangat*'s presence. In each gurdwara the Guru Granth Sahib should be opened daily... The Guru Granth Sahib must be treated with great reverence while it is being opened, read, or closed. When it is to be opened it should be laid under a canopy in a place which is clean and tidy. It should be set on a stool or lectern over which a clean cloth covering has been spread. Cushions should be used to support it while it is open and a mantle should be provided for covering it when it is not being read. A whisk should be provided for use when it is open... Shoes must be removed before entering a gurdwara. Feet, if unclean, should be washed... Whenever a Sikh enters a gurdwara his first duty must be to bow before the Guru Granth Sahib, touching the floor with his forehead... No Sikh may sit bareheaded in the presence of the *sangat* or an opened Guru Granth Sahib...

The only works which may be sung as kirtan in a *sangat* are those which are recorded in the sacred scriptures (1.2–3) or the commentaries on sacred scripture composed by Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal (1.4).

A practice to be commended is for each Sikh regularly to read right through the entire contents of the Guru Granth Sahib, planning his daily instalments in such a way that he completes the task in four to eight weeks (or whatever period may be convenient for him)... An unbroken reading of the Guru Granth Sahib (*akhand path*) may be held in time of distress or to mark an occasion of particular joy. Such a reading takes approximately forty-eight hours, the actual reading continuing without interruption.

Karah prasad [sanctified food] which has been prepared in the prescribed manner may be brought to a gurdwara for distribution. The prescribed method for preparing *karah prasad* is as follows. Equal portions [by weight] of wholemeal flour, sugar (the best available) and ghee should be mixed in a clean [iron] vessel while passages from the sacred scriptures are sung or recited.

Each Sikh should live and work in accordance with the principles of Gurmat.

Gurmat may be defined as follows:

- a) To worship only the one supreme God (*Akal Purakh*) spurning all other gods and goddesses.
- (b) To accept as the means of deliverance only the ten Gurus, the Guru Granth Sahib, and the works of the ten Gurus.
- (c) To believe that the same spirit was successively incarnated in the ten individual Gurus.
- (d) To reject caste distinctions and untouchability; magical amulets, mantras, and spells; auspicious omens, days, times, planets and astrological signs; the ritual feeding of Brahmans to sanctify or propitiate the dead; oblation for the dead; the superstitious waving of lights; [traditional] obsequies; fire sacrifices; ritual feasting or libations; sacred tufts of hair or ritual shaving; fasting for particular phases of the moon; frontal marks, sacred threads and sanctified rosaries; worshipping at tombs, temples or cenotaphs; idol worship; and all other such superstitions...
- (g) A knowledge of Gurmukhi is essential for Sikhs...
- (i) Do not cut a child's hair...

(r) When Sikhs meet they should greet each other by saying, 'Vahiguru ji ka Khalsa, Vahiguru ji ki fateh' [Hail to the Guru's Khalsa! Hail to the victory of the Guru!]. This is the correct form for both men and women...

(t) A Sikh must wear a kachh and a turban. Apart from these garments he may wear whatever he chooses. The turban is optional for women.

Following the birth of a child in a Sikh home the family and relatives should visit their gurdwara as soon as the mother is able to rise and bathe. (There is no particular period fixed for this purpose.) They should take karah prasad with them or arrange to have it prepared on their behalf. While they are in the gurdwara they should celebrate the event and give thanks by singing such hymns as Guru Arjan's 'God has broken every barrier' (*Sorath raga*), and his 'God has sent this wondrous gift' (*Asa raga*). If a complete reading of the Guru Granth Sahib has been undertaken [to mark the occasion] the concluding ceremony should be performed [at this time]. A passage should be chosen at random and the officiating granthi should propose a name beginning with the same letter as the first word of the randomly-chosen shabad. If the suggested name meets with the sangat's approval it shall be the name bestowed on the child. To a boy's name 'Singh' should be added, and to a girl's name 'Kaur'.

After the six prescribed stanzas of *Anand Sahib* have been read the child's birth is celebrated with an appropriate *Ardas* and the distribution of karah prasad.

At the time for the actual marriage the congregation should assemble in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib and kirtan should be sung, either by professional singers (*ragi*) or by the congregation. The bride and bridegroom should be seated in front of the Guru Granth Sahib, the bride on the groom's left. Having first secured the consent of the assembled sangat the Sikh (either man or woman) who is to conduct the marriage ceremony should instruct the couple to stand, together with their parents or guardians, and should then recite the *Ardas* with which the ceremony begins.

The officiant should then instruct the couple in the teachings of Gurmat concerning the duties of marriage... To signify their assent to these injunctions the couple should bow before the Guru Granth Sahib. The bride's father or senior relative should then place in her hand the hem of one of the garments worn by the bridegroom. The person serving as reader then sings the *Lavan* hymn, Guru Ram Das's *Suhi Chhant 2*. After each of the four stanzas the couple walk around the Guru Granth Sahib, the bridegroom followed by the bride who continues to hold his hem. While they are thus proceeding around the Guru Granth Sahib either the ragis or the entire congregation repeat the appropriate stanza. After completing each of the first three rounds the couple bow before the Guru Granth Sahib and then stand erect to hear the next stanza. Following the fourth round they bow and resume their seats. The ragis or others appointed for this particular purpose then sing the first five stanzas and the last stanza of *Anand Sahib*. The ceremony finally concludes with *Ardas* and the serving of karah prasad.

When a death takes place there should be no excessive lamenting, no beating of breasts or grief-stricken wailing. The best method of reconciling oneself to the will of God is to read the sacred scriptures or repeat God's name...

A corpse should be bathed and clad in clean garments, complete with all five Ks. It should be laid on a bier and *Ardas* should be recited. The bier should then be carried to the cremation ground to the accompaniment of appropriate hymns. At the cremation ground a funeral pyre should be erected and before consigning the body to the flames *Ardas* should be recited. The corpse should then be laid on the pyre, and the pyre lit by a son, some other relative, or a close friend. The assembled sangat should meanwhile sit some distance away and sing hymns appropriate to a funeral... When the pyre is well ablaze *Kirtan Sohila* should be recited, followed by *Ardas*.

After the cremation a reading of the Guru Granth Sahib should be initiated on behalf of the departed soul, either in the house of the deceased or in a neighbouring gurdwara. When the funeral pyre has cooled the body's ashes, together with any remaining bones, should be gathered and should either be cast into running water or buried at the place of cremation. No memorial should be erected to mark the spot where the cremation took place.

Prayers of intercession may also be offered on appropriate occasions.

In addition to the ceremonies detailed above there may be occasions of particular joy or sadness which warrant a special intercession. Examples are the first entry into a new building, the opening of a new shop, or a child's first day at school. On such occasions a Sikh should invoke God's blessing by reciting *Ardas*. Readings from the scriptures and *Ardas* are essential components of all Sikh rituals.

Seva is a fundamental feature of Sikhism. Gurdwara maintenance provides a means of inculcating this essential virtue. Common examples are the sweeping of a gurdwara, serving water to members of a *sangat* or fanning them, serving food in the gurdwara dining-hall (*langar*), and cleaning the shoes [of worshippers].

The Guru's *langar* serves two purposes. It inculcates the spirit of *seva* in Sikhs; and it breaks down false notions of status and caste. Anyone may eat in a *langar*, regardless of his status or caste. When all take their places in the same line [to receive their food] there should be no discrimination on the basis of nationality, caste or religion. The only qualification is that food which is given to initiated members of the Khalsa must be served from a separate dish.

An open copy of the Guru Granth Sahib is required at the place of initiation together with at least six baptised Sikhs, each of them bearing all five of the Khalsa symbols. One of the six will sit with the Guru Granth Sahib while the remaining five will administer the actual initiation. Either men or women may serve in both capacities. Prior to the ceremony they should bathe and wash their hair...

Any man or woman who affirms belief in the Sikh faith and vows to live according to its principles may receive initiation, regardless of nationality, [previous] creed, or caste. Those who are to receive initiation should be old enough to understand the meaning of the ceremony. They should bathe and wash their hair, and should present themselves wearing all five Khalsa symbols. These are uncut hair (*kes*), a sword or dagger (*kirpan*) suspended from the shoulder, a pair of shorts (*kachh* or *kachhahira*), a comb (*kangha*), and a steel bangle (*kara*). No symbols associated with other faiths may be worn. The head must be covered, but not with a hat or cap. Ear-rings and nose ornaments must not be worn. Prior to receiving initiation the candidates should stand reverently before the Guru Granth Sahib with palms together.

One of the five officiants should then address those who are seeking initiation, explaining to them the principles of the Sikh faith in the following terms: 'The Sikh faith requires you to abandon the worship of man-made objects. Instead you should direct your love and devotion to the one supreme Creator. This obligation is discharged by attending to the words of sacred scripture; by serving the *sangat* and the Panth; by acting benevolently towards others; by maintaining love for the divine Name; and after receiving initiation by living in accordance with the *Rahit*. Do you gladly accept this faith?'

When an affirmative answer has been given one of the officiants should offer an appropriate prayer and take a *hukam*. The five officiants should then take their places beside the large bowl [which is to be used for the baptism]. The bowl should be made of iron and should be set on something clean and appropriate, such as a gilded stool. Fresh water should be poured into the bowl and soluble sweets added. Having done this the five officiants should sit around the bowl in the 'heroic posture'. The following passages from scripture should be recited: *Japji*, *Jap*, the *Ten Savayyas*, *Benati Chaupai* and the six prescribed stanzas of *Anand Sahib*.

The officiant who performs this recitation should do so with his left hand placed on the rim of the bowl. With his right hand he should stir the water with a two-edged sword (*khanda*), keeping his attention intently focussed on the task he is performing. The other officiants should gaze intently into the water with both hands resting on the rim of the bowl. After the appointed passages have been completed one of the officiants should recite *Ardas*...

The candidate should now be instructed to adopt the 'heroic posture', turning their thoughts to the Tenth Master as they do so. Each should cup his hands, placing the right hand over the left. Five times the sanctified water (*amrit*) is poured into the candidate's cupped hands. As he does this the officiant shall say to him, 'Say, "Vahiguru ji ka Khalsa, Vahiguru ji ki fateh" '. After drinking each portion the recipient shall repeat, 'Vahiguru ji ka Khalsa, Vahiguru ji ki fateh.' Amrit is then sprinkled onto his eyes five times, and five times it is sprinkled over his hair. After each sprinkling the officiant shall call, 'Vahiguru ji ka Khalsa, Vahiguru ji ki fateh,' and the recipient shall repeat the words after him. The amrit which still remains is then consumed by the initiates (both men and women), all drinking from the same vessel.

Next the five officiants should impart the Name of God to the initiates by reciting the Basic Credal Statement (*mul mantra*) in unison and by having the initiates repeat it after them...

One of the five officiants should then expound the Rahit as follows: 'As from today you are "born to the Guru and freed from rebirth". You are now a member of the Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh is your spiritual father and Sahib Kaur your spiritual mother. Your birthplace is Kesgarh Sahib and your home is Anandpur Sahib. Because you are all children of the same father you are spiritual brothers, one with another and with all others who have received the amrit initiation. You must renounce your former lineage, occupation, and religious affiliation. This means that you should put aside all concern for caste status, birth, country and religion, for you are now exclusively a member of the sublime Khalsa. You must worship God alone, spurning all other gods, goddesses, incarnations and prophets. You must accept the ten Gurus and their teachings as your only means of deliverance.

'You can already read the Gurmukhi script (if not you must learn how to do so) and at least once a day you must read or hear the following works which together constitute the Daily Rule: *Japji*, *Jap*, the *Ten Savayyas*, *Sodar Rahiras*, and *Sohila*. You should also read or hear some additional passage from the Guru Granth Sahib at least once a day, and you must always wear the Five Ks. These are uncut hair (*kes*), a sword or dagger (*kirpan*), a pair of shorts (*kachh*), a comb (*kangha*), and a steel bangle (*kara*).

'There are four sins which are particularly serious and which must be scrupulously avoided: (1) Cutting one's hair. (2) Eating meat which has been slaughtered according to the Muslim rite. (3) Sexual intercourse with any person other than one's spouse. (4) Using tobacco. Anyone who commits any of these cardinal sins must be re-initiated, unless the act has been unintentional in which case no punishment should be administered.

'Have no dealings with initiated Sikhs who cut their hair, nor with Sikhs who smoke.

'Always be prepared to support the Panth and to provide whatever assistance may be required in a gurdwara. Set aside a tenth part of whatever you earn and dedicate it to the Guru. Let all that you do be done in accordance with the principles of Gurmat.

'Observe at all times the discipline required of those who belong to the Khalsa. If you violate the Rahit in any respect you should present yourself before a congregation of the Khalsa and request a penance... The following offences warrant a penance:

1. Associating with Minas, Masands, Dhir-malias, Ram-raias, and other enemies of the Panth; or with smokers, those who murder baby daughters, or initiated Sikhs who cut their hair.
2. Eating from the same dish as a person who has not received the Khalsa initiation or an apostate Sikh (*patit*).
3. Dyeing one's beard.
4. Giving or receiving a cash dowry in return for a son's or a daughter's hand in marriage.
5. Consuming any drug or intoxicant (cannabis, opium, alcohol, cocaine, etc).
6. Performing any rite or ceremony which conflicts with Sikh belief, or commissioning anyone else to do so.
7. Neglecting to fulfil any part of the Rahit.'

At the conclusion of this homily one of the five officiants should recite *Ardas*. The person sitting in attendance on the Guru Granth Sahib should then take a *hukam*. If any of the newly initiated bears a name which was not selected from the Guru Granth Sahib he should now receive a new name [chosen in the approved manner]. Finally *karah prasad* should be distributed. All who have enlisted in the Guru's service, both men and women, should take *karah prasad* from the same dish.

The Japji (pages 86-93)

There is one Supreme Being, the Eternal Reality. He is the Creator, without fear and devoid of enmity. He is immortal, never incarnated, self-existent, known by grace through the Guru. The Eternal One, from the beginning, through all time, present now, the Everlasting Reality.

1. Through ritual purity he can never be known though one cleanse oneself a hundred thousand times. Silent reflection will never reveal him though one dwell absorbed in the deepest meditation. Though one gather vast riches the hunger remains, no cunning will help in the hereafter. How is Truth to be attained, how the veil of falsehood torn aside? Nanak, thus it is written: Submit to God's Order (*hukam*), walk in its way.

2. God's order is far beyond our describing though all that exists is its visible expression. All forms, all life is its creation, and it alone determines greatness. Some are exalted, some abased; some must suffer while others find joy. Some receive blessing, others condemnation, doomed by God's Order to endless transmigration. All are within it, none beyond its power. They who comprehend it, Nanak, renounce their blind self-centred pride.

3. They who are strong sing of God's might; they who perceive his gifts sing of his grace. Some praise his majesty and the wonders he performs; others laud his wisdom in their scholarship and learning. Some praise his power made manifest in creation, how he brings to life, restores to dust, and reincarnates anew. Some sing of his distance, of how he dwells afar; others of his presence, immanent in all creation. Countless numbers tell of him, describing him in endless ways. None can ever hope to succeed, for none can encompass his infinite being. Continually he gives, bestowing gifts beyond our power to receive. He cares for us, supplying our needs down the endless ages. God commands and by his Order directs our path. For ever joyous is he, declares Nanak, for ever free from care.

4. The eternal Master whose Name is Truth speaks to us in infinite love. Insistently we beg for the gifts which he by grace bestows. What can we offer in return, what gift will gain us entrance to his court? What words can we utter to attract his love? At the ambrosial hour of fragrant dawn meditate on the grandeur of the one true Name. Past actions determine the nature of our birth but grace alone reveals the door to liberation. See him therefore, Nanak, dwelling immanent in all. Know him as the One, the eternal, changeless Truth.

5. He cannot be made and installed as an idol, he the Supreme One devoid of spot or stain. Whoever serves him wins honour, Nanak, so sing of him and his boundless excellence. Sing his praises, hear them sung, and nourish love for him within your heart. Thus shall your suffering all be banished and peace take its place within. The Guru's word is the mystic sound, the voice of the scriptures immanent in all. Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma and Parvati, all are but manifestations of the one divine Guru. Were my mind to comprehend him my words would surely fail, for he is far above describing, far beyond all power of human telling. One thing only I ask of the Guru. May the gracious Lord, the Giver of all, constantly dwell in my thoughts and recollection.

6. I would bathe at a place of pilgrimage if that would please God, but without his blessing nothing is gained. Throughout all creation nothing can be gained except by means of his grace. He who accepts but a single word from the Guru shall find within himself a treasure trove of jewels. Grant me, Master, that single perception, the constant remembrance of the Giver of all.

7. If one were to live through all four yugas or even ten times their span; if one were to be famed throughout the world, acknowledged as leader by all; if one were to earn an exalted name and a glory which covered the earth, yet would it all be futile and wasted without the blessing of God. If God's gracious glance avoids such a person all turn their faces away from him. He will be treated as the lowest of worms, scorned and blamed by all. The worthless he converts to virtue, Nanak, to the virtuous he imparts yet more. He alone has the power so to do, for no one confers virtue on God.

8. By listening to the Word one gathers all the qualities of the spiritually adept. By listening to the Word one comprehends the deepest mysteries of the universe. When one listens to the Word the vastness of the world comes into view, its continents, its realms, and under it the nether regions. If one listens to the Word the power of Death is overcome. The devout, declares Nanak, dwell in everlasting bliss, for suffering and sin must flee from all who hear the Word.

9. By listening to the Word one matches the gods, the equal of Shiva, of Brahma, and of Indra. From listening to the Word even the wicked turn to praise. Through listening to the Word one attains deep understanding, learning the mysteries of the yogic art and the wisdom of the scriptures. The devout, declares Nanak, dwell in everlasting bliss, for suffering and sin must flee from all who hear the Word.

10. Listening to the Word one finds truth, contentment, spiritual perception. Listening to the Word secures all that pilgrimage can achieve, the merit earned by bathing at every sacred site. By listening to the Word one acquires the fame of the learned scholar. Listening to the Word one knows the rapture of deep meditation. The devout, declares Nanak, dwell in everlasting bliss, for suffering and sin must flee from all who hear the Word.

11. Listening to the Word one plumbs the ultimate depths of virtue. Listening to the Word one comprehends the wisdom of the Sufi masters. Listening to the Word the blind find their eyes have been opened. Listening to the Word one fathoms the unfathomable mysteries of our existence. The devout, declares Nanak, dwell in everlasting bliss, for suffering and sin must flee from all who hear the Word.

12. None can describe the believer's bliss; he who tries will rue his folly. Though one sit engrossed in strenuous thought no paper nor pen can serve the need, no scribe discharge the task. For such is the wonder of the Name of God, free from all spot and stain. Only he who truly knows the Name can ever be accounted a believer.

13. By believing one gains inner sight and wisdom. By believing one wins access to the mansions of the mind. Death no longer smites the believer, freed by faith from the summons to depart. Such is the wonder of the Name of God, free from all spot and stain. Only he who truly knows the Name can ever be accounted a believer.

14. No obstacle stands in the believer's path; unchecked he advances with honour and acclaim. For him the broad highway, no narrow track he follows, obedient to the call of his sacred duty. Such is the wonder of the Name of God, free from all spot and stain. Only he who truly knows the Name can ever be accounted a believer.

15. By believing one finds the door to liberation, and he who finds it shows the way to all his family and kin. The master leads, his disciples follow. He who has faith and believes, Nanak, need never wander as a beggar. Such is the wonder of the Name of God, free from all spot and stain. Only he who truly knows the Name can ever be accounted a believer.

16. The truly devout win God's acceptance, supreme as the leaders of men. Honoured in the Court of God they stand in glory at his royal door, gazing upon their Master alone and thus directed by him. If we should seek to speak of God or turn to him in contemplation our attempts to encompass him must surely fail. Wondrous are the Creator's deeds, far beyond our computing! Faithfulness, the offspring of grace, is the Bull which supports the earth. Serenity is the rope by which it is tethered. Enlightened is he who truly knows the burden born by the Bull. Beyond this earth there are countless more. Who stands beneath them, what bears their weight? Beings of various kinds, colours, and names, he recorded all with a flowing pen. If one might know how to score their sum what a mighty account it would be! What power, what beauty, what bounteous giving! Who can comprehend them! With a single command he unfurled creation and by that command a host of streams sprang forth. How can I, abject and worthless, ever describe your mighty power? Worthy is that which pleases you, eternally constant Nirankar.

17. Countless those who repeat your Name, countless those who adore you. Countless those who offer you worship, countless those who perform austerities. Countless those who intone the scriptures, countless the ascetic practitioners of yoga. Countless the devout contemplating goodness and wisdom. Countless the faithful and the givers of charity. Countless the warriors scarred by battle. Countless those who observe vows of silence, How can I, abject and worthless, ever describe your mighty power? Worthy is that which pleases you, eternally constant Nirankar.

18. Countless the fools, the thieves, the swindlers; countless those who have ruled by force. Countless the cut-throats, violent murderers; countless those who live lives of sin. Countless the liars, reborn to lie again; countless the polluted subsisting on filth. Countless the slanderers, weighed down by infamy. Nanak the lowly, having pondered now declares: Worthless am I to be offered as sacrifice. Worthy alone is that which pleases you, eternally constant Nirankar.

19. Countless your names and countless your dwellings, numberless worlds beyond man's comprehending. Even declaring them numberless falls sinfully short of the truth. Yet by words alone can we utter the Name, with words alone can we give you glory. With words alone can we tell of your wisdom, with words sing hymns of praise. With words we write and recite the scriptures, and words must be used to record our destiny. He who records it is free from its trammels; whatever he commands must surely come to pass. Whatever he has made gives form to his Name. Nothing exists except that which expresses it. How can I, abject and worthless, ever describe your mighty power? Worthy is that which pleases you, eternally constant Nirankar.

20. If hands, feet and body are smeared with grime water will wash them clean. Clothes may be stained with the traces of urine, but soap will restore them again. If the mind be soiled and defiled by sin it is cleansed with love of the Name. Virtue and sin are more than mere words, for each of us carries the fruit of his deeds. As we have sown so shall we reap. Each must transmigrate, Nanak, as God's divine Order decrees.

21. Pilgrimage, austerities, charity and alms earn no more merit than a paltry sesame. Hear, believe, nurture love in your heart, for thus one is cleansed by the waters within. All virtue is yours, O Lord, none do I possess. Helpless am I unless you confer it, unable even to love you. All praise to you Master of all, Creator Lord made manifest in the Word. You are Truth, you are Beauty, you are the One eternally blissful. What was the time, what the occasion, what the date and what the day; what the month and what the season when first creation took its birth? No pundit knows, for no Purana contains it; no qazi will find it recorded in the Qur'an. No yogi knows the date or day, no man can tell the season or the month. Only the Creator knows the answer; he alone knows when creation began. How can I tell of him, how utter his praise? How can I describe him, how comprehend his might? Everyone tries to describe him, Nanak, each claiming wisdom beyond his neighbour. He is the Master, Supreme in his greatness, Maker and Lord of all! He who claims to encompass him, Nanak, can win no glory in the hereafter.

22. A hundred thousand worlds below, countless heavens above! He who would count them must certainly fail as the Vedas so curtly confess. Eighteen thousand, say the Muslim scriptures, their foundation the Creator's deed. Yet none can compute them, no words will suffice; no language can ever describe them. Let God be praised and magnified, Nanak, for he alone can comprehend.

23. Though men may praise you, endlessly praise you, none may perceive the true measure of your being. Rivers and streams merge with the ocean, each unaware of its boundless extent. Kings may own empires vaster than oceans, with wealth heaped high as mountains. Yet none can hope to match the ant which ever remembers God.

24. Infinite are his praises, uttered in ways unnumbered; infinite his works and infinite his gifts. Infinite is his sight, infinite his hearing, infinite the workings of his mind. His creation is boundless, infinite its span. Though many may try none can ever comprehend it. None there be who know its bounds; though much be said much more remains. Great is God and high his station, higher than high his Name. Only he who matches its height can ever aspire to understanding. God alone can scan it, Nanak. All we receive is by his grace.

25. Grace abounding, beyond recording! Great the Giver, seeking no return. At his door beg warriors unnumbered, with countless more beyond describing. Many there be who misuse his gifts, turning his bounty to their own destruction. Many receive while denying the source; others accept without gratitude or thanks. Many endure constant suffering or hunger, yet even these are your gifts, O Lord. Our bonds are broken, if such be your will, by the word which you alone can speak. If any fool should assume this right retribution must follow, a fate beyond telling. God alone knows, God alone bestows. Rare is he who acknowledges this. Endowed with the power to offer praise, Nanak, one stands supreme, an emperor amongst kings.

26. Priceless the stock, incomparable the merchants, conducting their trade from a store beyond valuing. Peerless are they who take up this commerce, boundless the profits they carry away. Priceless the devotion they give to their Master, priceless the unity all share with him. Priceless his laws, priceless his court, priceless the scales which balance our merits. Priceless his blessing and the tokens he bestows; priceless his grace and priceless his commands. God himself is beyond our appraisal, all our descriptions must falter and fail. Men may try, seeking words to express him. The end is the silence of mystical union. The scriptures have tried and so too have scholars, attempting descriptions in text and in commentary. Brahmas tell of him, so too do Indras; Krishna and gopis all join in the task. Shiva speaks of him and likewise the Siddhs, numberless others whom God has enlightened. Demons and gods, the inspired, the ascetic – all speak of him and all fail in the telling. How many men have sought to describe him, endlessly striving yet finally failing. Though countless more be brought into being their efforts too would all be in vain. He is as mighty as he may choose; he alone knows his own greatness, Nanak. Should anyone boast that he too can know let him be branded the feeblest of fools.

27. Where, O Lord, is the place where you dwell, with its gate where you sit keeping watch over all; there where the music resounds to your glory, the heavenly strains of a host without number? Boundless the range of your glorious harmony; infinite they who unite in your praise. The wind and the waters, the whole world of nature, unite in your praises and join in the song. With them your scribe and his tireless attendants, praising your greatness while listing men's deeds. Blest by your grace all the gods and their consorts, a mighty array singing hymns to your praise. So too the Siddhs in their deep contemplation, and others of wisdom, austerities, strength. They who are learned sing hymns to your glory, with rishis who study the scriptures of old. Ravishing beauties add joy to the harmony, music in heaven, on earth and below. Spirits most precious give voice to their gladness, their music resounding where piety dwells. Heroes and warriors, famed for their victories, sing with creation one vast song of praise. They who enraptured lend voice to this harmony all win your love for the praises they sing. Boundless, unnumbered, an infinite chorus, mighty assemblies which none may conceive. Master eternal, our Lord and Creator, with Truth as your Name and unfailingly true; all that exists in its forms and its colourings, all is your handiwork, all you sustain. None may command you, none challenge your purpose, whatever you choose comes to pass. You are the Master, our King all-prevailing, before whom all creatures must bow.

28. Yogis wear ear-rings, let yours be patience, with honest labour for begging bowl and pouch. Cover yourself with contemplation as the yogi applies his ashes. Clothe yourself in the remembrance of death as the yogi dons his blanket. Let purity be your yogic discipline and lean for support on the staff of faith. Accept all as brothers, be strong in self-discipline. He conquers the world who conquers self. Let the yogi's cry be our joyous greeting, to you the Master of all. From time's beginning, through all eternity, you are the pure, the eternal Lord.

29. With wisdom your food and compassion the giver let the mystic music resound in every heart. God is supreme, the Master of all. Put your trust in him, not in magical powers. Such powers are futile, for all power is God's. He summons or despatches as our destiny decrees. Let the yogi's cry be our joyous greeting, to you the Master of all. From time's beginning, through all eternity, you are the pure, the eternal Lord.

30. In some strange way (so people believe) a Mother gave birth to three appointed sons – one the world's creator, one its sustainer, one to sit in judgement and pass the sentence of death. But all is under God's control, all functions according to his command. Wonder of wonders, God witnesses all, yet to all remains invisible, unseen. Let the yogi's cry be our joyous greeting, to you the Master of all. From time's beginning, through all eternity, you are the pure, the eternal Lord.

31. God dwells in every realm of the universe, every realm a portion of the storehouse divine. All that exists he created once for ever, keeping vigil over all that he thus brought into being. Eternally steadfast is he, O Nanak, and his works endure for evermore. Let the yogi's cry be our joyous greeting, to you the Master of all. From time's beginning, through all eternity, you are the pure, the eternal Lord.

32. Let every tongue become a hundred thousand; let each be multiplied twice ten times more. Let this multitude of tongues then join together, each repeating a hundred thousand times the name of creation's Lord. This path is a stairway leading to the Master, an ascent to the bliss of mystical union. All may follow it, even the lowliest, if they but heed the word from above, They who receive grace will find the path, Nanak, leaving the braggart to wander astray.

33. We have no power to speak or be silent, neither to beg nor give to another. The power to live, the power to die, the strength to possess kingdoms, spurs to arrogance – none is ours to claim or command. We have no power to gain wisdom or enlightenment, neither spiritual skill nor the means of liberation. God alone possesses power, he alone can wield it. Before him all are equal, Nanak. None are exalted, none abased.

34. God created the night and the day, the days of the week and the seasons of the year. With them he created wind and water, fire and the regions established below. Amidst them all he set the earth, the place where men are confronted by duty. Wondrous the creatures there created, boundless variety, countless their names. Each must be judged for the deeds he performs, by a faultless judge in a perfect court. Those who are justified stand radiant in glory, bearing upon them the mark of his grace. All who enter are recognised, Nanak, the false distinguished from those who are true.

35. Such is the law in the Realm of Duty. Hear now the nature of the Realm of Knowledge – the infinite variety of wind, water, fire, numberless Krishnas, countless Shivas, endless Brahmas creating endless styles of form, of colour, of outward attire. All are present in infinite array – the earth and sacred mountains, each with its Dhruva uttering sermons without end; the Indras, the moons and suns, infinite spheres and lands without number; Siddhs and Buddhas, Naths and devis, gods and demons, men of silence, precious jewels and mighty oceans! How deep the mines, how varied the speech, how grand the dynasties of rulers and kings! Infinite forms of meditation, numberless those who perform them. Boundless, limitless, infinite, O Nanak. None can perceive its end.

36. Enlightenment shines in the Realm of Knowledge, music and spectacle, wonder and joy. Beauty prevails in the Realm of Endeavour, beauty of form unique in its splendour. Words will not serve, for none can describe it. Were one to try one would surely be humbled. Perception is sharpened, wisdom grows deeper, powers far transcending the knowledge of mortals.

37. Mastery rules in the Realm of Fulfilment, for there God's will prevails. There one encounters mighty heroes, filled with the spirit of God's pervading power; and virtuous women, praised as was Sita, women of beauty no words can describe. Death cannot touch them nor any deceit, for God himself resides in their hearts. God also dwells in the hearts of his faithful, host upon host enraptured by his presence. God's ultimate dwelling is the Realm of Truth, the ineffable home of eternal bliss. There the Creator keeps watch over all, imparting grace, bestowing joy. Within that realm are continents and universes, their vastness far beyond power of telling. Worlds upon worlds and endless forms, all of them acting as God has decreed. Joyously he watches, guiding their courses. To describe it, Nanak, is as hard as steel.

38. Let continence be the forge and tranquillity the goldsmith, intelligence the anvil and knowledge the tools. Let fear be the bellows, austerities the fire, and love the crucible wherein the amrit is poured. In such a mint the divine Word is cast, the daily task for all who receive his grace. They who receive his grace, Nanak, are blessed with transcendent joy.

Epilogue. Air is the Guru, water the Father, and earth the mighty Mother of all. Day and night are the caring guardians, fondly nurturing all creation. In the court of God all stands revealed, the record of deeds both good and evil. As we have acted so we are recompensed, the devout brought near to the presence divine, the reprobates banished afar. They who have faithfully followed the Name have run their course, their labours done. Freed are they and others with them. Radiantly, Nanak, they go to glory.

New Testament

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Luke 22

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

¹Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, ²and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. ³Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. ⁴And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. ⁵They were delighted and agreed to give him money. ⁶He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.

The Last Supper

⁷Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.”

⁹“Where do you want us to prepare for it?” they asked.

¹⁰He replied, “As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, ¹¹and say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ ¹²He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there.”

¹³They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

¹⁴When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. ¹⁵And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfilment in the kingdom of God.”

¹⁷After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

¹⁹And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

²⁰In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. ²¹But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. ²²The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays him.” ²³They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.

²⁴Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. ²⁵Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. ²⁶But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. ²⁷For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. ²⁸You are those who have stood by me in my trials. ²⁹And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, ³⁰so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

³¹“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you ^[a] as wheat. ³²But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

³³But he replied, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”

³⁴Jesus answered, “I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.”

³⁵Then Jesus asked them, “When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?”
“Nothing,” they answered.

³⁶He said to them, “But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. ³⁷It is written: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors’^[b]; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfilment.”

³⁸The disciples said, “See, Lord, here are two swords.”
“That is enough,” he replied.

Jesus Prays on the Mount of Olives

³⁹Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. ⁴⁰On reaching the place, he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.” ⁴¹He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, ⁴²“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” ⁴³An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. ⁴⁴And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.^[c]

⁴⁵When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. ⁴⁶“Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”

Jesus Arrested

⁴⁷While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, ⁴⁸but Jesus asked him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

⁴⁹When Jesus’ followers saw what was going to happen, they said, “Lord, should we strike with our swords?” ⁵⁰And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear.

⁵¹But Jesus answered, “No more of this!” And he touched the man’s ear and healed him.

⁵²Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, “Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs? ⁵³Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour—when darkness reigns.”

Peter Disowns Jesus

⁵⁴Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. ⁵⁵But when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. ⁵⁶A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, “This man was with him.”

⁵⁷But he denied it. “Woman, I don’t know him,” he said.

⁵⁸A little later someone else saw him and said, “You also are one of them.”
“Man, I am not!” Peter replied.

⁵⁹About an hour later another asserted, “Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.”

⁶⁰Peter replied, “Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!” Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.” ⁶²And he went outside and wept bitterly.

The Guards Mock Jesus

⁶³The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him. ⁶⁴They blindfolded him and demanded, “Prophecy! Who hit you?” ⁶⁵And they said many other insulting things to him.

Jesus Before Pilate and Herod

⁶⁶At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. ⁶⁷“If you are the Christ, ^[d]” they said, “tell us.”

Jesus answered, “If I tell you, you will not believe me, ⁶⁸and if I asked you, you would not answer. ⁶⁹But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.”

⁷⁰They all asked, “Are you then the Son of God?”

He replied, “You are right in saying I am.”

⁷¹Then they said, “Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips.”

Footnotes

- a [Luke 22:31](#) The Greek is plural.
- b [Luke 22:37](#) Isaiah 53:12
- c [Luke 22:44](#) Some early manuscripts do not have verses 43 and 44.
- d [Luke 22:67](#) Or Messiah

Luke 23

¹Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate. ²And they began to accuse him, saying, “We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, ^[a] a king.”

³So Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

“Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied.

⁴Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, “I find no basis for a charge against this man.”

⁵But they insisted, “He stirs up the people all over Judea ^[b] by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here.”

⁶On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. ⁷When he learned that Jesus was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

⁸When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle. ⁹He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. ¹²That day Herod and Pilate became friends—before this they had been enemies.

¹³Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, ¹⁴and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. ¹⁵Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. ¹⁶Therefore, I will punish him and then release him.” ^[c]

¹⁸With one voice they cried out, “Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!” ¹⁹(Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.)

²⁰Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. ²¹But they kept shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

²²For the third time he spoke to them: “Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him.”

²³But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. ²⁴So Pilate decided to grant their demand. ²⁵He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

The Crucifixion

²⁶As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. ²⁸Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ ³⁰Then they will say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us!” ³¹For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

³²Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” ³⁵And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

³⁵The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.”

³⁶The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar ³⁷and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

³⁸There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

³⁹One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!”

⁴⁰But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

⁴²Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

⁴³Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Jesus’ Death

⁴⁴It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last.

⁴⁷The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, “Surely this was a righteous man.” ⁴⁸When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. ⁴⁹But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Jesus’ Burial

⁵⁰Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, ⁵¹who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God. ⁵²Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus’ body. ⁵³Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. ⁵⁴It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

⁵⁵The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. ⁵⁶Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

Footnotes

- a [Luke 23:2](#) Or Messiah; also in verses 35 and 39
- b [Luke 23:5](#) Or over the land of the Jews
- c [Luke 23:16](#) Some manuscripts him.” 17 Now he was obliged to release one man to them at the Feast.
- d [Luke 23:30](#) Hosea 10:8
- e [Luke 23:34](#) Some early manuscripts do not have this sentence.
- f [Luke 23:42](#) Some manuscripts come with your kingly power

Luke 24

The Resurrection

¹On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.” ⁸Then they remembered his words.

⁹When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹²Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

On the Road to Emmaus

¹³Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles^[a] from Jerusalem. ¹⁴They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶but they were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

¹⁹“What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²²In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”

²⁵He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Did not the Christ^[b] have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” ²⁷And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

²⁸As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³²They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

³³They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” ³⁵Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

³⁶While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

³⁷They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

⁴⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate it in their presence.

⁴⁴He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

⁴⁵Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

The Ascension

⁵⁰When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. ⁵²Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

Footnotes

- a [Luke 24:13](#) Greek sixty stadia (about 11 kilometers)
- b [Luke 24:26](#) Or Messiah; also in verse 46

John 18

Jesus Arrested

¹When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it.

²Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. ³So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

⁴Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"

⁵"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) ⁶When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

⁷Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?"
And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

⁸"I told you that I am he," Jesus answered. "If you are looking for me, then let these men go." ⁹This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me." ^[a]

¹⁰Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

¹¹Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

Jesus Taken to Annas

¹²Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him ¹³and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. ¹⁴Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people.

Peter's First Denial

¹⁵Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, ¹⁶but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

¹⁷"You are not one of his disciples, are you?" the girl at the door asked Peter.
He replied, "I am not."

¹⁸It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

The High Priest Questions Jesus

¹⁹Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

²⁰"I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. ²¹Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said."

²²When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby struck him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded.

²³"If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" ²⁴Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest. ^[b]

Peter's Second and Third Denials

²⁵As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it, saying, "I am not."

²⁶One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the olive grove?" ²⁷Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

Jesus Before Pilate

²⁸Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. ²⁹So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?"

³⁰"If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you."

³¹Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law."

"But we have no right to execute anyone," the Jews objected. ³²This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled.

³³Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

³⁴"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

³⁵"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

³⁶Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

³⁷"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

³⁸"What is truth?" Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. ³⁹But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release 'the king of the Jews'?"

⁴⁰They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion.

Footnotes

a [John 18:9](#) John 6:39

b [John 18:24](#) Or (Now Annas had sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest.)

John 19

Jesus Sentenced to be Crucified

¹Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ²The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe ³and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face.

⁴Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." ⁵When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

⁶As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"

But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him."

⁷The Jews insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."

⁸When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, ⁹and he went back inside the palace. “Where do you come from?” he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰“Do you refuse to speak to me?” Pilate said. “Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?”

¹¹Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.”

¹²From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.”

¹³When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge’s seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). ¹⁴It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour.

“Here is your king,” Pilate said to the Jews.

¹⁵But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!”

“Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked.

“We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered.

¹⁶Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

The Crucifixion

So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. ¹⁷Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). ¹⁸Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

¹⁹Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: *IN SC JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS*. ²⁰Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. ²¹The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.”

²²Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

²³When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

²⁴“Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.”

This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said,

“They divided my garments among them

and cast lots for my clothing.”^[a] So this is what the soldiers did.

²⁵Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Dear woman, here is your son,” ²⁷and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

The Death of Jesus

²⁸Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” ²⁹A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. ³⁰When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

³¹Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. ³²The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. ³³But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. ³⁵The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. ³⁶These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken,”^[b] ³⁷and, as another scripture says, “They will look on the one they have pierced.”^[c]

The Burial of Jesus

³⁸Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. ³⁹He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. ⁴⁰Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. ⁴¹At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. ⁴²Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Footnotes

- a [John 19:24](#) Psalm 22:18
- b [John 19:36](#) Exodus 12:46; Num. 9:12; Psalm 34:20
- c [John 19:37](#) Zech. 12:10
- d [John 19:39](#) Greek a hundred litrai (about 34 kilograms)

John 20

The Empty Tomb

¹Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ²So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

³So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. ⁸Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹⁰Then the disciples went back to their homes, ¹¹but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹²and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵"Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

¹⁸Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

¹⁹On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²²And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Jesus Appears to Thomas

²⁴Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

²⁶A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

²⁸Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

³⁰Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹But these are written that you may ^[a] believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Footnotes

- a [John 20:31](#) Some manuscripts may continue to

John 21

Jesus and the Miraculous Catch of Fish

¹Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. ^[a] It happened this way: ²Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

⁵He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"

"No," they answered.

⁶He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

⁷Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. ⁸The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. ^[b] ⁹When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

¹⁰Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."

¹¹Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Jesus Reinstates Peter

¹⁵When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

¹⁶Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

¹⁷The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

¹⁸Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

²⁰Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”) ²¹When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”

²²Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” ²³Because of this, the rumor spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?”

²⁴This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

²⁵Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

Footnotes

- a [John 21:1](#) That is, Sea of Galilee
- b [John 21:8](#) Greek about two hundred cubits (about 90 meters)

Textual sources for Unit 4: Implications

Philosophy of Religion

'God-talk is evidently nonsense' – AJ Ayer in
Davies B (editor) – **Philosophy of Religion: a guide and anthology** (OUP, 2000) pages 143-146
© Philosophy of Religion – a guide and anthology, A J Ayer, Dover Publications Inc.

It is now generally admitted, at any rate by philosophers, that the existence of a being having the attributes which define the god of any non-animistic religion cannot be demonstratively proved. What is not so generally recognised is that there can be no way of proving that the existence of a god, such as the God of Christianity, is even probable. Yet this also is easily shown. For if the existence of such a god were probable, then the proposition that he existed would be an empirical hypothesis. And in that case it would be possible to deduce from it, and other empirical hypotheses, certain experiential propositions which were not deducible from those other hypotheses alone. But in fact this is not possible. It is sometimes claimed, indeed, that the existence of a certain sort of regularity in nature constitutes sufficient evidence for the existence of a god. But if the sentence 'God exists' entails no more than that certain types of phenomena occur in certain sequences, then to assert the existence of a god will be simply equivalent to asserting that there is the requisite regularity in nature; and no religious man would admit that this was all he intended to assert in asserting the existence of a god. He would say that in talking about God, he was talking about a transcendent being who might be known through certain empirical manifestations, but certainly could not be defined in terms of those manifestations. But in that case the term 'god' is a metaphysical term. And if 'god' is a metaphysical term, then it cannot be even probable that a god exists. For to say that 'God exists' is to make a metaphysical utterance which cannot be either true or false. And by the same criterion, no sentence which purports to describe the nature of a transcendent god can possess any literal significance.

It is important not to confuse this view of religious assertions with the view that is adopted by atheists, or agnostics. For it is characteristic of an agnostic to hold that the existence of a god is a possibility in which there is no good reason either to believe or disbelieve; and it is characteristic of an atheist to hold that it is at least probable that no god exists. And our view that all utterances about the nature of God are nonsensical, so far from being identical with, or even lending any support to, either of these familiar contentions, is actually incompatible with them. For if the assertion that there is a god is nonsensical, then the atheist's assertion that there is no god is equally nonsensical, since it is only a significant proposition that can be significantly contradicted. As for the agnostic, although he refrains from saying either that there is or that there is not a god, he does not deny that the question whether a transcendent god exists is a genuine question. He does not deny that the two sentences 'There is a transcendent god' and 'There is no transcendent god' express propositions one of which is actually true and the other false. All he says is that we have no means of telling which of them is true, and therefore ought not to commit ourselves to either. But we have seen that the sentences in question do not express propositions at all. And this means that agnosticism also is ruled out.

It is to be remarked that in cases where deities are identified with natural objects, assertions concerning them may be allowed to be significant. If, for example, a man tells me that the occurrence of thunder is alone both necessary and sufficient to establish the truth of the proposition that Jehovah is angry, I may conclude that, in his usage of words, the sentence 'Jehovah is angry' is equivalent to 'It is thundering.' But in sophisticated religions, though they may be to some extent based on men's awe of natural process which they cannot sufficiently understand, the 'person' who is supposed to control the empirical world is not himself located in it; he is held to be superior to the empirical world, and so outside it; and he is endowed with super-empirical attributes. But the notion of a person whose essential attributes are non-empirical is not an intelligible notion at all. We may have a word which is used as if it named this 'person,' but, unless the sentences in which it occurs express propositions which are empirically verifiable, it cannot be said to symbolize anything. And this is the case with regard to the word 'god,' in the usage in which it is intended to refer to a transcendent object. The mere existence of the noun is enough to foster the illusion that there is a real, or at any rate a possible

entity corresponding to it. It is only when we enquire what God's attributes are that we discover that 'God,' in this usage, is not a genuine name.

It is not within the scope of this enquiry to enter more deeply into the causes of religious feeling, or to discuss the probability of the continuance of religious belief. We are concerned only to answer those questions which arise out of our discussion of the possibility of religious knowledge. The point which we wish to establish is that there cannot be any transcendent truths of religion. For the sentences which the theist uses to express such 'truths' are not literally significant.

An interesting feature of this conclusion is that it accords with what many theists are accustomed to say themselves. For we are often told that the nature of God is a mystery which transcends the human understanding. But to say that something transcends the human understanding is to say that it is unintelligible. And what is unintelligible cannot significantly be described. Again, we are told that God is not an object of reason but an object of faith. This may be nothing more than an admission that the existence of God must be taken on trust, since it cannot be proved. But it may also be an assertion that God is the object of a purely mystical intuition, and cannot therefore be defined in terms which are intelligible to the reason. And I think there are many theists who would assert this. But if one allows that it is impossible to define God in intelligible terms, then one is allowing that it is impossible for a sentence both to be significant and to be about God. If a mystic admits that the object of his vision is something which cannot be described, then he must also admit that he is bound to talk nonsense when he describes it.

For his part, the mystic may protest that his intuition does reveal truths to him, even though he cannot explain to others what these truths are; and that we who do not possess this faculty of intuition can have no ground for denying that it is a cognitive faculty. But the mystic, so far from producing propositions which are empirically verified, is unable to produce any intelligible propositions at all. And therefore we say that his intuition has not revealed to him any facts. It is no use his saying that he has apprehended facts but is unable to express them. For we know that if he really had acquired any information, he would be able to express it. He would be able to indicate in some way or other how the genuineness of his discovery might be empirically determined. The fact that he cannot reveal what he 'knows,' or even himself devise an empirical test to validate his 'knowledge,' shows that his state of mystical intuition is not a genuinely cognitive state. So that in describing his vision the mystic does not give us any information about the external world; he merely gives us indirect information about the condition of his own mind.

These considerations dispose of the argument from religious experience, which many philosophers still regard as a valid argument in favour of the existence of a god. They say that it is logically possible for men to be immediately acquainted with God, as they are immediately acquainted with a sense-content, and that there is no reason why one should be prepared to believe a man when he says that he is seeing a yellow patch, and refuse to believe him when he says that he is seeing God. The answer to this is that if the man who asserts that he is seeing God is merely asserting that he is experiencing a peculiar kind of sense-content, then we do not for a moment deny that his assertion may be true. But, ordinarily, the man who says that he is seeing God is saying not merely that he is experiencing a religious emotion, but also that there exists a transcendent being who is the object of this emotion; just as the man who says that he sees a yellow patch is ordinarily saying not merely that his visual sense-field contains a yellow sense-content, but also that there exists a yellow object to which the sense-content belongs. And it is not irrational to be prepared to believe a man when he asserts the existence of a yellow object, and to refuse to believe him when he asserts the existence of a transcendent god. For whereas the sentence 'There exists here a yellow-coloured material thing' expresses a genuine synthetic proposition which could be empirically verified, the sentence 'There exists a transcendent god' has, as we have seen, no literal significance.

We conclude, therefore, that the argument from religious experience is altogether fallacious. The fact that people have religious experiences is interesting from the psychological point of view, but it does not in any way imply that there is such a thing as religious knowledge, any more than our having moral experiences implies that there is such a thing as moral knowledge. The theist, like the moralist, may believe that his experiences are cognitive experiences, but, unless he can formulate his 'knowledge' in propositions that are empirically verifiable, we may be sure that he is deceiving himself. It follows that those philosophers who fill their books with assertions that they intuitively 'know' this or that moral or religious 'truth' are merely providing material for the psychoanalyst. For no act of intuition can be said to reveal a truth about any matter of fact unless it issues in verifiable propositions. And all such propositions are to be incorporated in the system of empirical propositions which constitutes science.

‘Can we know God by experience?’ – Donovan P in
Davies B (editor) – *Philosophy of Religion: a guide and anthology* (OUP, 2000) pages 370-381
© Peter Donovan, *Interpreting Religious Experience* (Sheldon Press, 1979), reprinted by
permission of the publisher.

‘Why all this talk about arguing from religious experience?’ someone may be asking. ‘If you really experience God you don’t have to argue, you *know* he’s real, and that’s all there is to it.’ So if we are trying to do justice to the varieties of religious experience, we must take seriously this particular type, the sense of knowledge arising from inner conviction.

It is a risky business, of course, to claim to know something and to act as though one knows for sure, if one can’t give much in the way of reasons for one’s claim. People have claimed to ‘just *know*’ (as they put it) all sorts of things. Even the most irrational and misguided things have been said and done at times with apparent certainty and complete conviction by tyrants and dictators, and by ordinary people confused by ignorance or blinded by prejudice. To have no doubts at all about one’s beliefs may sometimes be more a symptom of insanity or arrogant irresponsibility than of sound thinking. Yet believers, aware of all these risks, may still feel they have a right to say they know because they experience God’s reality for themselves.

We laugh about the person who says, ‘I know I’m right; don’t confuse me with arguments’. And yet there are times when we find ourselves wanting to say that too. For there *are* situations in which we feel sure that we know something, even though if asked to give a good argument to back up our claim we are at a loss to know quite how to do so. ‘I *know* you’re the person I spoke to on the bus yesterday.’ ‘I *know* I have two hands.’ ‘I *know* it is wrong to let that child starve.’ ‘I *know* that six minus four leaves two.’ Our experience of being confident that we are right in cases like those is often called *intuition*. Intuitive knowing seems to be a direct, convincing way of knowing, which needs no further argument. And it is a perfectly ordinary, everyday occurrence as those examples show.

Are there such things as intuitions in religious matters too? Does a similar feeling of conviction in cases of religious experience also give us the right to say we *know*, even without having to produce any further reasons or offer any additional arguments?

Knowledge from intuition

A number of mid-twentieth-century theologians and philosophers of religion maintained, in more or less similar ways, that religious experience is a source of religious knowledge, and that the way such knowledge arises is not from reasoning or argument, but from *intuition*. God (the primary object of religious knowledge for these thinkers) is known through finite things—events and experiences in time and space. (Human beings could not otherwise have any contact with God.) But he is known indirectly, in and through such media. His reality is not arrived at merely as the conclusion of an argument based upon them.

The writers who presented this position began by drawing attention to the important part played by direct, intuitive awareness in other areas of our knowledge, areas that are well established and beyond dispute. They then argued that an intuitive awareness arising through religious interpretations of experience can also be claimed as a way of knowing, though in this case it is knowledge of God that the intuition grasps.

The argument was very thoroughly presented by H. P. Owen, for instance, in *The Christian Knowledge of God*⁹⁵. Owen argued that intuition is necessary for our grasp of the material world through the experiences our sense organs give us. It is present also when we experience other people not just as visible, tangible, moving bodies, but as conscious selves with minds and feelings like our own. There are several similarities, Owen suggests, between our intuitive awareness of other people and the believer’s intuitive knowledge of God. They can be summed up thus:

(a) Just as a human person reveals their inner nature through their outer acts, so God reveals himself to us in the created order.

⁹⁵ Athlone Press 1969. See also H. D. Lewis, *Our Experience of God* (Allen and Unwin 1959), Fontana edn 1970, and Illtyd Trethowan, *Mysticism and Theology* (Geoffrey Chapman 1975).

(b) Just as there are special moments in which another person's inner self stands out and challenges our attention, so God is known most clearly by his special revelation in Christ.

(c) Just as a human person's acts reveal both their existence as a self and something of their character, so through God's signs in nature and within our experience we learn both of his existence and, to some extent, of his character.

(d) Just as we intuitively grasp that another person is a subject and agent who brings about both physical and spiritual or mental effects, so we apprehend God who creates both material and spiritual realities.

In all these respects, our intuition of the reality of God, like our intuition of other selves, has a 'mediated immediacy'. It is not the product of reasoning or inference, but is none the less mediated by finite things and experiences: in the one case bodily movements, words, behaviour—in the other, general features of the natural world suggesting a divine creator, and particular religiously significant experiences.

Of course the intellectual activity of the mind, as well as the intuitive, has its part to play. It may clear the way for the intuition and provide suitable concepts (names, descriptions, interpretations, etc) so as to make it expressible and able to be related to a wider body of knowledge. But first and foremost, none the less, it is by intuition through religious experience that God is known.

*The basic form of Christian experience is the apprehension of God to which I have given the names of 'intuition' and 'faith'. All forms of experience are modes of this one fundamental form; they are all expressions of this primary awareness.*⁹⁶

Having taken care of the basic issue of knowledge by appealing to an intuition of the reality of God, Owen treats all cases of genuine religious experiences as forms of that knowledge. (In a similar way, once we have accepted that there *are* other people, the sense of their reality persists in all our experiencing of their bodily actions without argument or reasoning being needed to justify it.)

The sense of God's reality, in Owen's view, underlies all other Christian experience, ie experience under Christian interpretations. The basic intuition of God may arise in many ways.

*The sense of God's reality can occur in various contexts. It can be produced by the contemplation of beauty and order in nature, by meditation on the words of Scripture, by participation in the Church's liturgy, by some event within our personal existence. Yet it may not have any assignable cause or channel; it may come uninvited. And although it is more likely to occur in moods of quiet recollection, it can also occur when our minds are troubled by the secular pressures of life.*⁹⁷

The idea of knowing God by intuition through religious experience is an attractive one for Christians, and it seems quite consistent with the teachings of the Bible about how God is known. Throughout the Bible God is viewed as personal, as one who communicates, draws near, and seeks fellowship with humanity, making himself known through natural things and in the lives and experiences of people. The world is the medium of his revealing activity, and by his gracious activity (the initiative he takes in approaching humanity for its own good) natural things and experiences become signs and symbols through which he is known. As one theologian put it:

*Because nature is God's and He is its creator, it lends itself to His use, and He can make its natural elements to speak sacramentally to us; not in the sense of a 'natural theology' which can prove the purpose of God from a mere contemplation of nature, but in the sense that God by His Word can use, and therefore we by our faith can use, natural objects... as sacramental expressions of His mercy and faithfulness.*⁹⁸

Not only does the knowledge-of-God-by-intuition approach fit well with biblical views of the ways God reveals himself, it also enables an account to be given of the human response to God, which is usually called *faith*. Faith, on this view, becomes a way of knowing as an intuitive response. It is not a kind of stretched belief, or assent to a set of dogmas without sufficient evidence. It is the basic intuitive awareness of God experienced as actively approaching humanity and seeking the human response of acknowledgement and trust. Another noted Christian theologian set out the relation between revelation and faith in this way:

⁹⁶ Owen, *op. cit.*, p.191.

⁹⁷ Owen, *op. cit.*, pp. 192–3.

⁹⁸ D. H. Baillie, *The Theology of the Sacraments* (Faber 1964 edn), pp. 45-6.

The essential content of revelation is... God Himself, and not general truths about God or the universe or immortality or the way of duty; though such truths are implicit in the divine self-giving, as this is mediated ever more richly to the responsive soul in the changing situations of life, and are capable of reflective formulation.

*And the proper response to revelation is . . . faith, faith being not an intellectual assent to general truths, but the decisive commitment of the whole person in active obedience to, and quiet trust in, the divine will apprehended as rightfully sovereign and utterly trustworthy at one and the same time.*⁹⁹

The knowledge a believer has of God, on this view, is a living awareness of a direct, intuitive kind. It may arise in different situations and be kept alive by many different kinds of experience, but for the person who has it, it requires no further argument or support.

Feeling certain and being right

Despite its careful presentation by writers such as Farmer, Lewis, and Owen and its wide appeal in popular Christian thinking, the position considered in the previous section has seemed particularly unconvincing to some of its contemporary philosophical critics.¹⁰⁰ This is not to be put down simply to their scepticism about things religious. Rather, it relates to the fatal weakness, in their eyes, of reliance on *intuition* as a way of knowledge that can be appealed to in the case of God or the objects of religious belief.

The criticism of this position often begins with the making of a distinction between two kinds of certainty, which are sometimes called *psychological* certainty and *rational* certainty. Certainty is a much-disputed notion in philosophy. But we can get at the main point, for our purposes, simply by comparing the difference between 'feeling certain' and 'being right'.

It is obvious, after a moment's thought, that one can feel certain without being right. I may, for instance, feel certain that it is half past three, after looking at my watch (which is usually right). But I won't go on feeling certain if I discover that for once the watch has stopped. In other words, I can check the appropriateness of my feeling of certainty against the rightness of the watch. But I can't check the rightness of the watch against my feeling of certainty. The feel of certainty is not what makes us right, even though we may often have a feel of certainty when we *are* right.

Being right then is not a matter of having some recognizable state of mind, a sense or feeling of certainty. It is a matter of our beliefs and states of mind standing in some appropriate relation to various states of affairs.

Many of the problems associated with 'feeling certain' go also with the idea of having intuitive knowledge. The sense of 'having an intuition that such-and-such is the case' may possess a quality of clarity or conviction or a peculiar directness in some circumstances. I may feel very strongly, for instance, that I am being watched, or that something disastrous or momentous is about to happen. Perhaps these feelings turn out to be justified at times. What we felt certain about, intuitively, was actually so. Such cases, taken along with the everyday cases of intuitive knowing mentioned above, may tempt us to conclude that *having an intuition* has a recognizable feel about it, that can be taken as a reliable sign of being right, whatever the circumstances.

But then the following question arises. If you have *only* the intuitive feeling of certainty to go on, how do you know in a given case that you are having *that* feeling (ie the one that counts as a sign of intuitions)? Perhaps your memory of 'the intuitive feel' is letting you down this time. It is not enough to say you feel certain that your memory is right; for that is just repeating the process—using an intuition to check intuition itself. And if whatever seems right can be right, what does 'getting it right (or wrong)' mean?

⁹⁹ H. H. Farmer; *The World and God* (Nisbet 1935), Fontana edn 1963, p. 85.

¹⁰⁰ In particular, see R. W. Hepburn, *Christianity and Paradox* (Watts 1958); C. B. Martin, 'A Religious Way of Knowing', in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (SCM Press 1955); Antony Flew, *God and Philosophy* (Hutchinson 1966), ch. 6.

The reliability of our 'sense of intuition' is not something to be taken for granted then, as an independent guide to genuine knowledge. There's no doubt that we have reliable intuitions in some situations. But it is the situation, not the feeling of intuition, that determines whether or not intuition is a reliable way of knowing in these cases. Even in the case of our intuitive knowledge of other people (on which the argument for religious intuition so heavily relies) the feeling that we have profound and certain knowledge may be quite false. As Bertrand Russell once wrote,

*One of the most notable examples of intuition is the knowledge people believe themselves to possess of those with whom they are in love. The wall between different personalities seems to become transparent, and people think they see into another soul as into their own. Yet deception in such cases is constantly practised with success; and even where there is no intentional deception, experience gradually proves, as a rule, that the supposed insight was illusory, and that the slower more groping methods of the intellect are in the long run more reliable.*¹⁰¹

Those are some of the difficulties which face anyone who argues from what seems to be an intuitive awareness, in religious experience, to the conclusion that there really is knowledge of God. It is not enough to emphasize the sense of certainty or directness of the basic religious experience by giving it descriptions like 'awareness', 'encounter', 'apprehension', or 'response'. For those terms take it for granted that there *is* a genuine object of experience, beyond the experiencer's own mental states. But that is the very question at issue.

Nor does it seem sufficient to point out, as Owen does, that we accept intuitive, non-inferential knowledge in such everyday areas as sense perception, or awareness of other minds. For the case of sense perception is a special one. Our knowledge of the workings of sense organs, and the range of tests and checking procedures which surround the experiences they give us, all contribute to the context in which our intuitive perceptions take place and help us to justify them. Similarly with our awareness of other people as being conscious, and not as mere moving bodies. For we have, after all, a body ourselves. And while our awareness of others may at times be largely intuitive it is capable of being backed up with a strong argument from analogy, from our knowledge of ourselves as conscious beings.

But when we turn to some other areas in which people rely on intuitions (gardening, investment, archaeological exploration, or fortune-telling, for instance) it is much more difficult to say whether the sense of having such-and-such an intuition is a sure sign of knowing or being right. The nature of those subjects is such that rules for making sound judgements and ways of avoiding self-deception are far less well established. How can appealing to intuition make up for those deficiencies? And is religion any better off, with all its variety and openness to disagreement? The idea of knowing purely by intuition seems to become less and less plausible the more the fact of religious diversity is faced. Aren't there just too many different intuitions being had, by too many people, for intuition on its own to be a reliable guide to the truth?

Just because we have *some* acceptable cases of knowing by intuition (sense perception, other minds, simple arithmetic) it does not follow that there is an intuitive 'way of knowing' open to be used in other cases as well. To assume that is like assuming that because someone is able to read road-signs and to read newspapers, they will also be able to read palms. But what counts as being able to read palms is not an agreed-upon matter in the way the reading of road signs and newspapers is; and therefore it is quite unclear whether the other kinds of reading abilities have anything in common with palm-reading at all. Similarly, what counts as having knowledge of God is so much in doubt and dispute that until agreement is reached on that question there is no sound basis for deciding whether such knowledge could or could not be arrived at through intuitions, even if intuitions *are* reliable in certain other cases of knowledge.

Of course Owen, Lewis, and the other thinkers who appeal to intuitive knowledge of God have not intended to produce a short-cut argument for the truth of Christianity based on the view that the believer simply *knows* and that's all there is to it. There is far more in their position than that. They offer very comprehensive accounts of the interplay of experiences, interpretations, doctrines, traditions, imagination, and action which make up religious life as a whole. Their aim is to describe and analyse the total Christian enterprise in such a way that it commends itself as an interpretation of the world and the experiences of human life.

¹⁰¹ *Mysticism and Logic* (Longmans Green & Co. 1919), p. 16.

But the central place given to a basic, not-argued-for intuition of God in their overall position does invite serious criticisms from philosophers for whom intuition seems a very weak straw to be clutching at.

Yet for all the possible criticisms, it doesn't follow at all that what people think are experiences of God must all be illusory. Nor has it been shown that the person who says 'I know he lives—he lives within my heart' is talking simple-minded nonsense. *If* a religion like Christianity is true, it is very likely that there are situations in which people are directly aware of God's reality and activity, within the experiences and situations of life. But it is the *if* in the previous sentence, that highlights the difficulty, for the philosopher at least. While *that* question is still open, how can one decide whether people's impressions that they are intuitively aware of God should be regarded as reliable?

Knowledge about and experience of

Theologians who argue that God is known by immediate encounter rather than by inference and argument rest their claim on a view of the special features of person-to-person knowledge. Meeting someone at first hand, they remind us, is very different from merely knowing about them. And encountering someone as another conscious person seems to involve a rather special kind of knowledge quite different from our knowledge of them as an object or thing.

The religious philosopher Martin Buber in his book *I and Thou* has given a widely influential account of that difference. He begins:

The world is twofold for man in accordance with his twofold attitude.

The attitude of man is twofold in accordance with the two basic words he can speak

The basic words are not single words but word pairs.

One basic word is the pair I–You

*The other basic word is the pair I–It.*¹⁰²

I–You relationships are direct, reciprocal, person-to-person. They contain no reasoning or reflection and though deeply profound are fragile and impermanent. The world of It—of objectivity, reasoning, analysis—is unavoidable and human beings cannot live without it. But whoever lives only in the world of It, Buber tells us, does not become truly human.

Buber and other personalistic thinkers have encouraged theologians to point also to the biblical tradition in which, as we have seen, God is personal and seeks person-to-person relations with human beings whom he has created. If God is conceived of as personal, then we must think in I–You rather than I–It terms in seeking to experience God, they say. So great stress is placed in theology on the difference between thinking or arguing about God on the one hand, and experiencing God in personal existential encounter on the other.

That contrast is easily related to other familiar contrasts in Christian thought. For instance, belief *in* is taken to be better than belief *about*. Faith is recommended, rather than speculation, in approaching God. Involvement and trust are encouraged, rather than detachment and theorizing. A wealth of religiously suggestive parallels can be drawn, all resting on the basic distinction between knowledge about God (an I–It matter) and experience of God (an I–You experience).

A further feature of I–You, rather than I–It, relationships is the impression that much of what we know in a personal encounter can't be put into words. This inexpressibility at the heart of an interpersonal relationship supports the view that if God is to be known, relationships with him will inevitably have features appropriate to an I–You rather than an I–It encounter. Why should we expect genuine knowledge of God to be any more capable of analysis, description, or reasoned argument than genuine person-to-person knowledge is? Questions of reasoning or analysis have no application to the profound experiences of meeting and encounter, we are told. Indeed, if one attempts in a moment of encounter to describe or analyse the person encountered, the I–You relation is immediately broken and the other party experienced only as an It.

¹⁰² *I and Thou*, a new tr. by Walter Kaufmann (Scribners 1970), p. 53.

Because the idea of encountering God in religious experience is so familiar a notion to Christian believers and so consistent with the biblical ways of speaking, anyone relying on this way of speaking needs to be very much aware of the philosophical problems it raises. For as in the case of the supposed intuitive knowledge of God, this closely-related idea of knowledge through encounter has been subjected to some telling criticisms. Arising from the criticisms, three points need to be discussed.

(i) The sense that an encounter is taking place may be mistaken.

(ii) Having 'experience of' presupposes having knowledge about.

(iii) 'Experience of' is not in itself knowledge.

(i) The 'sense of encounter' may be mistaken This is similar to the problem about intuition and the feeling of certainty. It is not that our sense of such things is *never* reliable. But the surrounding of possible checks and tests that show it to be reliable in one context may simply not be there in another context, and then the mere impression of certainty is no guide at all for us to go by.

As Bertrand Russell reminded us, our apparent intuitions about other people can be wildly astray. The same is true of the sense of a 'genuine I–You encounter'. We all have experiences of shared awareness with close friends, in which 'knowledge about' fades into the background, and person-to-person communion or *rapport* is achieved. At such times neither person seems to be treated as an It. Each may think they have genuinely become a You in the eyes of the other. Yet how do we know when such an encounter has really been achieved? Is the impression that it is taking place enough to go on?

Standard situations in plays or television dramas remind us how easily what seems to be a genuine I–You relationship can turn out to be something quite different. A caller discovers they are conversing with a computer. A spy reveals secrets to a trusted friend who is an unsuspected double agent. In classic cases of disguise such as those in *Twelfth Night* or *The Marriage of Figaro*, everybody but the victim of the deception knows what the real facts are. Misinterpreted encounters then, far from being impossible, are not at all rare.

Up to this point the critic's position may not amount to much more than the caution, 'You may not be as right as you think you are', in treating what seems to be an encounter as a genuine experience of God. The fact that some supposed encounter with God could possibly be mistaken won't much worry believers if they are convinced that they are right in fact. There is more to the sceptic's position, however, as appears in the next point we must consider.

(ii) Having 'experience of' presupposes having 'knowledge about' Preachers and theologians often point out that 'know', in the biblical and religious sense, is a much richer notion than simply 'possess knowledge about'. It involves an I–You, not an I–It relationship. Thus when Adam 'knew his wife Eve' (Genesis 4.1) there was a good deal more to it than simply his possessing the information that such-and-such a female person existed. Religious knowing, like person-to-person knowing, is not just a possession of facts or information. It is an experience of total involvement.

Knowledge in the biblical sense of the word is not theoretical contemplation but an entering into subjective relations as between person and person—relations of trust, obedience, respect, worship, love, fear, and so on. It is knowledge in the sense of our knowledge of other persons rather than of our knowledge of objects, 'existential' rather than 'scientific' knowledge.¹⁰³

If believers genuinely do have a direct encounter with God, then, it is quite inappropriate to try to force that experience into the mould of scientific information or knowledge about—expecting them to provide accurate descriptions or meet objective tests. Surely we know well enough from our experience of personal knowledge that such an approach is bound to be negative and fruitless.

But even granting that scientific, impersonal 'knowledge about' isn't the most important thing in interpersonal relations, we must not conclude that it is quite irrelevant and can be done without. After all, Adam's knowledge about Eve is there in the background all the time, so to speak. It may not seem very important to him when she is right beside him, and his interest is in something more I–You than mere factual information. But suppose Adam has never actually met Eve, and has only the odd trace (a slender footprint, a strand or two of hair) to go by, in deciding whether there is anyone other than himself in the world. The possibility of external, objective information will then be by far the more important question for him. For without Eve's existence as an It being established, there is no question at all of her being encountered as a You.

¹⁰³ Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (SCM Press, 1958), p. 40

So 'mere factual knowledge' is by no means as unimportant to personal, existential knowledge as the contrast between I–You and I–It may suggest. In the same way, it is too easily taken for granted, in making a contrast between knowing about God and personally encountering him, that 'knowledge about' is largely unproblematic and readily available, and that its only defect is that it lacks immediacy and depth by contrast with genuine, interpersonal experience of God.

To the philosophical onlooker at least, knowledge about God is the very thing that is in question. It is largely because it might be a source of knowledge about God, that religious experience is being investigated at all. So even though the preacher or believer may not rate 'knowledge about' as highly as 'experience of', the philosopher would be more than content if even the former could be established for certain.

That is not to say, of course, that the philosopher demands objective, scientific knowledge of God before contemplating the possibility that anyone might have a direct, interpersonal awareness of God. If a certain religious tradition holds that God is not to be thought of as an It, then it is up to the philosopher to respect that feature of the concept of God. But isn't it on this very point that encounters with God differ so much from encounters with people? For at least far as establishing their existence goes, people are open to being investigated and known about as Its, however much we may prefer (at times) to be encountering them as Yous.

In the case of people we certainly can have I–It relationships without I–You ones. But could we have an I–You encounter that did not seriously depend on a background of I–It knowledge? (Who would we take the 'You' we were experiencing to be, if we knew nothing about them?) Similarly in the case of a religious experience believed to be an I–You encounter with God, unless the believer was in a position to supplement the experience with a good deal of already available knowledge about God (that he is creator of the world, for instance, judge of all people, father of Jesus Christ, etc) their belief 'I am personally encountering God' would mean no more than I am experiencing a profound personal encounter with someone I know not who'. Without knowledge about what is being experienced, experience of points no more towards God than towards any other possible person.

(iii) 'Experience of' is not in itself knowledge Suppose it were indisputable that God is genuinely experienced in some form of first-hand awareness. It does not follow that such first-hand experience or encounter, *on its own*, would count as knowledge at all. The point can be put this way. We generally think that someone who has experienced something for themselves is in a better position to know the truth about it than someone who has not. Yet why should that be so? What does first-hand experience add, that all available second-hand knowledge cannot supply?

There are obviously some cases in which a lack of first-hand experience is unimportant, so long as there is good second-hand knowledge. A male doctor, for instance, simply cannot have first-hand experience of being pregnant; yet his knowledge about pregnancy may be far greater than that of some uninformed woman patient who is experiencing pregnancy at first hand yet understands little of what is taking place. She might still feel inclined to say that her doctor doesn't *really* know what pregnancy is, whereas she does. But what does she mean?

Perhaps a clearer case would be to compare equally well trained and experienced doctors, one a man and one a woman, the latter of whom has also given birth. Surely then we should say that the woman doctor has a better knowledge of what pregnancy is than the man. Well, perhaps we should—but is it merely the *experience* of pregnancy that the man lacks? There seems to be more to it than that. For what the woman doctor gains from having been pregnant is not just an additional experience, but a whole set of impressions and memories and items of information that can only be learnt by having the experience oneself.

It is the additional knowledge *about* pregnancy that being pregnant makes available, rather than the mere experience *of* pregnancy, that makes the woman doctor better off than the man. The extra knowledge she now has, though it can only be gained by having first-hand experience, is certainly not *the same thing as* that experience. Furthermore, without all her other knowledge (which she and the male doctor have acquired through training, practice, etc) the additional lessons learnt through actually having the experience would mean nothing much to her. If she had no prior knowledge at all about pregnancies, the experience she went through would not even be recognized as a pregnancy by her, and might merely seem to be a rather lengthy and uncomfortable bodily process, ending in the surprise arrival of a baby.

First-hand experience is important then not because it *is* knowledge but because it may put us in a position to increase our knowledge. Knowledge, in other words, is not merely a matter of experiences or kinds of awareness. It consists as well in what one can do with or make of those experiences in relation to the rest of one's knowledge and experience. To treat *experience* of something as itself a kind of knowing is to confuse the means by which we may gain knowledge with the content of the knowledge itself.

At this point someone may object that too much emphasis is being placed on learning, or gaining knowledge. Surely we do not seek close personal encounters with people simply for the sake of learning from those experiences more facts about them, which we could not find out so well in other ways. Our I–You encounters are for the sake of company, enjoyment, fellowship, sharing, and love. 'Knowledge about', even if we do presuppose it, is a secondary matter. And if God exists, the same is true of religious experiences taken to be I–You encounters with him. These are sought for the sake of love, worship, fellowship, not as aids to knowledge (even if knowledge may be increased through them).

The objection is a sound one. If there are encounters between God and people they may be chiefly for those non-intellectual interpersonal reasons, and not for the sake of acquiring knowledge. It is only if a claim to *know* is based on experiences taken as encounters with God, and on them alone, that the philosophical difficulties considered above apply. And the fact is that believers often do try to argue that they have knowledge of God purely on the strength of such experiences. The effect of the philosophical criticisms has been simply to show how inadequate that kind of argument is.

The criticisms do nothing at all to show that awareness of God is illusory. They simply suggest that even if it is genuine it cannot, by itself, solve all the problems about whether or not we have good reason for belief in God.

The sense of knowing God

Awareness of God, oneness with God, the sense of his presence, the inner conviction of his reality—the situations and experiences which lead people to talk in these ways are vital for religious belief. They have kept it alive in the past and continue to make it plausible for millions of people today. What such experiences do is to generate a *sense of knowing God*.

The philosophical difficulties of intuitions, encounters, mystical experiences, and other sources of that sense do not detract from its importance for religion. Religious people may conclude, 'If philosophy isn't very impressed with the sense of God, then so much the worse for philosophers. They have obviously hardened their hearts and refused to be open to God.'

But it is a mistake to react in that way. For one thing, a fair number of modern philosophers are religious believers and regard the sense of God as a central fact in their own lives. That makes it all the more important for them to give it the most careful philosophical attention. For they will not want so important an experience to be discredited by being used in weak arguments or doubtful reasoning.

The chief point of the philosophical criticisms of 'knowing God by experience' amounts to this. Where popular religious reasoning falls down is not in taking the sense of God too seriously, but in trying to treat it as a form of knowledge, of a self-certifying kind, immediately available to those who have it. Knowledge, the philosophers point out, is just not like that—whether it is knowledge of God or of anything else. The *sense* of knowing is never on its own a sufficient sign of knowledge. (That distinction is a key to many of the philosophical difficulties in claims to know God by experience.)

But if the *sense of God* fails, in the end, to count as knowledge of God, what is to be said about it? Is it of no further philosophical interest and to be discarded, like a pricked balloon, as being simply a great illusion?

Nothing that has been said here leads to that conclusion. There is no justification for taking such an all-or-nothing view of religious experience (even though at times both philosophical critics and religious thinkers are inclined to do so).

‘The emergence of modern philosophy of religion’ – Westphal M in Quinn P and Taliaferro C (editors) – *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion* (Blackwell, 2002) pages 111-117

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There seems to be no clear and consistent distinction between philosophical theology and the philosophy of religion. Yet, on purely linguistic grounds one would seem to have God and the other religion as its primary subject matter. I think it is not an accident that the editors of this volume used the term ‘philosophical theology’ in the titles of the preceding five articles, but switched to ‘philosophy of religion’ for the present one. For during the time from David Hume and Immanuel Kant to Friedrich Nietzsche the focus shifted from philosophizing about God to philosophizing about religion.

Thus G W F Hegel complains bitterly about the prevailing assumption that we do not know God, which, therefore, ‘permits us to speak merely of our relation to Him, to speak of religion and not of God Himself.’ The result is that ‘we at least hear much talk... about religion, and therefore all the less about God Himself’ (1962 [1832], pp.191-2).

The matter is not that simple, for talking about religion cannot so easily be separated from talking about God. Still, Hegel calls our attention to what amounts to a sea change in modern philosophy, the transition from philosophical theology to philosophy of religion in the narrower sense of philosophizing about religion. In light of his intended resistance to this feature of post-Kantian modernity, it is ironic that we owe to him more than to anyone else the notion that there is a sub-division of philosophy called the philosophy of *religion*, that he develops this in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, and that the three parts of these lectures are ‘The Concept of *Religion*,’ ‘Determinate *Religion*,’ and ‘Consummate *Religion*.’ When philosophical theology will return in our own time, often as if nothing had happened in the meanwhile, it will call itself the philosophy of religion.

Pre-Kantian philosophical theology

Two species of philosophical theology form the background for the movement Hegel deplores. I shall call them, rather loosely, scholastic and deistic. Both are concerned to explore what can be established about the existence and nature of God by means of human reason unaided by revelation. But the scholastic versions of this enterprise share the Augustinian assumption that pure reason, on the one hand, and faith, revelation, and authority, on the other, are harmonious and should be seen as working together. The deistic versions by contrast, are concerned not merely to distinguish but also to separate the two. They wish to bring religion, in Kant’s phrase, ‘within the limits of reason alone.’ To that end they seek to separate the rational kernel of religion from the irrational husk that exceeds those limits in the direction of faith, revelation, and authority. Typical examples of the kernel are God as creator and God as author and enforcer of the moral law, not only in this life but in the life to come. Typical examples of the husk are anything miraculous or supernatural and the tendency to give essential significance to anything historically particular such as the life and death of Jesus. These general strategies are worked out in a variety of ways in the English deism of Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648), John Toland (1670-1722), and Matthew Tindal (1657-1733); in the French deism of Voltaire (1694-1788) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78); and in the German deism of Moses Mendelssohn (1729-86), Gotthold Lessing (1729-81), and Kant (1724-1804).

Deism rather than scholasticism is the immediate precursor and even the beginning of the emergence here to be narrated. It can be called the religion of the Enlightenment. The horror of religious warfare and persecution hung heavy over European history, and when Enlightenment thinkers did not espouse an entirely anti-religious materialism, they sought above all to define a religion that would foster moral unity rather than immoral hostility within and among human societies.

This political agenda had both epistemological and ecclesiastical ramifications. For it was believed that a non-violent religion could only rest on the universality of reason and not on the particularity of any special revelation; nor could it reside in any church or sect which claimed authority in matters of faith and practice on the basis of such a revelation. In this context, Enlightenment rationalism (or the autonomy of reason) does not signify a rejection of the empiricist appeal to experience in favor of a purely a priori mode of thought; it rather signifies an appeal made by rationalists and empiricists alike to limit religion to those grounds, whether a priori or experiential, which are available to all people, at all times, and in all places. The contrast is not between reason and experience but between reason and faith, in so far as the latter is tied to special revelation and a particular 'church'.

Thus the deist project is motivated by three powerful, interlocking Enlightenment motifs: an epistemic concern for the autonomy of a universal human reason, a political concern for religious tolerance, and an anti-clericalism designed to deny to the church both epistemic and political authority. This project clearly antedates the prevalence of the assumption, bemoaned by Hegel, that we do not know God and must therefore talk about religion. It is confident that, in one way or another, unaided human reason can know all we need to know about God. Still, in seeking to distinguish good religion (morally and politically speaking) from bad religion it begins the shift to philosophizing about religion. It is unembarrassed by talk about God, but it spends more of its energy talking about religion as a human, all too human social reality that is, for better and often for worse, a player on the stage we call history. The problem is less to prove God's existence than to make religion the ally rather than the enemy of morality.

Enter Hume and Kant. Their combined critique of the ontological, cosmological and teleological proofs of the existence of God was a devastating blow to the many forms of both the scholastic and the deistic projects that built on the foundation of those proofs (see Article 41, ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS; Article 42, COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS; and ARTICLE 43, TELEOLOGICAL AND DESIGN ARGUMENTS). The widespread (if temporary) belief that Hume and especially Kant had said the last word on the subject is what Hegel referred to as the assumption that we cannot know God and must therefore only talk about religion. The pressing issue became: what can philosophy say about the religious dimension of human life now that the metaphysical proofs of God's existence have been taken away?

Enter Hume and Kant, again. It is not surprising that two thinkers who were as concerned as they were about the religious dimension of human life and who were as convinced as they were that the metaphysical foundations of scholastic and deistic philosophical theology had crumbled should point in new directions. But how different are those directions!

Post-Kantian reconstructions of the deist project

Kant is the deist who, having undermined the metaphysical foundations of many forms of deism, sought to provide the project with alternative foundations. Since this alternative comes in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793), which follow Kant's demolition of the theistic proofs in *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781; 2nd edition 1787), we can speak of Kant as the first post-Kantian to try to rescue the deist project.

Kant's (re)formulation is distinctive in two ways. First, he claims that if there is no knowledge of God by means of pure (a priori) theoretical reason, we can have such knowledge by means of pure practical reason. Thus the *Critique of Practical Reason* develops moral arguments for God and immortality to take the place of the arguments discredited in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Second, Kant's account of *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* begins with an account of radical evil in human nature that departs drastically from the more typically optimistic view whose fullest expression is to be found in Rousseau (see Article 68, SIN AND ORIGINAL SIN).

In the final three books of *Religion*, Kant gives a classical account of the kind of religion that could be acceptable in the Age of Reason. It is grounded in universal reason and in the service of universal morality. Kant is especially concerned to clarify the relation between religion and morality, and he does so in three basic principles. First, 'morality does not need religion at all' – either in the discovery of what our duty is or in the motivation for doing it (1960 [1793], p. 3). Second, 'morality leads inevitably to religion' (p. 7n.). This is a reminder of the moral arguments for God and immortality given in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Finally, 'religion is (subjectively regarded) the recognition of all duties as divine commands' (p. 142). As such it is an aid, useful if unnecessary, to the moral life.

But there can be no special duties to God in a universal religion, for God can receive nothing from us (p. 142n.). It follows that such 'means of grace' as prayer, church attendance, baptism, and communion are illusions that belong to 'fetish-faith' if they are conceived as anything but means to the ends of moral living. A charitable interpretation would have Kant saying that there can be no love of God separate from the love of fellow humans, but the text seems to make the stronger claim that religion is exclusively concerned with our duty toward one another, that even God is nothing but a means toward human morality.

Kant continues his attempt to bring the Christian religion within the limits of reason alone by drawing corollaries concerning Christ and the church. The true church can only be the ethical commonwealth created on earth by the moral self-improvement of human persons. The 'Augustinian' overtones of Kant's account of radical evil are here replaced by a fully 'Pelagian' soteriology and ecclesiology. Christ, in turn, can be of significance only as an archetypal ideal of moral perfection. Any 'Christology' within the limits of reason would be a construction of pure reason, independent of historical fact and historical knowledge. Here Lessing's principle (1957 [1777], pp. 51-6) that rational knowledge of God must depend on nothing historically contingent is employed, not to reject traditional Christian themes but to reinterpret (or, perhaps, 'demythologize') them radically.

Unlike Kant, the Romantic Friedrich Schleiermacher and the anti-Romantic Hegel are not properly described as deists. But with Kant they are major figures in the post-Kantian effort to reformulate the deist project. Schleiermacher addresses an audience unsympathetic not only to the metaphysical quarrels of scholastic and deistic philosophical theologies, whose claims about providence and immortality he dismisses as 'externals' (1958 [1799], p. 14), but also to the moral rigorism of a Kantian alternative. Both metaphysics and morality belong to the husk of religion: its kernel is to be found in feeling, in 'the immediate consciousness of the universal existence of all finite things, in and through the Infinite, and of all temporal things in and through the Eternal' (p. 36).

Schleiermacher's explicit enthusiasm for Spinoza, whom he describes as 'full of the Holy Spirit' (1958 [1799], p. 40), suggests a pantheistic move away from the deistic and theistic notions of God as a personal being distinct from the created world. Thus he writes: 'The sum total of religion is to feel that, in its highest unity, all that moves us in feeling is one; to feel that aught single and particular is only possible by means of this unity; to feel, that is to say, that our being and living is a being and living in and through God. But it is not necessary that the Deity should be presented as also one distinct object.' Such a representation would be 'vain mythology' (p. 50).

Schleiermacher's 'church' would be the communion of all who recognize the feeling or immediate contemplation of the unity of all in the Infinite and Eternal as the only true religion. But this does not mean the simple rejection of the churches committed to some specific system of metaphysical beliefs and moral or liturgical practices. Such a church is only 'an association of persons who are but seeking religion... the counterpart of the true church' (p. 157). But 'I would have you discover religion in the religions. Though they are always earthly and impure, the same form of heavenly beauty that I have tried to depict is to be sought in them' (p. 211).

This advice is possible because Schleiermacher believes that the universal kernel must clothe itself in particular ideas and practices. The immediacy of religious feeling needs to be mediated in some concrete form, however contingent. The important thing is to remember that such ideas and practices are neither necessary nor sufficient for true piety. With reference to any particular beliefs and practices their absence is no barrier to true religion, while their presence is no guarantee of it.

Hegel is too much the speculative thinker to be satisfied with either Kant's reduction of religion to morality or Schleiermacher's reduction to feeling. Religion must be the knowledge of God, and while Hegel finds Kant's theology unconvincing, he finds Schleiermacher's, to which he is more sympathetic, simply confused. He rejects all Romantic claims to immediacy on the grounds that they are either empty of all conceptual content whatever and thus compatible with every absurd belief and every immoral practice, or they have a content that needs to be articulated and defended. The appeal to immediacy is merely dogmatism in disguise. Schleiermacher is just kidding himself when he thinks his own talk about the Infinite and Eternal is not already a conceptual mediation that requires analysis and argument as much as more traditional talk about Trinity, Incarnation, Atonement, and so forth.

Hegel thus assigns to himself the twin tasks of defending metaphysical theorizing in the aftermath of Kant and of developing a religiously significant metaphysics. He undertakes these tasks primarily in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), his *Science of Logic* (1812-16), and his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1817, 1827, and 1830). His central thesis is that the content of religion and philosophy are the same but that they differ in form, with only philosophy having the conceptual form adequate to true knowledge. The religious form is too tightly tied to sensory images and historical narratives. Even the scholastic and deistic philosophical theologies, whose speculative instinct is to move beyond popular forms of religious representation, fail to free themselves sufficiently, for the concepts they employ are only suitable for a finite subject matter and not adequate to the Infinite and Eternal. Only a thoroughgoing reinterpretation of the philosophical concepts of Idea and Spirit can (1) justify philosophical speculation itself, and (2) provide us with concepts suitable for doing philosophical theology.

Hegelian idealism is a philosophy of the Idea much closer to Aristotle and Plotinus than to George Berkeley and Kant. But it is perhaps best understood as a form of Spinozism. It is unlike that of Lessing (whose sympathy for Spinoza distinguishes him from typical deists) in that it becomes the basis for the radical reinterpretation (demythologizing) rather than the rejection of traditional theistic and Christian themes; and it is unlike the Spinozism of Schleiermacher in that it will not hide in claims to immediate feeling but will seek to articulate and defend itself in philosophical argument.

Finally, it is unlike Spinoza himself, but not because Hegel takes God to be a personal being distinct from the created world. Only the understanding, which Kant rightly found incapable of knowing God, takes God and the world, or finite spirit and infinite spirit to be distinct beings; reason understands that they 'are no longer two' (1984-7 [the 1827 lectures], 1, 425). Hegel's only defense against the charge that this is pantheism is that, unlike Spinoza, his highest category is spirit rather than nature or substance. When Spinoza says *Deus sive Natura* (God or Nature), Hegel replies *Gott oder Geist* (God or Spirit).

Religion is the elevation of finite spirit to absolute or infinite spirit. In its religious form, this is (mis)understood as encounter with Someone Other. In its philosophical form it is the discovery that the highest form of human self-awareness is the sole locus in which the infinite totality, which is the only reality, comes to self-knowledge and is spirit rather than just nature, subject rather than merely substance.

Religion as this elevation of the human spirit occurs in all the religions, but most fully and adequately in Christianity as the consummate religion. However, Christianity can play this role only when it takes on philosophical form and systematically reinterprets its basic themes. For example, it is the revealed religion, not because in Jesus and the prophets, the Bible, and the church God has come to the aid of a human reason limited by finitude and wounded by sin, but because in its philosophical form human reason makes the true nature of God fully manifest. Or again, Incarnation is the central Christian truth. Jesus is not, however, to be seen as the unique locus of the identity of the human and divine: rather, he is the embodiment of the universal truth that the human as such is divine.

Hume and the hermeneutics of suspicion

Modern philosophy of religion grew out of a deep dissatisfaction with historic Christianity. But the response of Hume and his followers was very different from that of Kant and his followers. Instead of seeking an alternative religion, inoffensive to modernity, they looked to see whether the problem might not lie at the very heart of religion and not in the disposable husks.

Suspicion, rather than skepticism, arises when instead of asking about the evidence for or against religious beliefs one asks what motives underlie religious beliefs and practices, and what functions they play in the lives of believers. In *The Natural History of Religion* Hume develops a notion of instrumental religion according to which piety is primarily a flattering of the gods grounded in selfish hopes and fears. The piety of self-interest immediately gives rise to self-deception, since the pious soul cannot acknowledge that it has reduced the sacred to nothing but a means to its own ends.

Self-interest and self-deception are basic themes in the hermeneutics of suspicion in Karl Marx and Nietzsche. With Marx the question shifts from motive to function, and thus from psychology to sociology. He asks what function religion plays in society and answers that it serves to legitimize structures of social domination. His theory of religion thus belongs to his theory of ideology. Every historical society involves economic and political exploitation, whether the victims are slaves, serfs, or wage laborers. Ideas that represent such an order as natural or rational are needed both to salve the consciences of the beneficiaries and to encourage cooperation by the victims, since violent repression by itself is never sufficient. Nothing does the job quite as well as religious ideas, for what higher justification could a social order receive than to be divinely ordained. For Marx, then, religion is primarily a matter of social privilege seeking legitimation and of the oppressed seeking consolation.

For Nietzsche religion is rooted in the slave revolt in morals, but given his postulation of the will to power as universal, his slaves are less concerned with consolation than with revenge. Unable to give vent to their resentment physically, they join forces with the priests who help them to designate their dominators as evil. This gives them the satisfaction of moral superiority and, to the degree that it permeates the social order, it makes the strong feel guilty. Divine perfection is defined as the one who will punish our enemies.

This kind of suspicion is not the monopoly of secular thought. It is the key to the attack on Christendom that is the heart of Søren Kierkegaard's writings. Their critique of bourgeois Christianity is not directed toward its theology, which Kierkegaard largely shares, but toward its double ideological function. By equating the present social order with the kingdom of God it not only confuses something finite and unfinished with something absolute and ultimate; it also tells the individual that God asks nothing more than that I be a respectable member of this society. The biblical tension between Jesus and every established order is lost.

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Ethics

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i Introduction

Contemporary moral philosophers have taken up a wide range of questions. These questions include the significance of moral language, the nature of value and obligation, the defensibility of various normative theories, and the duties we may have concerning animals and future generations. Contemporary moral philosophers have been much less interested in questions concerning moral theories themselves: what they are, why we might want to have them, and what methods we should use in constructing them. In this article I will take up some of these questions. I will be mainly concerned with questions *about* moral theory rather than with questions *in* moral theory.

One reason why questions about moral theory have been relatively neglected is because, until recently, there appeared to be widespread agreement about the nature of moral theories and the acceptability of various methodological practices. Moral theories were commonly regarded as abstract structures whose role is to supply justification rather than motivation. The proper method was thought by most to be some version of coherentism (see section (iii. 2) for a discussion of this concept). While these remain the dominant views, the intellectual landscape is not as uniform as it once was.

In recent years there has been increasing anxiety about the nature, status and role of moral theory. For example Bernard Williams has expressed scepticism about the deliverances of theory, Jonathan Dancy and John McDowell see little role for theories to play in practical reasoning, and Susan Wolf has attacked the ideals that she sees as implicit in traditional moral theories. Robert Fullinwider has staked an avowedly anti-theoretical position. Michael Stocker has proffered a diagnosis: the problems of modern moral theory stem from its ‘schizophrenic’ nature.

While problems of theory have been the main focus of some philosophers, others have primarily been concerned with what they see as a crisis of method. According to Alasdair MacIntyre, modern moral philosophy serves up a cafeteria of conflicting moralities among which it is powerless to decide. Annette Baier claims that this way of teaching moral philosophy breeds scepticism in students.

In this article I cannot hope to resolve or even address all of these disputes. I will discuss some of them, survey the issues that I take to be central, and gesture towards what I take to be the truth. In the next section I will discuss the nature of theories, and in the following section I will discuss some questions of method. In section (iv) I will discuss the role of examples in producing the ‘moral intuitions’ with which theories work. In the final section I will draw some conclusions.

ii The nature of moral theories

There is a dominant conception of moral theory that is presupposed or endorsed by theorists of many different stripes. Although this conception is currently under vigorous attack, there is surprisingly little explicit defence or even articulation of it. The dominant conception is mainly known through the writings of its opponents and the practices of its adherents. I will try to make explicit some of the important features of this conception.

1 The dominant conception

On the dominant conception, moral theories are abstract structures that sort agents, actions, or outcomes into appropriate categories. Proposed categories include virtuous, vicious, right, wrong, permitted, forbidden, good, bad, best, worst, supererogatory, and obligatory. Characteristically outcomes are ranked according to their goodness, actions according to their rightness, and agents according to their virtuousness. Different theories take different categories as primary. For example utilitarianism takes the goodness of outcomes as primary, and from this derives accounts of the rightness of actions and the virtuousness of agents. Deontology, on the other hand, takes the rightness of actions as primary and either derives from this accounts of other categories that it takes to be morally relevant, or supplements it with accounts of the other categories. (See Article 17, CONTEMPORARY DEONTOLOGY, and ARTICLE 19, CONSEQUENTIALISM.)

The job of moral theorists, on the dominant conception, is to make particular moral theories explicit, to describe their universality, and to make vivid their coercive power. This is done through examining arguments, assessing evidence, and scrutinizing logical relationships. Moral-theoretic reasoning is often modelled on legal or economic reasoning. The legal model is implicit in the work of Bentham, while the economic model is often identified with Hobbes. The difference between law or economics on the one hand, and morality on the other, is often taken to involve the reasons agents have for conformity to the practices of the respective institutions, or the mechanisms that are available for enforcing conformity.

As I have said, the dominant conception is mainly implicit rather than explicit in contemporary ethical theory. For this reason it is dangerous to name names. However, without suggesting that they would endorse every feature of the dominant conception as I have described it, we can associate the dominant conception with the nineteenth-century philosopher, Henry Sidgwick, and such contemporary philosophers as Richard Brandt, Derek Parfit, John Rawls, and Judith Jarvis Thomson.

2 The anti-theorists

Challenges to the dominant conception have become increasingly prominent. One source of these challenges is a feminist sensibility that began to emerge in professional philosophy in the 1970s. Another source is the widespread scepticism about authority that was characteristic of the 1960s. Philosophers whose views were affected by these tendencies have profound differences among them. However, many of these philosophers have emphasized character and motivation rather than consequences and obligations. They have found their inspiration in Aristotle and Hume rather than Kant and Sidgwick. They are inclined to view morality 'from the ground up', as a kind of social practice, rather than 'from the top down', as an expression of theory.

One of the first influential critiques of the dominant conception was G. E. M. Anscombe's 1958 essay, 'Modern moral philosophy'. Here Anscombe objects to the 'law conception of ethics', which she sees as characteristic of English philosophy from Sidgwick on. Anscombe argues that this view is untenable without the notion of a divine lawgiver. Since modern moral philosophy banishes God, regarding him as either dead, non-existent, or irrelevant, its conception of moral theory is ultimately anachronistic.

It is as if the notion 'criminal' were to remain when criminal law and criminal courts had been abolished and forgotten. (Anscombe, 1958, p. 30)

Anscombe's conclusion is that if moral philosophy is to be secular, it had better be more like Aristotle's than Sidgwick's. But if we do return to Aristotle, then moral philosophy 'should be laid aside... until we have an adequate philosophy of psychology' (p. 26).

According to Alasdair MacIntyre and Bernard Williams, moral theory does not have the authority that it claims for itself. MacIntyre argues generally that there can be no moral authority in pluralistic, liberal societies. He urges us to subvert liberalism by developing common narratives and ways of life. Williams, on the other hand, takes pluralism and liberalism as given in societies like ours, and goes on to reflect on the prospects for living an ethical life in such societies.

Despite their differences, both MacIntyre and Williams find modern moral philosophy to be part of our cultural problem rather than a solution. In *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* MacIntyre writes that:

[m]odern academic philosophy turns out by and large to provide means for a more accurate and informed definition of disagreement rather than for progress toward its resolution. (1988, p. 3)

In *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* Williams tells us that 'philosophy should not try to produce ethical theory' (p. 17), because ethical theory does not have the authority to 'give some compelling reason to accept one intuition rather than another' (p. 99).

Williams has much in common with Anscombe, but there are important differences. Although both advocate the abolition of morality as it is understood by many philosophers, their reasons are quite different. For Anscombe, the belief in a distinctive, authoritative kind of obligation that is moral is a perversion of theistic ethics. The abolition of this kind of morality would clarify our existing beliefs and practices since morality, as many of us understand it, does not exist anyway. Williams distinguishes ethics from morality, and identifies morality with a 'peculiar institution' that is a modern expression of the ethical. Morality focuses on obligations, and makes claims for itself that are so grandiose that fidelity to this harsh master alienates us from our personal relationships and commitments and erodes our integrity. For Anscombe, the law conception of morality is untenable without God. For Williams the law conception of morality may be tenable, but it is vicious and repressive. We can be free to live our own lives in a truly secular society only when we have overcome the bondage of morality.

Much of the feminist critique of traditional moral theories has been influenced by psychological research, such as Carol Gilligan's, that suggests that women have different patterns of moral response than men. Annette Baier, an influential feminist voice in contemporary philosophy, takes this research to suggest that while traditional male ethics focuses on obligation, female ethics focuses on love. Baier hopes to reconcile these moralities in an ethics of trust. (See also Article 43, *THE IDEA OF A FEMALE ETHIC*.)

Without endorsing all of their claims, there is much that we can learn from the anti-theorists. Their attacks on the dominant conception challenge us to rethink the relationship between moral theory and moral practice.

3 Reconciling theory and practice

In my view moral theorizing is something that real people do in everyday life. It is not just the domain of professors, expounding in their lecture halls. Moral theorizing can be found on the highways and byways, practiced by everyone from bartenders to politicians.

In everyday life it is common for people to apply role reversal tests, to appeal to possible outcomes of actions or policies, or to point to special responsibilities and obligations. This is the stuff of moral persuasion, reasoning, and education. For example we ask children how they would feel if they were treated as they have treated others. To an acquaintance we point out that it would not cost much to visit a sick parent, and that it would do the parent a world of good. We condemn a friend for not acting as a friend.

When we ask why we should be moved by such considerations, or we test them in order to see whether they hang together with other beliefs and commitments that we have, we are engaging in moral theorizing. However, the result of this theorizing hardly ever leads to the creation of a full-blown moral theory. Generally we are pushed into theorizing by pragmatic considerations rather than by the disinterested search for truth. We are usually pushed out of it by conversational closure – one of us gets our way, or we agree to disagree. Moral theorizing typically emerges when there is a conversational niche for it to fill.

If this is correct, then the distinction between moral theorizing and moral practice is an untenable dualism. Moral theorizing is part of moral practice. It is a way of trying to ensure that the moralizing of ourselves and others is defensible. It is a way in which our 'better self', or at least our more reflective self, sometimes tries to carry the day.

Moral theories, the abstract conceptions that we study in moral philosophy, are derivative of moral theorizing. They are hypostatizations of an activity that is part of everyday moral practice. We use these abstract structures for various purposes: to grade and categorize agents, acts, and outcomes; to relate to various religious beliefs and cultural outlooks; to evaluate, analyse, extend, and so on. As the anti-theorists point out, what we almost never use them for is making moral decisions.

But this overstates the case. Many of us, and not just philosophers, are driven to evaluate systematically our own moral theorizing and that of others. These evaluations often go beyond what would be required by the exigencies of the immediate situation. Some of these systematic evaluations result in theories or theory-fragments. While these theories or theory-fragments may not play a starring role in moral decision-making, they surely have some effect, even if indirectly, on our moral practices.

The anti-theorists remind us that people in their everyday moral practices create theory; that there are limits on what these theories can do; that their job is to help us do what is right rather than to be true. In these ways their attack on the dominant conception is important and helpful. However, what they do not succeed in showing is that we would be better off without moral theory.

iii The methods of theorizing

If what I have said in the previous section is correct, much of our moral theorizing goes on as part of our ordinary moral practices. Rather than being orderly and systematic, it is eclectic and incremental. Despite this, many philosophers have been concerned to discover principles of grand method. Philosophers who are enthralled by the dominant conception of moral theory have wanted to construct theories that are explicit and universal. In order to help them to do this they have wanted to identify the principles that govern theory building. Such philosophers have often looked to epistemology – the study of how we can know things – as providing the models for this enterprise.

The two most influential approaches to theory construction in epistemology are foundationalism and coherentism. Most attempts at theory construction in ethics follow one of these two models. Coherentism is currently in vogue but it suffers from serious difficulties, as does foundationalism.

1 Foundationalism

Foundationalism is (roughly) the view that systems of belief are justified in virtue of the logical relations that obtain between beliefs that require justification, and other beliefs that themselves are in no need of justification.

Consider an example. Suppose that John believes that it is wrong to kill his next-door neighbour gratuitously, and takes this to follow from the self-evident principle that it is wrong to kill people gratuitously, and his belief that his next-door neighbour is a person. What has been offered is a foundationalist justification for this fragment of John's belief system.

Traditionally people have been tempted by foundationalist accounts for the following reason. At some point, it seems, justification must end. The beliefs in which a chain of justification terminates must themselves be justified but require no justification. For if they were not justified then the system of beliefs which is justified by reference to them would not itself be justified. If these 'terminating' beliefs themselves required justification then they would not in fact be the beliefs in which the chain of justification terminates.

There are a number of problems with this foundationalist picture. One problem concerns how it could be that some beliefs require no justification. Traditionally such beliefs have been thought either self-justifying or self-evident.

Consider first the idea that some beliefs are self-justifying. My belief that there are such things as beliefs may be an example of a self-justifying belief, for it is true in virtue of my believing it to be true (although some would deny even this). It is a long way from this kind of self-justifying belief, however, to an interesting moral theory. Other candidates for self-justifying beliefs have been suggested. Some philosophers have thought that there are common-sense propositions that we cannot help but believe: for example that we sometimes act freely, that there is an external world, and so on. On this view, since we cannot help but believe these things, these beliefs are self-justifying. But this claim is far from convincing. It seems possible that we are the sort of creatures who cannot help but believe some things that are false. There seems to be no guarantee that our epistemic capacities really give us access to the world.

There are also problems about deriving a moral theory from self-evident truths. There is little controversy about whether logical truths are self-evident (for example that all ravens are ravens), so logical truths are good candidates for self-evident truths. But logical truths are not rich enough to permit the derivation of any interesting moral theory. And once we go beyond logical truths, disagreement breaks out about what other truths, if any, are self-evident.

This leads to a further problem. If there are self-evident or self-justifying truths that are rich enough to permit the derivation of an interesting moral theory, then they must go beyond logical truths and those which are 'pragmatically necessary'. Yet it is far from clear that there are such truths or how we could recognize them if there are.

Foundationalism dominated epistemology for the first half of this century, but it has fallen upon hard times. Attempts to construct the world from the incorrigible deliverances of the senses have largely been abandoned in the wake of attacks by Wittgenstein, Quine and others. Foundationalism in ethics was always more problematical than foundationalism in general epistemology, for it was never clear what was to do the work of sense-data. It is not surprising that in our post-positivist philosophical climate, there are few moral theorists willing to endorse foundationalist methodology.

2 Coherentism

These days some version of coherentism is the dominant view of what constitutes proper method for theory construction in ethics. Coherentism can be roughly characterized as the view that beliefs can be justified only by their relation to other beliefs. This is in clear distinction to foundationalism which holds that some beliefs, those that are foundational, are justified independently of their relations to other beliefs.

The most influential form of coherentism is Rawls's method of reflective equilibrium. According to Rawls, proper method involves beginning with a set of considered beliefs, formulating general principles to account for them, and then revising both principles and beliefs in the light of each other, until an equilibrium is reached.

There are many problems with this methodology. Some philosophers, such as Brandt, Hare, and Singer, have denied that our considered beliefs have probative force. It appears that Nazis or Pharaohs employing the method of reflective equilibrium would arrive at outlooks that are grossly immoral. This is an instance of an old problem for coherence theories: there can be an indefinite number of sets of beliefs in reflective equilibrium, yet there may be no reason to suppose that any of these constitute a true theory.

One response, suggested by Holmgren, is to couple reflective equilibrium with a commitment to objective moral truths. But this only raises the question of how objective moral truths are to be identified. Rawls's own solution is to introduce (tacitly) further considerations for evaluating considered judgements and moral outlooks. This shifts the burden of justification from reflective equilibrium to these reliability tests. The question then arises as to what underwrites these reliability tests. And this seems to put us back in the soup. Is our belief in these tests foundational, or do the beliefs that are sanctioned by these tests gain their credibility from their relations to other beliefs?

Coherentism and foundationalism have resourceful defenders, and this short discussion cannot do justice to the subtle versions of these approaches that have been developed. Moreover methodological space is not exhausted by foundationalism and coherentism. Many other views are possible. One that seems increasingly popular is derivationism. Philosophers such as Brandt and Gauthier seek to derive a moral theory from what they regard as more fundamental considerations concerning rationality. They do this because they regard questions about rationality as clearer than questions about morality, or because they believe that rationality has motivational force in a way that morality does not. Though Brandt and Gauthier are derivationists, they are not foundationalists. For they do not claim that the beliefs from which their theories are derived are self-evident or self-justifying.

3 Other questions of method

Dramatically contrasting foundationalism and coherentism on the big screen of the philosophical dialectic may obscure the fact that they have much in common. One important issue in the background of this debate concerns whether and to what extent moral theories can or must be revisionary. On this issue foundationalism and coherentism have more in common than might be imagined.

Some have thought that since coherentist views begin with our considered moral beliefs, they must inevitably sanctify 'common sense morality' – that ragtag collection of moral prejudices, habits, judgements, and behaviours which people of 'our' class and culture exhibit or engage in. Because foundationalist approaches start from the beginning, it has been thought that only they are in a position to challenge those prejudices and promote moral progress. While there may be something to this view, it would be very difficult to say exactly what it is. Even if we are coherentists and believe that our considered moral beliefs are privileged, it is still not clear how we should settle conflicts between those beliefs and the deliverances of a moral theory. The corpus of our beliefs may be privileged, but it does not follow from this that each belief is privileged, or that those beliefs that are privileged are all equally privileged. It thus does not follow (for example) that utilitarianism should be rejected or revised because it makes demands that many people believe are excessive. It is consistent with even conservative views in moral epistemology to suppose that (some of) our everyday moral beliefs should be revised or rejected instead. Nor is it obvious that foundationalism must serve the cause of moral progress. Whether a foundationalist morality is conservative or not depends on what people take for foundational beliefs, not on the fact of its being a foundationalist theory.

There are also some constraints that any moral theory, whether coherentist or foundationalist, must satisfy. One of these is consistency. An inconsistent theory implies anything, and therefore fails to fulfil whatever role we might want theories to play. Theories must also be complete enough to provide a moral perspective. While it may be appropriate for moral theories to be silent over some range of hard cases, too much silence about the wrong cases would vitiate the claims to importance that are made on their behalf.

The goal of both foundationalists and coherentists is also the same: the identification of a defensible set of moral beliefs, convictions, dispositions, and purposes. Sometimes the members of this set are called 'intuitions'.

The search for this set begins in midstream. Even foundationalists must grant that we begin as well as end with moral intuitions. Both foundationalists and coherentists are interested in methods for identifying and assessing the intuitions with which we begin. Since coherentists are in the business of systematizing our 'considered' intuitions, they need methods for identifying them. Since derivations of moral truths from foundational beliefs are notoriously indeterminate (or at least controversial), foundationalists may want to identify our considered intuitions, in order to see how bodies of belief hang together, or how their proposed derivations map on to people's pre-theoretical beliefs.

For these reasons (and others) both coherentists and foundationalists have been interested in mechanisms for identifying and assessing our moral intuitions. Different techniques for eliciting and assessing moral intuitions have been employed. One of the most common is the use of examples. Philosophers present us with various cases – some from literature, some from real life, some from the imagination – and ask what intuitions we have about them. Although the intuitions that are elicited play different roles in foundationalist and coherentist theories, the use of examples is common to both. I believe that the limitations of this approach have not been sufficiently appreciated. In order to see why this approach is problematical, I shall conclude with a brief discussion of the role of examples in moral philosophy.

iv The role of examples

In moral philosophy examples are used for many different purposes. Kant, in the *Groundwork*, uses a series of examples to show us how the several formulations of the categorical imperative may be applied to cases. In 'Existentialism is a humanism' Sartre discusses the young man who is torn between caring for his mother and fighting for the Free French in order to show that there are (many?) moral problems that cannot be solved by appeals to principles. In contemporary moral philosophy examples are often used as 'intuition-pumps'. For example in *Reasons and Persons* Derek Parfit describes a number of worlds with different populations at different levels of welfare in order to elicit our intuitions about different population policies.

Following (but revising) Onora O'Neill, we can distinguish four kinds of examples that are used in moral theorizing: literary, ostensive, hypothetical, and imaginary. Literary examples are commonly used and have various strengths and weaknesses that cannot be explored here. (For an example, see the opening of Article 21, VIRTUE THEORY.) Ostensive examples are those taken from real life. We may discuss the My Lai massacre, for example, as a case in which soldiers had to choose between following orders and obeying moral injunctions.

The distinction between hypothetical and imaginative examples is important, but difficult to make clear. A hypothetical example may involve a decision between going to the movies or visiting a sick friend. The question of whether or not to enter a teletransporter that will destroy your body at point of entry but create a replica at your destination is an imaginary example. Hypothetical examples involve instances of situations or events that have occurred, or could occur without requiring us to rewrite physics or change our basic conception of how the world works. Imaginary examples involve logical possibilities that could occur only in worlds very different from ours.

Almost all philosophers make appeals to hypothetical cases. It is hard to see how we could go on without doing so. Deciding what to do involves hypothetical reasoning. Appeals to imaginary cases, however, are problematic because such examples are indeterminate with respect to background. In order to be valid, counterfactual reasoning must go on against a fixed background. When we consider whether to visit a sick friend or to go to the movies instead, we have a relatively clear idea about what will be different and what will be the same whatever we do. In imaginary cases we often do not really know what is up for grabs. We have intuitions, but these intuitions may be untrustworthy. For we may have dragged along part of the 'real world' into the counterfactual one. Imaginary examples are often described in a very schematic way. We tacitly supply the background that makes these cases intelligible. But we may simply be wrong about what a world with teleporters would be like.

A second problem is that imaginary cases are (typically) tendentiously described. This is due to the function that they are supposed to perform. A 'good' imaginary case is one about which we have clear intuitions. The idea is to transfer these clear intuitions to a relevantly similar case about which our intuitions are confused. However, it may be that our intuitions are different about the two cases because they are not relevantly similar. What we may think, on the face of it, is that some important features of the actual case are not present in the imaginary one. One such feature is ambiguity and complexity. As O'Neill points out in 'How can we individuate moral problems?', how we identify and describe cases is already an important part of our response to them. Real life is open to different descriptions and interpretations. It may not even be clear when some situation or circumstance presents a moral problem, or if it does, what kind of moral problem it presents. Imaginary cases come with their own descriptions. The battle for identification and description is suppressed. For this reason our intuitions about them are untrustworthy.

These problems can be seen by considering a series of imaginary examples, presented by Michael Tooley in his book, *Abortion and Infanticide* (pp. 191 ff), in defence of 'the moral symmetry principle' – roughly the view that the wrongness of intervening to stop a causal process is equivalent to the wrongness of failing to initiate the process. Tooley asks us to imagine a chemical that, when injected into the brain of a kitten, causes it to develop into a cat 'possessing a brain of the sort possessed by normal adult human beings'. According to Tooley, killing a kitten that has been injected but has not yet begun to develop 'those properties that would make it a person' is morally equivalent to killing an uninjected kitten. He goes on to apply these results to the issue of abortion, arriving at the conclusion that 'it is prima facie no more seriously wrong to kill a human organism that is a potential person, but not a person, than it is intentionally to refrain from injecting a kitten with the special chemical, and to kill it instead'.

Should we trust our intuitions about these cases? I think not, it is not clear what continuities and differences there are between our world and one in which it is possible to transform kittens into persons. Nor is it clear that we have been presented with all the relevant moral features of these cases. When we imagine cats with language are we also supposed to imagine that they have developed vocalization capacities like ours and now speak English? What do they talk about? Are they burdened with shame and guilt? Do they appreciate art, music, and literature? We might also want to know whether we like them and whether they like us. Only by asking these and other questions can we expose what has been suppressed by the schematic description of the case, and thus even begin to know whether or not we should trust our intuitions.

v Conclusion

The general topic of theory and method in moral philosophy is large, important, and underexplored. In this article I have canvassed various views, and expressed some of my own: that moral theories are derivative of moral theorizing, that moral theorizing is part of everyday moral practice, that both foundationalism and coherentism are problematical, and that appeals to imaginary cases are often misleading and unreliable.

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i Morality and personal relationships: Do they conflict?

Morality and personal relationships appear to conflict. Morality, as typically conceived, requires impartiality: we must treat all humans (creatures?) alike unless there is some general and morally relevant difference which justifies a difference in treatment. A teacher should give equal grades to students who perform equally; unequal grades are justified only if there is some general and relevant reason which justifies that difference. For example, it is legitimate to give a better grade to a student who does superior work; it is illegitimate to give her a better grade because she is pretty, wears pink, or is named ‘Judith’.

On the other hand, personal relationships are partial to the core. We behave toward intimates in ways we would never behave toward strangers; we allow intimates to treat us in ways we wouldn’t tolerate from strangers. We give preferential care; we expect it in return. Hence, the conflict. How can it be resolved? Should we presume that morality is always more important? Could the demands of personal relationships supersede those of morality? Or is there a way to show that the conflict is more apparent than real?

The standard move is to deny that there is a conflict, to assume that the apparent partiality of personal relationships is straightforwardly explicable by impartial moral principles. Let me explain. The principle of equal consideration of interests is not a substantive moral principle: it does not specify exactly how anyone is to be treated. Rather it is a formal principle which requires that we treat people the same unless there is some general and relevant reason which justifies our treating them differently. It does not specify what counts as a general and relevant reason, and thus does not specify how people should be treated.

Those taking this tack will then go on to claim that *one* general and relevant reason why I should treat Eva (my wife) better than I treat Phyllis (a stranger) is simply that she is my wife. All spouses, friends, lovers, etc should treat their intimates better than they treat others – after all, they have a personal relationship and personal relationships are, by definition, partial. The moral rule which justifies partiality is impartial: it allows (requires?) *everyone* to treat intimates better than they treat strangers. The demands of morality and of personal relationships are not at odds.

Does this strategy succeed? Well, intimacy is a general characteristic, but differentiating characteristics must also be morally relevant. Is it? It is not difficult to see why we might think it is. Intimacy promotes honesty, caring, loyalty, self-knowledge, patience, empathy, etc. These are significant moral values by anyone’s lights – values which arguably are best promoted by intimate relationships. So by this line of reasoning impartial moral principles dictate that we pursue intimacy. Since intimacy requires partiality, it is legitimate to treat intimates preferentially.

There is some force to this response, though it is not apparent that it is entirely adequate as it stands. Even if this manoeuvre resolves the apparent tension between morality and self-interest at this level, a parallel problem emerges at a lower level. The previous considerations allegedly show that it is legitimate to treat intimates better than we treat strangers. They thereby imply that we should treat all intimates the same unless there is some general and relevant reason that justifies a difference in treatment. However, we assume it is legitimate to treat different friends differently. It is not clear that we can provide general and relevant reasons which would justify *this* variation in treatment.

Perhaps we should conclude, instead, that the requirement of impartiality undermines personal relationships as we presently understand them. That is, relationships may be partial only in limited ways consistent with the principle of the equal consideration of interests. As Rachels (1989, p. 48) puts it: ‘[U]niversal love is a higher ideal than family loyalty, and the obligation within families can be properly understood only as particular instances of obligations to all mankind.’

Thus, people might still have special duties to others, but these would be more limited than on our present view. For instance, we might decide that some people should give preferential care for children in the same sort of way that we decide that people in certain institutional roles (police-officers, judges, doctors, or lifeguards) should give preferential consideration to people under their care. These role-specific duties are, in important respects, stronger than general impersonal obligations. Your doctor should look after your health in ways that she does not have to look after mine. Her duty to her patients will take precedence over the medical needs of strangers.

We can similarly explain why parents have special responsibilities for their children. They have special assigned roles which legitimate limited preferential treatment of them. But not so preferential, Rachels claims, that they can justifiably ignore the needs of other less well-off children. Hence the conflict is resolved by denying that *fundamentally* partial personal relationships are morally permissible, let alone obligatory. We *thought* personal relationships as we conceived them were compatible with morality, but we were wrong. The only legitimate personal relationships are derivative from impartial duties, and therefore, are distant kin to intimacy as we conceive it. The demands of morality are always superior.

This view will likely strike most readers as wrong and undesirable. To an extent I agree. In its raw form it is wrong. Wrong, but not nonsense. It has significant insights we should not ignore. Impartiality is vital to our understanding of morality, 'something deeply important, that we should be reluctant to give up. It is useful, for example, in explaining why egoism, racism, and sexism are morally odious, and if we abandon this conception we lose our most natural and persuasive means of combatting these doctrines' (Rachels, 1989, p. 48).

Moreover, though it is appealing to be able to lavish attention on those for whom we care, such attention seems at least tacky and probably cosmically unfair given that other people, through no fault of their own, are so poorly off. These people's lives could be improved if we would spread our attention beyond our close friends and family. For instance, it seems unfair that Sarah can legitimately buy her child an expensive new toy or treat her husband to an exorbitant gourmet meal, while the people living next door starve. Luck plays an inordinately large role in determining a person's lot in life. Morality should attempt to diminish, if not eradicate, the undesirable effects of luck.

Despite these insights, if we completely embrace Rachels's suggestion, there are some undesirable consequences. It is not just that friends will be unable to share the same depth and range of relationships they presently do – though that most assuredly will be so. It appears it might completely undermine the very possibility of personal relationships. On his view parents would care for children because the impartial generalized rules of morality require it, not because they love their children. Likewise, I would assume, for friends or spouses. We could still establish quasi-intimate relationships, but these would be founded on general moral rules, not on personal attraction or personal choice.

That would eliminate some of the primary benefits of personal relationships; for instance, that they heighten our sense of self-worth. Close relationships are those in which people like us because of who we are, because of our specific personality traits. Thus, when someone loves you it makes you feel better about yourself; they have *chosen* to love you because of who you are.

In contrast, on Rachels's proposal others would befriend you because some moral rule requires it. Duties of friendship would be just like other role-specific duties. We think lawyers should work to promote their clients' interests and that physicians should be concerned with their patients' medical needs – that is their job. Likewise, parents would care for their children, and friends would care for each other as prescribed by general moral rules.

But friends don't want that sort of impersonal care; they want to be loved for who they are. A complete commitment to an impartial moral theory seems to preclude the love for which humans yearn.

This problem has led philosophers such as Bernard Williams, Susan Wolf, and Thomas Nagel to argue that personal relationships and morality inevitably conflict, and, at least on some occasions, morality loses. Suppose, Williams says, two people are drowning and a rescuer can save only one of them. One is the rescuer's wife. Should he be impartial between them and decide, for example, by flipping a coin? No, says Williams, he should straightforwardly save his wife. He doesn't need to argue for or justify his decision; nor need he make any reference to impartial moral principles. In fact, to attempt to justify the action in that way would be completely inappropriate.

The consideration that it was his wife is certainly, for instance, an explanation which should silence comment. But something more ambitious than this is usually intended [in someone's saying that he was justified in his action], essentially involving the idea that moral principle can legitimate his preference, yielding the conclusion that in situations of this kind it is at least all right (morally permissible) to save one's wife... But this construction provides the agent with one question too many: it might have been hoped by some (for instance, his wife) that his motivating thought, fully spelled out, would be the thought that it was his wife, not that it was his wife and that in situations of this kind it is permissible to save one's wife. (Williams, 1981, p. 18)

When close personal relationships are at stake it is inappropriate to assume all of our actions must be guided by impartial moral standards. Moral standards will occasionally be trumped by our personal projects – especially our commitments to friends and family. Without such relationships or projects, Williams asserts, 'there will not be enough substance or conviction in a man's life to compel allegiance to life itself', (p. 18). Put differently, if life is to be meaningful, we cannot guide our lives by impartial moral principles.

ii The interplay of morality and personal relationships

It seems we have reached an impasse. There is something appealing about both views. Sometimes when moral concern for strangers conflicts with concern for those we love, we assume concern for our intimates should take precedence. Yet that appears to conflict with the principle of impartiality, and that principle lies at the heart of our ordinary moral understanding: moreover, it seems cosmically unfair that someone's life chances are significantly affected by an accident of birth. I cannot completely resolve this conflict in this brief essay, but I offer the following suggestions.

The problem arises if we assume the demands of morality and the concerns of personal relationships unavoidably conflict. I acknowledge that they occasionally conflict; however, we should focus instead on the important ways in which they are mutually supportive. If we could identify these, then perhaps we might have a clue about how to deal with apparent (or real) conflicts.

Here are two ways in which they are supportive: (1) close personal relationships empower us to develop an impersonal morality; and (2) intimacy flourishes in an environment which recognizes the impersonal demands of all. If this is right, then the tensions between impersonal moral demands and close personal relationships may not evaporate, but they will be more amenable to resolution.

Close personal relationships are grist for the moral mill. Different ethical theorists disagree about the extent of the concern we must have for everyone, but all agree that morality requires that we consider (even promote) the interests of others. But how do we learn to do that? And how do we become motivated to do it?

We can develop neither the moral knowledge nor empathy crucial for an impartial morality unless we have been in intimate relationships. Someone reared by uncaring parents, who never established close personal ties with others, will simply not know how to look after or promote the interests of either intimates or strangers. No-one knows how to do mathematics or to play football without acquaintance with the discipline or the game. Likewise, no-one knows how to consider the interests of others unless they have been in an intimate relationship.

Consider the following situation: suppose you are standing next to someone who has an epileptic seizure, but you have never heard of epilepsy, let alone witnessed a seizure. Or suppose you are stranded on an elevator with someone having a heart attack, but you didn't know people had hearts, let alone that they could malfunction. In short, try to imagine that you were in one of these circumstances when you were seven years old. You would do nothing. Or if you tried, it would very likely do more harm than good; success would surely be serendipitous.

The same would be true generally of efforts to promote the interests of others. We cannot promote interests we cannot identify. And the way we learn to identify the interests of others is through interaction with others. Most of us learn how to discern the needs of others within our families: our parents comforted us when we were hurt; they laughed with us when we were happy. Eventually, we came to recognize *their* pain and happiness, and subsequently learned to be concerned about them.

But without that experience, not only would we not have the knowledge to promote others' interests, we wouldn't have the inclination either. Though I expect we may have *some* biologically inherited sympathetic tendencies, these will not be developed adequately unless others have cared for us and we have cared for them. If we are not motivated to promote the needs of our families or friends, how can we be motivated to promote the needs of a stranger?

On the other hand, if we develop empathy toward our friends, we will be inclined to generalize it to others. We become so vividly aware of our intimate's needs that we are willing to help them even when it is difficult to do so. But since empathy is often non-specific, we will be likewise inclined to 'feel' pain in acquaintances and strangers. Having felt it, we are more likely to do something about it.

That is not to say that those who develop close relationships always come to care for the impersonal other, although most do. My point is simply that a person must have some exposure to personal relationships to be motivated to be moral or to know how to be moral. Put differently, people cannot be just or moral in a vacuum; they can become just only within an environment which countenances personal relationships.

Correspondingly, relationships between non-moral people are at risk. Intimates must be honest with one another; any dishonesty will chip away at the foundations of the relationship. Yet people cannot be as honest as they need to be if they are immersed in a subculture built on dishonesty and deceit. Dishonesty, like all traits, is not something someone can turn on and off. If people are dishonest with large numbers of people at work, they will be similarly inclined at home.

Likewise, close relationships are possible only inasmuch as each party trusts the other. But trust cannot survive, let alone flourish, in an environment of distrust and hate. And, to tie these issues together, you cannot be completely honest with me unless you trust me. Mistrust squelches honesty.

In short, the possibility of genuine personal relationships is limited, if not eliminated, in an immoral environment. If people are uninterested in the welfare of other people – that is, if they are amoral or immoral – then when they enter seemingly personal relationships, they will enter them for their own personal gain; thus, the relationships will not be personal in the relevant sense. Since they are not at all inclined to see the legitimate needs of other people, they will not be inclined to see these needs in people they presumably befriend.

Consequently, personal relationships and morality are not at odds in the ways many philosophers have supposed. Rather, they are mutually supportive. Experience and involvement in close relationships will enhance one's interest in and sympathy for the plight of others. Concern about the plight of the stranger will help her develop the traits necessary for close personal relationships.

Given these observations it appears we should seek a hybrid view to resolve the conflict between morality and personal relationships. I have argued that (1) only those who have experienced intimacy can have the knowledge and motivation which undergirds an impartial morality, and (2) intimacy can flourish only in a society which recognizes the demands of the impersonal other. Consequently, these two points must be part of some larger moral picture.

Perhaps that picture can be sketched like this: if an impartial morality required that we treat everyone impartially all of the time, then we couldn't develop the knowledge or motivation which enables us to act morally. So impartiality can't require *that*. It must allow at least some personal relationships – relationships where people can justifiably treat intimates partially. Otherwise it is self-defeating.

Exactly how much partiality does it allow? Enough to permit people to develop genuinely intimate relationships. How much is that? I don't know. It seems evident, however, that this would not justify unlimited partiality toward our intimates. Partiality which regularly disregards strangers while heaping trivial benefits on intimates is not justified. To that extent Rachels's position is vindicated.

Of course conflicts will arise, but when they do, they will arise in the same way that any moral conflicts arise; duties to two friends may conflict as may duties to two strangers. But such conflicts don't show that morality is impossible; they only show that it is difficult to achieve. But then, we already knew that.

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Ancient Western philosophical thought about how to live centred on the question of the highest good: what life is most fully and lastingly satisfying? While virtue was meant to govern one’s relations with others, it was first of all the condition of attaining the good for oneself. Christianity taught that the highest good was attainable only through salvation, and complicated the pursuit of it by insisting on obedience to God’s commands. The distinctive enterprise of modern philosophical ethics grew as ideas of the highest good and of the will of the Christian deity came to seem less and less able to provide practical guidance. Since many people today do not believe, as the ancients did, that there is just one definite way of living which is best for everyone, and since many think we cannot resolve our practical problems on a religious basis, the questions of modern Western ethics are unavoidably still our own questions.

If there is no highest good determined by nature or God, how are we to know whether our desires are misguided or sound? If there are no divinely ordained laws, what can tell us when we should refuse to do what our desires urge us to do, and when we may proceed? Modern moral philosophy emerged from consideration of these problems. There is no standard way of organizing its history, but it is useful to think of it as having three stages.

(1) The first stage is one of gradual emergence from the traditional assumption that morality must come from some authoritative source outside of human nature, into the belief that morality might arise from resources within human nature itself. It was a movement from the view that morality must be imposed on human beings towards the belief that morality could be understood as human self-governance or autonomy. This stage begins with the *Essays* of Michel de Montaigne (1595) and culminates in the work of Kant (1785), Reid (1788) and Bentham (1789).

(2) During the second stage moral philosophy was largely occupied with the elaboration and defence of the view that we are individually self-governing, and with new objections and alternatives to it. The period extends from the assimilation of the work of Reid, Bentham, and Kant to the last third of the present century.

(3) Since then, the attention of moral philosophers has begun to shift away from the problem of the autonomous individual toward new issues concerning public morality.

i Toward autonomy

Montaigne (1533-92) tried to show that the ideas of the good life proposed by classical antiquity fail as guides because most people cannot live as they direct. Though himself a believing Catholic, he also thought most people could not live up to Christian standards. He offered nothing in place of these ideals. He held that there are no clear norms governing social and political life beyond the laws of our own country, which, he held, are always to be obeyed. Positively, he suggested only that each of us might personally find a way of life which our own nature makes necessary for us.

Montaigne’s radical challenges to accepted ideas about authoritative morality spoke to the condition of an increasingly diversified, self-reliant and literate European population, but the public life of the time called for principles of a kind he did not present. Endless ferocious wars made evident the deep need for peaceful ways of settling political disputes. Christianity could no longer help, because Protestantism had split Europe so deeply that there could be no agreement on what the historical religion required. Although everyone took religious belief to be essential somehow to morality, it was plainly necessary to go beyond sectarian principles. The universities continued to teach watered-down versions of Aristotelian ethics, but these hardly spoke to the pressing needs of the time. Innovators drew on other sources.

The most durable tradition of thought about the norms governing human conduct was the Thomistic natural law tradition. It claimed to show what principles for public life are available to human reason, independent of revelation and without specifically Christian bias. Accepted by many Protestants as well as by Catholics, it taught that God's laws require us to act in certain ways which, whether we know it or not, are for the benefit of everyone. It held that the laws could be known at least by the wise, who could instruct the rest; and it showed what rewards and punishments God connects with obedience and disobedience. The moral thought of the seventeenth century started from classical natural law theory, but altered it drastically.

Classical natural law saw humans as created to play a part in a divinely ordained community expressing God's glory, and morality as teaching what that part is. Modern natural law began with the assertion that individuals are entitled to determine their own purposes, and that morality comprises the conditions under which these can best be pursued. Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), the acknowledged originator of the new outlook, was the first theorist to claim that rights are a natural attribute of the individual independently of any contribution the individual makes to the community. In his *Law of War and Peace* (1625) he insisted that we are sociable by nature; but when we form political societies, he said, we do so on condition that our individual rights be respected. Though our rights may be traded for political security, we begin, Grotius taught, as naturally entitled to determine our own lives within the space our rights create.

Thomas Hobbes's masterpiece, *Leviathan* (1651), denied natural sociability, and stressed our self-interested aims. There is, for him, no ultimate good: we restlessly seek 'power after power' to protect ourselves from death. Since we are basically equal in natural ability, this would cause a war of all against all if we did not agree to be ruled by a sovereign capable of enforcing peace while we each pursue our private goals. The laws of nature or morality are ultimately no more than indicators of the most essential steps we must take so that an orderly society may exist. Our limitless desires thus create a problem that can only be solved by setting up a ruler who is above any legal control; but it is our desires themselves that move us to solve that problem.

The theory that political society emerges from a social contract makes man and not God the creator of the secular powers that govern him. Many natural lawyers in the seventeenth century accepted this view. While Hobbes aroused almost universal opposition for his assertion that morality serves human selfishness, the natural lawyers nonetheless agreed that humans are unruly beings, needing strong governmental control. John Locke (1632-1704) was opposing Grotius as well as Hobbes when he claimed that some of our rights are inalienable, and hence that there are moral limits to what the government may do. But even Locke held, with his contemporaries, that most people cannot know without instruction what morality requires and that threats of punishment are needed to get the majority to behave decently. Even though the laws of nature are meant to guide us to individual as well as common well-being, and even though we are competent to set up our own political order, we are still to be viewed, according to most seventeenth-century thinkers, as needing to have morality imposed on us.

Late in the seventeenth century criticism of this outlook became vocal; and during the eighteenth century a number of thinkers developed views in which morality was taken, to one degree or another, not simply as suitably imposed on our nature but as an expression of it.

One major step was taken when Pierre Bayle argued in 1681 for the then shocking claim that a group of atheists could form a perfectly decent society. A more systematic effort to sketch a new picture of human nature and morality came from the third Earl of Shaftesbury. In his *Inquiry concerning Virtue* (1711) he argued that we have a moral faculty which enables us to judge our own motives. We are virtuous when we act only on those we approve; and we approve only our benevolent or sociable motives. Shaftesbury thought that our moral sense must even be our guide in determining whether allegedly divine commands came from God or from some demon. Morality thus became an outgrowth of human feelings.

There was much debate in the eighteenth century about the respective roles of benevolence and self-interest in human psychology, and about whether either of them could be the sole explanation for our moral behaviour. Similarly there was considerable discussion of whether our moral convictions result from feeling, as Shaftesbury had suggested, or from reason, as the natural lawyers had believed. Both debates involve the question of the extent to which humans can be autonomous.

It was agreed on all sides that virtue requires us to work for the good of others. Some argued that this is shown us by moral feelings of approval and disapproval, others that it is learned by intuition or direct moral insight. In either case it might be argued that everyone could be aware of the requirements of morality, since brilliance and education are not required in order to have feelings or to intuit what is self-evident. Some criticized Hobbes's psychology, arguing that we naturally desire the good of others. Then external sanctions are not needed to motivate us; and as we can readily see what brings good to others, we can also direct our own actions without instruction. Those who held with Hobbes that self-interest is all that ever moves anyone tried to show that nature is so constituted that if we act for our own best interests, we will in fact be helping others. Some claimed that nothing is more enjoyable than virtue; others argued that virtue pays because without it we cannot get assistance in pursuing our own projects. In either case, the aim was to show that self-interest – traditionally maligned as the source of evil-doing – would naturally lead us to virtuous behaviour. Even a selfish human nature could then be seen as expressing itself through morality. (See Article 16, EGOISM.)

In all these debates no-one seemed able or willing to say more about the good than that it is whatever gives happiness or pleasure. Still, it was assumed that what we ought to do is always a function of what it would be good to bring about: action can only be right because it produces good. The two most original eighteenth-century moral philosophers, David Hume (1711-76) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) challenged this deeply rooted idea, Hume indirectly and in part, Kant frontally.

Hume rejected natural law models of morality and sought to show that a virtue-centred theory could best account for our moral convictions. Morality, he argued, must be rooted in our feelings, since morality moves us to action, and reason alone can never do so. (Michael Smith expounds this position in Article 35, REALISM.) Approval and disapproval are the moral feelings. They are directed at the basic desires and aversions that move us to action. We approve, Hume argued, of those that move us to do what is generally beneficial, and disapprove of those that cause harm. Though we are often self-interested, we also have desires for the good of others, and regular action arising from them constitutes virtue. This is at least the case with virtues such as parental affection and kindness to the needy, which express our natural concern for the well-being of others. The question was whether all the virtues can be explained in this way.

The problem case, Hume thought, was justice. One of his immediate predecessors, Bishop Butler (1692-1752) had noted that following the rules of justice does not always bring about a favourable balance of good either to the agent or to others – as when, for instance, a virtuous impoverished parent returns lost money to a miserly millionaire. If what is right is always determined by what is good, how can we account for the virtue of justice? Hume argued that what benefits society is having an accepted practice of following known rules of justice, even if the practice causes hardship in some cases. He also argued that a disinterested desire to observe these rules grows naturally within us, out of sympathetic appreciation of the feelings of others. On Hume's view we can see how even the virtue of obeying laws can arise entirely from our own feelings and desires.

Kant held a more radical version of the view that morality arises from human nature. He took the central point about morality to be that it imposes absolute duties on us, showing us what we have to do no matter what. But he held that this special kind of moral necessity could only arise from a law we impose on ourselves. The clue to Kant's view is freedom. When we know we morally must do something, we know we can do it: and this can only be true if we are free. Freedom in action excludes determination by anything outside ourselves, and it is not merely undetermined, or random, behaviour. The sole way in which we can be free, for Kant, is if our actions are determined by something within our own nature. This means that in free action we cannot be pursuing natural goods, or conforming to eternal laws or laws God imposes, because in all those cases we would be determined by something external to ourselves. Our moral obligations must arise from a law which we ourselves legislate.

The moral law, Kant holds, is not a requirement to do good to others. It tells us rather to act only in ways which we could rationally agree to have everyone act. The law thus sets a formal requirement, and its function in our thinking is to serve as a test for our plans. Each of us, Kant holds, can methodically think out whether a planned action is allowable or not by asking: can I without self-contradiction will this plan to be a law according to which everyone always acts? Only if I can am I permitted to act on it. The Kantian position is thus a far more thorough alternative than Hume's to the view that good consequences always determine what is right. For Kant we must always settle what is right before we can know what is good.

Kant also holds that a special motive is involved in morality. Our awareness of our activity in legislating for ourselves generates a special respect for the law we have imposed. Since it is always possible for us to be dutiful out of respect, we need not depend on external sources for motivation any more than for guidance. We are fully autonomous. (For a more detailed account see Article 14, KANTIAN ETHICS.)

Kant held an extreme form of the view that morality is an expression of human nature. But one central part at least of his revolutionary view was advocated, quite independently, by both Thomas Reid (1710-96), founder of the important nineteenth-century Scottish 'common sense' school, and Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), the originator of modern utilitarianism. This was the belief that ordinary people can get adequate guidance for action by consciously applying abstract moral principles. Earlier thinkers had appealed to such principles to explain moral decisions, but did not think that everyone possessed a methodical way of consciously using them. After the work of Kant, Reid, and Bentham, it became widely accepted that a basic principle of morality had to be one which could actually be used by everyone alike.

Thomas Reid, the most conservative of the three, held that common-sense morality embodies principles whose truth everyone can see intuitively and can readily apply. We just know we are required to help others, act fairly, tell the truth, and so on. No further systematization of these principles is possible, or needed. Thus common sense and with it the moral competence of the individual are vindicated against theoretical doubts and simplifications. From this position Reid argued against the secularistic hedonism he saw in Hume. He aimed to defend Christianity, now built into common sense, against its detractors. Bentham, by contrast, thought that appeals to intuition simply hid the dangerous self-interest of those who made them. He claimed that his utilitarian principle – that we are to act so as to bring about the greatest happiness of the greatest number – was rational on the face of it, and provided a rational method of making moral decisions. And he held that no other principle did so. If producing the general happiness and producing our own do not always call for the same action, then, he said, we should change society so that they do: otherwise people will not be reliably moved to act as morality requires. It is no accident that Bentham and his philosophy were the centre of an active group of political reformers.

ii Autonomy and theory: pro and con

In its second period, after Kant, Reid, and Bentham, the enterprise of moral philosophy became more fragmented by nationalities than it had earlier been, and grew increasingly into a technical subject for university study rather than a topic of concern for the whole of educated society. At the cost of ignoring much of its ever more sophisticated development, I will discuss only three aspects of the work done during the period: (1) the continuation of efforts to vindicate and explain moral autonomy; (2) efforts to assert the primacy of the community over the individual; (3) the rise of nihilism and relativism, and the increased significance of questions about the epistemology of morals.

(1) Bentham's utilitarian theory led to some new questions. The principle seemed to yield moral conclusions strongly at odds with common-sense convictions: and despite Bentham's claim that it could be used for decision making, it seemed to call for calculations ordinary people could not make. John Stuart Mill (1806-73) worked out replies in his *Utilitarianism* (1863). Common-sense morality, he said, which we all learn as children, represents the accumulated wisdom of mankind about the desirable and undesirable consequences of actions. Hence we can and must live by it, except in usual or new cases, when direct appeal to the principle of utility is appropriate. But in those cases, common sense is itself apt to be undecided. Utilitarianism so interpreted will not lead to conclusions common sense finds unacceptable. So no appeal to intuitively grasped non-utilitarian principles is needed to explain our ordinary morality. Mill also proposed a new theory of moral motivation. We can come to be directly attached to our moral principles, he argued, just as a miser becomes attached to his money, even if we start by viewing them as instrumental to our own happiness. We can thus have inner motivation to act morally, and so be fully autonomous. (Issues underlying utilitarianism receive more detailed discussion elsewhere in this volume, especially in Article 9: CONSEQUENTIALISM and Article 20, UTILITY AND THE GOOD.) See also Article 40, UNIVERSAL PRESCRIPTIVISM.

Utilitarians continued the attempt to derive principles of right action entirely from consideration of the good that right acts bring about. Though Mill argued for a more complex understanding of human happiness than Bentham allowed, he still held the good to be essentially a matter of satisfying preferences which differ, often drastically, from person to person. Intuitionists, in opposition, held that principles of right action could not simply be derived from consideration of what people actually want. You cannot, they held, even draw a valid conclusion about what is good simply from premises about what people actually want. The premise 'whatever people want is good' must be added. Otherwise the basic principle of utilitarianism has no foundation. But only intuition, it was argued, can supply the missing premise. And in fact, the intuitionists held, not everything people want is good. As Reid had claimed, there are self-evident principles requiring justice and veracity as well as benevolence, and sometimes in conflict with it. So guidance about right action cannot be obtained solely from considering the good.

The nineteenth-century British intuitionists, of whom William Whewell (1794-1866) was the most distinguished, were trying to defend a Christian ethic against the utilitarian claim that the point of morality is to produce worldly happiness for all. But their intuitionism allowed that each person had the ability to know what morality requires. In *The Methods of Ethics* (1874), Henry Sidgwick tried to show that the intuitionist view about the foundations of morality could serve the utilitarian view about its point. Utilitarianism, he allowed, needed an intuition as its foundation; but without the utilitarian method, intuitionism would be useless in settling moral disputes. He argued in detail for the view that utilitarianism gives the best theoretical account of common-sense convictions.

Other varieties of intuitionism were also developed. The German-speaking philosophers Franz Brentano (1838-1917), Max Scheler (1874-1928) and Nicolai Hartmann (1882-1950) worked out different theories of the general nature of value, with moral value as one species. In opposition to Kant, they argued that through feeling we have access to a realm of real values; and they spelled out the structures or hierarchies of objectively existing values thus given to us. These values show the content of the good, and ultimately set the direction for right action. This enables us to move beyond the view, shared by Kant and the utilitarians, that the good for man can only be defined in terms of satisfaction of desires. A similar view of the objectivity and multiplicity of values was defended in England by G.E. Moore, who argued in *Principia Ethica* (1903) that knowledge of values could not be derived from knowledge of facts, but only from intuition of the goodness of kinds of states of affairs, such as beauty, pleasure, friendship, and knowledge. Right acts are those producing the most good, he held, thus advocating a form of utilitarianism going beyond the hedonistic version. But unlike Kantianism and classical utilitarianism, which both claim to provide a rational procedure for settling moral disputes, the intuitional views all rely ultimately on claims to insight, and offer no method for settling disagreements.

(2) The view that moral community depends on decisions made separately by individuals capable of seeing for themselves what morality requires occupied a major place in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Western thought. But there has also been a constant stream of thinkers rejecting it. Among the early reactions to Kant, the criticisms by G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) are most significant. Hegel pointed out that Kant's purely formal principle requires content, and argued that the content can only come from the institutions, vocabularies, and orientations with which society provides its members. The moral personality, Hegel argued, is and must be formed by the community in which the person lives. The claim to have a critical standpoint wholly beyond it is unsustainable; and the community has a structure and an impetus of its own that goes far beyond anything individual choice could deliberately construct. In France Auguste Comte (1798-1857) developed a philosophy of the historical evolution of society that ignored individual moral judgement in favour of policies to be derived from an ever-improving scientific sociology. The stress placed by Karl Marx (1818-83) on inevitable historical development generated by economic forces also attributes little importance to the choices and principles of the individual.

It is often said that although these writers have strong moral views, they have no moral philosophy; but their refusal to give a central place to individual morality as Kant and Mill saw it is itself a philosophical position about how we are to view the ethics of the self-directing agent.

American pragmatism has had less to say about morality than about other subjects, but John Dewey (1859-1952), influenced by Hegelian claims about the primacy of the community in structuring the moral personality, was a notable exception. In *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922) and other works he tried to show that a liberal society need not presuppose, as Hegel had claimed, either a standpoint outside history or a single abstract principle as its basis. Though individuals are shaped by their community, they can through rational inquiry devise new solutions to social problems, working consciously together to reform their community and their own moral outlooks.

(3) Sceptical and relativistic doubts about the existence of an eternal universally binding morality, arising from awareness of the variety of codes and practices throughout the world, had been voiced by Montaigne and debated during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The issue was revived with great force and depth by the brilliant and unsettling attacks which Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) directed against all pretensions of societies or theorists to deliver principles properly binding on everyone. In *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887) and other works Nietzsche did not try to refute Kantian and utilitarian theories. Instead he exposed what he took to be the psychological forces leading people to assert such views. The struggle for mastery, and envy and resentment of those who achieved it, were the roots of modern morality. Not even abstract claims to rationality escaped Nietzsche's unmasking: they too, he held, are fronts behind which nothing but the struggle for power is hidden. There is no impersonal guide to action: all one can do is decide what sort of person one proposes to be, and strive to be so.

The rise of modern anthropology encouraged philosophers like Edward Westermarck (1862-1939) to reopen the old relativistic question of whether there is such a thing as moral knowledge. The debate continues, as Article 39, RELATIVISM, indicates. More generally, science-oriented logical positivists such as Moritz Schlick (1881-1936) held that any alleged beliefs not meeting the tests that scientific beliefs can meet are not simply false: they are meaningless. Moore and others had convinced many people that claims about morality cannot be derived from statements of fact. If that is so, the positivists held, then moral beliefs cannot be empirically tested in the way that scientific beliefs can. Hence moral beliefs are really just expressions of feeling, not cognitive claims at all. The debate thus initiated about the meaning of moral language and the possibility of moral reasoning began in the 1930s and lasted for several decades. (See Article 38, SUBJECTIVISM.)

Unlike earlier discussions of morality, this controversy seemed to be wholly indifferent to the substantive issues of what principles or values should be sustained. It was often said that these were 'meta-ethical' issues, and that philosophers should and could say nothing about actual moral problems and specific principles. But the whole debate was structured by the assumption that what matters about morality is that individuals should be able to make their own moral decisions and live accordingly. The question concerned the status of individual decision-making: is it an outcome of knowledge, or a matter of feeling or custom? In an oddly similar vein the continental writers who, like Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-80) developed existentialist thought, reached back to Nietzschean views to argue that morality rests on nothing but the totally untrammelled free decision of each individual. Nothing general could be said about morality, Sartre held, because each person must make a purely personal decision about it and then, to be in good faith, live accordingly.

If the existentialists expressed their moral outlooks rather through literature than through formal studies of ethics, this is hardly surprising. The philosophers interested in meta-ethical issues moved back to the study of moral principles, sometimes by means of arguments to the effect that morality can have its own kind of non-scientific rationality and that certain specific principles are required if morality is to be rational. R. M. Hare, Kurt Baier, and Richard Brandt are among the many philosophers working on these lines. (See Article 40, UNIVERSAL PRESCRIPTIVISM, written by Hare, for an example.) They all see the ultimate point of morality as increasing human happiness by providing rational methods for resolving disputes. Though other positions were voiced, it would be fair to say that broadly utilitarian views dominated Anglo-American ethics through the nineteen-sixties.

iii New directions

In opposition to the long tradition of utilitarian thought, Kantian views have more recently been revitalized. Here the work of John Rawls is central. His *A Theory of Justice* (1971) attempts to show how principles of right action, at least in the domain of justice, are justifiable independently of the amount of good that just action brings about. And he has argued powerfully that no utilitarian account of justice can as adequately incorporate our strong common-sense convictions as can his Kantian view that the right is prior to the good.

Rawls's work indicates not only a new rejection of utilitarian thinking. It signals a turn away from the preoccupation with seeing morality as structured around the self-governing individual and taking moral philosophy to have the task of explaining how such an individual can operate. Rawls holds that the problems of justice cannot be resolved by decisions individuals make separately. The issues are simply too complex. Justice can only be achieved through something like a social contract, in which we all autonomously agree on how the basic institutions of our society must be structured so as to be just. Rawls thus tries to combine an Hegelian recognition of the priority of community with a reinterpretation of the Kantian insistence on autonomy.

Three further concerns have marked recent developments in moral philosophy. (1) Much work is being done on actual social and political problems. As the essays in Part V of this volume indicate, questions concerning abortion, environmental ethics, just war, medical treatment, business practices, the rights of animals, and the position of women and children occupy a considerable part of the literature and teaching considered to be moral philosophy or ethics. (2) There has been a return to the Aristotelian vision of morality as centrally a matter of virtue, rather than abstract principles. Alasdair MacIntyre and Bernard Williams, among others, attempt to develop a communitarian view of moral personality and of the functioning of morality. (See Article 21, VIRTUE THEORY.) (3) Finally, there has been a rapid growth of interest in the problems posed by the need to co-ordinate the behaviour of many individuals if effective action is to be taken. If too many people use a lake for a rural retreat, no-one will get the solitude each desires; but one person's decision to stay away may do no good; how are we to decide what is to be done? Many issues, including preservation of resources and the environment, population control, and the prevention of nuclear war seem to have similar structure, and moral philosophers along with economists, mathematicians, and others are being drawn to them.

Issues like these, affecting groups or communities of autonomous individuals, may be coming to have more importance for modern moral philosophy than the historically central problem of explaining and validating the morally autonomous individual as such.

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Buddhism

The Religious Experience of Mankind – Smart N (Collins, 1977) pages 15-25

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The Dimensions of Religion

The problem arises because there are different aspects or, as I shall call them, *dimensions* of religion. Whether we include Marxism as a religion depends on which dimension we regard as crucial for our definition. It will therefore be useful to analyse these various dimensions.

The Ritual Dimension

If we were asked the use or purpose of such buildings as temples and churches, we would not be far wrong in saying that they are used for ritual or ceremonial purposes. Religion tends in part to express itself through such rituals: through worship, prayers, offerings, and the like. We may call this the *ritual* dimension of religion. About this, some important comments need to be made.

First, when we think of ritual we often think of something very formal and elaborate, like a High Mass or the Liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox Church. But it is worth remarking that even the simplest form of religious service involves ritual, in the sense of some form of outer behaviour (such as closing one’s eyes in prayer) coordinated to an inner intention to make contact with, or to participate in, the invisible world. I am not concerned here with those who deny the existence of such an ‘invisible world,’ however interpreted, whether as God’s presence, as nirvana, as a sacred energy pervading nature. Whether or not such an invisible world exists, it forms an aspect of the world seen from the point of view of those who participate in religion. It is believed in. As was said earlier, it is not here our task to pass judgment on the truth or otherwise of religious conceptions. First, then, even the simplest service involves ritual.

Second, since ritual involves both an inner and an outer aspect it is always possible that the latter will come to dominate the former. Ritual then degenerates into a mechanical or conventional process. If people go through the motions of religious observance without accompanying it with the intentions and sentiments which give it human meaning, ritual is merely an empty shell. This is the reason why some religious activities are condemned as ‘ritualistic.’ But it would be wrong to conclude that because ritualism in this bad sense exists, therefore ritual is an unimportant or degenerate aspect of religion.

It should not be forgotten that there are secular rituals which we all use, and these can form an integral part of personal and social relationships. Greeting someone with a ‘Good morning,’ saying goodbye, saluting the flag—all these in differing ways are secular rituals. Very often in society they are integrated with religious rituals, as when men say ‘God be with you,’ which is more than taking leave of someone: it is invoking a blessing upon the other person.

Third, it will prove convenient to extend the meaning of ‘ritual’ beyond its reference to the forms of worship, sacrifice, etc, directed toward God or the gods.

It happens that a crucial part is played in India and elsewhere by yoga and analogous techniques of self-training. The ultimate aim of such methods is the attainment of higher states of consciousness, through which the adept has experience of release from worldly existence, of nirvana, of ultimate reality (the interpretation partly depends on the system of doctrines against which the adept tests his experience). Thus the essence of such religion is contemplative or mystical. Sometimes, it is pursued without reference to God or the gods—for example, in Buddhism, where the rituals of a religion of worship and sacrifice are regarded as largely irrelevant to the pursuit of nirvana. Nevertheless the techniques of self-training have an analogy to ritual: the adept performs various physical and mental exercises through which he hopes to concentrate the mind on the transcendent, invisible world, or to withdraw his senses from their usual immersion in the flow of empirical experiences. This aspect of religion, then, we shall include in our definition of the ritual dimension. It can be classified as pragmatic (aimed at the attainment of certain experiences) in distinction from sacred ritual (directed toward a holy being, such as God). Sometimes the two forms of ritual are combined, as in Christian mysticism.

The meaning of ritual cannot be understood without reference to the environment of belief in which it is performed. Thus prayer in most ritual is directed toward a divine being. Very often, legends about the gods are used to explain the features of a ceremony or festival; and often the important events of human life, such as birth, marriage, death, are invested with a sacred significance by relating them to the divine world.

All this can happen before a religion has any theology or formal system of doctrines. Theology is an attempt to introduce organization and intellectual power into what is found in less explicit form in the deposit of revelation or traditional mythology of a religion. The collection of myths, images, and stories through which the invisible world is symbolized can suitably be called the *mythological* dimension of religion.

The Mythological Dimension

Some important comments need to be made about this mythological dimension. First, in accordance with modern usage in theology and in the comparative study of religion, the terms ‘myth,’ ‘mythological,’ etc, are *not* used to mean that the content is false. Perhaps in ordinary English to say ‘It’s a myth’ is just a way of saying ‘It’s false.’ But the use of the term *myth* in relation to religious phenomena is quite neutral as to the truth or falsity of the story enshrined in the myth. In origin, the term ‘myth’ means ‘story,’ and in calling something a story we are not thereby saying that it is true or false. We are just reporting on what has been said. Similarly, here we are concerned with reporting on what is believed.

Second, it is convenient to use the term to include not merely stories about God (for instance the story of the creation in Genesis), about the gods (for instance in Homer’s *Iliad*), etc, but also the historical events of religious significance in a tradition. For example, the Passover ritual in Judaism re-enacts a highly important event that once occurred to the children of Israel; their delivery from bondage in Egypt. The historical event functions as a myth. Thus we shall include stories relating to significant historical events under the head of the mythological dimension—again without prejudice to whether the stories accurately describe what actually occurred in history.

The Doctrinal Dimension

Third, it is not always easy to differentiate the mythological and the symbolic from what is stated in theology. Doctrines are an attempt to give system, clarity and intellectual power to what is revealed through the mythological and symbolic language of religious faith and ritual. Naturally, theology must make use of the symbols and myths. For example, when the Christian theologian has to describe the meaning of the Incarnation, he must necessarily make use of Biblical language and history. Thus the dividing line between the mythological and what I shall call the doctrinal dimension is not easy to draw. Yet there is clearly a distinction between Aquinas’ treatment of creation at the philosophical level and the colourful story of creation in Genesis. The distinction is important, because the world religions owe some of their living power to their success in presenting a total picture of reality, through a coherent system of doctrines.

The Ethical Dimension

Throughout history we find that religions usually incorporate a code of ethics. Ethics concern the behaviour of the individual and, to some extent, the code of ethics of the dominant religion controls the community. Quite obviously, men do not always live up to the standards they profess. And sometimes the standards which are inculcated by the dominant faith in a particular society may not be believed by all sections of that society.

Even so, there is no doubt that religions have been influential in moulding the ethical attitudes of the societies they are part of. It is important, however, to distinguish between the moral teaching incorporated in the doctrines and mythology of a religion, and the social facts concerning those who adhere to the faith in question. For instance, Christianity teaches ‘Love thy neighbour as thyself.’ As a matter of sociological fact, quite a lot of people in so-called Christian countries, where Christianity is the official or dominant religion, fail to come anywhere near this ideal. The man who goes to church is not necessarily loving; nor is the man who goes to a Buddhist temple necessarily compassionate. Consequently, we must distinguish between the ethical teachings of a faith, which we shall discuss as the *ethical* dimension of religion, and the actual sociological effects and circumstances of a religion.

Pertinent to this point is the consideration that most religions are institutionalized. This is most obvious in technologically primitive societies, where the priest, soothsayer, or magician is closely integrated into the social structure. Religion is not just a personal matter here: it is part of the life of the community. It is built into the institutions of daily life. But even in sophisticated communities where a line is drawn between religious and secular concerns, as in contemporary America, churches exist as institutions to be reckoned with. They are part of the 'establishment.' In areas where there is active or latent persecution of religious faith, as in the Soviet Union, there are still organizations for continuing religious activities.

The Social Dimension

Religions are not just systems of *belief*: they are also organizations, or parts of organizations. They have a communal and social significance. This social shape of a religion is, of course, to some extent determined by the religious and ethical ideals and practices that it harbours. Conversely, it often happens that the religious and ethical ideals are adapted to existing social conditions and attitudes. For example, Japanese fishermen reconcile the Buddhist injunction against taking life (even animal or fish life) to their activity as fishermen. The Christian's dedication to brotherly love or his attitude to war may be determined more by patriotism and a national crisis than by the Gospel. Thus, it is important to distinguish between the ethical dimension of religion and the *social* dimension. The latter is the mode in which the religion in question is institutionalized, whereby, through its institutions and teachings, it affects the community in which it finds itself.

The doctrinal, mythological, and ethical dimensions express a religion's claims about the nature of the invisible world and its aims about how men's lives ought to be shaped: the social dimension indicates the way in which men's lives are in fact shaped by these claims and the way in which religious institutions operate.

It is, incidentally, clear that the ongoing patterns of ritual are an important element in the institutionalization of religion. For example, if it is believed that certain ceremonies and sacraments can only be properly performed by a priest, then the religious institution will be partly determined by the need to maintain and protect a professional priesthood.

The Experiential Dimension

The dimensions we have so far discussed would indeed be hard to account for were it not for the dimension with which this book is centrally concerned: that of experience, the experiential dimension. Although men may hope to have contact with, and participate in, the invisible world through ritual, personal religion normally involves the hope of, or realization of, experience of that world. The Buddhist monk hopes for nirvana, and this includes the contemplative experience of peace and of insight into the transcendent. The Christian who prays to God believes normally that God answers prayer—and this not just 'externally' in bringing about certain states of affairs, such as a cure for illness, but more importantly 'internally' in the personal relationship that flowers between the man who prays and his Maker. The prayerful Christian believes that God does speak to men in an intimate way and that the individual can and does have an inner experience of God. Hence, personal religion necessarily involves what we have called the experiential dimension.

The factor of religious experience is even more crucial when we consider the events and the human lives from which the great religions have stemmed. The Buddha achieved Enlightenment as he sat in meditation beneath the Bo-Tree. As a consequence of his shattering mystical experience, he believed that he had the secret of the cure for the suffering and dissatisfactions of life in this world. We have records of the inaugural visions of some of the Old Testament prophets, of the experiences that told them something profoundly important about God and that spurred them on to teach men in his name. It was through such experiences that Muhammad began to preach the unity of Allah—a preaching that had an explosive impact upon the world from Central Asia to Spain. One cannot read the Upanishads, the source of so much of Hindu doctrine, without feeling the experience on which their teachings are founded. The most striking passage in the *Bhagavadgita*, perhaps the greatest religious document of Hinduism, is that in which the Lord reveals himself in terrifying splendour to Arjuna. Arjuna is overwhelmed by awe and filled with utter devotion. We have already remarked on the seminal importance of St. Paul's similar experience on the Damascus Road.

The words of Jesus Christ reveal his sense of intimate closeness to the Father; there is little doubt that this rested upon highly significant personal experiences. These and other examples can be given of the crucial part played by religious experience in the genesis of the great faiths.

For this reason, it is unrealistic to treat Marxism as a religion: though it possesses doctrines, symbols, a moral code, and even sometimes rituals, it denies the possibility of an experience of the invisible world. Neither relationship to a personal God nor the hope of an experience of salvation or nirvana can be significant for the Marxist. Likewise Humanism, because it fixes its sights on this-worldly aims, is essentially non-religious. Nevertheless, it is necessary for us to examine the impact of these faiths upon the contemporary world. But the main emphasis will be upon the inner side—what religions mean in personal experience, and how they have been moulded by such experience.

There is a special difficulty, however, in undertaking a description of a religious experience. We have to rely upon the testimony of those who have the experience, and their reports must be conveyed to us either by telling or writing. Sometimes accounts of prophetic or mystical experience of important religious leaders have been preserved by oral tradition through many generations before being written down. But for the most part, the individual religious experiences that have influenced large segments of mankind occurred in cultures that knew the art of writing.

This means that the experience occurred in the context of the existing religions which already had a doctrinal dimension. This raises a problem for us in our attempt to understand the unique religious experience of the prophets or founders of religions, for their experiences are likely to be interpreted in the light of existing doctrines, as well as clothed in the mythological and symbolic forms of the age. There is less difficulty when we consider the 'lesser' figures of the religions—not the founders, but those saints and visionaries who come after. They interpret their experiences in terms of received doctrines and mythologies.

For these reasons, it is not easy to know about a given report which of the elements in it are based, so to say, purely on the experience itself, and which are due to doctrinal and mythological interpretation. To some extent the problem can be overcome by comparing the reports of men of different cultures—such as India and the West—which had virtually no contact during the periods crucial for the formation and elaboration of the dominant religious beliefs.

Moreover, it is worth noting that there is a *dialectic* between experience and doctrine. Thus, though the Buddha, for example, took over elements from the thought-forms of his own age, he was genuinely a creative teacher, who introduced new elements and transmuted the old. The Old Testament prophets fashioned a genuinely original ethical monotheism from an existant belief in Yahweh. The changes they made in the simple tribal religious teaching they inherited can be understood, to some degree, in terms of the impact of the personal religious experiences that were revelatory for these men. Thus experience and doctrinal interpretation have a dialectical relationship. The latter colours the former, but the former also shapes the latter. This book will attempt to exhibit this dialectic at work.

This dialectical interplay also helps us to understand some of the features of personal religion at a humbler level. The Christian, for example, is taught certain doctrines and mythological symbols by his parents. He learns to call God 'Our Father'; he is instructed to believe that the world is created by God and sustained by God. These ideas will at first simply be 'theoretical' as far as the young Christian is concerned, on a par with other non-observable theories he learns about the world, such as that the earth goes round the sun. But suppose he progresses to a deeper understanding of the Christian faith through a particular personal experience, or through his response to the ritual and ethical demands of the religion. Then he will come to see that in some mysterious way God is a person with whom he can have contact; God is not just like the sun, to be thought of speculatively, or to be looked at. Personally, then, he discovers that he can worship and pray to God. In short, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth' will come to have a new meaning for him. In a sense, he will now believe something other than what he first believed. In this way, the interplay between doctrine and experiences is fundamental to religion.

‘Buddhism’ – Griffiths P in

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This article will outline the philosophical problems that have seemed most urgent to Buddhist thinkers, together with the kinds of answers they have found persuasive.

Tradition and sources

Buddhism began in India with the birth of Gautama Sakyamuni, the Buddha, about 500 years before Christ. While it effectively ceased to exist in most of the Indian subcontinent by the twelfth century CE, it had by then spread through almost all of South, Central, and East Asia. It remains a significant presence in many parts of Asia (and has seen a revival in India since independence) though the effects of European colonialism since the sixteenth century, and of the Communist revolutions of the twentieth, have on the whole been negative.

Buddhist philosophers have therefore done their work in a wide variety of languages and cultural settings. There is a massive amount of material available in the imperial and canonical languages of Pali, Chinese, Tibetan, Korean, and Japanese; some literary remnants of a once-flourishing Sanskrit Buddhist philosophical tradition: and much work in a variety of South and Central Asian vernaculars. Only a tiny proportion of this body of work has been translated into European languages, and even less has been given serious study by European or American philosophers. This situation creates some difficulties. The first is that of fragmentary and partial knowledge: we do not know as much as we should in order to make responsible generalizations about Buddhist philosophical concerns. And the second is that of internal variety: the Buddhist tradition is, if anything, even more differentiated than the Christian: while it may be difficult to see what unites (or even connects) Origen and Jonathan Edwards, philosophically speaking, it is even more difficult to see what unites connects Buddhaghosa (a philosopher working in Sri Lanka about 1,500 years ago) with Nichiren (a philosopher working in Japan about 700 years ago) – even though both are Buddhist. These difficulties should be borne in mind when reading what follows, and it should also be noted that what is said here is drawn more from Indo-Tibetan materials than from Sino-Japanese ones.

Ontology

Buddhist philosophers typically think of themselves as arguing for a middle way between extremes, whether of asceticism and indulgence in matters of the flesh, determinism and randomness in causal relations, or eternalism and nihilism in ontology. The necessity of steering a course between the members of this last pair – the view on the one hand that everything exists just as it seems, eternally and without change: and on the other that nothing at all exists – provides Buddhist philosophers with their main impulse toward systematic ontology. The rubric usually used to direct this enterprise is the claim that everything (or at least almost everything: there are some difficulties here) is impermanent, which is typically taken to mean that in so far as anything exists at all, it has both a beginning and an end in time, and that the amount of time separating these two events is very small. Ratnakirti, an eleventh century Indian Buddhist philosopher, provides a systematic and classical defense of one version of this basic insight (for a translation see McDermott 1970).

This claim as to impermanence is not of merely conceptual or academic interest to Buddhist philosophers. On it is thought to hang much of strictly religious significance, for if you get your ontology wrong, if you misconstrue the nature of what exists, you are very likely also to have improper emotional reactions to your misconstruals: to become excessively attached to what is (falsely) thought to be beginninglessly and endlessly desirable (God, perhaps; or other human persons), which is eternalism; or to despair at the (mistaken) judgment that there exists nothing at all, which is nihilism. One result of such conceptual mistakes will be continued rebirth and redeath in the cycle of Samsara, and a concomitant failure to reach Nirvana. The claim that everything is impermanent, then, is an initial step in the development of an ontology that will be accurate and that will as a result foster a properly dispassionate emotional condition. But it is a claim capable of numerous construals. Four have been influential among Buddhist philosophers, and to varying degrees they all remain so.

The first is an attempt to develop an atomistic ontology according to which every existent occupies the smallest amount of space possible and lasts for the shortest amount of time possible. These existents were called by the Sanskrit term *dharma* in India, where this ontology was first systematized: and both the theory and the texts in which it was expressed are often referred to by the name *abhidharma*. Its most influential exposition may be found in a work called *Abhidharmakosa* ('Treasury of Abhidharma'), probably composed in India in the fourth century CE by Vasubandhu (for a translation see Pruden 1988-90). According to this theory, objects that appear to be extended in space or to last longer than an instant are in fact composed of collocations of *dharmas*, either aggregated in space or strung together causally through time. Further, proponents of this ontology are typically interested in providing a catalogue or list of the kinds of *dharma* there are, and then of accounting for medium-sized physical objects – trees, say, or tables – in terms of the different kinds of *dharma* that may be found aggregated or connected causally in them. A typical list is fairly short, containing between 50 and 150 categories, including items such as tangibility, shape/color, perception, memory, and anger. Such lists are meant to be exhaustive, to provide a catalogue of every kind of existent, and as a result also to make it possible to account for everything ordinarily perceived and thought to exist – things such as human persons, stars, and holes in the ground. Both mental and physical phenomena are included in the *dharma* lists.

An ontology of this sort immediately suggests some problems. First, it requires a sophisticated causal theory, for if all ordinary objects of sensory perception are to be accounted for in terms of causal interaction among *dharmas*, a tremendously complex account of even the simplest of events will be needed. And Buddhist philosophers have in fact developed an appropriately nuanced and subtle (if unwieldy) causal theory, often using the ancient twelvefold formula of dependent co-origination (*pratitya-samutpada*) as a starting point (Lamotte 1958, pp. 23-53, provides the details). Second, there are difficulties with the idea of something that exists for an irreducibly small amount of time and takes up an irreducibly small amount of space. If a *dharma* takes up any space at all, or lasts for any time at all, why can it not be further subdivided into existents that take up less space and time? Third, how can disputes as to just which categories are needed to give the shortest possible comprehensive list of kinds of existents (are 50 categories needed? or 100? should memory be an item on the list or not?) be resolved? And fourth, might not the attribution of real (if transient) existence to the *dharmas* offend against the basic philosophico-religious insight that one's ontology should not foster improper attachments? These difficulties contributed to the development of other construals of the basic claim that everything is impermanent, for example the one discussed below.

The second influential construal is that associated with thinkers belonging to the Madhyamaka ('Middle') school of thought, among whom the Indian philosopher Nagarjuna, who may have lived in the first or second century CE, is considered the founder (for a translation of one of his works see Bhattacharya 1986). Nagarjuna, and his followers and commentators in India, Tibet, and China, argued that the pluralistic atomism of the defenders of *dharma* theory has internal problems of the kinds mentioned, and that the basic philosophical insight that everything is impermanent should be interpreted much more radically in order to avoid these difficulties. This Madhyamaka radicalization makes central use of the dialectical arguments associated with the idea of emptiness (*sunyata*). These arguments try to show that every version of realism, every view that assumes or tries to show that there are individuable and describable entities possessed of defining characteristics that make them what they are and not something else, is either *prima facie* incoherent or can be shown by argument to issue in incoherence. This, it is said, is just as true of an ontology based upon *dharmas* as it is of one based upon the idea that there are enduring substances; and so all ontologies of these kinds had better be dropped. An added advantage, according to this way of thinking, is that such a radical rejection of realism will do even more than *dharma* theory to dispose of inappropriate emotional responses issuing

from ontological misconceptions. This second ontological construal is not, according to its understanding of itself, nihilism: it is, rather, an attempt at a principled rejection of the language of existence and non-existence. To say that everything is empty is not to deny that there is anything so much as to say that all attempts to catalogue and define what there is will necessarily issue in incoherence.

Yet a third ontological position agrees with the Madhyamaka rejection of the realistic pluralism of the *dharma* theorists, but differs from it in affirming the final reality of a single category: that of mind. So this broadly idealistic construal differs from that of the emptiness theorists principally in that it is willing to state a positive ontology. According to most defenders of the mind-only ontology there are two main reasons to prefer this construal. First, it is not subject to the internal difficulties of *dharma* theory: much emphasis is typically placed here upon the difficulty of coherently explaining the idea of a partless spatially or temporally extended object, which is what a *dharma* must be. And second – or so argue the defenders of the view – it is possible to give a coherent and complete account of human experience without being forced to appeal to external mind-independent objects. Much is made here of dream-experience: if it is characteristic of mind-independent objects that they appear to be located at particular places and times, that they are intersubjectively available, and that they have direct and apparently physical effects upon those who come into contact with them (for a classical statement of these points see Anacker 1984, pp. 161-75), then all these things can be true of objects that everyone agrees to be mental, such as dream-images. Why then, given the internal difficulties in doing so, postulate any mind-independent objects at all? The simplest coherent position, according to this construal, is the view that there is only mind. This position, or family of positions, also has its internal difficulties and tensions; but it has been and remains one of the more important construals of the basic ontological intuition.

There is yet a fourth ontological construal. It too, like the other three, claims to be founded upon the basic intuition, but it has a more difficult time than the others in showing this to be the case. This is because this view focuses upon a set of changeless facts about the cosmos, and as a result appears to run directly contrary to the claim that everything is impermanent. Adherents of this construal tend to say that everything that exists has the potential to become fully awakened, to become Buddha; or to say that there is some sense in which everything that exists already is awakened, already is Buddha (on which view see Ruegg 1989, and Griffiths 1994). It is likely that this ontological position grew out of, or is in some way significantly related to, speculation about the nature and properties of the Buddha. For if, as many Buddhist philosophers say, Buddha is strictly omniscient, and if this means that Buddha has directly present to its awareness all states of affairs, then there must be some sense in which this infinite set of states of affairs can be known atemporally. But it can also be shown that this fourth construal is not logically incompatible with the claim that everything is impermanent; for by applying a theory of types it is easy to show that the state of affairs picked out by the claim *everything is impermanent* is not itself impermanent, but rather permanent. And in similar fashion, the claim *everything is already and always Buddha*, it can be argued, is not obviously or directly incompatible with the claim that everything is impermanent, but is instead a restatement of the implications of that claim.

These four construals of the fundamental ontological intuition have provided, and continue to provide, the main options in Buddhist ontology. Their terms are the terms of most Buddhist philosophizing in this area, and it should be clear from what little has been said in this discussion that they provide much scope for fruitful and interesting philosophical debate: a strong proponent of the claim that everything is always already awakened is likely to have much to say in disagreement with a strong proponent of *dharma* theory.

Epistemology and philosophy of language

According to Buddhist ontology things are not as they seem. Any ontology whose upshot is such a view must work to develop an epistemology and a theory of language that cohere with it, for the ordinary commonsense versions of both these enterprises tend to assume, to the contrary, that things are pretty much as they seem, and that human languages as ordinarily used can get rather close to accurate and adequate description of the way things are. Buddhist philosophers, constrained by this necessity, put a lot of effort into elaborating epistemological and linguistic theories that will do the job they need done.

To take philosophy of language first, Buddhists tend to exhibit a deep suspicion of language, and its correlate, concept formation. One form of this suspicion – perhaps the most extreme form – is evident in the attempt by some (especially those versed in Madhyamaka modes of thought) to engage in philosophical argumentation without making any substantive claims, but rather only by laying bare the contradictions present in or entailed by those put forth by others. But this proved a controversial strategy even among Buddhists, and still more so among their non-Buddhist interlocutors and debaters in India and China. The chief issue here was whether the view, ‘I have no philosophical views,’ is itself a philosophical view, and, if it is, whether it does not fall victim to a common but damaging form of self-referential incoherence. This debate surfaces already in the work of Nagarjuna (Bhattacharya 1986, pp. 107-14), and thereafter becomes a standard part of philosophical debate in this tradition of reasoning.

But there are other ways to treat and elaborate this suspicion of language and concept. Some Buddhists deploy a distinction between two kinds of truth, one of which operates at the level of appearance and talks of such things as tables, chairs, and persons, and the other of which transcends language and conceptual distinctions altogether, and issues finally in silence. Others use a theory of the relations between words and things that makes such relations always indirect: using a term such as ‘cow,’ for instance, does not on this view involve any reference to a particular cow, nor to the presence of the universal ‘cowness’ present in some particular. Instead it removes or excludes from consideration all non-cows (on this theory see Hayes 1988).

Epistemologically speaking, Buddhists had not only to develop a theory that would explain why the ordinary means of gaining knowledge are misleading, but also one that would explain how the errors produced by deployment of these ordinary means might be corrected. One important move here is the development of arguments against regarding certain common belief-forming practices as productive of knowledge. In India, epistemological debates centered around the enumeration and definition of the belief-forming practices that should be thought of as authoritative, as capable of producing knowledge. Many non-Buddhist philosophers in India recognize at least three of these: sensory perception, reasoning, and testimony. Buddhists typically allow only the first two, and even these they tend to redescribe in ways that radically limit their knowledge-producing capacity. Sensory perception, for instance, is separated definitionally from any connection with concept or language: the bare percept may indeed produce knowledge (better, it is an instance of the occurrence of knowledge, on which see Hattori 1968), but any attempt to classify or categorize its phenomenal properties, its qualia, will not be an instance of knowledge. And since perceptual acquaintance with medium-sized physical objects always involves such classificatory activity, it follows that such acquaintance is never knowledge – and this takes us back to the fundamental ontological intuition already noted.

Reasoning is thought of as a knowledge-producing instrument in two senses. First, under the rubric of ‘reasoning for others,’ it can demonstrate the fallacies in the arguments of others, and to this end Buddhist philosophers in India, Tibet, and China developed a complex system of analyzing and classifying logical fallacies (Randle 1930, pp. 147-303, provides some details). Their interests in doing this appear to have been in part formal and in part polemical, which is to say that they were interested both in the development of systems and in the sharpening of tools for winning arguments. But it is certainly true that the system thus developed rivals in complexity the systems of logic and argument developed in medieval Europe. The second major function of reasoning (called ‘reasoning for oneself’) is to provide action-guides, whether in day-to-day interaction with the physical world, or in more abstruse matters of meditational practice or ethical decision-making. If, on seeing that there is smoke on the mountain, for instance, one wants to know whether there is also likely to be fire there (perhaps in order to guide one’s decisions as to proper places for meditating or monastery-building) one will need to use an inference-schema (there is smoke on the mountain; wherever there’s smoke there’s fire; so there’s fire on the mountain) in order to come to a decision. And so Buddhist philosophers have devoted a good deal of attention to the formal analysis of arguments of this sort, even though they typically do not judge that the objects with which such reasoning is concerned (mountains and the like) have any final reality.

Persons

The ontological intuition that everything is impermanent is taken by Buddhist philosophers to apply to human persons as much as to anything else. Indeed, they often present the claim *there are no enduring selves* as the philosophico-religious claim that is more distinctive of Buddhism than any other. The claim does not, of course, amount to a denial that there are persons, that part of the ordinary experience of us humans is a sense that we are subjects perceiving objects, that we endure through time, and that each of us is significantly different from other such centers of identity and action. But it does amount to a strong claim that some construals of these phenomenal facts are deeply mistaken; and, moreover, that giving one's assent to such a mistaken construal is a deeply damaging error, one that will likely prevent those who make it from acting properly, and will certainly prevent them from advancing toward Nirvana.

The usual construal of the phenomenal facts indicated is that each human person is an enduring entity: that my past and future are mine and not yours, that while I certainly seem to myself to have had a beginning in time (and may have an end in time), I none the less have had a continuous history since then, and as a result am justified in thinking of myself as an entity with both essential and accidental properties. But all, or almost all, of this is mistaken according to classical Buddhist philosophy. The truth, by contrast, is that what is picked out by my personal proper name (and yours, and everyone's) is only a collocation of events, connected causally but without any enduring or persisting entity of which these events may be predicated. Usually, the events that constitute a person are said to be of five kinds: physical events, and events of sensation, conceptualization, volition, and consciousness. An exhaustive analysis of what constitutes a person at a particular time can then be given by listing the events of these kinds that are occurring at that time. There is no further fact, no possessor of these events. The past and future of the person in question can be described by tracing the precursors of these events backward in time and by projecting them forward.

Arguments for this view usually proceed on two fronts. The first begins with phenomenology and ends with logic. It is said that the fivefold analysis of kinds of event mentioned above describes a set of facts open to discovery by dispassionate introspection: that close examination of what goes on in the continua of events that we call human persons will reveal events of these kinds, and will reveal nothing else. The introspection intended, naturally, is usually guided by instruction in meditational techniques that are precisely designed to reveal these kinds of events and no others, and this is a significant weakness in the argument, which requires for its full force that unmanipulated bare experience will reveal just and only these facts. Nevertheless, Buddhist arguments on this topic normally assert the phenomenological claim as if it were unproblematic. Coupled with the phenomenological claim is a set of logical arguments. These ask those who would wish to assert that there is more to human persons than the phenomenal facts mentioned explain the relation between the postulated further fact – a soul, perhaps, or some other kind of nonphysical substance – and these phenomenal facts. Perhaps the soul is the possessor of these phenomena, or their controller, or the whole of which they are parts, or the like. In the classical texts devoted to this topic (see, for example, Huntington 1989, pp. 170-7), attempts are made to give an exhaustive list of the relations that could obtain between postulated soul and the phenomenal facts of personhood, and to show that no such relations either are or can be coherently accounted for. The upshot of such arguments is taken to be that there are no enduring selves, though there are certainly phenomenal persons.

The second front upon which arguments for the non-existence of enduring selves proceed is a broadly ethical one. Having the view that there are enduring selves makes, it is said, the practice of the Buddhist path impossible. Briefly, the point is this: if you judge that you are an enduring entity, that you have a past and a future, you are very likely to be interested in that past and that future in ways that make it effectively impossible for you to be properly interested in the past and future of other sentient beings. You will be self-interested in ethically improper ways. If the goal is to have a compassionate attitude (and the actions that ought to accompany it) directed without distinction to all instances of suffering, then the view that sentient beings are genuinely (substantively) distinct from one another will make this difficult. The toothache that you think you are likely to have next week will be of greater concern to you than the toothache that your best friend will have, and of much greater concern than your enemies'. From this basic mistake about the nature of persons, it is argued, spring all the most damaging ethical offenses.

This view of persons creates some interesting difficulties of a strictly philosophical kind. The two most obvious are the difficulty of giving an account of the process of death and rebirth if there is not enduring self to die and be reborn. And the second is the difficulty of combining this view of persons with standard Asian views about karma, ideas that require, or seem to require, that the agent of a particular action be the same as the agent who experiences the results of that action at some time in the future. Dealing with these difficulties has given, and still gives, Buddhist philosophers much to do.

God

If God is thought of as Jews, Christians, Muslims, and some Hindus typically think of him – as the eternal, changeless, omniscient, omnipotent, unsurpassably benevolent creator of all that is – then most Buddhist philosophers have little time for him (see Article 28, OMNIPOTENCE; Article 29, OMNISCIENCE; and Article 30, GOODNESS). More precisely, the time they do have for him is mostly spent on developing arguments whose conclusion is that there can be no such being, and that it would be a bad thing if there were. Buddhist arguments against the coherence of the very idea of God will be largely familiar to philosophers of religion whose work has been within the ambit of the Abrahamic traditions. There are criticisms of the standard positive theistic arguments, notably of the argument from design: but there are also criticisms of the coherence of the claim, for example, that God knows events in time and acts in time, but is not himself subject to change (for a classical example see Jha 1986, pp. 68-100).

But there are equally deep and pressing ethical arguments on this question. If God is thought to be eternal and unchanging, as well as unsurpassably compassionate and loving toward human beings, and if, moreover, he is capable of delivering us from our miseries simply by his free choice so to do, then, in Buddhist eyes, we are unlikely to develop the mental and moral discipline we shall need in order to follow the Buddhist path to its end. God will become for us an object of such fascination that we are likely to spend all our time in contemplation of his glories, an activity that will foster in us emotional states of no help to us. Even if God could exist, then, we ought not to believe in him, much less worship him. None of this is to say that there are not many minor deities, beings who may be very powerful, almost unimaginably more powerful and knowledgeable than humans. Buddhist cosmology requires that there be many such: the standard stories about Sakyamuni's own awakening to Buddhahood involve the participation of at least two major deities. But these beings are not God in the Christian sense. They, like us, are subject to delusion and passion: and, so the argument goes, they must follow the same path that we must follow if they are ultimately to be liberated from their sufferings. Buddhism has been characterized quite aptly not as atheism but rather as trans-polytheism.

But there is a peculiar irony here. While on the one hand Buddhist philosophers are keen to reject the idea and the actuality of God, on the other they devote a great deal of intellectual energy to considering Buddha, to developing theories of what Buddha must really be like in order to have done the things the tradition claims him to have done. And as this intellectual tradition developed it came to look more and more like what Christians have called 'theology' in the sense of reasoned discourse about God. Buddha came to be seen as omniscient, omnipotent, and even as coextensive with the limits of the cosmos. And the arguments in support of these views about the nature of Buddha often look very like Christian discussions of the attributes of God. Sometimes the tension between the rejection of theism and a strong view of the nature of Buddha is dramatic, as when a single thinker spends time demolishing arguments about God's omniscience, and then resurrects what look like very similar arguments whose conclusion is that Buddha is omniscient (for example, Jha 1986, pp. 68-100, 1391-579). Theology, understood as ordered and systematic reasoning about what a maximally significant being must be like, here makes a re-entry even when the door has apparently been firmly closed against it.

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‘Buddhist ethics’ – De Silva P in

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The Buddha’s personal name was Siddhartha and his family name was Gotama. His father was the ruler of the kingdom of the Sakyas in North India. As a prince living in north India during the sixth century BCE, Siddhartha was caught in the intellectual ferment of the times, of ascetics and seers and philosophers of various brands, materialists, sceptics, nihilists, determinists and theists. He was also highly disturbed by the rigidities of caste, by animal sacrifices and by the uncritical attitudes of rulers regarding these issues. But he was even more disturbed by the perennial human issues of sickness, anguish and suffering, and the riddle of life and death. Thus in the young Siddhartha who left the royal palace at the age of 29 to become an ascetic, we find the profile of a rebel as well as a philosopher.

In addition to inquiring into these issues, Siddhartha experimented with different lifestyles. He immersed himself in the different techniques of meditation current at the time. He learnt from the teachers of meditation at the time the practices leading to states of meditative absorption referred to as *jhānas*. But he wished to go beyond these current practices and developed a comprehensive system of meditation, including both the practice of tranquillity meditation to reach a stage of calmness and the development of insight. The development of insight was focused on the three important realities of impermanence, suffering and egolessness. By the practice of meditation, he attained enlightenment at the age of 35 years, and preached thereafter to his fellow men. For 45 years after enlightenment he taught and spoke to all types of men and women, peasants, carpenters, Brahmins and outcastes, kings and criminals, as well as ascetics and philosophers. It is these discourses which have been preserved in the Pali canon and are the primary sources for our study of the ethics of Buddhism.

The teachings of the Buddha were handed down in the form of an oral tradition, and it was many years later (first century BCE) that the monks wrote the discourses in ola leaves. They remained so till during recent times they were edited and printed by the Pali Text Society. Of these discourses, the group of discourses called the *Vinaya Pitaka* deal with the rules of discipline for the monks, while the *Sutta Pitaka* contains the basic teachings of the Buddha. A systematization of the doctrine by later commentators is called the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. Together they are called the three baskets and provide the primary sources for the study of Buddhism as well as the guidelines for the practical codes of conduct.

The very early tradition of Buddhism often called *Theravāda* Buddhism took root in South East Asia, specially in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma and Cambodia. The later traditions, *Mahāyāna* (meaning the Greater Vehicle) developed in Nepal, China, Korea and Japan, while the tradition called the *Tantrayāna* (the Esoteric Vehicle) emerged in Tibet and Mongolia. The *Mahāyānist* referred to the early Buddhist tradition as *Hīnayāna* (the lesser vehicle). In this article we are concerned with the common ethical teachings of the Buddha. Some of the differences of emphasis brought out by the different traditions in relation to ethics will be dealt with in the final section of this analysis.

ii Ethical concerns in the Buddhist tradition

When we refer to ‘Buddhist ethics’, we refer to the Buddha’s analysis and insights into ethical issues, found dispersed over his discourses, as well as the reflections on ethical issues found in the later traditions. The discourses, however, provide the common doctrinal core for the analysis of ethical issues from a Buddhist perspective. Though he did not present a well-knit treatise on philosophical ethics, the discourses contain theoretical perspectives on major ethical issues. But beyond the rational scrutiny of ethical issues, he showed an abiding interest in ethics as a practical concern, a way of life and a well-defined ethical path towards liberation from suffering.

While the Buddha often emphasized the social dimensions of ethics, he also saw it as a personal quest marked by leading a good life, practising virtues and following meditational exercises. The practice of meditation emphasized the importance of paying attention to whatever one is doing while doing it, without the intrusion of distracting thoughts. Developing awareness of this sort laid the foundation for meditational exercises with specific objects for concentration. The development of meditation promoted its expansion into daily activities and enhanced individual morality. Thus in Buddhist ethics there is a close integration of the ethical as a rational engagement of analysis and argument, as a normative recommendation of conduct and a way of life, as a social expression and as an intense personal quest and mode of character development.

To understand how ethical concerns originate in the Buddhist traditions, one has to focus attention on the Four Noble Truths, which in a sense summarize the basic message of the Buddha. An understanding of the Four Noble Truths and the orientation of the Buddhist world-view helps us to place Buddhist ethics in a proper setting. At the core of the Buddha's doctrine is the notion of *dukkha*, a sense of *unsatisfactoriness* which lies at the heart of the perilous condition of human suffering, of physical pain and sickness, psychological conflict, anxiety and anguish and a deeper feature of the world described as insubstantiality. This latter feature of insubstantiality is related to the Buddhist doctrine of egolessness and the doctrine of change and impermanence. What we call an individual or 'I' is, according to the Buddha, a combination of physical and psychological factors which are in constant change. By projecting a sense of 'permanence' onto a process which is in constant flux, man becomes disappointed when he faces change, destruction and loss. This complex which we consider as an 'individual' is liable to constant suffering, and if we project and anticipate a continuous life of pleasure and joy in terms of our sense of an individual person we find it difficult to accept that we are liable to sickness, grief and suffering. Thus in this manner the three doctrines of impermanence, suffering and egolessness are interrelated. The Four Noble Truths, and the Noble Eightfold Path as a component of the Four Noble Truths, are related to the diagnosis of the human predicament described by the Pali word *dukkha*. Reflections on morality and society cannot be severed from this basic concern.

Some see the notion of *dukkha* as indicating a pessimistic outlook. Yet the ideal that the Buddha offers for man in following the ethical system is an ideal of happiness. While *nibbāna* represents the ideal of ultimate happiness for man as a moral ideal, the Buddha also offers a qualified notion of happiness for the householder who lives a harmonious and righteous life. Just as there are various expressions of pain, there are also diverse grades of pleasure and well-being. While the righteous and harmonious life permits the householder to seek wealth by lawful means, without greed and longing, to get ease and pleasure for him or herself and do meritorious deeds, the recluse exercises a more stringent control over desires and wants and is more earnestly committed to the ideal of release from all suffering (*nibbāna*). Both the life ideals of the householder as well as those of the recluse are highly critical of the life of pure sensuality devoid of any ethical constraints. A life of pure pleasure by its inner nature ends up in boredom and dissonance, and interferes with the healthy functioning of family and community life. The Buddha condemned pure hedonism on psychological and ethical grounds. The Buddha was also critical of some materialists who did not believe in an afterlife and thus supported a hedonistic lifestyle without any moral values.

The Buddha was critical of the way of pure sensuality and the way of self-mortification, and considered his own way as the middle path. The first Noble Truth is the truth of suffering, the second deals with the arising of suffering, the third deals with the cessation of suffering (*nibbāna*) and the fourth with the way to end suffering (the Noble Eightfold Path). The Noble Eightfold Path has the following aspects: (1) right understanding; (2) right thought; (3) right speech; (4) right bodily action; (5) right livelihood; (6) right effort; (7) right mindfulness; (8) right concentration. An important point about the path is that the items fall under three divisions: items 3-5 come under ethical conduct (*sīlā*), items 6-8 come under mental training (*samādhi*), and items 1 and 2 come under wisdom (*pañña*). Thus it is a threefold scheme of moral training, consisting of the practice of virtues and the avoidance of vices, the practice of meditation and the development of wisdom. It is through the Eightfold Path that one can attain the ultimate moral ideal of Buddhism.

iii The moral philosophy of Buddhism

Philosophically, the first prerequisite for a system of ethics, according to the Buddha, is the notion of free will, secondly the distinction between good and bad, and thirdly the notion of causation in relation to moral action. The third concept, as indicating the good and bad consequences of actions which can be morally assessed, is also related to a specifically Buddhist notion, survival after death.

Of these the most crucial concept necessary for the evaluation of human action is the notion of *kamma*, based on the notion of moral causation. The Pali term *kamma* is used to refer to volitional acts which are expressed by *thought*, *speech* and *bodily action*. The oft-quoted statement 'I call the motive to be the deed' provides a focus for the evaluation of human action from a moral point of view. Volitional acts which come within the purview of moral evaluation can be good, bad or neutral, and could also be of a mixed nature.

When we evaluate an action, we can look at its genesis. If the action has as its roots greed, hatred and delusion, it is an unwholesome or bad action, and if it was generated by the opposite roots of liberality, compassionate love and wisdom, it is a good action. But we have also to see its consequences to others as well as oneself, as they also play a part in moral evaluation.

The Pali word *cetanā*, usually translated as motive, is a complex term covering intention and motive as well as the consequences of action dependent on the motive or intention. According to the law of moral causation, if a person gives some money to a needy person several consequences follow in the form of psychological laws: it is a good thought and stabilizes the tendency to repeat such thoughts, it is a good action, and it is said that the greatest blessing of a good action is the tendency to repeat it, that it becomes a part of one's character. This psychological dimension is believed to extend over several births and to be carried over to another life.

There is another aspect to the consequences of good and bad actions. According to the law of moral causation, a person who gives for charity expects to get something in return, comforts in future life, and a person who steals or is miserly will be repaid by being subjected to poverty. These are two aspects of the moral consequences of action. We may describe the first aspect of character-building as the *craftsmanship model* of action and the second aspect, which focus on rewards and punishments, as the *judicial model* of action.

Another dimension of these two models is that disinterested character-building may be *nibbāna*-oriented, as it is basically an attempt to rid oneself of greed, hatred and delusion, and the attempt to accumulate merit is directed towards a better life in the future. It has been observed by scholars who have gone into the terminology that 'good' and 'bad', used in the context of *nibbāna*-oriented action, may be translated by the words *kusala* and *akusala*, and 'good' and 'bad', when speaking of the wish for a better existence in the future lives, may be translated by the terms *puñña* and *pāpa*. If *puñña* is rendered as merit and *pāpa* as de-merit, a meritorious action paradoxically helps us to collect more fuel for a longer journey in *samsāra* (the wheel of existence), while a good action in the form of *kusala* shortens our journey and speeds our approach to *nibbāna*.

The Buddha will not limit the evaluation of actions to the narrow concept of motive alone, as the act has to be performed, and the manner in which it is done and the consequences are important. In this sense this is a consequentialist or a teleological ethics. (See Article 19, CONSEQUENTIALISM.)

Within the consequentialist orientation, Buddhist ethics lays very great emphasis on working towards the material and spiritual welfare of others. The Buddha himself was described as a person concerned with the well-being and happiness of mankind. In general, Buddhist ethics has a utilitarian stance, but the Buddhist utilitarianism is not a hedonistic utilitarianism. (Varieties of utilitarianism are discussed in Article 20, UTILITY AND THE GOOD.) Certainly the Buddha would be critical of the pursuit of pure sensuality and also of any attempt to reduce human pleasures to a hedonistic calculus. As one proceeds on the path of meditation, the *jhānas* (states of deep meditative absorption) are associated with states of pleasure and happiness, not of a mundane nature but rather states of joy, zest and rapture. There are certain refinements in these states which go beyond the pleasures we normally associate with hedonism (the view that pleasure is or ought to be the goal of all our actions). Against the background of these jhānic states, concepts like hedonism and eudaimonism (in which 'happiness' plays the role that 'pleasure' does in the hedonistic doctrine) used in the context of Western ethics may lose clear application.

Buddhism may be described as a consequentialist ethic embodying the ideal of ultimate happiness for the individual, as well as a social ethic with a utilitarian stance concerned with the material and spiritual well-being of mankind. In keeping with this stance, Buddhism also has a strong altruistic component, specially embodied in the four sublime virtues of lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity.

The Buddha also emphasizes the role of duties and obligations in relevant contexts. The *Sigālōvāda Sutta* discusses the duties and rights of parents and children, husband and wife, teachers and pupils as well as one's obligations to friends and recluses. But what is described here are reciprocal relations of mutual obligations, rather than any concept of human rights. First, the Buddhist approach to duties and rights is more a humanistic than a legalistic one. Second, while considering duties and rights as important, the Buddha never elevated them into an ethic of duty and obligation as found in Western ethical systems. (See, for example, Article 18 AN ETHIC OF PRIMA FACIE DUTIES.) In ethical systems emerging in the Judeo-Christian tradition, a breach of duties is tied to the notion of feeling guilty about wrongdoing. Sin and guilt and worry over past offences are not concepts that fit into the Buddhist analysis of wrong-doing. In fact it is a difficult task to find a Pali equivalent in the discourses for notions like guilt in the context of wrongdoing. In general wrongdoing is described as unskilled action, as unwholesome, as a defilement etc. In fact, worry and restlessness, as well as unhealthy fears regarding wrongs done, are considered as obstructions to the leading of a morally good life. Thus while concepts of duty and obligations, as well as of justice and righteousness, play a part in Buddhist ethics, they are integrated within the broader humanistic and consequentialist ethics of Buddhism.

iv A Buddhist perspective on the place of knowledge and truth in ethics

In ordinary everyday situations, statements like 'There is a red book on my table' can be checked regarding their truth and falsity. But in ethics we get statements like 'Killing is wrong', 'Stealing is bad', 'He did wrong in not going to the appointment' and so on. Though these statements are grammatically similar to other statement cited above, they appear to lack any cognitive content. Thus it is said that it is illogical to apply notions like knowledge and truth in the field of ethics. (For further discussion see Articles 35 and 38, REALISM and SUBJECTIVISM.)

Such problems did not disturb the Buddha and there is no explicit discussion in his discourses of the relationship between facts and values. Yet the Buddha upheld the relative objectivity of moral utterances as crucial to his system against the sceptics and the relativists of his time. There is a broad-based naturalistic stance in Buddhist ethics, and it can be said that *certain types of facts are* relevant as support for moral utterances. Thus in Buddhist ethics, there is no relationship of logical entailment between facts and values, but a relationship of specific kinds of relevance according to which facts will provide a *kind* of grounding for values.

But yet from another perspective it appears that a concept like *dukkha* seems to lie at the point of intersection between a range of facts and their evaluation. A word like *dukkha* is a description of a state of affairs, the nature of the human predicament, but in the context of the Four Noble Truths, it carries with it the notion that it has to be *known, abandoned and realized*. The first Noble Truth suggests that *dukkha* has to be realized, the second that it has to be abandoned, the third that it has to be realized and the fourth that knowledge about *dukkha* has to be developed and gradually refined so that it culminates in knowledge of *dukkha*. Thus in Buddhist ethics, in one sense facts are relevant for understanding values, but in another sense some of the central concepts like that of *dukkha* seem to lie at the point of intersection between values and facts.

It is also necessary to point out that the Buddha's use of the notion of 'fact' goes beyond its usage in Western ethical reflections. A 'fact' for the Buddha can be found out by the avenues of our normal senses, but he also upholds the acquaintance with facts through extra-sensory perception. Let us take an example like 'Killing is bad'. Killing is considered bad or wrong for several reasons. (1) The genesis of the action show that it is clearly associated with the effective root of hatred, sometimes with greed and also with the cognitive root of having wrong views; (2) It has harmful consequences to oneself and is an obstruction to attaining *nibbāna* or will have bad consequences in another life; (3) Here and now, it hardens one's character in transgressing the ideal of non-injury, makes one develop a heavy conscience, comes into conflict with other people and can be punished by the law.

Now, some of the information relevant to the normal utterances may be had by sensory observation, by self-analysis, by the observation of others, etc. But certain types of information like the consequences for a future life go beyond our normal powers. Buddhism also accepts that there are levels of spiritual development and that the differences between normal perception and extra-sensory perception are merely a difference of degree, not of kind.

The Buddha's notion of facts and the relevance of facts to values is something which emerged from the nature of the world in which he lived. Sometimes we convert ordinary usages into excessively difficult riddles by trying to impose a formal rigour into them. The Buddha himself said that he was neither a traditionalist nor a rational metaphysician who considers that logic can solve all the problems, but an experimentalist who respects facts as they are found in the world. But facts to him also have some significance in the light of his doctrine. That significance is something which emerges from the natures of things and is not imposed from outside.

v Buddhism as an ethics of virtues and vices

As an ethics concerned with the moral development of man, Buddhist ethics deal both with the nature of the evil states which darken the mind, as well as the wholesome mental states which illumine the mind. The sutta on the *Simili of the Cloth* cites sixteen such defilements: greed, covetousness, malevolence, anger, malice, hypocrisy, spite, envy, stinginess, deceit, treachery, obstinacy, impetuosity, arrogance, pride and conceit. The most well-known and important analysis is the tenfold evil actions, which are in turn related to the three roots of evil: killing, stealing, enjoying sensual pleasures of a wrong nature, false speech, slanderous speech and frivolous talk, as well as intense greed, malevolence and wrong view.

The Buddha requested people not only to refrain from such evil states, but also to practise positive moral virtues. Following the analysis of Wallace (*Virtues and Vices*, 1978), we can say that the virtues fall into three groups:

- 1 virtues of conscientiousness:
veracity, truthfulness and righteousness
- 2 virtues of benevolence:
lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity
- 3 virtues of self-restraint:
self-control, abstinence, contentment, patience, celibacy, chastity, purity.

The arrangement of the recommended moral qualities shows that Buddhist ethics brings into play a wide variety of virtues for the building up of human character. Some of them are closely welded to the natural feelings humans have for fellow beings, others apply to the needs of social organization and community living, and yet others are demanded by the path of moral development and self-restraint. Virtues and vices also refer to our emotional aspect. In addition to making a close analysis of the negative emotions like anger, malevolence, lust, envy and worry, the Buddha gave a central place to the positive and creative emotional responses which had a great moral relevance, like compassion, generosity and gratitude. His analysis shows that there is a great range and variety of emotional responses sharpening and expanding our moral sensibility. The link between moral psychology and ethics is a central feature of the ethics of Buddhism and makes it appropriate to consider it as an ethic of virtue. (See Article 21, VIRTUE THEORY.)

vi Buddhist social ethics

The social ethics of Buddhism revolve around two important ethical perspectives, which may be referred to as 'the ethic of care' and the 'ethic of rights'. It is a blend of the principles of humanistic altruism and the notion of a *righteous* social, moral and political order which provide the ethical foundations of society. Though the ethical path as a path towards liberation is basically a consequentialist ideal, the social and political ethics of Buddhism has a deontological strand as an ethics of duty and rights, which is, however, integrated into Buddhist social ethics in its own way.

The family forms a central unit in Buddhist social ethics. Within the family there are reciprocal duties that link up all members of the family. This notion of reciprocity in human relations means that talk of sexual equality and the rights of men and women is somewhat misplaced. The concept of equality was raised when the question of admission of women to the order became a practical issue. Regarding the moral and spiritual excellence of women, there is a well documented tradition of references in the discourses and the Buddha gave permission to initiate a separate order of nuns. Within the family it was accepted that a woman brings stability, care, patience and compassion. While women attained the state of sainthood (*arahat*), the concept of a Buddha was limited to men and this became a point of debate within the later traditions.

In rejecting caste and race the Buddha said that distinctions based on birth are artificial and the only worthwhile distinctions are based on character. In admitting people to the order he did not pay any attention to distinctions based on caste and socio-economic status.

The Buddha also showed concern regarding all forms of life. The Buddhist concept of society would in a deeper ethical sense include all living beings, not only those who are human but animals and lower creatures as well. Unlike most Western systems of ethics, the cultivation of socio-moral virtues covers behaviour in relation to all living beings.

The Buddha expected the universal monarch to govern justly and impartially. There are three components of the concept of righteousness: impartiality, just requital and truthfulness. While impartiality and fair play are emphasized for kings, their rule is expected to be pervaded by the spirit of benevolence. Above the social and political order was the Buddhist concept of *dharma*, the cosmic order in the universe, and the king had not merely to respect this order but also as the 'wheel-turning monarch' to see that this order was reflected in his regime. In general it may be said that though in the political order the concepts of rights and fairness are important, the Buddhist social ethics is centred on human relations, where the ethic of responsibility and the recognition of differences in need play an important part.

vii Buddhist perspectives on practical ethics

If one is to search for the existence of any core moral values in Buddhism, they are to be found in the five precepts; abstention from killing and hurting living creatures, abstention from stealing, abstention from wrong indulgence in sensual pleasures, abstention from lying and abstention from taking intoxicants. These precepts embody basic requirements for the living of a good life and the establishment of a good community. The respect for life and property, the acceptance of a lifestyle which rejects excessive, illegitimate and harmful pleasures, truthfulness and an awareness of the danger of certain social evils like alcoholism and drug addiction are the basic moral concerns of a Buddhist society.

During the time of the Buddha as well as during later debates, questions relating to these precepts have been discussed. We shall briefly take two of these issues, questions concerning the respect for life in relation to animals and the accumulation of wealth.

Even kings were expected to provide protected territory not only for human beings but also for beasts of the forests and birds of the air. Deliberate infliction of torture and hurt to animals and killing were condemned by the Buddha.

There are four topics in the discourses which are relevant to issues pertaining to the values of life: animal sacrifices, warfare, agriculture and meat-eating. The Buddha did not hesitate to condemn both the performance of animal sacrifices and the pleasures of hunting. He also pointed out the futility of warfare. He prohibited the monks from joining the army and also from digging the ground, as in this process there was the danger of injuring insect life. But regarding meat-eating he left it as an open possibility that if one practises compassion one would be inclined to practise vegetarianism. Also there is a social context where the Buddha himself and other monks went for their food with the begging bowl and walked silently through the streets and the marketplace. The Buddha had asked the monks not to ask for any particular food unless the monk was sick but collect what was offered. As far as the rules are concerned the monk may accept meat that is offered for a meal if the monk is convinced that it was not specially killed and prepared for a monk's meal. Though the Buddha rejects professions like the selling of armaments and the killing and selling of animals, he did not restrict the monk's food, unless it was forbidden because it was poisonous. It is also important that the Buddha did not want to make eating into a fad or a fetish through which recluses would seek purification. It appears that vegetarianism is a positive practice that can emerge through the practice of compassion, but in the context of the monks collecting the food that was given to them, there was no rule forbidding them from taking meat under all conditions.

The problem about the accumulation of wealth is of course well understood in terms of the lifestyles recommended by the Buddha. While the monk lives with no possessions except the robes and the begging bowl, the layman is encouraged to contribute to his economic stability. The layman is asked to concentrate on production of wealth through skilled and earnest endeavour, and protecting wealth through savings and living within one's means. The Buddha condemned both miserliness and extravagance and provided the guidelines for contented living. The layman has a right to property and to accumulate wealth to ensure a decent existence for his family, but not to develop greed and avarice for wealth. Also, the idea that the needy should be helped and that wealth should be given to the have-nots was accepted even by the kings who ruled according to the advice of the Buddha. Whatever moral values we take in terms of the five precepts, there was a pragmatism and realism in the Buddha's outlook, which provide useful resources for dealing with conflicts between human needs and moral ideals.

vii Contributions to ethics in the later Buddhist traditions

The later Buddhist traditions of *Mahāyāna*, the *Tantrayāna* and Zen Buddhism are all rooted in the original teachings of the Buddha, and with the *Hinayāna* tradition share his basic doctrines of egolessness, impermanence and suffering. But their techniques of communication and points of emphasis took different directions.

In relation to the ethics of Buddhism a central point on which both the *Mahāyāna* and the *Tantrayāna* traditions opened up a fresh line of inquiry was on the question whether everyone should aspire to be a Buddha or whether one should be contented with the cessation from suffering by attaining the state of perfection called the *arahant*. The *Mahāyānist* felt that instead of attaining enlightenment as a disciple of the Buddha, everyone should aspire to be a Buddha, so that one could help others. The *Mahāyānist* felt, like the followers of *Tantrayāna*, that there was a higher ideal, that of the *Bodhisatva*, which indicated an infinite commitment to others and was an expression of the widest limits of altruism. The Buddha is an enlightened one and a *Bodhisatva* is one who aspires to be a Buddha. The different lives of the *Bodhisatva* are dedicated to the practice of special virtues like charity, patience, effort, meditation and wisdom. The *Bodhisatva* attempts to identify himself with the liberation of others.

The *Tantrayāna* added a strong devotional strand into the religious practices with an emphasis on symbolism and rituals. As these were associated with esoteric teachings they do not appear to have any specific contribution to ethics which differs from the Mahayanist perspective.

The word Zen is an equivalent of the Sanskrit word *dhyāna* meaning meditation. It emerged from the Chinese soil and was deeply centred on the practice of meditation. But it was critical of moral codes and rituals which were practised through the force of convention. When a tradition gets too much stuck in rules, codes and procedures an intended 'means' can become an 'end' in itself. Also, the prolific philosophical and scholastic distinctions which emerged in the Indian tradition after the Buddha seemed to submerge the deep meditative tradition which the Buddha initiated. Thus the Zen masters used stories, paradoxes, parables, and meditational exercises called *koans* to shock the conventional mind stuck in rules and procedures. This is a useful perspective for the practice of morality rather than a theory of ethics, but it does emphasize that the practice of morality is intrinsically related to the inner transformation of the individual. Thus the Zen masters come out with the paradox that Zen begins where morality ends.

Both the early and later traditions of Buddhism continue as living traditions in different parts of the Eastern world and their impact has spread to the West. While the ethics of Buddhism influence the daily lives of its adherents, there is a great admixture of rituals and conventional practices of each culture, which can both be an aid to the development of the teachings of the Buddha as well as an obstruction. Thus Buddhism continues to live in the minds of people at different levels, of routine practice and rituals, intellectual reflection and debate, and a deeper personal quest rooted in Buddhist meditation.

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The Dimensions of Religion

The problem arises because there are different aspects or, as I shall call them, *dimensions* of religion. Whether we include Marxism as a religion depends on which dimension we regard as crucial for our definition. It will therefore be useful to analyse these various dimensions.

The Ritual Dimension

If we were asked the use or purpose of such buildings as temples and churches, we would not be far wrong in saying that they are used for ritual or ceremonial purposes. Religion tends in part to express itself through such rituals: through worship, prayers, offerings, and the like. We may call this the *ritual* dimension of religion. About this, some important comments need to be made.

First, when we think of ritual we often think of something very formal and elaborate, like a High Mass or the Liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox Church. But it is worth remarking that even the simplest form of religious service involves ritual, in the sense of some form of outer behaviour (such as closing one’s eyes in prayer) coordinated to an inner intention to make contact with, or to participate in, the invisible world. I am not concerned here with those who deny the existence of such an ‘invisible world,’ however interpreted, whether as God’s presence, as nirvana, as a sacred energy pervading nature. Whether or not such an invisible world exists, it forms an aspect of the world seen from the point of view of those who participate in religion. It is believed in. As was said earlier, it is not here our task to pass judgment on the truth or otherwise of religious conceptions. First, then, even the simplest service involves ritual.

Second, since ritual involves both an inner and an outer aspect it is always possible that the latter will come to dominate the former. Ritual then degenerates into a mechanical or conventional process. If people go through the motions of religious observance without accompanying it with the intentions and sentiments which give it human meaning, ritual is merely an empty shell. This is the reason why some religious activities are condemned as ‘ritualistic.’ But it would be wrong to conclude that because ritualism in this bad sense exists, therefore ritual is an unimportant or degenerate aspect of religion.

It should not be forgotten that there are secular rituals which we all use, and these can form an integral part of personal and social relationships. Greeting someone with a ‘Good morning,’ saying goodbye, saluting the flag—all these in differing ways are secular rituals. Very often in society they are integrated with religious rituals, as when men say ‘God be with you,’ which is more than taking leave of someone: it is invoking a blessing upon the other person.

Third, it will prove convenient to extend the meaning of ‘ritual’ beyond its reference to the forms of worship, sacrifice, etc, directed toward God or the gods.

It happens that a crucial part is played in India and elsewhere by yoga and analogous techniques of self-training. The ultimate aim of such methods is the attainment of higher states of consciousness, through which the adept has experience of release from worldly existence, of nirvana, of ultimate reality (the interpretation partly depends on the system of doctrines against which the adept tests his experience). Thus the essence of such religion is contemplative or mystical. Sometimes, it is pursued without reference to God or the gods—for example, in Buddhism, where the rituals of a religion of worship and sacrifice are regarded as largely irrelevant to the pursuit of nirvana. Nevertheless the techniques of self-training have an analogy to ritual: the adept performs various physical and mental exercises through which he hopes to concentrate the mind on the transcendent, invisible world, or to withdraw his senses from their usual immersion in the flow of empirical experiences. This aspect of religion, then, we shall include in our definition of the ritual dimension. It can be classified as pragmatic (aimed at the attainment of certain experiences) in distinction from sacred ritual (directed toward a holy being, such as God). Sometimes the two forms of ritual are combined, as in Christian mysticism.

The meaning of ritual cannot be understood without reference to the environment of belief in which it is performed. Thus prayer in most ritual is directed toward a divine being. Very often, legends about the gods are used to explain the features of a ceremony or festival; and often the important events of human life, such as birth, marriage, death, are invested with a sacred significance by relating them to the divine world.

All this can happen before a religion has any theology or formal system of doctrines. Theology is an attempt to introduce organization and intellectual power into what is found in less explicit form in the deposit of revelation or traditional mythology of a religion. The collection of myths, images, and stories through which the invisible world is symbolized can suitably be called the *mythological* dimension of religion.

The Mythological Dimension

Some important comments need to be made about this mythological dimension. First, in accordance with modern usage in theology and in the comparative study of religion, the terms ‘myth,’ ‘mythological,’ etc, are *not* used to mean that the content is false. Perhaps in ordinary English to say ‘It’s a myth’ is just a way of saying ‘It’s false.’ But the use of the term *myth* in relation to religious phenomena is quite neutral as to the truth or falsity of the story enshrined in the myth. In origin, the term ‘myth’ means ‘story,’ and in calling something a story we are not thereby saying that it is true or false. We are just reporting on what has been said. Similarly, here we are concerned with reporting on what is believed.

Second, it is convenient to use the term to include not merely stories about God (for instance the story of the creation in Genesis), about the gods (for instance in Homer’s *Iliad*), etc, but also the historical events of religious significance in a tradition. For example, the Passover ritual in Judaism re-enacts a highly important event that once occurred to the children of Israel; their delivery from bondage in Egypt. The historical event functions as a myth. Thus we shall include stories relating to significant historical events under the head of the mythological dimension—again without prejudice to whether the stories accurately describe what actually occurred in history.

The Doctrinal Dimension

Third, it is not always easy to differentiate the mythological and the symbolic from what is stated in theology. Doctrines are an attempt to give system, clarity and intellectual power to what is revealed through the mythological and symbolic language of religious faith and ritual. Naturally, theology must make use of the symbols and myths. For example, when the Christian theologian has to describe the meaning of the Incarnation, he must necessarily make use of Biblical language and history. Thus the dividing line between the mythological and what I shall call the doctrinal dimension is not easy to draw. Yet there is clearly a distinction between Aquinas’ treatment of creation at the philosophical level and the colourful story of creation in Genesis. The distinction is important, because the world religions owe some of their living power to their success in presenting a total picture of reality, through a coherent system of doctrines.

The Ethical Dimension

Throughout history we find that religions usually incorporate a code of ethics. Ethics concern the behaviour of the individual and, to some extent, the code of ethics of the dominant religion controls the community. Quite obviously, men do not always live up to the standards they profess. And sometimes the standards which are inculcated by the dominant faith in a particular society may not be believed by all sections of that society.

Even so, there is no doubt that religions have been influential in moulding the ethical attitudes of the societies they are part of. It is important, however, to distinguish between the moral teaching incorporated in the doctrines and mythology of a religion, and the social facts concerning those who adhere to the faith in question. For instance, Christianity teaches ‘Love thy neighbour as thyself.’ As a matter of sociological fact, quite a lot of people in so-called Christian countries, where Christianity is the official or dominant religion, fail to come anywhere near this ideal. The man who goes to church is not necessarily loving; nor is the man who goes to a Buddhist temple necessarily compassionate. Consequently, we must distinguish between the ethical teachings of a faith, which we shall discuss as the *ethical* dimension of religion, and the actual sociological effects and circumstances of a religion.

Pertinent to this point is the consideration that most religions are institutionalized. This is most obvious in technologically primitive societies, where the priest, soothsayer, or magician is closely integrated into the social structure. Religion is not just a personal matter here: it is part of the life of the community. It is built into the institutions of daily life. But even in sophisticated communities where a line is drawn between religious and secular concerns, as in contemporary America, churches exist as institutions to be reckoned with. They are part of the 'establishment.' In areas where there is active or latent persecution of religious faith, as in the Soviet Union, there are still organizations for continuing religious activities.

The Social Dimension

Religions are not just systems of *belief*: they are also organizations, or parts of organizations. They have a communal and social significance. This social shape of a religion is, of course, to some extent determined by the religious and ethical ideals and practices that it harbours. Conversely, it often happens that the religious and ethical ideals are adapted to existing social conditions and attitudes. For example, Japanese fishermen reconcile the Buddhist injunction against taking life (even animal or fish life) to their activity as fishermen. The Christian's dedication to brotherly love or his attitude to war may be determined more by patriotism and a national crisis than by the Gospel. Thus, it is important to distinguish between the ethical dimension of religion and the *social* dimension. The latter is the mode in which the religion in question is institutionalized, whereby, through its institutions and teachings, it affects the community in which it finds itself.

The doctrinal, mythological, and ethical dimensions express a religion's claims about the nature of the invisible world and its aims about how men's lives ought to be shaped: the social dimension indicates the way in which men's lives are in fact shaped by these claims and the way in which religious institutions operate.

It is, incidentally, clear that the ongoing patterns of ritual are an important element in the institutionalization of religion. For example, if it is believed that certain ceremonies and sacraments can only be properly performed by a priest, then the religious institution will be partly determined by the need to maintain and protect a professional priesthood.

The Experiential Dimension

The dimensions we have so far discussed would indeed be hard to account for were it not for the dimension with which this book is centrally concerned: that of experience, the experiential dimension. Although men may hope to have contact with, and participate in, the invisible world through ritual, personal religion normally involves the hope of, or realization of, experience of that world. The Buddhist monk hopes for nirvana, and this includes the contemplative experience of peace and of insight into the transcendent. The Christian who prays to God believes normally that God answers prayer—and this not just 'externally' in bringing about certain states of affairs, such as a cure for illness, but more importantly 'internally' in the personal relationship that flowers between the man who prays and his Maker. The prayerful Christian believes that God does speak to men in an intimate way and that the individual can and does have an inner experience of God. Hence, personal religion necessarily involves what we have called the experiential dimension.

The factor of religious experience is even more crucial when we consider the events and the human lives from which the great religions have stemmed. The Buddha achieved Enlightenment as he sat in meditation beneath the Bo-Tree. As a consequence of his shattering mystical experience, he believed that he had the secret of the cure for the suffering and dissatisfactions of life in this world. We have records of the inaugural visions of some of the Old Testament prophets, of the experiences that told them something profoundly important about God and that spurred them on to teach men in his name. It was through such experiences that Muhammad began to preach the unity of Allah—a preaching that had an explosive impact upon the world from Central Asia to Spain. One cannot read the Upanishads, the source of so much of Hindu doctrine, without feeling the experience on which their teachings are founded. The most striking passage in the *Bhagavadgita*, perhaps the greatest religious document of Hinduism, is that in which the Lord reveals himself in terrifying splendour to Arjuna. Arjuna is overwhelmed by awe and filled with utter devotion. We have already remarked on the seminal importance of St. Paul's similar experience on the Damascus Road.

The words of Jesus Christ reveal his sense of intimate closeness to the Father; there is little doubt that this rested upon highly significant personal experiences. These and other examples can be given of the crucial part played by religious experience in the genesis of the great faiths.

For this reason, it is unrealistic to treat Marxism as a religion: though it possesses doctrines, symbols, a moral code, and even sometimes rituals, it denies the possibility of an experience of the invisible world. Neither relationship to a personal God nor the hope of an experience of salvation or nirvana can be significant for the Marxist. Likewise Humanism, because it fixes its sights on this-worldly aims, is essentially non-religious. Nevertheless, it is necessary for us to examine the impact of these faiths upon the contemporary world. But the main emphasis will be upon the inner side—what religions mean in personal experience, and how they have been moulded by such experience.

There is a special difficulty, however, in undertaking a description of a religious experience. We have to rely upon the testimony of those who have the experience, and their reports must be conveyed to us either by telling or writing. Sometimes accounts of prophetic or mystical experience of important religious leaders have been preserved by oral tradition through many generations before being written down. But for the most part, the individual religious experiences that have influenced large segments of mankind occurred in cultures that knew the art of writing.

This means that the experience occurred in the context of the existing religions which already had a doctrinal dimension. This raises a problem for us in our attempt to understand the unique religious experience of the prophets or founders of religions, for their experiences are likely to be interpreted in the light of existing doctrines, as well as clothed in the mythological and symbolic forms of the age. There is less difficulty when we consider the 'lesser' figures of the religions—not the founders, but those saints and visionaries who come after. They interpret their experiences in terms of received doctrines and mythologies.

For these reasons, it is not easy to know about a given report which of the elements in it are based, so to say, purely on the experience itself, and which are due to doctrinal and mythological interpretation. To some extent the problem can be overcome by comparing the reports of men of different cultures—such as India and the West—which had virtually no contact during the periods crucial for the formation and elaboration of the dominant religious beliefs.

Moreover, it is worth noting that there is a *dialectic* between experience and doctrine. Thus, though the Buddha, for example, took over elements from the thought-forms of his own age, he was genuinely a creative teacher, who introduced new elements and transmuted the old. The Old Testament prophets fashioned a genuinely original ethical monotheism from an existant belief in Yahweh. The changes they made in the simple tribal religious teaching they inherited can be understood, to some degree, in terms of the impact of the personal religious experiences that were revelatory for these men. Thus experience and doctrinal interpretation have a dialectical relationship. The latter colours the former, but the former also shapes the latter. This book will attempt to exhibit this dialectic at work.

This dialectical interplay also helps us to understand some of the features of personal religion at a humbler level. The Christian, for example, is taught certain doctrines and mythological symbols by his parents. He learns to call God 'Our Father'; he is instructed to believe that the world is created by God and sustained by God. These ideas will at first simply be 'theoretical' as far as the young Christian is concerned, on a par with other non-observable theories he learns about the world, such as that the earth goes round the sun. But suppose he progresses to a deeper understanding of the Christian faith through a particular personal experience, or through his response to the ritual and ethical demands of the religion. Then he will come to see that in some mysterious way God is a person with whom he can have contact; God is not just like the sun, to be thought of speculatively, or to be looked at. Personally, then, he discovers that he can worship and pray to God. In short, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth' will come to have a new meaning for him. In a sense, he will now believe something other than what he first believed. In this way, the interplay between doctrine and experiences is fundamental to religion.

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Christianity’s complex relations with philosophy can be approached from three angles – by surveying the problems which Christian philosophy of religion must address, by examining Christian theism’s impact on Western philosophy and the resources it provides for solving problems arising within that tradition, and by considering Christianity’s ambivalent attitudes towards philosophy.

Philosophical problems associated with Christianity

Christian theism is a specification of more generic religious conceptions. At the most general level, it is an instance of William James’s ‘religious hypothesis’:

- 1 There is a higher universe.
- 2 We are better off if we believe this and act accordingly.
- 3 Communion with the higher universe ‘is a process wherein work is really done,’ and effects produced in the visible world.

James’s ‘higher universe’ can be interpreted in a number of ways, however – as an impersonal power or force, as ‘emptiness,’ as cosmic law, and so on. Theists construe it as God – an omniscient mind, an omnipotent will, an unlimited love. Christians are distinguished from other theists by their understanding of the Godhead as both one and three, and by their belief that God has redeemed the world through Jesus of Nazareth.

Many philosophical difficulties which the literature associates with Christianity are problems for any religious worldview. Whether religious hypotheses are metaphysically otiose, for example, and naturalism sufficient. Or whether religious language is cognitively meaningful and (if it is) what kind of meaning it has (see Article 24, RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE). Or whether experience of the “‘higher universe’” is genuinely possible. Of the remaining difficulties, most are problems for any standard form of theism – whether God’s existence can be proved, whether and how OMNIPOTENCE (see Article 28) and other divine attributes can be defined, whether such properties as timelessness (see Article 32, ETERNITY) and providential activity are consistent, whether MIRACLES (see Article 46) are possible or likely, whether God’s FOREKNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN FREEDOM (see Article 37) are compatible, and so on. The problem of evil is particularly acute for theists since they believe that an omnipotent and morally perfect God knowingly permits it (see Article 50, THE PROBLEM OF EVIL). (However, some form of the difficulty besets any religious worldview which maintains, as most do, that reality is fundamentally good.) Other problems are common to Christianity and to some but not all non-Christian forms of theism. An example is the tension between strong doctrines of grace such as those found in Christianity and (for example) Sri Vaisnavism or Siva Siddhanta, and human responsibility. Another is the ‘scandal of particularity’ – the potential conflict between doctrines of God’s justice and love, and the belief that salvation depends on a conscious relation to historical persons or events that are unknown (and thus, on the face of it, inaccessible) to large numbers of people. Thus, most of the philosophical problems associated with Christian theism are not peculiar to Christianity. But some are. Obvious examples are difficulties associated with the Trinity, the Incarnation or atonement, and original sin (see Article 66, TRINITY; Article 67, INCARNATION; Article 69, ATONEMENT, JUSTIFICATION, AND SANCTIFICATION: and Article 68, SIN AND ORIGINAL SIN).

Christian theism may also provide unique resources for dealing with problems common to other theistic or religious systems. Marilyn Adams, for example, has recently argued that Christian theism furnishes materials for handling the problem of evil. Discussions of the issue typically assume that the system of rights and obligations connects all rational agents, and that a satisfactory solution of the problem must show that evils are logically necessary conditions or consequences of 'religiously neutral' goods like pleasure, knowledge, or friendship. Both assumptions are suspect. God escapes the network of rights and obligations in virtue of His transcendence. Furthermore, God and communion with Him don't just surpass temporal goods: they are incommensurable with them. The beatific vision will therefore 'engulf' any finite evils one has suffered. Adams also suggests that Christian theodiscists should explore the implications of such goods as Christian martyrdom and Christ's passion. Suffering maybe a means of participating in Christ, thereby providing the sufferer with insight into, and communion with, God's inner life. Adams's first suggestion is available to other theists, but her second is not.

Christian philosophers in the Middle Ages addressed all of these issues. Since Descartes, they have largely confined themselves to discussing generic questions. There are two exceptions, however. Since the early 1980s, Christian analytic philosophers have turned their attention to uniquely Christian issues. Richard Swinburne's work on the atonement, Thomas Morris's book on the Incarnation, and the essays collected in *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* are important examples. The other notable exception is Immanuel Kant's and G. W. F. Hegel's philosophical reconstructions of such peculiarly Christian doctrines as original sin and the Trinity.

Christian theism and Western philosophy

Some intellectual historians have claimed that Christian theism's encounter with Greek thought profoundly altered the course of Western philosophy. For example, Etienne Gilson has argued that the Christian notion of God as a self-existent act of existence that freely bestows actuality on created beings had revolutionary consequences. The basic ontological dividing line was no longer between unity and multiplicity, or between the immaterial and material, as it was in Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus, but between a God who exists necessarily, on the one hand, and created (and therefore contingent) being, on the other (see Article 39, CREATION AND CONSERVATION). As a result, philosophy was forced to draw a sharp distinction between a thing's being and its being a certain kind of thing, ie between its existence and its essence. Philosophy no longer confined itself to asking, with the Greeks, 'how is the world ordered, and what accounts for its order?' (see Article 8, ANCIENT PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY). It also asked, 'why does any world exist and not nothing?' The being of things as well as their order was problematized. Others contend that these themes had further consequences. Pursuing suggestions of M. B. Foster and A. N. Whitehead, Eric Mascall has maintained that Christian theism cleared a metaphysical space within which modern science became possible. Since the Christian God is a God of reason and order, any world He creates will exhibit pattern and regularity. But because He *freely* creates the world, its order will be contingent. The world's structures cannot be deduced a priori, then, but must be discovered by observation and experiment. Others have claimed that Christian theism's desacralization of nature also helps explain why modern science arose in the West and not elsewhere. Christian theism maintains that nothing contingent is inherently holy. Places (Sinai, Jerusalem), persons (prophets, priests, divinely anointed kings), artifacts (the ark), and so on, aren't intrinsically holy: any holiness they possess is extrinsic – conferred upon them by God from without. Nature is no longer regarded as divine and therefore becomes an appropriate object for manipulation and detached observation.

However, while these claims may point to important truths, they are over-stated. The conception of God in question is not peculiarly Christian, for Muslims and Jews share it. Nor is the desacralization of nature a uniquely Western phenomenon. (It occurs in Hinayana Buddhism.) Furthermore, that the created order is contingent is a consequence of at least one major form of Indian theism – Ramanuja's (1017-1137) Visistadvaita Vedanta. The world's 'material' ('prakritic') substrate necessarily exists (for the world in either its latent or manifest form is God's body), but the phenomenal world or manifest universe does not. God is free to create it or not (ie He is free either to bring the world from an unmanifest to a manifest state or not to do so), and to give it any order He pleases.

Christian theism does appear to be largely responsible for the importance of the free will problem in Western philosophy. Neither Plato's nor Aristotle's philosophical psychology contains anything that precisely corresponds to the will. Augustine is the first to clearly recognize that some moral failures cannot be plausibly ascribed to imperfections of reason or desire, and to attribute them to a misuse of will. Again, while Aristotle's discussion of voluntary and involuntary action is quite sophisticated, he does not clearly ask whether human freedom and moral responsibility are compatible with universal causal determination. Christian theism's emphasis on the will, heightened sense of humanity's moral responsibility, and vivid awareness of God's sovereignty and causal universality, made this problem acute. Works like Augustine's *On Free Choice of the Will* and his anti-Pelagian writings, Anselm's *On Freedom of Choice* and *The Fall of Satan*, and Jonathan Edwards' *Freedom of the Will* raise issues which aren't squarely addressed in ancient philosophy, and discuss them with a sophistication and thoroughness which are absent in their Indian counterparts. (Indian philosophy examines these issues in connection with the doctrines of karma and God's sovereign causal activity. But the discussions are brief and comparatively unsophisticated. Ramanuja, for example, argues that God's causal sovereignty is preserved because God is the free agent's existential support and because He 'consents' to their free actions, ie allows them to be actualized. Ramanuja thus resolves the tension between human freedom and God's causal sovereignty by restricting the latter's range. This is to dissolve the problem, not solve it.) Arguably, both the distinctions drawn and moves made in secular discussions of the free will problem, and the importance ascribed to it, have their ultimate roots in these theological discussions.

Some Christian philosophers believe that the resources of Christian philosophy can be used to 'solve' or illuminate philosophical problems arising independently of theism. Two examples will suffice. First, if natural laws are no more than constant conjunctions (as David Hume thought), they will not support counterfactuals. That striking a match is always followed by its bursting into flame does not imply that if a match were struck in certain counterfactual situations, it would burst into flame. For the conjunction could be accidental. Of course, if laws of nature were necessary truths, they would support counterfactuals. But they aren't. What is needed is an account of natural laws that respects both their subjunctive character and their contingency. Jonathan Edwards regarded them as expressions of God's settled intentions with respect to the natural world, descriptions of His habitual manner of acting. Del Ratzsch has recently argued that views of this sort can provide a more adequate account of the subjunctive character of natural laws than non-theistic alternatives. Second, other philosophers have claimed that theism alone can adequately account for the objectivity and inescapability of moral value (see Article 44, MORAL ARGUMENTS; and Article 57, DIVINE COMMAND ETHICS). Suppose that God Himself is the standard of moral goodness, or that moral values are necessary contents of the divine intellectual activity, or that an action's obligatory character consists in God's having commanded it. Moral facts will then be objective in the sense that they are not human constructs. If God exists necessarily, then (on the first two views), moral truths are necessary. If God necessarily exists and necessarily commands that (for example) we tell the truth, then truth telling is necessarily obligatory on the third view as well. Views of this sort can also do a better job of accommodating two apparently conflicting intuitions: that moral values exist in minds, and that morality cannot command our allegiance unless it expresses a deep fact about reality. But whatever merit these solutions to wider philosophical problems have, they are not specifically Christian. For they are also available to other theists.

Christianity's attitude towards philosophy

Christianity's attitude towards philosophy has been ambivalent. One strand of the tradition is openly hostile. Its seminal figure is Tertullian (155-222).

Tertullian does not deny that the writings of the philosophers contain truths. Nor does he deny that God can be (imperfectly) grasped without the aid of revelation. For He can be known from His works and by the interior witness of our souls. Philosophy is none the less repudiated. 'What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? the Academy and the Church? What concord is there between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from the porch of Solomon, who had himself taught that the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart. Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition. We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ, no inquisition after enjoying the Gospel' (Roberts and Donaldson 1950, vol. 3, p. 246). Tertullian's objection is threefold. First the introduction of philosophy among Christians has resulted in heresy. Second, whereas schools of philosophy have human founders, the school of the Gospel is founded by God. Christianity is a *revealed* doctrine that demands obedience and submission. Philosophy, by contrast, relies on *human* wisdom, and is an expression of self-seeking and of a fallible and corrupt reason. Finally (and most profoundly), the mysteries of faith *repel* reason. 'The Son of God died; it is by all means to be believed because it is absurd. And he was buried, and rose again; the fact is certain because it is impossible' (Roberts and Donaldson 1950, vol. 3, p. 535). Christian philosophy is a contradiction in terms because Christianity's truths are impenetrable to reason.

Tertullian is by no means alone. In the Christian Middle Ages, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) claimed that those who 'called themselves philosophers should rather be called the slaves of curiosity and pride.' The true teacher is the Holy Spirit, and those who have been instructed by Him can 'say with the Psalmist (Psalm 119:99) *I have understood more than all my teachers.*' Commenting on this text, Bernard exclaims: 'Wherefore, O my brother, does thou make such a boast? Is it because... thou has understood or hast endeavored to understand the reasonings of Plato and the subtleties of Aristotle? God forbid! thou answerest. It is because I have sought Thy commandments, O Lord' (Gilson 1938, pp. 12-13).

This attitude persists and is especially prominent in the Protestant reformers and among the skeptical fideists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (see Article 48, FIDEISM).

An equally important, and ultimately more widespread, attitude towards philosophy was expressed by Justin Martyr (105-65), Clement of Alexandria (150-215), and Origen (185-254). Philosophy is a preparation for the gospel. According to Clement, for example, 'it was a schoolmaster to bring the Hellenic mind, as the Law, the Hebrews, to Christ' (Roberts and Donaldson 1950, vol. 2. p. 305). This positive attitude towards philosophy was supported in two ways. The first was the 'loan' hypothesis: the truths in Greek philosophy were ultimately plagiarized from Moses and the prophets. The second was the Logos theory: all human beings participate in the Logos – God's eternal word or wisdom who became incarnate in Jesus Christ. The Greek writers were thus, as Justin says, 'able to see realities darkly through the sowing of the implanted word that was in them.' Since 'Christ... is the Word of whom every race of men were partakers, ... those who lived reasonably are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists; as, among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus, and men like them' (Roberts and Donaldson 1950, vol. 1, pp. 193, 178). And both Clement and Origen believe that the Logos is the archetype of which human reason is the copy.

It is important to notice, however, that while these doctrines make a positive evaluation of Greek philosophy possible, they also imply philosophy's inferiority to revelation. The loan hypothesis implies that the truths found in philosophy are fragmented and mixed with error. Whatever authority they have depends on their origin. Only in scripture can truth be found whole and undistorted. The Logos theory implies that Christians are better off than the philosophers. For, as Justin says, Christians 'live not according to a part only of the word diffused [among men] but by the knowledge and contemplation of the whole Word, which is Christ' (Roberts and Donaldson 1950, vol. 1, p. 191).

Even so, philosophy isn't just a preparation for the Gospel. Both Clement and Origen believe that our blessedness consists in knowing or understanding the Good, and that philosophy can be employed to deepen our understanding of the truths of scripture in which that Good reveals itself. The seminal treatment of this theme is Augustine's.

Revelation is a safer and surer guide to truth than philosophy. Any truths about God taught by the philosophers can be found in scripture as well, but unmixed with error and enriched by other truths. Reason and philosophy aren't to be despised, however. Reason is needed to understand what is proposed for belief and to make the divine speaker's claims to authority credible. Nor should reason be discarded once faith has been achieved. 'God forbid that He should hate in us that faculty by which He has made us superior to all other living beings. Therefore, we must refuse so to believe as not to receive or seek a reason for our belief...' (Augustine 1953, p. 302). The mature Christian will therefore use reason and the insights of philosophy to understand (to the extent possible) what he already believes. But faith remains a precondition of the success of this enterprise. For some things must first be believed to be understood. 'Therefore the prophet said with reason: 'If you will not believe, you will not understand'' (Augustine 1953, p. 302). Augustine is principally thinking, in this passage, of the Christian 'mysteries' (the Trinity, Incarnation, and so on). Yet he clearly believes that sound faith is needed for *any* adequate understanding of God. (But it is not needed for grasping some truths about Him. The 'Platonists' lacked faith yet not only affirmed God's existence and the immortality of the soul but also that the Logos or Word was born of God and that all things were made by Him.)

Augustine's attitudes towards philosophy are echoed by Anselm and dominate the Christian Middle Ages. Modern Christian attitudes towards philosophy are, on the whole, variants of those seminally expressed by Tertullian and Augustine.

Closer inspection reveals that the two views are not always as sharply opposed as at first appears. Consider, for example, the attitudes towards reason expressed by Puritan divines, on the one hand, and by the Cambridge Platonists who opposed their so-called 'dogmatism' and 'narrow sectarianism,' on the other.

As good Calvinists, Puritans believed that while reason was competent in 'civill and humane things,' it was not competent in divine things. Because of the fall, 'the whole speculative power of the higher and nobler part of the Soule, which wee call the Understanding... is naturally and originally corrupted, and utterly destitute of all Divine Light' (Robert Bolton, quoted in Morgan 1986, p. 47). Francis Quarles therefore recommends: 'In the Meditation of divine Mysteries, keep thy heart humble, and thy thoughts holy: Let Philosophy not be asham'd to be confuted, nor Logic blush to be confounded... The best way to see day-light is to put out thy Candle [reason]' (Patrides 1970, p. 9). The Cambridge Platonists sounded a very different note. 'Reason is the Divine governor of man's life; it is the very voice of God' (Benjamin Whichcote, quoted in Powicke 1970 [1926], p. 23). According to John Smith, it is 'a Light flowing from the Foundation and Father of Lights.' Reason was given 'to enable Man to work out of himself all those Notions of God which are the true Ground-work of Love and Obedience to God, and conformity to him...' (Smith 1978 [1660] p. 382). Scripture simply reinforces and clarifies what a properly functioning reason discerns.

Neither position, however, is as extreme as this suggests. Many Puritan diatribes against reason are expressions of Puritanism's emphasis on experience and not of a belief that reason's 'notional' understanding of religion is invariably false. As Arthur Dent says, 'The knowledge of the reprobate is like the knowledge which a mathematicall geographer hath of the earth and all the places in it, which is but a generall notion, and a speculative comprehension of them. But the knowledge of the elect is like the knowledge of a traveller which can speake of experience and feeling, and hath beene there and seene...' (Morgan 1986, p. 59).

Puritans also insisted that God's word is *intrinsically* rational. 'The Sunne is ever cleere' although we are prevented from seeing it because 'wee want eyes to behold it' or because it is 'so be-clouded, that our sight is thereby hindered...' (Richard Bernard, quoted In Morgan 1986, p. 55). Furthermore, grace can cure our blindness and remove the clouds. *Regenerate* reason can unfold scripture and defend the faith. Puritan divines were therefore prepared, in practice, to ascribe a high instrumental value to reason and humane learning. As John Rainolds said, 'It may be lawfull for Christians to use Philosophers, and books of Secular Learning... with this condition, that whatsoever they finde in them, that is profitable and usefull, they convert it to Christian doctrine and do, as it were, shave off... all superfluous stufte' (Morgan 1986, p. 113). Even a radical Puritan like John Penry could insist that 'the Lord doth not ordinarily bestowe [full comprehension of the Word]... without the knowledge of the artes,' especially rhetoric and logic, Hebrew and Greek (Morgan 1986, p. 106). Logic, indeed, was so important that the missionary John Eliot translated a treatise on it into Algonquin 'to initiate the Indians in the knowledge of the Rule of Reason' (Miller 1961 [1939] p. 114).

The Cambridge Platonists' exaltation of reason must be similarly qualified. Because of the fall, reason is 'but an old MS., with some broken periods, some letters worn out,' it is a picture which has 'lost its gloss and beauty, the oriency of its colours... the comeliness of its proportions...' (Powicke 1970 [1926] p. 30). As a consequence, divine assistance is now necessary. And God has provided it. Not only is there 'an Outward revelation of God's will to men [scripture], there is also an Inward impression of it on their Minds and Spirits... We cannot see divine things but in a divine light (Smith 1978 [1660], p. 384). 'Right reason' is indeed sufficient to discern the things of God, but right reason is sanctified reason. Henry More speaks for all the Cambridge Platonists when he says, 'The oracle of God [reason] is not be heard but in his Holy Temple – that is to say in a good and holy man, thoroughly sanctified in Spirit, Soul and body' (More 1978 [1662] vol. 1, p. viii).

The dispute between the Puritans and Cambridge Platonists is typical of similar disputes in the history of traditional Christianity. Attacks on the use of reason and philosophy are seldom unqualified. (Tertullian himself was strongly influenced by Stoicism.) The reason which is commended, on the other hand, is what the seventeenth century called 'right reason' – a reason that is informed by the divine light, and is an expression of a properly disposed heart. Conflicting views on the relation between faith and reason or philosophy within traditional Christianity are, for the most part, less a matter of outright opposition than of difference in emphasis.

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Christian ethics can most simply be differentiated as the way of life appropriate to those who accept the Christian faith. However, in the course of nearly two thousand years Christianity has become a worldwide protean phenomenon. Therefore there are many points of view from which Christian ethics could be analysed, and many ways in which its history could be charted. This account is written by one who can reasonably be said to be in the mainstream of Christianity, as it has been historically expressed. So the plan of this article is to begin with an overall view of the phenomenon of Christian ethics, then to deal with its foundation in New Testament times in the ministry of Jesus and the interpreter of Jesus of whom we have most evidence, St Paul, and conclude with a brief mention of criticisms of Christian ethics made in recent years.

i A survey of Christian faith and ethics

The Christian faith, as its name implies, is specifically related to Jesus Christ. It can be said to rest on two presuppositions. The first is the reality of God. But when the question is raised, what sort of God? (since there have been many and diverse gods in human history), the second presupposition is that God is as disclosed in the ministry of Jesus Christ. This has become a single name in common usage, though the term Christ is rooted in the Jewish faith within which he lived. It refers to an expected Deliverer who would be sent by God to put the world to rights. The earliest Christians were those Jews who believed that this had indeed happened in the ministry of Jesus.

The Jewish faith is a strongly ethical one, quite unlike the various mystery religions which were current in the Roman Empire at the time of Jesus. So it is no surprise that the Christian faith is also strongly ethical. Its sources are found first of all in the Bible. The Old Testament is seen as preparing for and being fulfilled (though also in many respects negated) by the ministry of Jesus: the New Testament is seen as a witness to the life, death, and triumph over death of Jesus, and to the new community, or People of God, which came into existence as a result of his ministry. Experiences after his death led the closest disciples to worship God through him, an extraordinary thing for strictly monotheistic Jews to do; and that is why the Christian church commonly ends prayers with the phrase ‘through Jesus Christ our Lord’. However, even the term ‘resurrection’ which the Christians used to interpret Jesus’ triumph over death is drawn from the vocabulary of Judaism in the last few centuries BCE.

Initially the traditions about Jesus were transmitted to and within the new Christian congregations by word of mouth, and in ways relevant to their situation. Later they were incorporated into the four gospels, each author having his own theological stance. Mark is the earliest, about forty years after Jesus’ death. Prior to that we have letters from St Paul to various churches, several of which he founded. These cover both his basic understanding of Christian faith and ethics, and his answers to specific ethical problems which had arisen in the life of these young churches.

It took three or four centuries before it became quite clear which books would be regarded by the Church as included in the Canon (or Rule) of Scripture, and thus in the Bible as we know it. So the sources of Christian ethics also include the tradition of ethical reflection in the community of the Church down the centuries as it was brought to bear on the changing situations it faced. And the data themselves of these problems became another source of Christian ethics. Underlying all is the conscience (or power of reasoning on ethical questions) which Christians share with all human beings.

The questions which had to be raised ranged from the intimately personal to the complexities of economic and political life, including those of war and peace. A classic typology of five characteristic attitudes to the whole realm of human culture which continually appear in Christian history is that of Richard Niebuhr (*Christ and Culture*, 1951). These are (1) Christ against culture, a kind of other-worldly pietism; (2) the Christ of culture, a Christianity which casts a gospel glow over the existing order and hardly challenges it; (3) Christ and culture in paradox, which makes a sharp separation between God’s kindly rule in the Church and his stern rule (for the sake of order) in public life; (4) Christ above culture, meaning a triumphalist church which seeks control over public life; (5) Christ transforming culture, a leaven in the lump of personal and public life which allows for a legitimate autonomy of secular disciplines and seeks to influence but not necessarily to control institutions. All five positions refer back to the same biblical material, showing how important is the way it is decided to move from the Bible to the modern world. These five types have usually not been exemplified in totally pure ways;

they are what the sociologist Max Weber called 'ideal types', in which an attempt is made to distil the distinctive elements and different tendencies in each. But it is suggested that since they have reappeared so constantly in Christian history each is likely to have some basic cogency. For instance the Christ against culture type speaks powerfully when Christians find themselves against hostile and oppressive governments; or perhaps a small minority in a particularly alien environment. However, this is not to say that all five are equally plausible. All of them originally developed against the background of a social order relatively stable compared to that which the world has known since the scientific and technological changes which we call the Industrial Revolution. This has produced a new kind of civilization, and one involving rapid social change over almost the whole world. Today the fifth type, Christ transforming culture, seems to be much the most cogent, and more so than in the days of St Augustine and Calvin whom Richard Niebuhr finds to be two of the most notable examples of it.

This typology illustrates the protean nature of Christianity. Beginning as a reform movement, associated with a charismatic figure in the Jewish countryside, it rapidly became a predominantly urban movement as it spread along the great road routes of the Roman Empire. The direct Jewish influence soon ceased (particularly after the fall of Jerusalem to Rome in 70 CE), and that of the pervasive Hellenistic culture increased, with its legacy of Greek philosophy and ethics. After the fall of Rome itself four centuries later, Christianity became heir to the rickety Roman Empire, and in due course embodied itself closely in the institutions of one civilization, that of Europe and its later offshoots in the 'new world'. Christianity has now spread globally and this presents it with new doctrinal and ethical issues.

Living through these changes, Christianity has split into five broad confessional traditions, each of which has achieved a certain stability and each with a doctrinal and ethical style of its own. (1) The Orthodox, primarily in eastern Europe and Russia; (2) the Roman Catholic, by far the most numerous; (3) the Lutheran; (4) the Calvinist or Reformed, met with in the English-speaking world in the form of Presbyterian, Congregationalist and Baptist; (3) the Anglican, to which must be added Methodism as an offshoot bigger than the parent. In addition there are hundreds of other churches; a few are historic, like the Society of Friends or Quakers and other Peace Churches, whilst many are the products of this century, notably indigenous African churches. The Ecumenical Movement is bringing greater coherence and mutual understanding into both doctrinal and ethical reflection among this variety, though there remains a sizable minority which is either anti-ecumenical or so far unaffected by it.

To come closely to grips with Christian ethics, against this general background, it is worth noting that the term is commonly used in Protestant circles, whereas in Catholic ones the more common term is moral theology. There is no agreed differentiation between the use of the terms nor any essential difference in subject matter. Both are concerned with the two basic issues in ethics, how to act from the right motive and how to find what is the right action in particular circumstances. In essence the methods and procedures of Christian ethics are no different from those of moral philosophy; the difference in Christian ethics is its starting point in the Christian faith. (Other systems of ethics will have other starting points, either religious or some form of humanism, for all must have some presuppositions before they can get going.) It will be found that at many points there will be an overlap between different systems of ethics, and this is important in a growingly interconnected but plural world whose inhabitants must learn to live together.

That the two basic issues in ethics are right motive and right action seems obvious, but it is not always realized that they are. For instance Samuel Butler in his nineteenth-century novel *The Way of All Flesh* has this passage, 'The more I see the more sure I am that it does not matter why people do the right thing so long as they do it, nor why they may have done wrong if they have done it. The result depends upon the thing done and the motive goes for nothing.' St Paul, in a benevolent mood in the first chapter of Philippians, seems to take the same view. He says some people are preaching Christ out of envy but nevertheless he rejoices that Christ is preached. However, he would not have agreed with Butler that 'motive goes for nothing'. In furthering action from the right motive Christian ethics is concerned with what is often called 'spiritual formation'. By that is meant a growth in character through private prayers and public worship (both of which involve reflection on the Bible), and discussion with fellow Christians (and others where appropriate) so that one's insight or powers of discernment deepen. Bringing motivation to bear on particular decisions is traditionally known as casuistry. This got a bad name at the time of the Counter-Reformation because its aim seemed to be a series of rules for the evasion of obvious moral duties rather than to find out and fulfil what was the right action in particular circumstances. For instance mental restriction, equivocation and perjury were said to be legitimate if the welfare of the person, including honour or possessions, was at stake; whilst the doctrine of 'philosophic sin' held that no action was morally sinful unless the agent was actually thinking of God at the moment of committing it. Such absurdities were excoriated in Pascal's *Lettres Provinciales* (1656)

and they were soon condemned by the Papacy. It was a passing phase. The abuse of a procedure does not mean that the procedure is wrong in itself. 'Casuistry', whether known by that name or not, is essential. But it can no longer be tied to the precise demarcation of sins, associated with the confessional, as recent Roman Catholic moral theology recognizes. Nor is it to be supposed that there are clear, specific, 'Christian' answers to all the ethical problems that the world throws up. More likely there is a range of possibilities, with some ruled out. Recognizing the ambiguities of choice is part of the task of Christian ethics.

ii Jesus

We turn to the roots of Christian ethics in the ministry of Jesus, especially the teaching in the so-called synoptic gospels, Mark, Matthew and Luke. The fourth, John, can best be regarded as a selective and mature series of meditations on the main themes of the first three, whether the author knew them or only the oral traditions behind them. The crux of Jesus' teaching concerns the Kingdom of God, or the way God exercises his rule as King over the world. Jesus saw it as exemplified in his own life and teaching. He reflected on the traditions of his people which were available to him through the synagogues as he grew up, and interpreted them in a new and original way in terms of his own mission. He saw the weight of God's purpose for the world through Israel resting upon himself. The intimacy of his understanding of God comes clearly through the gospels. His understanding of God's kingly rule was highly paradoxical by conventional standards, so he expressed it less by doctrinal affirmations than by indirect means, parables and pithy sayings (as well as by choice of actions) related to everyday experiences but designed to startle the assumptions of the hearers and viewers and shift them to a new dimension. In particular God's rule is seen not in the punishment of wrongdoers but in bearing the consequences of their wrongdoing. Equally paradoxical ethical teaching followed.

It may be asked how far we can be sure that these teachings go back to Jesus. The broad answer is that the gospels have been put through a more meticulous and widespread critical examination than any other writings of the ancient world and that, allowing for elements of uncertainty in places, there is no doubt that from them we can know a great deal about Jesus' teaching, even though it has come to us filtered through the concerns of the earliest Christian congregations. One of the indirect evidences for this is that two great themes of post-resurrection (Pauline) Christianity, the dynamism of the Holy Spirit and the universality of the gospel were not read back into the life of Jesus but only appear as anticipatory hints in the written gospels.

What is conduct appropriate to a citizen of the Kingdom of God? Some of it is at the level of 'natural' morality, for instance the Golden Rule, 'Always treat others as you would like them to treat you' (Matt. 7: 12), which is found in some similar form in other ethics, and which can be taken at different levels provided one is consistent between oneself and others. Some of Jesus' words appear to follow 'natural' human judgements in offering rewards for good conduct and threatening penalties for bad. We shall return to this. But the distinctive feature of Jesus' ethical teaching is the way it radicalizes common morality. For instance there is to be no limit to the forgiveness for injuries (Matt. 18: 21ff), not on the grounds that it will win over the offender but because it corresponds to God's forgiveness of us. Similarly love of enemies is enjoined (Matt. 6: 14ff) not because it will win over the enemy (although of course it might) but because God loves his enemies. There is to be no restriction on neighbour love (Luke 10: 29ff). Anxiety is the surest sign of lack of trust in God (Matt. 6: 19-34), especially anxiety over possessions. So far from motive not being important provided the right action is done, Jesus was penetratingly critical of the self-love of 'good' people (Luke 18: 9-14), and it is clear from many passages in the gospels that he thought bad people to be not nearly so bad as the 'good' thought them. Underlying all this teaching lies the fact that Jesus was a man of faith (trust). Faced with the ambiguities of existence he looked at the weather, sun shining and rain falling alike on good and bad, and saw it as a sign of the unconditional goodness of the creative power of God. A sceptic would have drawn from the same evidence the conclusion that the universe is quite indifferent to moral worth. In this respect Jesus is an archetype for his followers.

His ethics is very different from an everyday ethic of doing good turns to those who do good turns to you; that is to say an ethic of reciprocity. This is invaluable as far as it goes. Social life requires a level of mutuality on which we can normally rely. One of the perils of international relations is that governments have not sufficient confidence in their relations with one another for mutuality to be relied upon. However, in our lives as citizens we do usually count on it. Some people behave better than the rule of reciprocity requires. Some keep it exactly on a fifty-fifty basis. Some get by with the minimum of co-operation. Some who do not even do that are likely to end in prison. Jesus goes much deeper, explicitly warning against loving only those who love you, and saying that there is nothing extraordinary in that, the Gentiles do it: rather, what do you do more? (Matt. 5: 45ff). He goes beyond the world of claims and counter-claims, of rights and duties or something owed to others, as St Paul clearly sees when in Romans (13: 8) he says, 'Owe no-one anything but to love one another'. Jesus calls for a certain flair in life, a certain creative recklessness at critical points.

It might be thought that another emphasis in the gospels, that on rewards, is incompatible with this non-reciprocal ethic. Indeed it has continually been misunderstood. It is true that there is one passage in the gospels, about taking the lower seat in order to be promoted to the higher (Luke 14: 7) which is presented as pure prudential morality, presumably teaching that egoism is self-defeating, as a traditional proverb might. But it is most uncharacteristic. The usual teaching on rewards is found in such passages as Matthew 19: 29, where it is eternal life, or Luke 18: 22 where it is treasure in heaven, and especially the Beatitude in the Sermon on the Mount, 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God' (Matt. 5: 8). This teaching, as that on punishments, must be taken as a statement of fact. In the Kingdom of God there is only one reward whether, as in the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, you have worked all day or began only at the eleventh hour (Matt. 20: 1ff). The thrust of the teaching is towards a self-forgetfulness which results in an unselfconscious goodness. Writers on spirituality often call it disinterestedness. Jesus spoke severely against self-conscious goodness, as we noted when referring to Luke 18: 9ff. In the allegory of the sheep and the goats the sheep are unconscious of either their goodness or of rewards. The rewards Jesus spoke of cannot follow from the direct pursuit of them. Indeed consciously to pursue disinterestedness is self-defeating. One cannot *pursue* self-forgetfulness. If God is as Jesus said he is, it must be the case that following his way of life brings us to God; and to turn our backs on it must bring us to destruction, vividly symbolized by the perpetual burning rubbish dump outside the walls of Jerusalem (Gehenna). The fact that one can be tempted to do the right thing for the wrong reason, which was the fourth and most insidious temptation of Becket in T. S. Eliot's play *Murder in the Cathedral*, cannot alter that reality. The reward of God's presence must be for those who follow 'the way of the Lord Jesus' for love's sake, not the reward's sake. Indeed only they will be able to appreciate the reward. Whether anyone with full knowledge will turn their back on the vision of goodness lived and taught by Jesus is a question to which we have no answer. If there is a hell of destruction, is it empty?

This teaching on rewards has often not been followed or understood. Alms-giving is a litmus test. Donations and bequests have often been made with the motive of securing God's favour now and after death, and not as a joyful response to a graciousness of God already known.

It is significant that Jesus did not give a precise ruling on detailed ethical issues. When asked whether tribute should be given to Caesar (Matt. 22: 25ff) he said that what was due to God should be rendered to God and what due to Caesar should be rendered to him, without saying which was which. This has had continually to be worked out in varying circumstances. Education is a key area. When asked by two brothers to divide an estate he refused (Luke 12: 14). There is truth in Richard Robinson's contention (*An Atheist's Values*, 1964, p. 149): 'Jesus says nothing on any social questions except divorce, and all ascriptions of political doctrine to him are false. He does not pronounce about war, capital punishment, gambling, justice, the administration of law, the distribution of goods, socialism, equality of income, equality of sex, equality of colour, equality of opportunity, tyranny, freedom, slavery, self-determination or contraception. There is nothing Christian about being for any of these things nor about being against them if we mean by 'Christian' what Jesus taught according to the synoptic gospels.'

Some have thought that the passage in the Sermon on the Mount concerning 'turning the other cheek' is an injunction to pacifism as a political technique (Matt. 5: 39ff), but this is to ignore its literary character as well as the nature of Jesus' ethical teaching. It occurs along with the command to pluck out an eye or cut off a hand rather than fall into evil, and also to give your cloak as well to anyone who asks for your coat (and thus be naked, for only two garments were worn). Like paradox, hyperbole is a way of giving concreteness to abstract ideas. The passage is neither for nor against pacifism as a political technique; Robinson is right.

Divorce is the one apparent exception to the fact that Jesus did not give detailed ethical rulings, but it is very doubtful if it is so. The key passage is Mark 10, 1-12 which deals with God's basic intention for marriage, without any direct reference to ecclesiastical, still less state, law. In Matthew 5: 32 and 19: 9 this is modified to include a clause forbidding divorce except on the grounds of *porneia*, usually translated as adultery. There has been an immense discussion of these texts. Apart from the inherent improbability that Jesus would give a detailed rule on only one issue, it seems clear that Matthew has made him arbitrate between the two rival contemporary rabbinic schools of Hillel and Shammai on what justified divorce in terms of the Mosaic ruling in Deuteronomy 24: 1.

The fourth gospel reflects in its own way the distinctive features of Jesus' ethical teaching. There is no ruling on any specific issue. The concentration is on the radical challenge Jesus brings to accepted ways. All is darkness except the white light focused on him, and through him on his intimate disciples. Indeed mutual love in the first instance is restricted to them, but it is only a provisional restriction, for the world is to be saved and not abandoned (17: 20ff). Love in word, will and action is stressed, even as a condition of knowledge (7:17). There is a parallel here with classical Marxism, which has been picked up by recent liberation theology, that only those who are actively committed to the cause of the poor will understand the Christian faith. It is certainly the case that Jesus challenged society's standards by the standards of the Kingdom of God in his attitude not only to the poor, but to heretics and schismatics (Samaritans), the immoral (prostitutes and adulterers), the politically compromised (tax collectors), society's rejects (lepers), those whom society neglected; and to women as a sex.

What is the meaning of love to which Jesus referred when he said that the Old Testament law (Torah) could be summarized in two commandments, love to God and to one's neighbour as oneself? (Matt. 22: 34ff). Without going into a detailed word study, it is well known that the one English word love covers several different Greek words, notably *eros* (a yearning for satisfaction at any level up to the heights of beauty, truth and goodness), *philia* (friendship), and *agape*. This last was a relatively colourless Greek word which Christians took over to express the heart of Jesus' teaching. The two loves are not univocal, for adoration and worship are involved in our attitude to God, but not to our neighbour. Briefly, love of neighbour means being responsible for our fellow human beings, not because of their idiosyncratic qualities but because of their humanity as made in the image of God (Gen. 1: 22). It does not depend on natural affection in the one who loves nor natural attractiveness in the one loved. It does not imply identical treatment, but putting oneself in the neighbour's shoes. It is not a question of what *you* would want if you were in the neighbour's shoes. It does not mean submission to being exploited; for one thing it would not be for the good of the neighbour to be allowed to exploit you. Nor is it in the first instance concerned with self-sacrifice; it is service to the neighbour, not a loss to the self which is important. Indeed an affirmation of the self is needed. Those who hate or despise themselves cannot love their neighbour. It is pride, sloth and anxiety which are the enemies of the self, and thus the enemies of *agape*.

When more than two people are involved the expression of *agape* involves being fair to each of them. Questions of corrective and distributive justice are in the background of the New Testament, but the relation of them to *agape* is not systematically worked out because it is not a systematic work on ethics. The focus is on the new community of the church. Response in neighbour love to the love of God requires life within a community of love, a fellowship of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. The New Testament is very rich in its picture of the church in this respect, and very sharp in its criticism of the church when it fails to be such a community. But questions of justice remain. Suppose, for instance, parents have two children. They love both equally: but children of the same parents can differ greatly and it is still necessary to be *fair* between them. If this is so in the intimacy of family relations it is just as necessary and far more difficult to arrive at what is fair, in the wider collective relationships in which humans are involved. These extend even to issues of war. St Thomas Aquinas' brief discussion of the rudiments of a 'just war' doctrine occurs in the framework of his treatment of love. (*Summa Theologiae*, 2a, 2ae, q40 articles 1-3.)

The relation of justice and love is complex. It quickly brings in questions which are discussed in moral philosophy, like the place of special obligations. At least it must be said that love presupposes justice; it cannot require less than justice even if it transcends it; otherwise it degenerates into sentimentality.

Love as motivation does not give detailed content to ethical decisions. That requires knowledge and discernment, a combination of skills and perceptiveness. A love which is unwilling to be formed in this way and is content to mean well is irresponsible and potentially dangerous. Some of the worst sins against love have been perpetrated by those who 'meant well'.

One theological tradition, the Lutheran, has particularly emphasized the gratuitous and unceasing love of God, his 'amazing grace', which is not dependent in any way on the merits of the loved one. It does this because it wants to remove any possibility of human boasting, any trace of a religion of works which thinks it can earn acceptance by God, that a credit balance of meritorious deeds is a prior condition of being 'right with God', rather than the Christian life being a response to God's prior graciousness. In a major modern work, *Agape and Eros*, Anders Nygren ends by comparing human beings to tubes or channels through which God's grace flows to the neighbour. Something has gone wrong when humans are compared to tubes. Rather they are called to share in God's non-reciprocal love which yearns for a response from the neighbour but does not give up when it fails to elicit it. In this it differs from friendship, which is more mutual and changeable, and needs *agape* to save it from self-centredness. *Eros* also, which can move from the instinctive level of sexual libido to the highest levels of aspiration, needs to be set in the context of *agape* to save it from self-centredness.

The Church has had trouble in holding to this radical understanding of love. It is focused in the question of how to interpret the very radical sayings found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), the most considerable collection of Jesus' teaching. Several ways have been adopted, all having the effect of neutralizing these radical elements and bringing them nearer to common-sense morality. One has been to say that Jesus expected the imminent end of the world and that the ethic was meant only for the short time left. This is probably correct about Jesus' expectation, but it does not follow that the ethic is irrelevant now that the world has not ended. Another way has been to siphon off the more radical elements as 'counsels of perfection' to which a few are called. They are usually to be found in monasteries and nunneries, having taken vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and are called the Religious with a capital R. The rest are called to follow the basic ethical 'precepts' which are binding on all. One way of expressing this is to say that one *must* be just and one *may* be loving. It is a kind of Honours and Pass course in Christian living. A serious feature of it has been to make the married state a second best. Whilst Religious communities still flourish, they are rarely advocated to-day, even by their members, on such grounds. Still another way is to make a sharp separation between the realm of love in the church and the stern realm of justice and order in the world, or to say that the purpose of Jesus' radical ethic is to convict us of sin and prevent the development of spiritual pride. None of these attempts will do. The radical elements in Jesus' ethic are an authentic corollary of the radical stance of the Kingdom of God, calling us past the necessary struggles with justice to a fuller realization of love. It is the more challenging because the more serious sins feed on moral achievements, not on the more coarse and flamboyant ones. Both with individuals and collectives corruption can feed on moral achievement, so that if there is a moral collapse it can be greater than if the achievement had been less. Nazi Germany is the great example of this in the twentieth century. Hence the question has been raised, Is there any point in such a radical ethic which is always being ignored? Would not a less drastic and more practical one be better? It is a question which is frequently asked in this century by adherents of other faiths, such as Jews and Muslims.

One of the first Jewish writers to make a sustained effort to get behind the polemics and persecutions of the centuries and take a new look at Jesus was Joseph Klausner (*Jesus of Nazareth*, 1925). He has had a number of successors. This is a remarkable change. Christian scholarship at the same time has become alert to the deep Jewishness of Jesus. Klausner's verdict is that all Jesus' ethical teaching is to be found somewhere in Jewish sources but nowhere else gathered together without any commonplace matter. However, it is an ethic for the days of the Messiah and impossible short of them. It breaks up the family, ignores justice, and would disrupt social stability. More than that it has been ignored by all except priests and recluses; and in its shadow every kind of wickedness and vice has flourished. How much better the practical, corporate ethic of Judaism! For instance the Rabbis would have been likely to agree with Jesus that 'the sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath' (Mark 2: 27), but they wanted a rule for breaking the normal sabbath rules and this he did not give. This is not because life can be lived without rules or codes, like an extemporare speaker, but because Jesus' ethic is in a different dimension. It always seeks an adequate expression of *agape* whilst transcending particular instances of it.

To these charges Christians tend to make two replies. One is to say that it is indeed fortunate that Jesus did not give us detailed ethical instructions or we would be forever trying to relate them to very different and changing cultures and involved in tortuous exegesis in doing so. Second, and more important, they stress the relevance of an impossible ethic. Its point is to bring us to see that the reward of loving is to learn more of the depth and range of love, so that even those who we consider the most 'saintly' are those who are most conscious of the gulf in their lives between what *is* and what *ought* to be the case; and this not because they are morbid but because they have grasped more of the inexhaustible nature of love.

Such a perspective is meant to be a spur to action, with both a personal and social reference, and not an excuse for a spurious otherworldliness (as distinct from a hope beyond this life which is involved in following Jesus' understanding of human destiny). To paraphrase the rather prosaic words of a modern New Testament scholar, the Christian ethic does not provide a law for either the individual or society, but creates a tension which has transforming results. (*Jesus the Messiah*, William Manson, 1943)

That is how it should work out. What did the earliest Christians make of it? Here our best witness is St Paul: and his later years lead on to post-apostolic Christianity and the latest books of the New Testament.

iii St Paul

St Paul is a controversial figure because of the controversies in which he was involved, and those which have focused on him since, not least at the time of the Reformation. Because of his Pharisaic background and his split from it he cannot be considered apart from the question of the self-definition of the Christian community as against Judaism, particularly after the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in 70 CE. By then the number of Jews in the Christian community was small. The kind of character that Jews and Christians admired was very similar, and hence Christianity attracted admirers of Judaism in the Gentile world because it commended the virtues of Judaism but without circumcision and the food laws. The dominant gospel picture of Jesus' controversies with the Pharisees must not be taken as a complete picture; indeed there are indications in them of a positive relationship between him and some Pharisees. The Pharisees were not a uniform party. In an effort to find and follow God's way in every detail of life they were argumentative. Moreover arguments were not finally resolved; minority opinions continued as part of the tradition. Some Pharisees were like the dominant gospel picture, but it has been a Christian travesty to say of all of them that they were content with a religion of outward observance of moral rules as a means of establishing their moral worth in God's eyes, whereas Jesus probed to inward motives. This travesty was intensified by Luther's struggle against the spirit of late medieval Catholicism, as he encountered it, which often became attributed to Pharisaism. Wherein, then, lay the difference between Jesus and the various parties of Judaism, particularly the Pharisees? In the first place it was their exclusiveness, and in the second their understanding of the range and depth of love was not radical enough. But with respect to St Paul, he was a complex thinker and these issues are still much discussed and by no means resolved.

It is clear, however, that St Paul grasped that the basis of Jesus' ethic is a joyful response in life to the overflowing graciousness of God. 'Freely you have received, freely give' (Matt. 10: 8). The Kingdom of God in the first three gospels is witnessed to in St Paul's letters as the new life in Christ, which he understood as essentially a community experience. A typical expression is 'We who are many are one body in Christ' (Rom. 12: 5). The 'law of Christ' is Christ himself (Rom. 10: 4). The Kingdom of God is both a present reality and a leaven in the lump of history (Rom. 14: 7), and yet it is still to come in its fullness (1 Cor. 15: 24 and 50). Love is the cornerstone of it. The characteristics of love are spelled out in 1 Corinthians 13, which is somewhat like a Stoic diatribe but quite different in spirit. Jesus was the model for this passage. St. Paul does not directly quote incidents from his life but assumes they are known to his hearers and readers by referring in passing to his birth, teaching, crucifixion, burial and resurrection. He assumes that the young Christian congregations know in their own experience that the work of Christ has led to an outpouring of God's spirit which has broken down barriers between people which humans have created; between Jews and Gentiles, men and women, slaves and free. He uses this shared assumption to chide them when they fail to express this reality. In Romans 13 he sums up the Christian ethic as one of love, as has been mentioned.

Moreover what makes St Paul so important for us is that he is the first Christian of whom we are aware who was called upon to bring his understanding of the Christian ethic to bear on particular problems thrown up by the churches, as when a deputation from Corinth puts to him various questions about marriage which he answers in 1 Corinthians 7. In dealing with them he shews on occasion, as we would expect, that not every corner of his mind was instantly converted to understand all the implications of his new faith. Some of his teaching with respect to women is incompatible with his best insights. Too often the church has taken his instructions as a permanent rule so that, to take a trivial example, it is only in this century that women have been able to enter churches without hats because of what St Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12.5ff. Again as we would expect, his advice has to be put in the context of the situation of the early Christians in the first century AD. His expectation of the imminent end of the world influenced his advice on marriage. However, he took a typically robust attitude in urging the Christians to get on with their daily lives and work just because time is short, and not sit about waiting for it to end. By the close of the first century the church had made a major change of view in this matter (though the attitude has continued among some to this day). The fourth gospel re-interprets the return of Christ and the end of time as the gift of the Spirit within the community. Cosmically St Paul accepted the current view that superhuman powers affect human affairs (though the exalted Christ had now drawn their sting). These ideas have to be translated by us into a realistic sociology. As to earthly powers, Christians were in no position to alter human institutions or affect public policy. In this situation St Paul takes a favourable view of the pagan Roman state, of which he was proud to be a citizen and to which he had reason to be grateful. The abolition of slavery does not enter his view, though he does show how Christians can transcend its structures (note the letter to Philemon). In short he gave to people oppressed with a fear of change and of a fate decreed by the stars a present security and a future hope because of his belief in the lordship of Christ.

The problem of Christians in the later years of the first century, as of all Christians since, was to sustain the radical rigour of the gospel ethic without an expectation of the imminent end of time. The ongoing life of the local churches produced a number of standard problems, particularly in the realm of marriage and the family. In the later books of the New Testament we find codes of conduct inserted, often taken from Greek ethics and Christianized with biblical illustrations. Examples can be found in Colossians (3. 18-4.1), Ephesians (5.12-6.9), 1 Peter (2.11-3.12 and 5.1-5), Titus (2.1-3.2), and 1 Timothy (2.1-6.19). There is here a difference in emotional tone as well as in content from that of earlier letters; piety and perseverance are stressed, and love becomes one virtue in a list of others. There is no reason to object to codes of conduct to cover standard situations, provided the radical ambience of the gospel is kept. However, some of it was lost. The church is settling down too easily in the current social and political order. An unfortunate feature of some of the codes is a stress on the duties of the 'inferior' to the 'superior' party, wives to husbands, children to parent, and slaves to masters, without any corresponding stress on the duties of the 'superior' party. Such an ethic of patience and submission is hardly adequate for our world, which is more and more conscious of personal responsibility and the need for social structures which encourage it, or even in some situations of oppression begin to make it possible for the first time.

However, periodic persecutions prevented the church settling down too easily, and we can find elements of a challenge to those who tried to do so in these later New Testament writings. It takes the form of a rigorist reaction against mere conforming, in the shape of references to sins which cannot be forgiven. We do not know what was the 'sin unto death' of John 5: 16 (perhaps apostasy), but we are forbidden even to pray for anyone who commits it. In three places Hebrews refers to sins which cannot be forgiven (6: 4-6; 10: 26-31; 12: 16ff), whilst Revelation never considers that any of those who suffer the fearful penalties of John's visions will repent, nor hopes that they will; rather it exults in their punishment. These two tendencies continued. Conformism in the church, especially after the 'conversion' of Constantine, as it is usually referred to – it is not clear how far he was using Christianity as a weapon in his political struggle – led to the rigorist reaction of the Desert Fathers, and then to the beginnings of communal monasticism and to the double standard of counsels of perfection and precepts. Thus by the end of the New Testament period the creative tension established by Jesus had largely been dissolved into disparate elements, though it has always remained as a source of renewal in the church, challenging distortions.

iv Criticisms of Christian ethics

Problems of moving from the Bible to the modern world continue to be explored, as do the different traditions in thinking about ethical issues which have developed in Christian history. Notable among these has been the incorporation of Natural Law thinking into Christian ethics: on this see Article 11, MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE ETHICS, and Article 13, NATURAL LAW.

It is necessary, however, that mention should be made of some contemporary criticisms of Christian ethics.

(1) Christian ethics is intolerant and breeds intolerance. There is much evidence to support this charge. All the major confessional traditions have at times persecuted each other. Indeed it was only at the second Vatican Council (1962-5) that the Roman Catholic Church finally abandoned the position that 'error has no rights'. Anti-semitism was also a major disease of Christendom (though also found outside it). Toleration came into the 'Christian' world largely through the influence of those who were appalled by Christian intolerance, and Christians learned through the sceptical tolerance of a man like Voltaire to distinguish tolerance from an indifference to truth. There have always been Christians who understood this. Bitter lessons this century have brought it home.

(2) Christian ethics is immoral because it works on a system of rewards (heaven) for good behaviour and threats (hell) for bad; and not on doing what is right simply because it is right and for no other reason. The question of rewards has already been mentioned and seen to be overdone. (See also Article 14, KANTIAN ETHICS.)

(3) Instead of leading to self-fulfilment Christian ethics is repressive. Most modern psychological analyses of human growth and development advocate as an ethical norm an altruistic, autonomous character. They do not look to Christianity to produce it; rather they think it leads to defensive and restrictive behaviour, and to a static social conformism. This is connected to a further criticism.

(4) Christian ethics keeps people at an immature level, because it leads to stock moral reactions regardless of circumstances. It prevents people from learning from experience. Many immature people are 'religious'. At its worst Christian ethics has certainly had this effect, but at its best its effect has been quite the reverse, as in its traditional teaching on conscience. The traditional teaching has been that it is reasons which justify moral judgements, and conscience has been the name given to the power of reason and discernment brought to bear on moral issues. This is so central to the integrity of the person that the teaching is that 'conscience must always be obeyed'. In saying this no claim is made for the infallibility of conscience, or for more certainty than the very nature of the uncertainties of ethical decisions can provide. The teaching is accompanied by a call for the formation of an informed and sensitive conscience by living in the Christian community, and making use of the resources for the education of conscience which have already been mentioned. Differences between Christians on ethical issues often arise from different weights attached to these different sources. Sometimes this whole teaching has been suspect as leading one to put one's own unregenerate judgements in the place of the guidance of God. Hence sometimes conscience has been seen as the 'voice of God' within the self, but the problems and dangers of this, as of all forms of intuitionism, are obvious. (On intuitionism see Article 36, INTUITIONISM, and Article 40, UNIVERSAL PRESCRIPTIVISM.) Once the complexities of the moral life are faced, the traditional teaching on conscience is seen to lead to vigorous, creative and hopeful Christian living.

Within the spectrum of attitudes among Christians to Christian ethics there is a strong, though not universal, stress on the dignity of the human person, the reality and universality of the community of the church, and a concern for its contribution to the holding together of humanity in a pluralistic world. Christianity must not add to its divisions, but exert a healing influence. These convictions are in conflict in many respects with the 'possessive individualism' which has had a wide influence in Western circles in the late twentieth century. It has produced in some circles a version of Christian ethics in its own image, but one which is not accepted by the majority of contemporary Christian ethicists, certainly not those influenced by the Ecumenical Movement. Rather there has been a growing emphasis on giving preference to the needs of the poor. These two emphases, concern for the unity of mankind and for 'a preferential option for the poor', mark the end of the embodiment of the Christian ethic in Church and State which for centuries characterized its heartland, Christendom.

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Hinduism

The Religious Experience of Mankind – Smart N (Collins, 1977) pages 15-25

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The Dimensions of Religion

The problem arises because there are different aspects or, as I shall call them, *dimensions* of religion. Whether we include Marxism as a religion depends on which dimension we regard as crucial for our definition. It will therefore be useful to analyse these various dimensions.

The Ritual Dimension

If we were asked the use or purpose of such buildings as temples and churches, we would not be far wrong in saying that they are used for ritual or ceremonial purposes. Religion tends in part to express itself through such rituals: through worship, prayers, offerings, and the like. We may call this the *ritual* dimension of religion. About this, some important comments need to be made.

First, when we think of ritual we often think of something very formal and elaborate, like a High Mass or the Liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox Church. But it is worth remarking that even the simplest form of religious service involves ritual, in the sense of some form of outer behaviour (such as closing one's eyes in prayer) coordinated to an inner intention to make contact with, or to participate in, the invisible world. I am not concerned here with those who deny the existence of such an 'invisible world,' however interpreted, whether as God's presence, as nirvana, as a sacred energy pervading nature. Whether or not such an invisible world exists, it forms an aspect of the world seen from the point of view of those who participate in religion. It is believed in. As was said earlier, it is not here our task to pass judgment on the truth or otherwise of religious conceptions. First, then, even the simplest service involves ritual.

Second, since ritual involves both an inner and an outer aspect it is always possible that the latter will come to dominate the former. Ritual then degenerates into a mechanical or conventional process. If people go through the motions of religious observance without accompanying it with the intentions and sentiments which give it human meaning, ritual is merely an empty shell. This is the reason why some religious activities are condemned as 'ritualistic.' But it would be wrong to conclude that because ritualism in this bad sense exists, therefore ritual is an unimportant or degenerate aspect of religion.

It should not be forgotten that there are secular rituals which we all use, and these can form an integral part of personal and social relationships. Greeting someone with a 'Good morning,' saying goodbye, saluting the flag—all these in differing ways are secular rituals. Very often in society they are integrated with religious rituals, as when men say 'God be with you,' which is more than taking leave of someone: it is invoking a blessing upon the other person.

Third, it will prove convenient to extend the meaning of 'ritual' beyond its reference to the forms of worship, sacrifice, etc, directed toward God or the gods.

It happens that a crucial part is played in India and elsewhere by yoga and analogous techniques of self-training. The ultimate aim of such methods is the attainment of higher states of consciousness, through which the adept has experience of release from worldly existence, of nirvana, of ultimate reality (the interpretation partly depends on the system of doctrines against which the adept tests his experience). Thus the essence of such religion is contemplative or mystical. Sometimes, it is pursued without reference to God or the gods—for example, in Buddhism, where the rituals of a religion of worship and sacrifice are regarded as largely irrelevant to the pursuit of nirvana. Nevertheless the techniques of self-training have an analogy to ritual: the adept performs various physical and mental exercises through which he hopes to concentrate the mind on the transcendent, invisible world, or to withdraw his senses from their usual immersion in the flow of empirical experiences. This aspect of religion, then, we shall include in our definition of the ritual dimension. It can be classified as pragmatic (aimed at the attainment of certain experiences) in distinction from sacred ritual (directed toward a holy being, such as God). Sometimes the two forms of ritual are combined, as in Christian mysticism.

The meaning of ritual cannot be understood without reference to the environment of belief in which it is performed. Thus prayer in most ritual is directed toward a divine being. Very often, legends about the gods are used to explain the features of a ceremony or festival; and often the important events of human life, such as birth, marriage, death, are invested with a sacred significance by relating them to the divine world.

All this can happen before a religion has any theology or formal system of doctrines. Theology is an attempt to introduce organization and intellectual power into what is found in less explicit form in the deposit of revelation or traditional mythology of a religion. The collection of myths, images, and stories through which the invisible world is symbolized can suitably be called the *mythological* dimension of religion.

The Mythological Dimension

Some important comments need to be made about this mythological dimension. First, in accordance with modern usage in theology and in the comparative study of religion, the terms ‘myth,’ ‘mythological,’ etc, are *not* used to mean that the content is false. Perhaps in ordinary English to say ‘It’s a myth’ is just a way of saying ‘It’s false.’ But the use of the term *myth* in relation to religious phenomena is quite neutral as to the truth or falsity of the story enshrined in the myth. In origin, the term ‘myth’ means ‘story,’ and in calling something a story we are not thereby saying that it is true or false. We are just reporting on what has been said. Similarly, here we are concerned with reporting on what is believed.

Second, it is convenient to use the term to include not merely stories about God (for instance the story of the creation in Genesis), about the gods (for instance in Homer’s *Iliad*), etc, but also the historical events of religious significance in a tradition. For example, the Passover ritual in Judaism re-enacts a highly important event that once occurred to the children of Israel; their delivery from bondage in Egypt. The historical event functions as a myth. Thus we shall include stories relating to significant historical events under the head of the mythological dimension—again without prejudice to whether the stories accurately describe what actually occurred in history.

The Doctrinal Dimension

Third, it is not always easy to differentiate the mythological and the symbolic from what is stated in theology. Doctrines are an attempt to give system, clarity and intellectual power to what is revealed through the mythological and symbolic language of religious faith and ritual. Naturally, theology must make use of the symbols and myths. For example, when the Christian theologian has to describe the meaning of the Incarnation, he must necessarily make use of Biblical language and history. Thus the dividing line between the mythological and what I shall call the doctrinal dimension is not easy to draw. Yet there is clearly a distinction between Aquinas’ treatment of creation at the philosophical level and the colourful story of creation in Genesis. The distinction is important, because the world religions owe some of their living power to their success in presenting a total picture of reality, through a coherent system of doctrines.

The Ethical Dimension

Throughout history we find that religions usually incorporate a code of ethics. Ethics concern the behaviour of the individual and, to some extent, the code of ethics of the dominant religion controls the community. Quite obviously, men do not always live up to the standards they profess. And sometimes the standards which are inculcated by the dominant faith in a particular society may not be believed by all sections of that society.

Even so, there is no doubt that religions have been influential in moulding the ethical attitudes of the societies they are part of. It is important, however, to distinguish between the moral teaching incorporated in the doctrines and mythology of a religion, and the social facts concerning those who adhere to the faith in question. For instance, Christianity teaches ‘Love thy neighbour as thyself.’ As a matter of sociological fact, quite a lot of people in so-called Christian countries, where Christianity is the official or dominant religion, fail to come anywhere near this ideal. The man who goes to church is not necessarily loving; nor is the man who goes to a Buddhist temple necessarily compassionate. Consequently, we must distinguish between the ethical teachings of a faith, which we shall discuss as the *ethical* dimension of religion, and the actual sociological effects and circumstances of a religion.

Pertinent to this point is the consideration that most religions are institutionalized. This is most obvious in technologically primitive societies, where the priest, soothsayer, or magician is closely integrated into the social structure. Religion is not just a personal matter here: it is part of the life of the community. It is built into the institutions of daily life. But even in sophisticated communities where a line is drawn between religious and secular concerns, as in contemporary America, churches exist as institutions to be reckoned with. They are part of the 'establishment.' In areas where there is active or latent persecution of religious faith, as in the Soviet Union, there are still organizations for continuing religious activities.

The Social Dimension

Religions are not just systems of *belief*: they are also organizations, or parts of organizations. They have a communal and social significance. This social shape of a religion is, of course, to some extent determined by the religious and ethical ideals and practices that it harbours. Conversely, it often happens that the religious and ethical ideals are adapted to existing social conditions and attitudes. For example, Japanese fishermen reconcile the Buddhist injunction against taking life (even animal or fish life) to their activity as fishermen. The Christian's dedication to brotherly love or his attitude to war may be determined more by patriotism and a national crisis than by the Gospel. Thus, it is important to distinguish between the ethical dimension of religion and the *social* dimension. The latter is the mode in which the religion in question is institutionalized, whereby, through its institutions and teachings, it affects the community in which it finds itself.

The doctrinal, mythological, and ethical dimensions express a religion's claims about the nature of the invisible world and its aims about how men's lives ought to be shaped: the social dimension indicates the way in which men's lives are in fact shaped by these claims and the way in which religious institutions operate.

It is, incidentally, clear that the ongoing patterns of ritual are an important element in the institutionalization of religion. For example, if it is believed that certain ceremonies and sacraments can only be properly performed by a priest, then the religious institution will be partly determined by the need to maintain and protect a professional priesthood.

The Experiential Dimension

The dimensions we have so far discussed would indeed be hard to account for were it not for the dimension with which this book is centrally concerned: that of experience, the experiential dimension. Although men may hope to have contact with, and participate in, the invisible world through ritual, personal religion normally involves the hope of, or realization of, experience of that world. The Buddhist monk hopes for nirvana, and this includes the contemplative experience of peace and of insight into the transcendent. The Christian who prays to God believes normally that God answers prayer—and this not just 'externally' in bringing about certain states of affairs, such as a cure for illness, but more importantly 'internally' in the personal relationship that flowers between the man who prays and his Maker. The prayerful Christian believes that God does speak to men in an intimate way and that the individual can and does have an inner experience of God. Hence, personal religion necessarily involves what we have called the experiential dimension.

The factor of religious experience is even more crucial when we consider the events and the human lives from which the great religions have stemmed. The Buddha achieved Enlightenment as he sat in meditation beneath the Bo-Tree. As a consequence of his shattering mystical experience, he believed that he had the secret of the cure for the suffering and dissatisfactions of life in this world. We have records of the inaugural visions of some of the Old Testament prophets, of the experiences that told them something profoundly important about God and that spurred them on to teach men in his name. It was through such experiences that Muhammad began to preach the unity of Allah—a preaching that had an explosive impact upon the world from Central Asia to Spain. One cannot read the Upanishads, the source of so much of Hindu doctrine, without feeling the experience on which their teachings are founded. The most striking passage in the *Bhagavadgita*, perhaps the greatest religious document of Hinduism, is that in which the Lord reveals himself in terrifying splendour to Arjuna. Arjuna is overwhelmed by awe and filled with utter devotion. We have already remarked on the seminal importance of St. Paul's similar experience on the Damascus Road.

The words of Jesus Christ reveal his sense of intimate closeness to the Father; there is little doubt that this rested upon highly significant personal experiences. These and other examples can be given of the crucial part played by religious experience in the genesis of the great faiths.

For this reason, it is unrealistic to treat Marxism as a religion: though it possesses doctrines, symbols, a moral code, and even sometimes rituals, it denies the possibility of an experience of the invisible world. Neither relationship to a personal God nor the hope of an experience of salvation or nirvana can be significant for the Marxist. Likewise Humanism, because it fixes its sights on this-worldly aims, is essentially non-religious. Nevertheless, it is necessary for us to examine the impact of these faiths upon the contemporary world. But the main emphasis will be upon the inner side—what religions mean in personal experience, and how they have been moulded by such experience.

There is a special difficulty, however, in undertaking a description of a religious experience. We have to rely upon the testimony of those who have the experience, and their reports must be conveyed to us either by telling or writing. Sometimes accounts of prophetic or mystical experience of important religious leaders have been preserved by oral tradition through many generations before being written down. But for the most part, the individual religious experiences that have influenced large segments of mankind occurred in cultures that knew the art of writing.

This means that the experience occurred in the context of the existing religions which already had a doctrinal dimension. This raises a problem for us in our attempt to understand the unique religious experience of the prophets or founders of religions, for their experiences are likely to be interpreted in the light of existing doctrines, as well as clothed in the mythological and symbolic forms of the age. There is less difficulty when we consider the 'lesser' figures of the religions—not the founders, but those saints and visionaries who come after. They interpret their experiences in terms of received doctrines and mythologies.

For these reasons, it is not easy to know about a given report which of the elements in it are based, so to say, purely on the experience itself, and which are due to doctrinal and mythological interpretation. To some extent the problem can be overcome by comparing the reports of men of different cultures—such as India and the West—which had virtually no contact during the periods crucial for the formation and elaboration of the dominant religious beliefs.

Moreover, it is worth noting that there is a *dialectic* between experience and doctrine. Thus, though the Buddha, for example, took over elements from the thought-forms of his own age, he was genuinely a creative teacher, who introduced new elements and transmuted the old. The Old Testament prophets fashioned a genuinely original ethical monotheism from an existant belief in Yahweh. The changes they made in the simple tribal religious teaching they inherited can be understood, to some degree, in terms of the impact of the personal religious experiences that were revelatory for these men. Thus experience and doctrinal interpretation have a dialectical relationship. The latter colours the former, but the former also shapes the latter. This book will attempt to exhibit this dialectic at work.

This dialectical interplay also helps us to understand some of the features of personal religion at a humbler level. The Christian, for example, is taught certain doctrines and mythological symbols by his parents. He learns to call God 'Our Father'; he is instructed to believe that the world is created by God and sustained by God. These ideas will at first simply be 'theoretical' as far as the young Christian is concerned, on a par with other non-observable theories he learns about the world, such as that the earth goes round the sun. But suppose he progresses to a deeper understanding of the Christian faith through a particular personal experience, or through his response to the ritual and ethical demands of the religion. Then he will come to see that in some mysterious way God is a person with whom he can have contact; God is not just like the sun, to be thought of speculatively, or to be looked at. Personally, then, he discovers that he can worship and pray to God. In short, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth' will come to have a new meaning for him. In a sense, he will now believe something other than what he first believed. In this way, the interplay between doctrine and experiences is fundamental to religion.

‘Hinduism’ – Smart N in

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The Hindu tradition is important for the philosophy of religion from a number of angles. First, there is the intrinsic interest of a non-Western tradition, given that the philosophy of religion is often treated in such a Western way. I shall therefore begin with a general introduction to the intellectual history of Hinduism. Second, there are interesting notions of God as refracted through so many gods and goddesses in Hindu mythology, ritual, and piety. Third, there are various notions such as karma and reincarnation, and concepts of the self, which differ from Western ones, together with the difference in epistemology, which can create interesting and fruitful areas of discussion. Fourth, there are debates with other schools, mainly the Buddhists, which are suggestive for Western scholars. Fifth, the modern Hindu philosophical revival, especially through Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan, and in its claim that all religions point to the same goal, meets with certain recent philosophers of religion, notably John Hick.

First, then, a brief history and description of the Hindu tradition. Hinduism is so to speak a tradition (or collection of them) by induction. It does not, like Islam, emanate from a single source, the Qur’an (see Article 7, ISLAM). Though it has admittedly ancient roots, such as the Indus Valley civilization, the Vedic hymns, ancient tribal myths, and so forth, it was only about the third century CE that it came together into anything like the shape which we identify as Hindu. For example there are key ideas and sources, and institutions, which come together thus relatively late: belief in reincarnation, karma, the great epics (the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*), the vast expanse of the cosmos and its periodic sleep and recovery, devotion to such great gods as Siva and Vishnu, the emerging class and caste system, the aphoristic summaries or *sutras* relating to the beginnings of philosophical schools, temple worship, statues incarnating the gods, the worship of the Goddess, gurus, yoga, austerity, the practice of pilgrimage, sacred cows, the dominance of brahmins, and so on. This wonderful amalgam came to characterize Hinduism as a loosely knit system – mainly by contrast with contemporary Buddhism (see Article 2, BUDDHISM). From the eleventh century onwards the contrast was chiefly with Islam, with its relatively austere theism, while Buddhism, partly under pressure from Islam (for its monasteries were vulnerable to alien rule), faded away. Meanwhile various important philosophies or theologies were formulated, above all those of Sankara (8-9th century), Ramanuja (11th century) and Madhva (13th century). These were systems known as Vedanta (the End or Purport of the Vedas or Sacred Revelation). Other Hindu schools (as opposed to Buddhist, Jain, Materialist, etc) included Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisesika, and Mimamsa, and various Saiva schools (dedicated, that is, to the god Siva).

The oldest Hindu texts are the Vedic hymns. They center on various deities, such as Indra, Agni, Varuna, Dyauspitr, and so on. There is in the hymns a tendency to think of them essentially as the same – a theme also found in modern Hinduism. Also, a degree of henotheism is in evidence, namely, treating a god addressed in a given hymn as *the* god: this has its analogue in the later Hindu motif of treating Vishnu and Siva as alternative representations of the One. In the period of the main Upanisads, dating from about the fifth to the second century BCE, two main trends emerge. One is the search for the esoteric or true meaning of the Brahminical sacrifice. The second is a degree of influence from contemporary sramanic thinking, that is, the thinking of those like the Buddhists, Jains, and others who practiced a degree of austerity and withdrawal from the world in order to gain release from the round of rebirth. In connection with the first, the texts identify the one Reality as Brahman, a non-personal power on the whole, but sometimes seen as personal Lord and creator. The Reality is also identified with the atman or inner self. Later Vedanta discussed whether this means strict identity (so there is only one Self) or merely some kind of union or communion. The doctrine is expressed in a number of great sayings, notably in Chandogya Upanisad, VI.viii. 7, *tat tvam asi* or ‘that art thou.’

In the somewhat later Bhagavadgita (but note: early Indian dating is highly speculative), a more personal picture of God is presented, in the context of the warrior hero Arjuna’s dilemma before battle of having his duty to fight, though in conflict with relatives. The notion is presented of the need to carry on with one’s duty or dharma, despite its consequences: one will not reap the bad fruits of karma if one carries it out without selfishness and for the love of God. This more theistic picture came to be vital in later Vedanta. Meanwhile the six schools of orthodox Indian philosophy were forming. In some ways the most basic was Samkhya.

It saw the world as consisting on the one hand of *prakṛti* or nature and innumerable souls or *puruṣas* which were, as it were, embedded in nature. Since the nature of reincarnated existence is basically painful, the aim of a soul is to attain liberation from rebirth and the world. The Samkhya system came to be conjoined to that of Yoga, and it is by practicing contemplation through various techniques that the individual soul comes to see that its essence is different from that of the subtle and gross matter that makes up the world and the psychophysical organism (often in Indian philosophy consciousness is thought of as transcending the biological and psychological factors which make up an individual human being). While the Samkhya and Yoga cosmologies are very similar, Yoga does posit a Lord or God, who is actually not so much creator as the one soul who has never been immersed in the round of rebirth, and so serves as an inspiration to the contemplative individual who is seeking liberation. The basic Samkhya cosmology was used by Vaishnava forms of theism for explicating the way God evolves the world. The system posits three *gunas* or ingredients in matter which in differing blends help to explain the nature of things and of individuals.

In Samkhya and Yoga, as with virtually all Indian systems of thought, the cosmos pulsates, that is, it evolves from a quiescent state before ultimately lapsing back into sleep. But the Mimamsa viewpoint holds rigidly to the idea that revelation is uncreated and eternal, and so denies both God and the pulsation of the universe. Its attention is fixed on ritual: and so the Vedic hymns are treated simply as a set of injunctions. Even the gods turn out to be mere mentions. Mimamsa is paired with Vedanta, though its presuppositions are so very different. We shall return to Vedanta later. Meanwhile the Logic School (Nyaya) is usually grouped with Vaisesika or atomism. Nyaya sets forth ancient Indian logic (later logic is known as Navya-Nyaya or new logic). Vaisesika exhibits an atomistic cosmology, with a presiding God. Nyaya was host to the most famous work on the proof of God's existence (the *Kusumanali* of Udayana, 10th century CE).

The schools known as Vedanta are in principle based on the *Brahmasutras* or Aphorisms on the Holy Power, assembled in the first or second century CE. These somewhat enigmatic utterances attracted major commentaries from the main figures of the Vedanta school, notably Sankara (8th century), Ramanuja (12th century), and Madhva (13th century). Sankara's rather rigorous Advaita Vedanta or Non-Dualistic Vedanta was influenced by the Buddhist Madhyamaka theory or viewpoint, which saw supposed reality at two levels: as it is, empty, at the 'higher level,' and at the empirical level. Sankara makes use of this differentiation, so that Brahman (divine reality) is truly non-personal, with no properties, though it is constituted by being, bliss and consciousness. At the lower level of illusion Brahman is the Lord (or personal God). It is by knowledge of the higher truth that a person is liberated, so that she or he is no longer reborn. This monism of Sankara's arose from his strong interpretation of 'that art thou.' All separate individuality is an illusion. At a lower level, however, a person can worship God and express devotion. Sankara thus accommodated the 'ordinary' religious believer. But in the end God herself is an illusion, caught up in the very illusion she creates. Modern thinkers made use of an adaptation of this schema in formulating modern Hinduism and modern Hindu nationalism. Though Sankara has become highly influential in the modern formulation of the Indian tradition, his reinvigoration of the tradition in the latter part of the first millennium stirred resistance from those who took the personal side of theism more seriously, especially because in that era and after Buddhism faded from view, partly under Muslim onslaughts, Hindu controversy had its own traditions to turn against.

Ramanuja objected to Sankara both on religious and philosophical grounds. He considered that Sankara's non-personalism made nonsense of the very idea of a self, intrinsic to Ramanuja's strongly held theism. Ramanuja believed that the cosmos is God's body (see Article 34, INCORPOREALITY), by analogy with the way the soul controls the human or animal body. Ramanuja also objected to Sankara's theory of illusion or *maya*. He held to a realist theory of perception. Moreover, he thought that the notion that not only the cosmos can be God's body, but also souls, created a sufficiently intimate union between God and souls for the 'that art thou' saying to be true. In his commentary on the Bhagavadgita, it would seem that Ramanuja was nearer to the original intent of the text than was Sankara. Madhva, on the other hand, went far in the other direction.

He argued, by a gerrymandering of language, that theoretically the great text read (with an inserted 'non-' so to speak), 'that thou art not.' His position is known as Dvaita or Dualism, as against both Sankara's Non-Dualism and Ramanuja's Qualified Non-Dualism. Madhva emphasized the particularity of substances and souls, and affirmed God's difference from both. Later Vedantins tended toward forms of theism, as did the followers of Siva. Thus, in a way, Vedanta had as its core variations on theism and devotional religion.

However, during the British period new factors entered into Indian philosophical self-understanding. While some veered toward simplifying Hindu belief and reforming practice, others preferred a way of harnessing the classical tradition to the preservation and formulation of a new Hinduism intertwined with Indian nationalism. British institutions had unified India as never before, while English-speaking higher education gave Indian intellectuals a new entrée on to the world. It was above all the work of Sankara that some of the most influential drew upon to express the new outlook. This was a new pluralism, building on Sankara's notion of levels of truth and his idea of an ultimate reality (which all religions point to). We shall return to these developments later on.

Our next section concerns the sense in which (on the whole) Hinduism is theistic. At first sight (for the Westerner) there is a certain degree of bafflement: each goddess has a god, and vice versa. There are children, mythic beasts, lots of equivalents of the main god or goddess. Christian missionaries in nineteenth century India tended to look on the system as idolatrous. There were also features such as non-personal representations of the deity, above all the lingam. Hindus denied that they worshiped idols or that the lingam was a phallic symbol. I think that the best model of God (or Goddess) as conceived in modern Hinduism (and to some extent the ancient Hindu traditions) is as refracted. What Hindus tend to believe is a refracted theism. This is the thought that God and gods and goddesses are one, but, unlike the Semitic religions (see Article 5, JUDAISM; Article 6, CHRISTIANITY; and Article 7, ISLAM), Hinduism tends to see the gods and goddesses as offshoots of the one Great God (Siva, Vishnu, Devi). The deities are allowed a bit of individuality, for they figure in stories of various kinds. On the other hand, if you worship Ganesa too intensely you can fail to see the Divine Spirit behind his symbolic visage. This attitude to the gods lies behind the modern Hindu penchant both for tolerance and for philosophical pluralism (see Article 77, RELIGIOUS PLURALISM; and Article 65, THEISM AND TOLERATION). Another feature of Indian theism is Ramanuja's view that the cosmos is God's body. In our case the body is only imperfectly under our control: whereas in God's case the universe is wholly under her or his control. This analogy is haunting, because it means that we get a vivid sense of God's presence everywhere in his universe, as we are present in our fingertips, etc. Though Ramanuja did not think that the cosmos looks like a body, it is so. He also analogized the universe to an organic body: in other words here we are dealing with the relevant Sanskrit term standing for human or other animal body, as distinct from a physical body, such as a stone dropped from a height by Galileo. Another point worth mentioning is that through large parts of India God is the Goddess, Devi or Kali or Durga, and so on. Moreover every God has his consort, such as Vishnu and Laksmi, and Siva and Minaksi in Madurai, etc. Hinduism does not emphasize the male in the way the Abrahamic religions do. Anyway, on these various issues there are grounds for debate with customary Western philosophical thinking. Finally it may be noted that Hindu theism has a place for the non-personal side of God: there is no unrelenting anthropomorphism or personalism (see Article 15, PERSONALISM). This is in part because the very notion of God is also a neuter noun, that of *brahman*.

Next, Hinduism inherits from the sramanic movements such as Jainism and Buddhism the prevalent belief in reincarnation or rebirth, though the Mimamsa school is an exception, since early Vedic hymns did not incorporate the belief, but rather forms of ancestor ritual. Generally, reincarnation exhibits various features: first, a human can be reborn in a variety of forms, whether in heaven as a god, in a hellish purgatory, as a ghost, or as another life form, from insect to elephant. At the end of the day, she might achieve *moksha* or liberation from the round of rebirth. In this case there are varying possibilities: it might be an isolated, suffering-less existence; or it might be in some degree of intimate closeness to God, in a heavenly realm. A person who is liberated may have done it on her own, as in Samkhya-Yoga (though in this case she will have gained help from God); or it may be due entirely to God's grace, especially in the Qualified Non-Dualistic school known as the Cat School, since God transports the soul to salvation as a cat transports her kitten from A to B, by the scruff of the neck. In the sramanic schools and in Samkhya, salvation is as it were dictated by the state of one's karma; while the theistic traditions treat karma as administered (so to speak) by God, and indeed it becomes itself an expression of God's grace. In Madhva's system karma is intrinsic to the life of the individual: God simply works out his destiny. This has an analogy to Calvinist predestination (see Article 72, PROVIDENCE AND PREDESTINATION). In some traditions 'living liberation' is possible, in which a saint reaches a kind of perfection and complete serenity. Mostly theistic liberation is post mortem (see Article 70, SURVIVAL OF DEATH).

The typical assumption in the Hindu tradition is that every living body is matched by a soul (sometimes called *atman* and sometimes *purusa*, or else *cit* or consciousness). However, in Advaita Vedanta the identity between the Divine Being and the Self is taken strictly. Consequently we all, so to speak, share the same Self. It is our limited view or projection which causes us to see separate selves. It is like a light seen through a colander. It looks like many lights when it is in fact only one. Advaita in this way shows an affinity to Buddhism, in that the latter has many individual consciousnesses but none are permanent; so at the lower or empirical level of truth we have a host of transmigrating individuals, lacking permanence.

Apart from the karmic linkage between lives, it is assumed that yogis can by the process of purifying their consciousness remember previous lives. Spiritual leaders are held also to have other paranormal powers, such as telepathy and the ability to read others' minds. In regard to rebirth, arguments other than appeal to putative memory are used, mostly empirical – notably the occurrence of child geniuses, apparently paranormal recognitions, and so on.

The most important ontological divide in the Indian tradition is between the permanent and the impermanent. Advaitins interestingly define the illusory as that which is impermanent. But even the rest of the tradition which takes the impermanent to be real, sees the distinction to be vital. This introduces a difference from Western distinctions. It means that in the Hindu schools the consciousness or self, which is permanent, is sharply distinguished from the psychophysical organism. Consequently such entities as *buddhi* and the *ahamkara* or individuating factor, literally the 'I-maker,' are composed of subtle matter. In short, the mind–body distinction is drawn rather differently in the Hindu tradition. Moreover, the psychic geography differs: there is nothing corresponding to the will or to reason. (There is of course such a notion as reasoning or *tarka*.)

Indian epistemology plays a role in philosophy of religion, of course. The various systems have lists of *pramanas* or sources of knowledge, such as perception and inference. Though inference is conceived differently in relation to styles of syllogism used compared with the West, the basic notion of inference is similar. But perception is often taken to include yogic perception or (roughly) religious experience, or perhaps more narrowly contemplative or mystical experience (see Article 47, RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE). A third source is acknowledged in most Hindu schools, namely testimony or *abda*. This refers not just to empirical testimony but also transcendental testimony, ie revelation (see Article 74, REVELATION AND SCRIPTURE). Hindu schools are technically known as *astika*. Literally this means 'there is –ish': this refers to the existence of revelation (conceived as a Brahminical oral tradition). The notion of testimony as a source of knowledge is an interesting one, little treated in the West.

Since Mimamsa wished to rest its case wholly upon testimony with regard to its injunctive view of revelation, and did not wish its authority to rest upon an omniscient God (see Article 29, OMNISCIENCE), it rejected both the existence of, and arguments for, God. Oddly, Ramanuja, the most fervent philosophical theologian, also rejected the arguments, because he wanted salvation to depend solely upon God and not at all upon reasoning (we can compare Karl Barth on this point). Ramanuja's subtle critique of traditional Indian versions of the teleological argument (comparing the cosmos to a thing made of parts and to an organism, needing a soul to keep it alive) anticipate some of David Hume's (see Article 43, TELEOLOGICAL AND DESIGN ARGUMENTS). Among his points: there might have been many creators, not one; they might recur at differing emerging world periods; the stronger the argument the more anthropomorphic its conclusion; and the cosmos does not resemble an organism. Among other arguments used on behalf of God's existence was a version of the ontological (see Article 41, ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS), and the thought that the moral effects of karma need an intelligent director to organize them (see Article 44, MORAL ARGUMENTS).

Through much of Indian history Hinduism had an important rival in Buddhism, and to a lesser extent in Jainism, and Indian philosophy continuously nourished arguments between the main traditions. Generally, Indian theism made use of Samkhya categories in framing its cosmology, and an area of contention came to center on causation. The Buddhist schools had a non-identity theory, detaching events from one another somewhat in the manner of Hume. The Samkhya favored an identity or transformation theory in which substances change themselves (as milk into curds). Because Buddhism attacked the very notion of substance, breaking the world into short-lived events, the Samkhya thinkers were critical of the notion of an underlying Divine Being or *brahman*. This proved a major difference between Mahayana metaphysics and that of Sankara, despite the influence of Buddhism on him. The 'absolute' in Buddhism is emptiness, not a Being. The Buddhists also criticized the Hindu reliance on testimony, and indeed their theory of the Sanskrit language as primordial with a natural fit to reality.

The Buddhists were conventionalists. Among Jain critiques of Hindu thinking was the view that religious experience derives from prior belief and not vice versa.

The modern period saw the unification of the subcontinent under British rule, and with it the foundation of English-speaking colleges and universities. The new English-speaking elite were challenged by Christian and British criticisms of Hindu religion and society, as being idolatrous and backward. They acquired a new pan-Indian nationalism in the face of British imperialism. But it was in a new key, because they tended to draw on both traditions. We can pick out four movements in the modern period. One was the Brahmo Samaj founded by Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833). It was strongly modernist in presenting the Upanisads as being unitarian, and in dismissing a great deal of actual Hinduism. Another was the Arja Samaj, created by Dayananda Sarasvati (1824-83) who reverted to the Veda as the true source of faith, but like Ram Mohan Roy dismissed, indeed strongly attacked, image worship. As a movement it has had good success overseas, among Hindus in Fiji, South Africa, and elsewhere. But these movements were too critical of the main, warm tradition of Hindu worship. It was left to Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) – drawing on the inspiration of his charismatic teacher Ramakrishna (1834-86), a person of wide sympathies, intense spirituality, but ignorance of the English-speaking world – to formulate a position which was powerful in rolling back intellectual and Christian criticisms of the Hindu world, and in mobilizing Indian national sentiment. His position was based on an updated version of Sankara. It exploited the idea of levels of truth as well as the general idealism of the British philosophical tradition at the end of the nineteenth century. He was pluralist: all religions point to the same Reality. Hinduism has always had such a tolerant attitude. People are on differing stages of the upward spiritual path. His philosophy could underpin a pan-Indian patriotism: Muslims, Christians, and others could all take part, for they all had a view of the truth. Vivekananda was also a social reformer. Following indirectly in his footsteps was Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), whose pluralist attitude and conveniently vague appeal to Truth helped to cement Indian nationalism. Also important (though often despised by Western philosophers, who did not see the wider meaning of his ideology) was Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975), later president of India. Naturally, the idealism which had underpinned much of the Indian renaissance died in World War I, and Indian philosophy of religion came to be largely neglected in the period after World War II. However, the pluralist tradition was very important in the thinking behind the Indian constitution and the idea of India as a secular state (that is, pluralistic, not 'secular' in the sense of non-religious). Naturally, the main consumption of Indian philosophy in relation to religion was in the business of worldview-reconstruction. In this it was successful, but in the early 1990s there is a turn away from the old pluralism, and among philosophers a more technical methodology.

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Preamble

It is often asked: ‘Has there ever been ‘ethics’ in India?’ ‘Can one meaningfully speak of ‘Indian ethics?’ ‘Isn’t the idea of ‘ethics’ a Western invention – like anthropology?’ Or, alternatively, does not the Indian mystical and ‘life-denying’ world-view rule out the use of ethics? There is no gainsaying that the Indian tradition did concern itself with a quest for the ‘morally good life’ and the attendant principles, laws, rules, etc that might help achieve this goal. And like their counterparts elsewhere, Indian thinkers did not shy away from enquiring into the nature of morality, of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, ‘good’ and ‘bad’, even if they went no further than describing or codifying the prevailing ‘ethos’, mores, customs and habitual traditions – that is to say, giving expression to what in Sanskrit is termed dharma, meaning, very roughly, the moral and social order.

The questions we began with do, however, point to one difficulty, namely, that of locating in the Indian tradition the sort of ahistorical, abstract and formal theorizing in ethics that we have become accustomed to in the West. In India it was recognized that ethics is the ‘soul’ of the complex spiritual and moral aspirations of the people, co-mingled with social and political structures forged over a vast period of time. And this is a recurrent leitmotif in the culture’s profuse wisdom literature, legends, epics, liturgical texts, legal and political treatises.

As with any other major civilization whose origins lie in antiquity, one can naturally expect there to be a variety of ethical systems within the Indian tradition. To cover all of these positions would be an impossible task. Also, to speak of ‘Indian tradition’ is to refer rather loosely to an incredibly diversified collection of social, cultural, religious and philosophical systems, which have also changed over time. The present discussion has to be selective and it will be confined to the Brahmanical–Hindu and Jaina traditions, concluding with a brief look at Gandhian ethics. (Buddhist ethics, whose Indian career would normally be part of such a chapter, is discussed in Article 5.) The use of Sanskrit terms is inevitable, in view of the lack of English equivalents (and vice versa), but they will be explained.

General remarks about early Indian ethics

To start with the most general remark, the early Indian people in their practical moral judgements, placed on the side of the ‘good’: happiness, health, survival, progeny, pleasure, calmness, friendship, knowledge and truth: and on the side of ‘bad’ more or less their opposites or disvalues: misery or suffering, sickness and injury, death, infertility, pain, anger, enmity, ignorance or error, untruth, etc. And these are universalized for all sentient beings, for it is thought that the highest good is possible when the whole world can enjoy the good things the cosmos has to offer. The highest good, however, is identified with the total harmony of the cosmic or natural order, characterized as rita: this is the creative purpose that circumscribes human behaviour. The social and moral order is thus conceived ‘as a correlate of the natural order. This is the ordered course of things, the truth of being or reality (sat) and hence the Law’ (Rigveda 1.123: 5.8).

One therefore does that which is consistent with, or which promotes, the good so perceived, and desists from doing that which produces the bad things or effects, so that overall the order is not unduly disturbed. One may also attempt to prevent or overcome the untoward effects of certain actions. An act is therefore right if it conforms to this general principle, and an act is wrong if it contravenes it, and hence is anrita (disorder) (Rigveda 10.87.11). Since to do what is right safeguards the good of all qua rita (the factual order), it is assumed that it is more or less obligatory to do or perform the right acts (the ‘ought’ or moral order). This convergence of the cosmic and the moral orders is universally commended in the all-embracing category of dharma, which becomes more or less the Indian analogue for ethics.

‘Right’ or rightness is identified with ‘rite’, ie it is formalized as ritual, with varying content. In other words, the obligation derived from a value, say, survival of the race, becomes the value itself, eg sacrifice, regardless of what is offered in the act. Rite now comes to possess an intrinsic moral worth. But it also assumes a power all its own, and people are disposed to pursuing rites or rituals for egoistic ends. One group may claim entitlement and therefore advantage over others as to the prescribed rites, their content, correct performance, utility, and so on. This leads to the working out of differential duties and moral codes for the different groups in the larger social complex. Differentiation is superimposed on the organic unity of nature and individuals alike.

What counts as ethics, then, although in appearance naturalistic, is largely normative: the justification usually is that this is the ‘divined’ ordering of things, and hence there is a tendency also to absolutize the moral law.

That is not, however, to say that genuine issues, concerns and paradoxes of ethical relevance do not get raised, even if these appear to be couched in religious, mythical or mythological terms. To give an illustration: scriptures prescribe avoidance of flesh; but a priest would wrong the gods if he refuses to partake of a certain ritual offering involving an animal. With the gods wronged, order can’t be maintained: which then should he do? (Kane, 1969, 1. 1.) Here we are led into an ethical discussion. What we have sketched above is, admittedly, a sweeping account that basically covers the very early period (c. 1500-800 BCE), during which time the Brahmanical tradition grew and flourished. This also outlines a broad framework for looking at how moral consciousness, various ethical concepts and often competing moral schemes develop and become articulated in later periods, which we may identify as the ‘Hindu’ ethical tradition.

i Brahmanical–Hindu ethics

First we shall make three concrete observations about the Brahmanical society.

- 1 The Vedas, the canonical collection of texts, is its ultimate authority. There is no one ‘Supreme Revealer’ who is the source of the scriptures. Their contents are simply ‘seen’ or heard’ (*shruti*); and the principles invoked are embodied in the gods, who are models for human conduct.
- 2 A particular principle of social ordering is adopted (probably introduced in India by Aryans around 1500 BCE), according to which society is organized into a functional division of four ‘classes’, called *varna* (literally, ‘colour’). These are, with their respective tasks:

<i>brahmana</i> (brahmin)	religious, instructional
<i>kshatriya</i>	sovereign, defence
<i>vaishya</i>	agriculture, economic
<i>shudra</i>	menial, labour

Ideally, the sources of power are distributed justly at different places; and also, differences in function need not entail differences in interests, rights and privileges. But the outcome in practice appears to be otherwise. A system of subdivisions or ‘castes’ (*jati*) further complicates the class functions, gradually turning them into a discriminatory institution based on birth. The brahmins profit most from the system and they hold the power-base. A life-affirming but rigidly authoritarian morality develops. Because of this, Max Weber judged that the Vedas ‘do not contain a rational ethic’ (Weber, 1958, pp. 261, 337).

- 3 Despite the overall ritualistic worldview, the Vedic hymns do praise certain humanistic virtues and moral ideals, such as truthfulness (*satya*), giving (*dana*), restraint (*dama*), austerities (*tapas*), affection and gratitude, fidelity, forgiveness, non-thieving, non-cheating, giving others their just desert, and avoiding injury or *himsa* to all creatures. (*Rigveda*, 10; vedas, *Atharvaveda*, 2.8. 18-24; cf. Kane, 1969, 1.1:4.)

Classical Hindu ethics

Vedic authority becomes normative in the later periods; the Vedas, which now extend beyond hymns and rituals, are invoked as the source or as symbols of ethics. Another important institution, ashrama, and two morally significant concepts, namely, dharma and karma emerge, and these culminate in the ethical concept of purusharthas (ends), which are all central to classical Hindu ethics, as we shall now describe.

Ashrama (life-cycle). Life is conceived as progressing through four relative stages in concentric circles, each with its own codes of conduct. Namely, studentship, requiring discipline, continence and dedication to the teacher; the householder stage, entailing marriage, family, and their obligations; the semi-retreat stage, entailing gradual withdrawal from worldly pursuits and pleasures; and renunciation, leading to total withdrawal and contemplation. The last stage marks the preparation for final liberation and shedding of egoistic as well as altruistic tendencies, since the renunciant has to exercise extreme disinterestedness. It also involves breaking with the customary patterns of family and society and becoming an autonomous individual.

Dharma (duty). Dharma, as we said, is an all-embracing conception and is perhaps unique to Indian thought. But the term is also rather diffuse as it has many and varying meanings, beginning with 'fixed principles' in the Vedas and ranging from 'ordinance, usage, duty, right, justice, morality, virtue, religion, good works, function or characteristics' to 'norm', 'righteousness', 'truth' and much else (Kane, 1969, 1.1:1-8). The word is derived from the Sanskrit root dhr, meaning to form, uphold, support, sustain, or to hold together. It certainly connotes the idea of that which maintains, gives order and cohesion to any given reality, and ultimately to nature, society and the individual. As will be noticed, dharma takes over from the Vedic idea of organic unity (a la rita) and shifts more towards the human dimension. In this respect it parallels Hegel's idea of Sittlichkeit (the actual ethical order that regulates the conduct of the individual, family, civil life, and state) more than it does Kant's ideal conception of the Moral Law. Nevertheless, to a Hindu dharma suggests a 'form of life' whose sanction lies beyond individual and even group or collective preferences.

Law makers brought the notion of dharma more down to earth by devising a comprehensive system of social and moral regulations for each of the different groups, subgroups (caste, rulers, etc) within the Hindu social system, as well as specifying certain universal duties incumbent on all. Vocational niches, duties, norms, and even punishments are differently arranged for different groups, and the roles and requirements also vary in the different life-cycle stages for the different groups. Thus, while the wife of a 'twice-born' (the three higher classes) may take part in certain Vedic rites, a shudra (toiler) would be risking punishment if he or she so much as hears the Vedas recited – to say nothing of those who fall outside the class-caste order, and aliens like us! (Manu, 2.16, 67; 10.127.)

More often than not though, dharma is invoked as though it were an objective possibility, when in fact it merely gives an overall form to a system of positive law, mores and regulations which are cultural imperatives, the contents of which are determined by various factors, more particularly the voice of tradition, convention or custom, and the conscience of the learned. Dharma then provides a 'frame' for what is ethically proper or desirable at any one time. What gives coherence to the conception itself is perhaps its appeal to the need to preserve the organic unity of being, to 'make' justice where justice is due, and to minimize the burden of karma, if not also to free the individual from its encumbrances. But what do we understand by the concept of karma?

Karma (action-effect). The basic idea here is that every conscious and volitional action an individual engages in generates conditions for more than the visible effect, such that the net effect of an action X may manifest itself at a later time, or perhaps its traces remain in the 'unconscious' and get distributed over another time. X may combine the residual effect of Y to generate a compounded effect in some future moment. And this in turn becomes a determinant of another action, Z, or a state of affairs pertaining to that particular individual (perhaps even a collective). The effect of Z might be pleasurable (sukha) or it might be painful and induce suffering (dukkha), but this is the retribution entailed in the causal network that is itself an inexorable manifestation of dharma.

Further, the idea of an infinite possibility of action-retribution suggests to the Indian mind the idea of rebirth, for merit or virtue appears to be in need of being rewarded, and demerit punished, according to the Law of Karma. Thus merit or demerit achieved in one lifetime could well continue to determine one's capacities, temperament and circumstances in another birth. Hindu thought generally espouses the idea of a more substantial theory of rebirth, meaning that something like the 'soul' carries with it the latent potential (karma) of all that constitutes the person. However, some Hindu philosophers, such as Shankara (eighth century CE) do away with the idea of a permanent self by asserting the identity of the individual self, atman, with the ultimate reality, Brahman; hence what really transmigrates is something nearer to an illusory self, which has lost sight of its true identity, namely its oneness with Brahman.

The linkage of dharma and karma (action–effect) has the following consequences: there are no 'accidents of births' determining social iniquities; mobility within one lifetime is excluded; one has one's dharma, both as endowment and as a social role (Creel, 1984, p. 4). One either accumulates an improvement in karma aiming towards a higher, re-birth, or one tries to cut the Gordian knot and opts to step off, once and for all, the wheel of cyclical existence (samsara). But this is not achieved as simply as it is willed. Indeed, this freedom is placed as the fourth and the most difficult of goals in the scheme of the fourfold deontological ends of purusharthas, literally, 'things sought by human beings'.

Purushartha (human ends). According to the Hindu view, there are four pursuits in life which are of intrinsic value, namely: artha, material interests; kama, pleasure and affective fulfilment; dharma, again, social and individual duties; and moksha, liberation. They may or may not be continuous with each other, though one goal might prove to be of instrumental value for achieving another; dharma is often thought to be of instrumental value in connection with liberation. Thus an ascending scale might be admitted, and the fixing of the relative status of each could lead to vigorous debate, as it has in Indian philosophy.

What is significant is that the above conception of human ends provides the context and criteria for determining the rules, conduct and guidelines in respect of the institutes of class and life-cycle stages. For an individual will want to strive towards achieving the best in terms of these ends within the limits of his or her temperament, circumstances, status and so on. Sometimes it is a question of balance; at other times it is a question of which interests get priority.

For example, a brahmin in the semi-retreat stage might consider that he has discharged all his family and social obligations, so that his remaining interest is to edge towards liberation, by becoming a full-time renunciant. What he should do and what he should not do in pursuit of this end is left entirely to his own determination, for which he relies on his meditative and cognitive insights. His particular dharma is the correlate of his innate constitution, of which he alone is the master: thus an inward-attentive praxis is the source of the principles for his ethic. Here, it may be observed, the gap between intuition and ethics is very nearly closed over. This is another salient feature of Indian ethics.

Upanishadic ethics

The Upanishads (post 500 BCE), perhaps the key philosophical texts of the Hindus, presuppose in principle the authority of the earlier Vedas (while being cynical regarding Vedic ritualism with its promises for utilitarian returns, such as cows and progeny), however, develop this alternative scheme with much finesse for a more universal application. Here metaphysical knowledge is placed above worldly pursuits. But this scheme also allows for the possibility of, indeed encourages, a detached and asocial pursuit of spiritual ends removed from the challenges of the world.

That this tendency develops in the hands of yogis and ascetics, and that it influences Indian ethical thinking cannot be denied. It appears almost as though dharma could be dispensed with. As the virtuoso Yajnavalkya, justifying his hasty decision to leave behind his wealth, home and two wives, puts it: It is not for the sake of the husband, wife, sons, wealth, gods, Vedas, brahminhood, kshatriyahood, etc. that these are dear, but for the sake of the Self, all these are the Self, one knows all in the Self... Work cannot increase nor diminish the greatness of this knowledge (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 5.5.6-7; 4.4.24). Virtue is deemed necessary for knowledge, and the Socratic dictum, 'knowledge is virtue' rings through here also. The ideal Upanishadic person is expected to overcome emotions, feelings, inclinations and sentiments in pursuit of a higher, nonetheless self-centred, 'calling'. But there are few rules.

It is, however, just for these sorts of reason that there have been charges, from within and without the tradition, that all we have here is an ethically bankrupt, quietistic and mystically-grounded morality (Danto, 1972, p. 99). At least this is what is said of the Vedanta and Yoga systems.

True as this charge might be, there is a list of three comprehensive virtues extolled in the Upanishads (and familiar to readers of T. S. Eliot) which is worthy of mention, namely, 'damyata, datta, dayadhvam', signifying, self-restraint, giving or self-sacrifice, and compassion. But again, there are no rules other than exemplars, and no virtues to worry about after attaining liberation. Still, one moral ramification of the Upanishadic worldview is that all life, as indeed the whole world, is to be looked upon as a whole, where the ego sets aside its own narrow self-interests and even effaces itself.

Smarta ethics

There occur parallel and subsequent developments among the more doctrinaire and legalistic advocates of the rule of dharma, in what we shall call smarta (derivative) ethics. The school of Mimamsa champions a rigidly categorical reading of the scriptural imperatives. The implication is that all duties – religious as well as secular – could be divided into those that are optional or prudential and those that are obligatory, and that all ensuing actions are instrumental towards some result or end (even if not indicated). But if there is a mandate one does it out of a sense of obligation. The Mimamsa developed the thoroughgoing hermeneutic of dharma for which the school is best known, and which proved instructive for later ethical and legal discourses.

The more populist texts known as Dharmashastras, of which the most relevant are Manu's 'Law Books' and Kautilya's treatise on politics, overstress the legalistic side (Manu 1975; Kane, 1969). Thus Kautilya (c. 200 CE) justifies the rigid reign of the 'rod' (danda) wielded by the king on the grounds that unless there are calculated controls the (natural) law of the small fish being swallowed by the big fish would prevail. Jurisprudence, ordinances for regulating civil life, and the governance and security of the state are his chief objectives. But he also highlights the use of reasoning (anvikshiki) in the study and deliberation on these matters (Kane, 1969, 1.1:225). Both he and Manu make it mandatory for the king to attend first to the welfare of the citizens, and they seek to protect the rights and interests of the individual within a group framework, although not in the most egalitarian manner. Manu even admits that there are different dharmas in different epochs, which is suggestive of relativity in ethics (Manu, 1975, 1, 81-86). Manu decrees some ten virtues, namely contentment, forgiveness, self-restraint, non-anger, non-appropriating, purity, sensual-control, wisdom, self-knowledge, and truth. Again, these are common to Indian ethics.

The Epics and the Gita

The popular epics of the Ramayana and Mahabharata, through their moving narratives and anecdotes, explore the struggles, paradoxes and difficulties of coming to grips with the evolving idea of dharma. The Ramayana, which presents the heroic Rama and his chaste wife Sita as the paragons of virtue, is somewhat dogmatic on its stance of 'righteousness', while the voluminous Mahabharata is less sanguine about exactness in matters of duty, as it turns over every conceivable ethical stance the culture has hitherto known. For instance, the sage Kaushika, who in the Mahabharata courts censure for his insistence on telling the truth to a bandit – because it leads to the killing of an innocent man – might well be acclaimed in the Ramayana for his uncompromising adherence to principle – as Rama indeed is for giving priority to his father's promise over his royal and family obligations.

The Bhagavad Gita, however, which is part of the Mahabharata, appears to be more decisive in its ethical pronouncements and perhaps for that reason has had an extraordinary impact on the modern Hindu-Indian mind. The Gita locates itself in the middle of two opposing traditions: Nivritti (abstinent), the austere path of anti-action (echoing non-Vedic asceticism), and Pravritti (performative), the doing of social and moral duties. Each had ethical ramifications for its time and their respective codes and rules were in competition and conflict.

While the Gita is recognized for the ingenuity with which it raises a host of ethical issues (eg, should I kill my own kin for the sake of regaining my rightful sovereignty?), its judgements have not satisfied all and sundry. The deep conflict of traditions is resolved through a synthesis of asceticism and duty in the unique concept of nishkama karma or disinterested action. What this implies is that one does not forsake one's apportioned duties but performs them in complete disregard of their fruits or consequences. Action is a universal necessity, and the individual has a 'right' (adharma) only to the performance of the action and not to its fruit (2.47). The argument is that it is not acting that enslaves, but rather the thought that one is the cause, the agent and enjoyer of the act; stripped of this linear causal thinking no action can be binding on the self, which is free to start with.

This disinterested action ethics might look somewhat like Kant's ethic of 'duty for duty's sake', or acting from respect for the Law (hence the Categorical Imperative), but the precise rational-universalizable formulation of Kant is absent here. The Gita's motivation is not so much to make the 'Good Will' the determinant of moral actions but to conserve the Brahmanical cultural base (its performative ideal) while integrating the threatening asocial ethic of ascetic renunciation, and also accommodating the influence of a nascent devotionalism, with its theistic orientation. The Gita's ethics is both formal and material: one must do one's duty according to one's 'nature': but this duty is determined by virtue of the individual's place in the larger social whole, ie by dint of the class he or she finds himself belonging to. Thus the maxim: better one's duty (though) imperfect, than another's duty well-performed (3.35). As to the specific content of the duty and the criterion by which its validity is to be judged, the text remains largely obscure. Nonetheless, the promise of liberation lies in disinterestedly pursued action, and a crude 'work ethic' (karmayoga), rid of egoism, is suggested, which might appear to justify prescribed ritual activity (sacrifice, austerities and giving) (18.5) and killing alike (18.8).

But the Gita does not overlook the significant role that a quasi-rational discerning faculty plays in such a process. For this it develops the yogas (paths) of buddhi or intelligent-willing and jnana or knowledge ('gnosis'). That the 'will' could at once be intelligent and practical (ie socially-attuned), making for its moral autonomy, is itself an interesting idea canvassed here. Apart from these teachings, truth, continence and non-violence (ahimsa), (16.2; 17.14) as well as 'welfare of all' (lokasamgraha) and 'desiring the good of every living creature' are underscored in the Gita (3.20; 5.25). The Gita's model of an ethical person, in Krishna's words, is one who is:

without hatred of any creature, friendly and compassionate without possessiveness and self-pride, equable in happiness and unhappiness... who is dependent on nothing, disinterested, unworried... and who neither hates nor rejoices, does not mourn or hanker, and relinquishes both good and evil. (12.13-17)

But as to why one should follow these principles, and what one should do if the consequences of one's action or duty are detrimental to the interests of another, the Gita seems to have little to say. (Cf. Rama Rao Pappu, 1988.) Also, if good and evil are transcended and the distinction obliterated can there any longer be an ethic to speak of? (Can we each be like Nietzsche's Superman?) Modern Indian reformers, such as Gandhi, have tried to fill in some of the lacunae in the traditional ethical teachings, symbolized in the Gita. But before that we'll look at another, contrasting, Indian ethical system.

ii Jaina ethics

One of the lesser known ethical traditions of India is that of the Jains. Jainism, which is both a philosophical system and a way of life in its own right, was founded around 500 BCE by Mahavira, an ascetic and unorthodox teacher thought to be a contemporary of the Buddha, to whom he is often compared. Jainism is decidedly non-theistic, rejecting, like Buddhism, belief in a 'supremely personal God'. Very early on a dispute and rift arose over the charge that Jainas had concerned themselves far too much with individual morality and monastic life. This gave way to two distinct Jaina sects, the Digambaras (non-clad) and Shvet-ambaras (white-clad): the latter shifting towards a more pragmatic approach to lay life in contrast to the strictly austere life continued by the former.

The source of Jaina teachings is identified with a much older ascetic group of 'great teachers' (*tirthankaras*) called Nirgranthas. Their teachings were codified and systematized in canonical texts known as *Nigantha pavayana*, most of which are no longer extant (Jaini, 1979. p. 42). The basic philosophic belief of the Jainas is that every entity in the world has *jiva* or a sentient principle, whose distinguishing feature is consciousness along with vital energy and a happy disposition. The idea is that consciousness is continuous and nothing in the universe is without some degree of sentience at varying levels of conscious and apparently unconscious existence, from its more developed form in adult human beings to invisible embryonic modes at 'lower' animal and plant levels. (Here sentience is not determined merely by pain—pleasure responses.)

Each and every sentient principle however, subsists in a contingent relation to the quantity of *karma*, which is described as a ‘nonconscious immaterial’ *matter* of the most subtle form that determines the relative nature of the being. Activity, of both volitional and non-volitional kinds, induces *karma* and by association conditions the development of the sentient being, resulting in the eventual death and re-embodiment of the particular ‘soul’. If *karma* can be prevented and exhausted the bondage could be broken, the cyclical process arrested, and the sentient principle could grow to its fullest possible realization – a belief Jainism shares with much of Hindu and Buddhist thought (Jaini, 1979. pp. 111-14).

The ethical implication of this ‘spiritual’ worldview is that there has to be a rigid discipline of renunciation, which entails an individual and a collective mode of life, *dharma*, conducive to this principle. A monastic community (*samgha*) is the preferred model, although a social life that aims to maximize this principle in a secular environment is acceptable. The life of a monk, particularly of an *arhant*, a philosopher-ascetic, who through his stoic practices has attained a ‘near-omniscient’ state, becomes the normative standard for the layperson, who would have to be born as a monk in the next round to attain that glorious final liberation (*moksha*) which is the end of Jaina life. Thus the duties of the layperson in civil life are derived, with due concessions and modifications, from those observed by the monk in a monastic *samgha*. But this rules out the possibility of an independent social ethics, for as with Hindu Yoga, self-culture and personal ‘salvation’ take priority over all else. Paradoxically, this end is not attainable without the annihilation of all self-interest and self-centred desires and inclinations. The sentient principle in that state is both disinterested and inactive. It goes without saying that for the Jaina all ethics is perceived by reference to monastic ethics.

The Jaina ethical life becomes almost synonymous with the observance of a list of vows and austerities, and abstention from useless and untoward activities. But the Jainas gave no real reasons why a certain practice *X*, eg the painful uprooting of every hair from the body, is deemed essential to an ascetic life, save to say that hair represents pleasure. So all pleasure is evil, and pain is at least endurable: which in effect turns classical utilitarianism on its head! The practical manual of Jaina ethics defines right conduct in terms of the observance of vows of restraint, progressively geared towards the complete renunciation of the ascetic. This is their axiological scheme. There are five such ‘vows’, namely, *ahimsa*, *satya*, *asteya*, *brahmacharya*, *apigraha*, which we shall describe briefly.

Ahimsa refers to non-injury or non-harming of sentient beings and is perhaps the most fundamental concept of Jaina ethics. With its broad understanding of sentience, Jaina ethics inevitably reflects an uncompromising ‘reverence for all life’. The restraints comprise rigid dietary habits, such as non-consumption of meat, alcohol, and foods of certain kinds, and rules against the abuse, ill-treatment, exploitation, etc, of all ‘breathing, existing, living, sentient creatures’. There are prohibitions against injurious treatment of animals, such as beating, mutilating, branding, overloading and deprivation of food and space. Meat-eating is strictly prohibited on the grounds that this requires killing of animals.

These concerns make the Jainas among the earliest protagonists of ‘animal liberation’ and they surpassed the Hindus and Buddhists on this moral stance and in expounding vegetarianism (Jaini, 1979, p. 169). Furthermore, Jainas were so sensitive to the killing, both intentional *and* accidental, of living matter that they would strain water to avoid drinking any creatures that might be in it, brush ants and insects from the path, and wear masks over the mouth to prevent minute ‘*nigodas*’ (fungus-like entities) from being inhaled. The logical extreme of this ethic would be to curtail all movement and starve oneself (to death), as indeed some Jaina monks did – a sure antidote to eudaimonism! In cases of extreme or terminal illness, this practice may also be opted for by a Jaina.

One important qualification, however, has to be noted here. While the vow of *ahimsa* or non-injury may appear to have been practised on altruistic grounds, the concern here is as much with the motive of avoiding injury or harm to *oneself*, which could occur through any number of actions, not just in acts that lead to the suffering of others. Thus if one told lies this could be harmful to oneself for it hinders the development of one’s ‘soul’. Thus a Jaina monk will maintain silence where lying to the bandit could well save the life of his innocent prey. A layperson, however, may be inclined to place the interest of the victim above his or her own minimally threatened interest. This rather negatively articulated virtue has had an influence on the wider Indian ethical tradition.

The other vows pertain to being truthful (*satya*); not appropriating what is not one's own (*asteya*); exercising sexual continence (*brahmacharya*) – which legitimizes the institution of marriage for the laity; and non-possessiveness (*apigraha*), which encourages disinterested dealings in daily life. Fasting, giving alms, forgiveness, compassion and kindness towards others are some of the positive virtues that are encouraged. It could be said that the question of 'rights' and interests of others is not raised, except marginally under *ahimsa* (non-injury), for the ultimate justification for all ethical practices is that they should raise the moral stature of the practitioner, not necessarily of others. One even pardons another for this reason. In the stark absence of other beings, a lonesome Jaina might not accumulate much meritorious *karma*! Sometimes monks appeal to adverse social consequences to explain the evils of the non-observance of vows, but such prudential and utilitarian considerations are merely expedient rationalizations rather than their justification.

It has been claimed, somewhat contentiously, by some modern writers that virtues such as *ahimsa* have intrinsic value and that their justification lies in their being derived, not from objective facts (such as 'life is dear'), but from some experience which is self-evident. What is 'right' is in harmony with this experience. *Ahimsa*, in their example, is an experience related to the occurrence of pain and suffering among living beings and is universalized for others from one's own experience of pain. *Ahimsa* stands as the 'good' to which other values tend (Sogani, 1984, p. 243).

Overall, one gets the sense that Jaina ethics strives to be autonomous: it is not naturalistic but normative, and it admits the possibility of objective values, of which *ahimsa* seems to be its most significant and distinctive contribution.

iii Gandhian ethics

M. K. Gandhi, or Mahatma Gandhi as he is popularly known, is all but forgotten in India; and yet he, more than most in recent times, has struggled to advance Indian ethics beyond the pale of its apparently diminishing relevance in a modern, civilizing, world. Perhaps Gandhi doesn't have much to offer as an ethical theoretician. But, it is said, his genius lay in his practical wisdom, especially his ability to take an idea from a traditional practice or context (eg fasting) and apply it to contemporary issues or situations, whether on dietary matters or in an act of civil disobedience. For this he would attract criticism from both traditionalists and modernists alike.

Gandhi led a nationalist struggle against British sovereignty in India, which sparked off a spate of anti-colonial movements throughout the globe. The way or means by which he was able to achieve this feat, and how this ties in with the particular ethics he gave voice to, is particularly significant. That in the process he also ended up questioning many of the traditional (Hindu) values and customary practices, as well as a host of modern (Western) values, though perhaps not overturning them, is also significant. So, for example, he grew up a vegetarian on customary Hindu grounds; but after a short lapse he switched his moral justification for vegetarianism to ethical consideration for animals.

Gandhi is a curious mix of the radical and the conservative. For example, he takes up the cause of civil rights in South Africa, but his struggle does not extend much beyond rights for the Indian community. Still, he set an example of 'civil resistance' which some Black leaders and their Christian sympathizers of the time followed. Returning to India, Gandhi is much anguished by the injustices of the caste, class and religious divisions that had taken deep root in the Indian society. He becomes a champion of the cause of the 'untouchables', whom he gives the name *Harijan* (People of the Lord), and he rails against the prejudices and 'the evils of the caste system'. It looks as though Gandhi is set to have the entire structure dismantled.

In the long run, however, Gandhi defends the *varna* class structure, on the grounds that it is (1) different from the divisive caste system, (2) a sensible scheme for demarcation of work, (3) a law of human nature, and hence part of *dharma*. What he doesn't find agreeable is the inordinate privileges one class, especially the brahmin, has arrogated to itself. Inequality, he thinks, is not an issue in the design, but it becomes a problem when the structure gets tilted vertically (Gandhi, 1965, pp. 29. 80). The enigma of *dharma* oddly places constraints on the otherwise splendid idea of civil and human rights that Gandhi awakens to rather early in his career; but it also helps him forge a principle of human action which itself has buttressed the struggle for rights of one kind or another in different quarters. That principle is non-violent action or, as Gandhi also called it, *ahimsa*.

Gandhi first toys with non-co-operation, an idea which he discovers in Tolstoy and Henry Thoreau, and which is reinforced by his Quaker friends in South Africa. It underpins the idea of 'non-resistance' (or 'resist not evil'), meaning the renunciation of all opposition by force, when faced with evil, injustices and oppression. Gandhi initially calls this 'passive resistance'; although he modifies his strategy, and coins a new term, *satyagraha* ('truth-force'), which he says better reflects the Indian basis of this technique. What this implies is that Gandhi, no longer content with simply 'turning the other cheek' or just withholding taxes and obligations, or advocating 'go slow', looks for a method by which to bring the adversary to (1) confront the situation and meet 'eye-to-eye' on the issue in dispute, and (2) redress the evil or wrong without coercing or inflicting injury or violence onto the other party.

In developing this method, what Gandhi does in effect is to combine three cardinal notions that had long currency in Hindu, Jaina and Buddhist ethics, namely, *satya*, *ahimsa*, and *tapasya*. The last of these came up in our discussion of the austere practices associated with asceticism (*tapas*, 'spiritual heat'). For Gandhi this concept provides a framework for the cultivation of courage, fortitude, stamina and most importantly disinterestedness (here invoking the *Gita*), necessary for the successful deployment of the ensuing technique.

Satya has to do with 'truth', but truth in three senses, namely, of being truthful, the truth of knowledge and the truth of being or reality. Its original sense is of course derived from *sat*, which means the 'IS' of existence, the really existent truth; whether this is identified with Non-being, Brahman, *Nirvana*, or God is a matter for philosophy to determine. For Gandhi *Truth* is God, by which he means we should continue to strive for truth beyond all human conception, in a spirit of creative tolerance.

On the practical level, *satya* means *truth as action*, or *satyagraha*, which suggests the idea of 'seizing' or 'holding firmly to a good cause': thus *satyagraha* is a categorical attitude or 'force' by which one holds firmly to, grasps and hangs in there until truth triumphs in the situation. And this truth-force, he argues, must meet the needs of society at large beyond the individual's selfish ends (Gandhi, 1968, pp. 171ff).

There lurks in the idea of *satyagraha* all the connotations of a *force*, or exertion, of pushing oneself, or doggedly putting one's foot down, and so on. The force could be a subtly coercive one, or an overtly injurious or violent one. This is where Gandhi finds the Jaina precept of *ahimsa* or 'not causing injury or harm to another being' to be most instructive. Of course, we shouldn't overlook the Buddhist emphasis on just the same precept. Gandhi acknowledges as much and uses this negative precept of non-injury to qualify *satyagraha* so that no hurt or harm should arise.

But Gandhi does more: he transforms *ahimsa* into a dynamic condition for a stratagem that does not stop until the goal of the action is achieved! In other words, far from a passive 'do not' injunction, *ahimsa* (non-injury), when intertwined with *satyagraha* (truth-force), becomes a positive mode of action that raises the *intent* of this injunction to a much higher ethical level: it seeks to bring about what is *right* in the situation at hand. Further, the interest of the other party is not compromised, for activists would rather suffer injury or violence on themselves than have it inflicted on the other; and compassion or 'love', as Gandhi calls it, as well as utter humanity or humility, must accompany the action. This, Gandhi believes, can be universalized to form a principle of disinterested non-violent action.

This principle is then put to use in social and political action, in a civil disobedience movement, in non-violent freedom and civil rights struggles, some of which have achieved remarkable results. One can argue whether the application of this principle in some instances does or does not entail coercion, and whether this would nullify the principle; or whether the inadvertent violence unleashed in the process defeats the purpose altogether. The consensus of those who have been influenced by this principle, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., in leading the struggle for the rights of Afro-Americans in North America, is that the purpose is never defeated. This will perhaps go down as the most significant development of Indian ethics in the twentieth century.

iv Concluding remarks

What our enquiry shows is that the Indian culture, like any civilization, strives for ethically right conduct as well as a theoretical understanding of ethics. It may not succeed in achieving the goal, or it may lose sight of its goal, or even fail to reach a stage of clarity in its ethical discourse. But there are some important ideas and a few principles that emerge; these helped the society to survive, and to develop, even aesthetically. For us in the modern era, edging towards the twenty-first century, they may seem inadequate; but they might at least provide some useful metaphors, or *analogues*, to engage with our own notions, ideas, theories and analysis.

Dharma, with its roots in *rita* or 'natural order', can open up a more holistic, organic and ecologically enlightened perspective as a contrast to the more individualistic, competitive, nature-subjugating, and technocratic environment in which we try and think ethics. *Karma* or 'action-effect', and even the Indian ideas of concentric life-cycles and human ends, may suggest other possibilities of integrating the disparate and finite features of human life into this organic whole. And last but not least, the principle of disinterested non-violent action may prove effective in the continuing struggles towards justice and peace in the world.

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The Dimensions of Religion

The problem arises because there are different aspects or, as I shall call them, *dimensions* of religion. Whether we include Marxism as a religion depends on which dimension we regard as crucial for our definition. It will therefore be useful to analyse these various dimensions.

The Ritual Dimension

If we were asked the use or purpose of such buildings as temples and churches, we would not be far wrong in saying that they are used for ritual or ceremonial purposes. Religion tends in part to express itself through such rituals: through worship, prayers, offerings, and the like. We may call this the *ritual* dimension of religion. About this, some important comments need to be made.

First, when we think of ritual we often think of something very formal and elaborate, like a High Mass or the Liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox Church. But it is worth remarking that even the simplest form of religious service involves ritual, in the sense of some form of outer behaviour (such as closing one’s eyes in prayer) coordinated to an inner intention to make contact with, or to participate in, the invisible world. I am not concerned here with those who deny the existence of such an ‘invisible world,’ however interpreted, whether as God’s presence, as nirvana, as a sacred energy pervading nature. Whether or not such an invisible world exists, it forms an aspect of the world seen from the point of view of those who participate in religion. It is believed in. As was said earlier, it is not here our task to pass judgment on the truth or otherwise of religious conceptions. First, then, even the simplest service involves ritual.

Second, since ritual involves both an inner and an outer aspect it is always possible that the latter will come to dominate the former. Ritual then degenerates into a mechanical or conventional process. If people go through the motions of religious observance without accompanying it with the intentions and sentiments which give it human meaning, ritual is merely an empty shell. This is the reason why some religious activities are condemned as ‘ritualistic.’ But it would be wrong to conclude that because ritualism in this bad sense exists, therefore ritual is an unimportant or degenerate aspect of religion.

It should not be forgotten that there are secular rituals which we all use, and these can form an integral part of personal and social relationships. Greeting someone with a ‘Good morning,’ saying goodbye, saluting the flag—all these in differing ways are secular rituals. Very often in society they are integrated with religious rituals, as when men say ‘God be with you,’ which is more than taking leave of someone: it is invoking a blessing upon the other person.

Third, it will prove convenient to extend the meaning of ‘ritual’ beyond its reference to the forms of worship, sacrifice, etc, directed toward God or the gods.

It happens that a crucial part is played in India and elsewhere by yoga and analogous techniques of self-training. The ultimate aim of such methods is the attainment of higher states of consciousness, through which the adept has experience of release from worldly existence, of nirvana, of ultimate reality (the interpretation partly depends on the system of doctrines against which the adept tests his experience). Thus the essence of such religion is contemplative or mystical. Sometimes, it is pursued without reference to God or the gods—for example, in Buddhism, where the rituals of a religion of worship and sacrifice are regarded as largely irrelevant to the pursuit of nirvana. Nevertheless the techniques of self-training have an analogy to ritual: the adept performs various physical and mental exercises through which he hopes to concentrate the mind on the transcendent, invisible world, or to withdraw his senses from their usual immersion in the flow of empirical experiences. This aspect of religion, then, we shall include in our definition of the ritual dimension. It can be classified as pragmatic (aimed at the attainment of certain experiences) in distinction from sacred ritual (directed toward a holy being, such as God). Sometimes the two forms of ritual are combined, as in Christian mysticism.

The meaning of ritual cannot be understood without reference to the environment of belief in which it is performed. Thus prayer in most ritual is directed toward a divine being. Very often, legends about the gods are used to explain the features of a ceremony or festival; and often the important events of human life, such as birth, marriage, death, are invested with a sacred significance by relating them to the divine world.

All this can happen before a religion has any theology or formal system of doctrines. Theology is an attempt to introduce organization and intellectual power into what is found in less explicit form in the deposit of revelation or traditional mythology of a religion. The collection of myths, images, and stories through which the invisible world is symbolized can suitably be called the *mythological* dimension of religion.

The Mythological Dimension

Some important comments need to be made about this mythological dimension. First, in accordance with modern usage in theology and in the comparative study of religion, the terms ‘myth,’ ‘mythological,’ etc, are *not* used to mean that the content is false. Perhaps in ordinary English to say ‘It’s a myth’ is just a way of saying ‘It’s false.’ But the use of the term *myth* in relation to religious phenomena is quite neutral as to the truth or falsity of the story enshrined in the myth. In origin, the term ‘myth’ means ‘story,’ and in calling something a story we are not thereby saying that it is true or false. We are just reporting on what has been said. Similarly, here we are concerned with reporting on what is believed.

Second, it is convenient to use the term to include not merely stories about God (for instance the story of the creation in Genesis), about the gods (for instance in Homer’s *Iliad*), etc, but also the historical events of religious significance in a tradition. For example, the Passover ritual in Judaism re-enacts a highly important event that once occurred to the children of Israel; their delivery from bondage in Egypt. The historical event functions as a myth. Thus we shall include stories relating to significant historical events under the head of the mythological dimension—again without prejudice to whether the stories accurately describe what actually occurred in history.

The Doctrinal Dimension

Third, it is not always easy to differentiate the mythological and the symbolic from what is stated in theology. Doctrines are an attempt to give system, clarity and intellectual power to what is revealed through the mythological and symbolic language of religious faith and ritual. Naturally, theology must make use of the symbols and myths. For example, when the Christian theologian has to describe the meaning of the Incarnation, he must necessarily make use of Biblical language and history. Thus the dividing line between the mythological and what I shall call the doctrinal dimension is not easy to draw. Yet there is clearly a distinction between Aquinas’ treatment of creation at the philosophical level and the colourful story of creation in Genesis. The distinction is important, because the world religions owe some of their living power to their success in presenting a total picture of reality, through a coherent system of doctrines.

The Ethical Dimension

Throughout history we find that religions usually incorporate a code of ethics. Ethics concern the behaviour of the individual and, to some extent, the code of ethics of the dominant religion controls the community. Quite obviously, men do not always live up to the standards they profess. And sometimes the standards which are inculcated by the dominant faith in a particular society may not be believed by all sections of that society.

Even so, there is no doubt that religions have been influential in moulding the ethical attitudes of the societies they are part of. It is important, however, to distinguish between the moral teaching incorporated in the doctrines and mythology of a religion, and the social facts concerning those who adhere to the faith in question. For instance, Christianity teaches ‘Love thy neighbour as thyself.’ As a matter of sociological fact, quite a lot of people in so-called Christian countries, where Christianity is the official or dominant religion, fail to come anywhere near this ideal. The man who goes to church is not necessarily loving; nor is the man who goes to a Buddhist temple necessarily compassionate. Consequently, we must distinguish between the ethical teachings of a faith, which we shall discuss as the *ethical* dimension of religion, and the actual sociological effects and circumstances of a religion.

Pertinent to this point is the consideration that most religions are institutionalized. This is most obvious in technologically primitive societies, where the priest, soothsayer, or magician is closely integrated into the social structure. Religion is not just a personal matter here: it is part of the life of the community. It is built into the institutions of daily life. But even in sophisticated communities where a line is drawn between religious and secular concerns, as in contemporary America, churches exist as institutions to be reckoned with. They are part of the 'establishment.' In areas where there is active or latent persecution of religious faith, as in the Soviet Union, there are still organizations for continuing religious activities.

The Social Dimension

Religions are not just systems of *belief*: they are also organizations, or parts of organizations. They have a communal and social significance. This social shape of a religion is, of course, to some extent determined by the religious and ethical ideals and practices that it harbours. Conversely, it often happens that the religious and ethical ideals are adapted to existing social conditions and attitudes. For example, Japanese fishermen reconcile the Buddhist injunction against taking life (even animal or fish life) to their activity as fishermen. The Christian's dedication to brotherly love or his attitude to war may be determined more by patriotism and a national crisis than by the Gospel. Thus, it is important to distinguish between the ethical dimension of religion and the *social* dimension. The latter is the mode in which the religion in question is institutionalized, whereby, through its institutions and teachings, it affects the community in which it finds itself.

The doctrinal, mythological, and ethical dimensions express a religion's claims about the nature of the invisible world and its aims about how men's lives ought to be shaped: the social dimension indicates the way in which men's lives are in fact shaped by these claims and the way in which religious institutions operate.

It is, incidentally, clear that the ongoing patterns of ritual are an important element in the institutionalization of religion. For example, if it is believed that certain ceremonies and sacraments can only be properly performed by a priest, then the religious institution will be partly determined by the need to maintain and protect a professional priesthood.

The Experiential Dimension

The dimensions we have so far discussed would indeed be hard to account for were it not for the dimension with which this book is centrally concerned: that of experience, the experiential dimension. Although men may hope to have contact with, and participate in, the invisible world through ritual, personal religion normally involves the hope of, or realization of, experience of that world. The Buddhist monk hopes for nirvana, and this includes the contemplative experience of peace and of insight into the transcendent. The Christian who prays to God believes normally that God answers prayer—and this not just 'externally' in bringing about certain states of affairs, such as a cure for illness, but more importantly 'internally' in the personal relationship that flowers between the man who prays and his Maker. The prayerful Christian believes that God does speak to men in an intimate way and that the individual can and does have an inner experience of God. Hence, personal religion necessarily involves what we have called the experiential dimension.

The factor of religious experience is even more crucial when we consider the events and the human lives from which the great religions have stemmed. The Buddha achieved Enlightenment as he sat in meditation beneath the Bo-Tree. As a consequence of his shattering mystical experience, he believed that he had the secret of the cure for the suffering and dissatisfactions of life in this world. We have records of the inaugural visions of some of the Old Testament prophets, of the experiences that told them something profoundly important about God and that spurred them on to teach men in his name. It was through such experiences that Muhammad began to preach the unity of Allah—a preaching that had an explosive impact upon the world from Central Asia to Spain. One cannot read the Upanishads, the source of so much of Hindu doctrine, without feeling the experience on which their teachings are founded. The most striking passage in the *Bhagavadgita*, perhaps the greatest religious document of Hinduism, is that in which the Lord reveals himself in terrifying splendour to Arjuna. Arjuna is overwhelmed by awe and filled with utter devotion. We have already remarked on the seminal importance of St. Paul's similar experience on the Damascus Road.

The words of Jesus Christ reveal his sense of intimate closeness to the Father; there is little doubt that this rested upon highly significant personal experiences. These and other examples can be given of the crucial part played by religious experience in the genesis of the great faiths.

For this reason, it is unrealistic to treat Marxism as a religion: though it possesses doctrines, symbols, a moral code, and even sometimes rituals, it denies the possibility of an experience of the invisible world. Neither relationship to a personal God nor the hope of an experience of salvation or nirvana can be significant for the Marxist. Likewise Humanism, because it fixes its sights on this-worldly aims, is essentially non-religious. Nevertheless, it is necessary for us to examine the impact of these faiths upon the contemporary world. But the main emphasis will be upon the inner side—what religions mean in personal experience, and how they have been moulded by such experience.

There is a special difficulty, however, in undertaking a description of a religious experience. We have to rely upon the testimony of those who have the experience, and their reports must be conveyed to us either by telling or writing. Sometimes accounts of prophetic or mystical experience of important religious leaders have been preserved by oral tradition through many generations before being written down. But for the most part, the individual religious experiences that have influenced large segments of mankind occurred in cultures that knew the art of writing.

This means that the experience occurred in the context of the existing religions which already had a doctrinal dimension. This raises a problem for us in our attempt to understand the unique religious experience of the prophets or founders of religions, for their experiences are likely to be interpreted in the light of existing doctrines, as well as clothed in the mythological and symbolic forms of the age. There is less difficulty when we consider the 'lesser' figures of the religions—not the founders, but those saints and visionaries who come after. They interpret their experiences in terms of received doctrines and mythologies.

For these reasons, it is not easy to know about a given report which of the elements in it are based, so to say, purely on the experience itself, and which are due to doctrinal and mythological interpretation. To some extent the problem can be overcome by comparing the reports of men of different cultures—such as India and the West—which had virtually no contact during the periods crucial for the formation and elaboration of the dominant religious beliefs.

Moreover, it is worth noting that there is a *dialectic* between experience and doctrine. Thus, though the Buddha, for example, took over elements from the thought-forms of his own age, he was genuinely a creative teacher, who introduced new elements and transmuted the old. The Old Testament prophets fashioned a genuinely original ethical monotheism from an existant belief in Yahweh. The changes they made in the simple tribal religious teaching they inherited can be understood, to some degree, in terms of the impact of the personal religious experiences that were revelatory for these men. Thus experience and doctrinal interpretation have a dialectical relationship. The latter colours the former, but the former also shapes the latter. This book will attempt to exhibit this dialectic at work.

This dialectical interplay also helps us to understand some of the features of personal religion at a humbler level. The Christian, for example, is taught certain doctrines and mythological symbols by his parents. He learns to call God 'Our Father'; he is instructed to believe that the world is created by God and sustained by God. These ideas will at first simply be 'theoretical' as far as the young Christian is concerned, on a par with other non-observable theories he learns about the world, such as that the earth goes round the sun. But suppose he progresses to a deeper understanding of the Christian faith through a particular personal experience, or through his response to the ritual and ethical demands of the religion. Then he will come to see that in some mysterious way God is a person with whom he can have contact; God is not just like the sun, to be thought of speculatively, or to be looked at. Personally, then, he discovers that he can worship and pray to God. In short, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth' will come to have a new meaning for him. In a sense, he will now believe something other than what he first believed. In this way, the interplay between doctrine and experiences is fundamental to religion.

'Islam' – Nanji A and Esmail A in

Quinn P and Taliaferro C (editors) – *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion* (Blackwell, 2002) pages 64-70

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Islam belongs to the family of monotheistic faiths that also includes JUDAISM (see Article 5) and CHRISTIANITY (see Article 6). Its history began in the seventh century in what is modern-day Saudi Arabia, but its larger cultural and social context included the ancient civilizations of the Middle East and the Mediterranean. The norms and assumptions that have characterized belief and action in Islam are based on the message revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632) and recorded in the Qur'an. While Muslims regard the Qur'an as the closure in a series of revelations to humankind, they have also sought to understand this religious history in its relation to the intellectual environment in which they found themselves.

Philosophical thought in Islam (*falsafa*, in Arabic) emerged as one product of this new intellectual climate and grew out of attempts at discursive reflection on truths believed to be grounded in revelation but intelligible to the disciplined use of human reason. While the methods and tools of *falsafa* were inspired primarily by the heritage of classical antiquity mediated by its Christian students, its fullest expressions were not restricted by either classical antecedents or the constraints of religious dogma.

The historical origins of this intellectual tradition are to be found in the encounter of scholars in the Muslim world of the time with translations of Greek, Pahlavi, and Sanskrit (but principally Greek) philosophical texts.

The ethic of reverence for knowledge, prompted among Muslims by the Qur'anic appeal to reasoning and the Prophetic traditions that challenged Muslims to pursue learning ('even as far as China' according to one saying), was one among several factors that provided the impetus for the appropriation of new learning. Thus, in the translation movement that followed, a large portion of the scientific and philosophical legacy of Ancient Greece was made available in Arabic. Patronage by ruling Caliphs and the establishment of endowed institutions to promote translation and learning (such as the *Bayt al-Hikma* (House of Wisdom) and al-Azhar established in Baghdad and Cairo respectively, during the ninth and tenth centuries) further stimulated interest in philosophical and scientific work. From the very first, the scholars who studied these materials seem to have been aware of them as a whole tradition of thought – of observation, argument, and deduction. They dedicated themselves to its mastery, and not least, to its augmentation through their own interpretation and commentary.

There were two broad circumstances affecting philosophy in the early Muslim environment. It had its own identity, an inner independence from theology, which was referred to as *kalam*. But it was dependent on a polity for its own existence, and that polity was founded on religion. The philosophers had to reckon with this dual circumstance. They did so, and it was at this task that they may be said to have made their best contribution to the pluralistic environment of medieval Muslim culture and thought. The foremost exponents of *kalam* were the Mutazila, who emerged during the later part of the ninth and the early tenth centuries as a distinctive school of thought. Logic, epistemology, cosmology, politics, and ethics constituted the content of their theology while their emphasis on reason and method of argument drew on the resources of philosophy. Other schools of thought that emerged at this time and which were deeply committed to a type of religious philosophy were the Shia, and, in particular, the Ismaili branch of the Shia who developed an extensive intellectual tradition during the period of Fatimid Ismaili rule based in Cairo in the tenth through twelfth centuries.

Philosophy, as conceived in the thought of major Ismaili writers of the period, had as its goal the enlarging of the meaning of religion and revelation through the application of a hermeneutics based on *tawil*, a Qur'anic term exemplifying the disclosure of the inner meaning of revelation and religious language. Among the Shia in general, such a hermeneutic task was guided by the Imam, the designated successor of the Prophet, whose authority in intellectual as well as spiritual matters served to consolidate and contextualize the faith in changing environments.

While law and theology provided the moral and conceptual foundation of society, philosophy reflected a universalism, and a relative indifference to parochial or denominational interests. It recognized no theoretical restraints on its own scope and capacity other than that of reason. (That it did allow practical restraints was a sign partly of political expedience, and partly of a genuine recognition of the foundational value of religion.) Philosophy developed in the Islamic cultural context, and was written in Arabic and much later in Persian. Some of the earliest translators of Greek texts into Arabic were Christians. The first major philosophers to work from the translated texts and write commentaries on them were Muslims. But they were soon followed by Jewish and Christian authors. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, much of the Arabic heritage was translated into Latin and to an extent into Hebrew, so that a continual negotiation went on between these traditions. The role of philosophy in these three faith communities represents one perspective through which the whole history of medieval philosophy linking Muslim, Christian, and Jewish thought, may be seen (see Article 9, THE CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY; Article 10, THE ISLAMIC CONTRIBUTION TO MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY; and Article 11, THE JEWISH CONTRIBUTION TO MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY).

The first Muslim to be regarded as a philosopher in the formal sense, is al-Kindi (d. 870), who was closely associated with the Mutazila, and was a keen student of Greek philosophy as well as Indian arithmetic. His exposure to these subjects gave him an appreciation of the possibility of human knowledge. While Neoplatonic ideas exercised a strong influence on his thought, he also departed from some of their assumptions. Where Neoplatonism looks at the universe as a series of emanations from The One, al-Kindi proposed a theory more congenial to the Qur'anic (and Biblical) doctrine of temporal creation (see Article 39, CREATION AND CONSERVATION). In this theory, as also in his avowal of the immortality of the soul (see Article 70, SURVIVAL OF DEATH), al-Kindi laid some of the first planks in a bridge between the doctrinal content of Islam and classical learning.

Among those philosophers who followed al-Kindi, the only one who chose to break with religion altogether was Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 925), who opposed all authority in matters intellectual, asserting the sufficiency of human reason. Declaring prophecy to be superfluous, he denounced religion as a ruse, feeding on the gullibility of the masses, and responsible for sowing discord and division in the world. The Ismaili philosopher Abu Hatim al-Razi fought back against this attack on religion and vigorously defended the principles of revealed faith and prophetic authority against his (partial) namesake. Abu Bakr obviously stood in the tradition of the ancient materialists. It is scarcely surprising that in the context of his times he was an isolated figure, remarkable for his courage, but marginal to both the philosophical and theological traditions of the age.

Far more influential and positive towards religion was the philosopher al-Farabi (d. 950). He was the first major philosopher, in the Islamic context, to study the materials before him systematically, and to proceed to give his own commentary on them. These materials were varied. They included tracts on Aristotle, the works of Plato, the texts of Neoplatonism, of other ancient writers like Porphyry, and commentaries written on Aristotle by Christian scholars of late antiquity. Even more importantly, he was an early representative, at least in its incipient form, of what we now call philosophy of religion. The term 'philosophy of religion' should be understood in its precise sense: not religious thought, but thought that seeks to make sense of religion. For al-Farabi, philosophy of religion in this sense was also linked to political philosophy. He saw that Qur'anic exegesis, prophetic tradition, and ancillary religious subjects were but functions of the law revealed through Muhammad. Hence, to understand the character and objective of prophetic revelation and of the community founded on it has to be a cardinal task of philosophy. But this was not all. The relation of philosophy to religion in al-Farabi went further. Not only did philosophy seek to understand religion: the two shared a basic kinship. Thus, for instance, the philosopher-king of Plato and the prophets, such as the Prophet Muhammad, draw on the same cosmological sources of knowledge. Religion, properly understood, and philosophy are not opposed to each other. In this way, there is an organic quality in al-Farabi's philosophical handling of religion which is absent in al-Kindi. Al-Kindi's perspective is limited and raw: essentially, he juxtaposes the two traditions. Al-Farabi seeks to integrate them, though not to identify them. His is therefore an achievement at a more mature stage of the tradition.

By proposing Muhammad (among the others acknowledged in the Qur'an as prophets) as analogous to Plato's philosopher-king, al-Farabi was able to propose a relationship between the universal and the particular. The prophet's unique skill is to render philosophical truth into symbols. This is a function of creative imagination, and its audience is the masses (whereas philosophy and science are accessible only to an intellectual elite). According to al-Farabi, the reason why philosophy is universal is because it is theoretical or general, while religion is political (in the serious, moral sense of the word in classical thought, where the true end of politics is virtuous life in the City.) Al-Farabi's thought is an attempt at a harmonization – an 'analogization,' really – of the Hellenistic and Islamic traditions.

In the hands of the great Abu Ali ibn Sina (980-1037), or Avicenna, as he became known in the West, this process was taken considerably further. Ibn Sina describes in his autobiography his upbringing as a child prodigy and his vast reading and erudition in philosophy and the sciences as a youth. As a 17-year-old, he had already acquired a reputation as an excellent physician and treated rulers, thereby gaining access to their well-endowed libraries where he mined ancient knowledge. His chief aim was to harness philosophical thought to the principles of religion. This meant the incorporation of an independent rationality into foundational interests. This ambition was reflected in several features of his philosophy. One of these was a philosophical proof showing God as the creator of the world (see Article 42, COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS). This proof rested on a famous and widely influential distinction between 'essence' and 'existence.' Existence, Ibn Sina showed, cannot be inferred from essence. For an object to come to be, it requires the addition of existence to an essence. This assumes an existing cause. He imagined the universe as a hierarchy of beings, each of whom bestows existence on the one below. As such, a chain, in his view, cannot be infinite, it must terminate in a being whose very essence is to exist, and hence needs no cause outside itself. Such a being is God.

Ibn Sina's conclusions were not, from a religious point of view, orthodox. While insisting that everything is eternally dependent on God – a major departure from Aristotle in the direction of religious doctrine – he also ascribed eternity to many other things besides, such as intellects, souls, and the sublunary spheres. This was in keeping with the Aristotelian view of the eternity of the world (see Article 32, ETERNITY). This view was to create immense controversy, and to give the Sunni theologian, al-Ghazali (d. 1111), cause to declare Avicennan philosophy un-Islamic. But Islamic orthodoxy itself was a product of circumstances, and a relatively late one at that. Ibn Sina's doctrine of the eternity of the world is in part a reflection of the openness of Muslim thought as late as his time, before the crystallization of 'orthodoxy.'

The second religious issue which Ibn Sina examined philosophically was the fate of the individual self. The Qur'an speaks of reward and punishment in the hereafter. This implies a re-creation (or continuation) of individual identity after death. (Whether it is re-created at the moment of judgment, or sustained after the individual's death, and if so, in what form and what states, is a question which was endlessly debated by theologians, and not surprisingly, without agreement.) Ibn Sina took a major step away from Hellenistic thought by arguing for individual immortality. In the process, he proposed what he thought was a proof for the existence of the soul. If a person were to imagine himself as 'suspended' in space, ie without dimensions, weight, and organs or limbs, he would still retain a sense of 'I.' This proved that there is an individual soul, and that it does not have to perish with the body.

Another religious principle to which Ibn Sina gave a rational formulation was that of revelation (see Article 74. REVELATION AND SCRIPTURE). On this issue he followed the view of earlier thinkers, namely that revelation is a symbolization, for the benefit of the masses, of philosophical knowledge. Ibn Sina was inclined to see religious rites, such as prayer or fasting, in terms of what we would today call their practical utility or function. This interpretation was logically related to the theory of allegorical meaning. If a principle of belief or practice is said to have a meaning other than what is explicitly stated in it, it follows that it must be encoded; and that the code must be deciphered. His work is noteworthy for its symbolic exegeses of the Qur'an and the beliefs and practices of Islam. This is something that al-Farabi never did. Al-Farabi had offered a philosophy of religion. Ibn Sina narrowed – but at the same time deepened – the focus. His was a theory not just of religion but of Islam and its larger context, knowledge and philosophy. In the process, philosophical reason was domesticated and brought into the framework of Islam. Al-Farabi had spoken of the particularity of the community. He had theorized about the symbolic character of prophetic language. Ibn Sina spoke from within a particularity. And he not only spoke about allegory but practiced allegorical interpretation. There is a dual dynamic within his thought. There is, on one hand, a rationalization of faith through allegorical and functionalist exegesis. On the other hand, there is an assimilation of philosophy into religious experience.

Ibn Sina's influence was considerable. Thomas Aquinas adopted his distinction between essence and existence, as part of an argument for the existence of God. The Jewish philosopher of Spain, Abraham ibn Daud, followed him closely, with minor adaptations. Some of his works were translated into Latin and Hebrew. In the Islamic world, he was revered especially in the Persian-speaking East, where, however, his ideas were so thoroughly absorbed into mysticism that their intellectual edge, it has been said, was largely blunted. Apart from philosophy, he was widely admired for his vast medical knowledge and his work on the natural sciences.

Muslim Spain in the twelfth century was also a significant center of philosophical activity. Ibn Bajja (d. 1139) commented extensively on al-Farabi's works on logic and also argued against Ibn Sina's view of the immortality of the soul. His student, Ibn Tufayl (d. 1186) is best known as the author of *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, a philosophical narrative that explores the divide between philosophical understanding and the literalist approaches to religion. The narrative tells the story of Hayy (lit. the living one) ibn Yaqzan, a child born without parents out of the ferment of natural materials, who grows up alone on an island and infers philosophical truths through observation and reflection. When he eventually comes into contact with people practicing revealed religion, he is unable to reconcile them to the validity of his own unaided spiritual development and concludes that philosophy and literally-understood revealed religion must go their separate paths and satisfy the needs of separate constituencies.

In Ibn Tufayl's student, Ibn Rushd (1126-98), or Averroës as he came to be known in the West, philosophy found a gifted spokesman, theology a stern critic, and the law an eloquent defender. He served as a judge in Seville, and later as Chief Judge of Cordoba. His commentaries on Aristotle were translated into Latin and transmitted to Europe, where Dante referred to him as 'the great Commentator.' His best-known works on the relation between philosophy and religion are *On the Harmony Between Religion and Philosophy* and his defense of philosophy against the attack on it by al-Ghazali, the Sunni theologian and Professor of Law at the Nizamiyya College in Baghdad.

Ibn Rushd was stirred into a defense of philosophy by the gauntlet that al-Ghazali had flung at it. He was quick to perceive the intellectual power in al-Ghazali's attack, and the need to ensure that it did not go unchallenged. In repelling al-Ghazali's assault, Ibn Rushd voiced severe criticism of both al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. He disliked their concessions to theology. His position may be interpreted as a desire to save philosophical reason from being swallowed by a hybrid intellectualism. He wished to restore to philosophy its essence and its independence. As a judge, well versed in Islamic law, he also had a deep interest in practical religion and wished to demonstrate a basic harmony between reason and religious tradition.

Ibn Rushd believed strongly in the unity of truth, and rejected the theory that it had a twofold – intellectual and imaginative (or symbolic) – representation. The difference between intellectuals and the masses was real enough. But it was a difference of approach, not of representation. If al-Farabi had established an analogy between philosophy and religion, Ibn Rushd thought in analogous terms about philosophy and (divinely revealed) law. The philosophical attention he paid to law distinguishes him from the others. His reflections on the place of philosophy in society were as much a contribution to jurisprudence as to philosophy. While allowing that philosophy must follow its own rigorous methods, he insisted that the masses ought not to be exposed to it, nor to allegorical interpretation, lest they lose the assurance of faith without gaining the refined consolations of science or philosophy. Theologians, in particular, need to be especially wary. For theology occupies a middle ground between philosophy and religious law (to whose literal meaning ordinary people must adhere for their own good). Ibn Rushd would seem not to have been too fond of intellectual hybrids. And in his attack on the blunders of theology – to which he attributed misconceptions about philosophy – he tried, in one stroke, to defend philosophy from al-Ghazali's attack, and to attack al-Ghazali the theologian.

Another towering figure, born in Muslim Spain, who had enormous influence on the subsequent development of Muslim intellectual and mystical thought (Sufism), is Ibn Arabi (d. 1240). Among the major doctrines that represent a key strand in his multifaceted works, are the concepts of the 'Oneness of Being' (*wah dat al-wujud*), the 'Perfect Man' (*al-insan al-kamil*) and the 'world of analogical imagination' (*alam al-mithal*). Ibn Arabi's work, according to the late Henri Corbin, the noted French scholar of his thought, links philosophy and mysticism into a profoundly original wisdom tradition, that he calls a visionary theosophy (Corbin 1993), and it is developed into a complex series of syntheses.

Towards the eastern part of the Muslim world in Iran, the philosophical heritage of Ibn Sina and others took a different direction. It coalesced with Sufism—Muslim mysticism and produced an intellectual school that included such creative figures as Shihab al-din Shurawardi (d. 1191), the founder of Illuminationist (*ishraqi*) philosophy. Some scholars have referred to this tradition as ‘theosophy,’ reflecting a harmonization of spirituality and philosophy. It represents a synthesis of the tools of Muslim peripatetic philosophy, ascribed to Ibn Sina, with the wisdom traditions associated with Gnosticism, ancient Hermetic and Persian wisdom, and Sufism. At the heart of its cosmology lies the symbolism of illumination – light – and its epistemology synthesizes intellectual as well as mystical forms of knowing. The tradition flourished and received new impetus after a relatively long dormant period, with the establishment of the Shia Safavid state in Iran (1501-1722). The intellectual and philosophical developments of the period are marked by the emergence of the ‘School of Isfahan’ that produced thinkers like Mir Damad (d. 1630) and Mulla Sadra (d. 1640). They developed further the tradition of Shia intellectual thought, drawing upon the contributions of al-Shurawardi, Ibn Arabi and their successors and also the intellectual foundations laid down in the work of Nasir al-din Tusi (d. 1273).

This short survey illustrates the influence of major Muslim philosophers on Muslim thought and religious education, an influence that has persisted in parts of the Muslim world until modern times. It also highlights the impact of Muslim philosophers on intellectual developments in medieval European and even Renaissance thought. Its universalism and cosmopolitanism remain a source of inspiration for the development of philosophical inquiry among contemporary Muslim thinkers.

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i Introduction

Islam is among the youngest of the world’s major religions, belonging to the family of monotheistic faiths that also includes Judaism and Christianity. From its beginnings in what is now Saudi Arabia over 1,400 years ago, it has grown and spread to include almost a billion adherents, living in virtually every corner of the world. Though the majority of Islam’s followers, called Muslims, are found in the continents of Africa and Asia (including the Asian republics of the Soviet Union and north-west China), there has been a substantial increase in the number of Muslims living in the Americas, Australia and Europe in the last quarter of the twentieth century. More recently, the various nation-states and communities that constitute the global Muslim *ummah* (community), are expressing a need, in varying degrees, to relate their Islamic heritage to questions of national and cultural self-identification. Where this phenomenon has become allied to domestic or international reaction and conflict, it has caused a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding regarding the role of Islam. It is therefore important to develop historical insight into how the whole spectrum of Islamic values and their underlying moral and ethical assumptions have been shaped in the course of Muslim history, in order to appreciate the diversity of Islam’s heritage of ethical thought and life.

ii Beginnings and development: foundational values

The norms and assumptions that have characterized belief and action in Islam have their initial inspiration in two foundational sources. One is scriptural, embodying the message revealed by God to the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632) and recorded in the Quran. The second is the exemplification of that message in the perceived model pattern of the Prophet’s actions, sayings and norms, collectively called the *Sunnah*. Muslims regard the Quran as the ultimate closure in a series of revelations to humankind from God, and the *Sunnah* as the historical projection of a divinely inspired and guided human life in the person of the Prophet Muhammad, who is also believed to be the last in a series of messengers from God.

The late Fazlur Rahman, noted University of Chicago scholar of Islamic thought and modernist Muslim thinker, argued that in its initial phase Islam was moved by a deep rational and moral concern for reforming society, and that this moral intentionality was conceived in ways that encouraged a deep commitment to reasoning and rational discourse. Like other religious traditions, and particularly Christianity and Judaism, Islam, in answering the question ‘What ought or ought not to be done?’ thus had a clearly defined sense of the sources of moral authority. While revealing his will to humankind in the Quran, God also urges them to exercise reason in understanding revelation. One part of this rational inquiry into the meaning of revelation led Muslims to elaborate rules for ethical behaviour and the principles upon which such rules could be based. In time, the relationship between the Quran and the life of the Prophet, as a model of behaviour, would also be elaborated, to extend the framework within which values and obligations could be determined. The process of determination and elaboration, however, involved the application of human reasoning, and it is this continuing interaction between reason and revelation, and the potential and limits of the former in relation to the latter, that provided the basis for formalized expressions of ethical thought in Islam.

In one of the chapters of the Quran, entitled the Criterion (*Furqan*: Sura 25), revelation – to all humanity – becomes the point of reference for distinguishing right from wrong. The same chapter goes on to cite examples of past biblical prophets and their role as mediators of God’s word to their respective societies. Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam’s beginnings are thus rooted in the idea of the divine command as a basis for establishing moral order through human endeavour. (See Article 46, HOW COULD ETHICS DEPEND ON RELIGION?) Elsewhere in the Quran, the same term also indicates the concept of a revealed morality that presents humanity with a clear distinction between right and wrong which is not subject to human vicissitude. By grounding a moral code in divine will, an opportunity is afforded to human beings to respond by creating a rational awareness that sustains the validity of revelation. Thus a wider basis for human action is possible, if rationality comes to be applied as a result of revelation to elaborate criteria for encompassing the totality of human actions and decisions. These themes are played out in the Quranic telling of the story of Adam’s creation and regress.

Adam, the first human, is distinguished from existing angels, who are asked to bow down to him, by virtue of his divinely endowed capacity to ‘name things’, that is to conceive of knowledge capable of being described linguistically and thereby codified, a capacity not accessible to angels, who are seen as one-dimensional beings. This creative capacity carries with it, however, an obligation not to exceed set limits. Satan in the Quran exemplifies excess, since he disobeys God’s command to honour and bow before Adam, thus denying his own innate nature and limits. In time, Adam too fails to live within the limits set by God, loses his honourable status, which he will have to recover subsequently by struggling with and overcoming his propensities on earth, the arena that allows for choice and action. Ultimately he does recover his former status, attesting to the capacity to return to the right course of action through rational understanding of his failure and by transcending the urge to set aside that rationality and test the limits set by divine command. Adam’s story therefore reflects all of the potential for good and evil that is already built into the human condition and the unfolding saga of human response to a continuous divine revelation in history. It exemplifies the ongoing struggle within humanity to discover the mean that allows for balanced action and submission to the divine criterion. It is in that sense that the word *Islam* stands for the original revelation, requiring submission to achieve equilibrium, and that a *muslim* is one who seeks through action to attain that equilibrium in personal life as well as society.

The human quality that encompasses the concept of the ideal ethical value in the Quran is summed up in the term *taqwa*, which in its various forms occurs over two hundred times in the text. It represents, on the one hand, the moral grounding that underlies human action, while on the other, it signifies the ethical conscience which makes human beings aware of their responsibilities to God and society. Applied to the wider social context *taqwa* becomes the universal, ethical mark of a truly moral community:

O humankind! We have created you out of male and female and constituted you into different groups and societies, so that you may come to know each other – the noblest of you, in the sight of God, are the ones possessing taqwa. (49: 11-13)

More specifically, when addressing the first Muslims, the Quran refers to them as ‘a community of the middle way, witnesses to humankind, just as the Messenger (ie Muhammad) is a witness for you’ (2: 132).

The Muslim *ummah* or community is thus seen as the instrument through which Quranic ideals and commands are translated at the social level. Individuals become trustees through whom a moral and spiritual vision is fulfilled in personal life. They are accountable to God and to the community, since that is the custodian through whom the covenantal relationship with God is sustained. The Quran affirms the dual dimension of human and social life – material and spiritual – but these aspects are not seen in conflictual terms, nor is it assumed that spiritual goals should predominate in a way that devalues material aspects of life. The Quran, recognizing the complementarity between the two, asserts that human conduct and aspirations have relevance as acts of faith within the wider human, social and cultural contexts. It is in this sense that the idea that Islam embodies a total way of life can best be understood.

An illustration of one aspect of such a vision is the Quran's emphasis on the ethics of redressing injustice in economic and social life. For instance, individuals are urged to spend of their wealth and substance on:

- 1 family and relatives
- 2 orphans
- 3 the poor
- 4 the travelling homeless
- 5 the needy
- 6 freeing of the enslaved.

Such acts define a Muslim's responsibility to develop a social conscience and to share individual and communal resources with the less privileged. They are institutionalized in the Quran through the duty of *zakat*, a term connoting 'giving', 'virtue', 'increase' and 'purification'. In time, this became an obligatory act, assimilated into the framework of the ritual pillars of the faith, including prayer, fasting and pilgrimage. The Quran also sought to abolish usurious practices in the mercantile community of Mecca and Medina, stigmatizing such practices as reflecting the lack of a work ethic and an undue exploitation of those in need.

At the social level, the Quran's emphasis on the family includes a concern for ameliorating the status of women, through the abolition of pre-Islamic practices such as female infanticide and by according women new rights. Among these were the rights of ownership of property, inheritance, the right to contract marriage and to initiate divorce, if necessary, and to maintain one's own dowry. Polygyny, the plurality of wives, was regulated and restricted, so that a male was permitted to have up to four wives, but only if he could treat them with equity. Muslims have traditionally understood this practice in its seventh-century context, as affording the necessary flexibility to address the social and cultural diversity that arose with the expansion of Islam. Some modern Muslims, however, maintain that the thrust of the Quranic reform was in the direction of monogamy and an enhanced public role for women. They also hold that the development and occurrence of customs and practices of seclusion and veiling of women were a result of local tradition and customs, occasionally antithetical to the spirit of emancipation of women envisaged in the Quran.

Since Muslims had been privileged by the Quran as the 'best of communities', whose function it was to command the right and prevent wrong, the Prophet Muhammad's mission, like that of some past prophets, involved the creation of a just, divinely ordained polity. The struggle towards this goal involved Muslims in warfare, and the term in the Quran that encompasses this effort as a whole is *jihad*. Often simply and erroneously translated as 'holy war', *jihad* carries a far wider connotation that includes striving by peaceful means, such as preaching, education, and in a more personal and interiorized sense, as struggle to purify oneself. Where it refers to armed defence of a justly executed war, the Quran specifies the conditions for war and peace, the treatment of captives and the resolution of conflict, urging that the ultimate purpose of God's word was to invite and guide people to the 'ways of peace'.

As the Muslim polity took shape it also became necessary for it to address the question of its relationship and attitude towards non-Muslims with similar scriptural traditions, particularly Jews and Christians. In the Quran they are referred to as 'People of the Book'. Where they lived among Muslims, as subjects, they were to be granted 'protected' status through a mutual agreement. They were to be subject to a poll tax and their private and religious property, law and religious practices were to be protected. They could not, however, proselytize among Muslims. While recognizing the particularity of the Muslim community and its pre-eminent status, the Quran encourages a wider respect for difference and otherness in human society, while favouring common moral goals over mutually divisive and antagonistic attitudes:

For each community, we have granted a Law and a Code of Conduct. If God wished, He could have made you One community, but he wishes rather to test you through that which has been given to you. So vie with each other to excel in goodness and moral virtue. (5: 48)

The need for congruence between the divine moral imperative and human life is also reflected in the preserved Prophetic tradition, which is perceived as explaining and confirming Quranic values and commands. The recording of episodes of the Prophet's life, his words, actions and habits, came in time to represent for Muslims a timeless model pattern for daily life. It also assumed an authoritative role in explaining and complementing the Quran. His personal character, struggle, piety and eventual success, enhance for Muslims Muhammad's role as the paradigm and seal of prophecy. A rich tradition of poetry in praise of the Prophet exists in virtually all the languages spoken by Muslims, enhancing both the commitment to emulate his behaviour and a sense of personal affinity and love for his person and family. For Muslims, the message of the Quran and the example of the Prophet's life thus remain inseparably related through all of history as paradigms for moral and ethical behaviour. They formed the basis for Muslim thinkers subsequently to develop legal tools for embodying moral imperatives. The elaboration of the legal sciences would lead to a codification of norms and statutes that gave form to the concept of law in Islam, generally referred to as the *Shari'a*. Among the forms that developed to encompass the moral imperative are the various schools of law in Islam, each of whom, through the legal discipline of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), elaborated legal codes to embody their specific interpretation of how Muslims should respond to God's commands in conducting their daily lives.

Parallel to the developing legal expressions, there also emerged a set of moral assumptions that articulated ethical values, rooted in a more speculative and philosophical conception of human conduct as a response to the Quran and the Prophet's life. Groupings in Islam, as well as schools of law, were not as clearly circumscribed in the first three centuries of Muslim history as is generally thought. Most were still crystallizing and their subsequent boundaries and positions were yet to be fully defined and elaborated. Public, legal and educational institutions in the Muslim world of the time had not achieved the classical forms or purposes that came to be associated with them. A key to this process of definition and distinction is the nature of public discourse that characterized the growing Muslim society in its first three centuries. Muslim conquest and expansion had resulted in contact with cultures whose intellectual heritages were in time selectively appropriated by Muslims, then refined and further developed. The integration of the intellectual and philosophical legacies of Greece, India and Iran among others, created conditions and a tradition of intellectual activity that would lead to the cosmopolitan heritage of an emerging Islamic civilization. Christian and Jewish scholars, who had already encountered the above legacies in varying degrees, played a crucial mediating role as 'translators', particularly since they were also aware that the moral disposition of Muslims, like theirs, was shaped by common monotheistic conceptions based on divine command and revelation. The term *adab* has come to be used to define the wide connotation of meanings implied by the moral, ethical, intellectual and literary discourse that emerged. It was also during this period, from the eighth to the tenth centuries, that we see the emergence of what later came to be clearly identifiable theological and intellectual positions, within the Muslim community identified with traditions such as the Sunni, Shi'a, Mu'tazila and the Muslim philosophers.

The main features of the moral environment and perspective based on the Quranic message are defined by general ethical stances that came to be regarded as normative through their expression in legal language and terms. In the early period of Muslim intellectual history, these values also provided a frame of reference for the selective appropriation and development of philosophical, moral and ethical assumptions from other traditions, such as the Hellenistic, and served as a basis for widening the scope and application of an Islamic frame of reference to articulate ethical and moral values outside of merely juristically defined values. Since clear-cut distinctions in Islam between religion, society, and culture are hard to sustain, it seems appropriate, in discussing Muslim ethics, to let the whole spectrum of tendencies, legal, theological, philosophical and mystical, act as resources for disclosing moral assumptions and commitments in order to appreciate both development and continuity across the whole spectrum of Muslim thought and civilization.

iii The theological and traditionalist approaches

The transition towards what Marshall Hodgson has termed the 'Islamicate' civilization marked two types of moral and intellectual beginnings. Both derived their inspiration from Islam's foundational texts and the unfolding of self-reflexive rational processes. The first involved, on the part of the early Muslims, a shift from a pre-Islamic Arab culture bound primarily by local, oral tradition, to one based on a revealed text, whose preservation and recording, in Arabic, created the conditions for the emergence of a new Islamic culture, based on the Quran and incorporating and extending the monotheistic imperative reflected in Judaism and Christianity. The second 'beginning' was influenced in part by the translation into Arabic and study of works of ancient philosophy, medicine and the sciences (to a lesser extent including those of ancient Iran and India). The moral discussions and intellectual forces that emerged from the juxtaposition and integration of these into fresh beginnings, facilitated to a certain extent by the presence of Jewish and Christian scholars, stimulated a concern for how moral and religious perspectives could be reconciled with intellectual modes of inquiry.

The emergence of an intellectual tradition of inquiry based on the application of rational tools as a way of understanding Quranic injunctions led to the use among Muslims of a formal discipline devoted to the study of *kalam*, literally speech, ie the word of God. The goals of this discipline were theological, in the sense that the application of reason was to make comprehensible and justify the word of God. The discussions involved Muslims in the elaboration and definition of certain ethical concerns, namely:

- 1 the meaning of Quranic ethical attributes such as 'just', 'obligatory', 'good', 'evil', etc
- 2 the question of the relationship between human free will and divine will
- 3 the capacity of human beings to derive, through reason, the knowledge of objective ethical norms and truths.

Without doing too much injustice to the process of debate and discussion among various Muslim groups, it can be maintained that, in general, two clear positions emerged; one associated with the *Mu'tazila* and the other a traditionalist approach (generally associated with the Sunni tradition in Islam).

The *Mu'tazila* argued that since God is just and rewards and punishes within that context, human beings must possess free choice in order that they might be held fully accountable. They denied that acts could therefore be predestined. Secondly, they maintained that since ethical notions had objective meaning, human beings possess the intellectual capacity to grasp these meanings. Reason therefore was a key attribute capable, independently of revelation, of making empirical observations and drawing ethical conclusions. Natural reason, however, must be supplemented and confirmed by divine revelation. Related to this was another *Mu'tazili* conviction, that God's just nature precluded any belief that he might deliberately lead believers to sinful acts.

Historically, the *Mu'tazila* school of thought died out and its views were not deemed acceptable to the majority of the traditionalists. The latter's refutation of the main points suggest a differing orientation towards the sources from which ethical values are derived, and the context of faith in which they have meaning. The traditionalist position, as embodied, for example, in the classic work of one founder of a Muslim juridical school, al-Shafi'i, was that the foundations of faith were a matter of practice, not speculation. Over against the *Mu'tazila* belief that natural reason enabled good and evil to be determined, al-Shafi'i emphasized revelation as the ultimate source of definition. Since the principle of human accountability was also the cornerstone of juridical thought – obligations implied the capacity to undertake them – good and evil were to be determined on the basis of textual proof, Quranic and by extension that contained in Prophetic tradition. Acts and obligations were good and evil ultimately because divine commands defined them as such.

On the question of human freedom for action, the *Mu'tazili* position was combated, in one respect, through a notion of 'acquisition'. It was argued that the human power to perform acts was not one's own, but came from God. Human beings 'acquire' responsibility for their actions, thus making them accountable. It must be underlined that traditionalist thinkers were not opposed to the use of reason, quite the contrary; they parted company with rationalists only over the value placed on reason. They regarded it as an aid and tool for affirming issues of faith, but purely secondary in its relation to the definition of ethical obligation.

In summing up the traditionalist position, George Makdisi has emphasized that the final basis for moral obligation, from its perspective, was the data of Islam's foundational texts, the Quran and the Sunnah, elaborated and applied as God's commands and prohibitions, conceived as the *Shari'a*, formulated through the respective Muslim juridical schools. Such formulations of commands and prohibitions in Muslim books of law are expressed in ethical terms. Five categories are employed for evaluating all acts:

- 1 Obligatory acts, such as the duty to perform ritual prayer, paying of *zakat* and the practice of fasting.
- 2 Recommended acts, which are not considered obligatory, such as supererogatory acts of charity, kindness, prayer, etc.
- 3 Permitted actions, regarding which the law adopts a neutral stance, that is there is no expectation of reward or punishment for such acts.
- 4 Acts that are discouraged and regarded as reprehensible, but not strictly forbidden: Muslim jurists differ about what actions to include under this category.
- 5 Actions that are categorically forbidden, such as murder, adultery, blasphemy, theft, intoxication, etc.

These categories were further set by jurists within a dual framework of obligations: towards God and towards society. In each instance transgression was perceived in both legal and theological terms, as constituting a crime as well as a sin. Such acts were punishable under the law and the jurists attempted to specify and elaborate the conditions under which this could occur. For example, one of the punishments for theft or highway robbery was the cutting off of a hand and in minor instances, flogging. Traditionally, jurists attempted to take into account active repentance to mitigate such punishment, following a tradition of the Prophet to restrict the applicability of such punishments to extreme cases.

Some of these categories have received attention in several Muslim countries in recent times, where traditional juristic procedures have been reinstated, but there is a great deal of divergence in the Muslim world about the necessity and applicability of some of these procedures. Where applied, such punishment is meted out through *Shari'a* courts and rendered by appointed Muslim judges. Jurists or legal experts also function as interpreters of the *Shari'a* and are free to render informed legal opinions. Such opinions may be solicited by individuals who wish to be certain about the moral intentionality of certain acts, but among most Muslim schools of law such opinions need not be binding. The four major Sunni schools of law consider each other to reflect normative stances on matters of legal and ethical interpretation. For these Muslim jurists, both law and ethics are ultimately concerned with moral obligations, which they believe are the central focus of the Islamic message.

iv Philosophical approaches

The integration of the philosophical legacy of antiquity in the Islamic world was a major enabling factor in the use of philosophical tradition among Muslim intellectuals. It gave rise to figures such as al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Ibn Rushd (Averroes), and others, who became well-known to medieval Europe as philosophers, commentators and exponents of the classical tradition going back to Plato and Aristotle. The public discourse of *adab*, grounded in philosophical and moral language and concerns, represents a significant part of the cosmopolitan heritage of ethics in Islam and reflects efforts to reconcile religiously and scripturally derived values with an intellectually and morally based ethical foundation. The Muslim philosophical tradition of ethics is therefore doubly significant: for its value in continuing and enhancing classical Greek philosophy and for its commitment to synthesizing Islam and philosophical thought.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) argued for harmony between the ideals of virtuous religion and the goals of a true polity. Through philosophy, one is able to arrive at an understanding of how human happiness is to be achieved, but the actual recourse to moral virtues and acts involves the instrumentality of religion. He compares the founding of religion to the founding of a city. Citizens ought to acquire the traits which enable them to function as residents of a virtuous polis. Similarly the founder of a religion establishes norms that must be upheld through action, if a proper religious community is to be established. The thrust of Farabi's argument, particularly as it is articulated in his classic work, *The Virtuous City*, suggests a communal framework for attaining ultimate happiness, and therefore significant social and political roles for religion as well as an engagement in similar concerns by politicians. In this respect, the emphasis on virtue and its ethical connotations suggests a common focus for both Greek and Muslim philosophy, namely the application of such standards and norms to political societies. The greater the wisdom and virtue of the rulers and the citizens, the greater the possibility of attaining the true goal of philosophy and religion – happiness.

Ibn Sina (d. 1037) develops the argument that the Prophet embodies the totality of virtuous action and thought, the best of which is reflected in the attainment of moral virtue. The Prophet has acquired the moral characteristics needed for his own development which, having resulted in a perfect soul, not only imbues in him the capacity of a free intellect, but also makes him capable of laying down rules for other people, through laws and the establishment of justice. This implies that the Prophet goes beyond the philosopher and the virtuous ruler, who possess the capacity for intellectual development and practical morality, respectively. The establishment of justice is, in Ibn Sina's view, the basis for all human good. The combination of philosophy and religion encompasses harmonious living in both this world and in the hereafter.

Ibn Rushd (d. 1198) was faced with the daunting task for a Muslim philosopher of defending philosophy against attacks, the most well-known being by the great Sunni Muslim theologian Al-Ghazālī (d. 1111). The latter, through a work entitled *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, had sought to represent philosophers as self-contradictory, anti-scriptural and in some cases as affirming heretical beliefs. Ibn Rushd's defence was based on his contention that the Quran enjoined the use of reflection and reason and that the study of philosophy complemented traditionalist approaches to Islam. He asserted that philosophy and Islam had common goals, but arrived at them differently. There is thus a basic identity of interest between Muslims who adopt philosophical frames of inquiry and those who affirm juridical ones.

In summary, the various Muslim philosophers in their extension and occasional revision of earlier classical notions linked ethics to theoretical knowledge, which was to be acquired by rational means. Since human beings were rational, the virtues and qualities that they embraced and practised were seen as furthering the ultimate goal of individuals and the community. This goal was the attainment of happiness.

v Ethics in the Shi'a tradition

Among the Shi'a, who differed from the Sunni group in attributing legitimate authority after the Prophet Muhammad's death to his cousin and son-in-law Ali, and subsequently to his designated descendants, known as Imams, there developed the notion of rationality under the guiding instruction of the Imam. The Imam, who was believed to be divinely guided, acted in early Shi'a history as both custodian of the Quran and the Prophet's teaching, and interpreter and guide for the elaboration and systematization of the Quranic vision for the individual as well as society. Shi'ism, like the early theological and philosophical schools, affirmed the use of rational and intellectual discourse and was committed to a synthesis and further development of appropriate elements present in other religions and intellectual traditions outside Islam.

An example of a work on ethics by a Shi'a writer is the well-known *Nasirian Ethics* by Nasir al-din Tusi (d. 1275). Developing further the philosophical approaches already present among Muslims and linking them to Shi'a conceptions of guidance, Tusi draws attention to the need for ethical enactments to be based on superiority of knowledge and preponderance of discrimination, ie by a person 'who is distinguished from others by divine support, so that he may be able to accomplish their perfection' (Tusi, 1964, pp. 191-2). Wilferd Madelung has tried to show that Tusi blended into his ethical work elements of Neoplatonic as well as Shi'a Ismaili and Twelver Shi'a philosophical and moral perspectives.

The Twelver Shi'a are so-called because of their belief that the twelfth in the line of Imams they recognized had withdrawn from the world, to reappear physically only at the end of time to restore true justice. In the meantime, during his absence, the community was guided by trained scholars called *mujtahids* who interpreted for individual believers right and wrong in all matters of personal and religious life. In the Twelver Shi'a tradition therefore, such individuals, called *mullahs* in popular parlance, play a significant role as moral models and, as in recent times in Iran, have assumed a major role in the political life of the state, seeking to shape it in line with their view of a Muslim polity.

Among Ismaili groups that give allegiance to a living Imam, the Imam's presence is considered necessary to contextualize Islam in changing times and circumstances and his teachings and interpretation continue to guide followers in their material as well as spiritual lives. An example is the role of the current Imam of the Nizari Ismailis, the Aga Khan, who leads a worldwide community. Among the Shi'a continuity with Muslim tradition and values thus remains tied to the continuing spiritual authority vested in the Imam or his representatives.

vi Sufi perspectives

Sufism is the mystical and esoteric dimension of Islam, emphasizing the cultivation of an inner personal life in search of divine love and knowledge. Since a major part of Sufi teaching was to enable an individual Muslim to seek intimacy with God, it was felt that such seekers must embrace a commitment to an inner life of devotion and moral action that would lead to spiritual awakening. The observances of the *Shari'a* were to be complemented by adherence to a path of moral discipline, enabling the seeker to pass through several spiritual 'stations', each representing inner, spiritual growth, until one had understood the essential relationship of love and union between seeker and God. Since the inner meaning of action was a significant aspect of Sufi understanding of ethical and moral behaviour, Sufis emphasized the linkage between an inner, experiential awareness of morality and its outward expression, so that a true moral action was one embracing and penetrating the whole of life.

In institutional settings organized Sufi groups taught conformity to traditional Muslim values but added the component of discipline and inner purification. Since the practices that instilled discipline and moral awareness varied across the range of cultures and traditions encountered by Islam, many local practices were appropriated. These included, for example, the acceptance of the moral customs and practices adhered to in local tradition, such as in Indonesia and other countries, where large scale conversions had occurred. Sufi ethical practices thus provided a bridge for incorporating into Muslim moral behaviour the ethical values and practices of local traditions illustrating the universality of Sufi Muslim perspectives on the oneness of the inner dimension of various faiths. Al-Ghazālī, the Sunni jurist and theologian mentioned earlier, became a supporter of Sufi thought, but sought to synthesize the moral perspectives of the *Shari'a* with the notion of inner piety developed by Sufis. He conceived of divinely ordained obligations as a starting point for cultivating a moral personality, provided that it led to an inwardly motivated sense of ethics in due course. He was, however, reluctant to accept the emphasis of some Sufis on a purely experiential and subjectively guided basis for moral action.

vii Muslim ethics in the contemporary world

The practice and influence of the diverse ethical heritage in Islam has continued in varying degrees among Muslims in the contemporary world. Muslims, whether they constitute majorities in the large number of independent nation states that have arisen in this century, or where they live in significant numbers and communities elsewhere, are going through an important transitional phase. There is growing self-consciousness about identification with their past heritage and a recognition of the need to adapt that heritage to changing circumstances and a globalization of human society. As with the rest of the issues, ethical questions cannot be reflected in unified and monolithic responses. They must take into account the diversity and pluralism that has marked the Muslims of the past as well as the present.

Ethical criteria that can govern issues of economic and social justice and moral strategies for dealing with questions of poverty and imbalance have taken up the greater share of Muslim attention in ethical matters. Whether such responses are labelled 'modernist' or 'fundamentalist', they all reflect specific readings of past Muslim symbols and patterns and in their rethinking and restating of norms and values, employ different strategies for inclusion, exclusion and encoding of specific representations of Islam. In terms of broad moral and ethical concerns, this ongoing discourse seeks to establish norms for both public and private life, and is therefore simultaneously cultural, political, social and religious.

Since the modern conception of religion familiar to most people in the West assumes a theoretical separation between specifically religious and perceived secular activity, some aspects of contemporary Muslim discourse, which does not accept such a separation, appear strange and often retrogressive. Where such discourse, expressed in what appears to be traditional religious language, has become linked to radical change or violence, it has unfortunately deepened stereotypical perceptions about Muslim fanaticism, violence, and cultural and moral difference. As events and developments in the last quarter of the twentieth century indicate, no one response among the many Muslim societies in the world, can be regarded as normative for all Muslims.

In the pursuit of a vision that will guide Muslims in decisions and choices about present and future ethical matters, the most important challenge may be not simply to formulate a continuity and dialogue with its own past ethical underpinning but, like the Muslims of the past, to remain open to the possibilities and challenges of new ethical and moral discoveries.

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Judaism

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The Dimensions of Religion

The problem arises because there are different aspects or, as I shall call them, *dimensions* of religion. Whether we include Marxism as a religion depends on which dimension we regard as crucial for our definition. It will therefore be useful to analyse these various dimensions.

The Ritual Dimension

If we were asked the use or purpose of such buildings as temples and churches, we would not be far wrong in saying that they are used for ritual or ceremonial purposes. Religion tends in part to express itself through such rituals: through worship, prayers, offerings, and the like. We may call this the *ritual* dimension of religion. About this, some important comments need to be made.

First, when we think of ritual we often think of something very formal and elaborate, like a High Mass or the Liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox Church. But it is worth remarking that even the simplest form of religious service involves ritual, in the sense of some form of outer behaviour (such as closing one’s eyes in prayer) coordinated to an inner intention to make contact with, or to participate in, the invisible world. I am not concerned here with those who deny the existence of such an ‘invisible world,’ however interpreted, whether as God’s presence, as nirvana, as a sacred energy pervading nature. Whether or not such an invisible world exists, it forms an aspect of the world seen from the point of view of those who participate in religion. It is believed in. As was said earlier, it is not here our task to pass judgment on the truth or otherwise of religious conceptions. First, then, even the simplest service involves ritual.

Second, since ritual involves both an inner and an outer aspect it is always possible that the latter will come to dominate the former. Ritual then degenerates into a mechanical or conventional process. If people go through the motions of religious observance without accompanying it with the intentions and sentiments which give it human meaning, ritual is merely an empty shell. This is the reason why some religious activities are condemned as ‘ritualistic.’ But it would be wrong to conclude that because ritualism in this bad sense exists, therefore ritual is an unimportant or degenerate aspect of religion.

It should not be forgotten that there are secular rituals which we all use, and these can form an integral part of personal and social relationships. Greeting someone with a ‘Good morning,’ saying goodbye, saluting the flag—all these in differing ways are secular rituals. Very often in society they are integrated with religious rituals, as when men say ‘God be with you,’ which is more than taking leave of someone: it is invoking a blessing upon the other person.

Third, it will prove convenient to extend the meaning of ‘ritual’ beyond its reference to the forms of worship, sacrifice, etc, directed toward God or the gods.

It happens that a crucial part is played in India and elsewhere by yoga and analogous techniques of self-training. The ultimate aim of such methods is the attainment of higher states of consciousness, through which the adept has experience of release from worldly existence, of nirvana, of ultimate reality (the interpretation partly depends on the system of doctrines against which the adept tests his experience). Thus the essence of such religion is contemplative or mystical. Sometimes, it is pursued without reference to God or the gods—for example, in Buddhism, where the rituals of a religion of worship and sacrifice are regarded as largely irrelevant to the pursuit of nirvana. Nevertheless the techniques of self-training have an analogy to ritual: the adept performs various physical and mental exercises through which he hopes to concentrate the mind on the transcendent, invisible world, or to withdraw his senses from their usual immersion in the flow of empirical experiences. This aspect of religion, then, we shall include in our definition of the ritual dimension. It can be classified as pragmatic (aimed at the attainment of certain experiences) in distinction from sacred ritual (directed toward a holy being, such as God). Sometimes the two forms of ritual are combined, as in Christian mysticism.

The meaning of ritual cannot be understood without reference to the environment of belief in which it is performed. Thus prayer in most ritual is directed toward a divine being. Very often, legends about the gods are used to explain the features of a ceremony or festival; and often the important events of human life, such as birth, marriage, death, are invested with a sacred significance by relating them to the divine world.

All this can happen before a religion has any theology or formal system of doctrines. Theology is an attempt to introduce organization and intellectual power into what is found in less explicit form in the deposit of revelation or traditional mythology of a religion. The collection of myths, images, and stories through which the invisible world is symbolized can suitably be called the *mythological* dimension of religion.

The Mythological Dimension

Some important comments need to be made about this mythological dimension. First, in accordance with modern usage in theology and in the comparative study of religion, the terms ‘myth,’ ‘mythological,’ etc, are *not* used to mean that the content is false. Perhaps in ordinary English to say ‘It’s a myth’ is just a way of saying ‘It’s false.’ But the use of the term *myth* in relation to religious phenomena is quite neutral as to the truth or falsity of the story enshrined in the myth. In origin, the term ‘myth’ means ‘story,’ and in calling something a story we are not thereby saying that it is true or false. We are just reporting on what has been said. Similarly, here we are concerned with reporting on what is believed.

Second, it is convenient to use the term to include not merely stories about God (for instance the story of the creation in Genesis), about the gods (for instance in Homer’s *Iliad*), etc, but also the historical events of religious significance in a tradition. For example, the Passover ritual in Judaism re-enacts a highly important event that once occurred to the children of Israel; their delivery from bondage in Egypt. The historical event functions as a myth. Thus we shall include stories relating to significant historical events under the head of the mythological dimension—again without prejudice to whether the stories accurately describe what actually occurred in history.

The Doctrinal Dimension

Third, it is not always easy to differentiate the mythological and the symbolic from what is stated in theology. Doctrines are an attempt to give system, clarity and intellectual power to what is revealed through the mythological and symbolic language of religious faith and ritual. Naturally, theology must make use of the symbols and myths. For example, when the Christian theologian has to describe the meaning of the Incarnation, he must necessarily make use of Biblical language and history. Thus the dividing line between the mythological and what I shall call the doctrinal dimension is not easy to draw. Yet there is clearly a distinction between Aquinas’ treatment of creation at the philosophical level and the colourful story of creation in Genesis. The distinction is important, because the world religions owe some of their living power to their success in presenting a total picture of reality, through a coherent system of doctrines.

The Ethical Dimension

Throughout history we find that religions usually incorporate a code of ethics. Ethics concern the behaviour of the individual and, to some extent, the code of ethics of the dominant religion controls the community. Quite obviously, men do not always live up to the standards they profess. And sometimes the standards which are inculcated by the dominant faith in a particular society may not be believed by all sections of that society.

Even so, there is no doubt that religions have been influential in moulding the ethical attitudes of the societies they are part of. It is important, however, to distinguish between the moral teaching incorporated in the doctrines and mythology of a religion, and the social facts concerning those who adhere to the faith in question. For instance, Christianity teaches ‘Love thy neighbour as thyself.’ As a matter of sociological fact, quite a lot of people in so-called Christian countries, where Christianity is the official or dominant religion, fail to come anywhere near this ideal. The man who goes to church is not necessarily loving; nor is the man who goes to a Buddhist temple necessarily compassionate. Consequently, we must distinguish between the ethical teachings of a faith, which we shall discuss as the *ethical* dimension of religion, and the actual sociological effects and circumstances of a religion.

Pertinent to this point is the consideration that most religions are institutionalized. This is most obvious in technologically primitive societies, where the priest, soothsayer, or magician is closely integrated into the social structure. Religion is not just a personal matter here: it is part of the life of the community. It is built into the institutions of daily life. But even in sophisticated communities where a line is drawn between religious and secular concerns, as in contemporary America, churches exist as institutions to be reckoned with. They are part of the 'establishment.' In areas where there is active or latent persecution of religious faith, as in the Soviet Union, there are still organizations for continuing religious activities.

The Social Dimension

Religions are not just systems of *belief*: they are also organizations, or parts of organizations. They have a communal and social significance. This social shape of a religion is, of course, to some extent determined by the religious and ethical ideals and practices that it harbours. Conversely, it often happens that the religious and ethical ideals are adapted to existing social conditions and attitudes. For example, Japanese fishermen reconcile the Buddhist injunction against taking life (even animal or fish life) to their activity as fishermen. The Christian's dedication to brotherly love or his attitude to war may be determined more by patriotism and a national crisis than by the Gospel. Thus, it is important to distinguish between the ethical dimension of religion and the *social* dimension. The latter is the mode in which the religion in question is institutionalized, whereby, through its institutions and teachings, it affects the community in which it finds itself.

The doctrinal, mythological, and ethical dimensions express a religion's claims about the nature of the invisible world and its aims about how men's lives ought to be shaped: the social dimension indicates the way in which men's lives are in fact shaped by these claims and the way in which religious institutions operate.

It is, incidentally, clear that the ongoing patterns of ritual are an important element in the institutionalization of religion. For example, if it is believed that certain ceremonies and sacraments can only be properly performed by a priest, then the religious institution will be partly determined by the need to maintain and protect a professional priesthood.

The Experiential Dimension

The dimensions we have so far discussed would indeed be hard to account for were it not for the dimension with which this book is centrally concerned: that of experience, the experiential dimension. Although men may hope to have contact with, and participate in, the invisible world through ritual, personal religion normally involves the hope of, or realization of, experience of that world. The Buddhist monk hopes for nirvana, and this includes the contemplative experience of peace and of insight into the transcendent. The Christian who prays to God believes normally that God answers prayer—and this not just 'externally' in bringing about certain states of affairs, such as a cure for illness, but more importantly 'internally' in the personal relationship that flowers between the man who prays and his Maker. The prayerful Christian believes that God does speak to men in an intimate way and that the individual can and does have an inner experience of God. Hence, personal religion necessarily involves what we have called the experiential dimension.

The factor of religious experience is even more crucial when we consider the events and the human lives from which the great religions have stemmed. The Buddha achieved Enlightenment as he sat in meditation beneath the Bo-Tree. As a consequence of his shattering mystical experience, he believed that he had the secret of the cure for the suffering and dissatisfactions of life in this world. We have records of the inaugural visions of some of the Old Testament prophets, of the experiences that told them something profoundly important about God and that spurred them on to teach men in his name. It was through such experiences that Muhammad began to preach the unity of Allah—a preaching that had an explosive impact upon the world from Central Asia to Spain. One cannot read the Upanishads, the source of so much of Hindu doctrine, without feeling the experience on which their teachings are founded. The most striking passage in the *Bhagavadgita*, perhaps the greatest religious document of Hinduism, is that in which the Lord reveals himself in terrifying splendour to Arjuna. Arjuna is overwhelmed by awe and filled with utter devotion. We have already remarked on the seminal importance of St. Paul's similar experience on the Damascus Road.

The words of Jesus Christ reveal his sense of intimate closeness to the Father; there is little doubt that this rested upon highly significant personal experiences. These and other examples can be given of the crucial part played by religious experience in the genesis of the great faiths.

For this reason, it is unrealistic to treat Marxism as a religion: though it possesses doctrines, symbols, a moral code, and even sometimes rituals, it denies the possibility of an experience of the invisible world. Neither relationship to a personal God nor the hope of an experience of salvation or nirvana can be significant for the Marxist. Likewise Humanism, because it fixes its sights on this-worldly aims, is essentially non-religious. Nevertheless, it is necessary for us to examine the impact of these faiths upon the contemporary world. But the main emphasis will be upon the inner side—what religions mean in personal experience, and how they have been moulded by such experience.

There is a special difficulty, however, in undertaking a description of a religious experience. We have to rely upon the testimony of those who have the experience, and their reports must be conveyed to us either by telling or writing. Sometimes accounts of prophetic or mystical experience of important religious leaders have been preserved by oral tradition through many generations before being written down. But for the most part, the individual religious experiences that have influenced large segments of mankind occurred in cultures that knew the art of writing.

This means that the experience occurred in the context of the existing religions which already had a doctrinal dimension. This raises a problem for us in our attempt to understand the unique religious experience of the prophets or founders of religions, for their experiences are likely to be interpreted in the light of existing doctrines, as well as clothed in the mythological and symbolic forms of the age. There is less difficulty when we consider the 'lesser' figures of the religions—not the founders, but those saints and visionaries who come after. They interpret their experiences in terms of received doctrines and mythologies.

For these reasons, it is not easy to know about a given report which of the elements in it are based, so to say, purely on the experience itself, and which are due to doctrinal and mythological interpretation. To some extent the problem can be overcome by comparing the reports of men of different cultures—such as India and the West—which had virtually no contact during the periods crucial for the formation and elaboration of the dominant religious beliefs.

Moreover, it is worth noting that there is a *dialectic* between experience and doctrine. Thus, though the Buddha, for example, took over elements from the thought-forms of his own age, he was genuinely a creative teacher, who introduced new elements and transmuted the old. The Old Testament prophets fashioned a genuinely original ethical monotheism from an existant belief in Yahweh. The changes they made in the simple tribal religious teaching they inherited can be understood, to some degree, in terms of the impact of the personal religious experiences that were revelatory for these men. Thus experience and doctrinal interpretation have a dialectical relationship. The latter colours the former, but the former also shapes the latter. This book will attempt to exhibit this dialectic at work.

This dialectical interplay also helps us to understand some of the features of personal religion at a humbler level. The Christian, for example, is taught certain doctrines and mythological symbols by his parents. He learns to call God 'Our Father'; he is instructed to believe that the world is created by God and sustained by God. These ideas will at first simply be 'theoretical' as far as the young Christian is concerned, on a par with other non-observable theories he learns about the world, such as that the earth goes round the sun. But suppose he progresses to a deeper understanding of the Christian faith through a particular personal experience, or through his response to the ritual and ethical demands of the religion. Then he will come to see that in some mysterious way God is a person with whom he can have contact; God is not just like the sun, to be thought of speculatively, or to be looked at. Personally, then, he discovers that he can worship and pray to God. In short, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth' will come to have a new meaning for him. In a sense, he will now believe something other than what he first believed. In this way, the interplay between doctrine and experiences is fundamental to religion.

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In the heyday of positivism philosophy was often a kind of metadiscourse. There were philosophy of science, philosophy of law, philosophy of language, and, of course, philosophy of religion. These metadisiplines sought to clarify the various modes of discourse and untangle the conceptual confusions that might arise within them. Sometimes the function was propaedeutic, sometimes apologetic, but the bracketing of the object language was decisive: philosophers of science were not doing science when they put on their philosophical hats, but clarifying conceptual foundations, justifying, sometimes, almost, acting as cheerleaders. Philosophy of law or ethics did not indulge in normative discourse but explained it, or exposed its pretensions. Philosophy of religion was not about the sacred but about the modes of speech and judgment that religious persons might use (see Article 24, RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE). Users of the ‘object language’ were thought of as somewhat unselfconscious naifs or naturals. Philosophy might awaken them to the inner problems of the language they were using, and then, it was assumed, they would no longer speak or act in the same way. Philosophy would make them cautious or skeptical or tolerant. Perhaps it would teach them the deep inner truth of relativism, symbolism, or positivism itself. Certainly their thinking would never be the same. Philosophy of Judaism was about the problems of being Jewish – just as philosophy of religion was about the problems of being religious, or metaethics was about the problems of speaking or thinking ethically.

Today, happily, the tide has come in, or the catwalk has collapsed, and philosophers now find themselves swimming in the same water as those other human beings whose thoughts they seek to understand. We have religious and ethical philosophy, rather than just philosophy *of...*; normative ethics has resumed with gusto, and religious philosophy can speak of God, or ritual, or the nexus between divinity and obligation, and not just about the problems of religious discourse. The quest for a peculiar mode of religious speech or thought has all but ended, except in so rather projectively romantic forms of armchair anthropology. We can speak of Jewish philosophy rather than just philosophy of Judaism. The change is liberating, not least because it returns this ancient discipline to its roots and broadens its scope to match its widest historical range. Jewish philosophy will include a universe of problems that have exercised thoughtful exponents of the Jewish tradition – problems of cosmology and theology, social history, hermeneutics, philosophical anthropology, jurisprudence, and indeed aesthetics.

If philosophy is an open inquiry that seeks critical scrutiny of its own assumptions, Jewish philosophy will involve the informing of that inquiry by the resources of the Jewish tradition. Jewish philosophy so defined subsumes the narrower question, ‘what does it mean to be a Jew?’ in the larger universe of Jewish concerns – from the problem of evil to divine transcendence, immortality, human freedom, justice, history and destiny, nature and economy, the value and meaning of life, and of human life in particular.

What unites practitioners of Jewish philosophy is not some exotic logic that we can label chauvinistically or patronizingly as ‘Talmudic,’ nor a common store of doctrines, but a chain of discourse and problematics, an ongoing conversation that is jarred but not halted by shifts of language, external culture, or epistemic background. What makes this conversation distinctive is no unique flavor or accent, no values or concerns that are unshared by others, but a respect for prior Jewish efforts found worthy as points of reference or departure as the conversation continues.

The unity and distinctiveness of Jewish philosophy, then, are both conceptual and historical. There is a historical continuity from one participant to the next – as there is in general philosophy. And there is a critical reappropriation and redefinition of the elements of the tradition in each generation – as there must be in any religious or cultural transmission.

The first major Jewish philosopher was Philo (ca. 20 BCE-ca. CE 50), a cultured Alexandrian whose commitments to his people were evident in his embassy to Caligula in their behalf, but also in his creative synthesis of Platonic, Stoic, and Biblical ideas (see Article 8, ANCIENT PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY). Adapting the Stoic technique of allegory, Philo presented the Torah as a paradigm of the rational legislation Plato had called for, a law that grounds its commands in reasons, not sheer sanctions or obscure mysteries. Underlying the Law's authority was God's role as the Creator, not as arbitrary lord but as source of the wisdom manifest in nature and echoed in the Mosaic norms pursuing human harmony, creativity, and charity. It was by wisdom that God made his love manifest. For the plan of nature, the Logos (a concept appropriated by Jewish, Christian, and Muslim thinkers) was at once nature's immanent archetype and God's transcendent attribute. In nature and in the Law we grasp, as it were, God's idea.

Philo spoke of philosophy as the handmaiden of theology. But it was to philosophy, not astrology or textual stratigraphy, that he entrusted theology. Through his eyes we see the Torah as a philosophical text – Genesis, not just as a creation myth but as a self-conscious effort to fathom the natural world, by reference to the act of an utterly transcendent – yet not inscrutable – God (see Article 39, CREATION AND CONSERVATION). Just as modern Bible scholars assay the poetic chastity of Genesis against the theomachies and theogonies of ancient Near Eastern myths, Philo assays Mosaic naturalism and rationalism against the Hellenistic mystery cults. He finds in Moses the philosophical lawgiver for whom Plato had hoped. But reliance on a single individual's discretion is gone, displaced by a calm confidence in the norms of the Law; and philosophy guides the reading of those norms. For human wisdom reflects the wisdom that founded the Law.

The first systematic Jewish philosopher was Saadiah Gaon (882-942), a pioneer exegete, grammarian, liturgist, and lexicographer. Born in Egypt, Saadiah studied in Tiberias and led the ancient Talmudic academy of Pumpedita, by now located in Baghdad. His *Book of Critically Selected Beliefs and Convictions* surveys the views on major issues and defends those judged best-founded in reason and scripture – creation, providence, and accountability, but also moral and epistemic objectivism (see Article 72, PROVIDENCE AND PREDESTINATION). Saadiah rebuts skepticism and moral/aesthetic monism, favoring a humanizing pluralism over the Neoplatonic, mystical, or ascetic appetite for simplicity or austerity. Maimonides speaks of Saadiah as a practitioner of *kalam*, an apologetic, dialectical theology rooted in authority. But Saadiah's Biblical hermeneutics are as informed by philosophy as his philosophical views are by scripture. Convinced of the Torah's veracity, he insists that Biblical expressions be taken as familiarly understood only if logic and science, sound tradition and other texts permit. Otherwise we must read figuratively, forestalling capricious readings by citing textual parallels to warrant each departure from familiar Hebrew usage.

The Hebrew poet Ibn Gabirol, as discovered only in 1845, was the philosopher Avicembrol, author of the *Fons Vitae* ('The Fountain of Life'), which survives intact only in Latin, although passages quoted in Hebrew point us toward the lost Arabic original. Written as a dialogue between teacher and disciple, it addresses the ontology of the One and the many, relying on 'intellectual matter,' and a primal Will to mediate divine simplicity (see Article 31, SIMPLICITY). Among its most endearing exchanges: 'Disciple: 'The resolution of all things to these two (universal matter and form), is this fact or opinion?' Master: 'It is not a fact but an opinion.'

Ibn Gabirol's *On the Improvement of the Moral Qualities* examines moral psychology in a physiological vein. While upholding the soul's immortality (see Article 70, SURVIVAL OF DEATH) and the mind's affinity with the divine Intellect, Ibn Gabirol links human emotions with the bodily senses – hauteur, humility, shame, and shamelessness with seeing; love, hate, pity, and hardheartedness with hearing; ire, complaisance, jealousy, and spunk with smelling; joy, anxiety, serenity, and regret with tasting; free-spending, tightfistedness, boldness, and timidity with touching. The virtues, of course, are means between extremes. But, since each disposition represents a specific 'temperament,' or blending of the bodily humors, Ibn Gabirol can discuss and 'treat' the dispositions by reference not only to social norms but also to our embodiment, laying the groundwork for Maimonides' treatment of virtues and vices as habits which our choices overlay upon our inborn propensities.

Judah Halevi (before 1075-1141), perhaps the greatest post-Biblical Hebrew poet, was another medically-minded thinker who grounded a theology in nature and looked to nature as the realm in which understanding would bear fruit. His philosophical dialogue the *Kuzari* imagines the encounter with Judaism of the King of the Khazars, a people of the far off Volga, who had adopted Judaism in the eighth century. As Halevi sets the scene, the king has dreamed that his intentions please God, but not his actions. He summons a spokesman of the 'despised religion' only after hearing from a Neoplatonist, a Christian, and a Muslim. The philosopher's ideas are attractive. But, as the king explains, it is his way of life, not his mind, that needs improvement. He worries that sectarians who share the philosopher's ideas all seem sincerely bent on one another's murder. The problem is no mere abstraction. Halevi's poems reflect the mayhem he had seen in Spain, the Bosnia or Guernica of his time, where Jews were caught between the hammer and anvil of Reconquista and *jihad*. The philosopher's attempt to set the life of the mind above such conflicts vividly reveals the poverty of the prevailing intellectualism that passed for philosophy. Halevi's own response is to pursue a way of life and thought firmly rooted in practice and community with his people, in the past and future as well as the present.

Because Halevi places culture (including material culture), imagination, and history where more conventional philosophers had placed logic, reason, and cosmology, moderns of romantic bent see in him an adversary of philosophy. But closer study shows him as a skilled philosopher committed to a profound critique of established philosophical notions. His ontology is deeply rooted in Ibn Gabirol, as Marx is in Hegel. But Halevi banishes the stream of emanating celestial intellects that had entranced earlier thinkers. Seizing on Ibn Gabirol's idea of a union of will and wisdom and brilliantly transforming his spiritual matter, Halevi returns to the divine word, now called '*Amr*, Arabic for God's word of command, embodying the imperative force of archetypal and normative wisdom. Like Philo and the prophets in their way, he finds God's word immanent and accessible, in nature and the Law.

Halevi's Khazar responds thoughtfully to the Christian and Muslim spokespersons: not having been reared among them, he does not long to make sense of Christian mysteries or warmly resonate to the Arabic of the Qur'an. Naturalists always try to rationalize what they observe. But without direct experience or the heart's consent that is won in early childhood, Christian and Muslim traditions do not compel. The roots of commitment, Halevi finds, lie not in the momentary ecstasies of an isolated anchorite or the abstract ruminations of intellectualist philosophers but in the transgenerational life of a people.

Touched by the yearnings of the Hebrew liturgy (to which he, like Ibn Gabirol, contributed), Halevi demands to know how one can weep for Zion and not go there, where God's Presence is clearest and the life God commanded is most fully lived. Acting on this yearning, Halevi left Spain and journeyed to his people's ancient home, where he died, as legend has it, kissing the soil of Zion, run through by an Arab horseman's spear. But, even had he lived, his yearnings would not have ended with arrival in the holy city. For his famous lines, 'My heart is in the East, but I am in the utmost West,' voice spiritual as well as earthly longing, not to be sated by mere presence in the Land.

In the *Book of Guidance to the Duties of the Heart* Bahya Ibn Pakuda (mid-11th to mid-12th century) made philosophic understanding a spiritual obligation, involving study of nature, probing of God's Law, and internalization of its commands. Following the ancient pietist tradition, Bahya finds a kernel of self-serving in typical worries about free will, which neither reason nor texts can resolve. Wisdom urges us to accept maximal responsibility for our own acts and to accept all that befalls us as God's work (see Article 37, FOREKNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN FREEDOM). Humanism, we note, often does just the opposite, blaming fate, or God (as in the Epicurean dilemma) over what we do not control, even in ourselves, but indulging in self-congratulation, anxiety, or remorse over what we deem our own domain. Bahya's approach, like that of the Stoics, is rhetorical, a tactic for coping, not a metaphysical solution. But in voicing an outlook we can never wholly share, he offers us a kind of reality check: our own excuses and castigations are equally rhetorical, as we notice when they assign credit or blame, shoulder or shirk responsibility, otherwise than Bahya does.

Maimonides, called the Rambam, an acronym of the Hebrew, Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (1135?-1204), was born in Cordova but exiled with his family in 1148, when the Almohad invaders imposed conversion on non-Muslims. Living first in North Africa, then briefly in Palestine, he settled in Cairo and took up medicine to support his family after his brother's death in a shipwreck. His medical service to Saladin's *wazir* was complemented by a busy private practice, and he authored ten medical treatises.

Maimonides wrote three major juridical works: (1) *The Book of the Commandments* schematized the traditional 613 *mitzvot* or divine commands of the Pentateuch, notably including 'I am the Lord thy God...' and 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me...' as the first of the positive and negative commandments, arguing, with rabbinic precedent (*Makkot*, near the end) that these two precepts, addressed directly by God to human understanding, are the axioms grounding all the rest. (2) His Arabic commentary on the Mishnah, the ancient legal code that forms the backbone of the Talmud, interprets the 'oral law' by which the Rabbis elaborated Biblical legislation as containing the rational principles of that law. Maimonides structures the commandments in terms of Aristotelian VIRTUE ETHICS (see Article 59), arguing that they seek human moral and intellectual perfection, the virtues that enable us to know God and realize our likeness to Him. Commenting on the promise to all Israel of 'a portion in the world to come,' Maimonides lays out thirteen credal articles that assure even non-philosophers a share in immortality, since beliefs are practical surrogates for the ideas that render the intellect immortal. (3) His major and still authoritative 14-volume codification of Talmudic law, the *Mishneh Torah*, or Law in Review, was written in Mishnaic Hebrew. Familiarly cited as the *Yad Hazakah*, 'The Strong Hand,' because the word *Yad*, hand, has the numerical value of 14, it takes as its motto the verse 'Then shall I be unabashed to scrutinize all Thy commandments' (Psalm 119:6). It systematizes all of Talmudic law, omitting rabbinic citations (although faithfully respecting rabbinic authority and precedent) and cutting clear of the often digressive Talmudic discussions, organizing the laws according to their purposes: a few brief commandments ground a moral code, the laws of torts and the penal code pursue peace and justice, those of the Sabbath or the elaborate Temple ritual draw the mind to the idea of a transcendent God and wean it from all that is even reminiscent of pagan beliefs and practices. Strikingly, Maimonides elaborates a rabbinic political ideal, with the Torah as its constitution, a strong central ruler, 'to fight the battles of the Lord,' but under the authority of the Law and the wisdom of its interpreters (see Article 62, THEISM, LAW, AND POLITICS).

Maimonides' crowning philosophical achievement was the *Guide to the Perplexed*, which examines theological problems under the rabbinic rubrics of 'the act of creation' and 'the act of the chariot' – the Biblical accounts of Genesis and the vision of Ezekiel (see Article 11, THE JEWISH CONTRIBUTION TO MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY). The Rabbis permitted explication of these passages only one-on-one and only for the best-prepared students, who need no more than hints to provoke their understanding. The problems, as Maimonides understood them, were those of cosmology and metaphysics, centered on the accommodation of the infinitely transcendent God to the finitude of creation. For Ezekiel seems to suggest, with much periphrasis, that he saw God in human form; and Genesis clearly proposes a causal relation between God's timeless perfection (see Article 32, ETERNITY) and our changeable world.

To keep faith with the Talmudic injunction, lest unprepared readers face problems they cannot resolve, Maimonides couches his *Guide* as a letter to a single disciple with specific capabilities and needs. He never calls the *Guide* a book: and, more tellingly, does not state the problems it addresses, leaving readers in the dark about its subject matter, unless they have grappled with these problems. So effective is this approach that even careful readers often imagine the *Guide* opens by refuting anthropomorphism, when in fact its first 70 chapters assume that all ordinary predicates and relations are inapplicable to God and address the question how it is possible for us to speak of God at all, a problematic voiced in the Midrashic remark: 'How great is the boldness of the prophets, who liken the creature to its Creator!' Maimonides deconstructs prophetic anthropomorphism, carefully avoiding the 'onion peeling' that was the bugbear of his predecessor al-Ghazali (1058-1111), who feared that de-anthropomorphizing, carried too far, might leave one with nothing (see Article 10, THE ISLAMIC CONTRIBUTION TO MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY). Maimonides shows how all Biblical anthropomorphisms aim to communicate some (human) idea of perfection, while excluding the limitations that human ideas typically entail. The God that emerges from this analysis is no ordinary being (Maimonides urges that even little children should be taught that God is not a person) but a being of sheer perfection whose absolute and necessary existence (see Article 33, NECESSITY) is made explicit when God reveals Himself to Moses as 'I AM THAT I AM,' an All-sufficiency encapsulated in the Tetragrammaton, whose letters are those of the verb to be (see Article 27, BEING).

Maimonides, like Saadiah, defends creation, but he warns against assuming that either creation or eternity can be proved. Aristotle, who taught us the difference between apodictic and dialectical arguments, reveals by his resort to persuasive language that he knew his own arguments for the eternity of the natural order were not rigorous proofs. They were in fact projections of an eternalism already implicit in the Aristotelian analysis of time and change, matter and potentiality. But the defenses of creation proposed in the *kalam* proved too much, making continuous creation a necessity by dissolving the continuities of nature, splintering time, and making science impossible, freedom inconceivable, and the idea of creation itself incoherent.

In place of the certitude sought by the polemical exponents and adversaries of creation, Maimonides proposes only that creation is more probable conceptually and preferable theologically to eternalism. For the eternalist scheme of emanation without volition cannot explain how complexity emerged (by some automatism) from divine simplicity. And the Aristotelian claim that nature has always been as it is does not leave room for God's determination to have made a difference – as the voluntarism of Ibn Gabirol, Halevi, and al-Ghazali, suggested that it should. Indeed, if Aristotelian essentialism and Neoplatonic emanationism are taken strictly, change would not seem possible at all.

Pondering the problems of evil, of providence, and of revelation – all questions which involve the limits in God's creative manifestation – Maimonides finds precious hints in the book of Job (1:6), where Satan, the adversary, is said to have come 'along with' the children of God (see Article 50, THE PROBLEM OF EVIL). Satan, according to one rabbinic gloss, is simply sin, or death. But the book of Job (which Maimonides reads as a fictional allegory of the problem of evil) tells us that Job was innocent. Satan, whom he identifies with metaphysical 'otherness,' alienation from God's absolute perfection, is matter; and Maimonides chides the Neoplatonists for not recognizing in their own idea of matter a solution to the problem of evil. For matter is a concomitant of creation. It is not a positive reality, a principle like the divine ideas, the forms and forces that give reality to natural beings, but it 'comes along with them,' in the sense that there will be no gift of existence without alienation, no creation without separation. Matter is thus the basis of evil, including human differences and vulnerabilities. It is not evil in itself, and indeed is not real, as the Neoplatonic forms are. At once the heroic wife of Proverbs 31 and the married harlot of Proverbs 7, never content with just one form, matter in our own body is a receptivity that can be turned upward or downward, since the soul has her own power to govern it.

We are, then, neither as abandoned to circumstance as, say, Alexander of Aphrodisias suggests, nor as smothered by attentiveness as the *kalam* might have it in assigning God to superintend the fall of every leaf. Providence comes to nature through the forms, perfection scaled to the capacities of finitude; but providence does reach individuals and is not confined to species (see Article 30, GOODNESS). For Aristotle himself taught us that universals exist only in their particulars. And the human form is not just a pattern of life but a substantial entity, a rational soul, whose guidance is the providence of the wise and whose fulfillment, in knowledge of God, is immortality. This ultimate goal of the philosopher is visited on others by prophets, those rare philosophers who are graced with clarity of imagination to translate pure concepts into images and institutions, laws and symbols, beliefs and practices, that allow all humanity to share in the fruits of philosophy.

Space permits only brief mention of a few post-Maimonidean philosophers: Levi ben Gershom (Gersonides, 1288-1344), astronomer, mathematician, and exegete, sought in his *Wars of the Lord* to mediate between naturalism and theism, even compromising God's OMNISCIENCE (see Article 29) in the interest of human freedom. Hasdai Crescas (1340-1410), born in Barcelona, imprisoned for 'desecrating the host' but later, as a courtier, charged by the Crown with rehabilitating Spanish Jewry after the terrible anti-Jewish riots of 1391, addressed his task, on its intellectual level, through his *Light of the Lord*, a stunning critique of Aristotelian cosmology. In arguments that inspired Spinoza (who cites him as Rab Jasdaj), Crescas rejects Aristotle's abhorrence for the void and for 'actual infinity' and anticipates the ideas of gravity and multiple worlds, each with its own gravitational center. His student Joseph Albo (ca. 1360-?1444) defended Judaism in the Tortosa Disputation of 1413-14 and sought to forge a philosophically defensible creed based on God, revelation and requital, de-emphasizing messianism, the sore point of Christian-Jewish polemics, but using the idea of natural law, gleaned from the writings of Thomas Aquinas (see Article 9, THE CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY; Article 58, NATURAL LAW ETHICS; and Article 74, REVELATION AND SCRIPTURE). Isaac Abravanel (1437-1508), leader of the Jews expelled from Spain in 1492, described the ideal government of the Messianic age not as a monarchy – which is not at all the image of God's rule – but as a mixed constitution, Mosaic in model, with 'lower courts' chosen by the people to govern local matters and a high court, appointed by the ruler, to institute the overarching legal structure. Abravanel's son Judah, known as

Leone Ebreo (ca. 1460-ca. 1521), in his *Dialoghi d'amore*, celebrates love as a cosmic and spiritual force that pervades nature, from the mutual attraction of the elements to the divine love that unites the cosmos and draws the mind toward God. Judah Messer Leon (ca. 1425-ca. 1495) in his *Book of the Honeycomb's Flow*, draws on Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian to analyze the poetics of the Hebrew Bible, finding in its appeals to human sensibilities no detriments to the text but marks of divine artistry, to be emulated by human orators and authors. Ibn Gabirol took his title *Fons Vitae* ('The Fountain of Life') from the Psalms (36:9), to show the affinity between Biblical and Neoplatonic ideas. Messer Leon, similarly, chose a title from the Psalms (19:10), calling scripture to support his humanist thesis in a Biblical metaphor that makes God's law a work of natural artistry and praises it not only for truth and justice but for beauty and delight (see Article 35, BEAUTY).

Among the modern exponents of Jewish philosophy, few rank with those already mentioned. Moses Mendelssohn (1729-86), grandfather of the composer, is one. He was called the German Socrates, in part for his original arguments for immortality in his *Phaedo* or *Phaidon*. Academic entrée was out of the question for a Jew in Mendelssohn's time, and his outpouring of important publications was produced while he earned his living as managing director of a silk factory. Imbued with traditional and philosophical Jewish learning, he mastered independently Wolff and Leibniz, the culture and literary language of modern Europe, and won fame by taking the prize in the Berlin Academy competition of 1763, in which Kant won honorable mention (see Article 12, EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY). Mendelssohn was the first Jew to be accepted among modern European intellectuals, he inspired his friend Gotthold Lessing's play *Nathan the Wise*, and his idea of immortality as unending moral progress became that of Kant. Pressed by critics to justify his loyalty to his ancient faith, Mendelssohn responded in *Jerusalem* with a comprehensive philosophy of Judaism, arguing that it was not their religious beliefs that Israel had acquired at Sinai, since these were simply the natural religion they had already discovered by reason. What was revealed, and eternally valid, was a system of practices designed to sustain Israel's loyalty to that faith, making them 'a light unto the nations.' Enforcement of these ceremonial symbols had passed, with the destruction of the ancient Hebrew commonwealth, from that state to the hearts of individuals, where providence decreed it should forever abide. Mendelssohn thus blunted accusations of illiberality and the somewhat inconsistent charges of dual loyalties that were already becoming clichés of anti-Semitic modernism, but only by forswearing the social authority of Judaic institutions and forestalling the first modern glimmerings of Zionism. A founder of the Jewish Enlightenment, the *Haskalah*, he worked to elevate his fellow Jews by championing German-Jewish education, translating the Pentateuch, Psalms, and Song of Songs, and effectively combating such civil disabilities as the infamous oath *more Judaico*.

Hermann Cohen (1842-1918) was the son of a cantor and son-in-law of the splendid Hebrew liturgical composer Lewandowski. He became a major Kantian, an early critic of the *Ding an sich* and supplemented Kantian ethics with Aristotelian and Biblical ideas of virtue and justice. Cohen championed the loyalty and authentic Germanness of German Jews against attacks from the anti-Semitic historian Heinrich von Treitschke, by marking the affinities of Jewish values with Kantian ethics. In *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism*, he made God the moral standard and guarantor of justice and charity that seek to create a community of free individuals, a kingdom of ends that philosophy cannot prove to be inevitable but that personal conviction must somehow uphold (see Article 22, THE JEWISH TRADITION).

Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) nearly abandoned Judaism but discovered its inner spirituality at the Yom Kippur services he attended in 1913, out of a desire to enter Christianity not as a pagan but as a Jew. An important Hegel scholar, Rosenzweig uncovered a more liberal, less Machiavellian Hegel than was familiar in his time. His *Star of Redemption*, written largely in postcards home from the German trenches during World War I is a manifesto of spiritual existentialism that breaks with the classic primacy of the (intellectualist) Logos and foregrounds the immediacy of creation, encountered, rather than understood, more mythic than rational. We escape mythic atemporality, Cohen urges, not through reason but through revelation, which speaks to us, primordially, in a command, to love God; and, therefore, our fellow humans (see Article 61, AGAPEISTIC ETHICS). Revelation creates community, and community creates the individual, capable of dialogue with God. Thus the birth of the I-Thou relationship, crucial to several philosophers of the day, including Buber.

The star of David, signified in Rosenzweig's title, is his emblem of the dynamic relations of creation, revelation, and redemption that link God, man, and the universe. Like Mendelssohn, Rosenzweig translated much of the Bible into German, collaborating with Buber, who completed the work on his death. He helped found the Free Jewish House of Learning in Frankfurt and translated Halevi's liturgical poetry. But, unlike Halevi, Rosenzweig saw Israel's intimacy with God as a contact with eternity that somehow draws Jews out of history, living redemption while the world prepares for it in more material ways. He thus opposed Zionism, and, perhaps as tellingly, told an inquirer who asked whether he prayed with *tefillin*, 'Not yet.'

Martin Buber (1878-1965) was raised in the home of his grandfather Solomon Buber, a well-known scholar of Midrash. He studied with Dilthey and Simmel, became a youthful Zionist leader, and was drawn to the tales of the Hasidic Master Nahman of Bratslav, which he adapted into German. His novels gave modern Jews friendly access to the Hasidic world, and his Zionism proposed a Jewish-Arab community in Palestine, where he settled in 1938. His *I and Thou* (1922) foregrounds the relationality of human with human or of human with God. We constitute both self and other in radically different ways when we use an *it* or confront a *thou*. Authenticity, freedom, even genuine presentness depend on the I-Thou relation. God is the eternal Thou, never made an it by spiritual fatigue, but glimpsed through human encounters with others, and with art. When we speak to God, not about Him, we encounter the living presence. Revelation is humanity's continuing response to that presence, epitomized in Israel's covenant with God.

Emil Fackenheim is best known perhaps (although his career began with studies of Avicenna's doctrine of love and Hegel's religious dimensions) for the prominence he gives the Holocaust. His conclusions are not intellectual but existential. Their core, like the determination of the protagonist in Bernard Malamud's *The Fixer*, is a determination 'not to give Hitler a posthumous victory' – to find some mode of action or expression that will affirm Jewish vitality and strengthen the commitment of Jews.

Emmanuel Levinas is a Midrashic thinker, a master of aspects, and thus a phenomenologist, much admired by postmodernists, perhaps in part because he shuns sustained argument and system with the same discomfort that post-Holocaust musicians may show for melody, harmony, or symmetry. But Levinas is an avowedly ethical and indeed a constructive thinker. In speaking of the claims made upon us by the face of the other, he speaks, in his own way, of the same person whose cloak and millstone the Torah commands us not to take in pledge, the stranger whom we are commanded to love and told that God loves, the same thou that Buber and Rosenzweig find at the roots of our humanity and God's commanding word – although Levinas quarrels with Buber's somewhat romantic, non-intellectual construal of the I-Thou relation. In the dialectic of rabbinic thought Levinas finds a very Hebrew awareness of the everpresent face of the other. But he admires Rosenzweig for refusing to subjectivize nature in the post-Kantian mode, and thus for respecting the inalienable otherness of the other. Cautious of the mere posit of God as the parent who authorizes or commands our respect for one another, Levinas sees a trace of divine transcendence in the sheer alterity of the other, a trace that he connects with the Biblical dictum that one cannot see God's face and with the Maimonidean gloss that when Moses was allowed to see God's 'back,' it was a 'trace' of God – here understood as the ethical demand of alterity – that he was vouchsafed to know, and thus to enshrine in the Law.

Pausing now to sum up what it is that the philosophers we have considered have in common – since I think it best to ask the question empirically here, rather than to beg it prescriptively – we find that the exponents of Jewish philosophy in every period share the prophetic concern. That is, they continue to interpret the ethical socially and the social ethically. They share the Mosaic interest in cosmology and in the metaphysics of divinity, even when they fight shy (as Moses did) of efforts to bring God to terms in fanciful narratives or bring him to his knees in the graven images of theory. They, remain sensitive to the absoluteness of the Mosaic I AM, which contrasts vividly against the ground of Parmenides' sheer affirmation of being (*esti*). For in the I AM, which will become the one item of the Decalogue that all Israel must hear for themselves, God speaks to us in the first person and in a language that does not negate appearances but invites our humanity, our acceptance of creation and of one another. Objectivity does not exclude but presupposes subjecthood, and subjecthood does not entail but excludes the mere subjectivity of self or other.

All of the philosophers we have considered are in touch with their surroundings. None speaks a language too remote to be translated or uses an idiom that the others cannot catch, or trusts in categories incommensurate with those of humanity at large. Their philosophies are neither the symptoms of a *Zeitgeist* nor apologetics for a *Volkgeist* but products of reflection, enlivened by a tradition of critical thought and discourse. That reflection is made critical in part by its openness to the larger philosophical world, the world of Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics and Epicureans, the Neoplatonists and Muslim philosophers and theologians, the work of Thomas or the Renaissance humanists, of Leibniz, Kant and Hegel, the phenomenologists, existentialists, and postmodernists. Among these voices, the exponents of Jewish philosophy have been prominent and original participants, just as Josephus is among historians, or Saul Bellow among novelists. Their stance is creative, not merely (as Hitler thought) 'parasitic' or reactive. Their creativity is fostered by the wealth of their own traditions and by the crosstalk of their philosophical milieu.

In every period there are certain Jewish thinkers, or thinkers of Jewish origin, whose work cannot be classed as a contribution to Jewish philosophy. One thinks of those who succumbed to conversionary pressures in the medieval or the modern age and of those who internalized the anti-Jewish hostilities they felt. More broadly, certain major thinkers, whose ideas are inspired by Jewish sources, are not participants in the conversation of Jewish philosophy. Marx and Freud must be numbered among these. They paid a price for their cosmopolitanism, in terms of the free or forced abandonment of orientation toward their Jewish roots when they entered the mainstream of Western culture. Spinoza is a crucial case. His philosophy is deeply immersed in the great problematics of the Western tradition but also in the specific issues by which Jewish philosophers sought to address those problematics. What makes it hard to count Spinoza as a contributor to Jewish philosophy is not that he did not confine himself to a philosophy of Judaism – for no major Jewish philosopher did that – but that the circumstances of his life and epoch turned him decisively away from the methods of accommodation and critical appropriation that other Jewish philosophers had found. The result, as with Marx or Freud, was a rupture that led to greater radicalism – both creativity and hostility – than is found in those who were able, or enabled, to keep faith with the generations of their Jewish predecessors and contemporaries.

The outcome of such radicalism is striking: for such thinkers, in their moment, like any alienated person, become isolated both from some of the constraints and from some of the resources of a human community that might have been of help to them. Later Jewish thinkers can still profit from what Spinoza, Marx, or Freud achieved. Parts of their thought become dated and provincialized by the very topicality that once made them the matter of the moment or the century. Other elements are reabsorbed into the continuing conversation of philosophy at large or the particular foci of Jewish philosophical conversation. One cannot say, moralistically, that such thinkers, who are alienated to one degree or another, by choice or exclusion or force of circumstance, have thereby lost more than they have gained. For there is a deep potential for conceptual value to be gleaned in radicalism. But radicalism, like heresy, limits catholicity, blunts synthesis, focuses attention sharply on a single issue or nexus, and may overstress it or press it to the breaking point. Just as there is balance in community and value in synthesis, there is philosophical and not just practical wisdom in an irenic posture towards the philosophical past. Thus, when the prophets reflect on the future of human thinking, they envision all nations turning to a purer language (Zephaniah 3:9), and part of the means by which they expect this to be achieved is the reconciling of the fathers to the sons (Malachi 3:24).

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‘Jewish ethics’ – Kellner M in

Singer P (editor) – **A Companion to Ethics** (Blackwell, 2001) pages 82-90

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The very concept ‘Jewish ethics’ raises a number of problems, some of them inherent in the notion of any parochial ethic (be it Christian ethics, Navajo ethics, Marxist ethics, or whatever) and some of them unique to Jewish ethics. But, these problems aside, there exists a substantial body of literature which by common consensus is called ‘Jewish ethics’. A separate essay in this volume is devoted to an analysis of the relation between religion and ethics (see Article 46, HOW COULD ETHICS DEPEND ON RELIGION?); the general problems raised, therefore, by the notion of Jewish ethics as an example of a religious ethic will not be addressed here. There remain, however, a number of problems unique to Jewish ethics. This essay, then, will be divided into two parts. In the first I will describe some of the problems raised by the notion of Jewish ethics while in the second I will describe that body of literature ordinarily denoted by the term.

What is Jewish ethics? Answering this question presupposes being able to answer the antecedent question, ‘What is Judaism?’ This is not so simple a task. As the old saw has it, ‘Two Jews, three views’. The well-known propensity of Jews to disagree on matters theological while not definitively excluding each other from the faith or from the community may reflect the typical Jewish concentration on matters concrete and practical. This concentration elevates matters of behaviour (including most emphatically ethical issues) to a centrality of importance which may be unique among Western monotheistic faiths. Thus, for example, we find the Talmud quoting God as saying, ‘Would that they [the Jewish people] had abandoned Me but kept my Torah!’ (T. J. *Hagigah*, 1. 7). This emphasis on how to behave as opposed to what to believe makes it difficult to define ‘Judaism’ as a system of beliefs in a simple fashion.

In the contemporary world, for example, Judaism can be defined in both secular and religious terms. The secular definition can itself be either nationalist or cultural. The secular nationalist definition can either be Zionist (calling for the resettlement of the Jews in their ancient homeland) or non-Zionist. The Zionist definition of Judaism is itself defined in a plethora of ways. Defining Judaism in religious terms is no simpler today. Four different major movements (Orthodoxy, Conservatism, Reconstructionism and Reform) each claim to be the normative interpretation of Judaism. Many of the approaches mentioned here can also be combined (as, for example, in forms of religious Zionism).

It is immediately evident, then, that no one definition of Jewish ethics is possible, since there are so many varieties of Judaism. Since, however, we cannot possibly hope to settle this issue here we will simply ignore it henceforth. But, even assuming that we know what the term ‘Jewish’ means in the expression ‘Jewish ethics’, there are still fundamental problems which need clarification.

Judaism is very much a religion oriented towards practical perfection in this world (a ‘religion of pots and pans’ in the words of its nineteenth-century Protestant derogators). This practical orientation finds its concrete expression in the codified norms of Torah-based behaviour called *Halakhah* or Jewish law. While much of *Halakhah* is given over to what we would today call religious or ritual law, it encompasses civil, criminal and moral law as well. The moral component, however, is not distinguished in any way from the other components of *Halakhah* and, at least from within the system, is seen as drawing its authority, as does the rest of the Torah, from God’s command. Since *Halakhah* contains an ethical component it must be asked whether ‘the Jewish tradition recognizes an ethic independent of *Halakhah*’ (see Aharon Lichtenstein’s article by this name in Kellner, 1978). Can there be, that is, significantly Jewish ethical norms not included in *Halakhah*?

This is a thorny problem. If Judaism recognizes the existence of two authentically Jewish yet independent realms, one of *Halakhah* and one of ethics, how do they interrelate? Can *Halakhah* be corrected on the basis of Jewish ethical considerations? This possibility is abhorrent to those Jews who maintain that *Halakhah* is the unchanging expression of God’s will on earth. Can ethics be corrected on the basis of halakhic considerations? This possibility would probably be unacceptable to those Jews who see *Halakhah* as an expression of an early stage of God’s dynamic and ongoing revelation. This issue may be rephrased as follows: if *Halakhah* and Jewish ethics are both authentically Jewish, is one superior to the other? If not, what do we do when they conflict? If they never conflict, in what sense are they different?

And there are yet further problems: if there exists a supra-halakhic Jewish ethic, what is its relationship to non-Jewish civil law? What is the obligation of the Jew with respect to imposing that ethic upon or offering it to non-Jews?

More questions arise: if morality must be universally recognizable, then not only must Jewish ethics apply to all human beings, but it must be available to them as well. If a supra-halakhic Jewish ethic exists, is it really universally available, and, if it is, what is specifically *Jewish* about it?

So much for the problems raised by the notion of Jewish ethics generally. If, as is often maintained, Jews are like everybody else, only more so, it is appropriate that the notion of Jewish ethics be as problematic as the notion of religious ethics, only more so. But since, as the Yiddish expression has it, no-one has ever died from having an unsolved philosophical problem, we can turn to the second part of our discussion and describe what in fact has been passing as Jewish ethics all these many years.

Following the lead of Isaiah Tishby and Joseph Dan we may divide the literature of what is ordinarily called Jewish ethics into four main categories: biblical, rabbinic, medieval and modern. Certain recent scholars (such as Israel Efron and Shubert Spero) have maintained that the (Hebrew) Bible is self-consciously aware of a distinct area of human activity parallel to what we call ethics. I do not agree: while the Bible is surely permeated with ethical concern, it does not see the laws mandating ethical behaviour as being in any significant sense distinct from its laws governing civil, criminal, and ritual matters: they all 'are given from one Shepherd' (Eccl. 12: 11). Biblical Hebrew does not even have a word for 'ethics' in our sense of the term. The Bible, then, teaches ethics, but not self-consciously and as such: it is a *source* of Jewish ethics while not seeing itself, so to speak, as an ethical text. (On biblical ethics, see also Article 3, ANCIENT ETHICS.)

This said, the question remains, what are the ethical teachings of the Bible? The question presupposes that the Bible is, at least in moral and theological terms, a single unit. While that assumption may be rejected by historians of the Bible, it reflects the traditional Jewish approach to the text and will be adopted here.

Perhaps the best-known of the ethical teachings of the Bible is the so-called 'Ten Commandments' ('so-called' because there are many more than ten specific commandments in this passage), found in Exodus 20. Of the ten discrete statements in this text, at least six have direct ethical import: (a) honour thy father and thy mother; (b) thou shalt not murder; (c) thou shalt not commit adultery; (d) thou shalt not steal; (e) thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour; and (f) thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's possessions (which include thy neighbour's wife, which indicates that the Decalogue is not exactly a monument to feminist sensibilities). The remaining four ('I am the Lord thy God...', that God alone may be worshipped, that God's name must not be taken in vain, and the observance of the Sabbath) relate to matters of theological and ritual importance. This division of subject matter reflects a division which later rabbis read out of (or into) the Bible: that between obligations between human individuals and obligations between human individuals and God.

Much of biblical legislation involves this first group and herein may lie one of the basic contributions of Judaism to the Western religious tradition: that one worships God through decent, humane, and moral relations with one's fellows. (As the later rabbis were to put it, God is ideally worshipped in three ways: study of Torah, sacrifice and prayer, and acts of lovingkindness.) In other words, whatever morality might be, its basis is in God's will. God can be no more irrelevant to morality than he can be for religion. The basis for this demand that God makes upon his creatures to treat each other properly is the biblical teaching that man is created in the image of God (Gen. 1: 27).

Since human beings are created in the image of God, it is obvious that one achieves the highest possible level of perfection or self-realization by becoming as similar to God as humanly possible. This is the basis for what may be the single most important ethical doctrine of the Hebrew Bible, that of *imitatio Dei*, the imitation of God (on which, see the essays by Shapiro and Buber in Kellner, 1978).

The biblical doctrine of *imitatio Dei* finds expression in verses such as the following: 'Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy' (Lev. 19:2); 'And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul' (Deut. 10: 12); and 'The Lord will establish thee for a holy people unto Himself, as He hath sworn unto thee: if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in His ways' (Deut. 28: 9). For our purposes here, these verses involve two explicit commandments: to be holy, because God is holy, and to walk in the ways of God. How does one make oneself holy and thus God-like? The Bible couldn't be clearer. Leviticus 19: 2 is an introduction to a list of commandments combining matters moral (honour of parents, charity, justice, honesty, kindness to

the disadvantaged, etc), ritual (Sabbath observance, sacrifices, etc), and theological (not taking the name of the Lord in vain). One achieves holiness, that is, by obeying God's commandments, or, in the words quoted above from Deuteronomy, by walking in his ways.

It should come as no surprise that when Judaism, which so clearly emphasizes the practical over the metaphysical, introduces a doctrine which seems so clearly to beg for a metaphysical interpretation, it immediately insists on interpreting it in practical terms. The imitation of God, that is, is not a metaphysical issue in Judaism but a practical, moral one. Jews are not commanded (and it must not be forgotten that the imitation of God, as the verses adduced above clearly show, is a *commandment* of the Torah and was so construed by most later authorities) literally and actually to transcend their normal selves and become in some sense like God: rather, they are commanded to act in certain ways. It is through the achievement of practical, moral perfection, that Jews imitate God and thus fulfil their destiny as individuals created in the image of God.

This point can be made sharper if we contrast the Jewish approach to the imitation of God to two others, that of Plato and that of Christianity. In the *Theaetetus* (176) we find Socrates saying, 'We ought to fly away from earth to heaven as quickly as we can: and to fly away is to become like God, as far as this is possible: and to become like him is to become holy, just, and wise.' Far from flying away from earth, the Torah calls upon Jews to imitate God here on earth, through the fulfilment of his commandments. One does not then become *like* God; one walks in his ways, ie acts in a God-like manner so far as this is possible for a human being. In Christianity we find an even clearer emphasis on the actual, literal, and therefore metaphysical interpretation of the imitation of God. The God of Christianity is so eager to allow human beings to become like him that he actually performs an act of *imitatio humani* and incarnates himself in the body of an actual living breathing human being. The imitation of God is then performed through an intermediary and becomes *imitatio Christi*, which finds its expression, not in the fulfilment of the six hundred and thirteen commandments of the Torah, but in attitudes of faith and trust, and, before its self-destructiveness became evident, through the imitation of Christ's passion. (For a Jewish view of this, see Buber in Kellner.)

The moral implication of humanity's having been created in the image of God underlies both specific laws (such as 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (Lev. 19: 18) – because your neighbour is no less created in the image of God than you are) and the general universalistic thrust of the Hebrew Bible, something particularly evident in the classical literary prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel). It also lies at the basis of rabbinic discussions of what we would call moral issues.

I wrote above that the Hebrew Bible is not self-consciously aware of morality as a distinct religious or intellectual category. This is also true, I would maintain, of the corpus of rabbinic writings which centres on the Mishnah and those texts which developed around it. Here, too, we have no separate, distinct text dealing with ethics in an explicit fashion, and no apparent recognition of ethics as a department of thought which must be treated independently of other concerns. This is even true of the well-known Mishnaic tractate *Avot*, a compilation of maxims and homilies, many of which embody what we call ethical teachings. The point of this treatise, as Herford suggests, is to describe the ideal personality of the Mishnah: it is therefore much more concerned with piety than with ethics.

Even more than the Bible, the vast corpus of rabbinic writings is basically concerned with one issue: how we ought to live our lives so as to fulfil the command to make ourselves holy by walking in God's ways. The rabbinic response to this was the delineation of a body of detailed law designed to govern every aspect of our behaviour. That body of law is called 'Halakhah' (homiletically if not etymologically derived from the Hebrew word for 'the way' – compare the Chinese concept *dao*, discussed by Chad Hansen in Article 6, CLASSICAL CHINESE ETHICS – and thus taken as the specification of how one walks in God's ways) and includes, but by no means is limited to, moral concerns.

Fully aware, however, that no specification of legal obligations can cover every moral dilemma, the rabbis of the Mishnah and Talmud rely on a number of broad spectrum biblical commands such as 'Righteousness, righteousness, shalt thou pursue' (Deut. 17: 20) and 'Thou shalt do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord' (Deut. 6: 18) – and on one of their own devising, the *obligation* to go beyond the letter of the law in the fulfilment of God's will – to demand supererogatory behaviour from the Jews. Such a demand may be justified on the grounds that one never fully satisfies the obligation to imitate God.

The centrality of the doctrine that human beings are created in the image of God (the basis, as noted above, for the commandment to imitate God) is emphasized in the well-known debate between two mishnaic rabbis: Akiba and Ben Azzai. Their debate centred on the question, 'What is the great[est] maxim of the Torah?' Rabbi Akiba's nominee was 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (Lev. 19: 18) while Ben Azzai insisted on 'This is the book of the generations of man, in the image of God created He him' (Gen. 5: 1). (*Sifra*, VII.4. On this debate, see the article by Chaim Reines in Kellner, 1982.) The important point for our purposes here is that there is no actual debate. Both Rabbi Akiba and Ben Azzai agree that the doctrine of humanity's having been created in the image of God is the central teaching of the Torah. Ben Azzai cites the doctrine itself, Akiba, its clearest moral implication. Given the Jewish tradition's preference for practice over preaching, it is no surprise that in the popular Jewish mind, at least, Rabbi Akiba is thought to have won the argument.

This emphasis on the respect for others based on their having been created in the image of God also finds expression in what may be the best-known rabbinic moral teaching, Hillel's so-called 'Golden Rule'. When a non-Jew asked Hillel to teach him the entire Torah while he (the non-Jew) stood on one foot, Hillel replied, 'What you dislike don't do to others; that is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary. Go and learn.' (B.T. Shabbat 31a). It is perhaps only a personal idiosyncrasy (I don't like to be nagged) but I like to think that Hillel's formulation of this principle is superior to that of a well-known contemporary of his who phrased the same idea in positive terms ('Do unto others as you would have them do unto you') since I think that one can show no higher respect to one's fellows than to leave them alone if their behaviour harms no-one.

In sum, despite the importance of moral teachings in the Bible and Talmud, these texts know of no self-consciously worked-out moral system: they are not even aware of ethics as a distinct religious, intellectual, or human category. It is only in the Middle Ages, under the apparent impress of Greek categories of thought as mediated through Islam, that we first find a distinct corpus of Jewish literature self-consciously and explicitly devoted to ethics. The form may have been essentially Greek; the concern with right behaviour is obviously not new. What is new is the composition of texts which deal with moral behaviour outside of the strict context of Torah and Halakhah.

The literature of this period has been divided by Tishby and Dan into four categories: philosophic, rabbinic, pietistic, and kabbalistic. In terms of literary genre we find ethics being taught in philosophical or mystical texts, sermons, homilies, wills and letters, stories and fables, poetry, commentaries on Bible and Mishnah, and in manuals of ethical behaviour.

Turning to the first of the four categories of medieval Jewish ethical literature, it would seem that the basic issue which underlay discussions of ethics among medieval Jewish philosophers had to do with the nature of God: the importance one attaches to ethical behaviour (the *vita activa* as over against the *vita contemplativa*) depends upon one's assessment of human nature. Since Judaism teaches that human beings are created in the image of God and reach their most perfect self-realization through the imitation of God, it follows that our estimation of human nature depends to a great extent upon our estimation of divine nature. If God is construed as essentially active, then we should find our perfection in activity and ethics becomes a very important department of human endeavour; if, on the other hand, God is essentially contemplative, then we should find our perfection in contemplation and ethics plays a correspondingly less important role in our lives, often being seen as a propaedeutic to intellectual (contemplative) perfection.

The issue is highlighted in the work of the most important of the medieval Jewish philosophers, Moses Maimonides (1138-1204). In a semi-popular work, 'Laws of Character Traits'. Maimonides presented a slightly modified version of Aristotle's doctrine of the 'Golden Mean' as the ethical teaching of Judaism. In his philosophic work, *Guide for the Perplexed*, however, he seems to advance a purely intellectualist interpretation of Judaism, reducing ethical (and, concomitantly, halakhic) perfection to the level of a necessary propaedeutic for the achievement of intellectual perfection. At the very end of the book, however, the moral, practical orientation of Judaism wins out and Maimonides informs his reader that the truest perfection involves the imitation of God's lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness after having achieved the highest achievable level of intellectual perfection. Maimonides the philosopher, one might say, urges us to imitate God through metaphysical speculation; Maimonides the rabbi cannot leave it at that and insists that such imitation have practical impact on our lives in the community.

Perhaps in response to the ethical writings of medieval Jewish philosophers (on which see the Introduction to Kellner, 1978) writers rooted deeply and often exclusively in the rabbinic tradition began writing ethical treatises based entirely on mishnaic and talmudic texts, in an attempt to prove that these texts provided all that one needed in order to produce a complete ethical system. Accepting the rabbinic injunction to turn and turn in the Torah 'because everything is included in it' (*Avot*, V. 25), they felt that there was no need to turn to Aristotle for instruction in either the form or content of ethics. Rather, all one need do is search through the Torah and the rabbinic compilations. Rabbinic ethics is not a uniquely medieval phenomenon and works continue to be written to this day in this framework. A whole movement, which started in the last century and which has about it remarkable elements of modernity, the so-called 'Mussar Movement' (on which see Hillel Goldberg) is perhaps best understood as a version of medieval rabbinic ethics.

Pietistic ethical literature is associated with a circle of Jewish mystics and pietists called Hasidei Ashkenaz, who were active in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Germany. This literature, by and large, is concerned with specific problems and actual situations, rather than with the search for general principles. It is marked by deep piety, by superstitious elements typical of Jewish folk as opposed to elite religion, and by an emphasis on the effort involved in the performance of a moral or religious action: the greater the difficulty in performing an action, the more praiseworthy it is. This idea, and the parallel notion that the pietist (*hasid*) is marked by his adherence to the 'law of Heaven', which is stricter and more demanding than the 'law of the Torah' to which all others must adhere, may not have been totally unprecedented in Judaism, but were surely given new emphasis by the Hasidei Ashkenaz. This call for supererogatory ethical behaviour had great influence on subsequent developments in European Jewry.

One of the most striking intellectual developments in the history of medieval Judaism was the rise and spread of a Jewish mystical movement called Kabbalah (on which see Scholem, 1946, and Moshe Idel, 1988). A Kabbalistic idea which had important influence on Jewish ethics was the notion that religious actions can have a profound impact on the very structure of the universe. This, of course, makes sense in the context of a world-view which sees the physical and the spiritual in a constant state of active interpenetration. On this understanding there is no problem with maintaining that a definite interdependence can exist between the deeds of human beings and developments in the world.

Not until 1789 in Europe and much later in the Muslim world were Jews allowed, to all intents and purposes, fully to take part in the cultures of the societies around them. When such participation was made possible, the Jews dove in enthusiastically. This openness to and involvement in the broader culture is one of the crucial distinguishing marks of modern as opposed to medieval Judaism. A second distinguishing mark of modern Judaism is the way in which it has become fractured into many competing movements, trends, and even, perhaps, denominations. Judaism today, therefore, is distinguished from medieval Judaism by virtue of its being open to the entire problematic of modernity, and in that it no longer speaks with one voice (or with many different but still essentially harmonious voices, for those who insist that Judaism was always marked by pluralism) in its attempt to answer that complex of problems.

This situation is particularly clear in the case of ethics. One can find Jewish thinkers who maintain that Jewish ethics is essentially autonomous in the Kantian sense and others who glory in the fact that it is, was, and should be absolutely heteronomous (see Article 14, KANTIAN ETHICS). Every possible position on the question of the relation between ethics and Halakhah is forcefully maintained by different thinkers as being the authoritative position of the Jewish tradition. On a more concrete level, you have rabbis who can boast of impressive credentials as experts in the fields of Jewish law and ethics testifying before congressional committees studying the question of abortion and presenting diametrically opposed positions on the Jewish attitude towards abortion. (On all these matters see the essays in Kellner, 1978, and S. Daniel Breslauer's important annotated bibliographies.)

Jews and Judaism are not, of course, unique in this respect. They are like everyone else, only more so. The fractured Jewish response to the problems posed by the modern world is as much a reflection of the nature of modernity as it is a reflection of the nature of Judaism.

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The Dimensions of Religion

The problem arises because there are different aspects or, as I shall call them, *dimensions* of religion. Whether we include Marxism as a religion depends on which dimension we regard as crucial for our definition. It will therefore be useful to analyse these various dimensions.

The Ritual Dimension

If we were asked the use or purpose of such buildings as temples and churches, we would not be far wrong in saying that they are used for ritual or ceremonial purposes. Religion tends in part to express itself through such rituals: through worship, prayers, offerings, and the like. We may call this the *ritual* dimension of religion. About this, some important comments need to be made.

First, when we think of ritual we often think of something very formal and elaborate, like a High Mass or the Liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox Church. But it is worth remarking that even the simplest form of religious service involves ritual, in the sense of some form of outer behaviour (such as closing one’s eyes in prayer) coordinated to an inner intention to make contact with, or to participate in, the invisible world. I am not concerned here with those who deny the existence of such an ‘invisible world,’ however interpreted, whether as God’s presence, as nirvana, as a sacred energy pervading nature. Whether or not such an invisible world exists, it forms an aspect of the world seen from the point of view of those who participate in religion. It is believed in. As was said earlier, it is not here our task to pass judgment on the truth or otherwise of religious conceptions. First, then, even the simplest service involves ritual.

Second, since ritual involves both an inner and an outer aspect it is always possible that the latter will come to dominate the former. Ritual then degenerates into a mechanical or conventional process. If people go through the motions of religious observance without accompanying it with the intentions and sentiments which give it human meaning, ritual is merely an empty shell. This is the reason why some religious activities are condemned as ‘ritualistic.’ But it would be wrong to conclude that because ritualism in this bad sense exists, therefore ritual is an unimportant or degenerate aspect of religion.

It should not be forgotten that there are secular rituals which we all use, and these can form an integral part of personal and social relationships. Greeting someone with a ‘Good morning,’ saying goodbye, saluting the flag—all these in differing ways are secular rituals. Very often in society they are integrated with religious rituals, as when men say ‘God be with you,’ which is more than taking leave of someone: it is invoking a blessing upon the other person.

Third, it will prove convenient to extend the meaning of ‘ritual’ beyond its reference to the forms of worship, sacrifice, etc, directed toward God or the gods.

It happens that a crucial part is played in India and elsewhere by yoga and analogous techniques of self-training. The ultimate aim of such methods is the attainment of higher states of consciousness, through which the adept has experience of release from worldly existence, of nirvana, of ultimate reality (the interpretation partly depends on the system of doctrines against which the adept tests his experience). Thus the essence of such religion is contemplative or mystical. Sometimes, it is pursued without reference to God or the gods—for example, in Buddhism, where the rituals of a religion of worship and sacrifice are regarded as largely irrelevant to the pursuit of nirvana. Nevertheless the techniques of self-training have an analogy to ritual: the adept performs various physical and mental exercises through which he hopes to concentrate the mind on the transcendent, invisible world, or to withdraw his senses from their usual immersion in the flow of empirical experiences. This aspect of religion, then, we shall include in our definition of the ritual dimension. It can be classified as pragmatic (aimed at the attainment of certain experiences) in distinction from sacred ritual (directed toward a holy being, such as God). Sometimes the two forms of ritual are combined, as in Christian mysticism.

The meaning of ritual cannot be understood without reference to the environment of belief in which it is performed. Thus prayer in most ritual is directed toward a divine being. Very often, legends about the gods are used to explain the features of a ceremony or festival; and often the important events of human life, such as birth, marriage, death, are invested with a sacred significance by relating them to the divine world.

All this can happen before a religion has any theology or formal system of doctrines. Theology is an attempt to introduce organization and intellectual power into what is found in less explicit form in the deposit of revelation or traditional mythology of a religion. The collection of myths, images, and stories through which the invisible world is symbolized can suitably be called the *mythological* dimension of religion.

The Mythological Dimension

Some important comments need to be made about this mythological dimension. First, in accordance with modern usage in theology and in the comparative study of religion, the terms ‘myth,’ ‘mythological,’ etc, are *not* used to mean that the content is false. Perhaps in ordinary English to say ‘It’s a myth’ is just a way of saying ‘It’s false.’ But the use of the term *myth* in relation to religious phenomena is quite neutral as to the truth or falsity of the story enshrined in the myth. In origin, the term ‘myth’ means ‘story,’ and in calling something a story we are not thereby saying that it is true or false. We are just reporting on what has been said. Similarly, here we are concerned with reporting on what is believed.

Second, it is convenient to use the term to include not merely stories about God (for instance the story of the creation in Genesis), about the gods (for instance in Homer’s *Iliad*), etc, but also the historical events of religious significance in a tradition. For example, the Passover ritual in Judaism re-enacts a highly important event that once occurred to the children of Israel; their delivery from bondage in Egypt. The historical event functions as a myth. Thus we shall include stories relating to significant historical events under the head of the mythological dimension—again without prejudice to whether the stories accurately describe what actually occurred in history.

The Doctrinal Dimension

Third, it is not always easy to differentiate the mythological and the symbolic from what is stated in theology. Doctrines are an attempt to give system, clarity and intellectual power to what is revealed through the mythological and symbolic language of religious faith and ritual. Naturally, theology must make use of the symbols and myths. For example, when the Christian theologian has to describe the meaning of the Incarnation, he must necessarily make use of Biblical language and history. Thus the dividing line between the mythological and what I shall call the doctrinal dimension is not easy to draw. Yet there is clearly a distinction between Aquinas’ treatment of creation at the philosophical level and the colourful story of creation in Genesis. The distinction is important, because the world religions owe some of their living power to their success in presenting a total picture of reality, through a coherent system of doctrines.

The Ethical Dimension

Throughout history we find that religions usually incorporate a code of ethics. Ethics concern the behaviour of the individual and, to some extent, the code of ethics of the dominant religion controls the community. Quite obviously, men do not always live up to the standards they profess. And sometimes the standards which are inculcated by the dominant faith in a particular society may not be believed by all sections of that society.

Even so, there is no doubt that religions have been influential in moulding the ethical attitudes of the societies they are part of. It is important, however, to distinguish between the moral teaching incorporated in the doctrines and mythology of a religion, and the social facts concerning those who adhere to the faith in question. For instance, Christianity teaches ‘Love thy neighbour as thyself.’ As a matter of sociological fact, quite a lot of people in so-called Christian countries, where Christianity is the official or dominant religion, fail to come anywhere near this ideal. The man who goes to church is not necessarily loving; nor is the man who goes to a Buddhist temple necessarily compassionate. Consequently, we must distinguish between the ethical teachings of a faith, which we shall discuss as the *ethical* dimension of religion, and the actual sociological effects and circumstances of a religion.

Pertinent to this point is the consideration that most religions are institutionalized. This is most obvious in technologically primitive societies, where the priest, soothsayer, or magician is closely integrated into the social structure. Religion is not just a personal matter here: it is part of the life of the community. It is built into the institutions of daily life. But even in sophisticated communities where a line is drawn between religious and secular concerns, as in contemporary America, churches exist as institutions to be reckoned with. They are part of the 'establishment.' In areas where there is active or latent persecution of religious faith, as in the Soviet Union, there are still organizations for continuing religious activities.

The Social Dimension

Religions are not just systems of *belief*: they are also organizations, or parts of organizations. They have a communal and social significance. This social shape of a religion is, of course, to some extent determined by the religious and ethical ideals and practices that it harbours. Conversely, it often happens that the religious and ethical ideals are adapted to existing social conditions and attitudes. For example, Japanese fishermen reconcile the Buddhist injunction against taking life (even animal or fish life) to their activity as fishermen. The Christian's dedication to brotherly love or his attitude to war may be determined more by patriotism and a national crisis than by the Gospel. Thus, it is important to distinguish between the ethical dimension of religion and the *social* dimension. The latter is the mode in which the religion in question is institutionalized, whereby, through its institutions and teachings, it affects the community in which it finds itself.

The doctrinal, mythological, and ethical dimensions express a religion's claims about the nature of the invisible world and its aims about how men's lives ought to be shaped: the social dimension indicates the way in which men's lives are in fact shaped by these claims and the way in which religious institutions operate.

It is, incidentally, clear that the ongoing patterns of ritual are an important element in the institutionalization of religion. For example, if it is believed that certain ceremonies and sacraments can only be properly performed by a priest, then the religious institution will be partly determined by the need to maintain and protect a professional priesthood.

The Experiential Dimension

The dimensions we have so far discussed would indeed be hard to account for were it not for the dimension with which this book is centrally concerned: that of experience, the experiential dimension. Although men may hope to have contact with, and participate in, the invisible world through ritual, personal religion normally involves the hope of, or realization of, experience of that world. The Buddhist monk hopes for nirvana, and this includes the contemplative experience of peace and of insight into the transcendent. The Christian who prays to God believes normally that God answers prayer—and this not just 'externally' in bringing about certain states of affairs, such as a cure for illness, but more importantly 'internally' in the personal relationship that flowers between the man who prays and his Maker. The prayerful Christian believes that God does speak to men in an intimate way and that the individual can and does have an inner experience of God. Hence, personal religion necessarily involves what we have called the experiential dimension.

The factor of religious experience is even more crucial when we consider the events and the human lives from which the great religions have stemmed. The Buddha achieved Enlightenment as he sat in meditation beneath the Bo-Tree. As a consequence of his shattering mystical experience, he believed that he had the secret of the cure for the suffering and dissatisfactions of life in this world. We have records of the inaugural visions of some of the Old Testament prophets, of the experiences that told them something profoundly important about God and that spurred them on to teach men in his name. It was through such experiences that Muhammad began to preach the unity of Allah—a preaching that had an explosive impact upon the world from Central Asia to Spain. One cannot read the Upanishads, the source of so much of Hindu doctrine, without feeling the experience on which their teachings are founded. The most striking passage in the *Bhagavadgita*, perhaps the greatest religious document of Hinduism, is that in which the Lord reveals himself in terrifying splendour to Arjuna. Arjuna is overwhelmed by awe and filled with utter devotion. We have already remarked on the seminal importance of St. Paul's similar experience on the Damascus Road.

The words of Jesus Christ reveal his sense of intimate closeness to the Father; there is little doubt that this rested upon highly significant personal experiences. These and other examples can be given of the crucial part played by religious experience in the genesis of the great faiths.

For this reason, it is unrealistic to treat Marxism as a religion: though it possesses doctrines, symbols, a moral code, and even sometimes rituals, it denies the possibility of an experience of the invisible world. Neither relationship to a personal God nor the hope of an experience of salvation or nirvana can be significant for the Marxist. Likewise Humanism, because it fixes its sights on this-worldly aims, is essentially non-religious. Nevertheless, it is necessary for us to examine the impact of these faiths upon the contemporary world. But the main emphasis will be upon the inner side—what religions mean in personal experience, and how they have been moulded by such experience.

There is a special difficulty, however, in undertaking a description of a religious experience. We have to rely upon the testimony of those who have the experience, and their reports must be conveyed to us either by telling or writing. Sometimes accounts of prophetic or mystical experience of important religious leaders have been preserved by oral tradition through many generations before being written down. But for the most part, the individual religious experiences that have influenced large segments of mankind occurred in cultures that knew the art of writing.

This means that the experience occurred in the context of the existing religions which already had a doctrinal dimension. This raises a problem for us in our attempt to understand the unique religious experience of the prophets or founders of religions, for their experiences are likely to be interpreted in the light of existing doctrines, as well as clothed in the mythological and symbolic forms of the age. There is less difficulty when we consider the 'lesser' figures of the religions—not the founders, but those saints and visionaries who come after. They interpret their experiences in terms of received doctrines and mythologies.

For these reasons, it is not easy to know about a given report which of the elements in it are based, so to say, purely on the experience itself, and which are due to doctrinal and mythological interpretation. To some extent the problem can be overcome by comparing the reports of men of different cultures—such as India and the West—which had virtually no contact during the periods crucial for the formation and elaboration of the dominant religious beliefs.

Moreover, it is worth noting that there is a *dialectic* between experience and doctrine. Thus, though the Buddha, for example, took over elements from the thought-forms of his own age, he was genuinely a creative teacher, who introduced new elements and transmuted the old. The Old Testament prophets fashioned a genuinely original ethical monotheism from an existant belief in Yahweh. The changes they made in the simple tribal religious teaching they inherited can be understood, to some degree, in terms of the impact of the personal religious experiences that were revelatory for these men. Thus experience and doctrinal interpretation have a dialectical relationship. The latter colours the former, but the former also shapes the latter. This book will attempt to exhibit this dialectic at work.

This dialectical interplay also helps us to understand some of the features of personal religion at a humbler level. The Christian, for example, is taught certain doctrines and mythological symbols by his parents. He learns to call God 'Our Father'; he is instructed to believe that the world is created by God and sustained by God. These ideas will at first simply be 'theoretical' as far as the young Christian is concerned, on a par with other non-observable theories he learns about the world, such as that the earth goes round the sun. But suppose he progresses to a deeper understanding of the Christian faith through a particular personal experience, or through his response to the ritual and ethical demands of the religion. Then he will come to see that in some mysterious way God is a person with whom he can have contact; God is not just like the sun, to be thought of speculatively, or to be looked at. Personally, then, he discovers that he can worship and pray to God. In short, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth' will come to have a new meaning for him. In a sense, he will now believe something other than what he first believed. In this way, the interplay between doctrine and experiences is fundamental to religion.

Introduction

Sikh theology possesses a coherence unique to the sant tradition. This brief outline intends to convey something of this coherence and so make the more detailed study which follows clearer by bringing out the inter-relatedness and interdependence of Sikh belief. It has already been asserted that Sikhism grew out of both sant tradition and a general north-west Indian environment where religious variety existed within a Hindu cultural context. No attempt will be made in this section to examine the origins of Sikh concepts unless it is considered necessary for the purpose of their understanding instead, we shall concentrate on simply describing and explaining them.

Sikhism is strictly monotheistic. So firmly is the oneness of God affirmed that it is arguably monistic. Ultimate reality is a unity, God is one without a second. Parmeshur/Parmeshwara (God) is essentially without qualities (nirguna). Consequently, sat (truth) or akal (beyond time) or other negative terms, such as ajuni (not becoming), are among the least inadequate descriptions. However, Parmeshur or Sat is also personal, manifest and possesses qualities (saguna), though God's attributes are never physical, even though anthropomorphisms are used in the Adi Granth's poetry. In manifest form the qualities, Shabad (word), Nam (personality or character), and Guru (enlightener) are communicative and creative. God is the creator, from whom the universe emanates; its existence and its continuing survival depend upon God's will (hukam) which is all powerful.

Human beings are unique in this creation since they alone possess the ability to discriminate and enter into a voluntary relationship of love with God. In the natural state humans see themselves as creations of the Lord and disregard evidence of their own finiteness which mortality and nature's independence of provide. They are characterized by self-reliance (haumai) and at best see the world including themselves – erroneously – as distinct from God. This duality leads to attachment to temporal values, which is maya. The consequence is rebirth (samsara) on the basis of previous actions (karma). There is only one way of achieving liberation (mukti) – by conquering haumai, ceasing to be worldly-minded (man mukh) and becoming God-conscious and God-filled (gurmukh). This can only be done by being aware of the inner presence of God as Shabad, Guru and Nam and by coming completely under their influence. This in turn is only possible because God looks benignly and graciously (prasad, nadar) upon their efforts and as Shabad, Guru and Nam, is self revealing and enlightens and liberates the believer. Because God is within, rituals are unnecessary but right conduct is essential. The mark of the gurmukh is the life of service (seva) in the world as a householder (grihasthi), not a sannyasin (renouncer), because in the state of jivan mukti (liberation whilst still in this corporeal existence) they perceive themselves and the world as part of the one reality to which they are now consciously attached and in which, at death, they will be completely merged.

This brief outline, introducing the most important Sikh terms, is developed and explained in the sections which now follow.

The concept of God

'God is the one, the only one', 'the one without a second'. These are the recurrent observations of the six Gurus whose hymns are contained in the Adi Granth, and of Guru Gobind Singh. As a result there has been some discussion among scholars whether Sikhism is to be described as monistic or monotheistic. It is certainly monistic in the sense that the types of quotation referred to above emphasize an ultimate unity of such a kind that the world derives from God into whom it will be reabsorbed.

When the Creator became manifest all creatures of the earth assumed various shapes. But when you draw creation within yourself, all embodied beings are absorbed in you. (Guru Gobind Singh)

It is certainly true to say that Guru Nanak believed in a personal God who could be worshipped and loved. This understanding of God was derived from experience. When he was taken to God's court, as he put it, he became aware of God as one, as personal and as pervading the universe. He was given a cup of the nectar of God's name to drink and was commanded to go into the world to preach the divine name, but from then on he not only found him within himself, he perceived God as 'pervading all forms, all castes and all hearts' (AG 223).

God as male/female

In recent years the feminist movement has become active in the religions. One concern it has turned its attention to is the use of sexist language to describe God. It asserts that for as long as God is addressed as 'Father', 'Lord' or 'he' attitudes to women will continue to be of the kind which lack respect for their spirituality and consider them to be inferior members of God's creation and the church as well as society at large. Their views are eminently justified. God, according to Sikh teaching, is beyond the categories of male and female. They are attributes of the creation, not the creator:

The wise and beautiful Being (purukh) is neither a man or a woman or a bird. (Guru Nanak, AG 1010)

Like wealth they are maya in the sense that they have their place. God chose to decide that human beings and other creatures should reproduce through the union of male and female and gave them to one another for support and companionship, but lust or excessive attachment can separate the devotee from God to whom, ultimately, the only true attachment should be:

God, the one, dwells within all but is revealed only to those who receive grace. (AG 931)

The emphasis on the one and on the divine presence within every human being would be seen as preventing the conclusion being drawn that God is seen to possess characteristics of gender. Sikhs will frequently utter the words:

You are my mother and father, we are your children (AG 268),

as they occur in a verse by Guru Arjan used at the close of congregational worship, and:

You are my father, you are my mother,

You are my kinsman, you are my brother. (AG 103)

In these passages it is the love, care and protection of God which is being referred to, not gender. In the same way when devotees are described as God's brides (AG 763), or brides whom God enjoys (AG 21), we are invited to think of spiritual union, not sexual.

When the Guru Granth Sahib is translated into English, or other languages, there is a temptation and a need to amplify its terse poetical verses. So, where the personal pronoun may be missing in the gurmukhi original 'he' or 'him' is often inserted. (Women might point out that the existing translations are all made by men!) This custom, together with the inclination of the Gurus to use such names as Hari, Gobind, and others taken from Hindu mythology and relating to male forms of deity, can easily lead writers into presenting a male concept of God as being Sikh.

The Mul Mantra, which is said to have been the Guru's first poetic utterance, made soon after the Sultanpur experience, is a summary of Sikh beliefs. It reads:

This Being (God) is One; the truth; immanent in all things; Sustainer of all things; Creator of all things. Immanent in creation. Without fear and without hatred. Not subject to time, formless. Beyond birth and death. Self-revealing. Known by the Guru's grace.

The symbol representing 'Ik oankar', there is one God, is found on the canopy above the Adi Granth in the gurdwara. It is an immediate reminder of the symbol 'Om' which may be seen in a similar position in Hindu temples, though here the canopy is placed over pictures or statues of the deities. The coincidence is intentional. Ik oankar like Om stands for the one primal reality. Of Om the Katha Unpanishad states:

That which the Vedas declare, that which all austerities utter, that in desire of which men become students, that word I tell you briefly is Om. That word is even Brahman, the Supreme. (2:15)

In the words of Guru Nanak:

The One [oankar] created Brahma, The One fashioned the human mind, From the One came mountains and ages. The One created the Vedas. (AG 929)

This Being may be experienced but cannot be known by the mind, and is beyond comprehension. The Guru can only lament his inadequacy when confronted with the ultimate reality of the all-pervading Being:

O mother, the attributes of God cannot be comprehended, and without actually seeing one cannot say anything about God. How is the One to be described, O mother? (AG 1256)

Strictly speaking God is pure being, without qualities (nirguna) and therefore Guru Nanak uses Sat (truth), 'Eternal truth is his name', as some translations of the Mul Mantra read:

Only your functional names have I been able to describe. Your oldest name is Eternal Reality. (AG 1083)

'Sat' is itself a functional name significant for theology, personal belief and ethics, for life must be based on trust in God and truthfulness. Sikhs regard Sat as safer than other names given to God, although these are also found in the Adi Granth. Ram, Mohan (beautiful), Gobind (World Lord), Hari, even Allah or Khuda (Creator), taken from Hinduism and Islam, occur in the scriptures. For example, 'He is Allah, Alakh, Agam, Kadur, Karanhar, Karim' (AG 64). Manmohan Singh's translation reads, 'He is the unseen, inscrutable, inaccessible, omnipotent and bounteous creator', which hides the point that Guru Nanak was using Muslim names of God in such a way as to imply that all were acceptable but to be interpreted only as attributes of the One who is beyond names. However, each evokes some preconception, each can provide a stopping place which is short of the ultimate, therefore the abstract term 'Sat' is preferred by Guru Nanak though occasionally God is addressed as 'Anami' (without a name). Because functional names can be applied, eg Sat Nam (name) and Sat Guru (True Guru), it may be said that God is saguna with attributes as well as nirguna, but Sikhism rejects the view that God ever assumes any physical form, either animal or human.

The rest of the Mul Mantra is concerned with the functions of deity. First, God is creator, immanent in the universe. There are no creation stories, only the expression of a belief that the universe is an emanation of God who willed its existence. The situation before time was as follows:

For millions of years there was nothing but darkness over the void. There was neither earth nor sky, only the Infinite Will. There was neither night nor day, sun nor moon and God was in a state of trance [Samadhi]. The sources of creation did not exist, there was no speech, no air, no water, no birth, no death, no coming or going, no regions, no seven seas, no worlds above or below. The trimurti of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva did not exist. There was no other only the One. There was neither male or female, jati or birth, pain or pleasure. There was no caste or religious garb, no brahmin or khatri. No Vedas or Muslim kitab existed, smirits or shastras. No reading of Puranas. No sunrise or sunset. (AG 1035/6)

This is a paraphrase of a lengthy statement which denies the existence of duality of anything until God called it into being. For reasons known only to God the decision was made to bring the universe into being. It was experience not metaphysics which concerned the Guru:

The Infinite One's might became enshrined within all but God is detached and without limit or equal. In creation nature and inanimate nature came from the existing void. From God's Being [sunte] came air, water and the world, bodies and the divine spirit with them. Your light is within fire, water and living beings and in your Absolute Self lies the power of creation.

From the Absolute emanated Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva: from God came all the ages... All that springs from God merges with God again. By God's play the nature has been created and by the shabad the wonder has become manifest.

From God's own Being has come day and night, creation and destruction, pleasure and pain.

The godly-minded remain stable and detached from the effect of good or ill and find their home in God. (AG 1057)

Sikhism has no difficulty in coming to terms with scientific theories of evolution, in fact they find them congenial to the belief in an expanding universe derived from the mind of God. Their opposition is not to evolution but to a materialism which regards the universe as self-explanatory and self-existent.

Those who hold such views are the victims of deception: 'The world without the True One is merely a dream' (AG 1274); they will waken to disillusionment, for:

God who is eternal, wise and omniscient is the master of destiny. The world, on the other hand, is fickle and inconstant. (AG 1109)

The world is even described as God's pastime (lila), but not in such a way that God is to be seen as fickle. Belief in God as Truth sees God as moral and the basis for morality, in the sense that everything depends upon God for existence: 'Seated in the creation God looks on the intended pastime with delight' (AG 463).

The Lord is also described as fearless and without hatred. Man lives in constant dread of hunger, sickness or death; in Hindu mythology the gods are often afraid and frequently engage in vindictive wars, plots and deceitful tricks as they struggle for power. In the view of Guru Nanak a man should possess only awe in God's presence, not fear:

To be possessed by any fear but God's is vain; all other fears are but phantoms of the mind. (AG 151)

Sikhs should find their anxieties banished as they experience union with God.

The Guru's servants are pleasing to God who forgives them and they no longer fear death's courier. God dispels the doubt of devotees, enjoying union with them. Free from fear, limitless and infinite the creator is pleased with truth. (AG 1190)

The terms 'timeless, formless, beyond birth and death' must be considered together and one of them, 'beyond birth' (ajuni), has been given a section to itself, such is its importance. These words are to be understood by reference to their popular Hindu context. In the life of village India and its festivals Krishna, one of the principal deities, was born at Vrindavan, and his birthday is celebrated in late July or early August. In some myths the gods and goddesses die. It must be acknowledged that in the story of the Bhagavad Gita a much different view of incarnation is presented. It was not the profundities of this concept which the Guru had in mind, but the much more earthy anthropomorphic stories which led to what he regarded as futile superstition. An anthology of such stories is available in Hindu Myths (O'Flaherty, 1975). God is personal but not anthropomorphic; God does not grow old or become wearied by effort or human supplications.

Time is God's servant not master; as the cause of change, God is not affected by change. Sometimes one Hindu god is enlightened by another. This is a way of arguing sectarian superiority, but in the teachings of Guru Nanak, God is self-enlightened and the one source of enlightenment.

Finally, we come to that phrase of the Mul Mantra which states that God is known to man by the Guru's grace. The concept of grace will be discussed in on page 80. The immediate difficulty is the word 'Guru'. As the section on 'Guru' notes the term may refer to a human preceptor or to God manifest as the word (shabad). There is no agreement among scholars as to which interpretation is correct here. It is suggested that the Guru is God for the following reasons. First, it would be uncharacteristic of Guru Nanak to assert his importance to the extent of suggesting that only through him or at his pleasure is God made known. Second, the Sikh view of revelation is one which insists that God is always active in the process of revelation, that this preceded the human Gurus and also takes place beyond the teaching of the Gurus, through other inspired beings. Finally, the subject of the rest of the Mul Mantra is God and it seems logical to suppose that this is also the subject of the phrase being discussed here. The assertion would seem to be that just as God is self-enlightened so God is the enlightener who cannot be discovered by philosophical study; austerities will not compel appearance and incantations, sacrifices or hymns of devotion cannot induce divine manifestation:

God does what God pleases. No one can tell God what to do. (AG 2)

The initiative is always God's.

Guru Nanak's concept of God apparently leaves little place for free will because there is no room for dualism. Everything that happens has been predetermined and occurs because of the divine will. By this command (hukam) both good and evil happen: 'God drives all according to the hukam, God's pen writes our deeds' (AG 1241):

Through the Divine Will greatness is won, some become high and some low; some get joy and some pain; some are lost in transmigration and some are blessed. (AG 1)

However, this is not the complete story. Right living cannot achieve release but it can lead to a better life in the next round of existence:

Good actions may procure a better form of life, but release comes only through grace. (AG 2)

Humanity is always free to accept the Guru's word or reject it even if the opportunity to hear it in the first place is given by God. In keeping with the view that God is the only reality, and self revealing is the belief that only divine revelation occurs, people discover the immanent presence of God. Like Kabir, Lalla and many other saints, the idea of God residing 'at home' is very strong in the teaching of the Gurus. Consequently Guru Nanak recommended the householder stage of life as the one in which his followers should attain God-realization and explore its meaning. Guru Tegh Bahadur expressed this view most forcibly:

Why do you go to the forest to find God who lives in all and yet remains distinct? The Divine Being dwells in you as well, as fragrance resides in a flower or the reflection in a mirror. God abides in everything. See God, therefore, in your own heart. (AG 684)

However, unlike some of the other mystics the Sikh asserts that a distinction between God and humankind does remain even after God-realization. Guru Arjan wrote:

God lives in everything, and dwells in every heart, yet is not blended with anything; God is a separate entity. (AG 700)

Despite this stress upon immanence God is also transcendent. The passage quoted above insists on separateness and frequently God is described as the Transcendent One. In the Japji, Guru Nanak says

God is great and enthroned highly with a name is higher than the highest. (AG 2)

Ultimately, although a person discovers the One who is within him they recognize that it is more correct to regard themselves as existing within God. There is no place for pantheism in Sikh thought. The term panentheism is much more appropriate, for everything owes its meaning to God in whom it exists.

O wise and all knowing God, you are the river. How can I, the fish within you measure your limits. Wherever I look I find no one but you and if ever I were to leave you I would perish. (AG 25)

The enlightened, God-filled person experiences everything as existing within God and is also aware of God as immanent, but in the natural state humanity is like a fish who is oblivious of the water in which it swims. It is to this state and his release from it that we must now turn.

The Sikhs: their religious beliefs and practices – Cole W O and Sambhi P S (Sussex Academic, 1995) 'Ethics', pages 142-152

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Sikh ethics are based upon three fundamental concepts – first, that the principles kirt karo, nam japo and vand cako, work, worship and charity, should dominate one's complete life. Second, that self-reliance (haumai) is the great enemy of God realization and that it manifests itself in the five evils of lust, anger, greed, materialism and pride. Activities which result from any of these vices should be avoided. This is best done by practising the virtues of contentment, patience, the service of others and humility, which is considered to be the lynchpin of them all. Guru Nanak once remarked, 'Sweetness and humility are the essence of all virtues' (AG 470).

The householder basis of ethics

It is as a householder (grihasthi), a member of a family, not as one who has withdrawn from the world either to become a student or a hermit, that a Sikh should explore the meaning of God-realization. Again the Guru said, 'The householder who gives all that can be afforded to charity is as pure as the water of the Ganges' (AG 952).

Putting the principles into practice is difficult because the requirement to live like a lotus in a dirty pond, to be in the world but not attached to it, to radiate beauty and remain pure, is hard. It is easier to turn away from the social responsibilities but asceticism and renunciation are rejected. Instead Guru Nanak commanded:

Remain in towns and near the main high roads, but be alert. Do not covet your neighbour's possessions. Without the Name we cannot attain inner peace nor still our inner hunger. The Guru has shown me the real life of the city, the real life of its shops, it is the inner life. We must be traders in truth, moderate in our eating and sleeping. This is true yogism. (AG 939)

Caste

The predominant Hindu culture in a Mughal imperial context determined which social concerns should dominate Sikh teaching. Consequently caste and the status of women assume considerable attention in the teachings of the Gurus. The religious implications of the caste system were rejected by the very fact that the Gurus were Khatris not Brahmins. Whilst they had a right and responsibility to know the Vedas they had no business to teach them.

In fact they replaced vedic knowledge with their own and asserted a divine initiation into guruship. Using the vernacular instead of Sanskrit they went even further against the Brahminic tradition, as set out in the Laws of Manu, by preaching to the lowest castes and accepting them into the Sikh Panth. The Harmandir at Amritsar was given four doors to be open to all four castes, and Guru Arjan said of the Adi Granth:

This divine teaching is for everyone, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. Whoever utters the Name which lives in all hearts, under the Guru's instruction, is delivered from the Dark Age [Kali Yug]. (AG 747)

The caste system was condemned primarily because it was a practical denial that God is one and the creator and sustainer of all life:

God's light pervades every creature and every creature is contained in the Divine Light. (AG 469)

The consequence of this, as the Guru discovered, was that the Shudra as well as the Brahmin could attain God-realization. Many of the lower caste might receive enlightenment, for they were already of humble status though haumai could stand in anyone's way. Man came from one clay, and at death would return to the same dust be she a princess or washerwoman or he priest or cobbler:

In the hereafter caste and power do not count, for every soul appears there in its true colours. (AG 469)

As the aim of the God-realized person was to live on earth as he would live beyond death in the presence of God so he was instructed:

Know people by the light which illumines them, and do not ask what their caste is. In the hereafter no one is distinguishable by caste. (AG 349)

Guru Nanak's primary reason for attacking the caste system was theological rather than social. Although all the Gurus attacked it and the adoption of the names Singh and Kaur as well as the institution of the langar (common kitchen) were successful attempts to remove caste distinction within the panth, the message of Sikhism is concerned with liberating the atman or joti more than ameliorating social conditions. The elimination of caste even within the community has only been partial. Though Sikhs will eat together in the langar, worship together and share karah parshad, marriages are still usually arranged between members of the same subgroup be it Arora, Ramgarhia or Jat.

Peace, war and social justice

The doctrine of non-violence (ahimsa) permeates India as strongly as the social phenomenon of caste. It is usual to read that Guru Nanak was a pacifist and that Guru Gobind Singh changed the religion by creating the militant Khalsa. Elsewhere we have already noted that the transformation began with Guru Hargobind acting upon the advice of his father to arm himself and his followers. Here it is necessary to question the view that the early Gurus were pacifist. The fact of the matter seems to be that pacifism was not an issue. Guru Nanak was a spiritual preceptor who also told those who became his disciples how to order their lives. His immediate successors were responsible for spreading the same message and establishing the community. After Babur's invasion in the early sixteenth century, the Punjab enjoyed peace until Emperor Akbar's death and better government and security than it had known for several centuries. Only later when Mughal policy alienated the Sikhs as well as other indigenous groups was there violent unrest. When Guru Arjan told his son to arm the Sikhs he does not seem to have considered himself to be creating a new doctrine and rejecting an established tradition, but merely responding to the changed needs of the time. He was also rejecting the Mughal regulation that only Muslims and Rajputs should be allowed to bear arms. It was the changed religious situation that forced Sikhs to distinguish allegiance to the Panth from loyalty to the state in certain circumstances. Guru Nanak's encounter with the invading Mughals at Saidpur in 1521 provides an interesting insight into his approach to violence. The town was taken and plundered by Babur's army from Khurasan and the Guru was taken captive. As he tramped along in the company of other men, women and children whose lives had been spared he composed a hymn, part of which reads:

It is your will, O God! Honour and dishonour both are your gifts. You bestow one or the other at your pleasure. O people if you had thought of God in time and taken heed this retribution would not have fallen on your heads. O kings, if you hadn't lost all wisdom amid self-indulgence and pleasure this misery wouldn't have befallen the land. Now the armies of Babur are spreading across the country. No one can eat in peace. How hard it is for the captives. The times of worship and prayer pass by unused. These Indian women have nowhere to sit and cook, to bathe or anoint themselves by putting the frontal mark on their foreheads. They never gave God a thought, now they have no time for God remembrance. (AG 417)

His tone is that of the prophet declaring that Babur's invasion is the chastisement of God. In fact a few verses later he makes this explicit:

Today Rhurasan seems to be yours, why not India? Why have you made that land yours and terrified this by the terrible threat of retribution? Are you pitiless, Creator of all? You have sent Yama [god of death] disguised as the Mughal.

He questions God:

Did you feel no pity for what happened, for the screams of those who cried in agony?

He concludes by saying that all, victor and victim, should remember that they are in his sight and that hope lies only in serving God:

You see even the smallest crawling creatures and the worm that nibbles the corn. That one alone can win merit who has accepted death in life, who has put down the lower nature and lives hourly in the spirit and who, moment by moment, loves, serves and remembers you. (AG 360)

In keeping with his teaching the Guru provided spiritual comfort for the prisoners. He also asked Babur for their release, charging him to rule India wisely and with justice, but he left no one in doubt that political solutions were inadequate for what were ultimately spiritual problems. What little attention the early Gurus give to politics in their hymns does not seem to be pacifist. Guru Nanak condemned the Kshatriya (politician) caste for neglecting their duties:

The Kshatriya have abjured their dharma and taken to an alien one. The whole world has assumed the same caste and the rule of righteousness has lapsed. (AG 663)

The caste all had adopted was that of self-interest. Guru Amar Das characterized the true Kshatriya as follows:

He alone is a Kshatriya who is brave in good deeds. He yokes himself to charity and alms giving. Within the field bounded by the protecting fence of justice he sows seed which benefits everyone. (AG 1411 see also AG 469 where Guru Angad adds that Nam Simran is a duty which is common to all varnas)

During the period of Guru Gobind Singh the struggle against Mughal authority, which had continued intermittently for two generations, became a crusade at times. Among his other writings the Guru sent an admonitory letter to the Emperor Aurangzeb, known as the Zafarnama. In this he took the Emperor to task for the perjury of his officials who had attacked the Guru's forces after a peaceful withdrawal from Anandpur had been arranged in 1704. He also blamed Aurangzeb for his misuse of power and chided him on his unholy alliance with idol-worshipping rajas when he described himself as an idol-breaker! In this Letter of Admonition he named him not bhut shikan (idol breaker) by which he was popularly known, but paiman shikan (oath breaker).

The Guru accepted the idea of the just war and enunciated it in a famous couplet from his Zafarnama.

*When all efforts to restore peace prove useless and no words avail,
Lawful is the flash of steel, it is right to draw the sword.*

His verses differ from those of his predecessors most significantly in their use of military metaphors and their references to the struggle against tyranny. Nevertheless he taught that besides only being undertaken as a last resort, it should always be defensive, for the protection of the oppressed and the cause of liberty. The Sikh should never be the first to draw the sword. An epitaph upon his life and a conclusion to the discussion of the Sikh attitude to violence might be the epilogue to one of his own epics, the Story of Chandi (the goddess Durga):

Grant me this boon, O God, from your bounty, May I never refrain from righteous acts.

May I fight every foe in life's battle without fear and claim the victory with confidence and courage.

May my greatest ambition be to sing your praises and may your glory be engrained in my mind.

When this mortal life reaches its end may I die fighting with limitless courage.

The 'just war': dharam yudh

It might be of value to outline the Sikh concept in some detail because not only are Sikhs often depicted by the western media as willing to resort to violence almost without provocation, but it has to be admitted that this has been the conduct of a minority of Sikhs who engaged in what might be described as religious cleansing operations in Punjab during the 1980s when groups of Hindus were massacred, not always in retaliation to attacks on Sikhs in Delhi or Bombay. Guru Gobind Singh provided the setting: 'I have no other ambition but to wage righteous war' (dharam yudh), the emphasis being on righteousness rather than an eagerness for warfare. There should be five conditions:

- 1 It should be a last resort when all other means have failed.
- 2 It should be waged without enmity or the desire for revenge. Perhaps he had the detachment enjoined by Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita in mind.
- 3 Territory should not be annexed. Property captured should be returned at the ending of hostilities. Looting and the taking of booty are forbidden.

- 4 The army should be made up of soldiers committed to the cause, not mercenaries. It should be disciplined. The Rahit Namas of the Guru, codes of conduct, said the soldiers 'should not smoke or drink or molest the women folk of their adversaries' (often considered to be spoils of war at this time).
- 5 The minimum of force should be used to achieve the objective. When it has been achieved hostilities should cease.

Vegetarianism

Vegetarianism is another form in which the Hindu doctrine of non-violence is expressed. Here the position of Sikhs is far from clear. Many Sikhs will not eat any form of meat, rejecting fish as well as eggs. For some, however, the cow is a forbidden animal and most probably they do not eat beef. In the langar, however, meat is never served so no visitor is embarrassed in consequence. The practice of the Gurus is uncertain. Guru Amar Das ate only rice and lentils but his abstemiousness cannot be regarded as evidence of vegetarianism, only of simple living. Guru Nanak seems to have eaten venison or goat, depending upon different janam sakhi versions of a meal he cooked at Kurukshetra which evoked the criticism of Brahmins. Pages 1289 and 1290 of the Guru Granth Sahib contain a number of verses which can only be read as a rejection of the belief that flesh-eating is polluting and should be avoided. 'We are born from flesh, the spirit (jiu) lives in flesh', is the refrain. 'When one is taken from the womb of flesh one takes a mouthful of milk from teats of flesh.' He refers to myths in which the gods sacrifice animals and asserts that meat-eating is permitted in the Hindu Puranas and the Qur'an, and has been accepted in all the four ages of the Hindu time cycle. 'Fools quarrel over flesh,' he says, 'but they do not know and meditate on God.'

One of the commandments laid upon a Khalsa member is that of not eating meat slaughtered according to Muslim practice. Sikh vegetarians see this as a rejection of a particular method of slaughter, not a permission to eat meat killed in some other way. However, we consider that the prohibition must be seen as permitting the eating of meat killed at a stroke and not bled to death. Vegetarianism not a universal Hindu custom and the Jats and other groups in the Punjab were meat-eaters. For the Sikh of today vegetarianism is a matter of personal conscience.

Woman

The status of women has always been the concern of a religion which asserted the equality of mankind. To condemn caste distinction and condone widows being burned on their husbands' funeral pyres or having little place in religious or social life seemed hypocritical:

Call everyone noble, none is lowborn: there is only one potter, God, who has fashioned everyone alike. God's is the one light that pervades all creation. (AG 62)

The corollary of Guru Nanak's command was respect for women. Yet often they were despised. Menstruation and childbirth were polluting, celibacy was preferable to marriage, a widow brought ill-luck upon those with whom she came in contact. Often death on the funeral pyre could be more attractive than the ordeal of loneliness and isolation that lay before her. Guru Nanak denounced the prevalent Hindu attitude:

It is through woman, the despised one, that we are conceived and from her that we are born. It is to woman that we get engaged and then married. She is our life-long friend and the survival of our race depends on her. On her death a man seeks another wife. Through woman we establish our social ties. Why denounce her, the one from whom even kings are born? (AG 473)

Women served as missionaries during the fifteenth century and when Guru Gobind Singh introduced the new initiation rite in 1699 it was significant that his wife placed the sugar crystals in the water. According to Hindu thought she could have defiled and nullified the ceremony.

Sikhs are monogamous and marriage is a religious ceremony not a civil contract. It takes place in public in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. When Raja Hari Chand and his queen visited Guru Amar Das he gave her a pair of shoes to indicate that the ideal life is that in which man and woman become one, a pair, each essential to the other. The whole basis of the Sikh householder life depends upon the strength of the marriage partnership. Divorce is discouraged, but possible. The remarriage of widows is accepted and may take place in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib, not merely by the ignominious Punjabi practice of placing a bed sheet over her head in the presence of relatives and members of the biradari. Chadar pauna or kareva is, however, a common form of widow remarriage. When widows remain unmarried they are to be respected and allowed their full place in the life of the family and the community. They may, in fact, hold the position of head of family, the eldest son being the executor of his mother's decisions. The language used may say more about the actual state of divorced women and widows than the precepts of the Rahit Maryada. A divorced woman is called chhadi-hoyi, discarded, and a widow is vidhva or randi, without a husband – both are swear words in Punjabi. In each case it is clear that status is derived from the man and lost without him. No wonder the non-Sikh Punjabi fast (vrat) of karva chaut, for the welfare of the husband, is observed as scrupulously by Sikh wives as it is by Hindu! To lose a husband, especially for a young woman, can be more than an emotional tragedy.

Medical and general social care

Other aspects of Sikh ethics need only be mentioned in passing, but the western reader should note that the janam sakhis record many cases of Guru Nanak healing lepers and other sick people. The Guru established a leprosarium at Taran Taran and medical work and the care of the needy have always been regarded as important forms of charitable service (seva).

India and many other nations of south-east Asia do not have welfare states or social care programmes. This must be borne in mind in considering Sikh charitable work. Wherever there are Sikhs, in Cambodia or Thailand, Madras, Bombay or the Punjab, hospitals, schools or smaller ways of helping their own community and other people in the cities in which they live are to be found. Sikh denominational schools are open to pupils of all faiths and bursaries are available to help poor children obtain an education in them.

Hospitals, orphanages and similar institutions cater for anyone who needs their services. A number of establishments are famous throughout the Sikh world and receive donations from Sikhs living in the rich western hemisphere. Some of them are regularly mentioned in the Sikh Review and similar journals. One such institution is the Guru Nanak Niketan at Calcutta. Early in the 1970s, like many other Indian charities, it gave generous help to refugees from Bangladesh. At more normal times it is a base for midwives, medical teams and self-help projects using Gandhian principles. Also in eastern India, in Bihar, is found the Guru Nanak Hospital for Handicapped Children. It is one of the many institutions set up to mark the quincentenary of the first Guru. Donations which enabled 500 blind people to have operations to restore their sight were another way of celebrating this anniversary. Amritsar is naturally the focal point of Sikh charitable work. Among the many examples may be named the Guru Ram Das Hospital and the Central Orphanage, which was set up at the beginning of this century. Near the bus station is the Pingalwara, a centre established by Puran Singh who died in 1993. It provides a home for hopeless cases whose families cannot support them, for the chronic sick and the destitute. The Pingalwara is staffed by volunteers and depends on the charity of Sikhs, Hindus and some Christians in many parts of the world. A feature of many gurdwaras in India is the dispensary, which may be traced back to the Seventh Guru's interest in medicine. On one occasion he helped cure Emperor Shah Jehan's son, Prince Dara. Most gurdwaras also have sarais, lodging houses where pilgrims and travellers may stay.

The list of charitable work could be extended further and we must remember to include such ordinary everyday individual expressions of seva as helping build or repair gurdwaras, fanning the congregation when the temperature is over 90° Fahrenheit in the shade, carrying water to quench the thirst of pilgrims or preparing food for the langar at the Golden Temple. These recall the simple but necessary forms which seva often took in the days of the Gurus. Many villagers will spend a day regularly at the Harmandir Sahib performing acts of seva.

Many of the social and ethical ideals of Sikhism are summed up in the life of the gurdwara and the langar. The sangat is a democratic community. There are no priests or ordained ministers. The village granthi who is responsible for opening the Adi Granth in the morning, closing it in the evening, attending it during the day and performing teaching duties, is a paid officer whose personality may give him considerable influence, but he is only the community's servant. Men, women and children assemble together as theoretical equals at the feet of the Guru Granth Sahib when the sangat meets. Decisions should be made by all its members. In the langar the different castes will work together preparing food and they will sit together to eat it. The sangat and its individual members are expected to strive for the ideal which Guru Nanak stated in his conversations with the yogis:

As the lotus in the pool and the water fowl in the stream remain dry; so one should live, untouched by the world, repeating and meditating on the Name. (AG 938)

It is sometimes summed up in discussion by a saying that a Sikh should be a Brahmin in piety, a Kshatriya in defence of truth and the oppressed, a Vaishya in business acumen and hard work, and a Shudra in serving humanity. A Sikh should be all castes in one person, who should be above caste.

Sikhs and modern, largely medical but also environmental matters is something which has received little attention to date. Generally Sikh doctors seem to accept the medical ethics which prevail in the culture in which they happen to be living. There is one exception to this, however, and that is the use of amniocentesis to discover the gender of a foetus. Specialists in those cultures which stress the importance of sons rather than daughters have made large profits out of using their skills to discover the sex of the child in the womb so that prospective parents can arrange an abortion unless the child is a son. India has outlawed this use of scans and amniocentesis but before this happened Sikhs had denounced the practice as a form of infanticide. The use of abortion and contraception are accepted. Issues such as deciding when to take a patient off a life-support machine or euthanasia are unlikely to present practical problems for most people in India for some years but one would hope to find Sikhs in the Diaspora sharing their theological insights with other people who are concerned about them. The late Puran Singh, famous for the Pingalwara in Amritsar, is an example of a Sikh who objected to deforestation and other policies inimical to the environment as long ago as the late 1960s. He refused government support for his work so that he could remain free to attack such abuses as deforestation which deprived villagers of the fuel they then needed for cooking their food.

New Testament

God – a brief history – Bowker J (Dorling Kindersley, 2002) pages 240-245

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The New Testament

A covenant with all peoples

Paul was tireless in sharing with others his vision of God at work in Christ. When he preached in Athens, some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers asked him, 'May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?' (Acts 17.19). It may have sounded new to the philosophers, because New Testament writers rarely expressed their ideas in philosophical terms (that was to come later). But it was not new to the Jewish people. The understanding of God in the New Testament is fundamentally that of the covenant people, the Jews, whom God had called into special obedience and service on behalf of the whole world. They in turn offered themselves in holiness to God (pp. 188-9) with laws to help and guide them. The New Testament writers believed that God had now extended that covenant to include, on the basis of faith, non-Jews (Gentiles) as well: the vocation to holiness remained, but the laws were neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of holiness.

The way, therefore, that God is portrayed in the New Testament is very like that of Jewish scripture. God is faithful, wise, and true; God is merciful and just, even in anger; God is the God of peace, of hope, of comfort, and of love. Above all God seeks to bring healing and redemption to the whole world. It is never questioned or doubted there is only one who is truly God (pp. 178-9). Other so-called gods are foolish and dangerous inventions: to eat food offered to idols is to sit down at a meal prepared with poison. And yet, without compromising that absolute sovereignty and uniqueness of God, Jesus is related to God in an equally unique way. Particularly striking is the way that the New Testament writers claimed the Jewish Bible for Jesus, seeing him as the fulfilment of the purpose of God from the moment of creation onwards, as well as the fulfilment of specific texts. They did this sometimes without any reference to the original meaning of the text. Thus Matthew 1.23 quotes a text that referred originally to the birth of a royal child and may in the Hebrew have had no reference to a virginal conception, and 2.15 quotes a passage from Hosea that referred originally to the Exodus. But the point is not whether the New Testament writers imposed their own meaning on texts in the past, which at times they clearly did, but rather that in this way they could emphasize how exactly Jesus, in his life, death, and resurrection, was the continuation and fulfilment of the purpose of God throughout the whole Biblical period.

But how can Jesus be so closely related to God and yet still be so unequivocally human? Seeing the relationship as one of Father and Son (as Jesus did himself) expressed the dynamic nature of that relationship. The New Testament also continues the Biblical portrayal of God present to people in the world as Holy Spirit: the Holy Spirit is God present to particular people inspiring and changing them in many ways. The word 'spirit' meant originally 'breath', and hence it came to express the way in which God breathes into and thus inspires (the Latin *inspiro* means 'I breathe into') such people as prophets. The Jews believed that the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn, as part of the punishment, at the time of the Exile. But Christians believed that the Holy Spirit had been present to the life of Jesus and was continuing to inspire and change their own lives with gifts of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5.22).

All this left two major questions:

- How can the nature of God and human nature be combined in the one person of Jesus? That is the question of Christology
- How can God be absolutely and uniquely one and yet be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? That is the question of the Trinity, of what has to be said about the inner nature of God if justice is to be done to the evidence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit recorded in the New Testament

Those were to be major questions in the future. From the outset, it was the person of Christ, much more even than his teaching, that made the Christian story of God take off in such a radically new way. Far more than that, it remains the reason why Christians find their access to God in and through the risen and ascended Christ, as this prayer of devotion makes clear:

*'Jesus, may all that is you flow into me.
May your body and blood unite me to yourself,
May your passion and death be my strength and life.
Jesus, with you by my side enough has been given.
May the shelter I seek be the shadow of your cross.
Let me not run from the love which you offer,
But hold me safe from the forces of evil.
On each of my dyings shed your light and your love.
Keep calling to me until that day comes,
When, with your saints, I may praise you for ever'*

The Person of Christ

How is Jesus related to God?

In about the year 318CE, the Bishop of Alexandria, Alexander, called his clergy together and gave them a lecture on God – or, more specifically, on the unity that exists in the Trinity in which all Three Persons are equally God. A presbyter present disagreed so profoundly with the Bishop that he stood up and said so:

'If we say that Jesus is the Son of the Father, it means that he was brought into being [begotten] at some point in time; from which it follows that there was a time when he did not exist [and is thus not equal to God]' (Socrates, 1.5)

The presbyter who said these words was Arius, originator of doctrine of Arianism. His view that the Son had not existed eternally in the Godhead was summarized in a Greek phrase *en pote hote ouk en*, 'there was a time when he was not'.

It seems like a small point from a distant world, but in fact it was the beginning of a major uproar and conflict, the consequences of which have left their mark on the Christian understanding of God ever since. From the first, Christians had to account for the fact that Jesus was clearly a real human being and yet that he had brought into the world through his own person the effect and power of God, whom he called *Abba*, Father. He was therefore distinct from God and yet brought God life in and through himself. How could the nature of God be united with human nature in the person of Jesus Christ in such a way that God was not compromised or diminished (like a genie stuffed into a bottle) and that the humanity of Jesus was not overwhelmed (like dry land submerged under a flood)?

All the different views held by people on who or what Jesus really was had in common the belief that it is simply impossible for God to be united with a human life and body. Their present-day equivalents are likely to believe that God does not even exist, so that the claim that Jesus was uniquely related to God is held to have arisen from mistaken early believers who wanted to give Jesus the highest possible honour after his death, rather like a posthumous prize or decoration.

The search for the best (or the least inadequate) way to understand God in relation to Jesus still goes on today. The challenge lies in the fact that all the views are correct. But they are correct only up to a point. Jesus resembled many of the ways in which, at that time, it was believed that people could be God-related, and yet, crucially, he was unlike all of them. And the word 'crucially' is literally meant. It comes from the Latin *crux*, 'a cross': Jesus had died on a cross and yet was known to be alive. Through those events, the way for others to pass from death to life was opened up: 'If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you' (Romans 8.11). That could not be achieved by any human, no matter how gifted. It could be achieved only by God and even then, not by God working at a distance, like a football manager on the bench, shouting and gesticulating while the players get on

with the game. It could only be achieved (if it was achieved; and after the resurrection, Christians had no doubt that it *had* been achieved) by God becoming involved in the game and taking it to a different result. But it was exactly that which seemed impossible: how *could* God be involved in a human life and death without becoming less than God? That was the question raised by Arius.

Jesus and God

One Being With the Father

During the reign of the Roman Emperor Trajan (98-117CE), Pliny, one of his provincial governors, wrote to him to ask how he should deal with some apparently disloyal people called Christians. Those who, under threat, worshipped the statue of the emperor and cursed Christ were fine, but was he right to execute those who would not? According to Pliny, 'the whole of their guilt, or their error, was that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ as though to a God' (*Letter 96*). In fact they were singing to Christ, not as *though* to a God, but to God. Any account, like that of Arius, saying of Christ that he was less than God, did not seem to them to do justice to the evidence – and evidence not just from the past but also of the present in the continuing Christian experience of God. To them, the only account that seemed to be true was to say of Jesus (as a creed later did say) that he was 'God from God, light from light, true God from true God' (the so-called Nicene creed, though its final form came from a later Church Council).

Neither Arius nor all those who earlier attempted to associate Jesus with God by adoption or promotion seemed to do justice to person and the events that had brought the Church into being. It was not enough to say that Jesus was *like* God in some of the things that he did and said, or that he became *like* God in his own nature – or, in the Greek of the time, that he was *homoiousios* (of a like nature or substance). Jesus had done what only God can do: he had brought people from wrong to right (from sin to salvation) and from death to a new life beyond death. So, people felt, he could not have done that unless he was of the same nature or substance (*homoousios*) as God; the Nicene Creed therefore continues, '... begotten, not made, of one being (*homoousios*) with the Father; through him all things were made'. Those two Greek words (*homoiousios* and *homoousios*), differing by only a single letter, the Greek *iota* (i) point to the storm that raged around Arius. It seems absurd that people should fall out over a single letter – so that, as the historian Gibbon (1737-94) was later to put it mockingly, 'the profane of every age have been able to deride the furious contests which the difference of a single diphthong excited'.

Yet in fact the whole Christian understanding of God turns on the issue. Jesus did not live and act more or less like God in dealing with human need: to *deal* with that need, it had to be *God* who was at work in conjunction with the humanity of Jesus. Jesus did not *become* God, because the One united uniquely to the human nature of Jesus had always been God, pre-existing his manifestation, or incarnation, in the person of Christ. What God always is is always what God, united now with the human person of Jesus, must have been.

Only if that were so could Jesus have rescued people in the way that he did. As Athanasius, (the main opponent of Arius) put it, God became human in order that humans might become God: drowning people cannot be rescued by exhortations from the shore, but only by one who knows and understands their crisis, and who enters into it in order to do for them what they cannot do for themselves. For that reason, the Creed goes on: 'For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate of Virgin Mary, and was made man'. In gratitude for this, those who see the point and realize what has been done for them, kneel before Christ as the Wise Men had knelt in the stable, in worship, adoration, and love. If Christ is not truly God, that worship is a kind of idolatry.

For reasons of rescue and salvation, the early Christians knew that Jesus was both God and man, and uniquely so. In all the many speculations about the ways in which people might be inspired or possessed by God, nothing like this had ever been claimed, let alone described. The Christians were left with the impossibility of trying to explain how this unique conjunction of the human and the divine in one person could have happened.

To some extent, it is easier now than then. We now know how information, in the technical sense, acts as a constraint over all human behaviour, including speech and action, without destroying that humanity. From the record, it is clear that God was, at least in the belief of Jesus, an invariant source of information acting as a constant constraint over his humanity without in any way destroying it. The source of information, therefore, remained independent while being wholly and effectively present in the transformation of that life. Hebrews 4.15 put the point more colloquially by saying that Jesus was tempted in every way like us and yet was without sin. That creates the paradox: God is both wholly present and wholly absent, both within the person of Jesus and yet apart from Jesus, being addressed as Father and supporting him as the Spirit. How could God live, suffer, and die in a small corner of Palestine while at the same time running the universe? It was in answer to that question that the understanding of God as Trinity began to emerge.

Advanced Religious Studies – Reid G and Tyler S (Philip Allan Updates, 2002) ‘The titles of Jesus’, pages 270-271

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Throughout the New Testament Jesus is given a variety of titles and descriptions, many with symbolic meaning:

- **Jesus** – this is a common first name for a Jewish male. It derives from Joshua and means ‘The Lord is my help’.
- **Christ** – this was not part of Jesus’s name, but was a title given to him. It comes from the Greek *Christos* and Hebrew *Mashiah (Messiah)* which mean ‘anointed one’. It was first used to describe anyone entrusted with a divine mission, such as a prophet, priest or king. From this, the notion grew up that an anointed one would one day come from God to save Israel and usher in a new messianic age, the kingdom of God. Many Jews saw the Messiah as the ideal human being who would destroy the enemies of Israel and set up a Jewish kingdom ruled by the line of David. On the Last Day, the Messiah would gather together God’s people for Judgment and life in paradise.
- **Lord** – this was a title given to gods, including God in the Old Testament. It was little used by the Gospel writers, but a great deal by Paul (222 times) to express the idea of Christ’s rule over the entire world.
- **Son of Man** – this was a title that Jesus used to describe himself. It came from the Old Testament and is the form of address used by God when talking to the prophet Ezekiel. It also refers to a heavenly figure mentioned in Daniel 7:13 as one who will some day come down from heaven to bring salvation and judgment. Jesus seems to fulfil the roles attributed to this eschatological figure. He uses this term when he speaks of his messianic authority on earth and in the age to come, and also of his suffering, death and resurrection.
- **Son of David** – this was a Messianic title coming from the Old Testament notion that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David. Jesus’s adoptive relationship with Joseph grafts him onto the Davidic line.
- **Son of God** – in the Old Testament, this phrase was used to describe the King of Israel (Psalm 2:7). In the Gospels it highlights Jesus’s unique relationship with God and for the evangelists it is the pre-eminent title for Jesus. Mark brings his Gospel to a climax with the centurion’s confession at the foot of the cross that ‘*Surely this man was the Son of God*’ (15:39).
- **I am (Ego Eimi)** – ‘I am’ is the name of God, given to Moses in Exodus 3:14. Jesus uses it exclusively in the Fourth Gospel to highlight his own divinity.
- **The Lamb** – at Passover, a lamb would be sacrificed as an atonement for sins. The evangelists see Jesus’s death in the same way. This was itself highlighted by the Old Testament prophet Isaiah who said that the Servant of God (possibly meaning the Messiah) would be ‘*led like a lamb to the slaughter*’ (53:7).

Advanced Religious Studies – Reid G and Tyler S (Philip Allan Updates, 2002) ‘Why did Jesus have to die?’, pages 271-273

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How could Jesus have been brought to the cross by people who were blessed by his signs and wonders? (Jeremias, 1964)

Understanding the death of Jesus is a problem that has puzzled both believers and scholars. The New Testament addresses the issue in two different ways – one that is based upon the historical events of the time that led to Jesus’s death, and the other which offers religious and theological reasons for his death. The two are inevitably interlinked, as the gospel writers demonstrate how the divine plans and purposes are revealed in the working out of the political manoeuvrings in the last weeks of Jesus’s life.

3.1 The historical viewpoint

The Gospels show that Jesus’s words and actions created unrest amongst those who encountered him, particularly the Jewish and Roman authorities. Jesus angered the Jewish religious leaders with his teachings, his healings on the Sabbath and his interpretation of the Law of Moses. He condemned the Pharisees and Sadducees as hypocritical and angered them with his claims concerning his relationship to God. In particular, the cleansing of the Temple market and the triumphal entry into Jerusalem led them to see him as a great danger, not only to their own status and position but also to the religious faith of the people – they feared that the people would accept the teachings of a false Messiah.

At the trial before the Sanhedrin, Jesus was found guilty of blasphemy – for claiming to be the Christ – and was sentenced to death for the ultimate religious crime. However, the Jewish authorities did not have the power to carry out such an execution; that power lay with the Romans. Blasphemy was not a crime under Roman law, and the Gospels record that when Jesus was brought before Pilate, the Jewish leaders instead suggested that he was a danger to the Romans because he had committed the treasonable act of calling himself the King of the Jews. Pilate was not convinced, but condemned Jesus to death because he did not want to risk trouble by upsetting the Jewish leaders. In a historical sense, therefore, Jesus died as a matter of religious and political expediency.

3.2 The religious viewpoint

The death of Jesus has great religious and theological significance that believers claim has consequences for the whole of creation. Much of the language used is symbolic and five particular images of the death of Jesus are offered.

- **Defeat of evil** – Jesus’s ministry has been depicted as a struggle against evil sometimes in the form of the Devil and the forces of darkness (as in the exorcism miracles), and at other times in the form of Jesus fighting against the power of sin in people’s lives. With his death and resurrection, Jesus is seen as having defeated the power of evil and sin for ever.
- **An example** – Jesus’s life of humility and love for others culminates in the sacrifice of his own life to save people from the power of evil. His life is an example to believers, to encourage them to lead lives of humility and self-sacrifice: ‘*Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps*’ (Peter 2:21).
- **A sacrifice** – in the ancient world, animals (and sometimes humans) were sacrificed in the hope of pleasing the gods, to seek favours or as a guilt offering for wrongful actions. In the Old Testament, sacrificial procedures were laid down specifically: ‘*If a person sins and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord’s commands... He is to bring to the priest as a guilt offering a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value. In this way, the priest will make atonement for him for the wrong he has committed*’ (Leviticus 5: 17-18). At the time of the first Passover, the people of Israel are saved by the sacrifice of a lamb – the blood from the lamb being put on the doors of their houses to save them from destruction (Exodus 12:13).

The sacrificial rituals of Judaism were very elaborate – the animals were killed as a reminder to the people that they were sinners who deserved to die. The priest would take the blood of the animal to the altar as a symbol representing the sinner's life being given up to God – the animal, in effect, died in the place of the sinful human. This was called an act of **atonement** and meant that the punishment due for the sins had been carried out. God, in accepting the sacrifice, forgave the human sinner. Jesus was the ultimate sacrificial lamb. In the Last Supper he showed how his death would lead to the forgiveness of sins and the reconciliation of God and humanity: *'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you'* (Luke 22:20), and Paul wrote, *'For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed'* (1 Corinthians 5:7).

- **A ransom** – a ransom is an offering made to free someone else, for example a fee paid to a kidnapper. In the Roman world, it was possible to pay a ransom to set a slave free. The New Testament often refers to humanity as being slaves to sin, and Jesus's sacrifice is the payment of the ransom price to secure freedom from this slavery to sin: *'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many'* (Mark 10:45). *'His death was believed to bring perfect forgiveness and was a perfect offering of obedience to the Father'* (O'Donnell, 1999).
- **Taking humanity's place** – people are seen as being so weighed down by the burden and power of sin that they cannot be freed from it by their own actions, and so Jesus has to die in place of humanity because that is the only way in which humanity can be helped. The prophet Isaiah foretold this in the Old Testament. He spoke of the Suffering Servant who would take the punishment due to the people of God (Isaiah 53). This was later emphasised in 1 Peter 2:24: *'He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds we are healed.'*

This concept is not about God being a judgmental figure demanding death as a punishment for sins, but is about the nature of love. God cannot just dismiss sins any more than a doctor examining a patient with a life-threatening illness can just say 'forget it and it will go away'. Sin must be dealt with and this is done through an act of punishment. However, humanity cannot itself take the punishment because it is too great. Humanity needs help and this is what Jesus gives. His death means that he takes the punishment for humanity, thus freeing them from sin: *'If there is any thing distinctive about the teaching of Jesus, it has to be the way he redefined God, replacing the harsh, confrontational image of judgment and condemnation, with the language of family love and acceptance'* (Drane, 1999).

Why I am not a Christian – Russell B (Routledge Classics, 2004) ‘Defects in Christ’s teaching’, pages 12-13

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Having granted the excellence of these maxims, I come to certain points in which I do not believe that one can grant either the superlative wisdom or the superlative goodness of Christ as depicted in the Gospels; and here I may say that one is not concerned with the historical question. Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did we do not know anything about Him, so that I am not concerned with the historical question, which is a very difficult one. I am concerned with Christ as he appears in the Gospels, taking the Gospel narrative as it stands, and there one does find some things that do not seem to be very wise. For one thing, He certainly thought that His second coming would occur in clouds of glory before the death of all the people who were living at that time. There are a great many texts that prove that. He says, for instance: ‘Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come.’ Then He says: ‘There are some standing here which shall not taste death till the Son of Man comes into His kingdom’; and there are a lot of places where it is quite clear that He believed that His second coming would happen during the lifetime of many then living. That was the belief of His earlier followers, and it was the basis of a good deal of His moral teaching. When He said, ‘Take no thought for the morrow,’ and things of that sort, it was very largely because He thought that the second coming was going to be very soon, and that all ordinary mundane affairs did not count. I have, as a matter of fact, known some Christians who did believe that the second coming was imminent. I knew a parson who frightened his congregation terribly by telling them that the second coming was very imminent indeed, but they were much consoled when they found that he was planting trees in his garden. The early Christians did really believe it, and they did abstain from such things as planting trees in their gardens, because they did accept from Christ the belief that the second coming was imminent. In that respect clearly He was not so wise as some other people have been, and he was certainly not superlatively wise.

But if that is true, is the Torah irrelevant, simply superseded by a universal human morality? Christians sometimes seem to think that Jesus taught that the Torah, which they call ‘the Law’, was abolished, and they tend to quote the Sermon on the Mount (found in the gospel of Matthew, chapters 5–7, and in a rather different version – where it takes place on a plain – in the gospel of Luke, chapter 6) to this effect. Jesus says, ‘You have heard it said’, and continues, ‘But I say to you’, which could sound like a contradiction of the Law. But when you look at it more closely, you see that Jesus was not contradicting the Law at all. He was comparing some rather literalistic traditional interpretations of the Law with a much deeper interpretation, which talks about inner motives as well as outward observances. But he is still talking about the Law. Indeed, the beginning of the sermon should have made that perfectly clear. Jesus says, ‘Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets... not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished’ (5:17, 18). That sounds fairly legalistic. It certainly does not say, ‘Do not worry what the law says, do what I say instead.’

The fact that Jesus was an observant Jew who taught that the Law should be obeyed, but in a deep and inward sense, is confirmed by two key pieces of evidence in the New Testament. First, the apostle Peter, who surely knew very well what Jesus taught, always insisted on keeping the Law, and was shocked by a vision that he had on three occasions which seemed to imply that he should even speak to Gentiles. Second, at a general meeting at Jerusalem, recorded in the book of Acts, chapter 15, there was a heated debate on whether new disciples should keep the Law. There would have been no debate if Jesus had already said they need not bother. And the result of the debate was a compromise— new converts did not have to be circumcised (which saved the men from a rather painful ordeal, given that it was all done with a flint knife, and without anaesthetic), but they still had to eat kosher food. Obviously, giving up the Torah was a gradual and unexpected process, brought about largely by the fact that the new movement was rapidly becoming almost wholly Gentile.

Since this is all so clear in the New Testament, how is it that so many people think Jesus gave up the Law? I suspect it is a bit of anti-Jewish prejudice, which goes along with the ridiculous claim that Jews are legalists, whereas Christians are concerned about the innermost motives of human action. Christians can be very legalistic about the application of their own moral rules, and Jews can very readily read the Torah, as Jesus the Jew probably did, as concerned with inward motives as well as with outward acts.

The fact is that Jesus did care about the Torah, about the statutes and ordinances given by God through the prophet Moses. But he interpreted them in the light of a universal and rigorous application of the principle of ‘loving your neighbour as yourself’, an application which itself derived from a view of God’s love as universal and unlimited. So Jesus taught that anger, lust, infidelity, dishonesty, vindictiveness and hatred are inner motives of the human heart which are all completely opposed to the universal love of God for all creation (that is the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:21–48). To love God truly is to admire and wish to be like God, and that requires rooting out all those motives from the heart. It requires that you should love your neighbour, not just as you love yourself, but as God loves you.

All this was meant as an interpretation of the Torah. But it does seem that you could adopt these principles without keeping the precise rules of the Torah. When the early Christian churches found that they were almost entirely Gentile, they were thus able to renounce the 613 rules of *Torah* – which were, after all, for Jews – while claiming to remain true to the ethical teachings of Jesus. They did not think of themselves, however, as having a totally secular morality. Rather, following the example of the Sermon on the Mount, they tried to give an inward and spiritual meaning to the revealed laws of God.

From 'Jesus and Discipleship' – Corneek G in
Religious Studies Review, Volume 2, No. 2, (Philip Allan Updates, 2005) pages 9-11
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Updates

There is an immediate hundredfold reward for those who walk out on their commitments and dependents and join Jesus on the road; there will be even greater rewards 'in the age to come'.

(Vincent Taylor, *The Passion Narrative of St Luke: A Critical and Historical Investigation*, 2004)

A disciple is a pupil – someone who learns from a teacher. We tend to use the word to refer to the 12 disciples named by Luke in 6:14-16 as Simon (Peter); Andrew; James; John; Philip; Bartholomew; Levi (Matthew); Thomas; James, son of Alphaeus; Simon the Zealot; Judas, son of James; and Judas Iscariot. However, a disciple is anyone who follows Jesus.

According to the Bible, every human being is called to be a disciple – someone who follows God in a relationship of faith and love. In the Old Testament, the creation narratives of Genesis 1-3 show how God created humanity in his own image. Humanity was showered with all the blessings of God's love and lived in a close relationship with him. However, that relationship was broken when humans disobeyed him.

To restore the situation, God sent Jesus Christ – who was, in every sense, the first true disciple. He was a disciple because of the way he lived his life; he was aware of his relationship to God, he knew the significance of that relationship and understood how it would bring in the kingdom of God. Jesus appreciated the nature and demands of his discipleship and obedience to the will of God. He knew he would have to suffer and to die, and that this action would bring salvation to all: 'For the Son of Man... must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation' (Luke 17:24-25).

Discipleship in Luke's Gospel

In *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (1984) I. Howard Marshall observes that 'Disciples are those who believe in Christ and stand in a personal relationship to him as their Lord.' Luke saw discipleship as the lifelong task of following Jesus in a spirit of love and service. It came from accepting God's love and forgiveness and undertaking a commitment to follow Jesus as king. This meant repentance and being prepared to give up everything to follow God's call. The 12 disciples were called by Jesus specifically, giving up everything to follow him: 'Follow me,' Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him' (5:27-28).

Discipleship also required humility. A disciple had to be aware of his or her sinfulness. Pride was a barrier between God and his people and, until it was removed, God could not work in their lives: 'I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance' (5:32). This was shown when Jesus was anointed by the Sinful Woman. She knew of her dependence on God. She repented and anointed Jesus with perfume as a sign of her grateful response for God's forgiveness: 'Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – for she loved much' (7:47).

Luke made it clear that those who became disciples faced a demanding lifestyle; the price of discipleship was everything: 'In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple' (14:33). The disciples received authority from Jesus to act in his name and to preach, heal and cast out demons. When they returned from their mission of proclaiming the coming of God's kingdom by signs and wonders, Jesus said he 'saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven' (10:18).

The disciples acted with the same authority that Jesus himself received from God because their relationship with Jesus was a reflection of Jesus's relationship with God. The signs and wonders they saw were a demonstration of the coming of God's kingdom. They were called to live by the principles of the kingdom. They had to be steadfast and secure in their faith in God: 'Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom' (12:32).

Being a disciple meant having a unique relationship with God – the same relationship the Father had with Jesus. This relationship would endure forever. Disciples were blessed by God and knew things that others could not know: 'Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see, but did not see it' (10:24).

However, the demands of discipleship and maintaining the relationship with God were high. What was important was the decision to follow God and to know how to cope with the demands ahead: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it' (9:24). The disciples had God's help – they faced the hatred of the world, but the Holy Spirit came to their aid in times of trouble: 'When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say' (12:11-12).

Of crucial importance was the disciples' relationship with each other as it reflected God's relationship with them. By loving each other, the disciples learned how to love God. This led to self-knowledge and enabled them to understand better the word of God and the meaning of the kingdom. In this way, they were able to cope in times of trouble and to discover the best course of action in a difficult situation. It was through their fellowship together that God was able to lead them. As Rowan Williams observed in *Silence and Honey Cakes: The Wisdom of the Desert* (2004): 'Our life and our death is with our neighbour.'

Jesus looked for disciples to display an openness of heart and a willingness to live by the principles of the kingdom of God. Disciples lived a life that reflected Christ's relationship with God. Most importantly, they were people who believed that God loved them and made decisions of faith that reflected this belief, which was important because it reversed the fall of Adam and Eve and started the loving relationship with God afresh.

Discipleship in John's Gospel

Certainly the Fourth Gospel is a Gospel for Christian disciples. The Christ of St John invites people not only to live, but also to go on living in him.

(Stephen Smalley, *John, Evangelist and Interpreter*, 1978)

In John's Gospel, a disciple is someone who has responded in faith to Jesus. Crucial to the nature of discipleship is obedience to God through a loving relationship, which is the way to eternal life. This is emphasised throughout the Gospel and underpins the ministry of Christ: 'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full' (10:10). Jesus did not come to judge the world (3:17), but the world will be judged by its response to the person and work of Christ: 'Whoever believes in him is not condemned' (3:18).

The nature of the relationship between the Son and the Father must be mirrored by the relationship of the disciples to Christ. Discipleship is concerned primarily with the relationship between God and his people. Jesus is the Light of the World who brings salvation to those who had previously lived in darkness: 'Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God' (1:12). This is made clear in Jesus's teaching to the inner circle of disciples who gathered around him during his earthly ministry. His discourses with them dealt with the personal relationship between disciple and master and the implications this had for their actions within the world. In John, discipleship is about relationships – with the Father, with Jesus, with fellow disciples, and with those in the community. In *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (1979), Raymond E Brown claims: 'Discipleship is the primary Christian category for John.'

Prayer was the bedrock of discipleship. It was the means by which the disciples related to God and the way in which they learned to hear the voice of God. Through prayer, they discovered God's will and grew in confidence in God's love. These would be important in times of persecution:

'If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him' (14:7).

The relationships between the disciples themselves and the community of believers were also important. It was within these relationships that people began to understand their deepest emotions and the driving forces that shaped their lives; it was not easy to live with God's truths, or to discern good from evil and confront the problems of the world. The demands of discipleship were that decisions had to be made and there needed to be an authority and leadership that could understand and discern the will of God.

Out of this fellowship came the requirement to witness – to spread the teaching of Christ to others. Disciples were asked to bear much fruit, and this was achieved through prayer and by staying close to the Father and abiding in him. A disciple could not work alone: ‘I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing’ (15:5).

Discipleship required a new spiritual birth, unrelated to physical birth (3:3-7). Once the disciple had experienced this new birth, he received eternal life. This gift, according to the author of the fourth Gospel, was the hallmark of discipleship. The disciple passed from death to life into a quality of relationship with God that could not be experienced by those who remained ‘of the world’ (15:19). Disciples passed from judgement to salvation on the basis of their decision to accept Jesus and the one who had sent him.

Disciples were required to love Jesus and to be obedient to his commands: ‘Love one another as I have loved you’ (13:34) and ‘If you love me you will keep my commandments’ (14:15). Discipleship involved opposition and conflict, just as Jesus experienced it himself (15:18). He urged the disciples to rejoice when they shared his sufferings, just as they should rejoice at his death: ‘In the world you will have trouble, but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world’ (16:33). There was nothing the world could present to the disciples that Jesus had not defeated already, and this was made clear by John in Jesus’s triumphant cry from the cross: ‘It is accomplished’ (19:30).

In his final prayer in Chapter 17, Jesus prayed for a unity between disciples of all ages that would mirror the unity of the Father and the Son. Unity was a witness to the world of the disciples’ relationship to God. They lived in truth and knew the experience of joy that came from abiding in the presence of God. This offered confidence to those who would, in the future, choose to follow Christ and become his disciples too.

1 The parables

Much of Jesus’ teaching was done in parables – a common method of teaching amongst the leaders of Judaism. A parable is a short story based on real-life situations that Jesus used to highlight religious truths. (See p. 288 for more about the general nature of parables and their application.)

1.1 Parables of the kingdom

In all the Synoptic Gospels, the writers state that the teaching of Jesus was mainly concerned with the kingdom of God. In the Old Testament God’s kingdom was shown through his mighty works, and by the time of Jesus the people of Israel believed that God would rid the land of their enemies and establish his kingdom on earth. In Luke’s Gospel, the first time that Jesus mentions the kingdom of God is 4:43. It is a simple statement, which Luke uses to highlight how important the theme is: *‘I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God... because that is why I was sent.’* The term ‘kingdom of God’ is used in Luke to refer to the way God acts and intervenes in human history to establish his rule – it refers to God’s work rather than the kingdom he rules, and the good news in Luke is that Jesus is the Son of God who enables God’s rule to be manifested.

In all the Synoptic Gospels, the teaching on the kingdom is complex. Some scholars, such as Schweitzer, claim that Jesus was teaching that there would be an imminent coming of the kingdom. Others, however, such as Dodd, support the view of **realised eschatology** – that is, that the kingdom of God was already present in the person and ministry of Jesus. In turn, Sanders argues that the kingdom is coming in the distant future, possibly after a Day of Judgment. Jesus’s teaching on the kingdom in Luke seems to support all these views. Luke himself does suggest that the coming of the kingdom is close – for example, in 10:9: *‘The kingdom of God is near.’* Yet the writer tends not to convey quite the immediacy of the other synoptic writers. Luke, instead, stresses the notion of joy at the closeness of salvation, when the End will bring the fulfilment of God’s plan.

Thus, in the parable of the pounds (19:12-27) Jesus seems to suggest to the people that there will be a period of waiting before the kingdom comes. Similarly in 9:27, Luke mentions a future coming of the kingdom, linked to the judgment of God: *‘I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.’*

However, Luke’s greatest emphasis is on the rather paradoxical notion that on the one hand the kingdom is already present, yet on the other that it is coming soon. How is this explained? It is explained by reference to the fact that through the teaching of Jesus, the power of the kingdom of God will be manifested: *‘... the kingdom of God is within you’* (17:21). *‘But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you’* (11:20).

This fits in with the Old Testament view that God’s word brings life and change – and in the same way the word of Jesus will bring in the kingdom of God. As Marshall (1984) points out: *‘Luke associates the coming of the kingdom not only with the preaching but also with the mighty works of Jesus which are signs of the activity of God. The coming of the kingdom is firmly tied historically with the ministry of Jesus. From now on, the kingdom is at work...’*

Luke makes considerable use of sayings in which blessings and woes are associated with the kingdom – for example in 6:20, where Jesus makes it clear that the kingdom will be for the poor. In 13:30 and 14:14 Jesus suggests that those who are least on earth will be great in the kingdom. Moreover, in 7:28 Jesus highlights the point that even the least in the kingdom of God is greater than the greatest person outside it. This is not because of any personal qualities, but because he who is in the kingdom belongs to the time of fulfilment. Similarly, those who are more interested in worldly wealth and fail to follow Jesus cannot enter the kingdom (18:25; 29). The message is clear: the kingdom is relevant for humanity now – it is not something they should assume will come in the distant future (18:8), but is present in the ministry of Jesus.

Two parables of the kingdom merit particular examination: the sower and the banquet.

The parable of the sower

The parable (Luke 8:4-15) tells of a sower sowing seeds; some fall on the path and are eaten by birds, some fall on rock and cannot grow properly, some fall among thorns and are choked, and the rest fall on good soil and produce much. In those days, sowers sowed first, then ploughed afterwards, and the parable reveals what happened to the seed before it had a chance to be ploughed into the ground. The seed that falls on the path is eaten by birds; the seeds that fall on rock cannot find sufficient moisture in the soil; whilst the seeds that fall among thorns are choked, because the thorns grow quicker than the wheat. The seeds falling on the good soil produce a great harvest.

When the disciples ask Jesus to explain the parable he tells them that he is entrusting them with *'the secrets of the kingdom of God'* (8:9). Morris (1988) notes: *'Parables both reveal and conceal truth: they reveal it to the genuine seeker who will take the trouble to dig beneath the surface and discover the meaning, but they conceal it from him who is content simply to listen to the story'*.

Nevertheless, this parable deals with the reasons why not everyone who hears the message of the kingdom of God acts upon it. It can only grow if the hearer has faith and a responsive heart. The seeds represent the word of God; sometimes people are never bothered to hear it, or people lack the depth in themselves to take it seriously. Others lose faith at testing times. Yet those who do hear it and accept it will benefit greatly: *'But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop'* (8:15).

The parable of the banquet

In this parable (Luke 14:15-24) a man is holding a great banquet, the invitations are sent but the guests make excuses and do not come. The man then orders his servants to invite new guests, the crippled, the blind and the lame. The search for guests is extensive – not only is the city searched, but also the country lanes – God seeks everywhere for his people who come and celebrate joyfully.

This story highlights the fact that people will be saved and enter the kingdom by responding to God's invitation: *'Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God'* (14:15). This is an image of the messianic banquet, where the righteous will eat with the Messiah. The parable addresses an issue at the heart of the Gospel: the places at the banquet will not be given first to those who are just important by human standards – it is the humble who will receive the seats of honour. Moreover, those who share the feast will not necessarily be the ones who were first invited (the Jews); if they refuse, then new guests (the Gentiles and others who were outcast from conventional Judaism) will take their place. The parable ends on a sombre note: those who declined the invitation have lost their opportunity and will not get another. Morris notes: *'The story of the banquet emphasizes the truth that people are saved by responding to God's invitation, not by their own effort, whereas if they are lost it is by their own fault'*.

1.2 Parables of the lost

Of all the Synoptic Gospels, Luke contains the most parables, and in chapter 15 a distinctive group, known as the parables of the lost, emphasise Luke's theme of seeking God and finding salvation. Moreover, they add a fresh dimension: God does not simply wait for people to find him; he actively helps them to find him and then God's joy is highlighted as a lost sinner is found. The chapter begins with Jesus addressing a crowd of *'tax collectors and sinners'* (15:1) – outcasts from respectable Jewish society, either because they worked for the Romans or because they followed immoral occupations, such as prostitution, disapproved of by the Jewish religious authorities. Alongside them in the crowd are the righteous Pharisees and Teachers of the Law who mutter that Jesus *'welcomes sinners'* (15:2).

The first two parables are brief ones, depicting people who actively seek what has been lost, emphasising the point that God does not stand passively by, but seeks out the lost. There is an important point here. In traditional Jewish teaching at that time, it was accepted that God would welcome back a lost sinner. However, what was revolutionary about Jesus's teaching was the notion that God would actually take the initiative and seek the lost sinner himself.

In the parable of the lost sheep (15:3-7), Jesus depicts God as a shepherd with 99 sheep which are safe in pasture and one that is lost. He seeks until he finds it, and rejoices when he has done so. Jesus highlights the joy of God over the return of one sinner who has repented, a joy that is even greater than his joy at the 99 who had remained safe: *'... there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent'* (15:7).

In the parable of the lost coin (15:8-10), a woman with ten silver coins loses one. This is a serious loss for her – she may be poor or the coin may come from a traditional wedding bracelet – and she sweeps the whole house until she finds it, just as God will seek out the repentant sinner, and then rejoices at its recovery.

The parable of the lost son (15:11-32) emphasises the nature of God's forgiving love and highlights the contrast between the repentant sinner and those who feel they are righteous. In the parable, the younger of two brothers asks his father for his share of the estate. This was not a common Jewish practice – under the Law the son would not usually get his share until his father had died. In effect, the son was treating his father as if he were dead. His father agrees and the son goes off to another country and spends all the money on riotous living. Faced with a famine, he is forced to feed pigs in order to live – a distasteful job for a Jew, since the pig was regarded as an unclean creature (Leviticus 11:7). He decides to return home and ask his father to give him a job as a servant. Realising that he has sinned against both God and his father (18:15), he believes that he has forfeited his right to be treated as a son.

His father sees him and, although the son is unworthy, the father overwhelms him with his welcome – he throws his arms around him and kisses him, gets him the finest robe, puts a ring on his finger (to convey authority) and shoes on his feet (slaves went barefoot; free men wore shoes), and orders a feast of celebration. The son acknowledges his sin – *'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son'* (15:21) – but the eldest brother is outraged. He refuses to join the celebrations and complains to his father that he has worked hard, yet has never been given a feast. The father declares his right to be joyful at the return of his younger son, saying: *'... this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found'* (15:30).

In this parable, the father is God; the eldest son represents the outwardly righteous Jewish leaders and the youngest son the repentant sinner. God welcomes the sinner back and does not accept the complaint of the righteous who refuse to share his joy. Showing love to repentant sinners is not a threat to those who are already within the kingdom of God.

2 Theological and moral teaching

2.1 The Sermon on the Plain

The Sermon on the Plain (6:17-49) is a lengthy teaching by Jesus that covers a range of important topics. Jesus is speaking to a very large crowd, including his own disciples and people who have travelled from all over the country to hear him. There are also many in the crowd who have come to be healed or freed from evil spirits. He delivers the sermon on a 'level place', indicating perhaps a mountainside, as this was not the term usually given to a plain.

The sermon breaks down into the following four sections:

- 1 The blessings and woes (6:20-6)
- 2 Love (6:27-36)
- 3 Judging others (6:37-42)
- 4 Firm foundations (6:46-9)

Throughout the sermon Jesus highlights what it means to be a disciple and true follower.

The blessings and woes

The blessings are a series of statements that turn the values of the world upside down, by praising the qualities the world despises and rejecting the qualities the world admires. Thus, Jesus says: *'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God'* (6:20). He is referring to his disciples here. He is not saying that poverty is a blessing, but that those who are blessed are those who know they are spiritually poor in the sense that they have no resources and must rely on God. The rich of the world are self-reliant – they feel that they do not need God. The poor in spirit know that they do.

Jesus goes on to offer blessings to those who are *'hungry'* (6:21) and who know that they need God in order to be satisfied, and those who *'weep'* (6:21), that is, those who see the evil in the world and weep at the suffering caused by humanity's rejection of God. He also offers blessings for those who are persecuted *'because of the Son of Man'* (6:22). Those who suffer in this way should *'rejoice'* and *'leap for joy'* (6:23), because they are suffering for the sake of their belief in Christ and *'great is your reward in heaven'* (6:23).

In contrast, the woes (6:24-6) are a series of expressions, almost of regret, aimed at those who enjoy the qualities that the world approves of. Thus he says *'woe to the rich'* (6:24), because those who are wealthy tend to think that they have everything they need – they rely on money rather than God. This kind of prosperity leads to inner emptiness. Jesus also offers *'woe to you who are well fed'* and who *'laugh now'* (6:25) for much the same reason. Like the rich, these people feel that they lack nothing and do not need God: they are unaware of their own spiritual need and poverty. Finally, Jesus says: *'Woe to you when all men speak well of you'* (6:26). He is suggesting here that the message of God to the world is an uncomfortable one – if people speak well of you, then perhaps you are not giving out God's true message. The word of a true believer is often unpopular.

Love

The central theme of the Sermon is the need for love. Jesus makes clear that his followers must love all people, not just those who are easy to love, but the unlovable too. He is speaking of **agape** – love that is not earned, but that is freely given because the believer chooses to be a loving person to all.

Jesus begins with a dramatic statement: *'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you'* (6:27). Here, Jesus is teaching that a believer cannot pick and choose whom to love – he or she must love all people. Moreover, it is not enough just to be nice: Jesus requires that believers do good. He illustrates this in the famous saying: *'If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also'* (6:29). He is talking about an attitude of mind: instead of seeking revenge, the believer should accept injury and, instead of reacting in anger, offer love. Thus: *'Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you'* (6:30-1).

Jesus requires his followers to give all they have, out of love for others, to act towards others as they hope others would act towards them. In other words, following Christ is not just about thinking but about doing loving actions. Christians are therefore required to have higher standards than everyone else – not just to love their friends, but to love everyone, and their reward will be great in heaven (6:35).

Judging others

Jesus's teaching is direct and simple: *'Do not judge, and you will not be judged'* (6:37). He is not talking about judgment in courts of law, but instead he is referring to the everyday judgments we make of others – through gossip, backstabbing and false witness. If we judge others in this way, we too will be judged and, moreover, those who judge others bring the judgment of God upon themselves: *'Forgive, and you will be forgiven'* (6:37).

Jesus emphasises to his followers that if they lack love, they cannot guide others, for they cannot see where they are going. Lack of love and spiritual blindness will not bring people to God. Disciples must therefore ensure that they can see clearly before looking at others: *'... first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye'* (6:42).

Firm foundations

Jesus uses the illustration of a tree and its fruit to show that the good person produces good things through having a good heart (6:45) – in other words, the good we do or speak comes not from our heads, but from our hearts. The sermon concludes by highlighting the importance of believers acting upon the teaching Jesus has given and giving their lives a firm foundation, so that, when judgment comes, they have built their lives on God.

2.2 Wealth and poverty

In the teaching of Jesus the good news of the kingdom of God was for the poor and there were stern warnings to the rich about the danger of being kept outside the kingdom by their possessions.
(Marshall, 1984)

According to Luke, Jesus came to preach the Gospel to the poor and the preaching of the word of God to the poor seems to be of paramount importance: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor’ (4:18).

Jesus himself is described as having been born into humble circumstances and his first visitors, the shepherds, were from the poorest classes. Luke emphasises throughout the Gospel the dangers of wealth. In the Magnificat, Mary sings of the fact that ‘He has filled the hungry with good things, but he has sent the rich away empty’ (1:53). In the Sermon on the Plain, Jesus warns ‘Woe to you who are rich’ (6:24) because the rich feel that they have everything, and therefore forget their spiritual need for God. This theme is continued in the parable of the rich fool (12:16), in which Jesus warns against the greed and jealousy that wealth can bring. Jesus is talking to a man who is angry about the inheritance his brother has been given. Jesus tells him that people’s lives are not measured by the amount of possessions they have (6:15) and in the ensuing parable shows that what is important is not to store up money, but to be rich in spiritual matters before God: being rich does not mean that you can control your own destiny.

The parable of the shrewd manager

This parable (16:1-9) features a steward who has wasted his master’s possessions and then dishonestly tries to cover up his negligence. However, Jesus is not praising dishonesty, but is encouraging believers to be as wise with their money as non-believers are. Morris (1988) observes: ‘The sons of light are the servants of God. Well-intentioned as they are, they often lack the wisdom to use what they have as wisely as the worldly use of their possessions for their very different ends’.

Jesus warns the Pharisees, who ‘loved money’ (16:14), that the problem with wealth is that money can itself become a god, and that ‘No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money’ (16:13).

The rich man and Lazarus

In this parable (16:19-31), the rich man is shown as living only for himself – he has all he wants. In contrast, the poor man, Lazarus, has nothing and is forced to eat the scraps from the rich man’s table. Lazarus appears to be a religious man, and when he dies he goes to Abraham’s side, whilst the rich man goes to hell. Yet in death, the rich man does not change his ways – he still holds on to the world’s values and believes that poor Lazarus is still only fit to be his servant: ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue’ (16:24). Abraham points out to the rich man that he could have helped the poor when he was alive, but chose not to do so. Now, worldly values no longer apply and there can be no crossing of the ‘great chasm’ (16:26) that is between them. Even then, the rich man remains self-centred, asking Abraham not to help the poor, but to help the man’s brothers. Abraham’s reply is that the brothers have all the help they need in the scriptures. In other words, the rich man is in the state he is, not because he had money, but because the attitude to life that money had given him prevented him from accepting the truth of the scriptures. This is the real warning to the wealthy.

God's grace

This theme is highlighted clearly in Jesus's conversation with the rich young ruler (18:18-27), where the rich man is convinced of his own goodness through obedience to the Law, yet still wants to possess eternal life. The rich man is too satisfied with himself and has not truly reflected on what God's goodness means and how far short of God's standards he has fallen. So Jesus issues him with a challenge of faith – to give away all his wealth. If the man had truly understood the laws of God, he would have known that he could not have kept and worshipped his money, as he did, for he had not given God first place in his life. The man became 'very sad' (18:23) and was unable to rise to the challenge, prompting Jesus's famous saying: 'Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God' (18:25). Jesus makes it clear that there are no advantages in being rich when it comes to salvation – salvation is God's gift, given through divine grace: 'I tell you the truth,' Jesus said to them, 'no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life'' (18:29-30).

The grace of God is clearly shown in the incident with Zacchaeus, another rich man, but this time one who has understood that his money will not bring him fulfilment. He realises his foolishness and returns his property to the poor and receives salvation (19:9). This message is reinforced in the incident of the widow's offering (21:1-4), where Jesus praises the poor widow for giving all she has, rather than the rich who, although they gave more money, did not make so great a sacrifice. Marshall (1984) points out, however, that Luke is not just referring to financial wealth: 'The teaching about wealth and poverty must be set in its context. We have already seen that the 'poor' to whom the gospel is preached are those who are needy and dependent on God. By the same token, the 'rich' are those who are self-satisfied and feel no need of God'.

2.3 Prayer and praise

Prayer

Luke highlights the importance to believers of having the right attitude towards God and stresses the vital significance of prayer in this relationship. He does this by recording the prayers of Jesus (including seven prayers that are not mentioned anywhere else) and by explicating Jesus's teaching on prayer through the parables. Jesus is first recorded as praying at his baptism (3:21) and Luke later highlights the importance of prayer in Jesus's own life – he prays in '*lonely places*' (5:16), spends the whole night praying to God (6:12) and prays in private (9:18). Jesus also praises God for what has been done and he is said to be '*full of joy*': '*I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children*' (10:21).

Luke shows Jesus teaching the disciples to pray and links prayer closely with the notion of praise – that through salvation and forgiveness humanity is reconciled to God, producing joy and praise. In 11:1-13, the teaching on prayer reaches its climax with the giving of the Lord's Prayer. Jesus gives it to his followers after one of them asks for his guidance on how to pray. As a prayer, it has a pattern which is the model for all prayer:

- It begins with '*Father*' (11:2), encouraging believers to think of God in a personal and loving way.
- '*Hallowed be your name*' (11:2) means 'holy' and reminds the people that they should have proper reverence for God.
- '*Your kingdom come*' (11:2) looks forward to the coming of the kingdom of God and the fulfilment of God's will.
- The prayer then contains a petition that God will provide for everyday needs. '*Give us each day our daily bread*' (11:3) is a request for continual help, for the believer lives in continual dependence on God's love and mercy.
- '*Forgive us our sins*' (11:4) is followed by the assertion that the believers will, in turn, forgive those who have sinned against them. Just as God will forgive, so believers should also forgive.
- '*And lead us not into temptation*' (11:3) allows believers to recognise that they are weak and that they need to ask for God's help to be kept free from the temptation to sin.

Having laid out the format, Jesus goes on to highlight the need for meaningful and persistent prayer. In the parable of the friend at midnight (11:5-8), a man continually asks his friend for bread. The friend refuses, but the man keeps on asking until eventually the friend, impressed by the man's sincerity and persistence, grants his request. The meaning of the parable is made clear by Morris (1988):

We must not play at prayer, but must show persistence if we do not receive the answer immediately. It is not that God is unwilling and must be pressed into answering. The whole context makes it clear that he is eager to give. But if we do not want what we are asking for enough to be persistent we do not want it very much.

Jesus then goes on to tell his followers: *'Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you'* (11:9). By this he is saying that, whilst God is very willing to give, it is important that people do their part by asking. He is not saying that all prayer will be granted immediately or in the way the believer hopes. He is saying that God hears all true prayers and they are always answered in the way God sees best.

This is shown in the parable of the persistent widow (18:1-8) (sometimes called the parable of the unjust judge), which teaches that believers should not be discouraged if they see no answer to their prayers – they should pray on and not lose heart. Similarly, in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (18:9-14) Jesus shows the importance of praying with the right spirit. Here, although the Pharisee appears to lead a righteous life, the spirit of his prayer is wrong. He has no sense of his own sin or dependence on God – his prayer is full of praise for himself, not God. The tax collector, in contrast, has the right spirit. He knows he is unworthy and is full of sorrow. He knows he is utterly dependent on God and asks for God's forgiveness: *'God have mercy on me, a sinner'* (18:13). God accepts his prayer and his sins are forgiven – he has humbled himself and as a result will find God's mercy.

Jesus uses prayer in time of crisis. In 22:31 he says that he has prayed for Peter, that he will have a strong faith and be able to strengthen his comrades. In 22:41 Jesus prays alone on the Mount of Olives after first telling his disciples to pray for themselves that they *'will not fall into temptation'* (22:40). At that time, Jewish custom was to pray standing up, with the eyes looking to heaven. However, at this time of great crisis, Jesus kneels down – his prayer is a reflection of his fear at the death that lies before him. His prayer is unique, for he asks God, if he is willing, to *'take this cup from me'* (22:42). The cup is an Old Testament symbol of suffering and the wrath of God (Psalm 11:6; Ezekiel 23:33). Yet Jesus's focus remains on the Father; he is obedient to his will and he goes on to pray that God's divine plan will be fulfilled: *'... yet not my will, but yours be done'* (22:42). Finally, at the point of death, just as he had taught his followers to do in the Sermon on the Plain, Jesus prays for his enemies: *'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing'* (23:34).

Praise

Praising God is seen in Luke to come as an automatic response from people experiencing the good news of salvation and forgiveness – for the effect of this is to feel joy towards God and the knowledge that, through God's grace, the person has been saved: *'... rejoice that your names are written in heaven'* (10:20); *'I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents'* (15:10). Elsewhere, Luke uses praise as an expression of joy in the glory of God – for example, in the birth narratives, where the angels fill the skies, praising God (2:13-14). There is also praise as a result of seeing the works of God – for example, at the healing of the paralysed man (5:26) and the raising of the widow's son (7:16). Moreover, the people praise God when Jesus makes his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (19:37) and Luke even shows the centurion praising God as he witnesses the death of Jesus on the cross (23:47).

Perhaps the most well-known examples of praise are the great hymns in the birth narrative. The song of Mary, known as the Magnificat (1:46-55), is a song of praise in Old Testament language, modelled on Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2:1 ff. It is an appreciation of the mercy of God, his holiness, his power and his mercy in forgiveness. It goes on to look forward to what God will do and his fulfilment of the promises made to his people: *'My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour'* (1:46-7).

Zechariah's song, or the Benedictus (1:67-79), is a song of thanksgiving for the coming of the Messiah and the deliverance from sin and the hope of salvation. Like the Magnificat, it uses Old Testament imagery and emphasises the fulfilment of God's divine plan for his people and the forgiveness of sins: *'Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people'* (1:68).

Finally, Simeon's song, the Nunc Dimittis (2:29-32) is a hymn of praise for the salvation of Israel. Simeon expresses his desire to die contentedly for he has seen, in the infant Jesus, God's salvation for all people – God's plan will be fully realised: *'For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people'* (2:30-1).

The word 'rejoice' occurs more times in Luke than in any other book in the New Testament, and the Gospel itself ends on a note of praise, where, following the return of the risen Jesus to heaven, the Apostles are filled with great joy: *'And they stayed continually at the Temple, praising God'* (24:53). As Morris (1988) notes: *'Luke has written with a profoundly theological purpose. He sees God at work bringing salvation and he enjoys bringing out a variety of aspects of this saving work'*.

2.4 Discipleship

A disciple is a pupil – someone who learns from a teacher. Normally, we use the word to refer to the Twelve Disciples (or Apostles) named by Luke in 6:14-16 as Simon (Peter), Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Levi (Matthew), Thomas, James, son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas, son of James, and Judas Iscariot. However, strictly speaking a 'disciple' is anyone who follows Jesus, and in Luke 6:17, there is a reference to a 'great crowd of disciples'. Marshall (1984) offers this definition: *'Disciples are those who believe in Christ and stand in a personal relationship to him as their Lord'*.

For Luke, discipleship is a life of submission and service, but also one of joy and inner peace that comes from knowing God's forgiveness and acceptance. But first, becoming a disciple involves making a real commitment to follow Jesus. This means repentance and being prepared to give up everything to follow God's call. In 5:1-11, the first disciples, Simon, James and John, are persuaded to become disciples after witnessing a miraculous catch of fish. The Twelve were specifically called by Jesus and gave up all they had to follow him: *'Follow me' ... Levi got up, left everything and followed him'* (5:27-8). With repentance comes humility; disciples must be aware of their own sinfulness and dependence on the grace of God. Pride acts as a barrier between God and his people, and until it is removed, God cannot work in their lives. Thus, in the illustration of the wedding feast (14:8-12), it is those who take the humblest spot who will be raised to the highest. It is through the humility that God can 'raise' his followers up to the place he has prepared for them: *'I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance'* (5:32).

This is clearly shown in the anointing of Jesus by the sinful woman at the house of Simon the Pharisee (7:36-50). The woman knows of her dependence on God; she has repented and seeks to display unconditional love for Jesus as a sign of her grateful response for God's forgiveness. She anoints Jesus with perfume and dries his feet with her hair and Jesus tells the incredulous Simon: *'Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven –for she loved much'* (7:47). Moreover, disciples must not be hindered by the cares of the world. In the home of Martha and Mary (10:38-42) Martha is distracted by her worldly cares, but Mary, like the sinful woman earlier, lays her cares aside in order to express her love for Jesus and her need to be in his company.

Those who became disciples faced a demanding lifestyle that carried with it the real possibility of persecution and death. It was a lifelong commitment: *'No-one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God'* (9:62). Disciples had to give up their material comforts, because being tied to earthly possessions would restrict effective discipleship: *'In the same way any of you who does not give up everything he has, cannot be my disciple'* (14:33). But the disciples would have God's help. They faced the hatred of the world, but the Holy Spirit would aid them in times of trouble: *'When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say'* (12:11-12). The disciples received authority from Jesus to act in his name and to preach, heal and cast out demons: *'The seventy-two returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name''* (10:17). Moreover, they were especially blessed by God and were privileged to know things that others could not know: *'Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see, but did not see it'* (10:24).

The disciples had a unique relationship with God, which would endure for ever, and in his name they would achieve great things. Their prayers would be answered: *'Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom'* (12:32). Above all, the disciples brought in the new age, as Taylor (1992) points out: *'There is an immediate hundredfold reward for those who walk out on their commitments and dependants and join Jesus on the road; there will be even greater rewards 'in the age to come''*.

2.5 Salvation

The concept of salvation is more prominent in Luke than in the other Synoptic Gospels. The word 'salvation' comes from the Greek verb *sozo*, which means to 'make safe or well'. Luke suggests that humanity needs to be saved from the power of sin, which has separated humanity from God. This is achieved through the saving power of Jesus on the cross. Luke's concept of salvation is based on the Old Testament notion of the action of God, which saves his people. This was understood by the Old Testament writers as the concept of **salvation history** – God acting in the lives of his people and the nations of the world to bring about his purposes and lead his covenanted people into a special relationship with him. Luke sees the events of the Gospel and Acts in this light – they are the next stage in the working out of God's salvific plans and promises. This is clear from the very start of the Gospel. In the Magnificat, Mary refers to 'God my saviour' (1:47) and highlights the saving power of God through his actions and the fulfilment of his promises. Moreover, even the name Jesus means 'God saves'.

In the Benedictus, Simeon recognises God's saving power and that he has '*... raised up a horn of salvation for us*' (1:69). This salvation will come from the house of David – highlighting the hope of a Davidic Messiah who would save his people from their enemies. Later, the angel tells the shepherds of the birth of Jesus with the words: '*Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you: he is Christ the Lord*' (2:11). Luke highlights the fact that salvation is available to all people, not just the Jews. In the Nunc Dimittis, Simeon declares:

*For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all people,
a light of revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel.*

(2:30-2)

Luke also suggests that God's salvation made manifest through Jesus is for the Samaritans (9:51) and lepers (17:16) – usually sidelined by the righteous Jew – and his 'great commission' to his disciples is to preach to all nations (24:47). However, not all will be saved, for, although the good news is offered to everyone, people must actually choose for themselves whether or not to accept it, as the parable of the sower suggests: '*But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop*' (8:15).

Salvation requires repentance – a change of heart and attitude. John the Baptist (3:3) and Jesus both preach that people must repent in preparation for salvation and the coming of the kingdom: '*But unless you repent you too will all perish*' (13:3). For Luke, the world is corrupt and under the control of the forces of evil (11:18). He suggests that salvation will come because Jesus has ultimate authority and power over evil: '*I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God*' (12:8).

Salvation is the offer of eternal life and freedom from sin – it is the opposite of death. Luke speaks of Jesus coming to '*seek and to save what was lost*' (19:10) and shows Jesus as the culmination of God's history of salvation for his people. As Marshall (1984) suggests '*the idea of salvation supplies the key to the theology of Luke*'.

2.6 Eschatology

Eschatology is the study of the things of the end and, in particular, the concept of Christ's **Second Coming**, or his **parousia**. He will return bringing with him judgment and the end of things as they presently are. In Luke, the emphasis is on the supremacy of God over the world and of God as the ultimate source of salvation. Throughout the Gospel, Luke paints an eschatological picture – God controls events in accordance with his divine plan. In turn, the life of Christ is seen in the same eschatological way: Jesus is depicted as the fulfilment of the Old Testament scriptures and the centrepiece of God's plan of salvation.

In Luke 4:7-21, Jesus tells the people that the Old Testament scriptures are fulfilled. The prophet Isaiah has already foretold his work. Jesus will fulfil that prophecy when he preaches 'good news to the poor' (4:18), gives 'recovery of sight for the blind' (4:18), and releases 'the oppressed' (4:18). Christ is the summit of God's plan – and the eschatological message is shown in 18:31: '... everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled'.

In terms of the Second Coming of Christ, Luke seems to present a somewhat contrary picture, with two differing strands of thought. On the one hand, there are references to the possibility that Jesus will return quickly and unexpectedly and that believers must be prepared at all times: 'You must also be ready because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him' (12:40) and 'The Kingdom of God is near you' (10:9). On the other hand, there are references suggesting that the coming of Christ will be in great glory at a future date: 'The Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky' (17:24); 'There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars... on the earth, nations will be in anguish' (21:25); 'At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory' (21:27).

Ernst Kasemann (1964) suggested that Luke foresaw a future coming because 'You do not write the history of the Church if you are expecting the end of the world to come any day'. Luke does emphasise the notion that the coming of the last days will be a time of joy and salvation. Morris (1988) writes: '... he looks for the coming of the End when the salvation of which he writes will reach its consummation'. For Luke, the eschatological message was summed up at the very end of the Gospel: 'Then he opened their minds so that they could understand the scriptures. He told them, 'This is what is written: the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations'' (24:45-6).

2.1 The Last Supper

The final part of Jesus’s ministry begins with a supper. In the Synoptic Gospels, this supper is depicted as the Passover meal. However, there are indications in the Fourth Gospel that this is not so, and the meal is eaten a day before Passover. There seem to be two reasons for this: Peter is later seen carrying a sword, which was not permitted at Passover, and, the following day, the priests refuse to enter the palace of the Roman governor because it would defile them before Passover (18:28). However, the theological significance is more important still, and by moving the final meal forward by a day, the Fourth Evangelist ensures that Jesus dies at the moment that the Passover lambs are being slaughtered. Jesus himself is, of course, the perfect Passover lamb.

The supper begins with Jesus washing the disciples’ feet, showing that he has come as a humble servant. Peter protests, showing the false pride of a sinner who resists the need for divine help, but also responding as a disciple who cannot accept that Jesus is going to die. Jesus rebukes him – the believer must accept Christ’s offer of service, which is embodied in his sacrificial death, for otherwise there can be no true relationship of salvation. Equally, Christ’s followers will themselves have to serve others humbly: *‘I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him’* (13:15-16). The Fourth Evangelist appears to have substituted the well-known synoptic institution of the Lord’s Supper with the foot-washing, but he does not leave the final meal free of sacramental overtones. The foot-washing is a model of baptism, symbolising the immersion into Jesus’s death that the disciples must accept and the washing in his blood that will be accomplished on the cross.

As the supper goes on, Jesus is clearly troubled as the final battle between good and evil draws closer. Though he knows that Judas will be his betrayer, in an act of love and peace he performs the custom whereby the host offers the bread to the most honoured guest, offering it to Judas (13:26). Judas then goes out into the night, leaving the true light. It seems that only the Beloved Disciple, introduced here for the first time, has any notion of what Jesus’s words to Judas mean, as ironically, the others believe that Judas is leaving the gathering to buy something for the feast. Indeed, he leaves to ensure that the true Passover lamb will be offered at the fitting time.

With Judas gone, Jesus speaks directly to the disciples, telling them that he is soon to leave them. But he gives them fresh hope: *‘A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples’* (13:34-5).

In a burst of well-intentioned enthusiasm, Peter vainly offers to lay down his life for Christ (13:37), although he does not really understand what Jesus is saying, or the implications of his own offer. Jesus calmly tells him: *‘I tell you the truth, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times!’* (13:38). After the resurrection Jesus echoes Peter’s bold claim with his own prediction of Peter’s death: *‘When you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go.’ This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God’* (21:18-19).

2.2 The Holy Spirit – Paraclete

The concept of the Paraclete is a stroke of genius... It gave the Christians a distinctive way of thinking about the presence of God, answered the nagging question of the delay of the Parousia, and solved the problem of the growing temporal separation from the historical revelation. (Kysar, 1993)

Although the Fourth Evangelist has already dealt in some depth with the role that the Spirit plays in salvation and the life of the disciple, it is not until the farewell discourses that a new dimension to his teaching on the Holy Spirit is revealed. Kysar observes that for the Johannine community, there was clearly something about the simple title of Spirit that was unsatisfactory, and they needed a distinctive title which would express, especially in situations of conflict and uncertainty, the special reality of the living presence of God in their midst two and three generations after the death of Jesus. The concept adds a crucial dimension to the community's understanding of eschatology. So valuable was the presence of the Spirit in their midst, that they were able to claim that the future blessings had already become a present reality to them.

The central function of the Paraclete is to communicate the revelation of God given by Christ and to lead believers into a radically new life. However, that role is complex and involves the Paraclete in a range of activities in relation to the disciples, the church and the world. Furthermore, there are four primary ways of translating Paraclete:

- An advocate – one called to the side of another to assist.
- A defence counsel – one who intercedes for another.
- A comforter – one who comforts and consoles.
- A proclaimer – one who exhorts and encourages.

Evidently, the word was rich in meaning for the evangelist and his readers and there is no reason to assume that he did not choose it for this very reason.

Assuring the disciples that he would not leave them alone, Jesus promises that to enable them to carry on his work, the Father will send the Holy Spirit to the disciples. The Spirit will be a Counsellor, who will equip them to bring the good news to all people: *'But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you'* (14:25-6). The Counsellor, or Spirit of Truth, will be of equal stature to Christ himself and will enable the disciples to grasp fully the truth. He will live within the disciples (14:17). Moreover, Jesus assures the disciples that anything they ask for in his name will be given to them: *'And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask for anything in my name, and I will do it'* (14:13-14). He tells the disciples to obey his words and trust in God (14:23) and not to be afraid (14:27), despite the fact that the ordeal of the passion is near and he must now obey the Father: *'The prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me'* (14:30-1).

The promise of the Paraclete has run throughout the Gospel since John the Witness saw the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus and remain on him at 1:32-4. The term *pneuma* has served to describe the role and function of the spirit throughout Jesus's ministry, but now the evangelist uses his distinctive term, *paracletos*. The primary characteristic of the Paraclete is that he will be 'another' like Jesus (14:16) and will fulfil the roles and functions that Jesus performed when he was on earth – hence Raymond Brown's famous description of the Paraclete as *'the presence of Jesus when he is absent'*. The Paraclete spirit will be the living presence of Jesus amongst believers, not merely an instrument of power to wield. It will dwell in the disciples just as Jesus himself does, and as such, the world, dependent on the tangible and the rational, will not be able to accept it (14:17). The relationship between the Spirit and the disciples is one that the world will be unable to comprehend, but for the believer it will intercede, guide and teach – leading them into a deeper knowledge of Jesus's own words. Just as the evangelist has made clear throughout the Gospel that Jesus is one with the Father, inseparable from him in every way (10:30), when he introduces the Paraclete he makes clear that he too is sent in God's name and with his authority, as Jesus was sent, and hence his message and his work cannot be understood separately from that of the Father and the Son.

The Paraclete will be part of the process of salvation for believers. Because only those who have believed in Jesus can receive it, it is a characteristic that separates them from the world and singles them out as those who have passed from death to life. Indwelling of the Spirit is a necessary part of the life of discipleship, bearing witness in the disciple's life to the truth of Jesus and his words. Luke depicts the Spirit as the directing force of the Apostles' ministry in Acts; the Fourth Evangelist describes it in terms of the personal relationship that the believer has with the Father and the Son, which will be the means by which they continue to abide in the vine (15:1-11).

In chapter 16 the evangelist presents the Paraclete as being integral in the eschatological judgment of the world: *'And when he comes he will convince (convict?) the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment'* (16:8). In this role the Paraclete clearly plays the part of the prosecuting counsel, exposing the world's sin and calling it to account. Bultmann (1971) suggests that the lawsuit that the Paraclete will conduct is 'one of cosmic dimensions' and the essential reason for the Paraclete's judgment of the world and *'the ruler of this world'* (Satan) will be for the sin of rejecting Jesus. Furthermore, the Paraclete will not just prosecute but judge the world, anticipating the last judgment and bringing into the present the eschatological activity which it will ultimately face at the end times.

This brings into focus the other central function of the Paraclete for the Fourth Evangelist: it is the Johannine church's solution to the problem of the delay of the **Parousia**. Rather than look to the future, he urges them to look to the present and see that Jesus is already among them and that the Parousia has occurred already – not a distant event which most will not live to enjoy, but something which can be realised in the here and now.

The second problem for the church that the Paraclete solves is how those who were never able to meet the earthly Jesus face to face can still have a relationship with him. The Paraclete bridges the temporal gap between the Johannine community and the historical Jesus, and thus the evangelist stresses that the Paraclete does not teach new things, but reminds the church of Jesus's own words, consolidating and illuminating them for each new generation of believers. In this way all believers have as direct access to Jesus as the first disciples, and the Paraclete keeps alive the revelation of God in Christ so it is available to all. It is for this reason that Søren Kierkegaard writes:

There is no disciple at second hand. The first and the last are essentially on the same plane, only that a later generation finds its occasion in the testimony of a contemporary generation, while the contemporary generation finds the occasions in its own immediate contemporaneity, and in so far, owes nothing to any other generation.

(Cited in Aston, 1991)

2.3 'I am the way, the truth and the life' (14:1-14)

Jesus reassures his disciples, telling them that soon all will become clear and that they are to trust in God. He highlights his unique role with the Father: *'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'* (14:6). He tells them plainly that he and the Father are one and that they have to keep their faith in the confidence that *'I am in the Father, and the Father is in me'* (14:10). This 'I am' saying is made in response to Thomas's anxious question: *'Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?'* (14:5). Jesus's reassurance to the disciples that he is going to prepare them a place makes little difference to their fear and ignorance of his destiny and fate. Interestingly, the disciples are as much at a loss as the Jews were earlier in the narrative when they naively asked, *'Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him?'* (7:35), but Thomas's question suggests that the disciples are keen to know so that they truly might follow and learn from him.

Just as Jesus has described himself earlier as the bread and the one who gives it, and as both door and shepherd who leads the sheep through it, so too he provides the way to the Father by going that way himself. Jesus *is* the way, and the Fourth Evangelist makes no apologies for his exclusivism. Barrett (1975) observes, *'there is no access to God independent of him'*, and Jesus makes clear that he is the fullest revelation of God available to humanity (compare 1:18). But once on the road, the disciple needs directions and the means to reach his or her goal, and Jesus provides these too: the truth and the life. Both concepts have been vital in the Gospel from the Prologue, and the evangelist has made crystal clear that only Jesus *is* the truth and offers the true way to know the Father. The discourses with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman exposed the need to accept that knowing Jesus and the truth of his words is the only way in which humanity can be born anew and receive eternal life, and yet even now the disciples demand: *'Show us the Father and we will be satisfied'* (14:8). The reader has already grasped so much more than the inner circle, who still stumble with misunderstanding.

Truth and life are inextricable, for without following the way of truth the disciples will never reach the goal of life. The quest they are to undertake is the same that the Old Testament writers sought after. The Psalmist wrote, *'Teach me thy way O Lord that I may walk in thy truth'* (Psalm 86:11) and *'Make me know thy way O Lord.'* (Psalm 25:4), and, of course, for him it was the Law which was *'a light to my feet and a lamp to my path'* (Psalm 119:105). Jesus replaces the Law as the way to salvation and fellowship with God and although subsequent discourse makes it clear that it will not be an easy way to follow, it is the only way for the disciple who truly wants to know God.

2.4 'I am the true vine' (15:1-11)

When Jesus declares himself to be the true vine, he uses one of the richest symbols in the Old Testament, where the figure of the vine was used to symbolise the nation of Israel. Chosen, set aside and planted by Yahweh, Israel was given everything necessary to flourish, and yet, *'The more his fruit increased, the more altars he built'* (Hosea 10:1b), and God's people became a *'corrupt, wild vine'* (Jeremiah 2:21). Whilst the fruit of the old Israel might initially have been evident in its prosperity and political strength, it soon became valueless, as the people drifted into paganism and apostasy. The most important passage is clearly Isaiah 5:1-7, which condemns Israel for failing to produce the fruit that God had hoped they would, ie the taking of his word to all peoples.

In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus depicts himself as the true vine – *'I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener'* (15:1) – that will produce fruit and so all nations will know God. Marsh (1968) observes: *'... it was natural that, as the one in whom was embodied the new beginning of the life of God's people, Jesus should use such an Old Testament figure to make plain to his Israelite contemporaries what his nature and functions were'*. Believers in Jesus will be the branches of the vine, receiving life from the vine and bearing fruit. Like all vines, they will need pruning and cutting back, and this highlights the importance of a close relationship with God, for a branch cannot bear fruit on its own, and neither can a believer unless they abide in the love of Jesus: *'No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me'* (9:4).

In this saying, the Fourth Evangelist subtly conveys the depth of his replacement theology. Jesus has already indicated that he replaces and fulfils the Law, the festivals and the rites of Judaism. Now he replaces Israel as a whole. Where they were apostate and faithless, Jesus and his disciples (in the widest sense of all believers in Christ) will be the faithful vine, giving glory to the Father through its faithfulness. Old Israel has passed away and the new community, rooted in an intimate relationship with the Father and the Son, is now the bearer of the promises of Israel. That community does, of course, include some members of the old Israel, but they can only share in it by coming to the light and accepting the witness of Jesus.

Abiding in the vine (15:7) is the heart of fruitfulness, and it brings with it the promise of answered prayer. The intimacy suggested by abiding in the vine is, of course, characteristic of the Gospel as a whole. Jesus invites his disciples to eat his flesh and drink his blood, and the symbolism of the foot-washing conveys the intimate union that Jesus and the believer enter through his death. Only a deep, abiding and ongoing relationship with Jesus can bring the disciple abundant life, rooted in love and obedience (15:9-10). The call to obedience, implicit in all these sayings, marks the beginning of a new relationship between God and his people – which will finally eclipse the failures of previous generations.

2.5 The disciples' future role

The saying of the vine leads directly to some of Jesus's most important teaching concerning the nature of discipleship. To remain in Jesus meant obedience to his words and teachings. The relationship of the believer to Christ should be one of love. So, too, must believers love each other: *'My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends'* (15:12-13). Jesus tells the disciples that, not only are they his friends, but also they have been especially chosen by him: *'You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name'* (15:16).

Jesus warns the disciples that life will not be easy, for the world will hate them because they will no longer be part of it, but will be part of a new way (15:19). They will suffer persecution, as he has – but it will not really be a hatred of them, rather a hatred of Christ, born out of sin: *‘If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first’* (15:18). However, their task is not impossible, for the Holy Spirit will be with them.

Jesus warns the disciples about persecution in order to prepare them properly, so they will not give up and abandon their work. The Holy Spirit will help them in three ways:

- He will show people that they are sinners and that Christ died for them (15:8).
- He will show the world the love and righteousness of God (15:9-10).
- He will show the world that judgment is to come and that the ‘prince of this world’ has been condemned (15:11).

The Holy Spirit will not bring new truths, but will declare what he was told by God. He will bring the disciples into a greater understanding of Jesus’s death and resurrection and the salvation of the world. Moreover, the disciples have been given a high position. Just as God’s love was in Christ, so too it was in them. The Father loves them because of their love and belief in the Son. Therefore, after the resurrection, they will be able to ask the Father in their own right (15:23). Finally, Jesus warns them that they will initially be scattered, but Jesus will not be alone, for the Father will be with him. The disciples will not need to despair: *‘I have told you these things, so that you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world’* (15:33).

2.6 The High Priestly Prayer

Chapter 17, which concludes the farewell discourses, is written in the form of a long prayer, divided into three parts. Its origin is uncertain, although Smalley (1978) suggests that despite it clearly being a *‘literary composition’* (ie freely composed by the evangelist), the origin of its ideas and themes may well lie in the upper room and the last meal between Jesus and his disciples. It is commonly called the High Priestly Prayer or the Prayer of Consecration, which asks for God’s blessing on that which is to be offered as a sacrifice. The sacrifice, which, in Judaism, was offered by the High Priest, must be consecrated, that is, made holy and acceptable to God. In this prayer, Jesus is both the priest praying for consecration and the sacrifice to be consecrated. He has prepared the disciples for his death and warned them of what lies ahead once they are without the security of his physical presence. There is still much to learn, but the Paraclete will be their teacher when they are ready to receive it. Now Jesus must leave the disciples to continue his witness, but he is sharply aware of the difficulties they will face. These difficulties have been implicit in the good shepherd discourse: it would not be necessary for the good shepherd to protect the flock if discipleship did not present dangers. These difficulties become all the more apparent after Jesus’s physical departure, and the High Priestly Prayer serves therefore not only to dedicate Jesus to his death – the good shepherd’s death – but to provide a blanket of protection for the disciples.

In the first part (17:1-5), Jesus prepares and prays for himself. He makes two requests:

- That he will be used by the Father for the full and final display of their mutual love in sacrifice.
- That the hour of his death will be a time of glory. He speaks to the Father of their relationship and their communion together. God had given Jesus authority over all creation and now Jesus will exercise that authority and then return to the Father’s side: *‘Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him’* (17:2).

Although Jesus is praying for himself, the disciples are still firmly in view. His ministry has been for the purpose of giving *‘eternal life to all whom you have given him’* (17:2) and the work Jesus has done, soon to be fulfilled on the cross, is for their benefit. We know already that those who have accepted the offer of eternal life have passed from death to life (5:24). Even Jesus’s pre-existence – *‘the glory that I had in your presence before the world was made’* (17:5) – is relevant to the disciples who, Jesus prays, *‘may be with me where I am, to see my glory which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world’* (17:24, compare 14:2).

In the second part (17:6-19), Jesus prays specifically for the disciples. He asks God to bless them, to keep them strong in faith and to make the new church secure. He asks that they be kept safe and be filled with the truth and made ready for their mission: *'Sanctify them by the truth: your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world'* (17:18). Jesus's earthly ministry is a time during which he has led those who believe him into a true knowledge of God (17:6). They have enjoyed his divine protection, having been chosen by the Father and set apart from the world. Jesus must pray for them specifically, not because he does not love the world (3:16), but because at this stage he must focus on those he leaves behind. They are no longer of the world, but must continue to be in it (17:16), as he himself was: this is true of disciples in all ages. It is necessary to be in the world if any witness is to be accomplished, but in order to remain effective, the disciple must be uncorrupted by the world. Judas is already lost (17:12), but Jesus's prayer that none of the others shall be lost is fulfilled in the garden at the moment of his arrest (18:9). The links with the good shepherd discourse are apparent once again: *'I give them eternal life and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand'* (10:28). Jesus's protection of his sheep is guaranteed, and in the garden he lays down his life for the disciples, even before the salvific act on the cross.

In the third part (17:20-6), the scope of the prayer is widened as Jesus prays for future believers. He asks that all who come to believe will share the same love and fellowship that he shares with the Father. The future believers need protecting as well as the disciples: *'I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you'* (17:20-1). Jesus envisions a community united in love and witness, which lies beyond the life and ministry of the inner circle. Separated as they are from the world, unity is not just desirable; it is essential for their survival. It will be the most influential way in which they can show the world something of the love and reflected glory between the Father and the Son (17:21, 23) and the best way they can be effective in their ministry. During his earthly ministry, the source of Jesus's strength was his unity with the Father, and the work he accomplished was made possible only by his dependence on him – *'My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work'* (4:34). In the same way, future believers will only be effective in the world whilst they remain united and dependent on the Father and the Son. Disciples who attempt to operate outside this dependent unity will fail and, like the fruitless branches, they will be stripped away.

Through future believers, Jesus will continue to make known the love of the Father and to draw all of humanity into the love he shares with him. Thus the vision of chapter 17 is far-reaching indeed. There are many 'greater works' (14:12) that will be accomplished and it is clear that discipleship is not a passive relationship between the believer and Jesus. Rather, the unity between them opens it up to limitless possibilities as *'the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them'* (17:26).

‘Passion in the Fourth Gospel’ – Turner J in
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On a quick count, and somewhat frustratingly, over ten of the most estimable commentaries and analyses of the Fourth Gospel fail to include ‘the passion’ in either their contents lists or indices. However, it is there for all to see and need not be confined to the margins or footnotes of commentaries. Passion can usefully be defined and qualified, and in so doing we can shed light on our understanding of the author’s purpose in compiling this Gospel.

It is far too superficial to isolate passion to the farewell discourses and crucifixion narratives. My contention is that passion in the Fourth Gospel is of central significance and that John’s Gospel is nothing less than a ‘Passion Gospel’. Jesus’s passion in this Gospel is an act of selfless love, an act of controlled martyrdom. It is to serve as a fulfilling, liberating and glorifying climax to the signs and discourses that the author and editors pointedly select and adapt so that the Gospel can be just that: a veritable treasure-trove of kerygmatic theology. The **kerygma** is the name given to the proclaimed message of the early Christians. Their mission was to spread the word – the word that Christ was crucified and resurrected so that eternal life is on offer for all (John 3:16-17). The purpose of the author was to write a Gospel. A proper understanding of its passion is vital to the appreciation of just what that Gospel was intended to teach and preach.

Passion motifs in the opening chapters

Passion motifs abound throughout the Gospel. In chapter 1, for example, verses 11, 14, 29, 36, 41 and 51 are rich with passion imagery. The ‘Lamb of God’ references which are peculiar to the Fourth Gospel are especially telling given the changed chronology in the crucifixion story (John 19:14; cf. Mark 15:25ff.) For the best detailed analysis of this differing time frame see pp. 21-24 of Larry Kreitzer’s *The Gospel According to John* (1990).

The idea that Jesus is the Lamb of God and is to supersede the Passover Lamb is typical of the **replacement theology** of the Gospel. Replacement theology is the name scholars give to the author’s technique of introducing new ideas about Christ. These ideas (phrases, motifs, concepts etc) take over from the existing ones which would have been familiar to the original readers. For example, the phrase ‘Jacob’s well’ means little to us, but it is highly significant that Jesus speaks to a Samaritan woman there. Similarly, all Jews would have known what would happen to lambs at the Passover festival.

Chapter 2 opens with the beginning of a sequence of signs; this is followed by the Temple incident (2:13-22). In the Synoptic Gospels, we find this Temple incident at the end of Jesus’s ministry, and yet here the author projects it forward into chapter 2. This must have been for a purpose: namely to indicate from the outset something of Christ’s passion and his gift of eternal life. As such, it can be described as epiphanic – showing something about Jesus. An integral part of the passion story thus becomes a foretaste of the passion teaching that runs through this Gospel. Clement of Alexandria wrote, in effect, that the author knew of the synoptic accounts and so saw fit to compose a ‘spiritual Gospel’ instead.

Note the following features in the Temple incident and how they are found later in the Gospel:

- Conflict in the Temple (2:13-25). Jesus goes on to heal a man in the Temple who ends up believing (chapter 9).
- Jewish ambiguity leading to insight (2:19-22). This is found again in chapter 3 where Nicodemus asks how a man can be born again (3:4).
- The physical to be replaced by the spiritual (2:18-22). This is found also in 4:10-11 where water becomes living water.
- Rabbinic Judaism is superseded (2:17). Old Testament rabbinic Judaism is to be fulfilled. Similarly, the manna in chapter 6 is replaced by the ‘bread of life’.

Given that each of these has much to say about eternal life, it is not without significance that they are instrumental in our understanding of Jesus’s passion, for it is through Jesus’s passion that eternal life is on offer.

The passion and salvation

The predominant thrust of the Gospel is teaching on salvation and eternal life. It is therefore no coincidence that Jesus's conversation with the Samaritan woman (in every sense an outcast), with all its teaching on salvation and eternal life, is a prelude to Jesus's passion in many ways:

- In 4:6 Jesus is tired and weary; in 19:1-2 Jesus is to undergo much greater physical suffering.
- In 4:7 Jesus is thirsty; in 19:28 his thirst fulfils scripture.
- In 4:34 Jesus speaks of his work which is to be completed; in 19:30 it is completed. (The same Greek verb is used in both instances.)
- In 4:6 it is the sixth hour; in 19:14 it is also the sixth hour. This is an unusual time to specify.

Another passage rich in passion motifs is the final section of the bread of life discourse (chapter 6). The editors of the Gospel are thought to have relocated the teaching on sacrifice and atonement from the story of the Last Supper (chapter 13) and added it to this discourse so as to deepen its teaching on eternal life (6:53-58). Although we have moved a long way from the sign, the link between bread and the broken body is steadfast.

The theme of the sacrificial nature of the passion is seen again in chapter 10. Unlike the shepherd in Luke 15, the Johannine good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep (John 10:11; cf. Ezekiel 34:4). He is more than a mere guardian. He is to be the agent for salvation – and as such his is a vital part of the portrait of the passion in the Gospel. Jesus gives his life for his friends (15:13) and yet he is able to regain it again.

Other passion motifs

Other passion motifs that are found systematically throughout the Gospel include:

- hour: 2:4, 7:30, 8:26, 12:23, 13:1, 17:1
- opposition of the Jews: 5:18, 7:1, 8:59, 10:31, 11:53
- lifted up to be glorified: 3:14, 8:28, 12:32-34
- the Father sends the Son, so that the Father is known: 1:18, 3:32, 5:19, 5:37, 6:46, 8:38, 14:6.

The passion narrative

Come the actual events of the passion (arrest, trials, crucifixion and burial) the image is of Jesus, totally in control, obedient to the will of his Father. Irony abounds in the reversal of roles. Soldiers come with torches (18:3) to arrest the light of the world (8:12, 9:5). It is Pilate who is on trial, and found wanting. Jesus is mocked as a king and yet is lifted up and glorified. Establishment figures like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus assist in the burial of Jesus.

The author is careful to demonstrate:

- the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, eg 18:9, 19:24, 19:28
- that Jesus is very much a human being – he thirsts and blood and water pour from the wound in his side; this is believed to be indicative of the anti-docetic nature of the Gospel
- that Jesus's hour has now come – compare 12:23, 12:27, 13:1 and 17:1 with 2:4, 4:21, 4:23, 5:25, 5:28-29, 7:30, 8:20, 16:2, 16:25 and 16:32.

This comparison bears close scrutiny. The first time Jesus says that his hour has come (12:23) occurs after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin (the ruling Jewish council) has already decided to have him executed. He has been anointed (an act symbolic of his passion and death), and his words are spoken to 'certain Greeks' (12:20). The presence of the gentiles indicates the universality of the divine plan of salvation. To fulfil this plan, Jesus's death and resurrection are essential.

The last hours

The key features in the passion of Jesus's last hours are:

- His triumphal sacrifice. As the Passover lambs are slaughtered in the Temple in celebration of an annual festival, Jesus is crucified for eternity. In control ever since the moment of his arrest (and eschewing all violence) he is a king even to Pilate. In death, he is lifted up and glorified.
- A criminal is king. Jesus is crucified alongside criminals as a criminal. Mocked, scourged and given purple and a crown of thorns for a would-be king, his true kingship is revealed for those who have eyes to see.

Irony once again abounds. Those who claim control are not in control; he who is on trial is a judge; those with power have none; and he who is a captive condemned criminal is a king. Peter fails to defend Jesus, yet Pilate, his chief adversary, writes that he is 'King of the Jews'.

Johannine women and the passion

One other particularly Johannine theme can also shed light on the author's cumulative understanding of Jesus's passion. Much has rightly been said of the distinctive portrait of women in the Gospel. Without necessarily presenting a case for feminist theology, note how each episode involving women in the Gospel sheds light on the nature of Jesus's passion:

- Jesus's mother (never named) features in two linked episodes. She is present both before (2:4) and when (19:25-27) that hour literally and symbolically comes. She is then a witness to the passion as it unfolds.
- The Samaritan woman hears Jesus teach about the forthcoming hour of his passion (4:19-26). His passion is to be for her as much as for any good Jew.
- Equally in receipt of salvation is the woman caught in adultery (8:1-11). There is an irony here: the so-called sinner is not condemned yet the sinless will be and all this takes place in the Temple, in front of scribes and Pharisees.
- Martha's words and actions are also essential signposts for Jesus's passion. She (not Peter as in the Synoptic Gospels) identifies Jesus as 'the Christ, the son of God who is coming into the world' (11:27) and anoints Jesus, an act prophetic of his death (12:7).
- Somewhat unexpectedly (or maybe deliberately so) the risen Christ, having conquered death, appears first to Mary Magdalene. She witnessed his death (19:25) and now is to witness to the Gospel that his death is achieved (20:14). Mary Magdalene went and said to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord.'

What does passion really mean for John?

So what verse can be said to encapsulate the Johannine passion? Surely that honour must go to John 13:34. 'I give you a new commandment: love each other. You must love each other as I have loved you.' It is typically Johannine, distinctive and polemical. Love, specifically selfless love, is the essence of the passion and here it is both taught and practised. As K. Grayston writes in *Gospel of John* (1990): 'The love commandment displaces all others, not because other commandments are unnecessary for promoting justice and happiness in social life, but because... [the disciples] love knowing that they will be loved in return.'

Who Moved the Stone? – Morison F (Authentic Lifestyle, 1996) 'Between Sunset and Dawn', pages 88-102

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It is strange that there is no escaping the clock in all this baffling story of the closing phase of the life of Jesus.

We saw in an earlier chapter how the inexorable pressure of events precipitated the arrest, forced the hands of the authorities, prolonged the hour of the preliminary hearing, and modified profoundly the character of the Roman trial. It is as though everything in this affair was done under the lash of an invisible taskmaster, from whose decree there was no appeal. So now, whether we realize it at first or not, we shall find the problem steadily narrowing itself down to an investigation of what was happening just outside the walls of Jerusalem about 1,900 years ago between sunset on a certain Saturday and the first streaks of dawn on the following morning. Let us begin by considering in some detail the various hypotheses which have been put forward to account for the facts.

There is, of course, one suggestion which few readers of this book will expect to be argued seriously. I mean the suggestion, so widely circulated in apostolic times, that the disciples themselves had stolen or abducted the body. I do not propose to devote any considerable amount of space to testing the historical accuracy of this charge because the verdict has been anticipated by the almost universal sense and feeling of mankind. So far as I know there is not a single writer whose work is of critical value today who holds that there is even a case for discussion. We know these eleven men pretty well by their subsequent actions and writings. Somehow they are not built that way. There is no trace of the daring sort of ringleader who would have had the imagination to plan a *coup* like that and to carry it through without detection. Even if it had been possible, and the disciples the men to do it, the subsequent history of Christianity would have been different. Sooner or later, someone who knew the facts would have 'split'.

Further, no great moral structure like the Early Church, based as it was upon lifelong persecution and personal suffering, could have reared its head upon a statement which every one of the eleven apostles knew to be a lie. I have asked myself many times, would Peter have been a party to a deception like that, would John, would Andrew, would Philip or Thomas? Whatever the explanation of these extraordinary events may be, we may be certain that it was not that.

We are left, therefore, with the problem of the vacant tomb still unsolved. Can we get any light by exploring the various other explanations which have been advanced?

There are, in the main, six independent lines of critical approach to this matter. Four of them assume the vacancy of the tomb as an historic fact, while the others take the extremer view that the story is either entirely apocryphal or that the tomb was not investigated under the conditions described in the Gospels. Very briefly these hypotheses may be summarized as follows:

- 1 That Joseph of Arimathea secretly removed the body to a more suitable resting-place.
- 2 That the body was removed by order of the Roman Power.
- 3 That the body was removed by the Jewish authorities to prevent the possible veneration of the tomb.
- 4 That life was not really extinct, and that Jesus recovered in the cool of the grave.
- 5 That the women mistook the grave in the uncertain light.
- 6 That the grave was not visited at all and that the story about the women was a later accretion.

This is a very wide field of presuppositions and, so far as I know, includes every serious alternative to the Gospel thesis which has been put forward. Let us look at them in turn for a few moments.

1 That Joseph of Arimathea removed the Body.

At first sight the suggestion that the man who, by universal consent, begged the body of Jesus from the Roman Procurator, might himself have removed it for private reasons to another place, is one which seems to carry considerable weight.

The inferences drawn by a number of writers from the rather slender details given in the Gospels are that the tomb was probably purchased by Joseph for his own use, that its proximity to the scene of the Crucifixion suggested its temporary employment during the Sabbath, and that at the earliest possible moment Joseph would wish to remove the remains to a more permanent resting-place. All this is very understandable and, if the theory stood alone, it would present a quite remarkable and convincing aspect of self-consistency and strength. But we cannot leave a serious historical hypothesis in this state. It has to be worked out and superimposed upon the situation which it attempts to explain. The far, as well as the near consequences have to be explored and by its power to satisfy the whole of these conditions it must finally be judged.

Now a closer examination of this hypothesis reveals certain weaknesses and inconsistencies which affect its probability very gravely. In the first place the hour required for this suppositious removal (necessarily between the close of the Sabbath and the first sign of dawn) is in itself a rather strange time for a respected leader of the people to choose for a perfectly legitimate operation which could have been performed much better and more expeditiously at the break of day. It should never be forgotten that upon this theory Joseph of Arimathea and the little party of women were independently and quite unknown to each other planning to perform a service which would bring them to the tomb at the earliest possible moment consistent with the observance of the Sabbath. Having regard to the difficulties presented by the darkness that moment was unquestionably the break of day. Theoretically, therefore, Mary Magdalene and her friends upon reaching the tomb ought to have come upon the party of Joseph already at work.

There is no trace, however, of this dramatic meeting taking place. We are compelled, therefore, to put the supposed removal further back into the night. We have to think of a party of men operating with lamps or torches, working under the maximum difficulties, picking their way through the unlighted regions beyond the city wall, carrying a heavy body, probably for some considerable distance, and depositing it in another grave. We have to think of them going to the trouble of removing all the grave-clothes first, leaving these in the tomb and removing the naked body to its destination. And we have to regard them as either forgetting to close the door of the old tomb, or not wishing for the moment to waste time by doing so.

Let us try to see the full force and weight of this particular reconstruction of the scene. I can imagine someone saying:

‘Are we not here on the track of reality? Granted that dawn would have been the *ideal* time for this operation, but events may have determined otherwise. News flies quickly in proximity to a great national high road and Joseph may have feared that a task requiring at least two hours for its accomplishment might draw a large and dangerous crowd if undertaken after sunrise. May it not be that he really did carry out the preliminaries under cover of darkness and that when Mary Magdalene and her party arrived at the tomb, the party had already left for the locality of the permanent burial-place?’

This view of the matter possesses in a remarkable degree the required consistency with the records. It explains the surprise of the women on finding the great stone rolled away. It accounts for the tomb being discovered to be vacant. It agrees profoundly with Mary Magdalene’s breathless message to the two disciples: ‘They have taken away the Lord, and we know not where they have laid him!’ If there were no other conditions to be satisfied, this would be the supremely convincing and naturalistic explanation. But again no theory, however plausible and convincing at first sight, can stand alone. It must fit the big facts of the situation as well as the little. And it is with the big facts that no conceivable adjustment seems to be possible.

There are two ways of regarding Joseph of Arimathea consistently with the narratives. Either he was:

(a) A secret follower or disciple of Jesus who seriously desired to perform openly this service to one whose leadership he had hesitated to acknowledge during life; or

(b) A pious member of the Sanhedrin who was only concerned with the fulfilment of the Jewish Law which enjoined burial of the crucified prisoner before sunset.

A great deal has been made of the second possibility, chiefly by those who are anxious to show cause for Joseph's supposed reluctance to allow the body of Jesus to remain in his own tomb. It seems to me, however, that there is one insuperable difficulty in the way of its acceptance. The Jewish Law which enjoined burial before sunset applied equally to the two thieves, and there is no suggestion that Joseph occupied himself with or even gave a thought to the remains of these two men. Now this is remarkable, because all three cases, involving as they did the capital sentence, came within the Roman jurisdiction. It was quite as necessary to obtain Pilate's permission in the case of the two thieves as it was in that of Jesus. No doubt the Priests did later obtain official authority to deal with these two men, and their bodies were probably cast into the common grave, but this was clearly after Joseph of Arimathea had made his own personal and independent request. The fact that Joseph did make this isolated application to Pilate shows that he was not acting in an official or representative sense. In any case, why should an honourable Councillor and a member of the Great Sanhedrin have undertaken with his own hands a menial task which could more appropriately have been left to the civil guard?

Secondly, there are very definite indications in the apocryphal literature that the Priests were very angry with Joseph of Arimathea and summoned him before the Council. There would have been no occasion for such anger if he had acted merely at their behest, but very good reasons for it if he had stultified their collective action in the eyes of the people and of Pilate himself, by giving to the body of Jesus an honourable and respectful burial. Finally there is the explicit statement in St. Matthew's Gospel that Joseph was a disciple, and in St. Luke that he had not consented to their counsel and deed.

These considerations, taken together, seem to suggest that Joseph really was a sympathizer with Jesus who, stirred to the depths of his being by the illegality and fanaticism of what had been done, decided to give openly an honourable burial to the Great Teacher. With this object he went expressly to Pilate to beg the body, and with this object he chose his own tomb.

Now directly we accept this view of Joseph of Arimathea, we admit also a whole circle of ideas which are inseparable from it. In the first place it is extremely unlikely that in such circumstances Joseph would have wished to remove the body of Jesus at all. If he took the action recorded of him in the Gospels he compromised and even destroyed his social standing with the official and ruling caste. By that one act he threw in his lot irrevocably with the party of Jesus. He would hardly have adopted a bold and courageous course like that if he had not held Jesus in deep love and veneration. To one in his position, having made at long last the sacrifice he had hesitated to make during the living ministry, the thought that the revered leader and martyr rested in his own tomb would have been an imperishable consolation—the one hallowed recollection which would brighten the sad memories of his declining days. The more closely we consider this action of Joseph of Arimathea the more we get the impression of a man acting upon an inner compulsion to seize the last fleeting opportunity to align himself with the cause of Jesus before it was too late. Would he have incurred the penalties inseparable from his action—the contempt of his old associates, the deep hostility of the Priesthood, the ignominy of declaring himself a follower of the discredited and crucified Prophet—and have been willing within thirty-six hours to part with the glory? I think not. Overwhelmingly psychology is against it.

But there is another and even more cogent reason for thinking that Joseph was not responsible for the removal of the body. Within seven weeks at latest the disciples were back in Jerusalem declaring with the utmost certainty and conviction that Jesus had risen from the dead. If Joseph had made a perfectly legitimate removal of the body and (to avoid a popular demonstration) had done so in the middle of the night before Mary and her friends arrived at the Garden, the true facts of the matter must have been quite easily accessible to the Priests. After all, another tomb had to be found, and at least two or three helpers were required to carry the body. Why then, when all Jerusalem was seething with the Christian controversy, did they not simply tell the truth and thus give an effective quietus to the rumours due to the disappearance of the body?

Finally, and this to my mind carried conclusive weight, we cannot find in the contemporary records any trace of a tomb or shrine becoming the centre of veneration or worship on the ground that it contained the relics of Jesus. This is inconceivable if it was ever seriously stated at the time that Jesus was really buried elsewhere than in the vacant tomb. Rumour would have asserted a hundred supposititious places where the remains really lay, and pilgrimages innumerable would have been made to them.

Strange though it may appear, the only way in which we can account for the absence of this phenomenon is the explanation offered in the Gospels, viz. that the tomb was known, was investigated a few hours after the burial, and that the body had disappeared.

2 and 3. That the Authorities (Jewish or Roman) removed the Body

It will be convenient to take these two suggested solutions together, since the situation created by them is not markedly different from that which we have been considering.

It is no doubt possible, even at this distance of time, to suggest reasons why the body of Jesus might have been moved officially either by the Roman or the Jewish power, though the intrinsic probability of such a proceeding seems to be slight. Pilate was a very obstinate man, as his curt refusal to alter the terms of the inscription shows. He was clearly glad of any excuse to be rid of this painful incident, and if a Jew of substance desired and was granted the necessary permission to take charge of and bury the body, what more need have been done? With the Procurator in the mood in which he apparently then was, it would have required some exceedingly strong arguments to have induced him to alter his decision even at the instance of the Jewish power.

There is, of course, a very persistent tradition, both in the Gospels and the apocryphal writings, that the Jews did go to Pilate with a request. I shall deal with the very singular but important question of the guards in a later chapter. But the whole point of this tradition is to the effect that what the Priests are said to have sought of Pilate was not permission to remove the body, but to *prevent* it from being removed or stolen. There is not the slightest hint or suggestion in the earlier extant writings, apocryphal or otherwise, that the Priests ever contemplated changing the burial place, while there are a number of distinct statements that they were concerned lest some unauthorized person should abduct the body.

But the whole case for the supposed official removal of the body really breaks down when we confront it by the admitted facts of the after-situation. For if the Priests induced Pilate to change the burial-place, or to authorize their doing so, they must have known the ultimate and final resting-place, and in that event they would never have been content with the obviously unsatisfactory and untrue statement that the disciples had stolen the body. They would surely have taken the much stronger ground that the body had been removed for judicial reasons by Pilate's command or at their own request. Such a statement, made on the authority of the High Priest, would have been final. It would have destroyed for ever the possibility of anyone credibly asserting the physical resurrection of Jesus, because in the last resort, and if challenged, the remains could always have been produced. It is the complete failure of anyone to produce the remains, or to point to any tomb, official or otherwise, in which they were said to lie, which ultimately destroys every theory based upon the human removal of the body.

4 That Jesus did not really die on the Cross

I include this suggestion here more for the sake of completeness than in the expectation that the reader will desire to hear it seriously argued. It is really little more than an historical curiosity. Driven by the immense strength and cogency of the case for the empty tomb, the German rationalist Venturini put forward the suggestion that Christ did not actually die upon the Cross, but fainted, and that in the cool temperature of the grave He recovered and subsequently appeared to the disciples.

This suggestion, while attempting to produce a strictly rational explanation of the post-Crucifixion phenomena, is surely the least rational of all. It ignores the deadly character of the wounds inflicted upon Jesus, the frightful laceration of the hands and feet, the loss of strength through the ebbing away of blood, the hopelessness of human aid during the critical moments when it would be most needed, the tight-drawn bandages of the grave, the heavy stone. To try even to think of what would happen to an utterly collapsed constitution, bleeding from five torn and untended wounds, lying on the cold slab of a tomb in April without human succour of any kind, is to realize at once the unreason of the argument. But the death-blow to this theory was dealt long ago by the distinguished critic, Strauss, in a passage which will repay study.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ 'It is impossible that a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulchre, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening, and indulgence, and who still at last yielded to his sufferings, could have given to the disciples the impression that he was a conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life: an impression which lay at the bottom of their future ministry. Such a resuscitation could only have weakened the impression which he had made upon them in life and in death, at the most could only have given it an elegiac voice, but could by no possibility have changed their sorrow into enthusiasm, have elevated their reverence into worship.' Strauss, *New Life of Jesus*, i, 412 (tr.).

5 *That the Women made a Mistake*

This brings us to a suggestion which can only be discussed fully when we have studied in some detail the historic encounter at the tomb, but there are certain broad and general consequences of the theory which can more conveniently be considered here.

The suggestion is that when Mary Magdalene and her friends came to the Garden on Sunday morning the light was very dim; indeed, that dawn was only just breaking. Things take unusual shapes in the semi-darkness, and it is thought that in these circumstances the women may have made a quite genuine mistake in identifying the grave. It is suggested that, on reaching a tomb which they unexpectedly found to be open they encountered a young man—the gardener has been indicated—who, recognizing their mission, tried to tell them that Jesus was not there. The women were terrified, however, at the discovery of their errand, and without waiting for the young man to finish his sentence and thus explain their mistake, they fled from the Garden.

It will be observed that this theory, despite its appearance of rationality, has one peculiar weakness. If it was so dark that the women accidentally went to the wrong tomb, it is exceedingly improbable that the gardener would have been at work. If it was late enough and light enough for the gardener to be at work, it is improbable that the women would have been mistaken. The theory thus rests upon the synchronization of two very doubtful contingencies. This is, however, only part of the improbability and intellectual difficulty which gathers around it.

In order that we may get this matter in the clearest possible light, I propose to take the statement of one of the ablest of its exponents, Prof. Kirsopp Lake, D.D., who has developed the theory with great fullness and lucidity in his book *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. I shall endeavour to give Dr. Lake's view as far as is possible in his own words, because the openness and candour of his style calls for an equal frankness in those who may be opposed to him. This is no place for mere dialectics. It is the theory itself that we want to study and understand.

Now Prof. Lake begins, and I think rightly, with the assumption that the story of the women's visit to the tomb is an authentic piece of history. Whatever view we may take of what happened later, this particular episode is embedded too deeply in the primitive literature to be treated other than with respect. The story of the women's adventure is in the earliest authentic document we possess, the Gospel of St. Mark. It is repeated by St. Matthew and St. Luke, it is confirmed so far as Mary Magdalene herself is concerned by St. John, it is in the Apocryphal Gospel of Peter; and, perhaps even more significantly, it is in that very ancient independent fragment, preserved by St. Luke in chapter xxiv., verses 13-24, the journey to Emmaus.

The essential historicity of the women's visit is, therefore, not at present in doubt. But Prof. Lake is inclined to question whether the tomb to which they came really was the original and authentic grave of Christ.

There are two main passages in which Prof. Lake develops his theme. In his chapter on 'The Facts behind the Tradition', he says:

'It is seriously a matter for doubt whether the women were really in a position to be quite certain that the tomb which they visited was that in which they had seen Joseph of Arimathea bury the Lord's body... If it were not the same, the circumstances all seem to fall into line. The women came in the early morning to a tomb which they thought was the one in which they had seen the Lord buried. They expected to find a closed tomb, but they found an open one; and a young man, who was in the entrance, guessing their errand, tried to tell them that they had made a mistake in the place. 'He is not here,' said he; 'see the place where they laid him', and probably pointed to the next tomb. But the women were frightened at the detection of their errand and fled, only imperfectly or not at all understanding what they heard. It was only later on, when they knew that the Lord was risen, and—on their view—that his tomb must be empty, that they came to believe that the young man was something more than they had seen; that he was not telling them of their mistake, but announcing the Resurrection, and that his intention was to give them a message for the disciples.'

The same idea is developed further in the following passage from 'The Narrative in Mark':

'The burial was watched, probably from a distance, by the little band of women who had remained to see the last moments of their Master. None of the other disciples were present, for they had scattered after the arrest of Jesus (St. Peter had a little later than the rest), and had either already returned home or were in hiding in Jerusalem until they could find an opportunity of escape.'

‘Soon all the disciples found themselves once more in their old home, and prepared to return to their old methods of life. But to their surprise the Lord appeared, first to St. Peter and afterwards to others—to those who lived in Judea as well as to the Galileans— and under the influence of these appearances of which the details have not been accurately preserved, they came to believe that the Lord was risen and exalted to Heaven, and that they were called to return to Jerusalem to take up their Master’s work.

‘In Jerusalem they found the women who had watched the burial, and these told them that they had gone on the morning of the third day to supply the deficiencies of the burial given to the Lord by Joseph, but when they came to the grave, instead of finding it closed, they found it open, and a young man terrified them by telling them that Jesus whom they were seeking was not there. Thus to the already firm belief in the fact of the Resurrection—a belief which to that generation implied that the grave was empty—came to be added, on the strength of the women’s report, that the Resurrection took place on the third day.’

I have given these particular extracts because they seem to me to present, very clearly and in Prof. Lake’s own words, the fundamentals of his case, viz.:

- 1 That the women probably made a mistake.
- 2 That they did not immediately report their discovery, because the disciples were no longer in Jerusalem.
- 3 That the latter only heard the story when they returned from Galilee after an interval of some weeks.

I do not propose to attempt here an examination of those subtler points in the original narratives which can only be studied effectively in the light of the far closer and more detailed investigation which we shall make in a later chapter.

But there are three broad considerations which stand out and call for emphasis.

In the first place, the evidence for the supposed absence or inaccessibility of the disciples on Easter Sunday (so vital to Prof. Lake’s interpretation of the case) seems to me to be of a very doubtful and precarious character. It rests solely upon a broken or partly completed sentence in St. Mark. Against this there is positive evidence of a most direct and demonstrative kind. Not only does St. Mark himself expressly imply the presence of the disciples¹⁰⁵ but the whole Synoptic tradition asserts and implies it too.

If there is one thing in the Gospel story which does not seem to admit of doubt it is that, although the earliest account says that the disciples forsook Jesus and fled, they did not all flee. One man among them at least braved the terrors of the city that night and even obtained access to the scene of the midnight trial. That man was Peter.

I do not know how the reader feels about this matter, but personally I am surer of the essential historicity of the pathetic little story of Peter’s fall and repentance than of almost any thing else in the Gospels. It is one of those stories which is intelligible enough as a transcript from real life, but which would be quite inexplicable regarded as fiction. What possible explanation can we offer of a story so damning and derogatory to the repute of one of the leading apostles getting into the first Christian account of the Passion save that it was an ineffaceable memory of an actual event.

If, therefore, Peter was manifestly present in Jerusalem on Friday morning, who can say with any confidence that he and his companions had fled the city by the following Sunday?

Secondly, the behaviour of the women themselves, according to this hypothesis, is so curiously unnatural and strange. Remember who these women are. We are not dealing with mere acquaintances of the apostolic band, but with their own kith and kin. Salome was the mother of two of the disciples; Mary of Cleophas, her sister, of two others. Moreover, they were not normally resident in the city; they had come up specially for the Feast. If the disciples as a body were in any pressing kind of danger, their women-folk were in like peril. They could not leave them indifferently to the machinations of the Priests or the fury of a section of the multitude. Some attempt to secure their safety and their speedy withdrawal from the city would assuredly be made.

¹⁰⁵ ‘But go, tell his disciples and Peter, He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.’—Mark xvi. 7.

This interdependence of the women upon the men very seriously embarrasses Prof. Lake's theory at its most vital point. Prof. Lake is compelled to keep the women in Jerusalem until Sunday morning, because he firmly believes that they really went to the tomb. He is also compelled to get the disciples out of Jerusalem before sunrise on Sunday because he holds that the women kept silence. Finally, to harmonize this with the fact that they did subsequently tell the story, with all its inevitable and logical results, he finds it necessary to keep the women in Jerusalem for several weeks while the disciples returned to their homes, had certain experiences, and came back to the capital.

What does Prof. Lake imagine these women were doing all these weeks, in a foreign town, with every instinct and domestic tie pulling them northward? Would he himself in similar circumstances have gone off to safety leaving his wife or his mother in a situation of unquestioned peril? I find it hard to believe. If it was safe for the women to remain in the city and go unostentatiously to the tomb of Jesus, it was safe for the disciples to remain also. If it was not safe for the disciples to remain, then Salome, Mary of Cleophas, and surely the stricken Mother of Jesus would have shared their flight.

But there is a far deeper and more radical difficulty than this. Neither Prof. Lake nor the Rev. P. Gardner-Smith, who has adopted the same view with slight reservations, seem to have realized the annihilating character of the evidential case which their theory, if true, would have placed within reach of the Priests. Caiaphas and his friends must have been very different men from what we take them for if they did not see instantly that the supreme answer to all this nonsense about an empty grave was to *produce the gardener*.

Here was the one man who could have spoken with complete and final authority; whose slightest word could have blown the whole flimsy story to the winds. Where are the traces of the controversy which must surely have followed so direct and damaging an appeal to the facts? Where is the confident statement of the Priests that the grave of Jesus was not vacant, and that the mouldering remains still lay within it? There is no trace of any such controversy or statement—only the faint echo of the original charge that the disciples themselves had abducted the body.

There are, indeed, two very good reasons why, as a matter of historic fact, this young man was never called as a witness by the enemies of Christianity. In the first place, as we shall see, he was probably not the gardener at all, and his presence at the cave in the dim light of Sunday morning was due to other causes. But the supreme and decisive factor lay in the fact that, throughout the early decades of Christianity, the physical vacancy of the authentic tomb of Christ was not in doubt. Events seem to have conspired to place that beyond the reach of argument.

6 *That the Grave was not visited by the Women*

This brings us to a theory which is, perhaps, the only really logical alternative to the Gospel thesis.

If it could be proved that that grave was not visited on Sunday morning, and that it lay undisturbed and perhaps unthought of for many months afterwards, then the rock upon which all the preceding hypotheses ultimately founder would be removed. For if the women did not announce its vacancy, the Priests would be under no compulsion to formulate a theory, and the city would have gone about its normal life, save for the inevitable excitement and discussion occasioned by so resounding an event as the Crucifixion.

Yet I submit that none of the six hypotheses which we have been considering falls in greater or completer intellectual ruin than this. As the sequel will show, the history of what happened afterwards belies it at every turn and corner of the road.

A2 Religious Studies Synoptic Guide – Reid G and Tyler S (Philip Allan Updates, 2003) ‘Life after death in the New Testament’, pages 47-50

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The raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44)

The raising of Lazarus takes place among people who believe in Jesus and love Lazarus, a friend and follower of Christ. Lazarus has been dead and buried for 4 days before Jesus arrives, but Lazarus’s sister, Martha, seems to believe that Jesus can still do something: *‘But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask’* (John 11:22). She does not really understand the power of Christ, however, probably thinking that Jesus will be able to do something for Lazarus in the life to come – she mentions the *‘resurrection at the last day’* (John 11:24) – but not in the present instance. Yet this futuristic eschatology is about to be overtaken by a realised eschatology of the present as Jesus declares that he is *‘the resurrection and the life’* (John 11:25). Martha declares her belief that Jesus is *‘the Christ, the Son of God’* (John 11:27).

Jesus’s resurrection

In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus predicts his death and resurrection three times (Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:34 & //s), and after the Transfiguration he warns the disciples to *‘tell no one until the Son of Man should have risen from the dead’* (Mark 9:9). None of the predictions attempts to explain *how* Jesus’s resurrection will be accomplished. The evangelists were not concerned with the mechanics of God’s miraculous activity, but rather with the reality of it, and the gospel accounts of the Resurrection do not attempt a description or analysis of what happened. The Resurrection is not narrated, but proclaimed. Although all four accounts are quite distinctive, enabling the evangelists to make use of the narrative to emphasise key themes that have run throughout their gospels, there are significant links between them. All the gospel accounts include:

- the fact of the empty tomb
- the visit of women (in John’s case Mary Magdalene only) to the tomb
- information that Jesus has risen from the dead conveyed by angels or by a mysterious stranger
- motifs of surprise, lack of recognition and disbelief
- instructions or commissioning by Jesus.

Not all the gospel accounts can be said, strictly speaking, to include a resurrection appearance and in the Marcan account (the shortest, and possibly most reliable, one) the news that Jesus had been raised from the dead is not immediately believed by the disciples, male or female, although interestingly the women are more receptive than the men. The appearances of Jesus in Matthew and in John 21 appear to be of a figure that is of a more mystical and spiritual nature than in the other accounts where, for example, Thomas is invited to touch him, or where he eats broiled fish.

Paul’s teaching (1 Corinthians 15:3-9)

Paul’s teaching on the Resurrection and its significance for all Christian believers is based on his conviction that *‘if Christ be not risen, then your faith is in vain’* (1 Corinthians 15:17). His is the earliest resurrection tradition, written at least 10 years before the earliest gospel account. It can be summarised in four key stages:

- Christ dies for our sins in accordance with the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3b).
- He is buried (1 Corinthians 15:4a)
- He is raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:4b).
- Then he appears to various people (1 Corinthians 15:5-9).

The list of appearances that follows seems to validate the first three points, which are presented by Paul as both historical and theological certainties; taken together, the four formulae are offered as the grounds on which the believer can be absolutely certain of the future hope of their own resurrection.

R H Fuller (1972) wrote:

The presupposition of Paul's argument is that there is a constitutive and organic relationship between the resurrection and the future resurrection of believers... Christ's resurrection was the beginning of the eschatological process of resurrection... When, therefore, Paul goes on to define the nature of resurrected existence, what he says about it will apply equally to Christ.

Paul clearly seems to use the appearances – to Peter (Cephas), the Twelve (interestingly, since Judas would be dead by then), to ‘more than 500 brothers and sisters’, to James, to ‘all the apostles’, and ‘last of all... to me’ – to prove the Resurrection. Rudolph Bultmann claimed that this was a fatal step that leads to the further attempt to historicise it in the gospels, and ultimately in the highly imaginative accounts of the apocryphal gospels.

The resurrection of all believers

Paul's teaching (1 Corinthians 15:12-57)

R. H. Fuller suggested that Paul's readership in Corinth was anticipating not a bodily resurrection like Christ's, but simply the opening up of a new existence made possible by their baptism – a present state, but not accompanied by any concept of future hope. Paul writes to them to correct this picture. The resurrection of believers will, like Christ's resurrection, involve the resurrection and recreation of a body. However, the corruptible and perishable flesh will be transformed into something incorruptible, something that can only be created by God in the miracle of the Resurrection.

Eternal life

In the Fourth Gospel, the emphasis on salvation as a present experience overshadows the idea of future salvation and bodily resurrection. John teaches that as soon as a person makes this decision they enter into eternal life. The transition from death to life has already taken place, and thus Jesus can say: ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die’ (John 11:25-26). Eternal life transcends physical death and nothing can separate humankind from the communion it has with God:

‘I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand’ (John 10:28-29).

Robert Kysar called this the **preserver theory**. He claimed that the evangelist includes some futurist references in order to preserve the traditional view along side his own present perspective, even though they are contradictory: arguably, the evangelist feels that the futurist perspective is no longer meaningful.

Interpreting the resurrection accounts

Rudolph Bultmann claimed that the ‘*real meaning of the resurrection message was not that an incredible event took place on Easter Sunday, but the cross is permanently available to us in the church's preaching as the saving act of God*’ (cited in Fuller, 1972). Martin Dibelius observed that even the most sceptical historians acknowledge that something happened, but we cannot know the precise nature of this event, even though the New Testament writers believed it to be unambiguous.

It is the task of the systematic theologian to wrestle with the scientific, philosophical, and theological problems posed by the New Testament message of Christ's resurrection, but it is the task of the New Testament scholar to probe the historical basis of this proclamation.

(R H Fuller, 1972)

Jesus – the evidence – Wilson I (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1996) ‘Did Jesus really rise from the dead?’, pages 139-153

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According to the gospels, Joseph of Arimathea laid Jesus in his own new, rock-cut tomb ‘in which no-one had yet been buried’ (John 19: 41). This is described as having been in a garden, close to Golgotha (John 19: 41-2), and with a ‘very big’ stone rolled across the entrance-way (Matthew 27: 60; Mark 15: 46; 16: 3-4). More than sixty examples of such rolling-stone tombs can still be seen in and around Jerusalem. Their entrance boulders can weigh up to two tons, though if on level ground they can with a little effort be rolled aside by just one person. Although the John gospel’s information that ‘no-one had yet been buried’ in the tomb might appear puzzling, in fact this is consistent with the evidence of Jewish rock-cut tombs from Jesus’ time that have been excavated in recent years.

Thus, as was found, for instance, during the earlier-mentioned excavations at Giv’at ha-Mivtar, a single Jewish tomb might contain one or more benches or ‘laying-out’ places, together with as many as eight or more chambers cut into the rock to accommodate ossuaries, the stone boxes in which the bones were gathered once the corpse had decomposed. Since each tomb-chamber might contain two or three ossuaries, and each ossuary several sets of bones, a single tomb could be used for thirty or more people over a period of decades. For a tomb to be one in which ‘no-one had yet been buried’ would therefore be at least worthy of comment. It also provides an element of authentic Jewish detail bearing in mind that, for the Romans and other Gentiles of Jesus’s time, cremation was the norm.

But where was Jesus’ tomb located in relation to present-day Jerusalem? Today the traditional site is marked by the mainly Crusader-built Church of the Holy Sepulchre, a bewildering rabbit-warren of an edifice, always under repair and teeming with tourists, with in its midst a rather ugly, many times rebuilt edicule, or ‘little building’, housing a carefully protected marble slab covering all that remains of the purported bench on which Jesus was laid out in death. This location has been identified as Jesus’ burial place at least since the time when Helena, mother of the first Christian Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, reputedly ‘discovered’ it back in the fourth century AD. As recounted by the near-contemporary church historian Socrates Scholasticus:

Helena went to Jerusalem to find what had been that city as desolate as ‘a lodge in a garden of cucumbers’... after the Passion Christians paid great devotion to Christ’s tomb, but those who hated Christianity covered the spot with a mound of earth, built a temple of Aphrodite on it, and set up her statue there, so that the place would not be forgotten. The device was successful for a long time – until, in fact, it became known to the Emperor’s [ie Constantine the Great’s] mother. She had the statue thrown down, the earth removed and the site cleared, and found three crosses in the tomb... With them was also found the titulum on which Pilate had written in various languages that the Christ crucified was the king of the Jews...

From one of those three crosses found by Helena came most of the pieces of the ‘True Cross’ venerated in numerous churches and cathedrals throughout the world. What purports to be the *titulus* can also still be seen in Rome’s Basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, a puzzling piece of work with an inscription just decipherable as ‘Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews’, written in Aramaic, Greek and Latin (see John 19: 19). The authenticity of this has to be considered doubtful, likewise probably the pieces of the cross, though no-one can be sure.

But in view of the early attested marking of the spot with the Temple of Aphrodite (known to have been built by the Emperor Hadrian), there is a more than reasonable case for accepting the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as genuinely enshrining the one-time tomb in which Jesus’ body was laid. Although according to the gospels Jesus’ tomb was located outside Jerusalem’s walls, by Helena’s time these walls had been rebuilt, the reputed tomb being found inside them. There must, therefore, have been something very compelling about the location for Helena to have ignored the gospels’ clear descriptions. As archaeologist Dr Kathleen Kenyon discovered in the 1960s, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre site was outside the city walls of Jesus’ time, and would seem to have been within a quarry then being used for burials.

Frustratingly, however, Constantine the Great's engineers cut away the rock into which the tomb had been set, leaving it first free standing, and then before the end of the fourth century surrounded by a rotunda within a grandiose church. This church and the tomb alike subsequently became subjected to sometimes exhaustive Moslem attacks so that today almost every vestige of how it looked if and when Jesus was laid in it has been lost. This has prompted many Christian pilgrims to turn instead to the altogether more authentic-looking 'Garden Tomb', which General Gordon of Khartoum, on visiting Jerusalem in 1883, suggested might have been the true one used for Jesus. Located just a short walk north of Old City Jerusalem's Damascus Gate, this is today beautifully maintained as an interdenominational place of prayer, though as even its guides admit there is very little evidence in favour of it having been the original.

But the real question is: what happened to Jesus' body as laid in the true tomb, wherever this was, and whatever it looked like? According to every available early source, Jesus died on the cross at the hands of the world's most efficient executioners, the Romans. Before his body was taken down from the cross the Roman governor Pontius Pilate reportedly sent a senior officer to ensure that he was genuinely dead (Mark 15: 45). The author of the John gospel observed that in order to leave nothing to chance a lance was plunged into his chest, whereupon blood and a watery fluid oozed out (John 19: 34). According to the Matthew gospel's author, a guard was even mounted and official seals affixed to the entrance stone in order to prevent any possibility of trickery (Matthew 27: 66).

Because the Matthew gospel alone tells the story of the guard, also of a 'violent earthquake' and of the 'angel of the Lord' rolling away the entrance stone, it is probably safest to regard these as pious embroideries by an author demonstrably over-fond of the miraculous. It is equally impossible to know quite what to make of the differing accounts of the young man or men encountered at the tomb (Mark 16: 5; Luke 24: 4; see the parallel passages featured earlier on p. 27), except that the bench on which Jesus' body would have been laid, as still to be seen in surviving rolling-stone tombs, certainly would have provided sufficient space for individuals to be seated at both head and foot. But altogether more important is the agreement of all sources that just two days after Jesus had been laid in the tomb not only had his body mysteriously disappeared but people who had known him well began to have strange experiences of seeing him among them. Sometimes, distrusting their own senses, they reported seeing him pass through locked doors, yet he was able to talk and eat with them (Luke 24: 43). Reportedly he even felt like a living person to the touch (John 20: 27, 28). The convincingness of these encounters to those on the receiving end is powerfully conveyed by the speech attributed to Peter in the tenth chapter of Acts:

Now I and those with me can witness to everything he did throughout the countryside of Judaea and in Jerusalem itself: and also to the fact that they killed him by hanging him on a tree, yet three days afterwards God raised him to life and allowed him to be seen, not by the whole people, but only by certain witnesses God had chosen beforehand. Now we are those witnesses – we have eaten and drunk with him after his resurrection from the dead... (Acts 10: 39-42)

As even 'Jesus-did-not-exist' exponent Professor G. A. Wells has acknowledged, this powerful belief caught on very soon after the events described, at least one attestor to the resurrection, the apostle Paul, being readily dateable. In Acts 18: 12 Paul is said to have appeared before the Achaean proconsul Gallio while on his second mission, and since an inscription found at Delphi enables Gallio's administration to be accurately dated to 51-2 AD, simple back calculation establishes that Paul must have believed in Jesus' resurrection c. 40 AD, and according to some authorities, perhaps even as early as 36 AD. So what had happened to account for the fact that Paul and others held this belief? In this ostensibly simple question lies the central mystery of the Christian religion, and one for which there remains no uncontested rational answer.

The various accounts of the scene at the empty tomb on the first Easter morning are so full of inconsistencies that it is easy for sceptics to deride them. The writer of the John gospel describes Mary Magdalen arriving at the tomb alone, discovering the tomb to be empty and imparting the news to Peter and an unnamed 'other disciple, the one Jesus loved' (John 20: 2), generally identified as John. The Matthew author relates that Mary Magdalen was accompanied by 'Mary the mother of James and Joseph'. Mark adds a further companion, a woman called Salome, referred to in the Thomas gospel. Luke, who knows nothing of any Salome, speaks only of one 'Joanna' (presumably royal treasurer Chuza's wife – see p. 87) together with other women who go off to tell the disciples what they have seen, though according to Mark, the women, 'frightened out of their wits... said nothing to a soul, for they were afraid' (Mark 16: 8).

Similar discrepancies occur in the reports of what was seen at the empty tomb. John's Mary Magdalen saw first two angels sitting in the tomb and then Jesus, whom she was not allowed to touch. Matthew's two Marys saw one seated angel, and then Jesus. Mark's three women saw a young man in a white robe, and Mary Magdalen alone saw Jesus. Luke's group of women saw two men in brilliant clothes who suddenly appeared at their side, but not Jesus himself, who was seen only by two disciples on the road to Emmaus. All four gospels describe Jesus subsequently appearing to the full group of disciples, but while Matthew and Mark set these appearances in Galilee, the Luke and John gospels suggest that the setting was Jerusalem. Luke also indirectly mentions an earlier appearance of Jesus to Simon Peter, one which seems to have gone unnoticed elsewhere in the gospels. But it is one of Paul's letters which gives the fullest information of all:

... he [Jesus] appeared first to Cephas [Peter] and secondly to the Twelve. Next he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died; then he appeared to James and then to all the apostles; and last of all he appeared to me too...
(1 Corinthians 15: 5-8)

The documentation is an almost hopeless jumble of confusion, scarcely helped by the fact that the ever enigmatic Mary Magdalen, the only witness mentioned in every account except Paul's – for whom women didn't count – was obviously so unbalanced that she had needed to be cured by Jesus of 'seven devils'. The lack of a proper ending to the Mark gospel, as revealed by the *Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus* manuscripts, merely adds to the problem. Yet had someone wholly invented the resurrection story one might have expected them to do so more convincingly than, for instance, representing women as the prime witnesses, when women's testimony carried a particularly low weight in Jewish Law. And in their own way the garblings and inconsistencies have the same quality as the memories of witnesses after a road accident, which are, after all, personal and often highly confused versions of the same true story.

Any number of theories have been advanced in an attempt to explain what really happened, but all may be reduced to permutations of six basic hypotheses:

- 1 The women went to the wrong tomb.
- 2 Unknown to the disciples, some independent person removed the body.
- 3 The disciples themselves removed the body and invented the whole story.
- 4 The disciples saw not the real Jesus, but hallucinations.
- 5 Jesus did not actually die on the cross, but was resuscitated, or in some other way survived.
- 6 Jesus really did rise from the grave.

Although it is impossible within a single chapter to do justice to these different hypotheses, quite clear is that the disciples and gospel writers anticipated that the first four theories would be proposed to explain the mystery. All the synoptic writers emphasize, for instance, how the women had carefully taken note of where Jesus was laid (Matthew 27: 61; Mark 15: 47; Luke 23: 55). The John gospel puts into the mind of Mary Magdalen the idea that the man she mistook for a gardener (in reality Jesus, as yet unrecognized) had for some reason taken the body away (John 20: 15). The writer of Matthew acknowledged that in his time there was a story in circulation that the disciples had stolen the body. He accused 'the Jews' of having bribed the guards posted at Jesus' tomb to say this. With regard to the possibility of hallucination, both the Luke and the John gospels emphasize the disciples' own incredulity at the solidity of what they were seeing, the Luke author, for instance, wonderingly reporting '... they offered him a piece of fish which he took and ate before their eyes' (Luke 24: 43). The John author noted the disciple Thomas' insistence that he was not prepared to believe unless he was able to put his fingers into the wound in Jesus' side, and recorded that Thomas was specifically allowed to do this.

In fact, quite aside from the gospel writers' evident anticipation of them, the first four hypotheses bear little serious scrutiny. Had there simply been a mistake over the location of the tomb, it would have been an easy matter for any sceptic to go to the right location, show the body still there and set the whole matter at rest. Had Jesus' body been taken away either by a person unknown or by the disciples, we might surely have expected someone, sometime, to produce it. Such a hypothesis also fails to account for the repeated attestations of Jesus being seen alive and well. With regard to the possibility of hallucinations, it might of course be possible to envisage some bizarre mass post-hypnotic suggestion that made Jesus seem to appear to those so hypnotized, to seem to eat with them, and even to feel solid to their touch. But this still totally fails to account for the reportedly very real emptiness of Jesus' tomb.

Perhaps because the gospel writers do not take account of it, the fifth hypothesis, that Jesus did not die on the cross, has been particularly favoured by sceptics and sensationalists in recent years. In his *The Passover Plot* the late Hugh J. Schonfield advanced the ingenious theory that the sponge offered to Jesus on the cross (John 19: 29, 30) was soaked not in vinegar but in a drug to induce the appearance of death. This was so that he could be taken to the tomb by Joseph of Arimathea and there resuscitated, the lance thrust into Jesus' side being the unexpected eventuality that caused the plot to misfire. According to Schonfield, the man seen by Mary Magdalen was simply someone who had been deputed to help revive Jesus, and the 'resurrection' was therefore nothing more than a case of mistaken identity, Jesus' body having been quietly buried elsewhere.

Both before and after Schonfield all sorts of variants to this theory have been offered. In D.H. Lawrence's short story 'The Man who Died', Jesus was taken down too early from the cross, revived in the tomb, petrified his followers, who assumed he was dead, 'resurrected', and then slipped away to Egypt to enjoy conjugal relations with a priestess of Isis. The supposedly factual *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* by Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln represents Jesus' paramour as Mary Magdalen and their place of refuge as the south of France, but it follows essentially the same plot, with Jesus even going on to father a family. Within the last few years Dr Barbara Thiering of the University of Sydney has resurrected the same idea in her *Jesus: The Man*, as have the German writers Holger Kersten and Elmar Gruber with their *The Jesus Conspiracy*. Thiering has based her arguments on the idea that the gospels were all written in a code, so that virtually everything in them has to be re-interpreted in the light of that code. Kersten and Gruber have contended that the Vatican conspired with radiocarbon dating scientists to ensure that the Turin Shroud was dated to the Middle Ages so that its purported 'big secret', that it 'proves' that Jesus was still alive when laid inside it, should not be allowed to destroy the Christian faith. Despite the ingeniousness of such arguments, they merit scant serious scrutiny.

The problem for all hypotheses of this kind, certainly those postulating some form of resuscitation, was outlined more than a hundred years ago by the controversial Tübingen lecturer David Strauss, one of those nineteenth-century German theologians who in so many ways cast doubts on the gospel story. As Strauss wrote in his *New Life of Jesus*, published in 1865:

It is impossible that a being who had stolen half dead out of the sepulchre, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening and indulgence... could have given the disciples the impression that he was a Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life, an impression which lay at the bottom of their future ministry. Such a resuscitation... could by no possibility have changed their sorrow into enthusiasm, have elevated their reverence into worship!

In support of this, and in full favour of the hypothesis that Jesus genuinely rose from the grave, is the sheer confidence about this that became exhibited by the previously denying and demoralized disciple Simon Peter. This is evident from his first post-crucifixion public speech to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and their fellow-Judaeans reported in the book of Acts:

Men of Israel... Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God... This man... you took and had crucified by men outside the Law. You killed him, but God raised him to life... and all of us are witnesses to that. (Acts 2: 22-4, 32)

Peter went on to speak with similar passion on subsequently addressing non-Jews in Caesarea:

Now I, and those with me, can witness to everything he [Jesus] did throughout the countryside of Judaea and in Jerusalem itself; and also to the fact that they killed him by hanging him on a tree, yet three days afterwards God raised him to life and allowed him to be seen, not by the whole people, but by certain witnesses God had chosen beforehand. Now we are those witnesses – we have eaten and drunk with him after his resurrection from the dead... (Acts 10: 39-42)

Likewise meriting considerable weight as evidence is St Paul's clear and unequivocal statement in his letter to the Corinthians that the resurrected Jesus had been seen not only by himself, by Simon Peter, by the other disciples and by James but also by more than five hundred people at one time, most of whom he claimed to be still alive when he was setting his pen to papyrus. As pointed out by Dr Edwin M. Yamauchi, Associate Professor of History at Oxford, Ohio:

What gives a special authority to... [Paul's] list as historical evidence is the reference to most of the five hundred brethren being still alive. St Paul says in effect, 'If you do not believe me, you can ask them.' Such a statement in an admitted genuine letter written within thirty years of the event is almost as strong evidence as one could hope to get for something that happened nearly two thousand years ago.

Overall then, while there are undeniable reporting flaws regarding Jesus' claimed resurrection, and at a time distance of nearly two thousand years knowledge of exactly what happened is beyond us, the evidence that something like it actually happened is rather better than sceptics care to admit. And quite incontrovertibly, belief in it spread like wildfire very soon after the crucifixion.

Thus the book of Acts mentions as one of the first new believers a Hellenistic Jew called Stephen. Although their ancestry and religion was Jewish, Hellenistic Jews lived in the fashionable Graeco-Roman style, and spoke the Greek language. From Josephus' information that Jesus' teaching 'attracted many Jews and many of the Greeks', Stephen's adherence need not be considered out of the ordinary. But whatever his background, he chose, just like Jesus had, to attack the material vanity of the Jerusalem Temple, harking back to the Isaiah text:

*With heaven my throne
and earth my footstool,
what house could you build me,
what place could you make for my rest?
Was not all this made by my hand?*

(Isaiah 66: 1, 2)

Stephen then went on fearlessly to accuse the Jerusalem Temple authorities of having, in executing Jesus, murdered the great prophet foretold by Moses. That same Jesus, he impassionedly declared, he could see there and then 'standing at God's right hand'. Without in this instance even pausing to refer their prisoner to the Roman governor, those whom Stephen had attacked peremptorily stoned him to death.

Stephen was but the first of many who would take up this same cause – including, as we shall see, previously reticent members of Jesus' own family. They would firmly profess Jesus as the Messiah or Christ predicted in the Jewish scriptures, and emphatically attest that he had come back to life again after having suffered the most public of deaths. What cannot be emphasized enough is that those who made such claims had absolutely no expectation of any material gain for their outspokenness. Their reward instead, as the following decades and centuries would demonstrate, was all too frequently to be faced with some form of violent death, from being stoned, to being torn to pieces by wild animals in a Roman arena, to being crucified in some yet more grotesque and painful manner.

The really unnerving feature is that time after time they accepted such terrors with an astonishing cheerfulness, totally confident that what they professed was truth, that death had been conquered, and that their eventual reward far outweighed whatever tortures ordinary mortals might try to inflict upon them in the meantime. And few of the men and women who took up this challenge would have counted themselves natural martyrs, or anything out of the ordinary. Although some were high-born, most were from every stratum of society, whether Jewish or Graeco-Roman.

We can only conclude, therefore, that whether these were among the first five hundred-plus direct witnesses, or whether they had merely come to know one or more of those witnesses at first or second hand, something very powerful had fired into them such resoluteness of belief. So, given such attestation, can the resurrection of Jesus be accepted as a real historical event? And was the one-time flesh-and-blood Jesus genuinely rather more than just an ordinary man? Whatever the answer, already born was a faith in such matters powerful enough to survive not only the early years of persecution, but even through to our own time.

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