CULTURAL PRESUPPOSITIONS IN THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF
ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE, HENDRIK KRAEMER AND H. RICHARD NIEBUHR

with reference to the Encounter of the Christian
Faith and Other Faiths

James Ying-kau Pan, B.Th., B.D.

A Dissertation presented to the Faculty of Divinity
of the University of Edinburgh in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, January, 1970.
ABSTRACT OF THESIS

This work represents an attempt to understand how contemporary western culture has affected the religious thought of A.J. Toynbee, H. Kraemer and H.R. Niebuhr, with special reference to those questions which constitute the central issues in their religious writings, e.g., 'God' (Reality) and 'revelation'. In the light of such an analysis the effort is made to examine the standpoint of the Christian faith, especially in regard to the question of missionary encounter with non-Christian religions, and to re-formulate a viable Christian attitude towards them.

Study One: 'Relativism' is understood as one of the chief characteristics of contemporary western culture, and its meanings in different contexts are explored. In this Study we try to understand how the methods adopted by the writers under consideration take shape as they interact with this element in contemporary culture to which they all belong. Toynbee succumbs to the charm of 'relativism', which prompts him to hold the idea of the 'theological equivalence' of all higher religions in the sense that they all have 'in common an inkling of an identical truth about Reality.' To this 'relativism' he seeks to give a Jungian psychological basis and an Indic non-dualistic philosophical (metaphysical) framework. Kraemer reacts against the menace of 'relativism' by his 'theological approach' in the study of religions. This approach concentrates on 'revelation' by means of which he seeks to overcome the relativization of truth. His method is therefore negatively determined by his reaction against 'relativism.' Niebuhr regards 'relativism' as inevitable in the area of historical knowledge even though it threatens 'revelation.' He develops the idea of 'internal' and 'external' history, confining 'revelation' to the former, and
advocates a 'confessional' standpoint. In the realm of faith
'relativism' is possible and acceptable only if we affirm in faith and
confidence God who is the Absolute. The concept of 'radical monotheism'
is formed which not only corrects his own earlier relational value
method but also affects his understanding of the status of Jesus as
the Son of God.

Study Two: In the belief that man's understanding of himself determines
to a large extent his understanding of 'God', we proceed to analyse the
anthropological aspects of the thought of our writers. This analysis
is also conducted in the context of their interaction with the cultural
world in which they live and work. A survey of some trends of opinion
in contemporary western culture which have direct bearings on the thought
of the writers under consideration is given in Appendix I. In our
analysis of Toynbee's writings, special attention is given to his
understanding of man in the light of the Jungian scheme, and the place of
the subconscious in the religious life of man. In the case of Kraemer,
we note especially the problematical relationship between God and man
which is inherent in his 'dialectical' standpoint. A radical,
antithetical view of the divine-human relation runs through Kraemer's
thought, affecting not only his interpretation of the scriptures, but
also his evaluation of non-Christian religions in their quest for
truth. The characteristic feature of Niebuhr's anthropology is his
social understanding of the self, which represents his attempt to
correct individualistic and anti-rational tendencies in modern
existentialism. The notion of the 'social self' not only defines the
essential divine-human relation but also gives rise to the idea of the
'responsible self' with emphasis on the integrity of selfhood. Among
other things, it is this emphasis on the integrity of selfhood which has
a determinative effect on Niebuhr's notion of deity and revelation.
Study Three  This Study concentrates on how Toynbee, Kraemer and Niebuhr understand the question of 'God' (or 'Being', 'Reality') and 'revelation' which not only constitutes the core of their religious writings but also the major issues in inter-faith dialogue. Toynbee adopts the Hindu non-dualistic philosophical framework to reconcile the personal and the impersonal visions of Reality which he regards as required by the difference in the psychological make-up of men. His philosophical preference is monistic, but his religious sentiment is personalistic, with a strong Christian flavour. Revelation in his scheme is more akin to 'enlightenment' available to all men in all religions as divine truth has been made available to all men if only they turn 'inward' to the depth of their souls. Kraemer understands God in terms of the God and Father of Jesus Christ. The dynamic character of biblical realism requires the affirmation of the 'personal God', despite engulfing philosophical problems. The problematical divine-human relation in his thought results not only in a rejection of the reality of 'God' as proclamed by non-Christians, but also in a notion of 'revelation' characterized by the idea of 'disengagement', which has created many difficulties and ambiguities in his exposition. Niebuhr wrestles unsuccessfully with the problem of anthropomorphism in his understanding of God as 'person.' His rejection of metaphysics has not only led him to adopt the relational value method which he later found inadequate, but also rendered his notion of God's 'person' and 'trinity' ambiguous. His language of 'being' falls short of pantheism because he falls back on an existentialist-relational method which presupposes the structure of the 'self-Other.' Revelation means many things to Niebuhr. The notion is further complicated by the fact that it is also subsumed under the idea of the integrity of selfhood, insofar as the noetic content of revelation is largely confined (in later works of Niebuhr) to our knowledge of God as power and goodness
at one in his dealing with men which constitutes the basis of man's own integrity. Two points emerged in our analysis in this Study. First, the application of the category of the personal to God is not only required by the dynamic religious need, but also it is the only effective means whereby we can maintain the distinction between God and man in our thought and worship. Second, 'revelation' is a formal concept, depending on other categories and notions for its meaning and content. As such, it does not transcend historical relativism. We have not yet had a knowledge of God clear enough to qualify for a 'revelation.'

Study Four: Here we examine some important concepts which require further elaboration. On the basis of Jung's theory of psychological types, Toynbee works out a correlation between these types and religions. Differences in psychological make-up result in different conceptions of the nature of the ultimate. But this correlation is not convincing. Kraemer's notion of the totalitarian character of religion is meant to bring out the essential difference between one religion and another, especially between the Christian religion and the oriental, naturalistic religions. It is thought that this understanding of religion has not only destroyed the argument for 'points of contact', but also the idea of 'fulfilment'. But an examination of this notion shows that it is not totally satisfying, even though we agree that we should not overlook the difference between one religion and another. Even Kraemer, himself fails to maintain this notion consistently in his own arguments.

In this Study we also enquire into the nature of religious truth, and the meaning of 'religion'. Religious truth is to be found in the area of man's response and commitment to the impact of the divine on him. This understanding of the locus of religious truth compels us
to take the 'similarities' between religions seriously.

**Study Five:** In this Study we draw out the implications of our analysis in the preceding Studies for a critical understanding of the Christian faith and for the re-formulation of a viable Christian attitude towards non-Christian religions. In view of the ambiguity and confusion inherent in the notion of 'revelation' we argue that it is not an adequate concept to describe what God has done to men in the Christ event. The early Christians preferred 'salvation', or response and commitment to the new life made possible for men in Jesus Christ. In the writings of both Kraemer and Niebuhr the elements of response and commitment are not omitted, only subsumed under 'revelation'. From the point of view of the new orientation (in terms of response and commitment) we attempt to understand the significance of the Christ event, and the meaning of Jesus Christ as the criterion of truth.

For a viable Christian attitude towards non-Christian faiths we redefine Niebuhr's 'confessional approach' in the language of response and commitment, with a new understanding of the meaning of 'fulfilment.' This attitude is not only true to the Christian faith and our human historical situation, but also true to the Christian hope, as it is characterized by an 'openness' towards future possibilities the exact nature of which is still beyond our comprehension.
CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................... 1
INTRODUCTION ................................................................. iii
ABBREVIATIONS ............................................................... ix

STUDY ONE: THE IMPACT OF RELATIVISM: PRESUPPOSITION AS REGARDS
METHOD

I. A.J. TOYNBEE: RELATIVISM AS THE INEVITABLE LOT OF MAN .... 8
   A. Epistemological: Relativism is inevitable in respect of the
      method of historical knowledge .................................... 11
   B. Cultural: Relativism is inevitable in respect of the
      plurality of cultures (or civilizations) ............................ 19
   C. Religious: Relativism is inevitable in respect of the
      plurality of religions .................................................. 23
   D. Summary remarks ..................................................... 33

II. HENDRIK KRAEMER: RELATIVISM AS BLURRING THE QUESTION OF
    TRUTH
   A. Relativism and the plurality of religions ........................ 35
   B. General characteristics of oriental religions .................... 39
   C. Towards the 'theological approach' ............................... 46
   D. Summary remarks .................................................... 53

III. H. RICHARD NIEBUHR: RELATIVISM AND THE RELEVANCE OF
    HISTORY AND FAITH .................................................... 56
   A. Historical relativism ................................................ 57
      (1) External and internal history .................................. 59
      (2) Confessional Standpoint ......................................... 71
   B. Religious relativism ................................................ 76
      (1) The mistake in theology ........................................ 79
      (2) Radical monotheism .............................................. 83
   C. Summary remarks .................................................... 88

IV. CONCLUSION ............................................................... 90
### III. H. RICHARD NIEBUHR: CONFESSIONING THE ONE BEYOND THE MANY WITH THE MANY

#### A. The God of radical monotheism
- From relational value theory to existentialism
- God as being and the question of personhood
  - The awesome power of being
  - The identification of being with God
  - The question of the 'personal' in Niebuhr's reference to God or being
- Niebuhr compared with Tillich, Barth and Edwards

#### B. Revelation and the continuous transformation of the human in the divine-human encounter
- The meaning of revelation
- Revelation and the integrity of selfhood
- Revelation and Jesus Christ
  - Jesus Christ and the transformation of the human situation
  - Jesus Christ and the transformation of our natural religion
- The question of the Trinity

#### C. Summary remarks

**4.74**

### IV. CONCLUSION

**4.77**

### STUDY FOUR: CONCERNING THE PHENOMENA OF RELIGIONS

#### I. A. J. Toynbee: Psychological types and religion

#### II. Hendrik Kraemer: The totalitarian view of religion

#### III. Is 'religion' an adequate concept in the discussion on missionary encounter?

#### IV. Conclusion

**5.27**

### STUDY FIVE: IMPLICATIONS FOR A VIABLE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE

#### (A) Response and commitment - a more realistic approach for Christian theology

#### (B) Confessional standpoint - a critical evaluation

#### (C) Confessional approach as a viable Christian attitude

- Confessing the new existence in Christ
- Fulfilment in Jesus Christ - a reinterpretation

**5.57**
APPENDICES

APPENDIX I. Some trends in contemporary Western culture relevant to the understanding of the thought of Toynbee, Kraemer and Niebuhr. 571

APPENDIX II. A brief note on 'the unconscious', 'archetypes' and 'the libido' in the writings of C.G. Jung 589

APPENDIX III. The concept of time in the thoughts of Augustine and Bergson 597

APPENDIX IV. The 'personal God': the question of 'personality in God' and 'personality of God' 607

APPENDIX V. A brief note on the anthropocentric tendency in Schleiermacher and Ritschl, and Barth's protest against it 611

BIBLIOGRAPHY 614

- Primary Sources 614
- Secondary Sources 621
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of this dissertation provides me with an occasion to register my gratitude to the many people and institutions which have made this study project of mine possible. First of all, I wish to thank my supervisors, the Rev. Professor John McIntyre and the Rev. D.W.D. Shaw, for their expert guidance in the preparation of the work, and for their criticism which is helpfully extended to language and style. I am also grateful to them for the freedom and encouragement to develop my own trend of thought. This work is but a very imperfect reflection of their guidance.

I also wish to thank the Church of Scotland for the grant of a Bursary which supported me during the first year of my study in Edinburgh, to the World Council of Churches for a grant which enabled me to spend a summer reading in the libraries at Geneva and at Celigny, to the Goethe Institute of Germany for a two-month scholarship for the purpose of studying the German language, to the University of Edinburgh for the award of the Junior Research Fellowship for a period of twenty-eight months which made the long stay in Edinburgh possible. Thanks are also due to the helpful service given to me by the staffs of the New College library, of the library of the World Council of Churches at Geneva, of the National Library of Scotland, and especially of the library of the University of Edinburgh.

I also remember with gratitude the kindness of Professor and Mrs R.P. Kramers, of the University of Zurich, who not only opened their home to me, but also allowed me to have access to some of the unpublished papers of Kraemer which otherwise would have been unobtainable. Mrs Kramers-Kraemer has also given me permission to
use the MSS (type-written, in English and unpublished) which consist of her father's lectures on *Reflections on the Future of Religion,* given first as the Olaś Petri Foundation Lectures at Upsalla in 1955 and then as the Hisam Thomas lectures in Chicago.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my teacher and friend, the Rev. Dr. John R. Fleming, now of St Andrews University, for his help and encouragement in numerous ways over the years. He has also kindly read the sections on Kraemer (consisting of pp 153-222, 336-407) and given me many helpful suggestions and criticisms.

Last of all, I wish to register my indebtedness to my wife Susanna. Without her inspiring companionship and constant encouragement this study project might not have been undertaken. I shall remain forever grateful for her patience with me, and for the way she has adapted herself and her career to many years of unsettled life abroad.
INTRODUCTION

One of the hopeful signs of the twentieth century is the growing interdependence of different parts of the world, characterized by 'encounters' and 'meetings' of peoples and cultures, and, more important still, religious faiths. There are many noble attempts made towards a better understanding of man and his neighbour, though there is still much self-assertiveness in the events of 'encounter.' Cultures and peoples meet because, as Kraemer has said, 'they can't help it.'(1) Toynbee sees it also as the inevitable outcome of the 'annihilation of distance' through the 'achievements of a Late Modern Western technology' which has revolutionized the means of communication.(2) It is still too early to forecast what the outcome of such 'encounters' between cultures and faiths will be, and Kraemer even suggests that the 'meeting' of cultures and religions so far has been rather superficial. The 'real play' (i.e., mutual influence and stimulus on the basis of a real understanding of the self and the other) has still to come.(3) This may be so, but nevertheless we have already arrived at the stage in which the major theological activity of the Christians can no longer afford to ignore the existence of other world religions and their impact on the Christian life and thought. The matter is specially urgent for the so called 'younger churches' in the east which right from the beginning of their existence have to be engaged in relating the Gospel to their own cultural

(1) World Culture, 14
(2) Approach, 263
(3) World Culture, 13f. Thus Kraemer looks forward to a 'coming dialogue' in which real communication based on mutual understanding becomes the rule, and not the exception.
situations, at the same time defining the Christian attitude towards the non-Christian religions which constitute not only much of the cultural environments but also their own past. Thus the question of the relation between Gospel and religions becomes something of first order importance.

The encounter of one religion with another raises the question of truth. Since each religion presents to the world at least a way of life and a vision of truth (in the ultimate sense of the word), the Christian has to decide for himself, on the basis of his commitment to his saviour Jesus Christ, what truth means to him and to all man, if he is to avoid the 'relativization of all standards' which comes with the easy acceptance of the plurality of religions. He has to formulate an attitude towards non-Christian faiths which is compatible with the nature of truth as he sees it. This means that the question of attitude cannot be raised apart from the Christian's understanding of his own faith in the light of his own Christian commitment.

It has been the tradition of the Christian Church to formulate the attitude towards non-Christian faiths on the basis of God's 'revelation' in Christ. Lately in the hands of the theologians of the 'Theology of Crisis' the notion of 'revelation' has become the means whereby all non-Christian religions are deprived of any positive participation in the truth of God which puts man in right relation with him. Indeed there is much in non-Christian religions which no conscientious Christians would regard as being compatible with the truth as they have come to know in their own commitment to Jesus Christ (the same judgment being applicable to the Christian
religion), nor is it obvious that all non-Christian religions regard 'God' as the ultimate reality. Nevertheless it is difficult to see how it is possible to exclude all non-Christian faiths in the positive participation in the truth of God if one believes that God is not only love but also the source of all truth.

The central issues in Protestant theology (as also in any other Christian theology or any religious writings which allow a personal vision of Reality) is the questions of 'God' and 'revelation', which determine how we should understand ourselves, how to live as well as our attitude towards non-Christian claims of truth. Thus 'God' and 'revelation' are familiar words in most religious writings and discussions. Yet the complications and ambiguities involved in our use of these words have not been adequately appreciated. A contrast between the thought of Kraemer and that of Niebuhr on these issues provides a good example of the sort of confusion as regards 'knowledge' of God among leading Protestant theologians. In the face of such confusion and ambiguities one wonders whether we have a 'knowledge' of God clear enough to be regarded as 'revelation', or whether 'revelation' is an adequate category to describe the Christian faith and commitment, or even to play a controlling role in the formulation of a viable Christian attitude towards non-Christian faiths. Our present work is also an attempt to explore a new approach to and a new language to describe what God has done for men through the Christ-event, and a re-definition of the approach to non-Christian faiths in the light of this new orientation. It is hoped that our discussions here may provoke further attempts towards a more critical self-understanding, as well as a mutual understanding and a more positive evaluation of one another between the Christian and the non-Christian faiths.
While we agree that the Christian should organize his life, his understanding of himself and the world on the Christian notions of 'God' and 'revelation', yet we should not forget that it is also true to say that our knowledge of God and his revelation is to a large extent influenced by factors such as man's understanding of himself as he enters into a confrontation with the contemporary cultural world around Him, and the method he adopts in his approach to the questions of 'God' and 'revelation'. Thus we feel it necessary to analyse the methods of the writers of our concern, as well as the anthropological aspect of their thought, in order to find out to what extent they have been affected by their dialogue with contemporary culture, and in turn, to what extent their methods and their anthropology have imposed themselves on their essential religious thought.

The word 'cultural presuppositions' in the title of this work refer generally to the preoccupations of our writers with certain elements in contemporary culture such as 'relativism', the philosophy of 'existentialism', 'depth psychology', 'secularism', among other things. These elements may influence a writer in a positive way, in the sense that he may adopt them into his system, making them the basis from which important aspects of his thought are developed. They may influence him in a negative way if his method as a whole, or aspects of his thought in particular, are developed as a reaction against them. A survey of some of the more important cultural elements which have direct bearings on our writers in the development of their anthropology is given in Appendix I.

Perhaps the choice of A.J. Toynbee, H. Kraemer and H.R. Niebuhr requires some explanation as they stand in widely different traditions
and are not preoccupied with exactly the same problems and in the same context. There is thus no convenient, ready-made, common ground of analysis. We choose Toynbee because he is a historian with an exceptionally large horizon of knowledge, and his understanding of the development of man in history is basically religious. He has made a noble attempt to assess the role religion plays in human history as a whole. Since he prefers to be called an 'ex-Christian' who approaches religions from an essentially 'Hindu' point of view, he is not inhibited by Christian doctrinal considerations in his discussion of the difficulties and ambiguities concerning the issues of 'God' and his revelation. He brings to his discussion Jung's psychological insight (which he adopts) in a way which few responsible theologians would countenance. A confrontation with Toynbee has the effect of forcing the Christian to turn a critical look at his own presuppositions, such as the revelational value he gives to 'history', the idea of 'uniqueness' and the meaning of the category of the 'personal' as it is applied to God. These are the questions which are important in the encounter of one world religion with another, about which Toynbee is most concerned.

The choice of Kraemer is obvious, because his Tambaram book has opened up a new era of missionary encounter, and his dialectical position is still very much the rule of the day in the field of mission, as witnessed in many of the World Council of Churches pronouncements on the Christian attitude to non-Christian religions. One may disagree with Kraemer's position, yet it is impossible not to take him seriously in any theological attempt to re-formulate a viable attitude towards non-Christian faiths. To study his thought is also
to familiarize oneself with the movement of the 'Theology of Crisis' which is still an important trend of thought in the Protestant theological world.

Niebuhr on the other hand has not given the same attention as Toynbee and Kraemer to the question of religions and their encounter. He is mainly interested in trying to reinterpret the basic Christian doctrinal issues and the meaning they have for moral behaviour and commitment in contemporary western society. We choose him because he is one of the very few creative theological and philosophical minds which are very sensitive to the difficult issues in Christian theology, and is not afraid of exposing himself to the risk of following strictly his own argumentation and method. One of his major preoccupations has been the understanding of the relation between the Gospel and culture, and in his theological reflection he freely makes use of insights from contemporary cultural sources. Thus Niebuhr has not only helped us to see the difficult issues in Christian theology in a critical manner, but his theological writings have also provided us with a good example of how notions of 'God' and 'revelation' can be coloured by dialogue with contemporary culture. We also find his 'confessional' standpoint which he develops under the impact of historical relativism very suggestive for the question of missionary encounter.

Lastly, a brief word about primary sources. For the purpose of our analysis we shall concentrate on the major works of the writers under consideration. In the case of Kraemer who wrote in more than one language, we shall refer only to his writings in English, in which his major works are published. This means that we shall not give a full bibliography of the works of our writers, but only those which we consider relevant to our analysis.
## ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A.J. Toynbee:</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>A Study of History volumes 1-10 and 12, Oxford, 1953-1961 then followed by volume number and page reference.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Hendrik Kraemer:</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td><em>The Communication of the Christian Faith</em>, Lutterworth, 1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Christianity</td>
<td>Why Christianity of All Religions? Lutterworth, 1962</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>H. Richard Niebuhr:</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td><em>The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry</em>, with D.W.D. Williams and James M. Gustafson, Harper, 1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radical Monotheism</td>
<td><em>Radical Monotheism and Western Culture</em>, Faber, 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td><em>The Meaning of Revelation</em>, Macmillian, 1941, Macmillian Paper, 1960 to which references are made</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>General:</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td><em>The Authority of Faith</em>, Tambaram Series, vol. 1, 1938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td><em>Toynbee and History, Critical Essays and Reviews</em>, ed. M.F. Ashley-Montagu, Porter-Sargent, 1956</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STUDY ONE: THE IMPACT OF RELATIVISM - PRESUPPOSITION AS REGARDS METHOD

At the beginning of the present century Lord Acton was still able to maintain with confidence the view that objective history was being progressively achieved. He thought the accumulated results of such historical research were leading toward the 'ultimate history' which was to be the final settlement for all unresolved historical controversies in the past. In this vein of optimism he saw history as 'our deliverer... from the tyranny of environment and the pleasure of the air we breathe.' (2) It was in the pursuit of the science of history that one could hope to transcend one's own environmental limitations and be in touch with objective reality. This attitude of Acton's was not uncommon among historians of the late nineteenth century. (3) But soon this confidence was shattered by Carl Becker who began to ask whether it was possible to have objective history at all. (4) Becker rejected the view that there was such a thing as purely objective fact, given to the historian's immediate perception. 'The facts of history do not exist for my historian until he creates them, and into every fact that he creates

(1) The word 'method' comes from μεθόδος, literally 'following a way'. We use the word in a very broad sense, meaning the way a writer chooses to conduct his research or studies, which he regards as being true to the nature of the subject-matter of his concern. For a brief discussion on 'method', see John Cobb, Jr. Living Options in Protestant Theology, 1962, 7-12. Alan Richardson, Christian Apologetics, 1947, 7-18.

(2) The Cambridge Modern History, Its Origin, Authorship and Production, 1917 10-12, see also Lectures on Modern History, 1907, 33.

(3) According to C.S. Smith, 'Carl Becker, on History and the Climate of Opinion' 1956, 58 Becker was the first scholar in USA to pronounce a 'downright statement of historical relativism.' Becker's important challenge to contemporary historical methods was contained in an article published in the Atlantic Monthly, 1910, 'Detachment and the Writing of History.'

(4) See, for example, the view of J.B. Bury referred to by Norman Sykes, Some Recent Contributions of Historiography and their Significance for Christian Apologetics, Journal of Theological Studies Vol.1, Jan-Apr, 1949, 25.
some part of his individual experience must enter.\(^{(1)}\) Becker made full allowance for the subjective involvement of the historian himself in the pursuit of history. The historian must necessarily belong to a particular culture and age, and so his work is conditioned by the 'climate of opinion' that engulfs him. Becker even said that the historian is so conditioned that he would not be able to understand the thought-forms of those belonging to the remote past.\(^{(2)}\)

Thus in a radical manner Becker has accentuated for us the problem of relativism, and it is in the study of history that this problem receives its proper focus. In the context of the study of history relativism means that we can have no absolute certainty in regard to historical knowledge. At most we have only probability. What one gets out of history depends chiefly on what one brings to the study of history. In our time, historical relativism is an accepted principle, and it only remains for historians to decide for themselves how far one should be a relativist.

This notion of historical relativism is also developed by E. Troeltsch. Troeltsch understands the fundamental characteristics of history in terms of individuality and development. By individuality he means the units such as class groupings, religious communities and nations, epochs and even a civilisation such as the Western civilization. Broadly speaking, any aspect which betrays some sort of unity can be regarded as a historical individual.

\(^{(1)}\) Smith, op.cit., 53. This view is also represented in Collingwood, The Idea of History, 1946. See the illuminating discussion on Collingwood's view in T.A. Roberts, History and Christian Apologetics, 1960, 16.

\(^{(2)}\) For illustrations see Alan Richardson, History, Sacred and Profane 1964, 253.
Historical individuals are to be regarded as totalities or wholes each carrying within itself a world of meaning and value. Each one is peculiar to its own time and place and the complex of factors that shape it. This means that these individuals can only be evaluated and interpreted from a standpoint taken within themselves. No external criterion should be imposed upon them. The other important notion is that of 'development'. It refers to the fact that the historical totalities exist in a state of becoming. History is movement, change and process, and historical development is the unfolding of the possibilities inherent in a given totality. It is also the opening up of some key ideas and themes which have significant potential for future creation of meaning and value. Integral to the idea of development is the notion of continuous connection. History is a continuous becoming, with each new state arising out of the possibilities given to it by the past. In the process of development the various totalities interact with one another and mutually condition each other. It is this interaction and cross-fertilization which bring about the richest historical forms. So the art of the historian, in Troeltsch's opinion, is fundamentally that of empathy (Nachempfindung) with the original content and the discovery of the correlated, mutually conditioned changes which make history one universal stream in which every event is involved in every other. (1)

The important point to note is that in this continuum of events and interactions no historical unit or phenomenon can be regarded as

unique or absolute. Troeltsch rejects all belief in any unique 'essence' or 'value' which might form the internal structure of one series of events and distinguish it from all others, a device which has been used by different writers to justify the absoluteness and uniqueness of Christianity.(1) He accepts the insight of the 'History of Religions' school that Christianity is not the product of an isolated historical development. On the contrary, it has gained its particular form and content in interaction with other historical and cultural units, and therefore it can be properly explained only in terms of its relation to the others which shaped it. This view of history certainly smacks of positivism, if by that it meant that history is a closed continuum of cause and effect to the exclusion of any possibility of interference by the divine. In fact this is why Troeltsch and the writers of the History of Religions school rule out the possibility of miracle as a cause in the continuum of cause and effect. So history, as seen by Troeltsch, is a continuous flux, forever unfolding and developing new possibilities. The affirmation of historical relativism is true to the nature of history because nothing in this flux can be singled out as final or absolute. What we have in history is relative in character. The values and achievements, for example, realized in history are relative to a particular complex of events. This is what he means when he says, 'The historical and relative are identical.'(2)

(1) It does not mean that Troeltsch rejects the idea of 'essence' altogether. For him, the essence of history is in its development. As such it is subject to change.
(2) Die Absolutheit des Christentums, 42 quoted in Ogletree, 32,36.
Troeltsch's idea of individuality has found a powerful expression in our time in the field of the study of religions, which makes the problem of relativism more acute. A surprisingly large amount of books on other religions and cultures have been made available to the public. The 'annihilation of distance' — a Toynbean phrase — as the result of improved travel facilities has helped to bring people of different cultural and religious background into closer contact. The mixing of cultures and religions has created an atmosphere in which pluralism of culture and religion is something to be taken for granted. A sensitive awareness of the historical and cultural limitation of the self results in making relativism more popular, relativism in this context being the unwillingness in giving value judgment in regard to the truth represented in the values and ideals in the many religions and cultures. This has been regarded as the only practical solution in view of the absence of any universally valid criterion or trans-historical viewpoint from which we make our judgment. An extreme case in point can be found in the works of Oswald Spengler, where this relativism develops into a sort of cultural solipsism. The basic historical unit, as set forth in The Decline of the West is culture (Kultur) which is self-contained and has a certain life span. Each unit goes through similar stages before it reaches decline and death. Each culture has its distinctive Zeitgeist, a cultural soul which embraces and unifies its spiritual, mental life and its social structure. The understanding of the world in a culture refers back to its basic symbol, the working out of which also determines the varied
manifestations of the cultural life. Religion as a cultural manifestation must therefore refer back to the basic symbol for its meaning. Each religion is relative to the culture to which it belongs, and meaningful only within that culture. The same applies to science and philosophy. 'Truths are truths only in relation to a particular mankind. Thus, my own philosophy is able to express and reflect only the Western soul, and that soul only in its present civilized phase by which its conception of the world, its practical range and its sphere of effect are specified.'

When Troeltsch wrote his book, Die Absolutheit des Christentums (1909), he still argued in favour of the universality and 'highest validity' of the Christian religion on the basis of the purely spiritual ideal which excludes all particular limitations such as nations, race and so on. The Christian revelation, guaranteed by divine miracles, appeared as the loftiest and the most spiritual revelation we ever know. But his position changed later in his life when the idea of individuality was given more emphasis. So in Christian Thought we find him saying that if Christianity has any absolute validity at all, it is only absolute 'for us', since we have nothing else. In like manner, the non-Christian religions will be as absolutely valid and binding to other racial and cultural groups as Christianity is to us. Like Spendler, he also understood the individual as being inseparably bound to his religion, and his religion to its culture. So if we are to determine the value of a

(1) The Decline of the West, vol. 1 1918, 46.
(2) See Troeltsch, Christian Thought, 1923, 9-21 in which he criticised his former position as it was in Absolutheit, 1909.
(3) ibid, 26.
religion, we need to compare not only the religions, but also the
cultures of which the religion in each case constitutes a part
incapable of severance from the rest. But such an undertaking, in
Troeltsch's opinion, can only be carried out by God himself.

Now let us briefly sum up the various meaning of relativism as
it is in our time. In regard to historical knowledge relativism
means that we cannot be certain as to what actually happened. The
so-called facts of history are but the products or creations of the
historian, and therefore necessarily reflect the cultural ethos of
his time. Relativism also means that we cannot make absolute and
entirely objective judgments because we have to take our stand within
the flux of history, and are being swept along with it. Because the
values we use in our judgments are relative to a particular age and
culture, our judgments cannot claim universal validity. In regard
to comparative religion and culture, relativism means refraining as
far as possible from making judgements in view of the fact that each
religion and culture has a world of values and ideals of its own.
Relativism is a complex notion, and the underlying concern in its
various phases can be described as the denial of any uniqueness and
absoluteness in the realm of history. Perhaps this can best be
expressed in Troeltsch's words, 'the historical and relative are
identical'.

In this study we shall examine how Toynbee, Kraemer and
Niebuhr understand and react to this distinctive feature of our
modern culture. No scholar, be he a theologian or a historian,
formulates his thought in a vacuum. His thought is always directed
to some problems to which he attempts to offer his own solutions.
As he must belong to a society or an academic community, he cannot escape the influence of the 'climate of opinion' that envelops him as he works. This influence can be either positively or negatively received, or both, or accepted or rejected with some qualification. In the case of Toynbee, the reaction to relativism is a positive one. He capitulates to its charm and assimilates it into his own system. Kraemer's attitude towards relativism is mainly negative, and his thought is largely developed as a protest against it. H.R. Niebuhr's reaction is ambivalent. While he recognises that it is inevitable, he yet knows that it is damaging to the Christian faith which must anchor its certainty in some historical events in which God is understood to have acted in a unique manner. So in order to overcome the problem created by historical relativism he understands history in terms of external and internal history, at the same time formulating a 'confessional' approach. It is interesting to see that not only with Toynbee but with Kraemer and Niebuhr as well, non-theological and non-biblical elements have played an important part in their thought.

I. A.J. TOYNBEE: Relativism as the inevitable lot of man

Toynbee's system is the grand expression of relativism. It is specially so in his treatment of religion in the last four volumes of his magnum opus. There are two distinctive stages in the development of his thought. The first stage is visible in the first six volumes of 'A Study of History', where he devotes himself to the
analysis of the genesis, growth, breakdown and disintegration of civilizations. History is understood as the coming and going of civilizations engaged in a spiral movement. Civilization is the ultimate concept of history. There is nothing in this stage which takes Toynbee significantly beyond the morphology of civilizations in Spangler's works, *The Decline of the West*. Even at this stage Toynbee is all the while conscious of his own standpoint as a historian educated in the Western traditions, and of how this may affect his judgment and valuation, which are inevitable in the study of history. (1) He is already looking for a self-transcending viewpoint so that he can study the civilizations with as little prejudice as possible, though he knows at the same time that 'the historian's transcendence of self-centredness is never more than partial and imperfect.' (2) His theory of the 'philosophical equivalence' of all civilizations which affirms his conviction of 'cultural relativism' must be understood in this light. This self-consciousness and his sensitivity towards the nature and problem of historical knowledge belong together.

The significant departure from Spengler comes in the later stage when Toynbee makes religion all-important, a higher species than civilization. (3) Instead of being subsumed under civilization, religion now sets the goal for civilization. 'All growth in civilization is equated with progress towards sainthood,' and this is the declaration of the belief that

(1) See his remarks in his autobiographical narrative, *Ad Hominem*, in *History*, xii, 573-657
(2) *Approach*, 9.
(3) For reason of the change, see below 98 ff.
the goal of human endeavours, which is being aimed at in the particular endeavour that we call 'civilization,' is something beyond and above civilization itself. This is my considered answer....(1)

The goodly function of all higher religions is to bring men into fellowship with God, as a result of which creative spiritual freedom may be placed at God's service. Herein lies the realization of the 'goal of a saint's endeavour.'(2)

It is, however, at this stage also that Toynbee develops his 'religious relativism' to the full. The last four volumes of his works, completed in 1954, were written from 'the Indian Standpoint' (3) Relativism springs from his monistic concept of Reality as well as from a new understanding of the relation between religious phenomena and the psychological structure of man. From then on, Toynbee develops what can be described as the 'theological equivalence' of all living higher religions. (4) It is also at this stage that history becomes metahistory, which is, according to Toynbee, 'akin to, if not identical with, metaphysics and theology.' (5) The mundane history of higher religions is now regarded as one aspect of the life of a Kingdom of Heaven, of which this world is one province, and so history passes over into theology. (6)

(1) History, xii, 279.
(2) History, xii, 68.
(3) Reviews, 7
(4) Toynbee defines 'higher religions' as those religions which have caught 'a new vision of the spiritual presences, higher than man, in which these presences are no longer seen through the medium of human economic and political needs and activities but are seen direct as powers that are not implicated ex officio in their local worshippers' human concerns'. History, xii, 83.
(5) History, xii, 228.
(6) Civilization on Trial, 1948, v.
In what follows we propose to examine in more detail his relativistic approach to history and religion which he has formulated as a result of his being influenced by the modern cultural ethos. We shall concentrate on his understanding of the problem of historical knowledge, the 'philosophical equivalence' of civilization and the question of religions. This survey will help us in our analysis of the anthropological basis of his thought, and his vision of the ultimate Reality, which will be taken up in later sections.

(A) Epistemological: Relativism is inevitable in respect of the method of historical knowledge

Under this heading we shall spell out Toynbee's understanding of the nature and method of historical knowledge.

Toynbee finds history to be a very elusive affair, even 'the word itself is as elusive as the things that it means.' (1) It was used by the Greeks to mean a study of human affairs, in the sense of human experience, and the actions of human personalities. Then it also came to mean human activities themselves. But human experiences and actions are events on the move down a one-way stream of time. In this sense, history also means a movement, an unceasing flux, and, together with them, being carried down time's irreversible current. (2) The historian is in the same plight as the astronomer.

(2) Encounter, ibid, 32.
Both of them have no fixed standpoint outside this flux to observe the objects of their studies. The only view of space and time each of them can have is one taken from some local and temporary point-moment inside the system that each is trying to observe. Each is conditioned by his standpoint, and the result of observation is relative to his particular locale.

The historian's view is conditioned, always and every, by his own location in time and space; and since time and space are continually changing, no history, in the subjective sense of the work, can ever be a permanent record that will tell the story, once for all, in a form that will be equally acceptable to readers in all ages, or even in all quarters of the world. (1)

Just because the historian has no absolute point from which he could make perfect observation, he is bound to be 'self-centred', for he has no other bearings except the point in space and moment in time at which he finds himself. So his view will inevitably be partial and subjective, and this is the price of being a living creature. What he can best do is constantly to subject his presuppositions to critical examination, at the same time seeking to enlarge his mental horizon so as to achieve some degree of self-transcendence, no matter how imperfect it may be.

The historian is a prisoner of time and place, prisoner both in an objective and a subjective sense. In the objective sense, he is a prisoner because

his only standing-ground for viewing the upper reaches of the river of history is the constantly moving locus of the mast-head of the little boat in which the observer himself is travelling all the time down a lower reach of the same ever-rolling stream. (2)

(1) Encounter, ibid, 33. Also see History, xii. 48.
(2) Approach, 6.
And so each successive generation sees the same episodes of past history in a new perspective which brings the familiar features of an old landscape into a new relation with one another. This is why every generation has to re-write, say, the history of the Graeco-Roman civilization, not because more evidence has been unearthed by the archaeologists (though this may happen) but because it changes its shape when it is viewed from a different perspective. In a subjective sense the historian is a prisoner because he inevitably imports his feeling and valuation into the study of history. These feelings of his are tied up with the general 'climate of opinion' of his own social and academic circles. A good example, in Toynbee's opinion, can be found in the modern controversies raised over the significance of the Egyptian Emperor Ikanaton. It is this subjective feeling and moral valuation which sometimes blind us from seeing the right questions. But there is no escape from this problem, because the objects of his study are human beings of like passions as the historian's own. Here lies the major difference between the study of human and non-human nature. Only in the study of non-human nature can the problems involved in moral decision making be put aside.

This emphasis bring Toynbee into conflict with the so called 'latter-day Western, objective and scientific historians', which includes most of the conventional, professional historians of our time. These historians eschew moral judgments because of their subjective and arbitrary nature. To them, the job of the historian

(1) History, xx, 56, also see Approach, 8, where Toynbee also cites Gibbon's magnum opus as reflecting also the limited standpoint of Gibbon himself.
is one of analysing and establishing facts. But Toynbee regards this attitude as self-deceiving, because, he says, quoting Cohen, 'all interpretations of human events which profess to exclude ethics actually smuggle in uncritical ethical judgments.' Thus scientific, objective history may be unproblematical in its details, but certainly problematical in its very concept of history. There is no interpretation of history into which the subjective elements of the historian do not enter. Moral judgment is unavoidable, as is the realisation that man's own standards, values and outlook are the product of his education, social and cultural environments.

The dilemma of the historian is that he has to exercise judgments all the time in the study and writing of history. Yet he knows well that the standards and values of his may be widely different from those of other peoples of different ages or cultural backgrounds. It is very easy to fall into the temptation of regarding one's own standards and values as absolute and universally binding. But once one does that, one 'cannot begin to see these people as they really are, or to appraise their standards at real worth.' What the historian can do is to judge on the assumption that underlying the equivocal differences between our relative points of view, there are some fundamental common standards because we share a common human nature. Thus judgement

(1) See, for example, Philip Bagby, Culture and History, 1958, 48 who thinks history should be 'scientific' and 'aesthetic rather than moral'.
(3) For a detailed discussion of these influences on man see History, xii, 62f Toynbee also includes 'heredity' - genetic heritage as one of the influences.
(4) History, xii, 63.
always involves a risk. Here we see that it is not only the relativism of man's historical knowledge that Toynbee has in mind, but also, like Troeltsch, he has a respect for the autonomous and individual character of other cultures. On the matter of judgement, historical relativism and cultural pluralism have merged into one another.

The problem of historical, moral judgement is also closely linked with Toynbee's conception of 'facts', concerning which his critics take him seriously to task. The common criticism of his 'facts' is that they are arbitrary, inaccurate, and made to serve his theories. So Geyl says, 'They are only subjective presentation of facts.'(1) According to Baker, 'they are not primary and objective facts (so many stamens, so many pistils and so on.) They are secondary and subjective constructions.'(2) Toynbee would not have agreed more with his critics. His 'facts' are admittedly subjective reconstructions. Obviously his critics understand facts, in his opinion, as ready-made, objective raw material. But Toynbee, like Becker, has rejected this understanding. The root of 'fact', Toynbee points out, is 'facta', which means 'things that have been made.' It is in this sense he understands 'facts'. The historian has a hand in making them.(3) It is true that the historian needs to establish facts, but this very process of establishing facts involves criteria. The criterion of selection is not inherent in the data, but lies with the historian himself. 'What we call

(1) P. Geyl, Debates with Historians, 1955, 141 Geyl calls Toynbee's system 'a priorism'.
(2) Baker, in Reviews, 95.
(3) History, xii, 230.
Historic facts are the results of our interpretation of certain fragmentary data or remains. Our implicitly assumed principles determine the character of our interpretation.¹

Again, Toynbee's facts are tied up with his use of hypotheses or theories, because, in his opinion, 'a fact cannot come into existence without the good offices of hypothesis,' and it is the hypothesis that controls the facts. To his critics, this looks like a vicious circle. Generally, there could not have been any hypothesis if there were no facts at all. A hypothesis is created only after an 'empirical observation' of facts in order to give a systematic and wider basis of interpretation. This understanding of the relation between facts and hypothesis seems to be reflected, for instance, in Geyl's criticism of Toynbee when he says, 'He selects the instances which will support his thesis or he presents them in the way that suits him.'² Trevor-Roper's criticism is also along the same line, 'the theories (i.e., Toynbee's) are not deduced from the facts, nor tested by them; the facts are selected, sometimes adjusted, to illustrate the theories, which themselves rest effortlessly on air.'³

There may be cases in which Toynbee has got his facts wrong, and in fact on many occasions he does admit having made mistakes. But he would not agree that such mistakes would disprove his principle, viz. hypothesis logically precedes facts. Hypothesis is not deducible from facts, as it ushers facts into being. It is

---

² Geyl, Debates with Historians, 1955, 45.
³ Reviews, 123.
impossible to make inductive generalizations in the sense that the historian starts from observation and tries to derive his theories from them, because before he collects his data, his interest in data of a certain kind must be aroused. The problem must come first, so also is the method by which the data are selected and screened. On this matter, Toynbee aligns himself with K. Popper, despite their difference in outlook. 'Theories are prior to observations as well as to experiments, in the sense that the latter are significant only in relation to theoretical problems.' (1)

The affirmation of the logical priority of hypothesis also implies that when there is a change in the hypothesis, there needs also a change in facts. This is especially important for Toynbee, for basic to his system of civilizations is a set of theories. The reader of Toynbee's History will not fail to find that changes are brought in, often major ones, as the work unfolds. The number of civilizations he claims to have discovered by means of his model changes as he changes his model. (2) The most important change of all is the setting aside of the original hypothesis about the historical relation of 'higher religions' to civilizations which he develops in the earlier volumes, in which religion serves as the chrysalis for civilization. Such changes are possible because Toynbee regards his hypotheses as no more than 'heuristic', 'operational' and 'instrumental'; their effectiveness depends on their capability of suggesting new fruitful questions, experiments

(1) History, xii, 244. Quotation from Popper, Poverty of Historicism, 98.

(2) The model Toynbee used in writing his History is the Greco-Roman model which he later regarded as inadequate. He suggested the use of other models, such as the Hellenic-Sinic model, the Jewish model and so on. So a re-classification of civilizations is necessary. See History, xii, 366, 586ff and 602.
or technique in dealing with problems. He is quite prepared to modify or even abandon them if they do not work. Geyl's criticism, that he regards his theory as 'an established datum', thus falling foul of the 'hypostatisation of methodological categories,' is not justified.

Toynbee's historical method allows the personal elements of the historian - his imagination, his standards and values, his \textit{Weltanschauung} and so on - to play their parts. But it is this awareness of the important conditioning personal role that leads him to stress the relativity of historical knowledge more than many of his fellow historians. Even though he recognizes the need for making judgment, yet in the study of civilizations he seeks to minimize the extent of this exercise. This attitude is reflected, for example, in his analysis of civilizations, which, according to Kroeber, leaves out the substantive, composing cultural elements which give style and content to a civilization.\(^1\) Haunted by the thought of the evil of 'self-centredness' which plagues historians, he strives after a standpoint which will also relativize his own Western perspective. His reluctance to pass judgement on the moral value and achievements of other cultures goes back to this concern. As his quest for truth proceeds from the historical plane to the religious plane, the self-relativizing standpoint gradually takes shape and eventually materializes in the religious sphere, in a monistic, all-embracing understanding of Reality and a psychological approach to the phenomena of religions. In the

\(^1\) See A. Kroeber's criticism in \textit{Style and Civilization} 1953, 120
religious realm, he can, without fear of being self-assertive, hold that his religious view of Reality is true, but at the same time he can maintain that other religious views are also true in their own right, being different approaches to the identical Reality which men in all ages and cultures seek. What he regards as true and valuable is also found in other higher religions. This all-inclusive attitude is characteristic of the Hindu Vedantic standpoint. An acute awareness of the inevitability of historical relativism, to which he gives a philosophical and psychological basis.

(B) Cultural: Relativism is inevitable in respect of the plurality of cultures (or civilizations) (1)

We have earlier mentioned that Toynbee avoids as much as possible making value judgments on other cultures, and now we take a closer

(1) The distinction between culture and civilization is notoriously difficult to define, and no less in the works of Toynbee. He has used the word in the narrow sense, after the manner of Matthew Arnold. He also uses it in a wider sense, as generally understood by the cultural anthropologists - he further develops the views of Kroeber and Bagby. See History, xii, 272, 273. In the wider sense of the word 'culture' seems to have been more inclusive than 'civilization', as e.g. he says that 'the class represented by civilizations is one species of the genus of culture.' Ibid, 282, also 289. However, there are evidences that he also loosely uses these two words as though they are interchangeable. For instance, he mentions in one place that culture and society are inseparable in the study of a society, and in another place he says, 'it is impossible in practice to study a civilization and its society apart from each other.' See ibid, 273, 282. Furthermore, the Abortive Civilization of the nomads, 'Nomadic Civilization' is also called 'Nomadic Culture' ibid, 277. Thus for practical purposes we feel justified in using these two words interchangeably. For Toynbee's definitions of 'civilization', see ibid, 284. The whole issue is made more complicated when he later makes 'religion' a separate and a higher species than 'civilization'.

look at what he means by a 'philosophical equivalence' of culture.

In the earlier part of his works, Toynbee has located, with the help of the model of the Greco-Roman civilization, more than twenty civilizations. He classifies these civilizations into Primary, Unrelated Civilizations, then Secondary, Affiliated Civilizations and Tertiary Civilizations, Abortive and Arrested Civilizations. These descriptions are strictly formal, only meant to indicate the relation of one civilization to another. There is no value judgement involved in it. This attitude certainly reflects Toynbee's profound awareness of his own limitation, and his aversion to the temptation of setting up the Western civilization as the criterion for all civilizations. But this 'self-centredness' or 'egocentricism' which he deplores is not unknown in the study of civilizations. The theory of the 'unity of civilization', for instance, was once developed. It was held that there had been only one Civilization which gradually realised itself in the development of civilization. This Civilization was identified with the Western society on the basis of which the present world had been brought together. Western Civilization is the consummation of a single continuous development of this Civilization through space and time. As a protest against this view, Toynbee asserts the plurality of civilizations. He regards such a misconception of Western society about itself as nothing more than an 'egocentric illusion'.

(1) A new list of Civilizations is given on History xii, 588-561.
(2) Toynbee sees his classification as different from that of Bagby's. The latter divides civilizations into 'major' and 'secondary' classes according to their relative value. In brief, Bagby's is based on value judgment, taking Western-European civilization as the measuring rod. see History, xii, 552.
(3) E.A. Freeman is taken by Toynbee as one who holds such a view, and he offers a criticism of Freeman, see History, i, 339-346
To assert of any living society, at any moment in its life, that it is the consummation of human history is to hazard a guess which is intrinsically unsusceptible of immediate verification. (1)

From this protest he develops the theory of the 'philosophical equivalence' of all civilizations. He uses the simile of cars travelling along an infinitely long one-way street to illustrate his point. Civilizations are the cars all heading towards the exit which is the common goal of their endeavour. To see how far they have gone, it is necessary to locate the farthest point they have reached beyond the entrance to the one-way street. These points will be seen as far apart on the street if we take the car of Western society as already at the end of the street. But if we look at these points in their complete setting, by the street-plan as a whole, then these points will be seen clustered together within the limit of a short section of the street. In front of all of them lies an infinitely long stretch. Thus, all these civilizations are seen to have fallen far too short of their 'common goal'. All their achievements and values are relativized. 'On a philosophical point of view, they must be regarded as all approximately equal to one another in value.' (2)

This is Toynbee's attitude towards all the civilizations in the first six volumes of his monumental works. He is not able to clearly define what the 'common goal' is at this stage. In the later volumes, it is understood in terms of man's fellowship or communion with the 'One True God', and the development of mankind is meant to be a process in which man proceeds from subman to man, and

(1) History, i, 159
(2) History, i, 177
now towards 'sainthood' through the higher religions. Civilization is now understood as the 'handmaid' of religion whose service is to bring about the 'progress of Religion'. Herein lies the value of a civilization. At the same time he has also introduced some sort of valuing scale into his works, which is hard to tally with his avowed belief in the 'philosophical equivalence' of all civilizations. The Primary civilizations are, we are told, not so valuable as the Secondary civilizations which gave birth to the full-blown living higher religions. When civilizations are compared with one another, Toynbee can still hold on to the idea of 'equivalence'. But when civilizations are compared with the higher species, the 'higher religions', then they are seen to fall into different value categories. In his new scale of evaluation,

The Primary and secondary civilizations appear as differentiated from one another and located on different qualitative levels by the difference in value between their respective contributions to the achievement of bringing the higher religions to flower. As for the civilizations of the third generation, they are now right out of the picture. (1)

The third generation civilizations include the present Western civilization. Toynbee regards this, together with other civilizations of the same class, as merely futile repetition, comparable to the 'vain repetition of the gentiles', (2) since the higher religions have already been brought into being. This contention has, of course, incited the wrath of his fellow historians.

(1) History, vii, 449.
(2) A phrase coined from Mtt.6.7.
The idea of the 'philosophical equivalence' of civilizations is valid as long as Toynbee's study is confined to the 'geneses, growths, breakdowns and disintegrations' of civilizations. But it is no more valid when it is seen in the context of religion. As Toynbee's thought moves from the plane of civilization to the plane of religion, this idea is being brought with it, and a theological equivalence of all living higher religions is in the making. To this religious aspect we now turn.

(C) Religious: Relativism is inevitable in respect of the plurality of religions

One of Toynbee's descriptions of civilization gives us a glimpse of his spiritual vision. Following Whitehead, he seeks to define civilization in 'spiritual terms.' 'Perhaps it (that is, civilization) may be defined as an endeavour to create a state of society in which the whole of mankind will be able to live together in harmony as members of a single all-inclusive family.' But to create such a state of society, civilization must draw on the sources which is made available to men in the higher religions. Religions are the expression of man's impulse to get into touch with the absolute Reality, and to live in harmony with it. In this sense religion

(1) History, vii, 449
(2) History, xii, 279
(3) History, xii, 663
is understood as the basis of life in civilization. The key-note of life is harmony. This idea of harmony greatly influenced Toynbee's view of the relation between religions.

The same sensitive awareness of the evil of self-centredness or egocentricism is also present in Toynbee's interpretation of the religious situation of our time. He deplores the religious situation of the present Western world, where the believers of the Christian faith are delivered over to religious parochialism. They not only claim that the Christian faith is the only true faith, but also insist that their version of it is more acceptable than the others. It was this intolerance which precipitated the Wars of Religion in the seventeenth century, which proved morally so revolting that they alienated Western souls decisively and rapidly from religion, and turned them away from an incurably polemic theology to natural sciences.

Toynbee sees the root of intolerance going back to the Jewish heritage. It is a problem tormenting not only Christianity but also Islam. It lies with the vision of the 'jealous God'. This vision has at least one of its roots in the worship of the tribe in the form of the God of the 'chosen people', who represents their collective power. Thus, 'the god of my tribe' is set against 'the gentile outside my tribe, or my church, or whatever my community may be.'(1) This vision of God is clearly in conflict with the other vision of him as being self-sacrificing love. This duality in the vision of God results in Christianity a duality of behaviour.

(1) Christianity and Religions 21,97
The worshippers of God who is love - God the merciful, the compassionate - try to act on the belief that their fellow creatures are their brothers, because they are all God's children. (1) But the vision of God as the 'jealous God' also leads the Christians to believe that they are the 'chosen people', and they easily fall into the role of intolerant persecutors. Marcion had long ago seen the incompatability of these two visions of God. It was a sign of regression of the Church, in Toynbee's opinion, that this great theologian was rejected.

The sure cure, therefore, is to affirm with Symmachus that 'it is impossible that so great a mystery should be approached by one road only.' (2) The mystery of the working of God among man cannot be exhausted by any one of the living higher religions. Thus religious relativism is the best prescription for our time. Religious relativism in Toynbee's thought can best be understood in terms of the 'theological equivalence' of all higher religions. But we must note that this does not mean that he regards all religions as the same or identical, as he has been wrongly represented. (3)

It rather means that 'all higher religions, and indeed, religions of all kinds, have in common an inkling of an identical truth about Reality, and of an identical goal of salvation for human beings.' (4)

The Reality in the visions of the higher religions is the same

---

(1) Christianity and Religions, 19.
(2) Ibid 112
(3) Christopher Dawson, for example, misrepresents Toynbee's view when he says of him, 'When he ... seeks to prove the substantial identity of all the existing forms of higher religions, he is over-simplifying the picture and is giving way to force the evidence ...'. See Reviews, 134. In fact, Toynbee has no intention of 'proving' the 'substantial identity' of all existing religions. They are not identical, in any way.
(4) History, xii, 100.
Reality, though differently represented. But even so, Toynbee still maintains certain criteria by which it is decided whether one religious vision is preferable to another. His religious relativism, therefore, is not one which is devoid of any criteria of judgment. He is in effect saying that there is truth in all the higher religions' visions of Reality, yet some of them are more true than others. (1)

Toynbee attempts to give an anthropological basis and a philosophical framework to underpin his relativism in regard to religions. In the development of the former he is particularly indebted to C.G. Jung who has opened his eyes to the intricate relation not only between religious phenomena and the unconscious psyche but also between the regularities in human history and the behaviour of the psychic order. (2) There are two important aspects which unmistakably betray Jung's influence. The first refers to Toynbee's attitude towards what is generally called religious phenomena, which is a loose reference to objects of belief and reverence, religious symbols, ritual, practice and so on. From the world of religions he has gathered a large amount of such religious phenomena. These elements, being abstracted from their historical context, are grouped together according to their outward similarities, and understood in the general development of the history of religions. In this view, there is no room for any 'unique event', nor is finality or absoluteness an apt description of any items of belief. Furthermore, the many doctrines and beliefs are not so much taken as

(1) See below, 301ff, for instance
(2) See below, 133ff
referring to any historical event, as representing the dramatic responses of the human psyche in mythical language and symbols to the impact of the 'Divine Presence' which is operative in all times on all men. In this respect Toynbee stands very close to Jung who sees the many themes and symbols which occur repeatedly in all religions as archetypal representations. (1)

In this light we can see that the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation is being challenged. Instead of being regarded as 'unique' (and it is also the basis for the claim of the uniqueness of the Christian faith) now it is understood as one phenomenon belonging to a class of 'incarnations' in the world religions.

Thus

The travail of Christ Incarnate for the salvation of mankind had been foreshadowed in the labours of Gilgamesh, Herakles, Prometheus and the 'culture heroes' of a Sinic mythology. (2)

Toynbee of course would not deny the historical existence of the figure Jesus. But to regard this historical figure as God Incarnate, as the unique Son of God, is a different matter. He would not discountenance the use of 'incarnation' in connection with Jesus, only he would regard the notion of incarnation as one more appropriate to the psychic, mythical realm than to the objective, historical world of happenings. (3)

Not only the Incarnation but other aspects of the Christian faith are also interpreted with similar occurrences in other religions.

---

(1) For Jung's view on archetypes see Appendix, pp 589ff
(2) History, vii, 458.
(3) This interpretation of the mind of Toynbee is borne out by the fact that Toynbee groups Christ's incarnation among the avatars of Vishnu and the Bodhisattvas, thus indicating that they all belong together. See, e.g. History, xii, 624, 625. Also see below 304ff for a discussion of Christ as a 'God Incarnate'
Thus the 'passion' of Christ had been foreshadowed in a passion of Tanmuz, and this theme was again elaborated under the different names of Adonis, Osiris, Attis, Zagreus, Balder and so on. Again, the Queen of Heaven who was the virgin mother and spouse of the dying god had been adored in Ishtar, Ashtoreth, Isis, Cybele, Britomartis, and Inanna on her way to be adored as Mary. She is also worshipped in Mahayana Buddhism in China as Kwan-yin. So, the Christian faith and other higher religions have a 'family likeness.' This likeness, in Toynbee's opinion, is not the creation of the devil, as some early Christian apologists would imagine. It goes back to the common human psyche, or the collective subconscious. Thus, Christianity as a historical religion, together with its 'unrepeatable,' 'unique' events of salvation, eventually in Toynbee's scheme dissolves into the psychic realm of mythical and poetic truth.

The word 'foreshadow' has appeared twice, and its meaning should be noted. There is no need to take it to mean 'praeparatio evangelica,' as it is used in the Christian circles, for such a meaning would be alien to Toynbee. It rather refers generally to an idea which has already made its appearance in religions before Christianity, without necessarily affirming that Christ 'fulfilled' it. Christ is just one figure in history with whom the religious themes and symbols are associated. He was as much 'foreshadowed' by others as he has 'foreshadowed' many others after him in the long history of religions.

(1) History, vii, 458.
(2) Toynbee regards the subconscious as the reservoir of truth about God, see below 128 ff.
The second aspect of the anthropological basis of Toynbee's religious relativism which shows his indebtedness to Jung is his attempt to account for the existence of the higher religions with the help of Jung's 'psychological types'. Jung has suggested two antithetical attitudes and four basic functions, the combination of which forms eight psychological types which describe the orientation of the human psyche. Toynbee regards this 'fruitful diversity' of human nature as a 'hall-mark of God's creative work,' and thus psychologically diverse human souls need different lenses for seeing a vision of God. On this reasoning 'each of the living higher religions might prove to correspond to one of the major psychological types ....' If this were true, (which Toynbee thinks highly likely) then the religions should 'each go into all the world', without having to conflict with one another. They should instead complement one another, since no one religion is found to correspond to all the types of the psyche. Therefore harmony and relativism should be the principle.

The heavenly music that would satisfy every need of the soul was not inaudible on Earth, but it was never audible in a solo; it could be heard only in a symphony. The diverse higher religions must resign themselves to playing limited parts, and must school themselves to playing them in harmony, in order, between them, to fulfil their common purpose of enabling every human being of every psychological type to enter into communion with God the Ultimate Reality.

Thus theological relativism is now grounded on the need of the human psyche.

---

(1) For more detailed discussion on the correlation of the Jungian psychological types and the higher religions and the sects, see below 493ff
(2) History, vii, 442
(3) History, vii, 734
(4) For a discussion on Psychological type and religions, see below 493ff, 501ff
Since the higher religions are all authentic approaches to Reality, so the conception of Reality must be broad and inclusive enough to correspond to the many different views which describe it. But some of the views are diametrically opposed to each other, the most obvious case being the Christian and the Hindu Vedantic views. Here we find the personal view in conflict with the impersonal. It is a conflict between the 'Thou' and the 'It'. Toynbee, fully aware of the gravity of the problem, develops the notion of undifferentiated Reality in which not only all contradiction finds unity and harmony, but also the personal is included within this all-embracing whole. This mystical vision of Reality enables him to hold on the one hand the view of Reality as 'a unitive, undifferentiated and impersonal state of Being,' and on the other hands, 'a personal God'.

We shall have to try to think in terms of both the personal and the impersonal aspect of Reality at once, and this comprehensive way of thinking is hard to achieve and no less hard to express. (1)

Toynbee warns his readers to be on the look out, that even when he is using the Christian, Judaic language to describe this Reality, it must be taken as 'a shorthand script' for referring to Reality in both of those two views. (2) This philosophical frame of mind is unmistakably Hindu, even though he has, as we shall see later, modified it in his own way.

This mystical view of Reality obviously goes against reason

(1) Approach, 19
(2) ibid, see also below 315ff
and its logic, as it is generally understood. (1) But this does not worry Toynbee at all, for on religious matters, he distrusts the capability of reason as an adequate means to Truth. Reality as seen by the eyes of faith cannot be rationally demonstrated, as it is beyond the categories of reason. To understand Toynbee's distrust of reason in this respect we must notice that he separates Truth into two distinct aspects: scientific, and prophetic or religious. These two aspects of Truth are experienced on two different planes. While scientific truth on the one hand operates within categories of philosophical or scientific reason, following the logic of the argument to wherever it may lead, prophetic truth, on the other hand, is more intuitive in character, operates 'on the poetic level of the Subconscious Psyche.' Religious truth, therefore, is independent of scientific truth. It is 'intuitive' truth, pertaining more to the vision of the Ultimate Reality as it is screened through the human subconscious psyche. In personal religious language, it can be described as the communication of God himself through the medium of the subconscious, which is also the 'fount of poetry, music and visual arts.' (2) What is true in the spiritual realm is not necessarily true in the scientific realm. (3) Religions in the past have made a big mistake by turning the 'prophetic revelation' into statements of facts, to be labelled either 'true' or 'false', making it something to be disputed in the

---

(1) For instance, reason would not tolerate the proposition that \( x \) is \( a \) and not \( a \) at the same time.
(2) *History*, vii, 473, 475, 479, 500. Also *Approach*, 122-127 on the dichotomization of Truth. It is interesting to see that Toynbee quotes Brunner to illustrate the fact that religious truth is the truth of God, and the latter's distinction of truth into God-truth and World-truths. *History*, vii, 475. Of course, Brunner will have nothing to do with Toynbee's heavy psychological overtone.
(3) *History*, vii, 503
mental territory.\(^{(1)}\) In doing so religious truth has falsified itself, by making itself into what it is not. This is the 'vice of theology.' It has 'proceeded on the mistaken assumption that spiritual truth could be formulated in intellectual terms'.\(^{(2)}\)

It assumes that the intellect is an adequate medium for conveying the insight which the Soul acquires when it has been 'caught up to the third heaven', whereas in fact religious truth can best be expressed in poetry and mythology which depict what happens in the depth of the psyche. If science challenges the mythical and poetic presentation of religious truth,

Religion can have the last word if she is content to retort that, for her, the scientific meaning is trivial and irrelevant. She does not expose her mythological expression of spiritual truth to any damaging scientific attack unless she stakes the perverse theological claim that her truths are true in the scientific sense as well as in the spiritual.\(^{(3)}\)

These two independent planes or aspects of Truth have, of course, an ultimate unity, if Truth is in any sense one. But this unity is to be sought on some third plane, which is distinct from both the planes so far known to mankind. Therefore, when this dichotomy of Truth is properly understood, no conflict should arise between science and religion. And, perhaps one can also add, that when religious truth is understood in this Toynbee way, the antithesis of 'true' and 'false' will not seem to apply. Truth-judgment on religious matters reflects one's own preference and liking, which are dictated to the individual by the structure of his

\(^{(1)}\) This attitude of Toynbee reminds one of that of Jung's which would not allow religious beliefs to be labelled 'true' or 'false' in the objective sense. See Appendix I, 582

\(^{(2)}\) History, vii, 495.

\(^{(3)}\) Ibid, 503.
own Psyche. When this stage is reached, religious relativism seems to have been complete and absolute.

(D) Summary remarks

As a historian with an extraordinary range of knowledge Toynbee encounters the impact of 'relativism' first in the study of history and cultures. On the plane of history relativism refers primarily to the limitations and uncertainty concerning our historical knowledge because of the inevitable intrusion of personal elements. Thus in the comparative study of culture Toynbee emphasizes the autonomy and individuality of each culture. His reluctance in passing moral judgment on the value scales and achievements of other cultures prompts him to formulate the idea of the 'philosophical equivalence' of all cultures. On the plane of religions this notion of 'philosophical equivalence' becomes more or less a 'theological equivalence' of religions on the assumption that religions are relatively true (but not true to the same degree and intensity) in so far as they have 'in common an inkling of an identical truth about Reality, and of an identical goal of salvation for human beings.' To this 'relativism' Toynbee seeks to give an anthropological basis and well as a philosophical framework. In the formulation of the anthropological basis he is indebted to Jung who has unfolded for him the mystery of the human psyche, and suggested to him a new language and approach to
the question of religions. In spelling out the philosophical framework he draws freely on the Hindu Vedantic tradition as championed by Sankara. Toynbee's religious relativism is essentially a defiance against history in favour of psychology of the Jungian type, and a rejection of reason in favour of mythology and symbolism which he thinks are better bearers of religious truth. Subsequent inquiries are devoted to the analysis of his psychological basis and his philosophical framework, which are most important for our understanding of his religious thought as a whole.
II. HENDRIK KRAEMER: RELATIVISM AS BLURRING THE QUESTION OF TRUTH

Kraemer's position is diametrically opposed to almost every aspect of Toynbee's idea of religion. If Toynbee could be described as a religious left-wing thinker in the Western world, Kraemer could be regarded as the right-wing spokesman. While Toynbee capitulates to the charm of relativism, Kraemer meets it with a radical rejection. This protest of his runs through his work. It is not an exaggeration to say that relativism has a negative determination on his thought. Being a missionary theologian, he confronts the problem of relativism in the modern affirmation of the plurality of religions.

(A) Relativism and the plurality of religions

Religious pluralism has not only been a matter of fact, but also a relativization of all standards. Since each religion is itself a world of meaning and value, it does not seem possible to derive some criterion from one religion and make it the standard of all truth. Troeltsch and Toynbee, each in his own way, have affirmed such a belief. This point is also shared by Kraemer, as, for instance, when he says,

The more one penetrates different religions and tries to understand them in their total, peculiar entity, the more one seems that they are worlds in themselves, with their own centres, axes, and structures, not reducible to each other or to a common denominator which expresses their inner core and makes them all translucent. (1)

(1) Christian Faith, 76
The awareness of the autonomous, individual character of each religion among scholars of religions has prompted the question whether it is possible, or at all advisable, to speak of ultimate truth in the study of religions. The task set for the study of religions, it has been suggested, is to collect in a scientific and an objective manner data about the different religions and to classify them according to their similarity or certain common themes, and to study them in the light of the general history of religion. This is the method of the historical approach which was once very popular. It is, for example, represented in the writings of Professor W. Brede Kristensen, the great Dutch phenomenologist and predecessor of Kraemer. Religion, according to Kristensen, belongs to culture, taking concrete forms in various cultural areas of life. The phenomenological approach represents an attempt to understand these areas according to their inner meaning or structure, leaving aside as much as possible in the course of this endeavour any judgment upon them. In his own words.

Phenomenology of Religion is the systematic treatment of the history of religion. Its aim is not to give any value judgment but to classify and group the divergent data to give an over-all view of their content and the religious value they contain. It tries to determine their religious value they have had for the believer....(1)

In trying to determine the religious data for the believer, phenomenology is also seeking to find the key to decode the secret of the inner meaning of each religion in its own inherent characteristic value. Thus the phenomenologist must also bring to his task an attitude of empathy, Einfühlung, to interpret and

(1) W.B. Kristensen, The Meaning of Religion, 1960, 2
understand (and not to explain) the religious phenomena of any one religion he studies, viz., sacrifice, prayer, sacraments and so on. These phenomena must be studied from their own standpoint as they would have been understood by their adherents themselves. But the scholar must also know his own limitation, for at best he can have only approximate knowledge. There is always a distance between him and the objects of his research. 'The absolute character of all faith' demands such limitation, and 'the existential value' of the religious datum is never disclosed by research. (1) What the scholar can say about any one religion, therefore, is that there is a 'subjective absolute absoluteness' for its believers, but an 'objective relative absoluteness' on the plane of history. It has absolute absoluteness for the believer because of the intense religious experience it generates in him and the complete devotion it inspires. There is no one single criterion which can be made universally applicable to all religions. In other words, Kristensen is saying that what the believer of one religion thinks and feels about its absoluteness, such absoluteness has validity only within that religion and for the believer's own subjective appreciation. On the plane of history, there is no such thing as absolute absoluteness. Thus relativism is inherent in this approach. Kraemer, who otherwise has very high regard for his predecessor, criticises him for having blurred' the majestic problem of truth'. 'Kristensen accepted without question,' he says, 'the absolutely basic character of experience in formulating the problem of truth. For me, on the other hand, experience, as a chief element in the problem of truth, is truly relevant, but not basic'. (2) Kraemer also questions whether

it is possible to really put aside one's judgment as he interprets other faiths. (1)

Yet Kristensen is, for Kraemer, one of the many authorities on the Science of Religion who are delivered over to relativism, which they take as a 'self-evident assumption'. It has been argued that to take Jesus Christ as the absolute, universally valid criterion for truth is incurably prejudiced and arbitrary. Granted that judgment is inevitable in the process of study and analysis, nevertheless the working criteria should rather be derived from the common elements in religions as a whole. (2) Kraemer deplores such a relativistic situation, for it means a betrayal of the Christian standpoint.

The present situation in comparative religion is that, having no standard of reference as norm, all religions are conceived as more or less worthy vehicles of divine revelation. Virtually this means the denial of all revelation, because the fundamentally relativistic trend of modern thinking excludes all possibilities of taking the idea of revelation really seriously. (3)

To understand more fully the impact of relativism it is necessary to take into account the influence of Eastern religious thought on the West. Kraemer notices that the East is not taking altogether a

---

(1) In a paper entitled 'The Value of Comparative Religion' (date uncertain) Kraemer argues that it is not totally possible for the writer to be 'objective'. He is not able to escape 'subjective inhibition'. But it is important that one should grasp two points: (a) it is questionable whether 'scientific objectivity' is the best way to true understanding of religion or morality, (b) 'comparative religion' as a science cannot claim to be the Arbiter per excellence for determining truth.

(2) Thus we have the sense of the numinous (Otto) and 'the belief in the power that makes for righteousness' (Hocking) put forward as working criteria. Notice also that the idea of 'reconception' as developed by Hocking, Living Religions and a World Faith, 1940, 190-198, and the notion of 'sublimation' in Montgomery Watt, Truth in the Religions, 1963, 166ff are attempts to avoid taking Jesus Christ as the criterion for all religious truth, as Kraemer has done so.

(3) Christian Message, 118. What worries Kraemer is not that Comparative Religion has no standard, but that it refuses to have any absolute standard based on revelation, as the Christian faith understands it.
passive role in the East-West encounter, and this is evident in the field of the study of religions. (1) The characteristic feature of eastern religious thought, on the whole, is relativistic, naturalistic, monistic and mystical. Kraemer's theological approach is also developed with the purpose of overcoming this problem of relativism as accentuated by eastern thought.

(B) The General characteristics of oriental religions

Kraemer divides world religions into two groups: the prophetic religions of revelation, and the naturalistic religions of trans-empirical realization. (2) The Semitic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam belong to the former, whilst 'all the other religions' belong to the latter. (3)

The civilizations of India and China (also Japan) and their religions are inextricably inter-related. These civilizations are colossal developments of the 'primitive' apprehension of the totality of existence, 'primitive' in the sense that these civilizations 'in

(1) This point is elaborated in World Culture 228-271. The desire for a 'Universal Religion' for instance is representative of oriental influences.

(2) By 'trans-empirical realization' Kraemer means 'that man conceives all his efforts of meditation, religious practices, concentration, asceticism etc as means towards realizing and grasping the identity of his real self with divine reality.' Christian Message, 143

(3) Christian Message, 142. Mazdaism seems 'prophetic', but Kraemer regards it as having developed out of the monistic-naturalistic old Iranian religion, Christian Faith, 329
all their rich and variegated manifestations never made a definite break with the fundamental presuppositions of the primitive apprehension of the totality of existence. (1) The main feature of this 'apprehension of life' is the absolute inter-dependence of all spheres of life - economic, social and religious - and consequently the absence of conscious differentiation and specialization.

Religion is the soul of such a system of life, which is to a very high degree static and isolated. Any disturbance of the isolated conditions from outside may generate disintegration in it. This explains why the impact of Western civilization on the ancient oriental civilizations are so threatening, for it destroys the treasured harmony and equilibrium of the closely inter-related and undifferentiated social structure.

Integral to this apprehension of life is a type of thinking which can be described as 'totalitarian' because in an unreflective, spontaneous way it starts from

the conception of totality and of unbroken, primeval unity, which comprises and dominates the whole range of reality in nature and human life with all its distinctions, nuances and correspondences. (2)

Kraemer also calls it 'emotional thinking', because thinking in this case has not yet become abstract and analytical. Its main interest is still one of classification, seeking to give proper places and ranks to gods and men, sexes and social classes, animals and plants, land and mountains, and defining them in the whole cosmic human order. The fundamental law behind this type of thinking is that

the macrocosmos (the world, universe) and the microcosmos (man) are

(1) Christian Message, 149. 'Archaic' seems a better word than 'primitive' as it does not imply value judgment.
(2) ibid 152
correlative entities that co-exist in an uninterrupted process of living inter-relation and inter-dependence. It is also monistic thinking because ultimately all is comprehended within a primeval totality. Essentially, there are no really antagonistic and opposite principles and realities. There can at most be contrasts, but no absolute or irreconcilable antitheses.

The religions which are developed from this background are naturalistic, vitalistic and syncretistic. 'Naturalistic' is taken in the sense that 'man and nature are essentially one; man in his whole being and possibility is a part of nature, equivalent to other parts of it.'[1] 'Vitalistic' refers to man's vital desire for life, and religion is regarded as a quest for eternal, imperishable life. This quest expresses itself either in lofty mysticism (as in Taoism or Hinayana Buddhism) or in debased materialism and sensualism (as in some sects of Buddhism, notably Tantric Buddhism). Religions of these types are chiefly concerned with human psychology. It is sought primarily for its experience-value, not for its truth value. The quality and nature of religious experience, therefore, are taken as the standard to measure the value of a religion. 'Syncretistic' is used in the sense that elements from different naturalistic monistic religions can come together to form a whole without conflicting with one another, as in the case of Ryobu-shinto of Japan, in which Buddhism and Shinto have been thoroughly amalgamated. Actually, 'syncretism', in Kraemer's opinion, is not an adequate word for these religions, if it means 'the illegitimate mingling of different religious elements,' as it has been used by Christian

(1) Christian Message, 155
writers. The use of the word implies an absolute standard of reference, which is absent in naturalistic religions. So Kraemer prefers to use 'amalgamation'. He neatly sums up the main features of these religions in these words:

This amalgamation, the universal pragmatic attitude, the typical tolerance, the aversion to doctrinal borderlines, the relativist and, ultimately very subjective (despite all seeming indications to the contrary) conception of religion, are all the natural products of the naturalistic monism in these religions.\(^1\)

The 'naturalistic monism' also takes different rationalized forms of appearance. In India there is the \textit{Vedantic} Hindu philosophy and in China philosophical Taoism. The general feature of the various rationalizing forms is the juxtaposition of the illusory world of relative, empirical existence and the real world of pure, absolute Essence. All religions and what they tell about God, man, the world, deliverance and so on belong to the sphere of illusory relative existence, while Truth belongs exclusively to the realm of pure Essence. This is the 'ontological apprehension' of Reality, in the light of which all religions can only be accommodated truths'. From the standpoint of Pure Essence all is sameness, from the standpoint of accommodated truth all is difference.\(^2\) It is this type of thinking which Kraemer finds in the religious aspect of Toynbee's work, and among the philosophers, 'Hegel's absolute idealism is the highest and most systematically thought-out version of the primitive apprehension of totality in modern life.'\(^3\)

There are two important points to be noted in this brief survey of Kraemer's understanding of the oriental relativistic

\(^1\) \textit{Christian Message}, 204
\(^2\) \textit{ibid}, 209
\(^3\) \textit{ibid}, 154
religious worlds. First, the unitary apprehension of life illustrates a 'totalitarian' understanding of religion. (1)

According to this view, each religion is to be taken as a whole, each composing element is inseparable from the whole and must be taken in the context of the whole. Kraemer himself sets forth this view in these words:

Religion is the vast and desperate effort of mankind to get somehow an apprehension of the totality of existence, and therefore every religion is an indivisible, and not to be divided, unity of existential apprehension. It is not a series of tenets, dogmas, prescriptions, institutions, practices that can be taken one by one and independent item.... and that can arbitrarily be compared with, and somehow related to, and grafted upon the similar item of another religion. (2)

Religion, therefore, is a living, indivisible unity, so related to the whole that it can never be understood in its real function and significance without keeping in mind the vast and living unity of existential apprehension in which its composing elements move and have their being. Each religion is entirely a world in itself, with its own scale of values and meaning. This totalitarian view, will naturally destroy the idea of 'point of contact' and 'fulfilment.' (3) The totalitarian view has not only maintained a 'qualitative difference' or 'total otherness' between the Christian faith and all other faiths, but also, in virtue of this emphasis, made the dialogue between faiths very difficult.

(1) One might have thought that the 'totalitarian' view of religion refers only to the religions of the oriental world in which thinking is basically 'totalitarian', being 'steeped in a cosmic-mythical view of the totality of existence. 'Christian Message' 151. But this 'totalitarian' view of religion, in Kraemer's writings, is to be applied also to 'every religion' in the world, including even Christianity itself. See Christian Message, 145 also 135.

(2) Christian Message, 135
(3) See below 504ff.
Even though Kraemer has often claimed Biblical support for his thought, it is obvious that this 'totalitarian' view cannot be said to have been derived from 'revelation'. Professor Watt suggests that it is rather a sociological, or even a philosophical, conception which Kraemer has introduced into the study of religions.\(^1\) We reserve the detailed examination of the validity of the 'totalitarian' view until a later stage when we deal with his handling of the problem of encounters between the Christian faith and other religions.

The second point is that the monistic, humanistic emphasis so characteristic of oriental religions accentuates Kraemer's negative attitude towards religions as a whole.

The oriental religions are mainly, according to Kraemer, man's attempt to 'apprehend the totality of existence,' 'to realize the self as divine,' and 'to perpetuate and strengthen individual and corporate life.' As such, religion is 'no sign of spirituality.'\(^2\)

This severe stricture on 'religion' is not confined to the oriental religions, but applicable to religions as a whole. 'What goes by the name "religion" in the world,' Kraemer says, 'is to a great extent unbridled human self-assertion in religious disguise.'\(^3\) Christianity does not fare any better than the other world religions, even though Kraemer acknowledges that it is in alignment with the historical act of revelation in Christ.\(^4\) In face of the revelation of God in Christ, the Christian religion, together with all the other religions, only deserve the negative verdict 'NO'. It is not surprising that Kraemer finds Barth's condemnation of 'religion'

---

\(^1\) William Montgomery Watt, *Truth in the Religions*, 1963.5. Watt also quotes a passage from Bradley to show the similarity between it and Kraemer's totalitarian view of religion, which carries a philosophical overtone. S. Kulandran traces the 'totalitarian' view back to Schleiermacher. See Grace in *Christianity and Hinduis* 1964, 10

\(^2\) Idem

\(^3\) Christian Message, 212

\(^4\) *Why Christianity*, 114ff, *Authority*, 13
very congenial. The implication of this attitude is significant: now revelation is placed in sharp contrast to religion, a thesis which, as we shall see later, is difficult to maintain strictly. This attitude is also a reflection of the basic problem, viz., the divine-human relation which is at the core of dialectical theology. We shall say more about this later.

This negative attitude persists all through Kraemer's work. It is true that Kraemer has tried to inject a positive note into his later works so as to mitigate the lopsided view which was presented in his Tambaram book of 1938. This is done by interpreting religion as man's dialectical response to the working of God. God is involved in man's religious life. He even says that he is impressed by the 'stirring note of authenticity and truth' in non-Christian religions. However, he is not prepared to alter his judgment that 'religion' is primarily man's own attempt to grasp at truth. It is a 'path' which man has made for himself towards his own salvation. It is man's attempt to force his way back to the 'tree of life.'

The dialectical view of religion is based on a dialectical understanding of the nature of man before God, as religions are but concrete expressions of the 'religious consciousness' within. So to get to know more fully Kraemer's theology one must examine his view of man, which, as we shall argue later, is to a large extent determinative of his notion of revelation.

(1) See below, 399ff
(2) See below, 402ff
(3) This is reflected for instance in his two level judgment. see below 366 f.
(4) See his idea of 'religious consciousness', below 201
(5) Why Christianity, 97
(6) Why Christianity, 116f
(7) Christian Faith, 254
Towards the 'Theological Approach'

Kraemer's major concern in the study of religions is the question of truth. The obverse side of this concern is the question of norm by which truth and falsehood must be decided. In order to jump clear of relativism and the fallacies of liberal theology he knows that the necessary criterion which he is looking for cannot be derived from the history of religions, or human conceptions of value. If it is to be an absolute norm, it cannot be any other than the revelation, Jesus Christ, who is 'a voice from the eternal,' and not of man's creating. For the Christian scholar, Christ as the revelation of the eternal God must be his 'religious a priori', for there cannot be any other criterion by which Jesus Christ is to be judged. No argument for such a commitment is possible, because arguments would presuppose other criteria more authoritative than Jesus. This position can only be arrived at by an act of faith. If the non-Christian students of religions disavow this, 'they must also realise that their decisions for their religious a priori is just as much an act of faith as the Christian's choice for Christ.'

It is, however, not only against the non-Christian students of religions that Kraemer is speaking in defence of his method. He also has to expose the false claims of Christian students who prefer an impartial, neutral standpoint to taking Christ as their standard. Kraemer's argument has much in common with Toynbee's epistemological understanding of history and its 'facts'. Both start from the

---

(1) Christian Faith, p.145, H.A. Hodges, In Language, Standpoint and Attitude, 1953 also says that 'underlying every standpoint and attitude or Weltanschauung there is 'belief as a responsible act' which cannot be explained further. In regard to basic attitudes the intellect is always dependent on the will.' Quotation in Christian Faith, p.82
affirmation that comprehension involves interpretation. Interpretation is not solely an intellectual exercise, but an existential activity, and that ultimately a responsible act of decision in regard to choice of criterion or establishment of working hypothesis is inevitable. From this angle one can see, so Kraemer argues, the inherent weakness of the so-called scientific attitude. It purports to be impartial, universal in its application and objective.\\(^1\) The various attempts at explanation of religious phenomena are based on the assumption that religion is one of the many great manifestations of human cultural capacity and activity, which, in turn, the Science of Religion can only explain out of culture, history or man himself. But the attempt to gain objective universal validity is sure to fail because underneath the 'scientific' attempts there are non-scientific elements which are often taken for granted, viz., elements derived from one's Weltanschauung. It refers to a certain conception of man, life and the world, coupled with value-judgments which have non-scientific grounds and therefore cannot be regarded as universally valid.\\(^2\) So the alleged scientific, objective and non-committal attitude is a fiction. Every epistemology is determined by some ontological presuppositions, and every study involves judgment. Judgment is implied in the very name 'Comparative Religion', which originally means to construct for religions a hierarchical scale, according to their context and

\\(^1\) Kraemer has at least Joachim Wach in mind. According to Wach the task of the Science of Religion, which consists of the history, psychology, sociology and phenomenology of religion, is to understand the religious data on the basis of historical and other relevant evidence available. The question of truth has to be left aside. See Christian Faith, 46, 47

\\(^2\) Christian Faith, 139
truth-value, from 'lower' to 'higher' religions. This approach, once very popular, requires certain scales of value coupled with an evolutionary view of religion. Even though modern researchers now use the name in a new way, viz., to describe mainly the work of contrasting and elaborating the peculiar structure of different religions, yet the old flavour of constructing evolutionary scales is not always completely absent.

Philosophy of Religion is a good case in point. It accepts the necessity of making value-judgment. But none of the criteria put forward can be regarded as universally valid.

In its many forms Philosophy of Religion is an attempt to explain the plurality of religions and to make an assessment of the different values of religions from a particular point of view.\(^{(1)}\) It must work with certain criteria, and the criteria have been differently understood by different writers. It may be some definition of the nature of religion, or some philosophical assumption about the essence of religion, which is all embracing and present in all religions, and that the world religions are in the process of realizing this essence.\(^{(2)}\) Thus the liberal ideas of progressive evolution and fulfilment come into play. The mysterious essence is often regarded to be universally valid and

---

\(^{(1)}\) J. Wach: *Science of Religion*, 1924 Wach distinguishes science of Religion and Philosophy of Religion. The latter is normative. It implies the study and evaluation of religion from the standpoint of definite presuppositions, and so tries to determine the essence of religion and measure the truth in it. The science of Religion is not normative, but descriptive, and aims to understand, (verstehen) Such a distinction, as Kraemer points out, is impossible. See *Christian Faith*, 45-49.

\(^{(2)}\) The nature or essence of religion has been differently understood. William James sees it as man's experience of the Divine Presence, no matter how one defines 'divine'. Schleiermacher takes it as man's feeling of absolute dependence. Kent defines it as the conceiving of all duties as divine command. For Hocking and Otto, see above 38
normative, yet there has been no unanimous agreement as to what it is. It is not clear how it is to be understood. Should it be personal or impersonal, moral or a-moral, mystical or aesthetic? Needless to say, each formulated criterion reflects no more than the general world-view and taste of the scholar who puts it forward.\(^1\) If the diversity of criteria indicates anything at all, it shows at least the impossibility of having a strictly scientific and objective method, and at the same time the fact that none of the many theories has been, and can be, accepted as absolute and universally valid. Perhaps Kraemer would agree with Troeltsch when he says, 'the historical and relative are identical.'

Having exploded the myth of the scientific, objective pretension among scholars of religions, Kraemer sets himself the task of defining his method, which he calls the 'theological approach,' and it can be described as follows:

By theological approach we mean that in his attempts to understand and interpret religions, the Christian thinker must frankly confess that he can never behave simply as the adherent of a religion, taking, if he so chooses, a standpoint detached from the basic views implied in the Christian Faith... he remains primarily a disciple, a captive of Jesus Christ, in whom God disclosed Himself, full of grace and truth .... The theological starting point therefore is revelation, which is basically different from religious intuition or divination, and which is not a product of the human religious consciousness ....\(^2\)

The essential features of this approach of Kraemer's can be set fourth in three points:

(A) If words like 'scientific' and 'objective' must be used at all, this 'theological approach' can be shown as 'scientific' and

\(^1\) See, for instance, Christian Faith, 141 where Kraemer refers to the 'warring concepts of the Essence of Religion'.

\(^2\) ibid, 144, 145, 146.
'objective' as any other so claimed approach in the study of religions. It is just one of the human limitations that one cannot think without first having some sort of frame of reference, or an epistemological a priori. So the 'scientific' student begins his work with an assumed, non-scientific Weltanschauung. In like manner, the theologian must begin, and quite legitimately, his study with the revelation in Jesus Christ as his religious and epistemological a priori without having to forfeit the scientific character of his research.

This theological approach is 'objective,' but not in the sense of 'universally valid for the purpose of rational thought, and so to be admitted without further question, or removed from every possibility of any subjective judgment.'(1) By 'objective' Kraemer means literally as something 'deposited in front' of us; something set, or which sets itself, before us. To be objective is to be true to the nature and requirement of that which is before us. Now for Kraemer, this something before us, this givenness, is 'Jesus Christ.'(2) Just because the 'object' is Jesus Christ, who is also the criterion, the criterion itself presupposes a living communion. As our understanding of him grows, so also the effectiveness of our judgment increases.

(B) The theological approach is not a handicap. On the contrary, it is a better tool for the student to understand other religions. The student cannot be a detached observer. He needs to enter into sympathetic relation with his subject-matter. Loyalty to Jesus Christ enables the student to begin his work with a good

---

(1) Why Christianity, 72
(2) For the problem of the 'given', see below, 348
philosophical conscience, for now he knows where he stands, and is aware of his own epistemological a priori. 'By full recognition and avowal of one's own bias one is comparatively speaking the better armed against the temptations of prejudice and partiality, to which every scholar without exception is constantly exposed.' (1) Now the student strives to see as Jesus Christ sees, and by the light of the reality disclosed in God's self-communication in him, search out in full commitment the evidence for revelatory activity of the same God in all religions, Christianity included, tracing done also the demonic and devilish forces in them at the same time. This trend of thought has a positive note about it, but Kraemer, as we shall argue later, fails to carry it through because of his own presuppositions which pin him down to a negative attitude.

(C) This theological approach is also in line with the nature of religious truth. Truth in this religious context is not a 'knowing' from without, nor is it such that one's relationship to it can be that of a spectator. Religious truth is not essentially an intellectually demonstrable proposition. 'It is a living in communion with a world of spiritual actuality of which God, who alone is known and therefore loved with the whole heart ... (think of the first commandment) is the centre.' (2) This truth is arrived at by a choice and a responsible decision on the part of the individual as he is confronted with the divine. Truth is therefore, in present-day philosophical language, existential, not only intellectual or noetic. For the Christian, it is also Christocentric. It is by this act of decision that one commits

(1) Christian Faith, 52
(2) Why Christianity, 74
oneself to Jesus Christ, and also to this theological approach.

Of course, this position to the outsider, Kraemer admits, would be meaningless, or merely subjective and arbitrary. So 'if someone on the outside of all this chooses to speak of subjectivity at this point, nobody can say him nay.' (1) But the outsider may also realize that his own position is not free from subjectivity as well. Yet to the loyal Christian who is confronted with the necessity of making truth-judgment there is no other criterion possible for him, except taking Jesus Christ seriously, who says, 'I am the truth'. Even though he has to start from this limited standpoint, he must also have the confidence and conviction that this criterion is not only applicable within Christian circles but universally valid. He comes to it by faith, because he cannot scientifically and historically demonstrate that it is so. Only by loyalty to Jesus Christ alone can one hope to overcome the problem of relativism in the study of our religion. The theological approach is formulated towards this end.

Kraemer's theological approach is attractive because it is rooted in a profound Christian devotion and loyalty to Jesus Christ. As a Christian theologian, Kraemer is certainly entitled, and correct, to take Jesus Christ as the absolute criterion of truth. But this approach has difficulties to which Kraemer does not seem to have given adequate attention. For instance, there is the epistemological problem. It is not immediately obvious how the 'object' or the given, which Kraemer also identifies with God's revelation to man, is to be interpreted, what should be included and what excluded.

(1) Why Christianity, 114
Moreover, it is one thing to affirm that Jesus Christ should be the criterion of truth, as he is 'the Truth', and another thing to actually apply such a criterion to case study. How can a person, even the God-man himself, be made a means of measurement, as the word 'criterion' implies? Unless Kraemer says more about 'Jesus Christ' the criterion, such a criterion can at most remain a formal principle incapable of application. This of course is what Kraemer does not want to see. So we find him adding to 'Jesus Christ' such as 'his love', 'his kingdom' and the forgiveness he brings.

The handling of such doctrinal issues not only shows that he is more in favour of a certain tradition, and particularly a certain understanding of man which does not necessarily belong to 'revelation'. The criterion of the 'theological approach' at first sight seems to be rather straightforward, but on a closer look it becomes very involved. We have only to mention it here, as its various aspects will be taken up in the following studies.

(D) Summary Remarks

Kraemer reacts to the challenge of relativism by taking 'Jesus Christ' as the absolute and ultimate criterion of truth for him. Students of religions refuse to take Christ as the criterion because they think it would be subjective and unscientific. To avoid such fallacies they prefer to derive their working criteria from within
the subject-matter itself. Kraemer shows that they are in fact not in any better position because their presuppositions include non-scientific elements. We must grant Kraemer the credit of exploding powerfully the myth of the alleged 'scientific' and 'objective' attitude. He has also shown convincingly that the theologian has as much right in taking 'Jesus Christ' or 'revelation' as his criterion as the 'scientific' researchers who derive their criteria from the subject matter concerned.

When Kraemer says that his theological method is 'objective' but not in the sense that it is 'universally valid for the purpose of rational thought ....' he might have suggested to his readers that his criterion is not universally valid. This certainly would not be what he intends. To him, 'Jesus Christ' is the ultimate criterion, but he cannot rationally demonstrate that it is so. In other words, ultimate truth is something one can only affirm in faith; it is not demonstrated or proved by reason. Once he comes to see that it is truth for him, he also believes that it is also truth for all men. In this respect, he differs significantly from Troeltsch who would not move from the 'for us' to 'for all men'.

Kraemer is just one of the many Christian theologians who in the present century appeal to 'revelation' for ultimate and absolute criterion. 'Revelation' is not the product of man or history, but a 'voice from beyond' not only history but also all that is human. The implication is that only by turning to 'revelation'

(1) This attitude also marks the difference between Kraemer and Niebuhr who is akin to Troeltsch on this point. For Troeltsch's view, see above, 4ff. For Niebuhr's confessional standpoint, see below, 71ff also 545ff
can we expect to escape from the uncertainty and the vain imaginings of man in regard to ultimate truth. But it is questionable whether we can escape the plight of uncertainty and imagination because these elements are involved in our interpretation of 'Jesus Christ' and 'revelation'. It does not seem to us that the complicated structure of 'revelation' has adequately been brought out in Kraemer's treatment, about which we shall say more later.

(1) The appeal to 'revelation' also serves the purpose of fleeing from the uncertainty of historical knowledge, as in the case of those who speak of Heilsgeschichte and Niebuhr, see below 61ff
Relativism as a fact of human existence had been accepted by H. Richard Niebuhr since the beginning of his career. It remains a constant theme all through his work. As a theologian, Niebuhr's deepest concern is to find out the connection between history, culture and theology, especially in a time when the study of history and culture has brought home powerfully to the modern man the inescapability of relativism. Such a realization, he observes, can easily lend to agnosticism, which is nothing less than 'rational suicide.' It is not surprising to find that many Christians tend to undermine the historical roots of their faith. History being of such an uncertain nature, in what sense can we say it is the locale or the medium in which the revelatory events of God were made known? In an age when the fact of the plurality of cultures and religions is something to be taken for granted, can we still say that the Christian faith is more acceptable or more true than the others?

Niebuhr qualifies the term relativism in different ways, calling it historical relativism, moral relativism, value relativism, religious relativism, theological and theocentric relativism. To bring out the full impact of relativism on Niebuhr's thought, we shall deal with the problem in two major aspects: historical and religious. It is mainly from the recognition of the reality of historical relativism that he develops the epistemology of

revelation in the form of the internal and external history, and his 'confessional' standpoint; and from religious relativism the principle of radical monotheism, giving full recognition to the absolute sovereignty of God.

(A) **Historical Relativism**

Like Toynbee, Niebuhr is concerned about the nature of historical knowledge, and especially about the limitations imposed upon the observer. He has learnt from Troeltsch 'to accept and to profit by the acceptance of the relativity not only of historical objects, but more, of the historical subject, the observer and the interpreter.'(1) Not only historical, but all knowledge, is conditioned by the spatial-temporal locale of the observer. This means that ethical values, economics and even metaphysics, for instance, have their own historical character. They are moving and changing in time, differing from society to society, from civilization to civilization. There was a time when it was fashionable to speak of innate religious ideas, or some rational essence in man's moral experience which was universal in all men. But these so called innate ideas are found to be innate only in a definite society or a historic culture rather than universally in all men. The case of Kant is a good example. Kant's conception

---

(1) *Christ and Culture*, xii. Troeltsch also deals with this problem in *Der Historismus*, especially chapters 2 & 3. For a summary treatment see Benjamin A Reist: *Towards a Theology of Involvement*, 1966, 43-89.
of moral duty can be accepted as the essence of universal moral experience only in a society in which the Judaic-Christian tradition is predominant. Of course, Niebuhr also says, 'we need not doubt the categorical imperative contains a universal meaning, but Kant's formulations of it are historically relative ....'(1) This must be so because man is a communal being. He belongs to a society, and society is a particular thing, being the product of its own past and the possessor of a limited culture. Historical relativism in Niebuhr's thought should rather be taken as historical relationism in the sense that man is inseparably related to a definite community and therefore to a particular culture of a particular time. As a result, his views are limited, and not universal, so they cannot be regarded as having universal validity.

The acute awareness of the reality of historical relativism has a profound effect in the shaping of Niebuhr's theological method. It leads to the abandoning of metaphysics, for instance, because he now sees it as having as much a historical character as other aspects of human knowledge.(2) In the study of theology this means that Niebuhr is not willing to speculate about the ontological structure of the Godhead itself. When God is spoken of, it is the God as he is known in his relation to man. In this respect Niebuhr is very close to Schleiermacher. This relational view of God, however, does raise some problems for Niebuhr, as for example when he comes to discuss the 'personhood' of God, which will be analysed in a later chapter.(3) For the time being we wish to register his anxiety over the problem of history, and his attempts to overcome it

(1) Revelation, 11
(2) Revelation, 12
(3) See below, pp 430 ff, 463 ff
by developing a view of history in which 'revelation' becomes a possibility, and a theological standpoint which is true to the nature of historical knowledge as he understands it. His notion of history takes the form of a dichotomization of history in its external and internal aspects, and to this we now turn.

(1) **External and Internal History**

Niebuhr shows a deep concern over the issue of the relation between history and faith, and the problems the former have created for the latter, because he comes to realize that 'Christian faith cannot escape from partnership with history, however many other partners it may choose ... the union is as indestructible as that of reason and sense experience in the natural sciences.' Such a partnership with history was already evident in the earliest days when, for instance, the preachings of the disciples was 'primarily a simple recital of the great events connected with the historical appearance of Jesus Christ and a confession of what had happened to the community of disciples.' In doing so they were only following what the prophets before them did. The prophets spoke of history, of what had happened to Abraham, Issac and Jacob, of a deliverance from Egypt, of the covenant of Sinai, and of mighty acts of God. Even God was defined less by his metaphysical and moral character

(1) *Revelation*, 59 also 58.
than by his historical relations, as the God of Abraham, Issac and Jacob. (1) The importance of such a relation was already well expressed in our time by Professor Whitehead who says, 'religions commit suicide when they find their inspiration in their dogmas. The inspiration of religion lies in the history of religion.' (2) Whether this is true of other religions may be questioned, but Niebuhr thinks it certainly holds good as far as the Christian faith is concerned. In the past, Christian faith had entered into partnership with metaphysical and ethical systems, but they were found wanting.

Metaphysical systems have not been able to maintain the intellectual life of our community and abstract systems of morality have not conveyed devotion and the power of obedience with their ideals and imperatives. Idealistic and realistic metaphysics, perfectionist and hedonistic ethics have been poor substitutes for the New Testament, and churches which feed on such nourishment seem subject to spiritual rickets. (3)

We should have learnt the lesson of such failures, and therefore do what New Testament evangelists did in their attempt to understand the Christian faith. We must realize that 'we are in history as the fish is in water,' and therefore when we refer to God's revelation, what we mean by it 'can be indicated only as we point through the medium in which we live.' (4) In brief, the Christian faith is grounded in the 'mighty acts of God' in history. History is the theatre of God's revelation. So we must look to history for what God has done and what he is doing in order to understand God's way and our fate. This is what is in Niebuhr's mind when he says that revelation means 'both history and God.'

---

(1) Revelation, 46  
(2) ibid, 47  
(3) ibid, 47  
(4) ibid, 48.
Today, it is this 'medium' or history to which we must look, which appears to us as most ambiguous and uncertain. Historical relativism has not only unfolded before us our uncertainty of what really happened in history, but also the passing nature of our opinions and judgments. In the writings of Troeltsch, it also means that we cannot regard any event in the stream of history as 'absolute' or 'unique', nor can notions like the 'mighty acts of God' and miracles be brought in as explanation of certain events. A note of positivism, as we have pointed out earlier, is also felt in Troeltsch's exclusion of divine intervention in human history. All this makes history very problematical for the theologian.

Historical relativism may have been more acutely felt as a problem in our time, but the attitude of uncertainty about historical knowledge has a longer history. It goes back at least as far as Lessing, whose dictum, that incidental truth of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason, haunted not only Kierkergaard but also the Nineteenth century liberal theologians. Instead of looking to history to guarantee religious certitude, Schleiermacher turned to religious experience, which also provided the foundation for his theology. Ritschl affirmed that it is faith that grasped the uniqueness of Christ by an historical value judgment, which, as it were, drew him out of the uniformity of the series of historical events. The independence of religious certainty from history is maintained to such an extent that Hermann, the disciple of Ritschl, even held that negative

(1) See above, 4
criticisms of history could not destroy the powerful influences which the perfection of Christ's personality exercised. The separation of faith from history seems to have virtually been complete.\(^1\)

The disengagement of history from the 'saving events' is continued in the present century among many who hold to some sort of \textit{Heilsgeschichte}, which often runs the risk of having more Heil than Geschichte.\(^2\) The \textit{Heilsgeschichte} is seen as running parallel to general history, 'never really intersecting, and inaccessible save through some extra-historical perception known as faith.'\(^3\) Of course, there is no question that these events did take place in space and time as events alongside other events. But they are not to be regarded as having stemmed from ordinary history handled by the secular historian. Therefore the historian, with his secular historical method, is not competent in dealing with \textit{Heilsgeschichte}. Neither is it within his reach.\(^4\)

It is interesting to see that this tendency towards disengagement seems to have been repeated in Niebuhr's understanding of history, notably in his dichotomization of history into 'external' and 'internal' history.

In the Preface to \textit{The Meaning of Revelation} Niebuhr tells his readers that


\(^2\) John McIntyre, \textit{ibid.}, 109.

\(^3\) Richardson, \textit{ibid} 134, for a criticism of Barth and Brunner, also see 131-139, Bultmann and after, 139-153.

\(^4\) This is also Troeltsch's criticism of orthodoxy, as represented in \textit{Historiche und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie}, 1898, and repeated in substance in \textit{Absolutheit}. See Oglister, \textit{Christian Faith and History}, 1965, 32, 33 and footnotes thereof.
the problem of reconciling a fully independent objective history with a valid religious history has also been approached from a somewhat Kantian point of view by recognizing the difference between pure and practical reason as these deal with history. (1)

'Independent objective history' in his works becomes external, scientific history, while 'religious history' takes the form of internal, or inner history which is an existential participative understanding of history. Like Kant's two views of reason, these two views of history also do not conflict with one another.

The characters of these two views of history are set out in sharp contrast to one another. The external history is a history of things, impersonal data and movement. Even when such history deals with human personalities, it reduces them into impersonal parts. But internal history is a history of selves. It deals with meaning and values, persons and their destiny. In external history, we deal with objects; in internal history, subjects. To help bring out the contrast, Niebuhr borrows the all too familiar terminology of Buber. In external history, we are told, all relations are between an I and an It, whereas in the internal, it is the I and the Thou. The I in the I-It relation differs from the self in the I-Thou setting. (2)

These two types of history have their own function to fulfil, and neither is reducible to the terms of the other. Just because each starts from a different viewpoint, each gives a different account even when they are dealing with the same thing. To illustrate this point Niebuhr gives three examples, namely, value,

(1) Revelation, viii
(2) Revelation, 63-65. Niebuhr also employs the method of critical Realism in making the distinction between external and internal history, see ibid, 65ff
time and society.

In the case of value, external history takes it in terms of what Niebuhr calls 'valency', or strength. The importance of an event is normally measured by the effect it has on other events in the series. But in internal history, value means worth for selves. Its value here is its bearing on the destiny of the selves. Value means quality, not power. In the case of time, for external history time is that of the naive chronicler with his acceptance of dynastic dates, his A.D.'s and B.C.'s. It is all quantitative and numbered, always in a series. But in internal history time is our duration. What is past is not lost, and what is future is not non-existent. The past endures in us as memory and the future as our potentiality. Time is organic and social, in the sense that past and future are associated with one another in the present. It is not associated with space in a unity of space-time, but is inseperable from life in the community of life-time. It is a dimension of our life and our community's being, a time which is in us rather than we are in it. (1) Again, in the case of society, external history understands society as being made up of individuals related to one another by external bonds, and individuals understood as complexes of psychological and biological factors. But internal history takes society as a community of selves. The relation between the selves is internal, in the sense that we cannot be selves save as we are members of each other, bound together by a common past and a common future based on a common hope. (2) These illustrations demonstrate the fact that the same thing appears differently to

---

(1) Revelation, 67-69. The question of time and the self will be dealt with in the following chapter, see below 241
(2) Revelation, 70f.
observers in accordance with their internal or external viewpoints. This is unfortunate, but inevitable, because, says Niebuhr, 'being finite souls with finite minds in finite bodies, men are confined to a double and partial knowledge.' But he also assures us that it is not 'knowledge of double reality' that we have.

The distinction of these 'two histories' are important because Niebuhr confines 'revelation' to the internal history alone.

When the evangelists of the New Testament and their successors pointed to history as the starting point of their faith and of their understanding of the world it was internal history that they indicated. (1)

The internal history in this context refers to the history of the community of faith which was founded on God's revelation. When the Christians talked about revelation, they pointed to the critical moment in their life-time when they became aware of themselves in a new way as they came to know the self on whom they were dependent. (2)

In brief, this knowledge of the 'self' who encounters man in all his human situation, as well as the new insight of man himself, can only be grasped in faith, when the eyes of faith turned to the 'events in history' in which such an encounter with the self was made possible. Of course, these same events 'can be studied in their cause-effect relationship, in their cultural, geographic, economic and political context.' (3) But then a different picture would have been drawn. This is, in effect, but another way of saying that 'revelation' is not accessible to the secular historian who handles the 'external history' only as far as the events of our faith are concerned.

(1) Revelation, 72
(2) ibid. Here the 'self' refers to God the divine self which confronts man in history.
(3) ibid, 55.
The error which the Christian church frequently makes has been, in Niebuhr's opinion, the 'location of revelation in external history.' This means that revelation has been identified with miracles, whether they refer to the acts or life of a person, or to the life of a community. Thus inevitably certain events in external history, or even the history of a community, are set apart as sacred, and the historians are not allowed to apply to them the same type of explanation which might be offered for secular happenings. Much of so-called orthodoxy, in Niebuhr's opinion, is guilty of this. In this tradition, revelation is identified with the Scriptures, the miraculous nature of which is further validated by miracles in the realm of nature such as 'a sun that stood still, a virgin-born child,' and 'water turned by a word into wine.'\(^1\) As a result, there are now 'two systems of reality on the same plane - a natural, historical, rational system and a supernatural, super-historical and super-rational system - (are) set besides each other.' Even though they are on the same plane, yet there is no real relation between the natural and the supernatural, or between history and faith.

Niebuhr rejects such an approach as largely represented by the orthodox tradition. The solution he put forth does not postulate 'two systems of reality' on the same plane, or two external histories. There is but one reality, or one history, only differently understood, either from the non-committed, detached, or from the participative, involved stand-points. The same event, or

\(^1\) Revelation, 74ff
series of events, may yield 'revelation' or 'sacred meaning' only to the participating observer. The difference between the natural and the supernatural is a matter due to 'the beholder's situation', and not to 'the things viewed.' (1) Just because 'revelation' rests with the standpoint and perspective of the observer in history, Niebuhr can say that 'revelatory moments' can occur even amidst political struggles and national crises. (2)

The location of revelation in the inner history seems at first sight to be advantageous. Now, from the viewpoint of faith, one can see the sacred in the secular, the revelatory 'supernatural' in the 'natural' and the 'rational.' The participative observer is also free from the relativities and uncertainties inherent in the scientific, objective external history. Scientific historical research cannot touch the certainty of revelation which is safely lodged in the internal history of selves and meanings, and to which the secular historian has no access. But Niebuhr's is also fraught with difficulties, on closer examination. It courts, for instance, the danger of confining the dramatic 'mighty acts' of God to the world of special categories and meanings for the selves in internal history. The question still can be raised whether these 'acts' did actually occur on the plane of happenings, detectable as mighty 'acts' even by the ordinary historians, though they may not be able to understand the full significance of it. (3)

Furthermore, the question also arises as to whether the

(1) Revelation, 76, also 74
(2) Radical Monotheism, 44
(3) It could have been helpful to his readers if Niebuhr had discussed the historical problem and factuality involved in the Resurrection. But nowhere in Niebuhr's work has this been attempted, even though he freely refers to Jesus Christ as the one who is 'risen'.
'external' really has any control over the 'internal' or vice versa. This question must be raised if the 'meaning' and significance recognized in 'internal history' were to be grounded in actual historical events, i.e., events which are also recognized as 'events' by the ordinary historians. But the way Niebuhr dichotomizes history has raised some doubts in the mind of his critics. Thus Beker of Utrecht criticizes him in these words:

Does not the concept of internal history, based on practical reason, narrow down God's sovereign power within the framework of internal history, where 'impersonal' critical analysis and describing science cannot touch? Is it not the danger of Niebuhr's thought, that it can ignore the methods and fruits of biblical and historical criticism, because they belong to external history? This is just what Niebuhr wants to avoid. But does he actually do so?(1)

Niebuhr, however, does attempt to define the relation between external and internal history. He is not unaware of the complicated problems involved in his two-aspect theory of history. He regards his theory as a statement of a paradox, comparable to that of Chalcedonian Christology.(2) It must be so because internal history cannot be absorbed into external history and vice versa. Nor is it possible for us finite beings to transcend them in such a way as to gain a knowledge of history superior to both, thus uniting them into a new whole. The relation can be stated in this manner: external history is the embodiment of internal history, and as such, internal history must be taken together with external history. He speaks jubilantly of 'how events that are revelatory in our history, sources of unconquerable certainty for us, can yet be analyzed in

(1) E. J. Beker in Nederland Theologisch Tijdschrift, December, 1966, 125.
(2) Revelation, 81, 90.
profane fashion by the observer.¹ But then immediately he reminds his readers of the paradox, the gulf that separate the two histories. It suggests that the analysis of the ordinary historian is only confined to the external aspect, while the source of our 'unconquerable certainty', namely, revelation, is not identifiable with the events handled by the historians, nor is it visible to them.

The two-aspect theory allows us to understand how revelation can be in history and yet not be identifiable with miraculous events as visible to an external observer ... The distinction ... does assist us to understand how it is possible for the word 'revelation' to point to history and yet point to God also.²

Thus we can say that even though Niebuhr recognizes the necessity of having external history as the embodiment or medium of internal history, yet the form and the content (meaning) in reality do not have any genuine methodic contact. The two histories are seen each moving on its own plane, though parallel to one another, yet without essentially controlling one another. The dilemma which is confronted by Heilsgeschichte is also repeated in similar fashion in the epistemological duality of Niebuhr's theory.³

The dichotomization of history is mainly an attempt to overcome the problems raised by historical relativism. But there is another

¹ Revelation, 82. In this section where Niebuhr purports to deal with the relation between external and internal history one is disappointed to find that Niebuhr only cites the example of attacks on the church by people like Marx, Feuerbach and Kautsky, and that the effect of such attacks produces only a sort of 'moral experience' for the Church in the understanding of its own history. It would have been much clearer if Niebuhr had taken some issues from Biblical and historical criticism to illustrate his point.

² Revelation, 82, 73, 74

³ This criticism of Niebuhr is also made by H. Frei. Concerning the two histories, Frei has this to say, 'They are not really in methodological contact, so that we may speak here of a parallelism rather than interactionism in historical epistemology.' Faith and Ethics, 1957, 90, also see 30.
reason which also prompts him towards this direction. In our time the general attitude towards history is a positivistic one (1), and, as we have mentioned, this attitude is also reflected in Troeltsch's view of history (2). When we examine Niebuhr's history, we find that he is operating with a positivistic view when he comes to external history. He believes that the secular historian has his own principles of interpretation which should not be denied, even though these principles, when applied to the events of the Christian faith, may prove damaging and destructive. His objection to orthodoxy is that it identifies revelation with some events in external history which are regarded as supernatural, and therefore would not permit historical analysis which is appropriate to external history in general to be applied to it. This is, in Niebuhr's opinion, asking for the impossible.

Sacred events in a secular context must be secularly apprehended, and to demand of men that they should exempt certain events in the chain of perceived happenings from the application of the laws or principles with which they apprehend the others is to ask the impossible or to make everything unintelligible (3).

The thought behind such a criticism is that history, or rather, external history, represents a closed continuum of causes and effects to be interpreted by a set of principles or laws befitting its nature. Seeing that it provides no room for divine revelation or direct intervention of any sort, Niebuhr turns to internal history which concerns ideas, worths, values, selves and destiny which are

---

(1) For a contemporary expression of what 'positivistic history' is, see Bultmann, Exegesis Without Presuppositions, in Existence and Faith, ed. S.M. Ogden, Meridian Paper, 1960.
(2) See above 4.
(3) Revelation, 76.
all involved in man's existential encounter with God in the community of faith. Here he finds revelation, in an area which is beyond the uncertainty of historical research, and beyond the reach of the secular historian. But it is this 'two-aspect theory' which also makes 'history' very problematical.

Niebuhr's historical dualism is maintained in sharp contrast all through *The Meaning of Revelation*, which deals mainly with questions of method rather than with concrete historical matters. When he actually writes history, as in *The Kingdom of God in America* we do not find any sharp dichotomization of history. Instead, we find him freely utilizing and appropriating sociological insights. But without doubt, this discussion of his theory of history is a necessary preparation for our consideration of his view of revelation in a later section.

(2) **Confessional Standpoint**

Another trend of Niebuhr's thought which is formulated in interaction with historical relativism is that of 'confessional theology', which he also refers to as the *caela* 'confessional approach' or 'standpoint' or 'theology of historical relativism'. The awareness of the self's relatedness to a particular spatial-temporal locale in history means that theology cannot begin from a universal standpoint, because there is none. It must begin in history and with the Christian community. The Christian faith is
historic in the sense that Christians believe that in history a reality has disclosed itself which invites trust and devotion. This reality is none other than God, who through Jesus Christ has declared to man as an infinite Self or Person, as One who knows us, loves and acts for us. (1) What theology can and should do now is to confess this faith, making it known what has happened to us in our own community and how we come to believe, how we reason about things and what we see from our particular point of view. With this must go the realization that our assertions are valid and particularly meaningful only to those who look upon our confession from the same standpoint. No defensive argument is necessary, because arguments in defence of revelation often leads to the defence of the self, its 'anthropocentric universe' and its values, as in the case of Ritschl. It becomes the 'inversion of faith,' and a 'blasphemy of self-exaltation.' (2) Moreover, Niebuhr does not claim that what is given to us is necessarily true for all. This approach excludes the danger of using revelation to justify the Church's claim to superior knowledge or some other excellences, as such an attitude presupposes that revelation is identifiable with something the Church can possess, and of which the Church, or its priesthood, is the sole custodian. The transcending sovereignty of God will be violated if revelation is made a possession of any sort.

Since theology as an intellectual discipline refers to what has happened to the community of faith, right from the beginning it is inseparably related to the community. But there is another

(1) Revelation, 88, 152-155, 164-166, 171, 176. Radical Monotheism, 44-47
(2) Revelation, 31ff more on Ritschl, below 81f
reason why the community must play an important role in theological pursuit. This can be understood as an attempted safeguard against subjectivism, which the phrase 'historical relativism' might otherwise imply. (1) It is true that the theologian can only confess what has happened as viewed from his limited standpoint, and that his view cannot be regarded as universal, but this does not mean that theology is 'private and subjective, without possibility of verification.' (2) The theologian is not an isolated figure in history, but must belong to a particular community, and so theology, and indeed, 'every view of the universal' must be 'subject to the test of experience on the part of companions who look from the same standpoint in the same direction as well as to the test of consistency with the principles and concepts that have grown out of past experience in the same community.' A theology which seeks to clarify and criticize the thought and action of the Church from within must also depend on the Church for the constant testing of its critical work. (3)

The experience of the community is not uniform, but variegated, as Niebuhr is fully aware. It is represented in the many traditions within the community of faith. Because of human limitations none of the traditions can be said to represent the whole truth. They should be brought together and understood together, as they play a very important corrective role in the life of the community - they serve the purpose of a 'mutual extraction of motes

(1) C.f. How my mind has changed, 73 where Niebuhr says that 'historical relativism' has been regarded by some of his critics as 'subjectivism.'

(2) Revelation, 20

(3) Revelation, 1 Concerning the Church's interpretation of the scriptures, see also 50-52. Purpose, 86-88, 119-120.
and beams." (1) It is only through mutual correction and complement that the experience of the community can be more fully understood. This would mean that the verification of a theology should not be sought in the context of one tradition alone, but in the widest context possible, in which as many traditions as possible should be included. A theology can be said to have achieved a greater degree of objectivity and validity within the community only when it is capable of including within itself as many traditions as possible. (2) Since the community is not only the starting point of Christian theology, but also the locus of its verification, it can perhaps be said that it constitutes the epistemological necessity in Neibuhr's theology.

There is yet another sense in which 'confessional theology' is not 'subjective'. Even though from the limited historical-cultural position it can only catch a glimpse of reality, which it states with a particular, and not a 'universal religious language', nevertheless it should not be doubted that this glimpse of reality is a valid one.

It is not evident that the man who is forced to confess that his view of things is conditioned by the standpoint he occupies must doubt the reality of what he sees. It is not apparent that one who knows that his concepts are not universal, or that one who understands how all his experience is historically mediated must believe that nothing is mediated through history. (3)


(2) This inclusive attitude towards theology is reflected in this essay, *Doctrine of the Trinity and the unity of the church*, *Theology Today*, 1946/7. On the doctrine of the Trinity, Niebuhr says, 'The Trinitarianism of the whole Church must undertake to state what is implicit in the faith and knowledge of all of its parts though it is not explicit in any one of them. It must undertake to correct the over-emphasis and partialities ... by means of a synthesized formula in which all partial insights and convictions are combined.' 383.

(3) *Revelation*, 18.
So 'confessional theology' is not 'subjective' because the vision of reality is not something it produces out of its own imagination. It has objective correspondence in the realm of reality. As such, it does not need to be defended; it only needs to be proclaimed. The Christian does not only refrain from defending his own point of view, but also from negating contending views put forward by observers of reality from other standpoints. This attitude is reflected in what he says in Christ and Culture, 'Maurice had a principle, gained from J.S. Mill, that commended itself to us. He affirms that men were generally right in what they affirmed and wrong in what they denied. What we deny is generally something that lies outside our experience, and about which we can therefore say nothing.'(1)

This 'confessional' standpoint of Niebuhr is attractive because it is true to the nature of historical knowledge, which must take its point of departure in a historical community, with particular language and symbols. It is not subjective, as it is open to verification within the community of faith as a whole. It does not claim to be universal, yet it does not lose confidence in itself; the glimpse of reality it represents is a valid one. Having said all this, we must also point out that, like his two-aspect theory of history, this 'confessional' standpoint is not without difficulty. One may readily agree with Niebuhr, for instance, that one should not doubt that the vision of reality one sees from a limited point is valid. In other words, one should affirm what one sees and experiences as a member of the community.

---

(1) Revelation, 238-239.
of faith. But having come to this conclusion, can one really refrain from negating contending views of reality which may be in obvious contradiction to what one believes as true? Is it not true that to affirm one viewpoint is at the same time to negate, implicitly or explicitly, another. Toynbee, as we have seen, is up against the same issue, and he has to develop an all-inclusive monistic view to overcome the problem. But his solution requires the rejection of reason. This is a road Niebuhr certainly would not go along. But to stop at making a judgment on contending standpoints and conflicting view of what is true is to remain 'sceptical', a charge which Niebuhr would find it difficult to clear. We shall come back to this dilemma later on. (1) Here we only register the problem.

(B) Religious Relativism

In the Preface to Christ and Culture Niebuhr informs his readers of the importance of this aspect of his thought:

Troeltsch has taught me to respect the multiformity and individuality of men and of movements in Christian history, to be loath to force this rich variety into prefashioned, conceptual molds, and yet to seek logos in mythos, reason in history, essence in existence ... If I think of my essay as an effort to correct Troeltsch's analyses of the encounters of church and world it is mostly because I try to understand this historical relativism in the light of theological and theo-centric relativism. (2)

(1) See below 545ff
(2) op. cit., xii
Niebuhr shares the general emphasis of Troeltsch's concern, viz: to approach religion culturally, with an emphasis on relativism; and culture religiously, with a quest for the absolute. In order to overcome the problem of relativism Troeltsch formulates the notion of the 'religious a priori', which refers to the personal, mystical and inner experience in human consciousness which opens out for the absolute. Religion is the purest and most concentrated locus of such a feeling. This a priori element in experience does not only serve as criterion for the discernment of meaning and value in history, but also the basis for the autonomous validity of cultural forms. Thus in history Troeltsch sees the interplay between the relative and the absolute. The absolute 'hovers before' all the relative achievements of history, towards which they all strive. These relative achievements and values of history contain it within themselves, though it must be regarded as standing beyond history. This absolute is identified with the divine, or with God himself. From this understanding of the relation between the relative and the absolute he develops the idea of the 'synthesis of culture,' which is the construction of a material philosophy with the purpose of defining the normative values for the present. In Troeltsch's thought, there is a 'thrust towards the general', towards the goal of a universal idea of historical development, which he maintains with a religious zeal. 'There is an implicit faith here that the highest value is that which unifies mankind, which finally attains to an all-emcompassing whole.' Behind this attitude there lies the confidence 'that all of life is the expression of the divine Ground of life and of the inner movement of
this ground towards a total meaning.\(^{(1)}\) The synthesis of culture, which he seeks to realize by a concentration on 'Europaism,' can thus be regarded as something having more than a merely historical significance. It is in a way an attempt to give content to the absolute, and hence identified with the absolute as it is known in the historical process.\(^{(2)}\)

Niebuhr, however, is not convinced by this approach of Troeltsch.\(^{(3)}\) He sees Troeltsch's appeal to mystical experience in the attempt to grasp the absolute as an abstraction of believing experience from its historical and cultural context. Also by pointing to the cultural synthesis as the nexus of the absolute and the relative, Troeltsch has, so Niebuhr believes, relativized the absolute.\(^{(4)}\) Thus Niebuhr's 'correction' of Troeltsch is to be understood as an attempt to point to the absolute, without for a moment confusing the absolute with the relative and relativizing the absolute. Relativizing the absolute also has the effect of absolutizing the relative and the finite, which Niebuhr regards as an 'aberration of faith as well as reason.'\(^{(5)}\) But this 'aberration' is also a perennial temptation and danger for theologians, who often commit this sin in the name of religious piety. This sin, as Niebuhr sees it, is actually exemplified in the theology of Schleiermacher and Ritschl in the modern period. His emphasis on

\(^{(1)}\) T. Ogletree, Christian Faith and History, 1965, 51-52, see also 40ff for a discussion of Troeltsch's view of the absolute in history.

\(^{(2)}\) This point is also noticed by Hoedemaker, Faith in Total Life, 109

\(^{(3)}\) Niebuhr notices that Troeltsch employs two methods in dealing with religious experience, viz., that of critical, historical realism and the other pertaining to mystical idealism. See his dissertation on E. Troeltsch's Philosophy of Religion 112. These two methods are difficult to hold together.

\(^{(4)}\) See, L. Kliever, Methodology and Christology in M.R. Niebuhr, 60

\(^{(5)}\) Christ and Culture, xii.
'radical monotheism' is meant to overcome this perennial problem of man. It is but another way of affirming 'religious relativism', which states that only God is to be regarded as the absolute, and all others before him are no more than relative and finite in significance and status.

(1) The Mistake in Theology

The confusion of the absolute with the relative has its origin in the human situation: one can only speak or think significantly about God from the point of view of faith in Him. Luther understands this when he affirms that faith and God belong together:

> What does it mean to have a god, or what is God? Trust and faith of the heart alone make both God and idol ... for the two, faith and God, hold close together. Whatever then thy heart cling to ... and relies upon, that is properly thy god. (1)

The perennial temptation in theology is that theologians often turn to this 'faith' rather than to God who makes it real and possible. To do so is to forsake the legitimate absolute starting point of theology for something relative; to substitute the theocentric for an anthropocentric orientation. (2)

This mistake is made, for instance, by Schleiermacher. His theological intention is basically realistic, in that he rejects the idea that the human mind is capable of concrete apprehension of the internal relationship between the absolute and the human mind.

---

(1) Revelation 23, also Radical Monotheism, 119
(2) For further reference to the anthropocentricism in Schleiermacher, See Appendix V, below 611f
What theology can describe, though inadequately, is a being who is the direct counterpart in human consciousness of that subjective trust which he calls 'the feeling of absolute dependence.' It is 'absolute' because this being is an absolute value upon which the self feels wholly dependent for any worth as well as any existence it possesses. God and this human feeling of absolute dependence must belong together, otherwise one would be speaking about the world instead of about God. Behind this argument is Schleiermacher's awareness that we are never without some sense of personal value-relation, so that when we speak about something on which we are not absolutely dependent, we necessarily speak of something that is partly dependent on us. (1)

Niebuhr agrees that Schleiermacher's intention is sound, but he is inconsistent in his method. Instead of holding together God and faith as his starting point, he makes the feeling of absolute dependence his object, thus directing the attention of faith towards itself rather than God. Hence his theology becomes a 'faithology,' or 'religionology' which 'turned away from God to religious feeling, and tended to make the religious consciousness the object of confidence.' (2) As such, his theology becomes anthropocentric. (3)

In Value-Theory and Theology (1937) Niebuhr points out that this anthropocentric emphasis in theology also characterizes the many shades of valuational theology in our time. They all assume that men have a knowledge of absolutely valid values which is not only independent of God but also in some way determinative of God. This trend of thought is also found in America in the writings of

---

(1) Revelation, 24ff
(2) Ibid, 26
(3) Later in his life, Niebuhr began to realize that Schleiermacher is not as anthropocentric as he has thought, see How my mind has changed, 77
D.C. Macintosh and H.N. Wieman, despite their avowed intention to counteract it.\(^1\) The champion of this trend of thought in the last century is Ritschl, whose influence is still being felt.

Niebuhr sees two poles in Ritschl's relational value theology. On the one hand Ritschl takes as his starting point the recognition that Christian affirmations about sin, Christ, salvation and so on are meaningful only in a Christian context. Religious judgments are value-judgments involving the valuing-experience of the Christian who takes his value-scale from the Christian faith. But on the other hand Ritschl also analyses God's nature simply from the point of view of a member of the human community confronting nature. Now he constructs also a value-scale which does not regard God as the highest value but that of the normal civilized man. What really concerns Ritschl now is how to maintain man's superiority over nature. So he interprets the value of God to man through man's evaluation of himself as this appears in his self-comparison not with God but with nature. Ritschl's deity is brought in as a means to support man's confidence in himself as a supernatural being. Therefore, Christianity for Ritschl is something of a double character:

Christianity was for him not a circle but an ellipse with two foci - God before whom man is a forgiven sinner, who is for man the beginning of all things and man who, confronting nature, regards himself as beginning and end in a kingdom of ends.\(^2\)

From Ritschl Niebuhr has learnt a lesson. Ritschl's inconsistency is due to his failure to adhere to his previous

\(^1\) For references to Macintosh and Wieman on God, see below, 411
\(^2\) Revelation, 33
confessional approach. He desires to justify Christianity as the best of all religions. In order to provide a basis of argument and comparison he seeks a common ground which Christianity and other religions all share. This he finds in the faith man has about himself as a being superior to nature. Niebuhr's emphasis on a confessional and non-apologetic approach must also be understood against this background.

Both Schleiermacher and Ritschl have, each in his own way, magnified for Niebuhr the danger of placing one's faith not in God but in something other than him. To allow relative elements in human thought, or man himself, to usurp God's place in theology is idolatrous, a sin 'which has manifested itself in all the theology of the past.' But the failure of Schleiermacher, Ritschl and others who employ the method of relational value theology does not mean that the method itself must be abandoned. In fact, Niebuhr himself also makes it his own, stating that he belongs to this tradition, though with a difference. (1) This theological method is 'the most enduring contribution of empirical theology, from Schleiermacher to Macintosh, lies in its insistence on the fact that knowledge of God is available only in religious relation to him.' (2) They go wrong when they turn away from God to that which is relative, be it faith or man's sense of worth. The remedy which Niebuhr offers to restore the correct perspective is a theocentric re-orientation of our faith, a truth which is embodied in 'radical monotheism.'

---

(1) This relational value method in Niebuhr’s thought is combined with that of existentialism. For further discussion on this aspect, see below, 409ff.

(2) Value-theory and Theology, 112.
Radical Monotheism

The only legitimate object of our faith, for Niebuhr, is God the infinite being, the absolute. But it is an undisputable fact that our faith is weak, and we always tend to fall back on ourselves. To guard ourselves against this perennial temptation Niebuhr advocates the notion of a 'permanent revolution' or metanoia which does not come to an end in this world, this life, or this time.¹

This revolution is made possible only through revelation which brings about a critical revolutionary self-understanding and radical reconstruction of all our beliefs, so that the absolute of our faith is for ever kept before us in the proper perspective. This 'revelation', which he also calls transformation or conversion in Revelation is integral to the concept of 'radical monotheism', which is developed in Radical Monotheism.

Radical monotheism is formulated to focus our faith on God as the truly absolute over against all other claims.² This concept also brings to the forefront of his theology the majesty and sovereignty of God.³ It dethrones the many quasi-absolutes which man have created for himself, such as ideologies, nationalism, racism, collective human power, technological achievements and so on. These 'absolutes' function as 'value centres' and are taken

¹ Revelation, ix
² The phrase 'radical monotheism' is taken from two sources: 'radical' comes from Bultmann's definition of the ethics of Jesus as 'radical obedience' and 'monotheism' from the liberal theology which sees prophetic religion as 'ethical monotheism'. See Radical Monotheism, 32
³ In How my mind has changed, 71 Niebuhr mentions the influence Barth has on him in his early years when he fought against liberalism, a position Niebuhr had discarded after the writing of his book, The Social Sources of Denominationalism. Though later in his life he left the Barthian camp in favour of a modified form of liberalism this insight of the sovereignty of God stayed with him. One can perhaps see the influence of Edwards on him in this respect, and for an examination of his indebtedness to Edwards, see below, 438ff
as 'gods' who have control over our lives. Often God is interpreted in such a way that he is but one among the many value-centres. But 'radical monotheism' clarifies for us that God is not just one among the many, but the 'One beyond the many.' To this 'radical monotheism' Niebuhr attempts to give a description in a formal and abstracted way, because he realizes that the pure form of it does not exist among us, but expresses itself in a mixture of social faith and polytheism.

For radical monotheism the value-centre is ... the principle of being itself; its reference is to no one reality among the many but to One beyond all the many, whence all the many derive their being, and by participation in which they exist. As faith, it is reliance on the source of all being for the significance of the self and of all that exist. It is the assurance that because I am, I am valued, and because you are, you are beloved, and because whatever is has being, therefore it is worthy of love. It is the confidence that whatever is, is good ...(1)

This notion of radical monotheism is not so much a theory of being as a form of faith. As such, it refers to 'the fidelity and confidence' for the object of man's devotion without which he does not live. So to say in formal language that 'I believe that the principle of being is gracious, that is, good toward what issues from it,' is at the same time, and for practical purposes, an affirmation that 'I believe in God the Father, Almighty Maker of heaven and earth.' In the confession of faith the principle of being is identified with the principle of value, and the principle of value with the principle of being. (2) This is possible because, to Niebuhr, being is

---

(1) Radical Monotheism, 32
(2) Radical Monotheism, 33 'principle of being' and 'principle of value' are used by Niebuhr in distinction from 'highest being' and 'highest good.' The principle of being is not immediately identifiable with being, nor the principle of value with value. Strictly, God who is the 'principle of being' is beyond being; he is also beyond value. It seems that this fine distinction is brought in to safeguard the temptation of easy and simple identification of being with God, which might have made him one among the many.
identified with God on the one hand, and on the other hand, and in more philosophical language, being and value belong together, though being takes a logical precedence over value in our conceptual thinking. In order to avoid the old liberal error which identifies God with a set of values which men hold prior to his encounter with God, Niebuhr prefers to see that God is beyond the categories of value, though these can be affirmed of him, for 'that by reference to which all things have their value is not itself a value in the primary sense.' (1)

Understood in the context of radical monotheism, the legitimate form faith takes is to be a complete 'reliance on the source of all being for the significance of the self and of all that exists.' Because I am, I am valued by the One beyond the many. So our faith, as well as our life in faith, can only orientate to God for worth and value and to no other else. Faith also means loyalty. It is loyalty to the principle of being and hence also to the whole realm of being. These are the basic attitudes of faith of which the concept of radical monotheism forever reminds us.

Since radical monotheism takes as the ultimate object of faith God who alone is the absolute, the question naturally arises concerning the place of Jesus Christ who has been also taken by many Christians as an absolute object of devotion. It is here that we see Niebuhr in conflict with much of traditional Christian piety which does give an absolute place to Jesus Christ. One of the 'deformations' of radical monotheism, according to Niebuhr, is that 'Jesus Christ is

(1) Radical Monotheism, 33, footnote. For a discussion of Niebuhr's identification of being with God, see below, 423ff
made the absolute centre of confidence and loyalty.\(^1\) This deformation is being carried on in preaching, in popular piety and also in theology. The Lordship of Christ has taken the place of the lordship of God. At various times and places Christianity has been transformed not only into a Christ-cult but also into a Christ- or Jesus-faith. The one through whom we have access to God, the one who reconciled us to the Father who alone is the source of our being has become the centre of our value and object of our unique obedience, trust and loyalty. Even theology is turned into Christology, and with it Niebuhr also sees the danger of the rise of ecclesiasticism 'in so far as the community that centres in Jesus Christ is set forth both as the object of his loyalty and of the Christian's loyalty.'\(^2\) Hence, as Niebuhr sees it, to become a Christian is to belong to a special group, with a special God, a special destiny and a special existence. Such Christ-centred and Church-centred faith breeds henotheism. So, in the mission lands, the conflict happens often not between the monotheisms of Christianity and the non-Christian religions, but between rival forms of social henotheistic faiths.

Niebuhr's dislike for the popular piestic, 'Christomonistic' expression of the faith is obvious, as his criticism is sweeping, the main reason being that this form of Christian faith runs contrary to the principle of radical monotheism which allows faith to take no other absolute object than God himself. After all, it is also to God that Christ points us. Furthermore, the piestistic attitude is

\(^{1}\) *Radical Monotheism*, 59
\(^{2}\) ibid, 60
nurtured on the belief that Jesus Christ is ontically one with God in respect of his divine person. This belief has doubtless made it easier for the transference of one's faith in God to one's faith in Jesus. Thus 'in many churchly pronouncements the faith of Christians is stated as if their one God were Jesus Christ; as if Christ's ministry of reconciliation to the Creator were of no importance ...' This transference also means the identification of Jesus with God, as it is evident in our time 'when the proposition that Jesus Christ is God is converted into the proposition that God is Jesus Christ.' Niebuhr's unwillingness to see in Jesus any ontic relation with God is an attempt to remove the confusion at its root. But the price he has to pay is high, because the lack of such ontic affirmation does create for Niebuhr some difficulty when he speaks of the 'personhood' of God, as we shall see later. In regard to Niebuhr's understanding of Jesus Christ, the non-metaphysical emphasis ties in well with his principle of radical monotheism.

From the viewpoint of radical monotheism it is God and not Jesus who is the proper object of our worship and loyalty. Nevertheless Niebuhr has a very central place for Jesus Christ in his scheme. He is, for instance, the given image with which we can understand our human situation. He is the one who has brought about the transformation of our notion of deity which is necessary for our salvation. In *Christ and Culture* Niebuhr attempts to understand Jesus' relation to God in terms of 'sonship.' Christ is the 'Son of God' because of his 'single-hearted trust' in the Father. As such he becomes the 'moral mediator' of the Father's will to

---

(1) Purpose, 45
(2) See Below, 430ff, 463ff
man. As a mediator he exists as a 'focal point' in the continuous alternation of movement from God to man and from man to God.\(^{(1)}\)

The most significant point in Niebuhr's treatment is that he dwells solely on the moral aspect of Jesus' sonship, and that he points away from himself to the Father who alone is the proper object of our obedience and trust. He admits that there may be 'other approaches besides the moral one', but he is quite content to confine himself to the moral one. He deliberately avoids the traditional notion of sonship which emphasizes the ontic relation between the Father and the Son, a relation which is rooted in the eternal structure within the Godhead. Perhaps at the end of the day one may say that Niebuhr's understanding of Jesus is to a large extent determined by the principle of radical monotheism which in a radical manner points man to God and God alone.

\(\text{(C) Summary remarks}\

Niebuhr reacts to the impact of relativism on two fronts. In the area of history, or rather, historical knowledge, he seeks to overcome problems created for faith by uncertainty and positivism with a dichotomization of history into internal and external history, and 'revelation' confined to the realm of the internal. But unfortunately he is not successful in holding these two histories

\(^{(1)}\) For further reference to Niebuhr's treatment on 'Jesus Christ' see below, See Study Three, A2d,B3, esp.465ff
together. It may be questioned whether his 'internal' history is 'history', and not just a certain view, or interpretation, or even a 'philosophy' of history. Of course, Niebuhr would not want us to reduce internal history's status as 'history'. This reduction might have been avoided if Niebuhr had been able to hold the two together, showing how the one controls the other. But we have suggested that he has failed to do so.

Niebuhr is one of the very few theologians of our time who shows a profound appreciation of the historical dimension of human existence. He prefers to speak of 'historical relationalism' rather than 'relativism' to describe our relatedness to a definite locale in space and time. His confessional standpoint is an attempt to be true to the nature of our historical existence. Integral to this standpoint is a reluctance in refuting contending viewpoints, especially those which are alien to the observer. In this respect he is close to Troeltsch, in the sense that he shares Troeltsch's reluctance to hold what we regard as true as also true for all men, a move which the historical nature of knowledge does not warrant. This thought is certainly congenial to the pluralistic ethos of the American Protestant world. But in the field of mission in non-Christian lands, can one really refrain from making judgment on contradicting contending viewpoints?

In the realm of religious faith and attitude, Niebuhr thinks that 'relativism' is a good thing, if it means that before God all the objects of our devotions, such as our ideologies and values, are seen as relative and finite. Just because faith affirms there is an absolute, it can also accept the many finite and the relative.
objects and viewpoints. We are not abandoned to the realm of the finite and the relative, yet we cannot live by it alone. In a time when many quasi-absolutes are claiming man's worship and devotion, 'radical monotheism' is the clarion call of faith to dethrone them. It holds before us the vision of the majestic sovereignty of God. In this respect Niebuhr shows himself an heir of the American Puritanical tradition which has been associated with Edwards, even though he is also influenced by the thought of Barth. It is, as we shall see, also this profound awareness of the sovereignty of God that makes him feel unsatisfied with the relation value approach.

IV CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have offered only a critical survey of the thoughts of our writers from a certain angle taken in our contemporary cultural and religious world. The survey was undertaken on the belief that no scholar is immune against being influenced by the 'climate of opinion' of his time, and our belief is shown to be true by what we have found. Their methods are seen to take shape in the course of their interaction with the contemporary cultural ethos. We do not suggest that relativism is the sole determinative factor in the shaping of their thoughts, nor is it the only trend in modern culture with which they are engaged in dialogue.

(1) Christ and Culture 239
(2) See below, 415f
it as our starting point because it constitutes an issue of common concern among our writers, and with its help we are able to understand why and how the controlling thoughts in their writings are formed and developed. It performs a 'heuristic function', and indeed a helpful and profitable function at that. However, the significance and impact of 'relativism' has been understood in diverse manner, in accordance with the theological or historical concerns of the individual writer. We trust that our survey has already shown how complicated a concept it is, and that it is not possible to give any adequate meaning to it, or do full justice to the force of its impact, unless it is studied in different contexts and situations.

The awareness of the problems of 'relativism' also signifies in modern times a new understanding of man himself: not only the nature of historical knowledge but also the nature of man's historical existence. It is therefore hardly surprising that the issue of 'relativism' should become a major preoccupation in modern historiography. But at the same time we also see that in modern culture there is a general interest in man himself, man trying to understand himself anew. In psychology, this is manifest in the development of depth psychology, for instance, not to mention the other types of analytic psychology; and in philosophy, in the many types of thinking which loosely come under the label 'existentialism.' This philosophy attempts to grasp not just one aspect of man, but man as a whole confronting the mystery of being and existence. In the works of our writers, we also see that the
awareness of 'relativism' is accompanied by some sort of anthropology which points in this direction, and it is this understanding of man which greatly characterizes their religious thought. It is more obvious in the cases of Toynbee and Niebuhr who utilize freely the insight and findings of other disciplines in the formulation of their religious views, and less obvious in Kraemer, who looks to 'revelation' rather than to contemporary culture in his attempt to understand the question of man and his religion. But whether more or less obvious, there is little doubt that each of them in his own way tries to look at man anew, and in this connection tries to account for the mystery of man and his religious life. Hence in Toynbee's writings the subconscious of man is stressed, which he regards as the source of man's religious life and the locus of interaction between the human and the divine. Kraemer refers to the universal 'religious consciousness' where the dialectic interaction between God and man takes place. Niebuhr looks to the 'internal history' of self and meaning, and the self in perennial confrontation with the 'Other' to define the human situation and man's relation with God. All these aspects have only been mentioned so far in this study, but have not been examined. In the following chapter we shall see them in their proper contexts, and also point out other cultural influences which have found their way into our writers' thoughts.
STUDY TWO: THE QUESTION OF MAN: ANTHROPOLOGICAL PRESUPPOSITION

In the previous study we have mentioned that in the structure of each writer's thought there is some sort of anthropology(1) which greatly characterizes one's religious thought. In this Study we shall attempt to delineate our writers' understandings of man. This Study prepares us for a more adequate grasp of their views on God and revelation, which will be the major concerns in the next Study.

Again, like the methods they adopt, their views of man have been heavily influenced by their interaction with the contemporary cultural situation. Western culture had been for a long time dominated by a rationalistic and idealistic understanding of man. But in our time we see violent reactions to it from different quarters. The so called existentialism in philosophy, the rise of 'depth psychology' and the spread of behaviouristic thinking are to be understood in this light. Furthermore, the problem of secularism has added a new dimension to the picture of men. Secular man has no place for God in his life. He becomes the measure of all things and the source of meaning and value. As such, he is 'self-sufficient', an illusion which is much fortified by the rapid development of science and technology. We focus our attention on these several aspects of our modern culture because they are reflected in one way or another in the anthropologies of our writers. In an Appendix we give a more detailed account of these reactions, the course they take and the reasons which prompt them into prominence. (2)

(1) By 'anthropology' we simply mean a 'view' or an 'understanding' of man.
(2) For the Appendix see below, 571ff. Also note that there is a distinction between 'secularism', which is an attitude of mind which rules out God, and which is characterized by 'self-sufficiency', and 'secularization', which is an affirmation of the relative autonomy of various facets of life as a reaction to ecclesiastical authoritarianism. See below, 573.
These reactions also create new questions about man himself. For instance, the emphasis of existentialism is on the whole man. The quest of 'depth psychology' is the wholeness of man. Thus both Toynbee and Niebuhr are concerned with the question of wholeness in man's religious and cultural life. Again, behaviourism, no less than the all-powerful and determinative 'unconscious' which the psychologist begins to unfold before us, raise the question of human freedom and moral responsibility. So we find Toynbee seeing the course of human development in history as a quest for freedom, and Niebuhr developing the concept of the 'responsible self' which is our authentic selfhood. Again, the phenomenal spread of secularism has not only threatened the religious understanding of the ultimate purpose of life in the world, but also creates a condition in which the many finite value-centres are turned into absolutes, demanding the absolute loyalty of man. Man is such an incurably religious creature that once God is ousted from his life, he has to have other absolute or absolutes to take his place. Against this tendency in the modern culture all our writers protest with one accord. In the case of Niebuhr we have already seen the formulation of 'radical monotheism' which is directed towards this end. In this light, and in the context of 'responsible self', sin is a failure of man to respond to God who acts in all things upon man himself, resulting in the disintegration of the oneness of selfhood. Kraemer's 'dialectical' understanding of man is shaped to a large extent by his protest against secularism, and not only relativism, and it is this view of man which controls his judgment on the question of relation between the Christian faith and the non-Christian faiths. His
concept of 'revelation' which stands at the centre of his thought is, as we shall argue, greatly affected by his aversion to the idea of 'self-sufficiency' of man, which in turn prompts him to holding a view of an antithetical relation between God and man. Toynbee, being an 'ex-Christian', is not committed to defending the absolute sovereignty of the Christian God, nevertheless he also believes that God and man cannot be confused. The greatest idolatry, in his opinion, is man-worship, which is an impediment on the way towards 'sainthood', the final goal of development of man in the world. The only way to escape this plight of man is to worship together with all men the 'One True God' who has been confronting and guiding man in his difficult upward path towards sainthood ever since the beginning of history. In protest against the deterministic and secular modern cultural ethos of our time, Toynbee seeks not only to recover 'freedom', but also 'God' as the all-important, determining factors in human life.

The developments in modern culture not only raise questions which our writers wish to answer, but also provide substance with which they develop their own anthropology. Toynbee draws for instance from 'depth psychology' and Niebuhr from existentialism as well as from Mead and Royce, besides many others. Even though the latter's anthropology cannot be said to have been derived from the scriptures, nevertheless he thinks it is at least 'bible-informed.' Kraemer is fully aware of the danger of evolving one's anthropology from the cultural situation, as this approach is not likely to do full justice to the distinctive biblical viewpoint. Since one must have 'a
certain understanding of man', the Christian thinker therefore should derive it from the Christian revelation itself. The conviction behind this assertion is that theological thinking must begin with revelation which also offers enough guiding principles for the formulation of a biblical anthropology. This task, in his opinion, must be done by the theologian in the context of 'Biblical realism,' a mode of thinking which is, in his opinion, peculiar to the Biblical witness. Only by being loyal to 'Biblical realism' can we maintain the absolute centrality and priority of 'revelation' in all our theological pursuit. So the main difference between Kraemer and the other two writers is this: Kraemer begins with the scriptures. Not only anthropology, but also all other aspects of the Christian faith (even non-Christian faiths) must be understood out of the Christian revelation itself. As such, his theology carries a divine authority which supposedly rises above 'relativism' and other cultural influences.

Kraemer, however, does not seem to have fully appreciated the difficulties involved in such an assertion. It may be possible to affirm the logical priority of revelation over anthropology, but can we maintain this priority epistemologically, and with such a high degree of certainty as Kraemer would like us to have? It may have been possible if revelation, with its complicated structure and

---

(1) In the study of religion, for instance, Kraemer acknowledges that anthropology is the 'fundamental issue.' Christian Faith, 72. Our argument is that even in our conception of 'revelation' this insight also holds.

(2) In his discussion on the subject of ethics and natural law Kraemer says that we need a firm grasp of 'biblical humanism.' It is a humanism derived from Biblical Message and with God as its centre. See his paper, The Bible and Social Ethics, in Contributions to a Christian Social Ethic, Papers of the Ecumenical Institute, no. 4, 1949, 12.
content, is immediately self-evident. But revelation, as we shall see in the following Study, is only a formal concept with certain variables, and its content must be derived from other categories. The element of human interpretation must be seriously reckoned with. It would be unfair to Kraemer if we say that he is not aware of the gravity of the problem. In fact, his 'Biblical realism' is meant to overcome this epistemological problem, as it supposedly sets forth an appropriate approach which he believes required for the understanding of revelation. But since 'Biblical realism' is itself a product of God's revelation witnessed in the scriptures, it means that Kraemer's suggestion amounts to making the method of approach also part and parcel of revelation. Can the already loaded concept of revelation bear this extra weight imposed on it? Furthermore, it can be argued, as we do, that Kraemer's concept of 'Biblical realism' embraces certain presuppositions which reflect his interaction with the contemporary relativistic and humanistic aspects of modern culture, and that they prejudice his theological thinking as a whole. Thus, 'Biblical realism' does not seem to have solved the epistemological problem involved. On the contrary, it has created more problems than it sets out to solve.

Since anthropology has such an important effect on the religious thought of a writer, we feel it justifiable to devote an entire Study to this subject, analysing it in the context of each Writer's own works.
I. A.J. TOYNBEE: A MYSTICAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

In the preceding Study we have mentioned that Toynbee changes his view on the relation between civilization and religion when he comes to write the later volumes of his Magnum Opus, viz, volumes 7-10, which were published fifteen years after the earlier volumes. (1) This change is necessary because he now wishes to define the purpose of human life in the world, and Civilization is not adequate for such an attempt. At the same time he takes an inner look at the mystery of man himself, and to give his theories or laws of civilization an anthropological basis. So we can say that anthropology has an extremely important place in his thought. It is the quest of purpose and fulfilment of life that points man to God, and therefore religion becomes paramount.

In the first six volumes in which Civilization is the ultimate concept, Toynbee works out a set of theories describing the behaviour of a civilization from its genesis to disintegration, as well as its relation to other civilizations. He even works out the appropriate 'wave-lengths' of some aspects of its behaviour in the disintegration phase. Behind the many theories there lies the mystical and vague concept characterized by the Chinese 'Yin' and 'Yang,' viz., the state of quiescence and the state of creative advance into the unknown. The movements in history and the changes in civilizations come from the transitions from Yin to Yang and vice versa. This Yin-Yang concept helps to describe changes, but cannot itself be explained. It is, in his opinion, 'one of the a priori categories through which reason operates.' (2) What the historian

(1) Volumes 4-6 came out in 1939.
(2) History, xii, 241
can do is to trace the circumstances in which the transitions take place and the results they produce. Why they happen in those circumstances (or do not happen under similar circumstances) must be regarded as a mystery hidden in the freedom of human response. This Yin-Yang idea is certainly behind Toynbee's concepts of Withdrawal and Return, Challenge and Response, Rout and Rally, Cycles of War and Peace, and indeed behind all pattern and regularities in history. The creativity which is characteristic of 'Yang' is also expressed in terms of the 'Promethean elan,' a concept which is similar, in Toynbee's rendering of it, to Bergson's 'elan vital.'

At this stage of his thought two inter-related questions suggest themselves. Since the alternation of Yin-Yang is rooted in the freedom of human response, and man being a creature living in a civilization governed by the many 'laws' which Toynbee has uncovered, the first question therefore is: how free is man? This question can also be approached by way of the 'laws.' Insofar as history obeys 'laws,' we may ask, with Hourani, what then is the anthropological basis of these laws? It would seem that Toynbee needs to develop a theory of man to provide the ground for the many theories he has uncovered.

The second question arises in connection with Toynbee's conviction that civilization is ultimate. The most important thing for a civilization is to achieve self-articulation and to maintain its power of creativity which is characteristic of the growth phase. Now, suppose a civilization has eventually achieved harmony and self-articulation, what is the next stage, presumably
it cannot forever stay in the Yang state? Can it have any purpose beyond itself? or has it no better future than relapsing into the cycle of birth, growth, and decline? All this can be grouped under one major question, that of the purpose and meaning of man who lives his life in civilization. To answer this question, Toynbee needs to develop a Weltanschauung which must go beyond civilization itself. But this is not possible as long as civilization remains the ultimate concept. Toynbee must have felt more and more uneasy as he draws near to the end of the sixth volume. (1)

These two questions are inter-related because man's freedom must have been given for some purpose. If civilization fails to give an adequate answer then we must look beyond it to find it. It is, as we shall see, this quest of freedom and purpose that leads man from different levels of laws to the 'law of God' which is perfect freedom itself. The goal of man is then seen as 'sainthood' in which he has unbroken communion with God and a self-giving love for his fellowmen. The saints are members of a 'higher species' which is the higher religions.

This, very briefly, indicates the general trend of thought which Toynbee develops in volumes 7 to 10, in which the earlier relation between civilization and religion is reversed. Now religion, whose chief function is to put man in touch with the 'One True God',

(1) The closing pages of volume six are telling. The disintegration of civilizations have given rise to Universal Churches which Toynbee regards as something new (p.324). The last question is: what is the destiny of the Universal Church in which every higher religion seeks to embody itself? (326) But he states that at this stage, 'we are not in a position to answer it.' He indeed cannot, unless he discards his present idea of relation between civilization and religion, as he does in the later volumes.
is that to which civilizations minister.\(^{(1)}\) In this new framework
of though, history is understood as a movement, or a process, in
which God's creation moves from God its source towards God its
goal. So it is not surprising to find that, for Toynbee, 'history
passes into theology.'\(^{(2)}\)

Toynbee does not only try to understand human destiny in a new
light, but he also explores the nature of the human psyche, by means
of which he wishes to give an answer to the status of his 'laws'.
In doing so he also tackles the question of religion and the
relation between God and man, because for him the 'subconscious' is
the organ through which man lives his spiritual life. He could
not have been able to do so had not the 'star of Jung' risen
above his mental horizon.\(^{(3)}\)

He follows Jung in dividing the
human psyche, for the purpose of mental operation, into
consciousness and subconscious, the latter being further
stratified.\(^{(4)}\)

To the conscious belong freedom, purpose and will,
while the subconscious, which is itself an articulated psychic cosmos,
operates in accordance with its own laws. These laws are more
clearly reflected, in the disintegrated phase of a civilization, in
the regularities and uniformities of human behaviour. 'When I see
undesigned regularities and recurrences in the ascendent of human

---

\(^{(1)}\) Actually the change was first announced in the following year after
the publication of volume six. In 1940 Toynbee delivered the Burge
Lecture at Oxford, entitled Christianity and Civilization, which
was reprinted in 1948 in Civilization on Trial. In this lecture,
Toynbee makes it clear that he has discarded the previous idea of
subordinating religion to civilization. Now, the rise and fall
of civilizations are understood in terms of rendering services to
the growth of higher religions, a view he develops in more detail
in volumes 7-10.

\(^{(2)}\) See History, vii, 423-425. Also see Hourani's review in the Dublin

\(^{(3)}\) History, x, 228

\(^{(4)}\) Toynbee's 'subconscious' corresponds to Jung's 'unconscious'. For
an account of Jung's view on the human psyche, see below, 580-582,
589-596.
affairs, I look for these in the medium of the subconscious ... (1) He calls attention to the limitations as well as the potentialities of both the conscious and the subconscious. These two organs of the human psyche must be held together, each reconciling the other, if man is to live an enriched life, a life characterized by wholeness. He also sees Jung's theory of the psychological types a 'possible explanation of the survival of the eight faiths on one planet,' and in an Appendix he goes into detail trying to relate different religions to different psychological types. (2)

Two prominent ideas run through Toynbee's works: that of freedom and harmony or unity. They are closely related, as harmony is the precondition of freedom. It is, as we have said earlier, the quest of freedom and its fulfilment (purpose) in human life that brings man to God. Perhaps at this point we should clarify briefly the rather complicated notion of 'freedom' in Toynbee's writings.

Freedom first of all is the freedom of man to choose a course of action which he thinks appropriate to the challenge, whether it comes from the natural or human environment. 'The distinctive gift of Consciousness is a freedom to make choices - between alternative courses of action for the Will, and between alternative ideas and beliefs for the Intellect.' (3) This concept of freedom is behind the idea of 'challenge and response' which Toynbee adopts as the 'key part' of his historical method, which reflects his reaction against the deterministic trend in modern thought. (4) From the religious perspective, man, according to Toynbee, is free to choose

(1) History, xii. 226
(2) For a critical evaluation of Toynbee's psychological types and religions, see below, 493ff
(3) History, ix, 331
(4) See below, 113ff
to do God's will which is love, or to do evil. He is free to respond to the challenge of God to man, (through the challenge of natural or human environments) to essay the difficult assent from subman to man and eventually sainthood, or stay dormant, "resting on one's oars." Even though Toynbee takes human sin very seriously, nevertheless he does not entertain the idea that sin makes it impossible for man to respond to God or to good. We can say he is closer to Pelagius than to Augustine. (1)

There is also an inner view of freedom. In this context, freedom is freedom from the blind thrust of the subconscious. (2) The subconscious cannot be neglected or suppressed, but must be coaxed into co-operation with consciousness. Freedom therefore depends on a delicate balance between the two aspects of the human psyche, with consciousness taking the initiative and giving the direction.

Freedom, in Toynbee's opinion, is given to man with a purpose. When it is directed towards this purpose, it finds its fulfilment. Freedom therefore is not merely freedom from certain elements or restrain, but freedom for a goal or purpose. The goal has been variously described as having 'communion with God' and doing 'his will', and choosing the 'law of God' which is characteristic of sainthood. (3) In other words, the freedom which Toynbee cherishes

---

(1) Augustine teaches that man's will may be free, but only not free to do good. For a discussion of the Augustinian and Pelagian views on freedom see Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature of Destiny of Man, vol. 1, 1941, 256ff.

(2) The idea of freedom as 'freedom from' in the social and political context is developed, for instance, in J.S. Mill's essay, On Liberty. It refers to an area of conduct within which each man chooses his own course and is protected from compulsion or restraint by the will of another. In the case of Toynbee, we are interested in the psychological context. Thus the 'compulsion' is that from the 'subconscious'.

(3) The idea that freedom is given to man with a purpose is clearly expressed in an important section in his works, see History, ix 395ff.
is not the unqualified or unconditional liberty, but rather that of doing God's will and making God's law one's own.\(^1\)

In the following we shall explore Toynbee's anthropology from the perspective of his quest for freedom, because of the centrality of this issue in the structure of his thought. This attempt will take us through various aspects of his thought developed at different stages. We shall begin with Toynbee's understanding of the relation between man and his society, from which Toynbee develops his concept of growth. Then the idea of 'challenge and response' which is formulated to give freedom a powerful expression in human affairs. Then we shall go on to his view of the psychic aspects of man, which becomes a major concern in his later writings when religion sets the goal for civilization.

A. Man and his society

Toynbee came across the threat to the freedom of response of the individual in the concept of society as expounded by J.S. Huxley and O. Spengler. To counteract their influence he developed a view

\(^1\) For this aspect of his thought, see below, 139ff, for example. Toynbee's religious understanding of freedom is similar to that expounded by Brunner, who sees freedom in the context of dependence on God. He writes, 'Man's freedom has its real possibility only within the dependence on God, so that the maximum of dependence on God is the maximum of his freedom, and that any attempt to get out of the dependence on God leads to slavery.' Brunner understands Christian freedom as between determinism and absolute liberalism, as represented by Fichte. See his Gifford lectures, Christianity and Civilization, 1946, Vol. 1, chapter IX, esp. 131ff
of society, and history, which stressed the reality and freedom of the individual.

Briefly, Huxley understands society as a corporate personality which has overshadowed and subordinated to itself the individual personalities of human beings belonging to it.\(^{(1)}\) Reality lies in the society and not in the individual. Society, which is prior to and indispensable to the awareness of self-identity, is a perfect and intelligible whole while the individual is but a rather insignificant part of it. In Germany Spengler expounds a similar view, using models drawn from biology. According to him, societies are super-organisms which are comparable to the organisms understood in the 'morphology of plants and animals.' Spengler's language is uncompromising. 'Civilizations (\textit{Kulturen}) are organisms. The history of soul of a civilization lives and develops towards the realization of the complete sum of possibilities, before it 'goes back into the primitive psyche from which it originally emerged.' This return of the soul to the primitive psyche also means the death of the civilization in which the soul is embodied.\(^{(2)}\)

Toynbee rejects these views because they regard the individual merely as an agent of the whole, carrying out a specific function without an independent life of his own. This almost reduces the

\(^{(1)}\) See J.S. Huxley: \textit{The Individual in the Animal Kingdom}, 1912, 36-8, 125, 143.

\(^{(2)}\) Spengler, \textit{Der Untergang des Abendlandes}, 1918, I, 150, 153. Both Huxley and Spengler are quoted at length in \textit{History}, iii, 219-222. Notice the special meaning of Culture and Civilization in Spengler's writings. \textit{Kultur} (culture) and \textit{Zivilisation} (civilization) are antithetical terms. The latter refers to the late, decadent, uncreative stage which terminates the development of his 'great cultures' (\textit{Kulturen}). \textit{Zivilisation} therefore is the over-developed, uncreative phase of Kultur. 'Civilization for him (i.e., Spengler) stands to Culture as being to becoming, as intellect to soul.' Philip Bagby, \textit{Culture and History} 1958, 166, also see 212. Spengler's \textit{Kultur}, as Toynbee understands it, corresponds to his civilization in process of growth, and \textit{Zivilisation} to his civilization which is in process of disintegration. See \textit{History}, iii, 221n.
individual to a robot, and denies him any freedom which makes life real. They also ignore the vital and creative role played by the individual in the society, especially in its growth stage.

In the formulation of his own view Toynbee wishes to bring out the 'realities' of the individual as well as the society to which it belongs. In doing so he draws heavily from Smuts and Bergson.

A Society, we may say, is a relation between individuals; and this relation of theirs consists in the coincidence of their individual fields of action; and this coincidence combines the individual fields into a common ground; and this common ground is what we call a society. (1)

The highly speculative idea of the 'field' must be understood in the context of Smuts' thought. (2) Now the real substance of social relation is the 'field' of action of the individual, ranging from the immediate to the infinite. Society is the interaction, or rather, coincidence, of the individual fields. Since the individual's field is a part of the individual himself, each individual is therefore 'in a sense co-extensive' and indeed identical with the whole of the society in which he is a shareholder

(1) History, iii, 230.
(2) According to General Smuts, who sees 'the stuff of the universe' as 'activity' rather than matter, a thing or an event is Action imprisoned in structure. But Action must always remain Action. Even though imprisoned in structure or material form, it tends to transcend it. 'All things overflow their own structural limits, the inner Action transcends the outer structure, and there is thus a trend in things beyond themselves. This inner trend in things springs from their very essence as localized, imprisoned Action.' The overflowing Action of a thing or an event overflows its structural bounds, and the surrounding 'field' is where the impact of the overflowing Action is felt. 'Every thing has its own field, like itself, only more attenuated.' This is true of ideas, animals, plants, persons and so on. Theoretically speaking, the extension of a 'field' is indefinite, embracing the whole universe. But in 'practical operation,' the field is quite limited, for the farther it recedes from the 'inner area' the greater will be the attenuation in force and influence. Smuts, Holism and Evolution, 1927, 336, 347-348., referred to in History, iii, 223ff
or in which he has a vested interest - to apply a metaphor from the business practice of the modern Western world. (1)

Even though the individual is in some sense 'co-extensive' and 'identical' with the society by virtue of his field of action, it does not follow that he is thus 'identical' with every other individual in the society. To bring out the idea of identity and difference Toynbee makes use of another speculative and philosophical concept, viz., the Macrococsm-Microcosm theme which has been widely used in mystical and esoteric writings. Man (Microcosm) and the universe (Macrococsm) are believed to have been constructed according to the same harmonic proportion, each sympathetically attuned to the other, and man is thought to be mirroring the universe. (2)

This idea is reflected in Toynbee when he says:

In the Microcosm, the Universe is mirrored or concentrated in the Soul. In the Macrocosm, the Soul ranged over a 'field' that is co-extensive with the Universe; and the sum of things - the ultimate whole which remains undivided and indivisible in reality, notwithstanding the logical dichotomy that has been practised upon it by human thought - is Soul and Universe in one. (3)

Now this Macrocosm becomes for Toynbee the society in which man the Microcosm has his being. Macrocosm is therefore a field of relationships between individuals, and the realm where 'different individuals interact.' As such, the Macrocosm is only to be 'apprehended and acted upon by the Microcosm.' (4)

There is no doubt that the Macrococsm has a reality of its own, for it represents the

---

(1) History, iii, 238
(2) For reference to Microcosm-Macrocosm in the oriental setting, see above,40f. For a short historical note on the meaning and development of this theme in Western thought, see the article on Macrocosm and Microcosm in Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed Paul Edwards, 1967. Volume 5, 121-124. Article by D. Levy.
(3) History, iii, 226
(4) History, iii, 230.
complicated networks of personal relations. (1) But when compared with the Microcosm, it only has a reality of the second order. The field of relations are the products of continual encounters between the feelings, thoughts and wills of a number of persons, and they would cease to exist if there were no more human beings to create and maintain them. The reality of the society therefore is dependent on the reality of the individuals.

This understanding of Toynbee's places the stress on the individual in his relation to the society, yet avoiding the error of individualism which undermines the importance of the society. It is obvious that in this view the society cannot be a source of action, as it is the macrocosm upon which the microcosm acts. In this way Toynbee hopes to affirm for the individual autonomy and freedom of action, even though his freedom is not an unqualified reality.

From this understanding of the individual's relation to the society Toynbee develops his concept of progress or growth of human life on earth. Man is not a slave to his environment but is free to choose a course of action which he thinks appropriate to the challenge that confronts him. When there is free and creative response growth is assured. Thus the progress or growth of a society or civilization depends on the free and creative responses of the individuals to challenges. But, in Toynbee's scheme, those who are responsible for the growth of the society are not men of the rank

---

(1) G. Trinkaus seems to have misunderstood Toynbee when he says that Toynbee's definition of society as the common ground of respective fields of action of a number of individuals amounts to abandoning society as "objectively existing." See Science and Society, 1948, 227. In fact, Toynbee never denies the reality of the society; see also his own affirmation, History xii, 270.
They are the 'creative minority', the individuals who are able to make the representative creative responses on behalf of the whole and who are also able to induce the same creative responses from the group. Following Smuts Toynbee calls these creative figures 'personalities' in the earlier writings. (1)

According to Smuts, the 'personality' is the individual who is able to 'gather the unorganized centrifugal tendencies' into 'an effective central control,' and who is often able to 'win even in the most discouraging circumstances those moral victories which form the great landmarks of personal and human progress.' (2) What is important about the 'personality', in Toynbee's opinion, is that he has experienced the inward development which enables him to have control over the 'discordant elements and tendencies', which, in biological and psychological contexts, would be the drives and impulses in man. Only when man can bring these elements under conscious control can he retain initiative and hence freedom to act in a new way, not being dictated by drives and needs. (3) Thus internal harmony means self-articulation for the individual. But since the individual is the microcosm which corresponds to the macrocosm, the society, what is true of the individual must therefore also be true of the society. So in the study of a society or civilization, internal control or self-articulation becomes the aim.

(1) History, iii, 233ff
(2) J.C. Smuts, Holism and evolution, 1926, 305-308. "The ideal personality is he in whom this inner control is sufficiently powerful, whether exercised by conscious will or some unconscious activity, to harmonize all the discordant elements and tendencies of the personal character into one harmonious whole, and to restrain all wayward, random activities which are in conflict with that harmony." Smuts also thinks that the personalities are still a growing factor in the universe, now merely at the infant stage.
(3) Toynbee is even at this stage seen at the verge of venturing into 'depth psychology.'
which is identical with growth. We shall come back to this point when we examine Toynbee's historical method of 'challenge and response.' It is sufficient here only to mention that it is this 'self-articulation' which is the ideal in the earlier volumes.

Yet Toynbee also tries to understand this 'personality' in the light of Bergson's thought. The personalities are creative because they are those in whom the elan vital (vital impetus) finds unobstructed expressions.\(^1\) In Bergson's writings, the creative persons are the 'mystics' who are the superhuman creators par excellence, as being such, belong to a new species altogether.\(^2\) Having attained self-articulation the mystic finds that he can no more live and die to himself. His compelling desire is the desire that he would set the imprint of the elan 'upon the whole of mankind' and 'to convert a species' into 'creative effort; to make a movement out of something which, by definition, is a halt.'\(^3\)

This social implication of the mystics is taken over by Toynbee who formulates it in the form of 'Withdrawal and Return.' The personality must, according to him, pass through the 'dark night of

---

\(^1\) elan vital is a central concept in Bergson's works. It refers to a 'current of conscious' that penetrates matter, giving rise to living bodies and determines the course of their evolution. It is the cause of variations that accumulated and produces new species. It also co-ordinates the appearance of variations so as to preserve continuity of functioning in evolving structures. Life is carried by it towards ever higher complexity or organizations. The main function of the elan is to 'engraft on to the necessity of physical forces the largest possible amount of indetermination' which is evident in the contingency and creativity that have characterised the history of life. But at every stage the elan has been limited by recalcitrant matter. Hence it is always seeking to transcend the stage it has reached and always remains inadequate to what it tries to produce. It surges forward in three directions, viz in the direction of the plants, the insects and the vertebrates. It achieves a moment of freedom at its highest point, in man. In particular, it manifests itself in the life of the mystics to whom the vital elan is communicated 'in its entirety.' In Creative Evolution the elan has been identified with the creator God.

\(^2\) H. Bergson, Les Deux Sources de la Morale et de la Religion, 1935, 96-7, 245-6, referred to in History, iii, 232

\(^3\) For a detailed description of the role of mystics see Bergson, ibid, 246-251, referred to in History, iii, 234f
the soul' which is the highest spiritual path. This is a withdrawal, or 'disengagement', from his social milieu. Such a disengagement makes it 'possible for the personality to realize individual potentialities,' and so it is 'necessary for the anchorite's transfiguration.' But he must return to his social milieu otherwise the withdrawal and the transfiguration would have 'no purpose' and 'no meaning.'(1) It is through the return of the transfigured personalities, or the 'creative minority', that the whole society is being brought forward towards its goal. At this stage of his thought Toynbee is not able to give any definite content as to what 'withdrawal' and 'transfiguration' really mean, except that we are told that through such processes the realization of one's own potentialities is possible.(2) The goal of the society, which is also the ideal, is growth, towards which the personalities lead his fellowmen.

In the latter volumes, the idea of personality recedes into the background. Its place is taken by 'sainthood'. But the basic idea of Bergson's 'mystic' is retained. The saints, we are told, are members of a 'higher species' which are represented by the higher religions, and, like the mystics and personalities, they are people who have been 'transfigured'. Being such, they are 'indispensable for the maintenance of societies' because they possess unselfishness, determination, courage and vision which make life possible on earth.(3) They are also creative because they orient themselves to God who is the infinite source of creativity. But now

---

(1) History, iii, 248
(2) Later, in volume six, Toynbee also says that transfiguration enables man to see the Kingdom of God operative on earth. See below, 118
(3) History, vii, 514-515.
the emphasis is not so much on creativity itself, but on love, harmony, and freedom for doing God's will. The hope of mankind lies in the transfigured saints who seek to bring about a similar transfiguration among their fellowmen so that the creation of man may come to its fulfilment. But now transfiguration is possible only when men commit themselves to God, to whom the saints point through their life and work.

So far we have largely concentrated on how the individual can influence the society and little on how the society moulds and shapes the individual. This is inevitable as the analogies with which Toynbee seeks to bring out the relation between the individual and the society emphasize the autonomy of the individual and his potentialities. It does not mean that he is unaware of the social influences on the development of the individual. The personality's effort, for example, to induce similar creative responses from his fellowmen may be violated, resisted. This would have a disastrous effect on the creative individual, because it would put him 'out of gear with his field of action', relegating him to the unwelcomed 'dominant minority'. Perhaps the most obvious social influence on the individual is to be seen in the shaping of the individual's mind by the cultural ethos which envelopes him. It is, as we have seen earlier, the recognition of this factor that leads Toynbee to the acceptance of cultural and historical relativism. If in his anthropology Toynbee has seemingly stressed unduly the autonomy of the individual, it is because he, in strong reaction to the modern ethos, tries to establish indeterminism in history, and to recover the reality of the freedom of response in the life of man.
In order to understand more adequately the issue of freedom, or rather, indeterminism, in history, let us now turn to his basic concept 'challenge and response.' It also helps us see the extent to which God is involved in human history.

B. Challenge and response

According to Toynbee, much of history can be regarded as a 'psychological drama,'(1) which is played out 'both within a single human soul and in the relations between two souls or more.'(2) Myths are 'symbols of psychological phenomena', and therefore are the best means for the exploration of the psychological drama. It is not surprising that 'challenge and response', a theme taken from the world of mythology, is adopted as the 'key part' of Toynbee's historical method.(3)

In ancient mythologies challenge and response is the theme of superhuman encounters, such as the struggle between Artemis and Aphrodite on which Euripides builds his Hippolytus; the encounter of a virgin with the father of her child; the stories about Europa and the Bull; Gretchen and Faust and so on. In the Old Testament there are also similar encounters such as that between Yahweh and the Serpent, and between the Lord of Hosts and Satan. The essential story in all cases are similar. It begins with some peculiar

(1) See Toynbee’s reply to the criticism of J.K. Feibleman in History, xii, 252
(2) History, xii, 252
(3) History, xii, 254
perfection and serenity, or, the perfect 'Yin' state, e.g., the Garden of Eden, or Job's perfection in virtue, or Gretchen's perfection in beauty and purity. This state is always upset by some elements which come as challenges. The challenge may appear in the form of temptation, or a blow, or an intrusion from outside the human scene. But the intrusions are not merely destructive, because while the static perfection is lost, something else is gained. The human actors who are involved in the struggle between superhuman powers go through a terrible and trying ordeal. When the ordeal is responded to with their whole souls, they always come through with new and creative energies, making it possible for life to progress to a higher level of existence, e.g., Job finds a deeper serenity and Gretchen is transfigured. Challenge touches off the sparks of freedom and creativity, enabling Yin to go into the Yang state. 'An encounter between two personalities in the form of challenge and response: have we not here the flint and steel by whose mutual impact the creative spark is kindled?' (1) The analogy taken from myths is suggestive and fruitful as far as it goes. But Toynbee also reminds us that it should not be pressed too far. The distinction, for example, between the two parties of the encounter should not be too sharply drawn. In reality they are not necessarily separated individual personalities as represented in a mythical drama. They can be the 'dialectical interaction' between conflicting elements or spiritual forces within the individual's soul. (2)

(1) Civilization on Trial, 12
(2) History, xii, 146. See O.H.K. Spate's criticism of Toynbee for having imposed an artificial distinction between man and his environment. The Geographical Journal, Dec. 1952, 419. Toynbee accepts his criticism, but argues that for the sake of mental analysis, the distinction must be maintained.
The idea of challenge and response is as applicable to the society as it is to the individual. This is readily understandable, in view of his notion of the relation between the individual and the society. In his *magnus opus* Toynbee applies it to the study of civilizations and the courses of their development. In history, challenge comes to men in different ways, with different degrees of intensity. It may come in a difficult way, so difficult that it renders any creative responses practically impossible, as in the case of the Eskimos. (1) It may come in an easy way, which fails to stir up the creative *elan* in man's soul, and therefore no creative response is called forth. The ideal or 'optimum' challenge is one which will provide stimulus of the kind best calculated to evoke the most potent creative response, at the same time sufficient momentum to carry the challenged party 'through equilibrium into an overbalance which exposes him to a fresh challenge and thereby inspired him to make a fresh response in the form of a further equilibrium ending in a further overbalance - and so on in a progression which is potentially infinite.' (2) This ideal state can be maintained only when a civilization is still in the growth phase. How to maintain growth therefore is an issue of major concern. It is the notion of growth which eventually provides the transition from civilization to religion.

In the study of the genese of civilizations, Toynbee examines and rejects the commonly accepted opinions which attribute the rise

---

(1) *History*, iii, 4ff. This applies to the 'Arrested Civilizations', a phrase which he drops on reconsideration, see *History*, xii, 554
(2) *History*, iii, 119-120
of civilization to factors of race, or of environment. (1) Once men have established mastery over the natural environments, the next serious challenges then come from the human environment: how to live with one another in peace. These challenges mainly gravitate round moral issues, and it is moral challenges which we must seriously reckon with in our generation. Challenges have a direction of their own. They point towards the inner (moral) world of civilization which is determinative of its growth. Growth means a progressive change of emphasis and transfer of energy and shifting of the scene of action out of this field (i.e., the external field) into another field (i.e., internal) in which the action of challenge and response may find an alternative arena. In this other field, challenges do not impinge from outside but arise from within, and victorious responses to challenges do not take the form of surmounting an external adversary but manifest themselves, instead, in an inward self-articulation or self-determination ... and progress towards self-determination is a prosaic formula for describing the miracle by which life enters into its kingdom. (2)

Just as the 'personality' who succeeds in bringing the 'discordant elements and tendencies of the personal character into one harmonious whole', the growing civilization or society through creative efforts is able to hold the political, economical and classes elements together in harmony. (3) It is also a state in which the creative minority successfully induce creative responses from their fellowmen by means of mimesis, 'social imitation'. (4)

---

(1) 'Race' denotes the possession of some distinctive and inheritable quality in particular groups of human beings. The supposed attributes of race which are taken as explanation for the rise of civilization are the distinctive psychic or spiritual qualities supposedly innate in certain human groups. 'Environment' refers to the favourable climates and geographical conditions which make life easier. See Toynbee's discussions on these in History, i, 207-271.

(2) History, iii, 192, also see 216.

(3) For an example, see Toynbee's analysis of 'England in the Third Chapter of Growth of the Western Society' in History, iii, 350-363.

(4) For the use of mimesis, a short-cut method of bringing about progress, see History, iii, 245ff.
But a civilization does not forever stay at a stage in which it can hold the various aspects of its life in an harmonious whole. The loss of harmony means its disintegration, a phase during which challenges are no longer creatively met. The creative personalities who were once able to lead their fellowmen by means of their creative charm are no more creative. Instead, they become the 'dominant minority', only arousing bitterness from the 'internal proletariat' who once followed them willingly. In this disintegration phase, there are schisms in the body social and in the human souls. In the body social different groups of people are alienated from one another, and institutions which served the function of holding society together in the growth phase become burdens and no more function properly. In the human souls different ways of response have been tried, but are found wanting, such as Archaism, an attempt to escape from an intolerable present by reconstructing an earlier phase in the life of a disintegrating society, and Futurism, an attempt to escape by a leap into the darkness of an unknown future. It involves a scrapping of the traditional links with the past, and therefore is in fact revolutionism. But even in this dark period, the creative élan has not ceased working. There are still creative personalities to be found, but not among the established leaders in the society. Instead, Toynbee finds them among the 'internal proletariat.' At a time when the old orders are crumbling down and civilization threatened by suicidal warfar, these creative individuals come to see that 'there can be no salvation from that sickness of the soul which the breakdown of a civilization brings

(1) For a detailed discussion of Archaism and Futurism, see History, vi, 49-113.
to light through any less radical remedy than a change of spiritual clime or dimension.\(^{(1)}\) This change is 'transfiguration', which is the sign of growth, attained through a transference of the field of action from Macrocosm to Microcosm.\(^{(2)}\) The transfigured individuals now see that intermingling with this mundane world is also the 'Kingdom of God', and that the 'happy issue out of our afflictions is to be found in enrolling ourselves as citizens of a Civitas Dei of which Christ is king.\(^{(3)}\) In other words, growth now can only be a growth into the Kingdom.

The member of a disintegrating mundane society who has taken this road has a super hope, and therefore a deeper happiness ... for he has learnt the saving truths that 'the Most High has not made one world, but two, \((\text{Ezra, vii, 50})\) and that the human wayfarer who still finds himself a sojourner in This World is not on that account beyond the pale of the Other World but is travelling all the time within the domain of the Kingdom of God and is at liberty to live as a citizen of this omnipresent commonwealth here and now, if he is willing with all his heart to pay allegiance to Christ the King and to take upon himself those obligations of citizenship which Christ has consecrated by voluntarily fulfilling them in person\(^{(4)}\)

As in the growth phase of a civilization when the personalities return to their social milieu to help transform their world, so the creative individuals now also need to return to the confused world, to enlist men into the Kingdom, in order to 'save the City of Destruction from its doom by converting it to the Peace of God.'\(^{(5)}\) The inner direction of challenge and response eventually points men to religion, and hence to God.

\(^{(1)}\) History, vi, 169  
\(^{(2)}\) History, vi, 170  
\(^{(3)}\) History, vi, 167. At this stage, before his religious relativism is fully hatched, Toynbee still accords a special place to Jesus Christ.  
\(^{(4)}\) History, vi, 167  
\(^{(5)}\) Iadem.
At this stage of Toynbee's thought, the Kingdom of God can only play the role of a chrysalis to a civilization, though he has already had some idea that it is a society of 'some other kind.' It is only when religion has broken through the framework of civilization into a 'higher species' that the Kingdom is identified with the higher religions.

The God-oriented direction of challenge and response in human history is affirmed by Toynbee when he says that he derived the idea not from Hellenistic mythology but from the Old Testament, which he understands to be a collection of books bearing witness to the activity of God in history. 'All these writers see history as a series of acts in each of which God presents a challenge to some human being individually, or collectively to the participants in some human community or society.' This God-oriented point of view is that which he adopts consistently all through his works. From this viewpoint, he also sees all challenges which men encounter, whether they come from the external world of natural or human environments, or from the internal world in the form of conflicting psychic factors or moral decisions, as challenges sent from God to evoke in man creative responses in freedom to God, thus completing the creation of man - from sub-man to man in process of civilization

(1) The idea of the Church as a chrysalis to a new civilization is developed in the earlier stage of his thought, see History, v, 139, 147f, 152, 190. By this idea Toynbee means that the Church keeps an otherwise extinct civilization alive 'by preserving a precious germ of life through the perilous interregnum between the dissolution of one mortal representative of the species (of civilizations) and the genesis of another.' A brief statement can be found in Civilization on Trial, 231f. But this view is re-examined and discarded. See History, vii, 381-419.

(2) History, vi, 170
(3) History, xii, 254
and eventually to sainthood which is man's highest possible achievement. Therefore Toynbee's main concern, in his study of human history, is the inner development both of the individual and of civilization. This also accounts for his spiritualistic approach to historical problems. He has not only rejected racial and material factors as causes for the genoses of civilizations, but also as criterion for growth the often accepted theories in terms of mastery over natural or human environments, or advancement of Technology. (1) Perhaps many of his fellow historians may want to sigh with Geyl, 'This exclusive spiritualism is more than I can swallow.' (2)

Just because Toynbee plays down the importance of material factors in history, the idea of challenge and response is necessarily vague and undefined. It cannot be analysed, for we cannot explain why in one case creative responses result and in another case not, even if the two cases are identical in material conditions and circumstances. Take the example of genesis of

(1) History, iii, 154ff.

civilization again,

When a challenge has been delivered, then, however scientifically exact the identity between two or more situations may be, we shall not expect the respective outcomes of these situations to conform with one another.... Even if we were exactly acquainted with all the racial, environmental, or other data that are capable of being formulated scientifically, we should not be able to predict the outcome of the interaction between the forces which these data represent.(1)

The outcome of a challenge cannot be predicted because the individual, or a group of individuals, who make the responses are beings endowed with freedom. To define it in the sense of specifying conditions under which successful responses would result or not would mean a translation of his 'non-deterministic' reading of human affairs into a deterministic one. It is on this point that he takes issue with his critics who think that his elusiveness makes scientific study of history impossible. Thus S. Hood criticises him:

Unless we can define what constitutes a successful response, unless we can say in advance what kind of unsuccessful response to what kind of problem spells disaster for a culture, unless we can formulate a hypothesis concerning the determinate conditions under which a creative response will or will not be made, we have hardly made a beginning towards a scientific study of the rise, growth, and decline of cultures.(2)

Hook is pressing for the sort of translation which Toynbee would not give. Toynbee purposely leaves it vague and undefined, despite criticism. 'If scientific knowledge and understanding is properly defined as being of a kind that makes prediction possible,' he says, 'then we have to acknowledge that there never has been, and never can be, such a thing as a scientific study of human affairs.'(3)

(1) History, 1, 300, also xii, 257.
(2) Hook Partisan Review, June, 1948, 693.
(3) History, xii, 260.
But how does this freedom of creative responses tally with the many laws which he has uncovered in history? If freedom is essential, why are there so many laws? Is Toynbee contradicting himself when he upholds freedom and yet spends much of his time spotting patterns and regularities in human affairs? Such activity as one of his critics understands it, 'in itself implies a measure of determination.'

This charge, however, is valid only if Toynbee affirms that all events in the future must happen in accordance with these patterns. In other words, if Toynbee's laws are not descriptive but prescriptive, then the charge of determinism (determination) would be valid. But Toynbee nowhere in his works argues that events must happen in accordance with the discovered laws, or that history necessarily repeats itself.

I do believe that many students of human affairs, myself among them, have discerned genuine regulations and recurrences in the configuration of past events; but I do not believe either that these regularities were bound to occur when they did (in my belief) occur or that they are bound to recur in the future.

But unfortunately, determinism is what the critics see behind his laws. This attitude is reflected in the bitter controversy between Toynbee and Douglas Jerrold, and in the outspoken and severe attack

---


(2) History, xli, 239. K.W. Thompson observes that Toynbee has maintained the belief that history is unpredictable 'with unflagging steadiness.' Toynbee and History, 220. Also A. Hourani, Dublin Review, vol. 229, No. 470, 1955, 390.
The idea as well as the working of challenge and response are elusive, as elusive as freedom itself. In Toynbee's opinion, encounters taking this form are the most illuminating kind of events for a historian who believes in the reality of freedom. In this light, he will then see that 'encounters are the occasions in human life on which freedom and creativity come into play and on which new things are brought into existence.'

Even though Toynbee has cleared himself, in our judgment, of the charge of determinism, nevertheless the question of relation between law and freedom still remains. For a possible explanation Toynbee looks into the mystery of the human psyche, taking Jung as his guide.

---

(1) Douglas-Jarrod, The Lie about the West, 1954; Trevor-Roper, A. J. Toynbee's Millenium, in Encounter, June, 1957. Both writers reject Toynbee's 'gloomy' view of the Western Civilization. Douglas-Jarrod defends the uniqueness of Western culture, arguing that it should not be compared with the fate of the Greco-Roman world. If Western culture is made to conform to the cyclical movement of civilization, the end of it is nothing but doom, which is already prefigured in the Greco-Roman civilization. In other words, he is afraid that in the light of the laws of genesis and breakdown of civilization, the West is already pre-determined to disintegration. Similar idea (or fear) is behind Trevor-Roper's rejection of Toynbee's 'messianic defeatism'.

(2) History, xii, 256.
C. Freedom and the human psyche

So far we have concentrated largely on the manifestation of freedom in human affairs, without exploring the psychic aspect of it which occupies much of Toynbee's attention in the latter volumes. When Toynbee takes a closer look at freedom and turns to the human psyche, he finds that it hinges on the harmonious relation between the conscious and the subconscious organs of the human psyche, as well as on the relation between conscious wills. It is at this stage of his thought that he develops his understanding of the human psyche and his theory of man's religious life. It is his psychological view which underpins his religious relativism.

Nature, according to Toynbee, has two aspects: the non-human and the human nature. In our time, man has made astonishing progress in the mastery of non-human nature through the rapid development of science and technology. But he is not at all successful in the mastery of the nature which is in him, viz., human nature. The traditional emphasis has been on the conscious, rational aspect when it comes to the understanding of man, while the subconscious aspect is either ruthlessly suppressed and made to conform to moral laws, or denied its reality altogether. (1) But this attitude only breeds tragedy, because it cuts man from the spiritual dimension of life, about which we shall see more in a moment. (2) Furthermore, even if we suppress the subconscious, it only comes back to haunt us in other forms. 'It was Human Nature that Horace had in mind when he wrote that nature will always keep on coming back at you, even if you drive her out with a pitch fork.' (3)

(1) See below, 571
(2) Approach, 22
(3) See below 127ff
Following Jung, Toynbee also divides the human psyche into consciousness and the subconscious, the former having derived from the latter which came into existence at a much earlier time. The consciousness, characterised by will and intellect, is an achievement of man while the subconscious animates man and beasts alike. It is the subconscious that bears up the conscious, like the submerged massive base of the iceberg giving support to the little part that is above water. (1) For this reason the subconscious abyss of the psyche must not be neglected.

When the Intellect and the Will thus ignore the subconscious abyss of the psyche, they do so at their peril, for so far from being the whole of Human Nature, they are merely a spirit moving upon the face of the waters - a feeble light cast by a wick that draws its faint luminosity from the opaque oil in the bowl of the lamp on whose surface the wick is floating. (2)

In the evolutionary context, man is understood as part of nature. What makes him different from the animal world is consciousness which is 'man's achievement.' Strictly, there is nothing qualitatively different (i.e., of a different kind altogether) between him and the animal. But at the same time Toynbee also believes, as the Christian does, that man is created 'in the image of God' and that he has a 'soul.' (3) This language of the Christian faith is in conflict with the language of evolution, because the Christian understands soul as that which is qualitatively different, and not derived, from any evolutionary process. But Toynbee makes no attempt to reconcile these two

(1) Approach, 25
(2) Approach, 24f
(3) See History, vii, 469, 525
types of language. (1) This ambiguity also makes it difficult for us to understand what he means by 'spiritual', as when he says that the subconscious is the 'organ through which man lives his spiritual life', (2) if, as he believes, the subconscious is that which is shared by man and animal alike.

(1) The subconscious and man's religious life

Toynbee's attitude towards the subconscious is an ambivalent one. It plays a creative as well as a stultifying role in human life. In the study of religions for instance, it is the creative aspect that is emphasized, though it can also be otherwise. But in the study of civilization it is the stultifying, negative side that concerns him most. In the following we shall concentrate on the subconscious in relation to the religious life of man. This aspect of his thought reminds one of Jung's concept of creativity.

Jung understands creativity as an activating of the eternal

(1) This point is also observed by his critic, Martin Wight, who challenges Toynbee to clarify the relation between the Christian and the evolutionary standpoints. The effect of Toynbee's ambiguity virtually suggests the idea that 'at some point in the evolutionary biological process (if we accept that hypothesis) God created a creature different in kind from what went before by endowing it with a soul.' It is significant to see that in a long passage in which Toynbee sets out to answer the different points raised by Wight, this particular issue is avoided. He has not answered the charge, History, vii 420-1, n6

(2) History, vii, 500
symbols of mankind which lie dormant in the unconscious, i.e., the collective unconscious. The finished works of arts, for instance, are the shaping and elaborating by the individual of these symbols which well up from the depth of the human psyche. For this reason Jung attaches great importance to fantasy, because of the richness of the symbols that come with it. It is this Jungian idea of the function of the unconscious that seems to be in Toynbee's mind when he says that the subconscious is the organ through which man lives his spiritual life, as well as 'the font of poetry, music and the visual arts.'

The subconscious is man's organ for spiritual life because it is 'the channel through which the Soul is in communion with God if it does not steel itself against God's influence.' The subconscious occupies this privileged position because it is 'naturally attuned to God,' and hence most susceptible to God's influence. The relation between God and man which is presupposed is a natural one. There is nothing which suggests that man is at odds with God, or that the natural man cannot know him. On the contrary, this 'One True God' has not only left his imprints everywhere in the universe, but also information about himself in the depth of man. When the true light of God shines on men, it becomes 'diffracted' in accordance with the different psychic orientation of man, as represented in the different higher religions. The diffracted rays of light penetrate the intellectual level and sink into the 'well-springs of lowly folk-lore and lofty poetry in the Psyche's

(1) For Jung's view of creativity and arts see On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetic Art in Contributions to Analytical Psychology, 248ff
(2) History, vii, 500
(3) History, vii, 443. The issue of psychological types and religions is dealt with later, see below, 493ff
intuitive and emotional depths,' and reflect themselves in religious rites, symbols and objects of worship in the various religions. Thus, man's worship of nature gives men 'an inkling of the One True God's transcendent power'. In the worship of the untamed animals men catch a glimpse of a divine power surpassing his own strength. In the hunter's game and in the shepherd's flock he has caught a glimpse of God's beneficence as the giver and sustainer of life. In the rite of sacramental eating and drinking the need for communion between God and man is symbolised. Toynbee also regards the gods in the world of mythology as also the diffractions of the image of the One True God, as in the case of the Olympian pantheon, even though the Olympian gods are 'prone to all human moral infirmities and free merely from all human physical limitations.' Furthermore, the general truth about God and man is also expressed in the many themes in mythologies which are found both in the Christian faith and the non-Christian faiths, themes such as the Passion of Christ, the Queen of Heaven, the idea of the sacrifice, the Incarnation, the tableau of Mother and Child, the Communion, and the Resurrection. These themes are similar to the archetypal themes and symbols in Jung's psychology, insofar as they are recurrent, like Jung's, in different religions and arts across space and time.

The subconscious, being the reservoir of such a wealth of truth, is therefore in everyway qualified to be called 'wiser' than the conscious sector. It is from this reservoir that 'flashes of

(1) History, vii, 456ff
(2) History, vii, 458
(3) History, vii, 457-458, also 502, 503. See also above, 27f
(4) For archetypes, see Appendix II, below, 591
insight' come to the conscious mind. As the subconscious is full of 'intimations' of God's presence, it is also called one of God's 'stopping places' in his creation. (1) God has 'passed by this way,' only if man cares to look inward for truth about him. So Toynbee prescribes for those who wish to take the 'enthralling voyage of spiritual exploration' as follows:

The first objective would be to seek insight into the workings of the Heart ... and the final objective, in striving to strike the rock-bottom in the psychic cosmos, would be to attain to a fuller vision of God the Dweller in the Innermost. (2)

At this point perhaps Toynbee's readers may be permitted to raise two inter-related questions. The first question is about normative understanding of God. (3) Granted that the true light of the One True God has diffracted into many gods and symbols as well as mythical themes, we still need to have some normative idea about the One True God first before we can identify the many gods as his diffracted images. What then is this normative idea and where does he derive it? We shall look into this question in the following Study. It suffices here to mention that Toynbee's normative idea is derived largely from the Christian faith. After all, the relativist has not been able to transcend his own background.

The second question is this: if the One True God is love, why do men worship such blood-thirsty gods like Shiva or Kali as in Hinduism? Toynbee attempts to tackle this second question in the context of the subconscious, which is our immediate concern.

(1) History, vii, 498, also 461
(2) History, vii, 500-501
(3) Toynbee may not like to have the question phrased in this way, as 'normative' suggests ratiocination. But, as we see later, he himself cannot help adopting some sort of normative idea on this matter.
The subconscious is not only a reservoir of intimations about God, it is also a power-house (if we may use such a figure-of-speech) in which the untamed wild psychic energy is most active. In the depths of the human psyche, nature is, says Toynbee, 'still as wild as ever it was ... still untamed ... and cannot be tamed by force.'(1) To the intellect or conscious, it is 'a monster who is creating and destroying perpetually, prodigally, aimlessly, senselessly, ruthlessly and immorally - or, it may be more accurate to say "unmorally", since this bestial Nature does not seem even to be aware of there being any difference between right and wrong.'(2) How then is man to deal with this wild force in him? He does so by means of worship. The creative-destructive force has been deified as Vishnu-Shiva, Durga-Kali, Cybele-Hecate, and

The human worshippers of this Protean Janus-faced power have sought to win its co-operation with their human purposes by pandering to Nature's lust and bloodthirstiness in such practices as ritual prostitution and as the sacrifice of living creatures on an ascending scale of agony in which the most efficacious victim of all is the sacrificer's only child.(3)

In other words, this 'seamy side' of human nature is recognized and dealt with through worship, hence religion. Religion in this light can be seen as a means to an end, even though Toynbee would elsewhere object to any utilitarian rendering of it.(4) This tinge

(1) Approach, 25
(2) Approach, 26
(3) Approach, 26
(4) To Toynbee, religion, as the 'master-activity' of man, must be an end in itself, through which man is in communion with God. It cannot be regarded in any other way. For his rejection of the utilitarian attitude towards religion, see History, xii, 94-95.
of utilitarianism can be traced back to Jung who sees religion as a means through which man accepts the content of the unconscious. (1)

In the same vein we may ask why man worships good gods, or gods of love and self-sacrifice for man's salvation. This activity of man, in Toynbee's scheme, can also be traced back to the behaviour of the human psyche. This seems to be the implication of the following mysterious passage only found in his Gifford Lectures:

Since there cannot be lust and cruelty without suffering, and since a cosmic monster has no other target than herself on which the suffering can be inflicted, Nature the monster necessarily has another aspect in which she presents herself as Nature the victim, sacrificing herself to herself for the sake of preserving her existence, making her progress, and fulfilling her mission. (2)

This passage is mysterious because it is not clear why Nature needs to sacrifice herself in order to survive, or must have another target to inflict upon. Here Nature is personified in a romantic fashion as though it had teeth and claws, awaiting to devour its prey. Originally Nature seems to refer to physical nature. But then it is personified and symbolised. The symbol no longer presents nature itself, as it is taken, say, by the scientists and biologists, but rather the nature which is in man, or, the creative-destructive aspect of nature in its psychic dimension. (3) Indeed, if

(1) See below 580-583
(2) Approach, 26, 27
(3) In the general context in which this passage occurs, 'nature' is both used as nature in the sense of 'external physical nature', and nature 'in the psychic dimension.' But 'nature' in the passage quoted refers in all probability to the psychic dimension in man, because Toynbee points us to the Summerian Epic of the Creation which gives a clue to the mysterious identity of nature as monster and as victim. See Approach, 27
Indeed, if we take this passage as a graphic way of expressing the behaviour of the libido we can make sense out of it. The libido functions in accordance with the law of necessary opposites. When one extreme is reached, it often reverts its course and flows to the other pole. This polarization explains why the cosmic monster transforms itself into something else when a certain stage is reached. In fact, Toynbee actually uses the word 'polarization' which is common in the writings of the Jungian school.

This polarization of the worship of Nature opens the way for the worship of Man and God: the worship of Nature the victim leads on to Man's redeeming worship of a God who sets His worshippers a divine example by sacrificing himself for their sake.

The important thing to note is that man's worship of the God of love is prompted by Nature sacrificing herself in the psychic dimension. The self-sacrifice of Nature opens man's eyes to the love of God, once when man has arrived at the stage in which God and not man or nature is regarded as the proper object of worship. Worship of the One True God of love requires that the conscious aspect of man must be enlisted. Man must know what is going on in the depths of the psyche cosmos, and to commit himself to God 'by the manful exertion of a God-given will to do the will of God and thereby evoke God's grace.'

(1) For the function of the libido, see below, 595f
(2) Approach, 28
(3) There is no need to deny that non-psychic considerations must have also played a part in prompting man's worship of the God of love. Toynbee thinks that man's worship of nature as monster leads man to wars and suicide, when man takes after the monster's behaviour in inflicting suffering on others. The idolization of parochial or even universal communities' of man's collective power and self-will are the consequences. See Approach, chapters three to five. Toynbee finds the only solution in the total commitment of man to the God of love.
(4) History, vii, 509.
conscious aspect to the God of love sets the direction and initiative for the creative-destructive forces in the psychic cosmos, thus freeing man from the blind thrusts of the 'subconscious principalities and powers in the psyche,' which might have led him to the service of evil and destruction. Man is truly free when he is free from the 'blind' thrusts. This freedom hinges on the delicate relation between the subconscious and consciousness, which must exist in peace and harmony with one another, with consciousness giving direction.

What is true of man in regard to the condition of freedom is also true on the historical plane (i.e., in the study of civilizations) which is the next item of our examination.

(2) The Subconscious and the laws of civilization

In the following we shall briefly explore the anthropological basis of the many 'laws' which Toynbee has uncovered. It is also here that we are confronted with the stultifying effects of the subconscious.

Following Jung, Toynbee also divides the subconscious into personal subconscious and the collective subconscious, even though these terms are not often used in his works. The diffracted images of the One True God belong to the 'primordial images' common to the whole human race, to be found in the 'rock-bottom' of the psychic
cosmos, that is, the collective subconscious, which is his major concern in the study of religions. The existence of the personal subconscious seems to be merely taken for granted, because Toynbee only mentions it, and pays very little attention to it. However, Toynbee thinks that further mental division may still be possible.

It was perhaps not unreasonable to surmise that, in between the uppermost and the lowermost of the layers of the subconscious ... there might be intermediate layers deposited neither by racial experience nor by personal experience, but by corporate experience of a supra-personal but infra-racial range. There might be layers of experience common to a family, common to a community, or common to a society; and, if, at the next level above the Primordial Images common to the whole human race, there should indeed prove to be images expressing the peculiar ethos of a particular society, the impress of these on the Psyche might account for the lengths of the periods which certain social processes seemed to require in order to work themselves out. (1)

It is in this infra-personal (but supra-racial) level of the human psyche that Toynbee sees the laws of civilization reflected. Why do civilizations in the past at certain stages invariably develop, say, the 'idolatry of the parochial states' within themselves, or universal states? (2) Why is it possible that approximate 'wave lengths' or periods of durations of these entities can be shown to be characterized by a high degree of regularity? Why do disintegrated civilizations go through the three-and-a-half beat of 'rout and rally' before they finally disintegrate away? The answer would be that these realities like the parochial state and the universal state, which represent corporate experiences in

(1) History, ix, 328
(2) Toynbee thinks that Western Civilization has already arrived at a 'Time of Troubles', but not yet entered into a universal state so far. History ix, 464.
different ways in different civilizational societies, have imprinted themselves in the infra-personal level of the subconscious. These images, together with their peculiar patterns and behaviour, become dominant images in the breakdown and disintegrated stages of a civilization when differentiation which is characteristic of growth is lacking. This is why once the universal state, say, is established, it succeeds in holding its subjects 'even for centuries after it has lost its usefulness as well as its power and has become almost as grievously heavy an incubus as the antecedent parochial states that it had been created to liquidate.' (1) The same applies to the image of the 'idol of the parochial state.' Once established, it might take men 'no less than four hundred years' to bring themselves to the point of plucking it out of their hearts. It may again take 'eight hundred years or a thousand to dissociate themselves from the civilization whose breakdown and disintegration a Time of Troubles had made manifest, and to open their hearts to receive the impress of some other society of the same species or of the different species represented by the higher religions. (2) The cycles of war and peace, the 'rout-rally' beats as well as many other patterns are to be explained on the same basis.

What do these examples indicate? They show that 'the social laws current in the histories of civilizations are indeed reflections of psychological laws governing some infra-personal layer of the subconscious psyche.' (3) These so called 'psychological laws' are understood elsewhere as the 'laws of nature' operative in the

(1) History, ix, 329
(2) History, ix, 329
(3) History, ix, 329
subconscious, for the subconscious psyche is also 'subject to the laws of nature of the kind that governs non-human fauna and flora and inanimate matter.'(1) But Toynbee also sees a big difference between these two aspects of the 'law of nature'. While man cannot change the 'law of nature' which he finds operative in the natural world around him, he can restrict or control the 'laws of nature which is in man' in the sense of bringing it under the initiating direction of the conscious mind. This is the case with a growing civilization, when standard 'wave-lengths' and uniformities are not discernible. It is at this stage that the conscious is taking the initiatives. 'The distinctive gift of consciousness is a freedom to make choices - between alternative courses of action for the will, and between alternative ideas and beliefs for the intellect.' It is this freedom in Toynbee's opinion, that 'keep the law of nature at bay.'(2) In other words the stultifying effects of the infra-personal level of the subconscious can only be overcome when freedom reigns.

(3) **Psyche, freedom and God**

We have already seen how important it is for the two aspects of the human psyche to exist in harmony, with consciousness taking the initiative and giving the direction. This, according to Toynbee, constitutes one of the two conditions of freedom. The

---

(1) *History*, xii, 303
(2) *History*, ix, 331
other condition is that the conscious personality 'must contrive
to dwell together in harmony with the other conscious personalities.' (1)
Let us take a closer look at these conditions.

When Toynbee makes the point that the conscious should enter
into relationship with the subconscious underworld in order to keep
it under guidance, we expect to be told how it is possible as well
as the technique necessary for the performance of the task. But
what do we get as an explanation? A simile! It is about a man
driving a pig to the market. The man symbolises consciousness and
the animal the 'perversely insubordinate' subconscious. The man's
job is to 'survey the country, choose his market and find the direct
road leading to the goal.' If we may 'demythologize' Toynbee's
language, this would mean that the intellect should be responsible
for the direction and purpose to which psychic forces are channelled.
But the man of the simile fails if he cannot bring the pig along
with him. There are several 'methods' open to him. There is the
'Mithraic' method. (2) He can 'cut the pig's throat, sling the
carcas over his shoulder, and stagger forward with his back bowed
down under its weight. In actual life if means that the reality
of the subconscious is simply denied. The man who lives on the
conscious alone would be 'a plaything of nature so long as he does
not command the beast's service.' (3) Or, he may adopt the Prussian
'drill-sergeant's method', by submitting the pig to harsh discipline,
to force it to conform to a certain rigid course. (4) But this

(1) History, ix, 332
(2) History, ix, 333f, also see vii, 505-6. In both cases the simile
is used in place of a proper explanation.
(3) For description of this Prussian method, see History, iv, 123-4
(4) History, ix, 333.
method may get in return a maliciously obstinate contrariness on the part of the animal. Suppression is therefore a method that brings ill effects. The method Toynbee favour is that practised by Zen Buddhism, one of charm and tact symbolised by the figure of a boy riding an ox and leading the ox home with the music of his magic flute. (1) But it is this tact which issues in such a result that still needs to be explained!

The task of bringing the subconscious along in step with the conscious, however, is further complicated by the fact that there are more than one herdsman, while there is only one pig. If the herdsmen fall out with one another, they would neutralize one another's effort to lead the pig, which will then have 'a chance of capturing the initiative from each other and all of them, and of taking his vengeance by leading each and all of them by the nose.' (2) This is the second condition, the conscious wills must be in harmony with one another. The penalty which conflicts and frustrations (such as wars, racial and classes conflicts) bring upon men is not only the dethronement of the conscious, but the enthronement of the subconscious. This point is elsewhere expressed by Toynbee in 'demythologized' language:

The loss of rational or purposeful control over common affairs arises from the mutual frustration of conflicting wills. The effect of this is to shift the ever oscillating psychic frontier between the realm of the reason and will and the realm of the irrational and emotional underworld of the psyche, and to shift it, in this event, in the subconscious psychic underworld's favour. (3)

The recession of the realm of consciousness means the extension of the realm of the subconscious, which also means the extension of

---

(1) History, vii, 506, ix, 322f
(2) History, ix, 334
(3) History, xii, 303
the law of nature in man, issuing in the stultifying uniformity and regularity which are the marks of the disintegration of civilization.

The quest for harmony and freedom leads man eventually to God. In the case of the relation between the subconscious and consciousness, freedom is possible when consciousness commits itself to God, and channelling the forces of the subconscious to the service of God, to will, and to do God's will. In the case of relation between conscious personalities, commitment to God is also imperative, and indeed, the only way by which harmony or unity among men can be achieved. The problem of strife and conflict in human society is a symptom of a 'spiritual disease' the solution of which is beyond mere human resources. It needs nothing less than God's redemption to heal it. It is the presence of strife and conflict which convinces Toynbee of the reality of 'original sin', which he understands in terms of self-centredness.

To extricate himself from this evil situation, man must orient himself to the creative and loving other: he must commit himself to God and to 'will his will.' As on the religious plane man can overcome evil worship and practices only by concentrating on worshipping the God of love, so on the social plane, man can overcome his spiritual disease only by seeking to do God's will, which is also 'the law of love.' Communion with God brings about the transfiguration of human nature, which is the saint's achievement. The ideal, transformed personality is governed by love, because the love of God for man has the effect of calling out in man 'an answering love for God, and

(1) See above, 133, 136, 138
(2) For a discussion of his view of sin, see below, 142ff
this love of man for God flows on earth along the channel of man's love for his human brothers. (1) Men can be one only when they are one in their commitment and loyalty to God, who is love.

God, in Toynbee's vision, is involved in human life from the very beginning, and he is also the end of human quest. Freedom is given to man to choose to do God's will. This idea of freedom as a freedom for God is clearly expressed when he understands freedom as ultimately identical with the law of God. The life of man, as he sees it, is a life governed by laws in hierarchical order, (2) and it is through laws that God calls man to himself. He challenges man right from the beginning to make use of the precious gift of freedom to make the perilous ascent, winning freedom from the service of one law by entering into the service of some higher law. It is a 'perilous ascent' because each new achievement brings new dangers. The rise from the level of a law of inanimate physical nature to the level of a law of subconscious psychic nature liberates life at the cost of inflicting death and of kindling sensations and passions. The rise from the level of a law of subconscious psychic nature to the level of a law of consciousness liberates the human spirit at the cost of exposing it to the danger of having to make decisions between right and wrong, with all serious consequences. (3) Now, having attained consciousness, we find we are caught in our own conceit. We need to submit ourselves to a still higher law, 'the law of God which is love,' in order to liberate us from sin and suffering. The freedom given to man is given with this definite

(1) History, vi, 165-66. This quotation has a strong Abelardian flavour.
(2) History, ix, 402. The laws which govern man's existence are 'like Jacob's ladder ... rung after rung,' leading man to God.
(3) History, ix, 403
function and purpose: that man may, if he so wishes, make the perilous ascent to God. In the light of the loftiest experience of man, as that attained by saints, in which the will of man and the will of God are one, freedom is understood as identical with the law of God which is love.

Man's freedom could only have been given to Man by a God who is love in person, and this divine gift can only be used by Man for freely choosing Good and Life instead of Death and Evil, if Man, on his side, loves God well enough to be moved by this responsive love of his to commit himself to God, by making God's will his own, as unreservedly as God has committed Himself to Man by giving Man the power of free choice. (1)

This is the mystery of the relation between law and freedom in history. In the lower hierarchical strata law and freedom seem to be opposed to one another. Only at the highest point of human vision are they seen to be one. Yet at every stage the way forward, or rather, upward, is provided by God in the form of challenges, that by his grace man may make the ascent or growth towards perfection, and hence the completion of man's creation. In a moving passage Toynbee describes the ultimate oneness of law and freedom as he visualizes it:

Thus, on this highest visible pitch of a cliff-face up which the creature is being drawn by the call of his Creator to essay a perilous ascent, we catch a glimpse of God's hand reaching down to meet the upstretched hand of the struggling human climber; and, at the point where hands meet in the clasp of Love, Law and Freedom case to be distinguishable ...... (2)

(1) History, ix, 395
(2) History, ix, 405
D. Sin and suffering

Since the goal of man is to become a saint in whose life freedom finds its fulfilment, sin is regarded as the chief enemy of man because it diverts man away from his goal. Sainthood is a mode of life the centre of which is in the spiritual presence higher than man himself, but the life in sin is one which has its centre in man himself. Thus self-centredness is understood as the essence of sin. It is also called 'original sin', (1) and in his Gifford Lectures Toynbee tries to account for it.

To begin with, Toynbee recognises the ambivalent role of self-centredness in human life. It can be said to be 'of the essence of Terrestrial Life,' because he cannot live without taking this standpoint. This is obvious in regard to the task of the historian, as we have already mentioned earlier. (2) In that connection, it is the epistemological aspect of self-centredness that is emphasized. But now it is the moral side that is more in his mind when he writes:

A living creature might, indeed, be defined as a minor and subordinate piece of the Universe which, by a tour de force, has partially disengaged itself from the rest and has set itself up as an autonomous power that strives, up to the limits of its capacity, to make the rest of the Universe minister to its selfish purposes. In other words, every living creature is striving to make itself into a centre of the Universe, and, in the act, is entering into rivalry with every other living creature, with the Universe itself, and with the Power that creates and sustains the Universe and that is the Reality underlying the fleeting phenomena. (3)

---

(1) Toynbee sees 'original sin' as a perennial reality in the life of man of all ages. See Civilization on Trial, 241; History, vii, 568.
(2) See above, 11ff
(3) Approach, 4
From this Toynbee now draws the conclusion which is rather ambiguous in its wording. 'Self-centredness is thus a necessity of life, but this necessity is also a sin.' (1) The sentence suggests that sin is a necessary part of human life, yet this suggestion here contradicts what he says elsewhere, that the saints are free from sin. Perhaps the confusion is due to the term 'self-centredness' which is susceptible to both the epistemological and moral interpretations. While one can accept the necessity of self-centredness in the epistemological sense, as knowledge, for instance, requires that one must start with oneself at a particular locale, it is nevertheless difficult to accept the necessity of it in the moral sense as Toynbee puts it. If sin were a 'necessity', then freedom would have been an illusion. Such a belief not only contradicts his own view of freedom which is the essence of man's spiritual life, but also his general belief in the goodness of the Creator and his creation. (2) This ambiguity, therefore, seems to have been the result of a confusion of the two meanings of 'self-centredness', a mistake similar to what Ryle describes as the 'category mistake.' Sin, however, is not a 'necessity', because there is a 'middle path' between 'self-assertion' and utter 'self-renunciation' only if man can 'keep his balance under the perpetual high tension of two pulls towards two abysses between which he has to pick his way.' (3)

The moral disease of self-centredness is not only the cause of all strife and conflict in history, but also the root of man-worship.

(1) Approach, 4
(2) The idea of the Fall, to which Toynbee has referred, (c.f. History, vii, 469, 762) surprisingly enough does not occur in his attempt to account for the rise of sin here.
(3) Approach, 5, 'self-renunciation' is the antithesis of self-assertion which comes with self-centredness. Extreme or utter self-renunciation would mean negation of existence altogether,
in the forms of the idolization of a parochial stage, a universal state or even of an individual such as a philosopher or a community leader. (1) Man-worship is the most subtle and deadly form of idolatry, as it is most difficult for man to transcend. This is not only true on the plane of history, in which self-centredness as in man-worship is tied up with man's need for security, protection and material prosperity, but also true on the plane of religion, where self-worship takes the form of anthropomorphism in our approach to God. Behind anthropomorphism lies the awareness that man was created in God's image. This awareness tempts man into 'setting himself up as the measure of all things, including the God whose image is dimly revealed through the dark glass of human nature.' Therefore, anthropomorphism, even in its most ethereal forms, is nothing but idolatry, in which man, rather than the Creator, is worshipped. (2) The danger of describing God 'in terms of the feelings, will and intellect of a human personality' is that man is exposed to the fallacy of 'egocentric illusion', thinking that this anthropomorphic understanding of God is the consummation of all human knowledge about God, just as, on the plane of civilizations, the parochial and secular societies which commit the same fallacy all think that they are the consummation of human history. (3) In our search for God, we should, in Toynbee's opinion, transcend anthropomorphism. But does it mean that the Indic (Hindu) alternative way - the Vedantic, philosophical way - is more

(1) For examples on idolatry of parochial state, see Approach, 29-38. Discussions on idolatry of ecumenical community and philosopher, see chapters 4 & 5 in Approach.
(2) History, vii, 468, also see below 281ff
(3) History, vii, 468, for a discussion of this 'egocentric illusion' in connection with societies, see History, i, 158-164.
preferable? The Hindus, he thinks, are also prone to anthropomorphism, only of a psychic kind. When the Hindus seek to know God, 'they eliminate from their conception of God both the physical body and the conscious surface of the Psyche, only, it would seem, to identify deity (brahman) with the impersonal subconscious psychic depths (at man) that underlie the personal conscious surface of a human soul.'(1) Thus the philosophical Hindu approach may be 'a potential source of errors,' and, as such, must also be transcended. It is the fear of this idolatry of anthropomorphism which is also behind his impersonal view of Reality.

With the coming of sin, there also comes suffering, because suffering is the nemesis of sin. Toynbee regards suffering as belonging to the 'essence of life,' because it is the product of an unresolvable tension between an individual's impulse to try to make itself the centre of the Universe, and his essential dependence on the rest of the creation. The thwarting of his own desires brings about suffering for himself. Should he succeed in making individuals serve his selfish purpose through violent means, he creates suffering for others. Suffering also comes in large scale when the parochial states which have been given over to the worship of collective human power lead their war-lords to fight in the pursuit of power. Suffering is therefore all-pervading in human life, and must be properly accepted.

(1) History, vii, 467.
Suffering has been regarded by Toynbee as a challenge, in varying degrees of severity, to the human soul. Appropriate response to it may bring about positive results in the form of growth. The usual, yet inept response to it takes the form of 'escape', by 'the acquisition and exercise of some kind of Power — whether collective and physical or individual and psychic.' But this violent response breeds more violence, and the 'Spartacists took the sword and perished with it.' (1) The response which Toynbee thinks appropriate is one which is characterized by gentleness, in the form of 'accepting suffering for oneself and trying to turn one's own suffering to positive account by acting, at the cost of suffering, on one's feeling of Pity and Love for one's fellow-creatures.' Since suffering is caused by self-centredness which is sin, it must be overcome at its root, by taking the course of other-centredness, hence love and pity for others which are the marks of self-giving. This means a 'change in the heart', a change with great spiritual significance. It 'opens (man's) eyes to a new vision of God. It gives him a glimpse of a God who is Love as well as Power ... the deliverer of all His creatures from the evil of self-centredness to which every creature is prone.' (2) Such a response to suffering results in the creation of the higher religions. That also explains why the religions arose from the ruins of the breakdown and disintegration of civilizations. (3)

(1) *Approach*, 78,81
(2) *Approach*, 78. Earlier (above, 131) we have seen that the self-sacrifice of Nature in the psychic dimension also opens man's heart to the worship of the One True God of love. Suffering is implied in the act of self-sacrifice.
(3) Toynbee gives a brief survey of historical settings for the rise of the higher religions in *Approach*, 78-84. Also below
They are, so to speak, the poor who eventually inherited the Kingdom.

The rise of higher religions from the ruins of civilizations also confirms a spiritual 'law', which was long ago proclaimed by Aeschylus in two words, \( \pi \delta \epsilon \iota \mu \lambda \beta \sigma \), (learning through suffering) with which Toynbee expresses his rather dualistic understanding of man's spiritual progress. If his criterion for growth is too 'spiritualistic', as his critics think, it is because he sees that the 'spiritual and secular ideals are at variance,' yet each striving for mastery over man's souls. The souls are deaf to the call of the spirit in times of secular prosperity, and hear the whisper of God only when 'the vanity of this world is brought home to them by secular catastrophes and when their hearts are softened by the sufferings and sorrows that these catastrophes inflict.' To those whose ears are tuned to God, suffering will then be taken as but the scourges of the Creator, and a challenge to look to things imperishable. This point is also expressed in a moving passage:

When the house that Man has built for himself falls in ruin about his ears and he finds himself standing again face to face with a God whose perpetual presence is now no longer hidden from Man's eyes by prison walls of Man's own making. If this is the truth, the interregna which punctuate secular history (are) .... but flashes of intense spiritual illumination and bursts of fervent spiritual activity.(1)

In other words, suffering is a challenge which offers possibility for spiritual growth. Spiritual growth for Toynbee is a process of internalization, a shifting of the field of action from the

(1) History, vii, 425.
external world to the internal world, from macrocosm to microcosm, and suffering is the best and most readily available means (because of its pervasiveness in life) of bringing about such a transition, challenging the soul to make the necessary creative response for the occasion. Suffering is so important to Toynbee that without it, 'love' will not be love, and God cannot be worthy of our unswerving loyalty and worship. (1)

Even though Toynbee stresses again and again the sin of man, and that he needs to be converted to the worship of the One True God, there is no indication that man's understanding faculty is in any way vitiated, or that he is not able to make the initiative in seeking his own salvation unless he is first filled with certain divine gift. He does use the word 'grace' frequently, (2) but mainly in a Pelagian sense. The natural man is a religious man. The yearning of man to reach his destined goal, once he comes to grips with the reality of human life through challenge and response, is a motive 'strong enough to break through the barrier of self-centredness that stands in the way.' (3) He must break through this barrier in order to commit himself to God and seek his help. He can rest assured that God is always available to help him, only he must know that 'the help that God gives is given by Him to those who help themselves.' (4) The Kingdom of God is lurking behind the common affairs in the familiar world, and men must make the resolution to attain the transformation of human nature and enlist themselves as members of the higher species which is the higher religions, to which the Kingdom belongs.

1) For his view on love and God, see below, 30lf
2) 'Grace' has been used in the sense of 'inspired will', see History, vii, 564, also see 570, 509 for the use of the word.
3) History, xii, 533
E. Summary Remarks

We have looked at the various aspects of Toynbee's thought from the viewpoint of the reality of freedom and its fulfillment. Freedom finds its fulfillment in sainthood which is the goal of human development. Thus the development in human history is a development into the Kingdom of God, which is composed of the higher religions. It is not surprising that some of his fellow historians prefer to regard him as 'prophet' or 'poet' rather than historian. (1) Toynbee's History is deliberately 'spiritualistic' because he wants to emphasize the reality of the inner or spiritual life of man and the essence of this inner reality he sees in terms of freedom. The most startling 'spiritualistic' handling of human life in history which we have examined so far is his interpretation of what 'society' is in terms of the idealistic and speculative concept of 'field' taken from Smuts. This 'society' hardly bears any resemblance to the 'society' in which we live and work. His neglect of material factors in his understanding of the criterion for growth has won few sympathizers. For those who can 'swallow' (Geyl's word) his 'spiritualism', Toynbee's history and his picture of man appear refreshingly creative if not altogether a novelty. But understandably most of his critics are more on Geyl's side than on his. In his reaction to the material and secular aspects of the contemporary cultural situation, Toynbee seems to have gone to the other extreme. Yet we should give him full credit for having restored the importance of human freedom into our picture of man, and with it the reality of the individual whose creative acts are

(1) Geyl calls Toynbee a 'prophet', and Fiss, 'poet', see Review 360, 378.
determinative of the progress of society. This is especially appreciated at a time when the individual appears to be no more than a number on a statistical report, and whose life is determined for him by the political and technological environment in which he happens to find himself.

There are three points of emphasis which stand out in Toynbee's anthropology which are connected with his idea of freedom. They are, viz., the idea of harmony, the God-oriented direction of the development of man in history, and the reality of the subconscious. These three elements are important for our understanding of his views on religion in general, and God, or Reality, in particular. The idea of harmony is expressed in his understanding of the wholeness of life, characterized by the harmonious relation between the two aspects of the human psyche, as well as in his aversion to the menace of conflict between personalities which is the source of war. (1) The God-oriented direction of his thought is expressed in different ways in which God is either the key figure or the focus of attention. It is God who leads man through challenges to essay the difficult ascent to sainthood, and it is he who also plays the decisive role in making harmony or concord possible among men. The commitment of man to God has not only given the thrusts of the psychic creative-destructive forces an appropriate direction and channel, but also has made it possible for him to overcome the spiritual disease of self-centredness. Not only is God the centre of human life, but also it is the same God that all religions respond

(1) For Toynbee's moving denunciation of war, see History, xii, 610.
to throughout the ages. This means that God is known to men in all ages and all cultures. This understanding of God's involvement in human life, together with the idea of harmony, naturally lead Toynbee to a grand 'synthesis' of man's visions of God which will occupy our attention in the following study. (1) Behind this 'synthesis' there lies not only the awareness of the limitation in our grasps of God's truth, but also the conviction that men are only one when they unite in their visions of God and in the service of love.

Toynbee is the only one of our three writers who discusses in detail the mystery of the subconscious, and who tries to integrate it into the spiritual life of man. Kraemer, as we shall see, has also made some references to it in the context of man's religions life, but his dialectical view of man prevents him from fully recognising its importance as Toynbee does. (2) To the subconscious Toynbee has given a religious significance. It is, as we have said earlier, the religious function of the subconscious which underpins Toynbee's religious relativism. This is so because the subconscious is the reservoir or repository of 'intimations' about God from which all religions draw their supply. This explains for Toynbee why there are similarities in rites and rituals as well as symbols and beliefs among the higher religions. Just because God has made his truth available to man through the medium of the subconscious on which all religions depend for man's spiritual life, no religion should claim any 'unique' place in the dispensation of

(1) See below, 315ff. The idea of harmony is also the controlling factor in Toynbee's view of the relation between religions. It is, as we said earlier, an idea which runs through his works.

(2) See below, 202
grace, or in any monopoly of truth. All religions, according to Toynbee, 'have in common an inkling of an identical truth about Reality.'(1) His religious relativism is a relativism which recognizes the presence of truth, though in varying degrees, in all higher religions.

It is this understanding of the subconscious as the repository of truth about God, together with his other psychological theory, (viz. the differentiation of the psyche into types which necessitates different apprehensions of Reality) which constitute the anthropological ground of his religious relativism. So far we have only dealt with the former, the latter has merely been mentioned, we have to defer our examination of it until later.(2)

---

(1) History, xii, 100, note 1.
(2) See above, 29, and below, 493ff.
II. HENDRIK KRAEMER: A DIALECTICAL APPROACH

Like all other faiths and theories of religion, the Christian faith, according to Kraemer, also has 'a certain understanding of man.' This faith, he says, revolves around two poles. 'The first pole is knowledge of God of a special kind that upsets all other conceptions of God or of the Divine .... The second pole is a knowledge of man, also of a very special kind and revolutionary in comparison with any other conception of man.' (1) These two poles are not only related to one another but are also derivations of the 'revelation of Christ.' In other words, Christian anthropology must be derived from the Christian revelation. It is also to be dialectically understood. The purpose of this section is to spell out this view and at the same time to see to what extent he has been influenced by his interaction with the contemporary cultural ethos.

So far we have mainly dealt with Kraemer's reaction to relativism in the study of religion, an element which he regards as characteristic of oriental religious thought. His reaction against relativism expressed in the study of religions results in his formulation of the 'theological approach'. But relativism, important as it is for our understanding of his thought, represents only one aspect of his reaction. There is another daemonic force he is fighting against, viz., that of secularism, or perhaps more accurately, the belief in the all-sufficiency of man which is enshrined in secularism found in the Western culture of our time. Both relativism and secularism have this in common: they can be said to be man-centred. In the case of relativism, it is expressed, in

(1) Christian Message, 101
the study of religions, in the disregard of revelation in favour of criteria derived from what some scholars understand as the 'essence' of religion. (1) In the oriental context, the man-centredness of relativism is more obvious, because relativism is closely related to 'naturalistic monism' in which the ultimate distinction between the divine and the Human is obliterated. Man is deified in the height of mystical experience. In the case of secularism, God is ousted from the picture of human life, (2) and man becomes 'all-sufficient'.

Kraemer's 'dialectical' understanding of man is a response to the challenge of relativism and secularism. It pronounces a radical 'no' to the wanton pride and conceit of man, at the same time affirms the noble and the God-relatedness of the human destiny. In what follows we shall examine Kraemer's reaction to secularism. From this he develops his dialectical view of man, which is presupposed in his 'theological approach.'

A. The threat to modern culture: secularism

The threat of secularism was already felt in 1928 when the Second World Missionary Council met in Jerusalem. In the Message of the Conference to the Churches Christians are encouraged to form a common front with adherents of non-Christian religions against

(1) See above, 48
(2) See below, 158f, also 573-576
secularism. It also calls upon 'the followers of non-Christian religions ... to hold fast to faith in the unseen and eternal in face of the growing materialism of the world; to co-operate with us against all evils of secularism.' (1) This utterance is significant for us because Kraemer was one of those responsible for the drawing up of it. (2) This missionary attitude was seriously challenged by Barth. (3) When in 1930 Kraemer published his paper, Christianity and Secularism, he came out in support of Barth's attack. (4) In this paper he defines secularism as 'the modern concept of the world, with its demonstration of man's power and capability of organization and technical achievement, relying on science to strengthen the growing belief that man, with his creative energy, is the centre of the universe. (5) This conception is 'based on and ends in the "absolutizing" and therefore the "solitarizing" of man, which means death. It means not only man with a closed heaven above him, but man without any heaven and without outlook. (6) In the light of this evil human situation he finds Kierkegaard's 'stern preaching of God's judgment on a secularised Christianity weakened by sentimental piety', as well as Barth's prophetic voice of protest, both timely and heartening. He commends Barth for his radical placing of life and the world in the crisis of God's judgment. 'Barth's theology gives to the problem

(2) The Message committee included Kraemer, Heim, T.C. Chao and O.C. Quick. The message was drafted by William Temple. See Hallencreutz, ibid, 195.
(3) See Questions which 'Christianity' must face by Barth in The Student World, 1932, 93f, which represents his view of the Jerusalem Message. His objection was also voiced in the post-Jerusalem debates in 1929, see Hallencreutz, ibid, 200
(4) Kraemer's paper was published in the International Review of Missions, 1930, 195-208.
(5) International Review of Missions, 1930, 196
(6) ibid, 206.
of Christianity and secularism the greatest tension imaginable; it may be a hypertension, but therefore, perhaps all the more wholesome and indispensable as an eye-opener.'(1) Both Kierkegaard and Barth have left their indelible imprint on Kraemer's thought, and his dialectical view of man is a natural outcome of such influence.

Kraemer maintains a polemic attitude towards secularism all through his career. (2) In his Laidlaw lectures, delivered in Toronto in 1953, he draws attention to the fact that 'secularization' - a word which is used interchangeably with secularism (3) - in the modern world has become a common reality for both the world and the church. It has become part and parcel of the 'historical situation' in which man finds himself. But it is a more serious matter when the church is in the process of being secularized, for then it sins in the disguise of the 'holy' and the 'sacred.'

The truth is that everywhere the Church is thoroughly secularized, just as much as the world .... the secularized interpretation of the gospel often has the upper hand over the critical function of Biblical faith. The minds of Christians are secularized, dominated by the current principles of thinking and action. The state of affairs is particularly evident in the prevalent opinion that religious faith is an ethical opinion, that religion and ethics are identical. (4)

The church is more and more 'conforming to the motives and methods of the world,' while the world is undergoing 'a process of enormous spiritual slimming, a catastrophic disorientation and blindness for the normative fundamentals of life, as seen in the light of the Biblical message.' This process is leading man into 'enslavements

---

(2) See for instance Christian Message, 8-10, Communication, 80-104 World Culture, 372.
(3) See Communication (Laidlaw lectures), 87, 88 where secularization and secularism are used in connection with the 'function of purification'.
(4) Communication, 84, 91.
to self-invented myths and illusions, which undermine the very basis of decent human existence.'

For Kraemer, secularism and modern scientific and technological advances are closely related, the common characteristic being the 'autonomy of the human spirit and of its intellectual and moral judgment.' But we must note that Kraemer is not condemning scientific and technological developments when he protests against the secular and materialistic ethos of modern culture. In fact he has great appreciation for the 'rational and technical mastery of nature' which promises 'endless possibilities of man to unveil the mysteries of the universe and to master life.' This intellectual adventure is the expression of the 'autonomy of the human spirit' which is the essence of 'liberty of thought,' tolerance, individualism,' and so on. This sense of autonomy has acted in politics and society in many directions as a liberating ferment, creating new ideals and new spirit. But unfortunately this autonomy also finds expression in the false belief that 'man ultimately is the standard and creator of all truths and values,' and so modern life takes on an 'immanentist' outlook.

From the standpoint of Christian faith Kraemer feels that protest must be made against this self-centred mentality. The Christian faith must be constantly on guard against any claim.

---

(1) Communication, 86f. The secularization of the Church means, among other things, a neglect of the great Biblical themes essential for man's salvation. Such a neglect renders the Church impotent in her dialogue with the world in order to point the world to God. See Communication, 94ff, 113ff

(2) Christian Message, 9
for the complete autonomy of man, which can mean in concrete cases the flat denial (not only the ignoring) of the sovereignty of God's will. In other words: to be on guard against a world which is built unconditionally on the self-sufficiency of man.\(^{(1)}\)

In short, Kraemer's protest is only directed against this 'self-sufficiency' of man in modern secular culture, an illusion which the rapid development of science and technology, among other achievements, seems to have intensified.

This threat of 'self-sufficiency' is further examined in another series of lectures, viz., the Olaf Petri Foundation Lectures delivered in Uppsala in 1955, under the title of Reflections on the Future of Religion.\(^{(2)}\) The future of religion is now in question because 'the irresistible technicalization of life secularizes our mood and outlook thoroughly. It empties life of all transcendence, which is the life-breath of religion.'\(^{(3)}\) His thesis which is eloquently developed in these lectures is that religion is bound to have a bright future because man is 'incurably religious.' The origin as well as the phenomena of religion are of a 'metaphysical' nature, and must be studied in the context of one's view of man, his origin and destiny.\(^{(4)}\) The many quasi-religions of our time bear witness to the fact that man cannot live without religion, without relating himself to 'something beyond'.

---

\(^{(1)}\) World Culture, 372, also Communication, 86
\(^{(2)}\) Only the Swedish version of these lectures have been published. With some minor alternation these lectures were also delivered as the Hisam Thomas lectures in Chicago. Quotations are taken from the English MSS (typewritten) and thanks are due to Prof. and Mrs R.P. Kramers for the use of it.
\(^{(3)}\) Reflections on the Future of Religion, chapter, 1, 4
\(^{(4)}\) ibid, chapter 2, 2
of man's religious need is related to his view of the 'subjective dialectical condition' of the human situation, which will be dealt with later.\(^1\) In these lectures, a great deal of attention has been given to tracing the anti-religious development of thought and attitude in the history of western culture. Figures like Comte, E. von Hartmann, Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, Dostojeski, Freud, Jung and Sartre, among many others, come under brief but critical review. It is not our intention here to evaluate Kraemer's criticism of their respective views. It suffices to note that he sees the theme of 'self-sufficiency' of man running through all their works. Comte, Kraemer says, excludes the transcendent from life, and reduces the world to a 'one dimensional' world. Religion of humanity is preached instead of God. 'What at present is called Scientific Humanism is simply Comte'sm in modern dress and gesture.'\(^2\)

He also thinks that Nietzsche and Dostojesky exemplified the 'nakedness and luciferic negativeness of modern culture. They represent the bankruptcy of all atheistic humanism which makes man the centre of life, and have worked out the inherent logic of this mentality ruthlessly to its last consequences. The creative-destructive spirit of Nietzsche finds expression in our time in the person of Sartre whose object it is to 'forget God and so conquer this obstinate religious appetite.' Having vanquished his religious appetite man should take over God's place and decide for himself what to think and do. To Kraemer, this means that 'man is indeed self-sufficient,' and the certain outcome will be self-destruction. He

---

\(^1\) See below, 166ff

\(^2\) Reflection on the Future of Religion, chapter 2.2; chapter 3;3
also sees in Freud a Feuerbach redivivus because Freud regards God as but a projection of man's aspiration and wishes. Man must be the sole God for himself, \textit{Homo homini Deus}. Jung does not fare any better, though Kraemer grants that he has a great interest in religion. Jung's God, in Kraemer's opinion, is but a gnostic God belonging to the category of naturalistic monism. As such, he belongs 'in principle in the lineage of Nietzsche, the God-killer, who shouted this fact proudly into the face of the world.' But Jung is worse because he is 'hiding' it behind his gnostic sophistry.\(^1\)

From what has been said it may be clear to us that Kraemer's protest against the idea of 'self-sufficiency' of man which is the essence of secularism constitutes a major presupposition in his understanding of man.\(^2\) The development is his dialectical thinking must be understood in the light of this protest.

Referring to the development of his own thought, Kraemer acknowledges the influence of Kierkegaard and Barth, among others.\(^3\) Kierkegaard has generally been regarded as the father of modern dialectical theology, though the method had already been adopted in philosophy by Kant in the form of the theory of antinomies, and in theology by Luther who understands God as, for instance, the God who

\(^{1}\) \textit{Reflections on the Future of Religion}, 1958, chapter 4, 17

\(^{2}\) In Protestant theological circles the unhealthy exaltation of man is reflected in the anthropocentrism in the thought of Schleiermacher and Ritschl, for instance. The major emphasis is on religious experience and moral value. In the field of religions, Söderblom, in Kraemer's opinion, belongs to the tradition of Schleiermacher. See his disengagement of revelation from experience and value, below, 357-63. For a short note on the anthropocentricism in liberal theology, and Barth's revolt, see Appendix, V, below 611-613

\(^{3}\) See Onder eigen vaandel, 1942, 17, quoted in Hallencreutz, \textit{Kraemer Towards Tambaram}, 1966, 98. The names mentioned by Kraemer include Pascal's and the Blumhardts.
says Yes and No to man. (1) The dialectical method is necessary, according to Kierkegaard, when we start thinking about God, which is what theology is doing. Thought falsifies its object unless we allow it to diffract into two opposite poles simultaneously, so that each affirmation about truth may be complementary to and corrected by the other. (2) So in his writings there are many such pairs of ideas, such as holiness and love, grace and responsibility, eternity and time, finite and infinite and so on. Even though the method requires that the two poles which are different from one another must be held together in thought, in practice it often results in an unbalanced utterance in which one pole is emphasized more strongly than the other. This is the case with Kierkegaard's repeated emphasis upon the qualitative difference between God and man, a concept which has deeply influenced Barth, especially in his early writings, and which is also behind Kraemer's dialectical understanding of man. Kierkegaard's emphasis is formulated as a reaction against Hegelian philosophy which regards man's spirit as being identical with that of the divine. He maintains that God is wholly and completely different from man. There is no immanent continuity between them. The discontinuity is first of all due to the fact that God is infinite and eternal, and man is a particular and existing creature. (3) It is also accentuated by the consciousness of sin. (4) Thus Kierkegaard rejects any attempt on the part of man


(2) Baillie, ibid, 107. also Our Knowledge of God, 1959, 165, 225.

(3) See for instance, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 1945, 195

(4) *Sickness Unto Death*, 1941, 99. There are many other places which show us that Kierkegaard is obsessed with sin, e.g., see *Training in Christianity*, 1941, 155, 71-72. Papirer, V a 6, 7, 10, 15. IXa 414. Also note the remark of Mackintosh, that there are places where Kierkegaard is on the brink of representing the gulf created by sin as being merely an aggravation of that which is due to finitude, c.f. his discussion in *Types of Modern Theology*, 1937, 237
to reach God by exercising his own reason. The transcendent God is not only outside our categories of thought but also beyond our experience. In the face of such radical discontinuity no analogy is possible. If the infinite God is to be mediated to us at all, it could only be in some way totally distinct from reason or experience, and for Kierkegaard, through the God-man, which is the 'absolute paradox'. To be a Christian is to embrace with passionate inwardness this 'paradox of the absurd.' Yet even in this revelation of himself, God remains obscure.\(^{(1)}\) He is Deus absconditus. The God of Kierkegaard is forever exalted and transcendent. It is not that he does not have any vision of his nearness. In fact he says that God is nearer to us than men with whom we associate in daily life.\(^{(2)}\) But Kierkegaard is too overwhelmed by the transcendence of God to give an adequate emphasis to his nearness. 'Kierkegaard sets forth so extreme a doctrine of transcendence that we can see it to be trembling on the verge of the old monastic misapprehension which felt the world to be God-forsaken and fled from it to the desert.'\(^{(3)}\)

This dialectical method is taken up by Barth who uses it as a powerful tool to demolish the anthropocentrism in the theology of Schleiermacher and Ritschl. 'If you ask me about God,' he says, 'and if I am ready to tell about him, dialectic is all that can be expected of me. Neither my affirmation nor my denial lays claim to being God's truth. Neither is more than a witness to that Truth

\(^{(1)}\) Papirer, XII\textit{cl}.
\(^{(2)}\) See \textit{Christian Discourses}, 1939
\(^{(3)}\) McKintosh, \textit{Types of Modern Theology}, 242.
which stands in the centre between every Yes and No.' (1) In the early polemic period of Barth, the No sounds louder than the Yes, and man is set in an antithetical relation to God. Furthermore, like Kierkegaard, Barth also has a profound consciousness of sin, though it is discussed in his works always in the context of grace. The sin of man, however, only accentuates the diastasis between God and man. It is the 'disturbing of the relationship with God.' It is also a 'robbery which becomes apparent in our arrogant endeavour to cross the line of death by which we are bound; in our drunken blurring of the distance which separates us from God .... (2) Even though later in his life, Barth wishes to make the Yes sound louder, nevertheless the rift created in his early thought does not seem to have been removed. The question whether Barth allows a complete union between God and man even in the Incarnation has not been settled. (3) The idea of 'absolute qualitative difference' is certainly behind the assertion that apart from the scriptures man has no knowledge of God, and that any other assertion would imply the undesirable immanent continuity between man and God, the creature and the Creator. This theme is consistently maintained in Barth's writings, and is not affected by his new development in anthropology. (4) One wonders, in this respect, whether Barth has successfully shaken off the shackles of Kierkegaard. The dilemma of the dialectical method is that it is always tempting to stress one pole more than the

(1) Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, 1929, 209, quoted in Torrance, Karl Barth, Introduction to His Early Theology, 1962, 87
(2) Barth, Romans, 167f quoted in Torrance, ibid, 66.
(3) See G. Wingren, Theology in Conflict, 1958, 31-33
(4) Wingren, ibid, 42. See also Baillie, The Sense of the Presence of God, 1962, 254ff in which he allies himself with Wingren against Barth.
other, and once the imbalance is created, it is difficult to correct

Kraemer has criticised his 'eye-opener' Barth for being 'undialectical' and 'rationalistic', evading the question whether God has anything to do with non-Christian religions. Does he fare better than Barth? It is our contention that Kraemer too has not been able to shake off the shackles of Kierkegaard. He is also haunted by the qualitative difference between God and man, and the perverting reality of human sin. He is as keen as Kierkegaard and Barth in his battle against the arrogant assumption of 'continuity' between the human and the divine. He, like Barth, is also not prepared to grant that man may have genuine and positive knowledge of God outside the Christian revelation, and this attitude underlies his whole dialectical approach. His aversion to any suggestion of 'continuity' is reflected in his rejection of the substantialist interpretation of the *Imago Dei* in the scriptures, which we shall examine later.

B. Man in his sinful, dialectical existence

Kraemer's dialectical method, essentially, is characterized by the holding together of two contrasting poles, Yes and No. The positive-negative utterances, he says, have always to be said 'in one sentence, and not in two separate ones.'(1) Perhaps we can

(1) *Christian Faith*, 251
put it in this way. It is first of all a Yes-No of God to man, and it is also a Yes-No of man to God. The response of man to God is also a religious response as expressed in the world religions. From the standpoint of the Christian faith, Kraemer takes a Yes-No attitude towards non-Christian religions. This, at its briefest, is the skeleton of the method which underlies his dialectical anthropology.

In what follows we shall examine Kraemer's interpretation of some scriptural references, which gives us an insight into his understanding of the dialectical human situation. These references are taken from the fourth part of his book, Christian Faith, and they are originally intended to deal with the wider problem of 'religion and religions'.(1) Kraemer has nowhere in his works given us an independent and systematic treatment of the question of anthropology. But since anthropology is inevitably involved or presupposed in the problem of man's religious life, Kraemer also enquires into what he calls 'the truth about man' in the course of his discussion on the wider issue of religion and religions. Our immediate concern is with this 'truth about man' which underlies most of Kraemer's writings. As our discussion in this section is a preparation for our understanding of Kraemer's views on 'revelation' and on the question of his attitude towards non-Christian religions, we shall, in the course of our examination, also pay attention to the time-honoured question: whether the 'natural' man has any knowledge of God. This question, as we shall shall, is also at the heart of Kramer's concern.

(1) The title of part four of Christian Faith is: The bible and the problems of religion and religions, beginning from 235.
(1) **The inescapable God-relatedness of the human situation**

The dialectical view of man affirms that man is a dual being. 'He is of divine origin, and he is corrupted by sin and constantly prone to assert his self-centred and disordered will against the divine will.'\(^{(1)}\) This dual nature of man is also described as the 'fundamental and horrid disharmony,' or the 'dialectical condition of man.' In *Christian Message* Kramer gives us a working definition of it as follows:

> by 'dialectical' is meant this condition, inherent in man, of saying at the same time yes and no to his true destiny and his relatedness to the eternal.\(^{(2)}\)

This definition, however, only brings out the subjective experience of the human situation. As such, it is inadequate, because it is necessary also to know whether this subjective experience, interpreted from the standpoint of the Christian faith, has any correspondence to objective reality. Kraemer himself is aware of such a necessity. So in his later works, *Christian Faith*, he draws our attention to the fact that there are two aspects of man's dialectical existence, the subjective and the objective, the latter being the ground of the former. If dialectical existence is a correct description of the human situation, it is because God himself deals with man in a dialectical manner, and not just because man feels so in his heart. The validity of the subjective view is, in other words, grounded in the dialectical relationship God has with man. These two aspects are brought out in Kraemer's comment on the early chapters of Genesis:

---

\(^{(1)}\) *Christian Message*, 112
\(^{(2)}\) *ibid.*, 113n
Man not only lives since the Fall in a dialectical condition, but also finds himself in a dialectical situation; that is to say, he continues to live under the blessing of God and also under God's course. Condition (subjective) and situation (objective) are interrelated. (1)

The mythical narratives in the first eleven chapters of Genesis, in Kraemer's opinion, are particularly illuminating on the dialectical nature of man's existence. Myth embodies invaluable theological insights, the 'mythical story expresses far more effectively than theological or philosophical conceptual languages ever could' concerning 'the truth about man.' (2) Three ideas among the mythical narratives are relevant in this regard: the Fall, the covenant after the Flood, and in particular, the idea of Imago Dei. The Fall signifies not only man's disobedience, but also the usurpation of 'autonomy' through his repudiation of the 'theonomy' under which he began his career. It also means a 'breach of the relation of partnership with God in the responsibility which he shared by God's grace with God,' and 'his flight from communion with God towards autonomous solitariness.' (3) But the important point is that even though man had broken the divine-human relationship and sought to flee from God, yet God still sought after him and called him, (Gen: 3.8). Man is inescapably related to God, who seeks after him and judges him in order to renew him. The same idea is also found in the story of the Flood and the ensuing covenant. The Flood was God's judgment upon the wickedness and arrogance of man. The covenant signifies his blessing and his renewal of mankind.

(1) Christian Faith, 252-253, also 381
(2) Christian Faith, 251, commenting on the stories of Genesis 1-3.
(3) Christian Faith, 250.
The dominant note of the prophets - the indissoluble oneness of divine judgment and divine mercy in God's dealing with His chosen people - is sounded loudly here in the accentuation of the oneness of God's condemnation of, and God's long-suffering patience with, mankind as a whole.\(^{(1)}\)

The Flood and the covenant exemplify the oneness of God's no and Yes to man. Herein also lies the objective ground of man's dialectical existence. Man is inescapably related to God because God has taken the initiative to establish a covenant with him. This relatedness is also characteristic of man's 'inherent' religious consciousness.' As God has established with the whole of mankind an everlasting covenant within the situation of the "Fall", man in his religious consciousness and pilgrimage, i.e., the whole world of religion and religions, lies within the compass of God's concern. God is not absent from them.\(^{(2)}\) It is also here that we see the difference between the early Barth and Kraemer. While Kraemer shares with Barth in his condemnation of religions as 'unbelief', as man asserting himself over against God, nevertheless Kraemer is prepared to look into the matter as to how God is involved in them. We shall return to the question of man's religious consciousness later. Meanwhile we turn to the interpretation of the \textit{Imago Dei} which occupies much attention in Kraemer's discussion. Kraemer's treatment of this issue also reflects his interaction with the contemporary cultural situation.

\(^{(1)}\) Christian Faith, 253 also see Communication 15. God's relation with man is a 'continued discourse'.

\(^{(2)}\) Christian Faith, 257, also below 201ff
(2) Man created in the 'image of God'

The essentials of the dialectical existence of man, his humanum and his final destiny, are embodied in the concept of the imago Dei. Yet it is this concept which has proved to be most confusing and ambiguous in the history of interpretation. It is not always understood that the Creation story is basically 'mythical, concrete story,' and any attempt to grasp its inner meaning 'by means of abstract concept' is bound to create confusion. As a result, the imago Dei is overlaid with 'philosophical and theological figments read into it in the past.' This is misleading, because 'the mythical symbols of Gen. 1-3 are no material for dogmatical or rational ratiocinations.' (1) Kraemer's dialectical and relational understanding is put forth as a viable alternative.

What is man? He is first of all a creature dependent on God. This emphasis is a good antidote to the belief in the self-sufficiency of man so prevailing in modern culture. 'Man, of both sexes, is God's creature. In Gen. 2.7, this, and man's dependence on God, are emphasized more strongly by stating that man is formed of the dust and that God breathed life into him.' (2) Yet man is more than earth and dust, for he is destined to be God's partner, capable of entering into fellowship with God. He is given the mandate to create culture, and to be God's 'commissioner' on earth, and so 'a creator in the secondary sense.' This noble aspect of man is brought out by the biblical emphasis, that man was created in God's image.

(1) Christian Faith, 250f
(2) Christian Faith, 247
In the Old Testament, the image of God is directly mentioned in only three places, viz., in Gen 1.26f, 5.1-3 and 9.5f. The most important reference is Gen. 1.26f in which God says, 'let us make man in our image (zelem), after our likeness (demuth).'

(Lat. Imago and similitudo, Greek, eikon and homoiosis) Beginning with Irenaeus and the fathers, according to Kraemer, image has been taken to mean the 'general human faculties' such as man's stature, reason and liberty, while likeness refers to 'man's moral likeness with God, communication with him and immortality.' Because these words are given different contents, so theologians in the past and present can say that after the Fall, man has lost his 'likeness' with God, though the 'image' has persisted. In the hands of the mediæval scholastic theologians, dona naturæ were attributed to imago, while dona gratia or the donum superadditum to similitudo, thus creating a 'two-story system' of the 'natural' and the 'supernatural'. It is thought that the Fall does not affect the

(1) All these passages appear in P. Because the explicit references are so few and in fact only in P. Mygren rejects the concept as non-biblical. Agape and Eros, 1953, I, 181. But von Rad thinks otherwise. Th. Wörterbuch zum N.T. vol. II 387-90, both writers are referred to in D. Cairns, The Image of God in Man, 1953, 17f.

(2) Kraemer's observation here is in line with that of Brunner, who sees the disastrous distinction between zelem and demuth traceable to Irenæus whose anthropology, in Brunner's words, is 'gnosticism purified by Scripture, with a strong element of Greek philosophy.' (Man in Revolt, 1939, 504) So from Irenæus onwards, down to the present day, 'patristic and scholastic theology follow Irenæus in taking zelem as man's natural endowment of reason, and demuth his relation to God which had been lost since the Fall. (Brunner, Dogmatics, vol II, 1952, 77) The important passages in Irenæus' works which seem to lend support to Brunner's contention are Contra Omnes Haereses Libri Quinque, V.6.1 and V.16.2
dona naturae, and so 'nature is kept integral.' (1) The development of Protestant theology, in Kraemer's opinion, is not free from blame, for 'attempts at interpretations of concepts like justititia originalis and status integritatis (Urstand)' which have played important roles in Roman thought 'have largely been taken over and even amplified' in Protestantism. (2) Furthermore, in modern times there is also a tendency to interpret the imago Dei in the sense of modern humanism,

(1) Brunner, however, not only regards Irenaeus as the first theologian responsible for the bifurcation of imago Dei but also as the originator of the two-fold division of the 'natural' and the 'supernatural' which became popular in medieval scholastic theology. (Man in Revolt, 1939, 505-7, Dogmatics, Vol. II, 1952, 77). This observation of Brunner's is accepted by D. Cairns who cautiously admits that 'to some extent' Irenaeus was the 'unconscious originator of the dichotomy between the natural and the supernatural...' The Image of God in Man, 1953, 83. But for a different view, see G. Wingren, Man and the Incarnation, 1959, 157 who argues that essentially Irenaeus sees imago and similitudo as a unity, and that to see in Irenaeus the origination of the bifurcation is 'anachronistic.' Whether or not Irenaeus was the originator of such bifurcation, scholastic theology regards the imago as anima rationalis and the similitudo as donum superadditum supernaturale, and 'to this state of pura naturalia - thus, of the imago - a certain element of concupiscence was also added, which emphasized the fact that by sin man did not lose the imago, but only the dona superaddita.' Because 'reason' is intact even after the Fall, therefore a rational natural theology as well as a natural ethic are regarded as possible in the Roman Catholic circles, even up to the present day. See Brunner, Man in Revolt, 1939, 507.

(2) Kraemer has not explicitly told us why he objects to these ideas. It seems likely that he rejects these ideas because they became attached to imago Dei, as such they give a false and rationalised interpretation of what it should have interpreted, i.e., in the dialectical, relational manner.

For a different evaluation of the usefulness of justititia originalis see Brunner, Man in Revolt, 508. Brunner praises Luther for having 'broken through the tradition of thirteen hundred years' when he removed the distinction between imago and similitudo so that imago Dei could be understood as a unity in terms of justititia originalis. Thus, 'the nature of man is again understood theologically and not philosophically, man as man is once more a "theological" being, that is, as man he can only be understood in the light of the Word of God.' By justititia originalis Brunner understands as 'the original, God-created state of life,' 'as an existence in love.' see ibid, 104.
that is, the image is taken to mean symbolically 'the dignity of the human personality and its infinite value.' The thought behind it is that man is intrinsically valuable because he has in him something which is continuous with God. What Kraemer says about 'humanism' may well be applied to liberal theology, as one of the latter's presuppositions is that there is a 'continuity' between the divine and the human. (1) This is exemplified, for instance, in Troeltsch's understanding of the *imago* in man. The *imago* 'does not signify a lost original condition, but rather, presupposing the kinship of man's soul with God, a longing which "reaches out in struggle and growth towards perfection, and which is consequently the principle of historical development."' (2)

Kraemer rejects these attempts to bifurcate the meaning and content of the *imago Dei* in Gen. 1:26f. Such attempts are arbitrary and speculative, because 'image' and 'likeness' are only stylistic

---

(1) Again, Kraemer has not explained what 'modern humanism' here means. Probably it is not a 'humanism' without God though overwhelmed by 'anthropocentrism'. See *Christian Faith*, 339. The idea of 'continuity' as one of the presuppositions of liberal theology is also observed by Brunner, see *Theology of Crisis*, 1929 12. To Brunner, liberal theology is 'in part the continuation of the old popular rationalism, but far more a theology based on German speculative Idealism.' (Mediator, 1934, 100) As such, its basic tenet is the 'idealistic assumption of continuity.'


(2) This view of Troeltsch's is given by Barth in *Dogmatika III*, 1, 193. Quotation taken from Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*, 25.
variations. 'The two words mean exactly the same: copy, figure.' (1) We have here a Hebrew parallelism. (2) However, there seem to be more than merely literary reasons behind Kraemer's rejection of the speculations of the past. The idea of imago Dei has been interpreted in a substantialist fashion, as is obvious in the Roman tradition and in liberal quarters, though Kraemer has not mentioned them by name. According to the substantialist interpretation, the imago refers to something or quality in man which is quite unaffected by the Fall. It therefore not only 'soft-pedals' the seriousness of sin, but also opens the door to mystical speculations and natural theology, as though God can be known if man turns inward to the God-element in him. Such speculations would lead on to self-deification and even self-sufficiency, especially when they are detached from religious piety. (3) That such a fear is real is evident, for instance, in his criticism of Paul Tillich. In his essay, Two Types of Philosophy of Religion, Tillich distinguishes two ways of approaching God. The first type, which Tillich favours, is based

(1) Christian Faith, 249. Scholars differ as to the exact meaning of imago Dei in Genesis. The opinions of three biblical scholars can be quoted: Ryder Smith thinks that Gen. 1.26 refers to a physical resemblance between God and man. (The Bible Doctrine of Man, 29-30). von Rad also thinks that the Imago in man should be taken in a predominantly physical sense, (Theologische Wörterbuch zum N.T., II 389). But Eichrodt thinks that physical resemblance could not have been in the mind of P, and so he prefers to see it as referring to 'those capacities which we are accustomed to regard as typical of personality...' (Theologie des Alten Testaments, II, 60f ) References taken from Cairns, The Image of God in Man, 1953, 21f

(2) Luther already noticed this point, that it is Hebrew parallelism that is involved in Gen.1.26f. See Brunner, Dogmatics, II, 1952, 76. Or, as Eichrodt thinks, the second term defines more closely than the first what is meant, 'In God's image, that is to say, in His likeness.'

(3) Cf. Brunner's observation, that the 'substantialist' (he does not use this word) view is 'the gate by which a pantheistic or an idealistic deification of man can enter.' Dogmatics, 1952, II, 60.
upon an underlying identity between God and man. So, 'man discovers himself when he discovers God.' The second type sets forth the diastasis between God and man, 'man meets a stranger when he meets God.'

On the basis of the former Tillich attempts to bring about a 'synthesis' of Biblical thought and ontological philosophy. Such an approach of Tillich's, in Kraemer's opinion, is, to say the least, 'unbiblical,' and it inevitably 'turns upside-down the heart of Biblical thinking and presses it into the service of ontological thinking.' It is not surprising, in this vein of thought, that 'in Tillich's eyes mysticism is the most adequate and true manifestation of religion.'

It is interesting to see that Kraemer thinks the second, 'cosmological type' which emphasizes the diastasis between God and man is 'less invalid', despite its being 'unbiblical' and 'wrong'. This judgment of Kraemer's only reflects his own presupposition as well as locating the reason of his fear.

In order to steer clear of the danger that may be caused by the substantialist interpretation, Kraemer proposes a relational understanding of imago Dei. He reminds his readers that 'the theology which is latent in the Bible' is not speculative or abstract, but 'relational theology,' in which 'man's relation to God, and of God to man, is of paramount importance in the Bible.' Thus regarding the controversial imago Dei Kraemer says (looking at Gen. 1.26-30 as a whole):

---

(1) See Tillich, Theology of Culture, 1959, 10
(2) Christian Faith, 443f
(3) Christian Faith, 248
(4) Christian Faith, 244
The plain meaning of the text is that man's stature is a copy of God's. The conception behind it is solidly and delightfully anthropomorphic and spiritual at once. God gives man a spirit and faculties by which his kinship to God is expressed. Man is in all respects God-like, but as created by God, his Lord, a creature. God gives to this being a commission, a mandate, that is: he speaks to him, He treats him as a partner, nothing more, nothing less. About moral or intellectual qualities there is not a word. Man is of divine origin and destiny, and as such a divinely mandate person. This is the content of the expression of imago Dei. It does not mean that man is a 'personality'.... which is a self- and man-centred distortion of the idea of 'person' in the sense of responsible partner of God, the Sovereign Creator. (1)

The relational emphasis is brought out by such words as 'creature' and 'responsible partner', with a mandate to create culture. He is a creature to whom God 'speaks'. Herein lies the humanum of man: he is capable of being addressed by God, and of rendering responsibility to God for his existence. Perhaps we can sum up what Kraemer wishes to say about man's humanum in this way: man is man because he is brought into relationship with God in a position of responsible partnership. (2)

However, if we look carefully into the long passage, we can find that there are traces upon which a substantialist view can be built, e.g., man's stature, we are told, is a 'copy' of God's. He has a spirit and 'faculties' which bear kinship with God. The words 'copy' and 'faculties' suggest some kind of substance to be found in man. Are not the speculative theologians of the past and present trying to give a content to these words? Kraemer has not spelt
out for us what they mean. He merely by-passes the issue and concentrates on the relational emphasis. But perhaps it can be pointed out that even in the midst of his relational emphasis traces of the 'substantialist' interpretation against which he reacts, do not seem to be altogether absent. This is implicit in the idea of God speaking to man, which is the presupposition of man’s responsible partnership with God. God’s speaking to man must imply man’s capability of being addressed, or, his addressability, a word which is not used in Kraemer’s writings. If addressibility is implied, then how is it to be understood? There are two ways it can be taken: (a) man’s addressibility is not inherent in man, but is created when God speaks to him; (b) addressibility is integral to his humanum, implanted by God and is never lost. As such, it is intrinsic attribute of human nature, or even an 'endowment' which bears an unavoidable 'substantialist' flavour. It is likely that Kraemer would go along with the second interpretation of this quality.

---

(1) This idea of man’s addressibility is certainly implied in the word 'communication' which Kraemer uses in a more comprehensive manner. God ‘wants personal relationship’, and has created man to live 'in communication' with him. ‘Communication’ thus belongs to the 'very essence of revelation.' (Communication, 14-17, 26.) In this book Kraemer discusses the questions of 'communication between' and 'communication of', and their interrelation in the witness of the Church of the world. The former refers to the relation between God and man which is the ground of man’s communication between man, while the latter refers to the content of the communication, and the problems and methods which go with it.

We prefer to use 'addressibility' so as to concentrate on one aspect of 'communication.' It also brings out the idea that it is God who takes the initiative in his communication with man.
of man, and our judgment is supported by a parallel idea in his works which bears an unmistakable 'substantialist' flavour. It refers to the 'semen religionis' or 'sensus divinitatis' which is the universal phenomenon of man's religious consciousness. This 'semen', according to Kraemer, is 'implanted' by God in man. God's truth addresses man in his 'depth', i.e., his religious consciousness, which is the wrestling place between the human and the divine. But we must notice that the 'substantialist' traces in Kraemer do not result in any 'natural theology' because they are understood in the strict context of his dialectical framework of thought, though the possibility of a 'general revelation' is not to be excluded.

So far we have only dealt with what Kraemer regards as 'the content of the expression of imago Dei' in the Creation story, viz., it refers to man as created to be the responsible partner of God, wherein also lies his humanum. But imago has been traditionally understood together with the Fall, resulting in endless speculations.

---

1. Here we are treading, as it were, on thin ice. We have to be cautious because we cannot give direct reference to this aspect in Kraemer's writings. Our interpretation here is an effort to read between the lines of what he says about imago Dei and in the light of his idea of religious consciousness. A parallel case of regarding addressability as an intrinsic quality in man can be found in Brunner's writings. During the course of the famous Barth-Brunner controversy on natural theology Brunner raises the question whether addressibility is an intrinsic attribute of human nature, a quality in virtue of which all men hear God speaking should they but attune themselves to God. In doing so, Brunner turns what is a relation ('being addressed by God') into a 'relational quality'. See John McIntyre God and Personality, (mimeographed lectures), 7. We suggest that Kraemer in this respect is similar to Brunner, yet he criticises Brunner for being too speculative on the matter of Wortmächtigkeit, see below 396.

2. See below, 204.

3. For religious consciousness, see below 201ff.

4. For general revelation, see below, 396f.
Thus, the early Fathers and the Scholastic theologians teach, as we have mentioned earlier, that the imago remains intact even after the Fall, but the similitudo is lost. The retention of the imago is an attempt to preserve the humanum of man, to distinguish him from other creatures. But this bifurcation of imago Dei is rejected, and rightly, by the Reformers, who understand it as unity. But then the question arises: how is the humanitas of fallen man to be explained? To solve the problem both Luther and Calvin, among others, resort to the doctrine of the 'relic' of the imago, upon which is based the whole humanitas of the fallen man such as freedom, reason, justitia civilis and even naturalis cognitio Dei (1). But this solution, Brunner points out, is not satisfactory, because 'relic' is taken as a 'quantitative entity'. This rendering fails to bring out the 'qualitative distinction' between the imago in the Old and the New Testament. (2)

At this point it may be profitable if we turn to the New Testament teaching on imago, which is profoundly different from that of the Old Testament, a point which, Brunner thinks, is not given enough attention in the discussion on the question of imago Dei. The primary meaning of imago in the New Testament is that man is said to be 'predestined to be conformed' to the 'image' of Jesus Christ.

(1) For a brief discussion on Luther's and Calvin's views of the 'relic' see Brunner, Man in Revolt, 1939, 507, 510.
(2) Brunner, Dogmatics, II, 1952, 77. Brunner also thinks that the idea of 'relic' has not been able to answer adequately the question: How is the central doctrine of the loss of the Image (= justitia originalis) to be combined with the recognition of the fact that the humanum which cannot be, and has not been lost (freedom, reason, conscience, language, etc.) belong to the Imago Dei? Both Luther and Calvin, in his opinion fail at this point. Man in Revolt, 1939, 510.
(Rom. 8.29), or 'renewed after the image'. (Col. 3.10, c.f. Eph. 4.24).

The implication is that the original image into which man was created was lost, or 'corrupted' away by sin. But the idea of a 'loss' of image is not suggested in Genesis. On the contrary, it may be more accurate to say that it is not lost. The killing of man, for example, is prohibited because he has been created in the image of God. (Gen. 9.6) Biblical evidence seems to favour Brunner's conclusion that the Old Testament imago (i.e., the 'structural' or 'formal' image, in the context of his thought) is not lost, what is lost is the New Testament imago (the 'material' image). This judgment is strengthened by two passages in the New Testament, I Cor. 11.7; and James 3.9, which suggest that man, in spite of sin, is the image of God. The 'image' in these passages, according to Professor Porteous, represent the Old Testament imago unaltered.

In the light of this understanding of the imago, both in the Old and the New Testament, let us see how Kraemer deals with the exegesis of imago Dei in the context of the Fall. He rejects as

(1) Imago in the New Testament are used in three main senses: (a) It describes Christ as the image of God, II Cor. 4.4, Col. 1.15 cf. Heb. 1.3, (b) it describes the likeness of God into which believers enter through faith in Christ (major usage), see for examples, Rom. 8.29, II Cor. 3.18, Col. 3.10, (c) It describes man's humanity (marginal usage), I Cor. 11.7, James 3.9. For a discussion, see Cairns: The Image of God in Man, 1953, 32-52.

(2) The 'material' image of the New Testament refers to man's 'true humanity' identical with 'being-in-the-Word' of God. Brunner, Dogmatics, 1952, II, 57ff For 'formal image' see above, 175, n. 2

'unreal' the attempts of 'Eastern theology' to keep the image as undamaged as possible because the seriousness of sin, in his opinion, has not been reckoned with. Nor is he in favour of 'Western theologies' which either speak of 'small traces of the image' or of a total effacement of it. (1) Instead, he proposes a 'paradoxical', or a 'dialectical' understanding of the image of Genesis 1-3. Commenting on the 'mythical symbol' of these chapters he says,

The conclusions are paradoxical: man is still in the 'image of God', and at the same time man has lost it entirely. Therefore we must speak about man's 'grandeur', we must heartily agree with the great Greek tragedian that 'there is nothing more formidable than man', and we must equally emphatically speak of man's misere, his inability to do any good and his inclination to all evil. But this dialectical situation has always to be said in one sentence, and not in two separate ones. The practice of doing it in two separate sentences, or of stressing the one above the other, has been a source of great theological deviation. (2)

The important sentence which affirms the dialectical predicament of man is this: man is still in the image, and yet he has lost it. This sounds illogical or even absurd. But it does not worry Kraemer, because he elsewhere says, 'the Christian faith is indifferent to rational coherence in the philosophical sense.' (3)

What is this 'image' which is lost yet still remains? A closer look reveals that it is used here in a double meaning. First, the image that remains is clearly the image of Genesis, viz., it refers to the creaturely status before God. He has not lost his 'grandeur' because, despite the Fall, he is still able to 'achieve great

---

(1) **Christian Faith**, 251.
(2) **Christian Faith**, 251
(3) **Christian Message**, 64
things in the field of culture and social organisation.' His 'religious creative urge' is also 'grand'.(1) Because he is still in the image, 'the world of religion and religions ... and the whole world of human culture ... live in a condition of responsibility and obligation towards God.'(2) Even though man has rebelled against God, yet he is inescapably and inevitably related to him.

How should we understand the image which is lost then? This image cannot be the Old Testament image because man still remains a responsible being before God. Indeed it cannot be lost if man were to remain man. What is lost then? In the passage just quoted Kraemer answers it by telling us the result of the loss, viz. man has lost the ability to do good, and that he is inclined to all evil. There is no direct reference to the lost 'image' till, in a few pages later, he comes to deal with the image in the New Testament. There he says:

As a consequence of the Fall, we do not know the true image of God. We cannot derive it in its real fullness from Gen.1. The mystery hidden in it we see revealed in Jesus Christ ... He is the true Image of God and the True Man. Only by being conformed to Him can we be recreated in the image of God ....(3)

The lost image is therefore the image of God which in the latter day was reflected in Jesus Christ, and into which we are to be recreated. This Pauline view of image, with its emphasis on 'what completely corresponds to the prototype,'(4) is, as we have said before, quite unrelated to the imago in Genesis. But Kraemer has telescoped the two views together in his attempt to formulate his

(1) Christian Faith, 251, 254
(2) Christian Faith, 257
(3) Christian Faith, 255
'paradoxical' or 'dialectical' view which he thinks is implied in Gen.1-3. There is certainly much truth in this dialectical view of man, but Gen.1-3 does not offer an adequate biblical basis for it. That is why Kraemer has not been able to spell out the 'lost' image until he comes to the section in which he sketchily deals with the New Testament teaching. So we can say his dialectical view is an attempt to hold both the Old and the New Testament imago together. In this respect his interpretation is similar to that of Brunner, except that he does not use words like 'formal', 'structural' and 'material' with which Brunner tries to bring out the difference between the image in the two Testaments. The telescoping together of the two views of imago inevitably raises in the reader's mind the question of the relation between the imago in Genesis according to which man was created, and the lost imago the existence of which can only be inferred from passages such as Col.3.10 and Rom.8.29, and presumably into which man was originally created. But Kraemer remains silent on this matter. Perhaps he is wise in regard to this enigma, because attempts to grapple with the problem only prove speculative and unsatisfactory. (1)

The dialectical view of man has important epistemological implications which bear on the questions of revelation and the relation between the Christian faith and the non-Christian religions. Being in the image of God, man lives in a responsible relation to

(1) Brunner, for instance, has tried to relate the two views of imago. The 'original' image into which man was created, he says, knows no distinction between 'formal' and 'material'. (Dogmatics II, 1952, 60) Instead, the 'formal' and the 'material' form an undifferentiated unity in Creation, and this 'undifferentiated' image is the New Testament image which is latterly reflected in Jesus Christ. But after the Fall, we have only the 'formal' image, as it is reported in Genesis, and this can only be the 'relic' of the original image. (Reason and Revelation, 1946, 70) It is interesting to see that the idea of the 'relic' against which he protests only finds its way into his speculative attempt.
his Maker. God continually seeks man and speaks to him. His truth addresses itself to the 'depth' of man's being. The cultural and religious quests of man as well as their achievements therefore cannot be regarded as merely man's own inventions. God is involved in them. With this view of God's involvement in man's religious life Kraemer wishes to modify his rather one-sided judgment on 'religion' in his Tambaram book, though the result, in our opinion, is not impressive. (1) Kraemer would even say that man is capable of 'knowing God', and that man's response to him can be described as 'wrong, partly right' and 'sometimes really right.' (2) But in actuality he does not 'know' him. The loss of the image results in man's incapability of doing good. In another place, he even says that man does not know what is good. (3) He thinks he knows God, but his knowledge is no more than vain imaginations. (4) It is characteristic of his dialectical view that the Yes should be balanced by the No, and in all probability the No sounds louder than the Yes. This is reflected in his denial of any positive knowledge of God to the non-Christians. The epistemological aspect comes to the fore when he examines the Pauline evidence for his dialectical view of man which will be the next item of our analysis.

(1) For his utterances on religion, see above, 144. Our discussion of his idea of 'revelation' will show that he has after all not changed much of his negative view on 'religion', see below, 399-401.

(2) Christian Faith, 257. It is difficult to understand what he means because he has nowhere in his works elaborated on how it is so in the non-Christian situation. See below, 208f.

(3) See his remarks in Why Christianity, 95 n.1.

(4) See below, 189ff but also 339ff.
Man knows God, and yet does not know him.

This dialectical view of man, viz., that he is in God's image, and yet he has lost it; he is inescapably related to God, yet he flees from him, finds support, in Kraemer's opinion, in the teaching of Paul, who has a profound 'insight into the eternal dialectic between God and man.'

In line with the Old Testament Paul also affirms the objective dialectical dealing of God with man. Even though he has abandoned men to their own foolishways, nevertheless at the same time he has continued to testify his concern about them in his gifts through the Creation. This, says Kraemer, is what Paul affirms in his sermon preached at Lystra (Acts 14.8-18) Paul is in fact telling his audience, 'Your religious way of life is in error, in which your God-forsakenness manifests itself, but nevertheless in this God forsookness God has not left you alone .... Properly speaking, you are both God-forsaken and not God-forsaken.' (1) The theme of man's inescapable relatedness is also expressed in Paul's famous Areopagus speech. Man is regarded as being 'God's offspring (γενος'), and Kraemer thinks that in the present context this should be interpreted as theologically equivalent to the Hebraic idea of being 'in God's image'. (2) The important elements of the speech, in Kraemer's opinion, lie in Paul's affirmation that 'all

---

(1) Christian Faith, 282
(2) The quotation from Paul is taken from the Phaenomena of Aratus. Linguistically (γενος) is unrelated to imago Dei, of course. It can only be taken in a very general way as the preacher's attempt to convey the idea of man created in imago Dei in a different cultural setting. Kraemer's interpretation echoes what R.B. Rackham says in 1925. 'That we are, in our human nature, the offspring of God, declares the true anthropomorphism, viz., that we are made in the image of God. 'The Acts of the Apostles, Westminster Commentary, 317.
the peoples, in their religion and imaginings, have gone astray.' They are in 'total ignorance, quite oblivious of God'. Yet God in his grace and faithfulness towards his creatures 'never abandons them.' So even in 'the midst of ignorance' men show signs, in the concrete embodiment of religious practices and ideas, they are 'dimly aware of him.'

The central concepts which give support, according to Kraemer, to the dialectical view of man are the Pauline ideas of righteousness and the wrath of God. For Paul, Kraemer carefully points out, divine righteousness is not an attribute. It is rather 'that kind of divine action which reveals in concrete historical fact God's intention and power to create salvation ... for man. It is an objective act, which changes the total world - and life-situation, whether acknowledged or not.' The event by which men are made righteous is the event of Jesus Christ.

Following Nygren, Kraemer also takes 'righteous through faith' together, as though it were a 'substantive' in the translation of Rom 1. 17b, a quotation which Paul takes from Habakkuk. Thus, through faith, men can have 'righteousness before God, which is also his 'salvation'. This 'righteousness' is the 'state of unhampered free life-relation with God'. It comes as a free gift of God in Christ.

Just because God's righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) is an act, it therefore must express itself. Indeed, it expresses itself as wrath (οργή) in its reaction against ungodliness (λογία) and unrighteousness (δικαια). This understanding of the relation

(1) Christian Faith, 264
(2) Christian Faith, 267
of righteousness and wrath is possible if the particle (δικαιοσύνη) is taken as a 'conclusive conjunctive', (as Kraemer takes it), meaning 'for, because', (1) and on this point Kraemer is on firm ground. In his opinion, 'it is clear that he (Paul) intends to say unambiguously that God's wrath of v.18 and God's righteousness of vv16-17 are one and the same thing.' (2) This is also how Luther understands it. Therefore God's wrath is revealed as an act of righteousness, holiness and love. It can be 'terrible,' and yet it is at the same time a 'saving, gracious reality.' This idea of righteousness and wrath brings out God's dialectical dealing with man. He seeks man, taking the initiative to restore the broken relation, yet he condemns man in his δικαιοσύνη. The condemnation is seen in the act of 'giving them up' 'Therefore (δικαιοσύνη) God gave them up....' The word (δικαιοσύνη) appears in vv.24, 26 and 28.

It affirms that man's abandonment is 'an act of God.' It shows

(1) Kraemer disagrees with C.H. Dodd who takes the conjunctive in Rom.1.18 as an 'adversative conjunctive' and hence, dissociating the revelation of δικαιοσύνη from the revelation of δικαιοσύνη. Dodd says, 'the adversative conjunction 'but' in v.18 shows that the revelation of God's anger is contrasted and not identified with the revelation of his righteousness.' Romans, 18, 1932. But the same conjunctive appears in vv.16, 17 (three times) and vv.18-20 (three times). In all these places both Dodd and Moffat take it as being a 'conclusive conjunctive' meaning 'for, because.' Only in the crucial place in v.18 is it suddenly rendered as a 'adversative conjunctive'. Kraemer thus thinks that such a rendering is arbitrary. Also see Barrett, Romans, 33ff who translate δικαιοσύνη as 'for, because' in v.18.

(2) Dodd's interpretation of δικαιοσύνη in Rom.1.18ff is well known. He thinks that Paul 'retains the concept of "the wrath of God"... to describe an inevitable process of cause and effect in a moral universe.' Romans, 23. John Knox takes a similar approach, see Interpreter's Bible, vol ix, 397. But their views are contested by R.V.G. Tasker, see The Biblical Doctrine of Wrath, 1957, 16. A.G. Hebert, The Authority of the Old Testament, 1947, 252. C.K. Barrett, Romans, 33, among many others. A good summary of discussions can be had in The Theology of St. Paul. D.E.H. Whiteley, 1964, 61ff
that 'in this perversion of God's purpose for man, not a monologue of man but a dialogue between God and man takes place ....' So, even in the darkness of man's perversion, 'the ineffaceable relatedness of man to God still shines through.'\(^{(1)}\)

Outside the genuine relation men exist in the state of \(\mathcal{D}_{\mathcal{K}_\mathcal{A}}\),

It is a state of utter perversion,

the effect of this \(\mathcal{D}_{\mathcal{K}_\mathcal{A}}\) is that those who are guilty of it, suppress the Truth. They are living in \(\mathcal{D}_{\mathcal{K}_\mathcal{A}}\), that is to say their total mode of existence moves in sin, in self-will and self-centred self-assertion, opposing the truth, i.e., God, the righteous and loving One.\(^{(2)}\)

Man in the state of \(\mathcal{D}_{\mathcal{K}_\mathcal{A}}\) 'suppress the truth', or are 'opposing the truth' when 'truth' refers to 'God the righteous and holy One.' Elsewhere 'truth' refers to the 'genuine relation with the living God.'\(^{(3)}\) Genuine relation is also the hall-mark of 'right knowledge' about God, as 'the right knowledge of God expresses itself necessarily in the right life-relationship with him.'\(^{(4)}\)

Thus we see that for Kraemer 'truth', 'knowledge of God' and 'genuine relationship' all belong together, and this relation is defined by faith in 'Jesus Christ' through whom the righteousness of God is operative. So when man 'opposes' the truth, it is this right relation with God which Christians come to understand through Christ that is being rejected. The important point for us to notice is that 'knowledge' of God for Kraemer is assimilated into an existential life-relationship with God, which is 'truth.' In other words, 'knowledge' of God cannot be abstracted from the acts of the believer. This is why, as we shall see later, in the course of his

\(^{(1)}\) Christian Faith, 295
\(^{(2)}\) Christian Faith, 292
\(^{(3)}\) Christian Faith, 282
discussion on 'revelation' he moves more and more towards some pattern of commitment. The move in this direction also makes his 'disengagement' of 'revelation' from moral and religious experience very problematical. (1)

The idea of the unrighteous (or, the natural) man suppressing or opposing the truth of God naturally raises the question of man's knowledge of God: Is the 'knowledge' of God accessible to man outside the realm of the Christian revelation? According to Kraemer, Paul affirms that man has some knowledge of God even though he is living in the state of ἀδικία. Rom.1:19ff plays an important part in the formulation of Kraemer's anthropology. In his opinion, Rom.19-20 obviously affirms that God has never concealed himself. Instead, he has, says Kraemer, revealed, manifested ἐφάνερωσεν himself to men, and his eternal power and divineness are 'plain' φανερός ἐστιν and are knowable to men. Therefore, for the natural man, 'the knowledge of God' is a 'fact'.

The knowledge of God is not an impossibility; on the contrary it is, as regards God, a fact. God's plain revelation and the possibility as well as the capacity of men to know him and acknowledge him are emphatically stressed by the last words: 'so that they have no excuse,' and by the opening words of V.21: διὸ τοῦτο ἐνότητα ἑρωτήματι ἐγένετο, i.e., 'therefore, although they know God,' and then follows what really was done by men in response to God's revelation, God's self-disclosure of his eternal power and Godhead'. (2)

But what men did showed that they did not know him, as they did not 'glorify' and 'thank' him. They were not in right relation with him. This is the dialectical plight of man: they know God, yet they do not really know him. This understanding of Paul's mind in

(1) See below, 363ff
(2) Christian Faith, 293
Rom.1.19ff sets for Kraemer the attitude in regard to the natural man's knowledge of God, and in particular, to the insights of non-Christian religions. Thus he says, 'God has revealed and reveals himself perenially. Man can know him, but in fact, as is witnessed by their religions, they don't know him. Karl Barth's title Religion als Unwissenheit of his contribution to our subject in his Church Dogmatics ... gets its full weight, although not that exclusive weight which Barth gives to it.' (1) All non-Christians are living in the state of ἀδικία, being out of proper relation with God. As such, they are given over to 'self-will' and 'self-assertion.' (2) A clear definition of this attitude is given in a later book, Why Christianity

...... the main thing about all religions ... is that they are a fleeing from God ... Their natural tendency is all in the direction of self-will, of self-justification, even though it is only in the light of Jesus Christ that this becomes apparent; and thus it is that we come to understand them as a flight from God, a refusal to let God decide what the good of man really is and what it means to be truly man, an iron determination to decide these things for themselves and so to set man up as himself the key to the problem and enigma of man. (3)

This 'flight' from God in the form of 'self-assertion' and self-justification' is what Kraemer calls the 'fundamental errancy', an error which he sees underlying all human religious achievements, threatening man's spiritual well-being.

It is, however, questionable whether Rom.1.19ff lends any

(1) Christian Faith, 294
(2) The ideas of man 'opposing' God's truth, and that he did not 'honour him as God or give thanks to him ...' Rom.15.21 suggest 'self-assertion' of man over against God. Kraemer also sees Rom.1.29 ἐξ ζητῆς as 'ruthless, aggressive self-assertion, in sexual and anti-social respect.' Christian Faith, 297.
(3) Why Christianity, 97
support to the formulation of a dogmatic attitude towards the possibility of knowledge of God in the Non-Christian religions as a whole. Paul was not wrestling with this question which occupies much of Kraemer's attention when he wrote to the Christian community in Rome. Actually, scholars have not been able to ascertain Paul's intention here. For instance, Barrett has rejected the so called 'popular exegesis' which interprets Rom.1.18-32 as a 'long digression' in which he deals with the state of mankind apart from the Gospel. (1)

It is probably true that Paul is tackling the question of the culpability of the gentiles for their distorted moral behaviour. The righteousness of God is also operative among gentiles who have not heard of the Gospel, and so they are without excuse. (2) Or it may even be suggested that Paul here is writing his own account of the Fall, in the reverse order. In the Creation account, God creates man in his own image, giving him dominion over fish, bird, beasts and reptiles. Now Paul sees all these, apart from fish, are being worshipped. So he argues that man by worshipping the image of a creature, has lost the privilege of being made in the image of God. (3)

As such, Rom.1.18ff is not mainly concerned with the

---

(1) C.K. Barrett, Romans, 33. Barrett thinks Paul is not dealing with the state of mankind in general but with the vices and moral deviations among the gentiles in particular.

(2) Both Barrett and Whiteley understand Rom.1.18-32 in terms of Paul wrestling with the problem of culpability of gentiles. Even though the gentiles have not heard the Gospel, nevertheless they know enough about God to be culpable. Barrett, Romans, 1957, 35. Whiteley, The Theology of St. Paul, 1964, 56, 58. Both authors hold that Paul assumes that man has some knowledge of God, given to him by God through Creation otherwise the question of 'responsibility' would be at stake.

(3) This suggestion is made by M. Hooker, in 'Adam in Romans', New Testament Studies, vi. 1960, 297-306.
general question whether man outside the Christian revelation has knowledge of God or not.

However, the opinions of many commentators point to the conclusion that this passage of Paul does suggest that man has some knowledge of God. (1) But even so, we have to be careful about what this 'knowledge' is. Owen, for example, thinks that the gentiles know that God exists, but do not know that he is the Creator, (2) while Barrett understands it to be some 'raw materials' of the knowledge of God. (3) Paul's reference to man's knowledge of God seems to be of limited application, just enough to make the gentiles culpable. Whether man knows more about this or not in regard to the truth of God is not his immediate concern in Rom.1.19ff.

If our interpretation, which is against the traditional current of interpretation, is correct, then what Paul says in Rom.1.19ff should not be regarded as in any way relevant to the formulation of a dogmatic attitude towards non-Christian religions in general. The non-Christian religions such as Islam, and the Bhakti religions in India speak of a God of love and forgiveness, as Creator and Saviour, which is a different type of 'knowledge' from what it is in Rom.1.19-20.

Furthermore, the sins and perversions referred to in Rom.1.21-32 are the sins of popular paganism of Paul's days. They should not

---

(1) Richardson and Nygren prefer the phrase 'general revelation' to describe this 'knowledge' in Rom.1.19-20. See Introduction to New Testament Theology, 1958, 50-3, Romans, 1952, 105-8


(3) Barrett, Romans, 1957, 36
be regarded as the sins of men in all non-Christian religions, even though we do not dispute the truth that 'in Adam' we have all sinned. Indeed, these sins cannot be simply attributed to pagans who have developed some sort of spiritual awareness or moral attainment. It is fair to point out that Kraemer is aware of the limited range of reference of Rom.1. He agrees that, in a direct sense, it passes no judgment on the 'higher' elements in pagan religion, culture and philosophy, because 'nobody can recognize in the picture of these verses, Plato, Aeschylus, Aristotle, Plutarch, Epictetus, etc. etc., setting aside the question of to what extent Paul had direct acquaintance with them.' But this does not change Kraemer's dogmatic attitude, because in an indirect sense, in his opinion, they are all involved. They are involved because they came to terms with the grossest forms of superstition and immorality without uttering a word of protest. Even if it is so, should Kraemer stretch Rom.1 to include all 'higher' elements in all the non-Christian religions? Can the meaning in Rom.1 be stretched to such an extent? As it is, Kraemer's interpretation of Rom.1 is strained, because he tries to draw from it implications to support his dogmatic, dialectical attitude towards religions where there is none.

In regard to the question of man's knowledge of God there is another passage in Romans which Kraemer thinks is 'perfectly in accord with Rom.1.19, 20, 32.' This is Rom. 2.14-15, which has been taken to support religio naturalis and lex naturalis. As to the structure of the text, Kraemer agrees with Dodd that it should be taken as a parenthetical remark while Rom. 2.13 and vv16 together form a sentence. In the interpretation of this passage Kraemer

(1) Christian Faith, 298
(2) For textual problem, see Dodd, Romans, 1932, 31,35.
disagrees with the 'custom of commentators' to read into Paul's thought the Stoic ideas of natural religion and natural law, a knowledge of God independent of any revelational initiative of God, enabling man to know God through his works in creation and to know the eternal principles of right and wrong. The Stoics regard the human \( \nu\o\o\o\o\o \), \( \lambda\o\o\o\o\o \) as identical with the immanent 'law of nature', so that what is secundum naturam is right and what is contra naturam is wrong. Conscience is a law-recognizing faculty. It recognizes the immanent law of man's nature, which is an expression of the identity and affinity of human reason with the divine and universal reason \( \lambda\o\o\o\o\o \). Dodd who understands Paul in the vein of Stoic thought is singled out by Kraemer for criticism. Kraemer says that he could not agree with Dodd when he says:

Now for Paul the Mosaic Law is the most complete revelation of the will of God there is, in terms of precepts and prohibitions; but the 'law of nature' is not a different law, but only a less precise and complete revelation of the same eternal law of right and wrong. (1)

To understand Paul in the Stoic context is, according to Kraemer, to misunderstand Paul altogether, because Paul's standpoint is a 'God-centred, theonomic standpoint.' Instead, we must look at this passage 'from the angle of the reality of the revelation of God's righteousness in Christ.'

Kraemer rejects the Stoicized interpretation of Paul because it is more Hallenistic than Biblical. But there is more behind his rejection. First, he has difficulty in understanding what exactly

---

(1) Dodd, Romans, 1932, 36. quoted in Christian Faith, 306, italics
Kraemer's G.K. Barrett thinks that the 'Stoic-Jewish' use of nature and natural law were in Paul's mind. Philo had taught that the Jewish revealed law was the most supreme expression of 'natural law'. Romans, 1957
'natural law' is, because, as he argues elsewhere, it is 'elusive and indefinable'. It has no 'concrete content.' The only sense in which one can speak of natural law,' Kraemer says, 'is to state as a matter of fact the presence and the endless growth and decay, in history of systems of law, created out of human experience, institutions and reasoning, a phenomenon which is by the nature of the case not universal, but endlessly variegated in character. '(1)

Second, the Stoic emphasis of the Logos provides the ground for religio naturalis and encourages speculation. What really worries Kraemer is the suggestion that man has in him the 'autonomous power to know God', an unmistakable indication of the arrogant affirmation of man's 'self-sufficiency' in the area of religion. So he sees that Paul steered clear of such a position. 'The conclusion, implied in the Stoic doctrine that religion and religions are the result of this natural capacity of men, lies beyond Paul's horizon'. (2)

What, then, does Kraemer see in this controversial parenthetical remark? Even though he rejects the Stoicized interpretation, he does not want to give the impression that the 'work' ἐργον of the Law which the gentiles observed has nothing to do with God's self-disclosure. In fact it represented their response to that divine self-disclosure. This is in line with Rom.1.32 where Paul affirms that men do know the δικαίωμα of God, that is, 'God's Order of Righteousness' or the 'elementary rules' of the natural order. (3)

(1) Kraemer, The Bible and Social Ethics, in Contributions to a Christian Social Ethics, Paper of the Ecumenical Institute, No. 4, 1949, Geneva, 11-13. Kraemer registers his indebtedness to J. Ellul, Le Fondement theologique du Droit in regard to the discussion of 'natural law'.
(2) Christian Faith, 307
(3) Christian Faith, 296
But such a response, Kraemer points out, is no evidence of any immanent logos which is identical with the divine Logos. Instead, it expresses man's inescapable relatedness to his Creator, and it is in this light that the so called 'natural law' should be understood.

This inescapable God-relationship expresses itself in striking or in dim, imperfect ways of acknowledging and responding to God's revelational activity (Rom. 2.14-15). In this connection it is appropriate to say that the Stoic idea of lex naturalis is perhaps best understood as such a feeble, distorted response to God's self-disclosure, and is therefore in the context of Paul's thinking not a lex 'naturalis' which derives from the communis sensus hominum, although it presents itself as such, but from God's working in man. (1)

Let us now briefly summarise the essential teaching of Paul as Kraemer understands it. Since the contention of Rom. 2.14-15, Kraemer says, is in perfect accord with Rom. 1.19, 20, 32 where Paul deals with the question of man's knowledge of God, it should now be clear that, when these two groups of texts are taken together, what is called 'the knowledge of God' or man's 'knowing of God' is hardly 'knowledge' in a concrete sense with definite content, but rather to be understood as man's dim awareness of God or man's groping after him to whom he is inescapably related. Even such awareness and groping are not given a positive content, as they are to be qualified by words like 'feeble' and 'distorted' so that no one can argue on the basis of such awareness or groping any possible 'points of contact.' (2) It is in a similar vein of thought that

(1) Christian Faith, 307-308
(2) The question of 'Points of contact' will be dealt with later, see below, 504ff
Kraemer interprets Paul's Areopagus speech in Acts 17, in which the pagans are understood to be 'in total ignorance' and yet are 'dimly aware of him.' This to Kraemer is as far as Paul would go in his 'dialectical judgement.' 'Paul certainly sees the highest religious and philosophical aspirations both in the light of groping (Acts 17) and in that of "ignorance" (Acts 17), i.e., in the light of God, and in that of ultimately "futile speculation." This feeble, groping towards God is what Kraemer calls the 'more or less positive answer' to God's self-disclosure in the hearts of man. Taken as a whole, it is a 'not-knowing' of God.

Yet we still have to ask the question: is Kraemer's handling of the text of Rom.2.14f satisfactory? The text suggests that the gentiles are capable of doing by nature the things which the law requires, and that this shows the effects of the law in their hearts. Kraemer, as we have seen, takes it to mean that the gentiles were capable of rendering 'striking, or dim, imperfect' or even 'feeble, distorted' responses to God. Such responses are neither positive nor concrete, and anything more would smack of the sin of 'self-sufficiency'. But the text sounds more positive, affirming that the gentiles are capable of rendering at times acceptable responses, even by the standard of the revealed law of God. According to Barrett, what the law requires refers in the

---

1 Christian Faith, 284
2 Christian Faith, 298
3 Christian Faith, 307 Other passages in Romans are also referred to, such as Rom.3.25 the idea of $\kappa\nu\nu\alpha\iota$ (io), and Rom.6.19-22 the longing of the cosmos. They depict the inescapable relatedness of man to God, but add nothing to what we have dealt with so far. He also refers us to the Prologue in the Fourth Gospel. But the exegesis of this passage will be dealt with when we examine his rejection of the Logos doctrine, see below 386ff.
present context to 'believing obedience'. This 'believing obedience' (viewed from the human side) is, in his opinion,

The only tolerable basis of relation between man and his creator, and just as the gentile finds (or ought to find) the creature-creator relationship written in the natural universe (1.19ff) so also he finds (or ought to find) it written in his heart. When man recognizes and accepts this relationship he may be said to do what the law requires 'by nature'

Barrett concludes that Paul is arguing here that 'there is, then, something .... in the very pattern of created existence which should, and sometimes does, lead the gentiles to an attitude of humble, grateful, dependent creatureliness, (2) even though the gentiles were under the judgment of the righteousness of God. In brief, the responses of the gentiles can be at times positive, and not just a 'feeble' or 'distorted' and 'dim' gropings towards God. It is this 'positive' note that we find missing in Kraemer's treatment.

(4) Kraemer's Biblical insight - a brief summary and evaluation

The 'dialectical' view of man, as Kraemer sees it, can be said to be a faithful interpretation of the thought in the scriptures. Credit must be given to him for having called our attention to the subjective as well as the objective aspects of this 'truth about man'. History can offer ample examples to demonstrate that man is formidable and yet wretched. He is a saint, and yet he is also

(1) Barrett, Romans, 1957, 51. Note also Barrett assumes that the gentiles were not void of knowledge of God as their Creator. Cf. Owen's view, see above, 193 for reference.
(2) Barrett, Romans, 1957, 52
a sinner of the most horrid kind. He has attained great cultural, technological and spiritual achievements, yet in the midst of them there is also the seed of corruption and self-will. However, despite his sin and secularity, man has an unquenchable yearning for the eternal and the ultimate. This 'inescapable relatedness (of man) to the eternal' which reflects his 'divine origin' is the key element in the 'dialectical' view of man. Kraemer finds 'objective' ground to account for this paradoxical existence of man in the 'dialectical' manner of God's dealing with man. He blesses man and yet curses him. He judges him in the heat of his divine wrath, yet he affirms man's being, holding him fast in his gracious loving care. If man feels inescapably related to the eternal, it is because God has taken the initiative to enter into relation with man and to seek him. Man was originally created for fellowship and partnership with him. Kraemer rightly sees this 'truth' about man embodied in the Creation stories in the early chapters in Genesis. To relate the status and destiny of man to Creation not only gives a broad groundwork for the dialectical predicament, but also has important implications for the understanding of non-Christian religions and the question of the Christian attitude towards them. The non-Christian religions are concrete expressions of man grappling with the question of his relatedness to the eternal. They are varying forms of man's response to the working of God. Even though there is much self-centeredness and self-assertion involved, yet one must also try to see that in mysterious ways God is involved in them. (1)

(1) See below 202ff
So far we have mainly dealt with the 'objective dialectical situation', a truth which, in Kraemer's opinion, is well illustrated in the Creation stories, the early saga and specially in the writings of Paul. His treatment of imago Dei of Genesis shows an improvement on the traditional view which bifurcates the imago, with all the speculations which go with it. Yet in his attempt to understand it in the context of the Fall he has telescoped the imago of the Old and the New Testaments together. In doing so he fails to do justice to the profound difference between the two concepts of imago which are unrelated in the scriptures. Nevertheless, his affirmation concerning the imago still holds, viz: 'man is still in God's image, yet he has lost it, 'if this statement is made to refer, not to Genesis' account as he intended, but to the scriptural witness as a whole. It is true that we are still in God's image, and indeed we cannot lose it without losing our humanum as well. But it is also true that in the New Testament there is indication that the imago into which man was originally created was lost, and hence a re-creation is necessary. The relation of the two unrelated concepts of imago is bound to remain a problem for theologians, and Kraemer is no exception.

Man's inescapable relatedness to God, and God's involvement in man's religious life inevitably raise the question of man's knowledge of God, a question to which Kraemer pays much attention when he comes

(1) Kraemer also understands the 'dialectical' manner of God's dealing with man as a 'dominant note of the prophets' Christian Faith, 253. The involvement of God in man's 'spiritual aspirations and achievements' is also implied in the Hebraic attitude towards 'Wisdom', the 'knowledge of life and art of living,' which is 'intrinsically connected with divine Wisdom, operating as a power everywhere in the world.' Christian Faith, 265.
to the writings of Paul. He wants to draw from Romans some support for the formulation of a dogmatic attitude towards non-Christian religions, but his attempt, in our opinion, is not successful.

The main difficulty is that Paul was not concerned with this problem when he wrote to the Christian community in Rome. The 'knowledge' he speaks of is different from the non-Christians' when they talk about the 'knowledge of God'. Actually, what Rom.1.19-20 really means is not certain. Neither is Rom.2.14-15 helpful in deciding whether non-Christians have a genuine 'knowledge' of God as they claim in their religions. There is not much to go on in these passages. Kraemer's attempt to stretch Rom.1.19ff to cover all non-Christian religions, as we have seen, is, to say the least, strained.

However, Kraemer concludes from a study of Paul(1) that man 'knows' God, and yet he does not 'know' him. But when one takes a closer look at what he regards as 'knowledge' of God, one finds it to be insubstantial and elusive. It does not go beyond 'dim awareness' or 'groping' towards him. Ultimately, the man in Ἰδικίο cannot be said to 'know' him. Kraemer's aversion to the sin of 'self-sufficiency' has tipped the balance in favour of the negative side in regard to his Yes-No utterances.

He rightly sees man as being inescapably related to God, but he falters when he attempts to settle the question of the natural man's knowledge of God.

---

(1) He thinks the Prologue of John also affirms that man does not know God. For his exegesis, see below, 386ff
G. The universal phenomenon of religious consciousness

Now we come to the 'subjective dialectical condition,' which is man's religious consciousness.

The concept of religious consciousness was already being developed by Kraezer in his Tambaram book of 1938. It was then put forth as a means to account for the many similarities found in the established world religions. The ambiguous, dialectical character of it had already come to his notice. It is 'confused and blinded by its inherent disharmony'. (1) Even though the question whether God was involved in the 'religious life as present in the non-Christian religions' was raised, there was no attempt to see religious consciousness as the locale of the divine-human encounter. (2) It is only in the later book, Christian Faith, that religious consciousness is taken as 'the place of dialectic encounter with God, and of giving a negative, or partly positive but often distortedly positive, answer to this encounter.' With this understanding he hopes to modify his earlier view, that non-Christian religions were great human achievements. This view is still maintained in his later book, though these religions are now understood as expressions of the dialectical response of man to God, who addresses him in the depth of his being. In other words, God is involved in the phenomena of religions. (3)

The phrase 'religious consciousness' was once very popular. It was Schleiermacher who brought it to life in the theological circles. The British anthropologist R.R. Marett and the German

(1) Christian Message, 113, also see 111, 112
(2) Christian Message, 111, and his own statement in Christian Faith, 8.
(3) Christian Faith 6, 8.
religious philosopher R. Otto have also played their important part in popularizing it. But whether it was understood in terms of a 'feeling of absolute dependence,' or 'feeling of awe', or the famous 'mysterium tremendum et fascinans' which were the essence of the 'numen', it always carried a strong psychological overtone. With the rise of Barthian theology, this phrase has been relegated to disrepute. It is therefore surprising that it is revived by Kraemer in his anthropology. Kraemer's language is no less psychological, and in many ways reminds his readers of that used by Toynbee. For instance, Kraemer speaks of the 'theological approach' as one which is mainly concerned, on the question of religion, with 'what happens in the depth between God, the Creator and Redeemer, and man, his creature.' This 'depth' is man's religious consciousness, for it is here that 'the silent, unconscious or conscious drama of the encounter of God and man takes place.' Because man is addressed by God, therefore in him 'there are to be found deep Ahnungen (intuitions) of sin, of guilt, of surrender to the divine will, expectations of a Saviour, of Grace, of Divine Love, of sacrifice of self, etc.' These 'spontaneous God-intuitions which in crucial moments 'urge up in man'. The language suggests that it comes 'up' from the 'depth' where the silent encounter is taking place. Kraemer would even think that


(2) Christian Faith, 299. Kraemer's references to the 'depth' have led R.H.L. Slater to think that like Toynbee, Kraemer is also interested in 'depth religion'. Both writers, he observes, are critical of the shallowness and pretensions of intellectualism, and both emphasize an apprehension of reality attained in the depths, though he also stresses the fact that Kraemer's outlook is different from that of Toynbee's. see World Religion and World Community, 1963, 160-162, also Christian Attitudes to Other Religions, in Canadian Journal of Theology, No. 4. Oct., 1956

(3) Christian Faith, 220
(4) Christian Faith, 333
(5) Idem
the 'types' of religion go back to the religious consciousness, of which they are but the 'solidified aspects.' (1) It looks as though Kraemer is on the threshold of a speculative attempt to relate psychological types with religions, an attempt which has occupied much of Toynbee's attention. (2) But he has never made it, because though his language is psychological, his thought and basic concern are theological, or rather, Biblical, as he would say. He would be horrified by Toynbee's suggestion that authentic intimations of God can be had if one turns inward, to the 'rock bottom' of the human psyche where the primordial images belong. This would not only reflect the sin of 'self-sufficiency' in man's religious life, but also make nonsense of the whole idea of 'revelation.'

Earlier we have mentioned that the concept of religious consciousness is parallel to the idea of God speaking to man, or rather, the presupposed quality of addressibility. (3) Religious consciousness is parallel to this idea of addressibility in the sense that the former is also an 'inherent' quality in man. But in fact they can be regarded as the same thing looked at from different angles. Just as man is able to hear God when God addresses him, in virtue of his addressibility, so in the realm of religion man is able to respond to God in virtue of his 'addressibility', which in this context is the 'sensus divinitatis' which God has implanted in him. If addressibility in the realm of culture is the presupposition of man's responsible partnership with God, so sensus divinitatis is, in the realm of religious life, the presupposition of the phenomenon

---

(1) *Christian Faith*, 220
(2) *Idem*, for Toynbee's idea of psychological types and religion, see below 493ff
(3) See above, 176
of religion. This *sensus divinitatis* (perception of divinity) is what Kraemer calls religious consciousness.

The idea of *sensus divinitatis* which Kraemer adopts in his writings is found in Calvin. It is also called *semen religionis* or even *instinctus naturalis*. This *sensus* or *semen* is 'implanted' by God in man (Inst.1.1.1) As such, it is 'inextinguishable.' By implanting this *sensus* in man, 'God himself has given to all some apprehension of his Godhead.' (Inst.1.iii.1.) But Calvin also points out that 'they do not apprehend God as he offers himself but such as they, in their temerity, construct him.'(1)

The *sensus* in Calvin's writings, Kraemer says, is so 'corrupted' and 'distorted' that man is no longer able to know God through his manifestation in his works, nor is it sufficient for the *vera notitia Dei* (real knowledge of God). This Calvin's view is 'in fact an excellent paraphrase of Rom.1.20. In fact, in the language of his day no better interpretation of this passage could be given.'(2) Calvin rightly recognizes that 'all religion presupposes rightly or wrongly a transcendent superhuman reality.' So even in our day when we attempt to 'formulate our interpretation differently', Kraemer says, 'essentially nothing can be added to Calvin's interpretation.'(3) Kraemer therefore regards his dialectical view, in regard to man's knowledge of God in particular, as not only being Pauline but also in the tradition of the great Reformer. The *sensus divinitatis* was given by God so that man might know him, but it became so 'corrupted' that what can be

(1) *Christian Faith*, 169, quotations and references to Calvin are taken from Kraemer, ad hoc.
(2) *Christian Faith*, 170,171.
(3) *Christian Faith*, 171
filtered through this medium becomes 'distorted'.\(^1\) In actuality, man does not know him.

We have earlier mentioned that religious consciousness is susceptible of a 'substantialist' interpretation. This is because its synonym *semen* religiosis and the act of 'implanting' suggest that 'something' is being laid by God in man.\(^2\) Furthermore, this implanting element is also set by Kraemer over against the 'revelation' of God in general as the two 'poles' of the 'problem of religion,'\(^3\) thereby implying that it is something real in the nature of man. As such, religions consciousness is to be understood as an intrinsic attribute of human nature.\(^4\) Being inherent in human nature, it necessarily takes on the dialectical outlook which is characteristic of human existence.

The religions consciousness of man can be expressed in two ways, according to Kraemer, viz., the 'subjective' way and the way of 'objective' religion. The subjective way is 'the special type of religiosity and piety or inner religious life, according to the particular religion as part of which this 'subjective' religiosity functions.' This includes the religiosity of the individuals who are detached from any 'positive religion', as well as the various Weltanschauungen which loom large in philosophy of religion.

The 'second way' refers to the so-called 'objective' religion, which

---

\(^1\) Idem.

\(^2\) See above, 177. Note the word 'laid' is also used by Calvin, as when he says, referring to sensus divinitatis, 'God has laid it (indidit) in man.' *Christian Faith*, 171.

\(^3\) idem. By this Kraemer means that on the one hand there is God's revelation (*revelatio generalis*) and on the other hand the dialectically conceived religions consciousness. Religions are man's distorted responses to God.

\(^4\) Kraemer himself clearly states that it is 'inherent in human nature'. *Christian Faith*, 142.
is 'the peculiar body of doctrine, myth, rite, cult and worship, which constitute the "established" religions as we treat them in the handbooks of the History of Religion.' (1) In other words, religious consciousness is primarily man's religiosity and piety, a matter of what he feels and acts, in private or public, in his God-relatedness, and religions are its concrete expressions or embodiments in history and culture.

Religious consciousness is ambivalent since it 'in multiple ways, is the place of man's dim, positive or negative response to God's working.' (2) In the state of άλήλες, he renders a Yes and No to 'his true destiny and his relatedness to the eternal.' It is a Yes because man in his sin and corruption still strives after 'goodness for goodness' sake and for communion with the Transcendent, in his search for salvation and liberation from what he feels to be the fundamental anxieties and frustrations of life.' (3) But this Yes does not seem to have taken him very far. Indeed, man may seek a communion with the 'transcendent', but it does not necessarily mean it is a communion with 'God.' He does not know him. In fact, Kraemer sees in the very effort of man to have communion with the 'Transcendent' the blasphemous attempt to 'arrange his relation with God.' (4) He wants God in his own way, and therefore his 'deepest Ahnungen, the highest flights, the

---


(2) Christian Faith, 360

(3) Christian Faith, 312

(4) Christian Faith, 360
sincerest contribution, remain in the sphere of a lofty moralism or spirituality. In the context of his ἔθνεως, man's Yes inevitably transforms itself into a No. The best is also the worst, the noble is also the sinful. Outside the Christian revelation we may find noble flights of the human spirit, such as in the moving stories of the Greek poets. But 'just where we seem to be nearest to the gospel, it appears often that we are farthest away from it.' The arch sin which distorts man's knowledge of God Kraemer understands as pride, or 'self-assertion' which he seems exemplified, in the case of the Greek tragic stories, in Prometheus who is the representative of the 'human spirit in its autonomous power' and who asserts his own will over against God's. The same 'self-assertion' is also characteristic of the so-called religions of grace and the prophetic religion related to Zarathustra. In fact, this 'self-assertion' is, as we saw earlier, what is called the 'fundamental errancy' which underlies all human spiritual achievements (religions). Just because religions are the embodiment of the 'negative encounter' of man with God, therefore they are 'the sector of human life in which the divine

(1) Christian Faith, 334.
(2) Christian Faith, 332f. Kraemer mentions Aeschylus' Prometheus.
(3) Christian Faith, 334.
(4) He criticises the religions of grace for having decided for themselves what grace means. Thus they indulging in the act of 'self-pardoning.' Christian Faith, 334. Concerning the religion of Zarathustra, he refers to Brunner's judgment on it as a religion of moralism, with its basis on the self-assertion of human moral consciousness. He apparently approves Brunner's judgment, because he praises him for his 'great discernment'. He also criticises Socrates' self-assertion, see ibid, 330f. Kraemer chides Socrates for being 'untouched by the humility and self-abandonment which Christ revealed as the heart of God.' This, he says, is also the sin of all humanism.
wrath and the human \( \text{\textbackslash d\textbackslash k\textbackslash i} \) become manifest,' a truth which, in Kraemer's opinion, is implied in Rom.1.18(1)

Since man's religious response to God is a dialectical Yes-No, with the Yes inevitably transforming into a No, it is met with a divine No, a negation of man's achievements and his perversions. But God does say Yes to man, despite man's sin and rebellion. This Yes, according to Kraemer, is an 'ultimate Yes' which soars above God's own dialectic Yes-No. It is not an acceptance of man's distorted Yes as valid, but an affirmation of his desire to save man.(2) It is this ultimate Yes of God which is the ground of man's inescapable 'God-relatedness.'

However, Kraemer's presentation of the dialectical character of religious consciousness is not free from ambiguity, nor can its validity be said to be unchallenged. First, there is an inherent ambiguity about it. Since the response of man to God is underlined by a 'fundamental errancy' which distorts it, we can understand why Kraemer describes it as 'distortedly positive.' (3) But at times Kraemer's utterances seem to have gone beyond this, leaving his readers wondering whether he has forgotten the underlying 'error' in all human attempts. For instance, he also says that man's responses to God can be 'partly right, sometimes really right.' (4) It is difficult to see how 'really right' goes along with the basic emphasis of 'fundamental errancy.' If man's response is fundamentally wrong, it cannot be 'really right' at the same time. Again, we are

(1) Christian Faith, 293
(2) Christian Message, 126.
(3) Christian Faith, 8
(4) Christian Faith, 257
told that 'not ... everything in the other religion is to be labelled "erroneous,"' but we are not to draw up a 'simple inventory, with all the phenomena and all the utterances associated with these religions neatly marshalled under the two heads of "erroneous" and "not erroneous."' We agree that it is difficult to have a neat and 'simple inventory,' but since Kraemer affirms that not everything is erroneous, there must be 'something' which is not 'erroneous.' But what it is Kraemer has not been able to say positively, except that we are told that 'even at the very heart of "error" itself, we are to discover and to recognize that "God has passed this way."'

Second, Kraemer's dialectical view has been challenged by other authorities on the Phenomenology of religion. The 'fundamental errancy' which underlies all religion is further described by Kraemer as man's attempt to effect his own 'self-justification,' 'self-sanctification' and 'self-redemption,' and not just 'self-assertion.' But the charge of 'self-justification' cannot be said to be the rule, because it does not apply, as Bleeker points out (himself taking the clue from Otto), in the case of Sankara. Sankara 'expressly excludes from his doctrine those forms of mysticism which are permeated with human passions and the urge for self-justification.' Furthermore, even in Kraemer's analysis of Islam we do not find this idea of 'self-justification' or 'self-assertion.'

---

1. Why Christianity, 102, 103.
2. Why Christianity, 103.
3. Kraemer himself is also an authority in this field.
5. C.J. Bleeker, Christ in Modern Athens, 1966, 104, 105. Also according to Bishop Kulandran, the Hindu Bhakti denotes 'a reverent humility on the part of the devotee' which is not much different than the attitude of pistis in the New Testament. See Grace in Christianity and Hinduism, 225.
emphasized. Islam, which stands for 'absolute surrender to God', is, to Kraemer, an 'unoriginal' religion. It is 'superficial', being a religion that has 'no questions and no answers,' and the relation between God and man is 'strangely eventless.' These judgments are severe (as well as questionable), but they are different from 'self-justification.' Instead, Kraemer appreciates the chief element of Moslem religions meeting, which is a 'reverent adoration and worship of God,' even though he does not commend its concept of God.

Again, the charge of 'self-redemption' does not seem to be applicable, for instance, to 'Hinduism' as a whole. This idea, according to Otto, is foreign to Sankara. 'It is true that in Brahman alone lies salvation. To seek salvation without Brahman is sacrilege. It would be an overweening attempt at 'self-redemption' - a concept foreign alike to Sankara and to Eckhart.'

Bleeker also concludes from his vast knowledge of Indian religion:

> In all event it may be stated with certainty that there is no question of a striving for self-redemption and self-justification in the classical religious tradition of India. It is in fact correcter to say that the search for the 'Sat', and the True, the Enduring which is recognized in a flash of insight as the Foundation of All involves a state of self-oblivion.

When authorities disagree, Kraemer's judgment on non-Christian faiths, or for that matter, on all human spiritual undertakings,

---

2) Christian Message, 221.
4) Bleeker, ibid, 104. Bleeker is not unaware of the fact that 'there are forms of Eastern religions which give the impression of being founded on the principle of self-redemption,' but he thinks that it cannot be regarded as a matter of fact applicable to all religions.
cannot be said to be conclusive. Instead, it seems more appropriate to say that man, despite his sin, everywhere shows a genuine and earnest desire for truth, and that he has not consciously asserted himself, or sought to justify himself before God to distort his quest. One may affirm with Bleeker the existence of much of 'self-redemption' in non-Christian religious activities, an element which Bleeker, no less eager than Kraemer, is quick to point out. Yet one must also allow for the possibility of a genuine, positive encounter with God outside the Christian revelation, an encounter which does not exclude man having a positive knowledge of God and a genuine fellowship with him, no matter how imperfect these elements are to the Christian observer. We shall come back to the question of man's knowledge of God outside the Christian revelation when we discuss the question of 'revelation'.

The nature of such a 'knowledge' will also be analysed later. It suffices us here to point out that Kraemer's dogmatic attitude is not adequate, nor has he done enough justice to the God-man encounter outside the Christian revelation, when he would not allow any encounter which is not an expression of 'self-assertion', 'self-justification' and 'self-redemption'.

While we are still on the subject of religious consciousness let us take notice of a question which is related to it: what about the 'similarities' which exist among the many religions, or which the Christian faith shares with the many non-Christian faiths? This question is bound to suggest itself because it is to account for the existence of such elements that religious consciousness was first formulated. But here we only acknowledge the question, because we intend to deal with it in detail when we come to the problem of the

(1) See below, 382ff for instance
(2) See below, 541f
'point of contact' in the general context of the question of attitude towards non-Christian religions.\(^1\) For the time being let us turn to another item of Kraemer's thought, viz., 'Biblical realism' which embodies the dialectical 'truth about God and man,' and which is also regarded as the criterion of the Christian interpretation of the scriptures.

D. **Biblical Realism**

The word 'realism' carries a wide variety of meanings, and it is not always clear what it means. In medieval thought it was used to denote a school of thought which was in opposition to Nominalism, and in modern philosophy it refers generally to a belief in the independent existence of material objects of our sense experiences. Thus 'realism' is opposed to Idealism and Phenomenalism.\(^2\) In Protestant theology, especially in the nineteenth century, it was used to denote the theological method of the 'German academic tradition' associated in one way or another

---

\(^1\) See below 504ff

\(^2\) For the various shades of the meaning of 'realism' in philosophy, see R.J. Hirst's article on 'Realism' in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1967, vol.7
with Schleiermacher. (1) But the meaning and emphasis change when 'realism' is used by different writers in different contexts, such as 'religious realism', 'Christian realism', 'radical realism', and Tillich's renowned 'belief-ful realism.' (2) The meaning of 'realism' ranges from that of philosophical discussion (as in Tillich) to something between optimism and pessimism (as in Bennett).

The word 'realism' appears very frequently in Kraemer's Tambaram book, and with different qualifying words such as 'Biblical realism,'

(1) Frei sees Schleiermacher as the champion of a 'nonmetaphysical realism' when he rejected the possibility of the mind being capable of apprehending the internal relation between the Absolute and the finite mind. Instead, 'God is given to us in feeling in an original way.' (Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, 1928, 17) He affirms that in consciousness God and the self, God and faith, are 'originally' or immediately related, and not external to one another. After Schleiermacher, the dominant trend in German 'academic tradition' affirmed 'an exclusively Christocentric revelation and a sort of nonmetaphysical realism in theology, in which God was seen as the direct object of a nontheoretic apprehension by the human subject.' Thus 'realism' in theological circles became associated with a type of thought which favours inductive rather than deductive theology. The knowledge of God must begin with faith, which fundamentally modifies whatever content given to it. See Faith and Ethics, ed. Ramsey, 1957.

(2) Religious realism: According to Michalson, the confession of the reality of God is 'religious realism' which is 'an accent in American theology.' It is an attitude which will not settle for the identification of God as anything less than God himself. Faith and Ethics, 1957, ed. Ramsey, 248, 259.

Christian realism, 1941: John Bennett uses the word 'realism' to refer primarily to the conviction 'that Christianity avoids the illusions of both the optimists and the pessimists.' He also uses it as a secondary reference to taking the 'given aspects of the world' seriously as they are, though some of them may defy rational explanation. See Bennett, Christian Realism, 12, 13.

Radical realism: Frei describes Barth's reaction against the method of Schleiermacher as 'radical realism'. Barth emphasizes the freedom and lordship of God. The 'Word' is not 'given in' but the 'other' of our immediate awareness or knowledge. It is a realism which accentuates the priority of the 'object'. Thus faith, in actuality and meaning, depends entirely on its object which defines for it its form and content. Faith and Ethics, ed, 1957 Ramsey.

Belief-ful realism: realism here is taken in the sense of 'an attitude which rejects every transcending of reality, every transcendency and all transcendentalizing.' As such, it is contrary to 'faith' which is 'an attitude which transcends every conceivable and experienceable reality.' Tillich's 'belief-ful realism' is coined to preserve the 'unconditioned tension' between faith and realism. See the Religious Situation, 14, 15. For a description of belief-ful realism, see Frei, in Faith and Ethics, 1957, ed. Ramsey.
'faith realism', 'concrete realism,' 'divine realism' and 'New Testament realism.' (1) But Kraemer has not given us a formal definition of it. The nearest description which amounts to a definition is that it is a 'radically honest openness to total reality.' It is a 'realism that looks realities honestly in the face and exposes them to the light of the divine judgment.' The question then arises: what is this 'reality' or 'realities'? The context suggests that it refers to the truth about God and man. 

'Biblical realism' or 'divine realism' takes man and God radically and seriously: man in his high origin and destiny as well as in his utter corruption and frustration; God in his radical rejection and condemnation of man, and in His never-weakening faith in and saving grace for man. (2) This intense religious realism of the Bible proclaims and asserts realities. (3)

This 'reality' which 'Biblical realism' asserts is a 'reality' which takes God and man 'radically and seriously'. It is from this 'reality' that the dialectical view of man was later developed, mainly in his later book, Christian Faith, though, as we have said, such a view was not absent in his Tambaram book. The theocentric character of this 'reality' is very strong. God is the 'absolute Sovereign', the 'sovereign Creator', holy as well as the wholly other, wholly beyond the grasp of man. He is the transcendent One, and his transcendence is 'absolute, primary transcendence, founded on the fact of God's Godhead.' He is the 'eternal initiative-taker' who confronts man, making known his holy will, judging and saving him.

A note of awesome diastasis and loftiness runs through Kraemer's

(1) See, for example, Christian Message, 41, 64, 66, 418, 431
(2) Christian Message, 41
(3) Christian Message, 64
vision of the divine majesty. Even though he balances this emphasis of God’s transcendence with casual reference to the Holy Spirit who 'dwells' in man to restore some sense of 'immanence of personal fellowship'. (1)

Together with the emphasis on God's sovereignty there is also the emphasis on his holy Will, which is set over against man's unholy desires and disobedience. The world and man, Kraemer says, have been created by God's Will, which is the 'ground', the beginning and the end of all that is. Even in his revelation, it is this holy Will that is revealed to men, and not his being. 'Not the mystery of His being or Essence is revealed, because that remains God's exclusive domain, but His redemptive Will towards mankind, God's saving Will, became manifest in his divine action, is what is revealed in the Christian faith.' (2) The holiness of God's will throws into sharp relief the unholy desires and sinfulness of man.

The natural correlative to 'sovereignty', 'will' are 'obedience' and 'faithfulness' or 'loyalty'. But because of sin man is at odds with God. Before him he is disobedient, faithless and disloyal. He is 'caught in his rebellion, confusion, sin and finiteness.' Rebellion and disobedience are characteristic in Kraemer's description of man's sinful state. So faith is 'obedient receptivity' to the reality of a new relationship with God. In this rebellion he is 'self-assertive,' 'self-justifying', wrapped up in his own 'self-will' and pride. 'Does not Biblical realism majestically proclaim that "all men are grass and all their glory like a flower

(1) Christian Message, 63–85, but see especially 63, 66, 67, 68.
(2) Christian Message, 73, for more references to God's will, see also 88, 89, 95–100, also see below, 542. Incidentally this utterance of Kraemer calls to our mind the Moslem's understanding of God's revelation, viz., a revelation mainly of his will. We do not suggest that Kraemer was Moslem in any respect!
in the field?" (1) It is this 'self-assertive' attitude that characterizes his judgment on man's religious consciousness and his religions, as we have seen earlier.

The language which describes this 'reality' - the radical God-man relation - not only suggests the imposing exaltedness of God but also sets God overagainst man in an antithetical relation. As such, says one of Kraemer's able critics, Farmer, it fails to do justice to the New Testament primal relation in terms of fatherly love. It is not that Kraemer does not speak about the love of God for man, only that the idea of love 'is almost wholly submerged in the idea of sovereignty.' Moreover, Farmer says, to the doctrine of God as sovereign will Kraemer adds the derivative doctrine of sin as rank disobedience and rebellion. This kind of references makes it more difficult to express the love of the Father for his children.

The implication for the study of religions is apparent,

It is much easier for those who set the primal emphasis on sovereignty to view the religious life of mankind on the one hand and God on the other as standing over against one another in a kind of isolation, than it is for those who set the primal emphasis on fatherly love .... the approach from the angle of God's absolute sovereign will results in what seems .... a curiously grudging and negative description of God's relation to men in their religious life, even when this is at its highest and best. It is described as a 'wrestling with the spirit of man', or in vague phrases like 'shining through' or 'leaving Himself not without witness.' (2)

Even though Farmer's criticism is originally directed to the position of Kraemer as expressed in the Tambaram book, it is, nevertheless, applicable to Kraemer's thought as a whole, for his

(1) Christian Message, 138
(2) Authority, 173
later writings are on the whole consistent in emphasis with his former utterances though qualifications have been brought in.\(^{(1)}\)

The emphasis on the sovereignty of God is effective in setting forth the diastasis. To accentuate it words like 'incommensurable', 'inaccessible', 'sui generis', 'strangeness' and 'wholly discontinuous' are called into service. A Biblical realism of this nature inevitably produced a dialectical anthropology which, in respect of attitude towards religious consciousness and religions, the negative overwhelms the positive. Kraemer has indeed genuinely attempted in *Christian Faith* to delineate the involvement of God in non-Christian religious quests. He also affirms that the world outside the Christian revelation is not 'God-forsaken.' On the matter of religious consciousness he apparently sides with Brunner against Barth who dismisses the question of 'general revelation.'\(^{(2)}\) Yet the general framework of his thought, viz., the radical sovereignty of God and the radical sinfulness of man, remains unchanged. Within this framework the 'positive' cannot be more than 'distortedly positive' and man's knowledge of God does not go beyond 'dim awareness'. There is no need to repeat here the influences which brings Kraemer to his rather lopsided position, as they have been dealt with earlier. His interaction with his contemporary cultural situation is definitely one important factor which tips the balance on the negative side.\(^{(1)}\)

\(^{(1)}\) In *Christian Faith* he affirms that he has not introduced any change in his standpoints of 1936. *Ibid.,* 232, 233.

\(^{(2)}\) See his remarks in *Christian Faith*, 232.
The meaning of the phrase 'Biblical realism' is ambiguous, even though we have tried to understand it mainly as an assertion of 'reality'. Kraemer himself admits its difficulty in *Christian Faith*, saying that he has not made sufficiently clear the implication of the term. But instead of clarifying its meaning for his readers, he only uses it less often in his later works. In places where he would have used it he adopts other terms which are not altogether free from ambiguity. Such terms are 'Biblical way of speaking', 'Biblical point of view', 'Biblical orientation', 'Biblical way of thinking', 'Biblical kerygma', 'Biblically motivated approach', and 'in the Biblical sense'. The word 'Biblical' is used as though its meaning were self-evident.

But there is another ambiguity which has a far-reaching implication in our study of his view on 'revelation.' It concerns its usage and its status. Of two points we need to take notice. On the one hand, Biblical realism, we are told, is a 'radically religious way of thinking', one which is proper to the theocentric nature of the Bible, with its 'religious logic.' As such, it should be 'the fundamental starting-point and criterion of all Christian and theological thinking.' It is not 'revelation' itself, but it 'testifies' to it. It can also be regarded as a 'deeper, more realistic' way of talking about the *sui generis* character of the realm of revelation and salvation. In brief, Biblical realism is the only proper approach to the content of the scriptures.

---

(1) *Christian Faith*, 232
(2) *Christian Faith*, 190, 246; 'realism', 296.
(5) *Christian Faith*, 7
(8) *Christian Faith*, 189.
(9) *Christian Faith*, 227
(10) *Christian Message*, 66, 125, 121
the other hand, there are places in his writings in which Biblical realism seems to have been used in the sense of revelation, or interchangeably with it. To illustrate this point let us give examples.

One of the major contentions of Kraemer is that in all our theological reasoning we must be sure of our starting-point. For the Christian, Biblical realism is the 'fundamental starting-point and criterion.' In another place where Kraemer discusses the problem of attitude towards man and his religions, he makes the statement that 'the theological starting-point therefore is revelation.'\(^{(1)}\) 'Biblical realism,' therefore, is interchangeable with 'revelation.' Again, on the problem of attitude, we are told that non-Christian religions must be understood or evaluated in the light of the Christian revelation, 'in the light of Christ's revelation it is a disturbing thing that such highly-developed spiritual personalities (i.e., the saintly figures in non-Christian religions) do not show the least comprehension of the greatest gift of Christ - forgiveness of sin.' But on the same page we are also told that the 'attitude towards the non-Christian religion' is derived 'from the standpoint of Biblical realism.' A page earlier he says, 'Inspired by this Biblical realism, the attitude towards the non-Christian religions is a remarkable combination of downright intrepidity and of radical humility.'\(^{(2)}\) Again, we see the interchangeability of 'revelation' and 'Biblical realism'.

\(^{(1)}\) Christian Message, 66, Christian Faith, 145
\(^{(2)}\) Christian Message, 129, 128
The point we wish to make is that in Kraemer's writings Biblical realism as a theological approach to the truth of the scriptures is somehow, due to its close proximity to revelation, assimilated into the structure of revelation. This 'Biblical way of thinking' is possible when man takes 'revelation' seriously, and he comes to think Biblically in the same way he comes to a real confrontation with 'revelation', that is, by way of 'conversion'. (1) Since Biblical realism and revelation are involved in one another, it is not surprising that the 'fusion' should occur, resulting in the interchangeability of terminology. (2) This 'fusion' creates the impression that the method of approach to 'revelation' also becomes part and parcel of 'revelation'. Since Biblical realism reflects the influence of the contemporary cultural situation, the fusion or assimilation therefore means that cultural elements are being introduced into the structure of 'revelation' itself. Thus 'revelation' cannot be taken as though it were undefiled by defiled hands, so to speak. Epistemologically, it cannot be the wholly 'other'. We shall come back to this point when we discuss Kraemer's idea of 'revelation' later.

(1) For his exposition of the uniqueness of 'Biblical thinking' and its difference from 'normal' thinking, see Christian Message 63-68.

(2) Such assimilations are not unknown among other aspects in theology. Because of the close proximity of 'revelation' and 'Jesus Christ', the latter is often taken as a shorthand reference to the former even in Kraemer's writings. See below, 369f. The 'fusion' of 'Christ' with 'God' is too numerous to mention, as evident in common prayer and worship.
E. **Summary Remarks**

The essential element of Kraemer's dialectical view of man is the inescapable God-relatedness of man to his Creator, despite his sin and rebellion. This understanding of man has its basis in the dialectical dealing of God with man as witnessed in the scriptures. The subjective aspect is reflected in the yearning and groping for God, which is man's Yes, and in his perversions and 'self-assertion', which represent his No, to his origin and the destiny for which God has created him. The postulation of the 'religious consciousness' is a definite step towards a positive evaluation of man's spiritual achievements as represented and expressed in the non-Christian faiths. It is a recognition of the 'God-involvement' in all serious spiritual quests by man. But this 'positive' attempt of Kraemer was developed within the framework of a radical antithetical view of the divine-human relation, with strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God and radical sinfulness of man, the 'positive' does not go beyond 'self-assertion' and 'self-justification'. Because man's Yes inevitably transforms itself into a No, Kraemer argues that man cannot be said to 'know' God. Thus there cannot be any positive, authentic knowledge of God outside 'revelation', which defines for man what Truth is. It is therefore not surprising that when it comes to 'revelation', it is as we shall see later, the idea of 'disengagement' or 'discontinuity' that is being stressed. The truth of God must be disengaged from the untruth and ambiguity of man.

It does not mean, however, that Kraemer denies whatever of truth and value in non-Christian faiths. The dialectical view of
man is formulated to make allowance for such recognition, that there is much which is true and good in human endeavours. Only from the point of Truth are the human elements seen to be perverted, so much so that Kraemer can say that man does not really know what is good. To understand this we have to keep in mind the 'two-level' judgment which is integral to his system.\(^{(1)}\) What is true on the 'human' level is not necessarily 'true' on the theological level.

We have already outlined the factors which prompted Kraemer to taking up the dialectical method. In view of his eventual 'negative' judgment it does not seem that he has successfully thrown off the shackles of Kierkegaard, though he has tried to do so in various seemingly 'positive' endeavours.

\(^{(1)}\) See below, 366ff where the 'two-level' judgment is elaborated.
III. H.R. NIEBUHR: AN EXISTENTIALIST APPROACH

One of the chief concerns of Niebuhr's theological reasoning has been man and his self-understanding: man not in isolation, but in the totality of his personal and social relationship before God. This concern can be translated into a number of 'existential questions'.

What will become of us? What is our whence and whither, what is the meaning - if meaning there is - in this whole march of mankind with which I am marching? Why have we, this human race, this unique historical reality, been thrown into existence? What is our guilt, our hope? What powers confront us in our birth and end? What must we do to be saved from the villainy, emptiness and futility? How can we have a friendly God?

In the course of his theological reflection Niebuhr makes free use of insights from contemporary cultural courses. One of the basic assumptions in his thought is that the Christian life, with all its moral and religious experience, though distinct from, is yet nevertheless continuous with other modes of human existence. Thus he feels free to subject human existence and its structure of experience to critical examinations in the light of his Christian faith. He is more interested in the moral and religious experiences of man than the Christian doctrines which grow out of them. So theological reasoning, in his opinion, is a process which moves between two poles, viz., actual human experience as he finds it, and the basic convictions of the Christian faith. He characterizes his position as one which is not 'Bible-centred' but 'Bible-informed'.

The mature thought of Niebuhr is developed in the framework of modern existentialism. It is evident that he is indebted to Kierkegaard. He is, for example, sympathetic with Kierkegaard's wrestling with problems such as the understanding of non-transcendable human subjectivity, as well as the non-transcendable relation between subject and subject, self and others. Again, he is also concerned,

(1) Christ and Culture, 224
(2) See Responsible Self, 45 where he states his disagreement with theologians who think otherwise.
(3) Responsible Self, 46
like Kierkegaard, with the responsible agent whose action and decision must be echoed in thought, without undermining the gulf between thought and decision. This point is reflected in Niebuhr's emphasis on the necessity of 'reasoning in faith', by which he seeks to redeem the Christian existentialist from the charge of anti-rationalism.

Niebuhr, however, is also a severe critic of Kierkegaard's extreme individualistic understanding of man and his experience. In the Concluding Unscientific Postscript Kierkegaard conceives truth as something very subjective. Truth is 'subjective truth—truth for me.' This truth is, to be sure, found 'only in faith and decision', but decision is understood in a very individualistic way. Niebuhr examines and rejects Kierkegaard's view. Truth, for Niebuhr, involved community, because it does not come to the individual 'without companions, collaborators, teachers, corroborating witness.' It is certainly right that decision is made by the individual, but it is never individualistic, for it is made in the context of his fellowship with other individuals and in the light of 'the responsibility of the self to and for other selves.' Kierkegaard's existentialism ends up, in Niebuhr's opinion, naturally in giving up cultural problems because he abstracts the individual from the society. It is his reaction against, and his attempt to redeem, existentialism from such individualism that Niebuhr develops a social or communal existentialism which is akin to Buber's view in many respects.

(1) For a brief reference to Kierkegaard's individualistic emphasis, see Appendix I, below, 585ff.
(2) Kierkegaard, op cit., 19, 540, quoted in Christ and Culture, 242.
(3) Christ and Culture, 244.
(4) For a brief reference to Buber's view, see Appendix I, below 585ff.
The centre of Niebuhr's existentialism is the idea of the 'social self', which implies a certain understanding of the relation between the self and God, and not only the nature of the self in its relation to other selves. This existentialist anthropology of Niebuhr's was already implied in his works Revelation, but an adequate statement of it was not given until the publication of his Robertson lectures, the Responsible Self, which represents Niebuhr's thought developed over 'a long period of teaching.' (1) In the following we shall examine Niebuhr's 'social self' in its various relations and dimensions of experience.

A. Man as a Social Self

By 'social self,' or rather, the 'social nature of selfhood,' Niebuhr means that the self is a being which not only knows itself in relation to other selves, but exists as self only in that relation. To be able to say 'I am I' is an acknowledgement of my existence as the counterpart of another self. (2) In this aspect he is at one with Buber who maintains that the experience of the self in the presence of other selves is not a derived experience, but a primordial one, as the I-Thou which the 'primary word' has the priority over the self's awareness of I as an individual entity.

(1) See his son's remarks in Responsible Self, 1, and his own, 4. Gustafson says that to understand Responsible Self one should read carefully his earlier book, Revelation, ibid, 11.

(2) Responsible Self, 71
This relation between self and self, according to Niebuhr, is an active relationship. It is best understood in terms of dialogue or response to other selves. This dialogue takes place in two ways: when the self is confronted by the other self or selves whose physical presence is felt, and when the self is engaged in its lonely debates in the presence of remembered or expected other selves in imagination or memory. The self, by nature, is a social self. If 'solitary self' is to be used, 'solitary' should only be understood in a physical sense.

This view of the self reflects that of Mead. Mead understands the 'me' as only the internalized other. In this sense, the self in the dialectic process is at once knower and known, subject and object. This idea is expressed in a passage which Niebuhr quotes at length.

The individual expresses himself as such, not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same social group, or from the generalised standpoint of the social group as a whole to which he belongs ... he enters his own experiences as a self ..... in so far as he first becomes an object to himself ..... He becomes an object to himself only by taking the attitude of other individuals towards himself within a social environment or context of experience and behaviour in which both he and they are involved.

Both Mead and Niebuhr therefore agree that the self which can be an object to itself is essentially a 'social structure' arising in social experience. This notion of the self also bears on the ethics of conscience, into which we shall not go. Their agreement, however, does not seem to go much beyond this point, because Niebuhr

(1) For a brief reference to Mead's position, see Appendix I, below, 577f.
knows fully well that the 'evolutionary, biocentric and behaviouristic thinking' of Mead is basically incompatible with his theistic position. For Niebuhr, the self is essentially spiritual, being involved in a complex of relations not only with other selves but also with God. The relation with God is presupposed in all the self's relation with other beings. This view is akin to that of Buber who sees every thou pointing him towards the fringe of the eternal Thou, so much so that he can say, 'In each thou we address the eternal thou.' (1)

Perhaps at this point we should briefly state the relevance of the idea of 'social self' to other aspects of Niebuhr's thought which are of interest to us. This understanding of the self clarifies for him the essential relation between God and man, and with it, the meaning of responsibility. The self should be a 'responsible self' just because it is a 'social self'. It is also from this standpoint that Niebuhr attempts to tackle the problem of sin and salvation. The analysis of the social experience of the self also brings out the timefulness of the moment, with which he seeks to introduce a historical dimension into existentialism. It is this sensitiveness of the timefulness of the moment that is behind the argument for historical relativism.

B. The triadic nature of human experience and the meaning of the responsible self

Since the self only exists as a self when it is in 'relation' to the 'other' (others), we must examine the 'relation' as well as the 'other'.

The human situation of encounter is triadic, because 'the encounter of the I and the thou takes place always in the presence of a third.' (1) This is so because the dialectic relation has a double character. Niebuhr himself illustrates this 'double character' by reference to the self's relation to society and nature, in which the self's knowing of nature occurs.

By nature Niebuhr refers to 'that large world of events and agencies that we regard as impersonal, as purely objective or thing-like in character. It is the congeries or systems of those actualities, events and energies that we know but that we do not interpret as knowing themselves.' (2) These congeries and systems he also calls natural events. How did I come to know and to respond to these natural events? I respond to them as one who interprets them in their interactions and meanings for me. But my interpretation is never the bare result of my encounter with them alone. From childhood these events have been interpreted to me by my companions in the community. I am indebted to them for language and symbols, names and categories, grammar and logic with which I organize my own interpretation which must again be verified by my fellow beings. So when I respond to nature I do so as a social being, and when I

(1) Responsible Self, 79
(2) Idem
respond to my companions, I do so as one, who, like them, also responds to nature. I engage in a continuous dialogue in which there are at least three parties - the self, the social companions, and natural events. (1) There is always a third party involved in any encounter.

There is yet another type of 'triadic, dialectical interaction' which is more close to Niebuhr's heart. It involves the exercising of practical reason, as it deals with values and ideals. In the development of this idea Niebuhr is indebted to Josiah Royce.

Royce understands moral life primarily as an affair of loyalty. Loyalty is defined as the 'willing and practical and thorough-going devotion of a person to a cause.' (2) A cause, whether good or bad, takes the self beyond its own private experience because it seeks to include other individuals who are loyal to it together into a unity, but it is not to be identified with any individual. A good cause is one which can best further the loyalty of his fellowmen. The individual finds self-fulfilment only in loyalty to a cause. When a person is able to say, 'for this cause was I born and therefore came I into the world,' he has arrived at mature selfhood.

This idea of loyalty to a cause is taken up by Niebuhr as evidence of another 'triadic situation' because, as he sees it, the bond of loyalty also has a double character. It is a 'double bond.' The self is not only tied to his companion, for instance, but also to the cause which is the third reality involved. So the soldier's loyalty is not only to his fellow soldiers, but also to a cause.

(1) Responsible Self, 80
(2) Royce, The Philosophy of Loyalty, 1908, ix, quoted in John Smith, Royce's Social Infinite, 1950, 35. A good introduction to Royce's moral thought is The Philosophy of Josiah Royce, by Peter Fuss, 1965
which unites them. Or, in the case of a patriot, his loyalty is devoted to his country as the cause and to his citizens. He responds to the actions of his fellow citizens, to their calls upon him for service, to their criticism, their approvals and disapprovals. But he does so as one who is also engaged in dialogue with his nation, to which or its representatives, he looks, for an ultimate standard of valuation. (1)

The important thing in Niebuhr's arguments is that in our response to the other, be it a 'thou' or an 'it', singular or plural, there is always a third party involved. Again, this third reality, according to Niebuhr, also has a double character. 'On the one hand, it is something personal; on the other hand it contains within itself again a reference to something that transcends it and to which it refers.' (2) In the case of the patriot, the third reality to whom he is related besides his fellow countrymen is a nation. But the nation is not only a community of persons living and dead, heroes of the past and the future, it is always the nation plus the cause for which its representatives have been fighting - be it democracy or communism. The cause again is something personal and something that transcends it. Democracy, for instance, refers to a 'transcendent reference group', which again refers beyond themselves. From the movement of thought based on the principle of 'the third beyond each third' Niebuhr comes to the conclusion that

(1) Responsible Self, 84
(2) idem
Ultimately we arrive in the case of democracy at a community which refers beyond itself to humanity and which in doing so seems to envisage not only representatives of the human community as such but a universal society and a universal generalized other, Nature and Nature's God. (1)

The ultimate third reality in which all encounters participate turns out to be God himself. Here we see the difference between Niebuhr and Royce. Royce moves from the loyalty to a cause ultimately to the universal community as the most ideal cause. But Niebuhr goes beyond this community to God who is the more ultimate cause. God is 'the ultimate person, the ultimate cause, the centre of the universal community.' (2) Radical monotheism would not allow man's faith and loyalty to be grounded in any object other than God, not even in the universal community. (3) However, the universal community is not neglected, because faith in God naturally involves loyalty to 'whatever is.' The counterpart of faith in God the universal being is universal loyalty, which is loyalty to the universal community, to 'whatever is.' This is certainly in his mind when he says:

When I respond to the One creative power, I place my companions, human and subhuman and superhuman, in the one universal society which has its centre neither in me nor in any finite cause but in the Transcendent One. (4)

(1) Responsible Self, 85
(2) Responsible Self, 86. See also The Triad of Faith, Andover Newton Bulletin, XLVII, 1954, 9.
(3) It is in the same vein of thought that Niebuhr criticises Bergson who is oriented towards the so-called 'open-society'. Bergson's critique, Niebuhr admits, of the defensive ethics and religion of closed societies, and his espousal of the aspiring religion and morals of open society, seems 'to move towards monotheism'. But then Bergson defines the open society as humanity. In so doing, his aspiring religion and morality only reveal themselves as merely the prelude to a new defensive and closed-society faith. As such, Bergson's open society of humanity, together with Royce's universal community, fall under the judgment of 'radical monotheism.' See Radical Monotheism, 35.
(4) Responsible Self, 123f
This analysis of the triadic nature of the human dialectic relation brings out the important point that man's ultimate engagement or encounter is with God, whether he knows it or not. The movement of thought on the basis of 'the third beyond each third' resembles that of some of the traditional arguments for the existence of God. The cosmological arguments, for instance, begin from events or movements in this world and proceed to 'God'. Niebuhr is in fact saying that God is within man's reach, if only man submits the complicated structures of experiences and relations to a thorough analysis. Since God is presupposed in human experiences and relations, the natural man therefore cannot be said to be godless. That is why he affirms elsewhere, 'Our natural mind is not Godless.'

The essential element in Niebuhr's analysis is that man's ultimate engagement is with God. This belief naturally raises the question of man's knowledge of God, since he is not godless. But we shall leave this question to a later discussion. Meanwhile, let us see how it bears on the idea of the 'responsible self.'

To understand the idea of 'responsible self' we must keep two questions constantly in mind: how can a self be 'responsible' self, and to whom is the self responsible? Let us first look at the noun, 'responsibility'. To Niebuhr it includes at least the notions of responsiveness and answerability (accountability), the understanding of which reflects the impact of modern thought on his sensitive mind. The modern 'psychology of interaction', as Niebuhr calls it, has taught us to see man as a being who reacts predictably to stimuli acting upon him. This insight has been adopted widely in

---

(1) The Triad of Faith, 14. Also see Revelation, 155 in which the idea of man having some knowledge of God is presupposed.
(2) See below, 419ff, 460ff
There is much truth in the 'interactional' emphasis. But in order not to fall into the mechanistic and deterministic fallacies of Behaviourism, Niebuhr, like Toynbee, stresses the part played by man in his responses to the challenges. So for Niebuhr, 'response' or 'responsive action' is understood as 'considered reaction', being responsive in accordance with our interpretation of the action impinged upon us. The self does not blindly or mechanically react to the stimuli. On the contrary, it retains the initiative to interpret and the freedom to determine for itself the best course of reaction. This responsive action, moreover, becomes 'responsible' action if it is made in anticipation of an answer to itself. 'Our actions are responsible not only insofar as they are reactions to interpret actions upon us but also insofar as they are made in anticipation of answers to our answers.' Responsibility here means answerability, and only an action is made in these conditions is the self held morally responsible for it.

It is also necessary to ask the question: to whom or to what the self is responsible. It is here we see the significance of the analysis of the triadic structure of human experience. In all our responses or encounters, a third party or reality is always involved. A 'responsible self' is therefore one who responds and is responsible to other beings or events in the context of this third reality.

(1) According to Niebuhr, this type of psychology has overshadowed 'the faculty psychology of the past which saw in the self three or more facient powers, and the associationist psychology which understood the mind to operate under laws of association.' (Responsible Self, 56) Not only interactional psychology, but also biology and sociology have taught us to regard ourselves as beings in the midst of a field of natural and social forces, acted upon and reacting, attracted and repelling. This shift in emphasis also affects our understanding of history. Now historians generally pay more attention to the natural, social and economic factors which act as stimuli, challenging societies and individuals alike. For a brief description of the behaviouristic idea of stimuli and responses, see below, 577ff

(2) Responsible Self, 64
Niebuhr says,

Responsiveness now becomes responsibility in the sense of accountability when response is made not to one being alone but to that being as related with the self to a third reality. (1)

But since God is the ultimate third reality, therefore the responsible self is one that is ultimately responsible to God. From this God-oriented point of view Niebuhr sees God as the One beyond the many who is acting in all actions upon the self. It is another way of saying that God is he in whom we move and have our being.

Responsibility affirms: 'God is acting in all actions upon you. So respond to all actions upon you as to respond to his action.' (2)

Besides the question of the natural man's knowledge of God, there are other questions implied in this understanding of the self. First, there is the question of sin. Since God is the One, the ultimate third reality, who acts in all actions upon us, therefore the failure to respond to him and to render ultimate responsibility to him means that we render our responsibility to something other than him, which is sin. Again, there is the question of 'interpretation', since the 'responsible' action is our considered, interpreted 'reaction.' How are we to interpret actions impinged upon us? With what do we interpret? These are the questions we shall have to examine later. Meanwhile let us turn to another trend in Niebuhr's thought in which he also tries to bring out the essential relation between God and man, at the same time the idea of the oneness of selfhood towards which man must grow. In the

(1) Responsible Self, 82
(2) Responsible Self, 126
analysis of the triadic nature of relations we are led to see that God is the third reality in all our encounters, now in the analysis of the mystery of being we find that we are immediately and directly confronted by God who is the power that creates and sustains us.

C. The mystery of being and the oneness of selfhood

Niebuhr is absolutely fascinated by the mystery of the 'I', which is presupposed in the complicated structure of human experiences and relations. To him, there is nothing more real than 'I am', and yet the 'I' is not identified or identifiable with any part, or even the whole, of the body. 'This "I" cannot be deduced from something that is more evidently the case than that I am.'(1) Attempts such as 'I think, therefore I am,' 'I feel, therefore I am,' or 'I am alive, therefore I am,' are not valid arguments for the 'I', because in each case the 'I' is presupposed. No doubt the I is involved in the process of living, thinking and feeling. But at the same time it transcends them.

How does this mysterious I which knows itself only in its encounter with others come to exist? According to Niebuhr it came into existence by the creative 'radical action by which I am.' Having been thrown into the realm of existence, as it were, the I now 'finds itself to be absolutely dependent in its existence.

(1) Responsible Self, 108f
completely contingent, inexplicably present in its here-ness and
now-ness.' (1) It is contingent because it was cast into existence
in a certain historical community of a particular culture and time.
The self cannot ask why it is here and not there, or now and not
then. All this is beyond its control. It is dependent because
it depends on the radical action that cast it into the realm of
being and thereafter maintains it. The I therefore can only accept
its being as a gift. This truth is expressed in the words of
G. Santayana which Niebuhr quotes:

Existence is a miracle, and morally considered, a
free gift from moment to moment ... though it (i.e.,
the spirit) is living, it is powerless to live;
that though it may die, it is powerless to die,
and that altogether, at every instant and in every
particular, it is in the hands of some alien and
inscrutable power.' (2)

The I in Niebuhr's view is completely at the mercy of the power by
which it is. It is powerless to live or to die. Because the
action which created the self is the action by which I am, so it
seems truer to say that I am being lived than that I live. I am
powerless to die, for I cannot elect myself out of existence. I
may commit biocide, but not suicide. (3)

This 'radical power by which I am' is, as Niebuhr carefully
points out, not to be regarded with or classified in that series of
actions of finite powers to which we respond in our daily social
relations, though it acts through the finite actions upon us. It
is unique, and so is our experience of it. It is difficult to grasp

(1) Responsible Self, 109
(2) Santayana, Ultimate Religion, in Orbiter Scripta, 283f Buchler
and Schwartz, quoted in Responsible Self, 114.
(3) Responsible Self, 115
as we cannot give any familiar analogy. The radical character of this power, however, comes home to us when we ask ourselves the ultimate question: what am I? But because there seems to be nothing I can do about this alien power by which I am except an absolute dependence, man does not wish to face this reality even in this encounter. This is done by shifting the focus of this encounter of being to less radical levels. Instead of asking oneself 'what am I?' now man asks less radical questions, what is man? or what is a Christian, and so on. For the 'I' we always substitute it for the 'one', such as: what should one do as a Christian? What is the fitting thing to do for one as an organization man? So the self becomes one among the many: just one living body among many bodies, one thinking mind among many minds, one complex of feelings among many complexes. This failure to come to grips with the alien radical power, in Niebuhr's opinion, is the root of trouble, or the cause of 'depersonalization', though he does not use this word.

So the person loses himself in a mass and responds not as a self but as a part of a machine, or of a field of forces, or of a system of ideas. It responds in all its action not to the act by which it is a self but to the action by which the group of bodies or of minds or of emotions exists. The self does not exist in the presence of its maker or of the action that makes it; a mind exists in the presence of its objects, a body exists vis-à-vis natural forces, a conscious exists in encounter with society. (1)

The failure of the self to respond as a self to the power by which it is means that the self cannot achieve the desired integrity or oneness which renders the self truly responsible. The problem

(1) Responsible Self, 116
of integrity of the self can be understood better in the context of the responsible self. In its social life, the self has to play many roles, such as being a responsible and responsive self before nature, responsive in political or economic or cultural society as responsible citizen; responsible businessman, responsible educator, responsible scientist, responsible parent, responsible churchman and so on. So the question of integrity arises: what ties all these responses and responsibilities together and where is the one responsible self among all these roles played by the individual being? Niebuhr says he is not satisfied with the sociologists who speak of the many roles a person plays in his relation to different groups without going into how the one self is present in all the roles; nor could he find help from the psychologist who speaks of self-identification as a process of self-distinction from the dominant others without specifying with what it is that the distinct self identifies itself. As an alternative Niebuhr puts forth the suggestion that the source of integrity (or that which brings about integrity in a person or in a society) is not in, but beyond, the self. It is identified with the power by which the self is, and it acts upon the self in all actions. This means that the self can achieve unity or integrity only when it comes to grips with this power. This thought is reflected in these words:

The self as one self among all the systematized reactions in which it engages seems to be the counterpart of a unity that lies beyond, yet expresses itself in, all the manifold systems of actions upon it. In religious language, the soul and God belong together; or otherwise stated, I am one within myself as I encounter the One in all that acts upon me. (2)

(1) Responsible Self, 121
(2) Responsible Self, 122
To come to grips, or encounter, with this power, which is also the 'transcendent principle of unity' (if this phrase is not too idealistic for Niebuhr), means that one must first acknowledge in faith that whatever acts upon me, in whatever domain of being, is part of, or participates, in one ultimate action, and then respond in the totality of the self to this action. 'To respond to the ultimate action in all responses to finite actions means to seek one integrity of self amidst all the integrities of scientific, political, economic, educational and other cultural activities.'

We need to notice two things in this context of the integrity of self-hood. First, Niebuhr does not say that unity cannot be achieved at all unless the self responds and is responsible to the power by which it is. In fact, he grants that 'some systems of unity' can be achieved within the self if it interprets particular events as instances of general behaviour, or discerns natural constancies at work in natural occasions and social constancies in the behaviour of companion individuals in their various aggregates. But he would claim that ultimate oneness or integrity of selfhood is denied of the self if it fails to respond to the power which acts on it through the many actions in which it is engaged.

Second, the integral self is not only the one responding self amidst all the responses of the roles being played, but also one which brings all interests and values under one transcending centre, the One beyond the many. This is so because the response to the radical power necessarily qualifies all the self's interpretations of the actions upon it, and also its reactions. All the actions

(1) Responsible Self, 123, also see 125.
(2) Responsible Self, 122
which act upon the self are now understood as participating in the radical, unique and absolute power which maintains all beings. The implication for ethics is obvious. The centre of valuation is no more in the self, or in the nation, or church, or science or humanity. It is in the power by which 'all things are and by which I am', resulting in the affirmation of all beings and the universal community, without falling into the mistake made by Bergson and Royce. (1)

This emphasis on the absolute dependence of the 'alien' power has been, in another context, called 'radical monotheism', which affirms the absoluteness of God in all our thinking, actions and valuations. Because the self in faith knows the One, absolute transcendent centre, it can accept the finite, relative centres and values without making them into quasi-absolutes. The integrity of selfhood is possible when the self responds to all actions upon it as to respond to the transcending power and centre. The integral self is one which knows that the centre of its oneness is not in itself, but in God.

The notions of the 'bueness of selfhood' and the 'responsible self' are best taken together as the one implies the other. The 'responsible self' is the self which responds and is responsible to the One beyond the many who acts on it through the actions of the many. When the self responds in this way, integrity becomes a possibility, if not already a reality. The integral, responsible self in Niebuhr's writings serve as the 'normative' understanding of man in the sense that it is what man should be. Man is a sinner

(1) See above, 231.
when he renders his responsibility to finite value-centres and not to the ultimate, absolute 'power', or God. In doing so, the internal 'oneness' or 'integrity' of the self is destroyed when the centres which provide grounds for 'some systems of unity' are incompatible with one another. The desire for 'oneness' is an important theme which runs through Niebuhr's works, and not only here in the contexts of self and sin. It affects his understanding of God and his 'revelation', in which case 'revelation' (in one sense) becomes the 'revelation' of the oneness of God's goodness and power. In view of the importance of 'oneness' in human life, the 'oneness' of God is given a major emphasis, if not the overall stress, in his exposition of 'revelation' and the meaning of 'God'. In seeking the 'oneness' of God, man is also seeking his own integrity, and hence his salvation. We shall come back to his emphasis of 'oneness' later on when we examine his idea of God and revelation. Now let us turn to another aspect of the 'self', viz., the historical dimension which constitutes the ground for Niebuhr's defence of 'historical relativism'.

D. The Time-full self and freedom

The considered reaction of the responsible self to the interpreted actions upon it can be described as a decision. The time of decision is neither the past, nor the future, but the present. Thus, like

(1) *Christ and Culture*, 246
other existentialist thinkers, Niebuhr attaches great importance to the present. 'The present moment is the time of decision; and the meaning of the present is that it is the time dimension of freedom and decision.' But while Kierkegaard and his followers tend to concentrate all the meaning of personal existence into the present moment, to the extent of saying that 'the past is not reality - for me; only the contemporary is reality for me ...' Niebuhr prefers to see the present being pregnant with the past and the future. To him, the past and the future are rather to be regarded as organically extensive of the present, and that the past is a reality which must be reckoned with. The self is not just a social self existing at a point in time, but in a very real sense a timefull or history-full self.

The bifurcation of history into external and internal history also necessitates the bifurcation of time on the one hand into 'space-time', 'clock-time', the 'chronicler's time' or 'Mathematical time'; and on the other hand 'life-time' or 'duration'. When Niebuhr refers to the self as a 'time-full' self, it is this internal view of time characterized by 'duration' that he has in mind. The word 'duration' draws our attention to the close proximity of Niebuhr's view to that of Bergson, whose idea of 'durée réelle' (pure duration) represents a climax of development in the Augustinian tradition. In an Appendix we shall examine in detail the notions of time as represented by Augustine and Bergson. Here we only draw attention to some similarities between Niebuhr and Bergson.

(1) Christ and Culture, 246
(3) See above, 64
(4) See below, 597ff
Like Bergson, Niebuhr also understands time as 'organic', being a 'dimension of our life and of our community's being.' (1) He also makes it clear that this internal view of time is qualitatively different from that of 'space-time', a distinction which echoes Bergson's division characterized by 'heterogeneity' and 'homogeneity.' Like Bergson, Niebuhr also sees time as a 'living, a stream of consciousness, a flow of feeling, thought and will.' (2) This, in essence, is what 'durée' is. This view of time inevitably raises questions on the freedom of the individual, as time, being a 'dimension' of one's social existence, also includes much of the 'past' in it. To what extent then does the past influence the present decision? The question of freedom is tackled by Bergson in *Time and Free Will* (3). The same question also occupies Niebuhr's attention, and his treatment, as we shall see, is significantly different from that of Bergson. (4) Now let us briefly examine Niebuhr's internal, existential view of time.

The present, as we have mentioned, is given important significance by Niebuhr. He also regards it as the living reality for the self. The self is 'always in the present .... always in the moment, so that the very notion of the present is probably unthinkable apart from some implicit reference to a self.' (5) I and now, he says, belong together. From the 'external' observer's point of view (comparable to Bergson's 'superficial self') this now is but a point in clock-time, between the no-longer and the not-yet. But from the 'internal' point, this 'now' is time-full, in the sense

---

(1) Revelation, 69
(2) Revelation, 69
(3) See below, 247
(4) See below, 248f
(5) Responsible Self, 93
that 'the past and the future are not the no-longer and the not-yet; they are extensions of the present.' (1) The idea of 'compresence' is applied to the analysis of the different phases of time.

Briefly, to be in the present for the self is to be in compresence with what is not myself. It is the awareness of being acted upon by what is not myself from without me that I am aware of the present moment. (2) Yet in the awareness of this present moment, there is also the compresence of the past and the future.

The past is present in the 'now' as drives, desires, instincts, ways of social behaviour, habits, speech and thought. These elements form the content of our 'conscious and unconscious memory,' which endures in the present. But the past itself is also an affair of compresence. The self 'remembers' itself, but remembers itself in encounter with others. For instance, it remembers its parents, and their actions upon it and its responses: their approvals and disapprovals, their opinions and their ideals. It also remembers the common community experiences which it shared with them and which made them what they are. It also remembers the history of the nation to which it belongs, as well as the language and culture which have become integral parts of him and which endure into the present. So the past which is in the present is not just something private and individual, a recollection of the sensations of joy and sorrow, or its private thoughts detached from the reality of life. It is social in character, so much so that we can almost say the past is a community, the reality of the community enduring

(1) Responsible Self 93
(2) This point is also well expressed in Christ and Culture, 247f
in the present. It was Augustine, and also Bergson, who saw the compresence of the past in the present, but it is Niebuhr which gives this 'past' a radically social interpretation.\(^1\)

In like manner the future is in the present in the form of anticipated encounter, of action and response, of 'meeting with compresences' for which the present is preparing the self. This anticipated encounter of the self, whether in joy, hope, anxiety, or fear which the self experiences in the present moment, is tied up with its past which provides the ground for future hope and present action. In other words, anticipations are developed out of memories of the past and the possibilities of the present.

The present therefore is a moment which also embraces the past and the future. In view of Niebuhr's 'social' emphasis it would not be incorrect to say that time is for him but the internalized social experiences in the form of duration for the individual, a duration in which past, present and future together form one organic whole. Thus,

\[
\text{Time in our history is not another dimension of the external space world in which we live, but a dimension of our life and of our community's being. We are not in this time but it is in us.} \quad (2)
\]

This internal and social understanding of time as presented in Niebuhr's writings naturally thrusts into prominence the idea of community. It is from the common past that the self derives

---

\(^1\) Niebuhr of course is not the only one who gives the 'past' a social interpretation. J. Royce, for instance, understands the self as one which is, 'by its very essence, a being with a past.' The self is and has a history. It is both its past and its future. This past of the self is rooted in the 'common past' of 'a community of memory'. See Royce, The Problem of Christianity, 1913, vol.ii, 40ff

\(^2\) Revelation, 69, italics mine.
language and symbols with which it interprets the present and on the basis of which it also anticipates its future encounters. The self is inescapably related to a community in a particular culture and time, and it is the common heritage of this community that makes it what it is. 'The past is what we are'. But at the same time it sets a limit to the range of its knowledge and possibilities. The concept of 'historical relativism' is an attempt by Niebuhr to draw attention to the relatedness of the self to 'history', and the limitations which come with it. (1) Such a recognition naturally results in the 'confessional' standpoint which stands, among other things, for a denial of the possibility of any universal standpoint in theology. (2)

This view of time, with its emphasis on the historical nature of the 'now', is meant to correct the superficial and individualistic understanding of the present moment in Kierkegaard's existentialism. But if it has succeeded in doing so, it has also raised the difficult problem of individual freedom. This problem is made more acute by his theory of the self in its relation to the society. The self needs to interpret the actions of others upon it in order to respond and be responsible. But interpretation requires the use of 'images', 'patterns' and 'symbols' or 'symbolic forms'. Yet these 'a priori equipments' are not so much the product of the self's own past as that of the community which, mainly through education, has imprinted on its mind. Does it mean that this communal past which endures in the form of tradition and memory in the present completely rules over the self, determining his mode of thought and action? (3) In what

(1) For 'historical relativism', see above, 57ff
(2) For 'confessional' standpoint, see above 1ff also below, 545ff
(3) Responsible Self, 100, also see 103.
sense then is the individual self free and master of its own fate? Does it also mean that the responses of the self can be predicted on the basis of what has happened in the past under similar situation and circumstances?

The problem of freedom is also one of Bergson's chief preoccupations, which he mainly deals with in Time and Free Will. He points out that the confusion over the issue of freedom (such as the objections raised from the standpoint of Determinism) is the outcome of a basic misunderstanding of the 'time' which the 'fundamental self' assumes, viz., 'duration.' Determinism takes 'time' in terms of space, as something measurable or as a series of atomic states. But 'duration' refers to the interpretation of qualitative states which cannot be measured. The act which springs from the 'fundamental self', through 'intuition', is essentially free and creative. (1)

However, Bergson's freedom is not an absolute, unqualified freedom. The free act of the self is 'self-determined', (2) and the

(1) Bergson regards as false questions whether the self could have done otherwise after a certain action is performed, or whether it can be predicted provided all the antecedents are known, They are raised in the context of time in terms of space. The Determinist and the Associationist commit the mistake of supposing that the mind of the agent consists of a succession of atomic states that determine how he will act. When we regard our individual actions and analyse them into means and ends and purposes, Determinism seems to be the logical conclusion. But this view of the self and his actions does not correspond to what we know of ourselves and our actions through 'intuition', which understands time in terms of 'duration'. It is spatial time which makes us think of ourselves as made up of elements that can be measured and counted, and our actions as the play of these elements. But consciousness cannot be measured. The different conscious states interpenetrate one another as qualities and not quantities. The act which springs from the fundamental self is free and creative. Acts cannot be predicted, even when all conditions are known in advance, because 'to have all the conditions given is, in concrete duration, to place oneself at the very moment of the act and not to foresee it.' Time and Free Will, 1910, quotation taken from Harper Torch edition 239 also see 220.

(2) See for example Time and Free Will, 1910 (Torch ed.), 220-221
self in turn is somehow 'conditioned' by the past which is enduring in the present. 'The whole of our past psychic life conditions our present state, without being its necessary determinant;' he says, 'whole, also, it reveals itself in our character, although no one of its past states manifests itself explicitly in character.' (1) Even though on the one hand he says that the past 'conditions' our present, yet on the other hand he also says that the past is that which has ceased to act, and thus remains 'powerless'. (2) It is difficult to know exactly how the past determines or conditions our present. His emphasis has been mainly on the novel, original and creative act of the 'élán.'

Niebuhr would probably not disagree with Bergson's assertion that freedom or free act must be an act which springs from the whole self, from the 'fundamental self'. In fact Niebuhr has always emphasized that the self must respond to actions upon it with the totality of the self. But he more than Bergson concentrates on the determining role of the past which endures in the present. The personality, which is formed as a product of the self's encounters with nature and community, reflects even in its spontaneous acts the community's past, its opinions, ideals and valuations as embodied in traditions and folklore. So it is not enough to say that free action is the spontaneous action of the whole personality. Genuine

(1) Bergson, Time and Free Will, 1910 (Torch ed.) 191
(2) See for instance Bergson, Matter and Memory, 1911, 193ff. See also below, 603ff the reference to memory and perception in Bergson's thought which is also relevant to our understanding of his handling of the 'past' in the present.
freedom, as Niebuhr sees it, must be a freedom in which the individual is able to transcend, but not to be independent of, the past which is in him. This thought is in his mind when for instance he says, 'the question of freedom arises ... as the question of the self's ability in its present to change its past and future and to achieve or receive a new understanding of its ultimate historical context.' (1)

There are, as Niebuhr sees it, two ways in which the self can 'change' the past and the future. One is the way of antitraditionalism which he rejects. This is the way of Descartes and the radical empiricists. It is a method of radical and systematic doubt, radically questioning every received notion and forming in the present moment new patterns for interpretation. This method is successful when it is applied to the study of nature, as it enables man to abandon his old anthropological patterns of interpretation in favour of new understanding of nature's ways. But applied to our responses to persons and communities, 'it has been successful only to the extent to which we have been able to reduce selves to objects, to unknowing knowns, non-interpreting reactors.' (2)

The other way, which Niebuhr himself adopts, is the way of reinterpreting the past. It is a way which recalls, accepts, understands and reorganizes the past instead of abandoning it. Since our past also reflects the past of the community to which we belong, so in order to reinterpret the past in the light of the present we need to study and re-study our history, in which our

(1) Responsible Self, 101
(2) Responsible Self, 102
symbols and images have their roots.\(^1\) To be free, therefore, means to be able to question and reinterpret the past in us. This has the effect of changing the present course of action and future expectations. So Niebuhr says, 'if we look for the arbitrary free will, we can locate it only ... at the point where (a man) commits himself to resolute questioning of the adequacy of his stereotyped established interpretations.'\(^2\) To reinterpret our past is also to reconstruct our past, an idea which is important when we come to his idea of revelation.

It is significant that Niebuhr also includes in reconstruction the idea of recalling the past. To begin with, to study history, obviously, is to recall the past which endures in the present in the form of memory and traditions. This memory endures in the corporate life of the society, hence traditions, and the individual life of the self which reflects the 'past' of the community. But the communal memory is also deposited in monuments, books and manuscripts, for instance. The 'past' which endures in the individual as well as in the community must be checked with the memory which has been so deposited. This is necessary not only to validate the accuracy of our memory of significant events, but also to seek fresh insight which enables us to reinterpret our past.

\(^1\) Niebuhr regards man as a **symbolic** rather than a **rational** animal in the sense that he is far more an image-making and image-using creature than he thinks he is. It is with the help of 'images,' 'symbols,' 'patterns' and 'models' that man seeks to grasp and understand the reality of the world and the actuality of human existence which otherwise might have stayed unintelligible to him. See *Revelation*, 98, 120, *Responsible Self*, 151-155 for a brief discussion. Niebuhr has also given us an example, the 'Civil War,' which serves as an established pattern for American citizens to interpret the interaction between the Negro and the white races, see *Responsible Self*, 103

\(^2\) *Responsible Self*, 106
Yet there is another, and deeper, meaning of recalling our past, which reflects Niebuhr’s profound awareness of the problem of sin. Sin affects the whole self and distorts the images and symbols we use in our interpretations, to the effect that some of the images we use are not only inadequate, but also evil, such as the image of the depraved race, of the superman, of an inflated ego and so on. But 'when we use insufficient and evil images of the personal or social self we drop out of our consciousness or suppress those memories which do not fit in with the picture of the self we cherish ... We also forget much that seems to us trivial, since it does not make sense when interpreted by means of the idolatrous image.'(1) In other words, we are not willing to accept that part of our past which is contrary to our interest, our cherished images and symbols. But like Bergson and the analytic psychologists, Niebuhr also maintains the idea that we cannot destroy this past of ours. This past he calls the 'unremembered past,'(2) or 'unconscious memory'.(3) In fact, we carry this unconscious past with us all the time, both on the individual and on the community levels. It is reflected in our attitude and way of life, in folkways and customs whose origins are beyond trace, in social ethos and national policies, in our tastes, prejudices and assumptions. 'Our buried past is mighty; the ghost of our fathers and of the selves that we have been haunt our days and nights though we refuse to acknowledge their presence.(4)

The reconstruction of our past will not be complete unless this aspect of our past is seriously reckoned with. Only when we revive

(1) Revelation, 113
(2) Revelation, 113
(3) Responsible Self, 93
(4) Revelation, 114
it, accept it and organise our present patterns in line with it can we say we are free. To do so we have to have adequate images and symbols. Here we see that Niebuhr's thought points us to 'revelation', because 'revelation' is just the event in which 'an image neither evil nor inadequate which enables the heart to understand' is given, and only by reasoning on the basis of revelation are we enabled, and in fact driven to remember what we have forgotten. (1)

In the writings of Niebuhr, sin is understood to constitute the basic problem of human existence. Not only are we up against it in our quest for freedom, but also in our analysis of the self as truly responsible self. So we propose to conclude our analysis of Niebuhr's anthropology with the examination of his view on sin.

E. Man as sinner

In 1935 Niebuhr published a short but important article entitled Man the Sinner, (2) in which he discussed the nature of sin. Two important ideas about sin were then formulated, and they were consistently held throughout his career. They were viz., sin is a religious category or religious concept, and the essence of sin is disloyalty.

The assertion of sin as a religious concept is meant to be a direct antithesis to the once popular view of sin which concentrates

(1) Revelation, 109, 113
evil in certain individuals or classes, to the romantic belief that evil only resides in institutions which must be abolished, and to the evolutionary theory which identifies sin with imperfection, with cultural lag or ignorance of the community. (1) It also refutes the view of 'modern moralism' which reduces sin to 'moral guilt', as it had reduced God to 'moral perfection'. It does not mean that Niebuhr wishes to purge moral value from the concept of sin. What he tries to do is to maintain the priority of the religious over the moral consideration. The thought behind this is that moral judgments are relative in nature, and that the terms 'good' and 'bad' are sometimes applied to the object of moral choice, and at other times to the choosing agent. Moreover, morality is not independent, as it has to depend upon religion for its standard judgment, because

Ultimately morality is always driven back to the acceptance of a standard which is given to it, without which morality would be impossible, but which is itself prior to all morality. It depends upon what man finds to be wholly worshipful, intrinsically valuable - in other words, upon the nature of his god or gods. (2)

Even the findings made from the psychological point of view by writers such as Otto and Marrett seem to negate any simple equation of moral evil with sin. The sense of the holy, even when approached from the side of feelings, turns out to be more than merely an 'emotional-plus' element. Sin cannot be 'moral guilt plus emotional evidences due to the religious feelings.' It is something qualitatively different from the moral state.

Having cleared the ground Niebuhr puts forth his own view, that sin is to be understood in terms of disloyalty, not disloyalty in

(1) Man the sinner, 273,
(2) Ibid, 275
general but disloyalty to the Almighty God. (1) Put it in a positive
form, sin is loyalty to something that is not God but which claims
deity. 'Sin therefore is not merely a deprivation, not merely the
absence of loyalty; it is wrong direction, false worship.' (2) In
short, it can be summed up in one word: idolatry.

This idea of sin as idolatry is developed in *Radical Monotheism*
in relation to man's need for value-centres. The social self needs
not only to enter into relation with the other in order to have an
awareness of itself, but also to orient itself to a centre (or centres)
of value whence it derives its worth for the sake of which it lives.
'If (man) did not believe there was something to live for, he
would not live.' (3) But man has many such centres to which he
orients himself, with all his heart and mind. Following the
principle of Luther, 'Whatever then they heart clings to ... and
relies upon, there is properly they God,' Niebuhr regards the many
value-centres to which man clings as his 'gods'. He says, 'when we
speak of "gods" we mean the gods of faith, namely, such value-
centres and causes.' (4) These gods can be almost anything, ranging
from sex to civilization, and even to the treasured theological
systems of the theologians. (5) Therefore he sees man by nature as
being 'polytheistic.' Man sins because he is loyal to the many

---

(1) *Man the Sinner*, 226, 227
(2) *ibid*, 227
(3) These words are from L. N. Tolstoi, *My Confession*, chapter ix
which Niebuhr quotes, *Radical Monotheism*, 20, also see 21.
Niebuhr has given us an illustration in the case of an ultra
patriotic nationalist for whom nation is his last value-centre.
(4) *Radical Monotheism*, 24, also 119.
(5) For a short list of these 'gods', see *Radical Monotheism*, 120
also 25-28.
rather than to the One beyond the many. In the language of 'responsibility', man sins because he is not ultimately responsible to God, but renders his responsibility alone to the finite.

Among the many gods which hold men under sway, the most subtle and elusive one is perhaps the projected image of the self. Perhaps it can be said that the projected self is not merely one among the many, but one pervading the many. The self-centred entanglement of the 'self' is described by Niebuhr in these words:

The most common object of devotion on which we depend for our meaning and value is the self. We tend in human life to a kind of religious Narcissism whereby we make ourselves the most admired of all beings and seek to interpret the meaning of all experiences by reference to their meaning for the central self. The self becomes the centre of values and at the same time the being which is to guarantee its own life against meaninglessness, worthlessness, and the threat of frustration. (1)

The self 'pervades' the many, and now the value-centres are 'centres' because they satisfy in one way or another the desire of the self. Thus, riches is taken as a value-centre because it brings about pleasure, comfort and power to the self; nationalism is a value-centre because it gives security to the self, and to others with whom the self knows that its fate is tied.

The obvious consequences of sin are conflicts and frustration of the self, both on the personal and on the social levels. Because the gods are created by man, none of them guarantee meaning to our life save for a time. They are powerless, being unable to save us from the ultimate frustration of meaningless existence. However, despite their powerlessness, they still make infinite claims upon us, requiring our whole-hearted loyalty. But since they are finite, our

(1) Radical Monotheism, 119
devotion to one always implies exclusion of another. 'Our inner
conflicts seem due to the fact that we have many sources of value,
and that these cannot all be served.'(1) In order to reduce conflicts
we have to work out some sort of compromise among many claims. We
remain beings, therefore, with many faiths held in succession, as
though we practice some kind of successive polygamy, being married
now to this and now to that centre of value. So the society becomes
an assemblage of associations devoted to many partial interest, held
together by no common derivation from a value-centre and by no
loyalty to an inclusive cause. Conflict and disintegration of the
'oneness' of selfhood are regarded as indication of the state of sin,
as indeed they are the result of sin.

In Responsible Self Niebuhr has made an attempt to understand
sin from the viewpoint of 'response-analysis'. The problem that
confronts him in his analysis of human experience is that of
disconnected and unreconciled responses of the self to actions upon
it. The inner conflict of the self is thrown into sharp relief in
this analysis, as for instance when he says,

So regarded I see my human condition, my condition in
self-hood rather, and that of my companions, as one of
internal division and conflict because though I am one
and though they are one in themselves, yet I and they
are surrounded by many agencies, many systems of actions
upon the self, these are diverse from each other, and
to their actions the self makes unreconciled, ununified
responses .... The actions (which act upon the self)
are connected in systems, but the systems are not connected
with each other. Some of the actions upon me I
interpret as actions of nature, and I respond to them
accordingly as a natural being, and man before nature:
some I interpret as actions of my national society,
and I respond to them as political being; some of
them are the actions of biological drives or of the
emotions connected with them, so that I respond as
man before and in life. But the agencies that act upon
me remain manifold and so am I manifold.(2)

(1) Radical Monotheism, 119
(2) Responsible Self, 137
The fact that I sometimes respond as a natural being, and at other times as political being, or as man before and in life, illustrates what Niebuhr has elsewhere called 'successive polygamy' to different value-centres. This behaviour of the self presupposes, and indeed, is the result of the self's turning away from the One beyond the many who alone is the proper object of our devotion. Disloyalty to the One brings about disintegration of the oneness of the self which is manifested in the form of tensions and conflicts. For this the self is held 'responsible' - using the word now more in the current theological and ethical sense - because it knows that 'I am one.' Indeed, Niebuhr says a little further on that there is in the self 'a small seed of integrity' and 'a haunting sense of unity,' a language which carries highly idealistic overtones, despite his realistic and existentialist concerns, (1)

At this point we should also point out one possible misunderstanding of Niebuhr. The long passage which we just quoted, if taken alone, would easily induce one to think that Niebuhr equates sin with creatureliness, for he is saying that the finite self remains manifold because the agencies that act upon it are 'unreconciled' and manifold, thus requiring manifoldness of responses fitting for various occasions. If being manifold is the expression of being in the state of sin, then we may as well say that the self could have done no otherwise, and so sin becomes its inevitable lot.

This, however, is not what Niebuhr means. It is true that manifold responses do indicate the sinful state of the self, if manifoldness refers to unreconciled and disunited responses. But

(1) Responsible Self, 139
manifoldness can also refer to that which springs from a reconciled and unified or integral self, a connotation which unfortunately is not made clear in that passage. In fact, Niebuhr maintains that the self must respond in a manifold manner in order to ensure that its actions are fitting for occasions of encounter. The self has always to ask itself, 'What is happening? What is the fitting responses to what is happening?'(1) But the self must first devote its heart and mind to the One beyond the many, in order not to be scattered among the many. The self should not be afraid to accept the relative and the finite if it knows the absolute. Sin comes when the self accepts only the relative and the finite to which it devotes its loyalty and worship, thus losing itself in the world of unreconciled and disunited manifoldness of value-centres. The trend of Niebuhr's thought here is interlocked with that of radical monotheism which has been examined in the previous Study.

In view of the pervasiveness of idolatry in our hearts Niebuhr is led to conclude, 'Our natural religion is polytheistic.'(2) This amounts to saying that the natural man is idolatrous, and hence sinful. This emphasis is quite in line with traditional Christian thought. But Niebuhr makes it clear that he does not start from any creedal affirmation about the universality of sin. 'We do not begin with the universal man, nor with a doctrine of original sin, though we may need to use the latter ultimately for purpose of explanation.'(3) How then does he come to such a conclusion? By way of empirical observation. We begin, he says, with the facts of observation of ourselves, by means of introspection 'supported by individual and social psychology and by history.' Having come

---

(1) Responsible Self, 67
(2) Radical Monotheism, 119
to his conclusion through empirical study of human experiences, he says 'with greater assurance than Paul had, that (men) have all fallen short of the glory of God.' So far he remains within the realm of traditional Christian thought. But then he makes his departure when he says, 'There may be exceptions to the rule,' just as 'perhaps the Marxians recognize a few exceptions to the rule of class loyalty.' This is a difficult saying, but totally in line with his relative, confessional point of view. One wonders whether Niebuhr would include these 'few exceptions' under the category of the 'natural' man. But then what meaning does 'natural' carry? He has not made it clear.

His unwillingness to go all the way with the emphasis of the traditional Christian doctrine is suggestive. It shows that he would not confine the possibility of salvation to the Christians alone. Nor would he accept the teaching that man is totally depraved and corrupted, even though Niebuhr would not doubt for a moment the seriousness of sin and its evil consequences. 'I do not have the evidence which allows me to say that the miracle of faith in God is worked only by Jesus Christ and that it is never given to men outside the sphere of his working,' Niebuhr says, late in his career, 'though I may say that where I note its presence I posit the presence also of something like Jesus Christ.'(1) He has a greater respect than most theologians in the Augustinian tradition for culture as a possible, autonomous vehicle of truth. He listens to what science, sociology, psychology and other disciplines have to say, and is quick to utilize their insights and findings. In his vision God is the

(1) Niebuhr in How My Mind Has Changed, ed. Fey, 1961, 73
omnipresent reality which acts on man through the many actions and experiences of encounters in his daily life. There is nothing that man does which is outside God's concern. Even though he worships the many rather than the One beyond the many, nevertheless he is haunted by a sense of integrity which is in him, and this longing for oneness of selfhood points beyond the finite realm to the One by whose creative power the self is for its fulfilment.

F. Summary Remarks

Niebuhr's understanding of man reflects his indebtedness to writers such as Mead and Royce, Buber and Bergson, and his reaction against the deterministic trend in modern thought. His social view of the self is meant to accentuate the influence of the 'past' on the self, at the same time the possibility of transcending the 'past' by the agent who acts. Three ideas stand out in his thought. First, the 'present' moment in which the self acts and makes its decision is 'history-full'. Time is not so much external to the self, but rather, in line with Bergson, 'internal', as a reality which endures in it. It is this understanding of the 'present', or rather, 'time,' which issues in 'historical relativism'. The social nature of the 'self' and the 'present' gives his existentialist thinking its characteristic touch. Perhaps Niebuhr's existentialism can best be called 'social existentialism.' Second, Man's ultimate
engagement or encounter is with God. In other words, God and man are engaged in a perennial encounter. The reality of this 'alien' power, in Niebuhr's opinion, is accessible to man if he subjects the triadic nature of human experience, or the mystery of being, to a searching analysis. This is just the belief on which 'natural theology' of the past and present is built. In the following Study we shall examine how this 'alien' power is understood by the 'natural' man and by the Christian who has come to know God through the event of Jesus. Third, the oneness of selfhood, the hallmark of the 'responsible self', is heavily stressed. The self in sin is a self full of internal conflicts which makes 'integrity' impossible. But the self can be one only when it rests its faith and loyalty in God. The idea of 'oneness' is also a major concern in his concept of God and revelation. If man is one when he responds to God, God therefore must be one in his 'revelation' to man. We may even say that Niebuhr's emphasis on the oneness of God is rooted primarily in his anthropological concern.
IV. CONCLUSION

The material in this chapter is multifarious and greatly diversified, and our discussion has to be conducted in different contexts in accordance with the basic thought-forms of our writers. These complications are, unfortunately, quite inevitable as the question of anthropology is the most central issue in the thought of a writer, underlying all aspects and utterances of his thought, whether he admits it or not. Our task is made the more complicated because we have to enlarge our scope by taking into consideration, albeit in a limited way, each writer's understanding of God, though a proper discussion of such a topic should belong to the following Study. This inclusion, however, is necessary as man cannot be fully understood apart from God, a truth which has merited the consensus of our writers. But it is also true that man's understanding of himself is to an amazingly large extent shaped by the cultural ethos in which the writers live. This means that man's self-understanding varies from age to age, and from culture to culture, because the cultural situations do not always remain constant and stable. Such an observation goes a long way to confirm Toynbee's affirmation that relativism is our inevitable lot. Niebuhr is certainly right when he takes relativism as an affirmation of our relatedness to 'history', a belief which is shared wholeheartedly by Toynbee. If relativism is our relatedness to history, then anthropology can well be taken as our relatedness to our cultural situations. Toynbee and Niebuhr make no attempt to hide this fact in their writings, which everywhere register their indebtedness to writers of other fields of research and whose insights
into human existence and experiences accepted and incorporated into their own. Kraemer's reaction is a rather desperate attempt to overcome relativism in our thought. He wants to ground Christian anthropology on the eternal truth of 'Biblical realism,' and keep it free from the whims and fancies of man. Kraemer would not of course say there is no truth in contemporary psychology and sociology, but would insist only that whatever claims of truth are made must be subjected to the judgment of 'Biblical realism'. Relativism can be avoided if the truth of God as witnessed in the scriptures is given the absolute priority.

However, our analysis of Kraemer's thought shows that a particular view of the relation between God and man is represented in 'Biblical realism' which is not generally shared by every Christian interpreter of the Bible. The heavy stress on the qualitatively difference between the divine and the human, to the extent of ruling out the possibility of man outside the Christian revelation having any positive knowledge of God, reflects his protest which also persuaded him to take the dialectical method. His anthropology therefore can be said to be negatively determined by the cultural situation, and his reaction therefore does not seem to have successively risen above 'historical relativism'.

Multifarious as the approaches and standpoints of our writers are, there are nevertheless at least two elements of common concern which bear on our later studies. The first element is their attempt to describe or locate how and where God and man are involved in one another. Toynbee sees the subconscious as the medium where God's impact is felt. The subconscious is naturally attuned to God, and
the symbols, themes and images which are reflected in the world religions are intimations of the One True God. It is chiefly the polarization of the libido that prompts man to worship the God of love. The subconscious therefore is a good source of man's knowledge of God. Kraemer takes a radically opposite view, even though he talks about the 'depth' in man. This 'depth' is where the wrestling between God and man takes place, and which constitutes the 'religious consciousness' in man. But Kraemer has not identified it with any part of the human psyche as Toynbee has, nor has he worked out its relation with what Toynbee would call the 'conscious faculty' in detail, though he vaguely mentions that the established religions are concrete 'expressions' of such wrestling. Moreover, he does not think such wrestling yields any positive, genuine knowledge of God. He tries to ground this dogmatic, negative attitude in regard to man's knowledge of God on scriptural witness. Such an attempt, in our opinion, as we have said before, is not impressive, nor successful. Niebuhr takes a somewhat mediating position. To him the experience of personal relationship, when subjected to a searching analysis, is a valid clue to our knowledge of the eternal Thou, who addresses and acts upon us through the many finite "thous" we encounter. Also the mystery of the fact of 'I am' points us to the 'radical power by which I am.' The self-other (the One) structure, in other words, is a given structure of human experience which is available to man (though, we may say, more easily available to the intellectual!) Man therefore is not by nature Godless, even though man's experience of his impact on him as well as his interpretation of human experience are in need of
correction in the light of the events of Jesus Christ.

The second element of common concern is their emphasis on sin which threatens the spiritual well-being of man. But again, each interprets the effect of sin in radically different manner. Kraemer more than the others emphasizes the corrupting effect of sin. The natural man in his 'totality' - the whole man - is perverted. It is on this basis that he rejects 'natural theology' which presupposes that man has valid knowledge of God. (1) This radically serious attitude towards sin, accentuated by the 'sovereignty' of God, determines his understanding of man, his salvation and his attitude towards non-Christian faiths. Toynbee is Pelagian in his outlook. Man attains salvation if only he manfully asserts his will to do God's will, and intimations from God are not inaccessible if he takes seriously the intimations which are in store in the subconscious, the medium through which man lives his spiritual life. It is not that Toynbee regards sin lightly. In fact, he thinks that 'original sin' will remain forever a reality. (2) But he is not prepared to accept the Augustinian emphasis that man is so sinful as to be denied of the capability of knowing what is good, nor is he so corrupted that he is unable to commit himself to God of his own accord. Niebuhr again maintains a mediating position. On the one hand he stresses the corrupting effect of sin. Man is so perverted that he has no adequate image with which he can recall his past. He creates his own gods and worships them. Yet on the other hand his confessional standpoint puts a check to his radical generalization. Idolatry is not necessarily the plight of all man,

(1) For his treatment of 'natural theology' see below 379ff, 396ff
(2) History vii, 563
and indeed a 'radical, monotheistic faith' in God by man outside the Christian revelation is possible. Like Toynbee, he would not confine positive knowledge of God to Christians alone. Niebuhr and Toynbee have struck one very important note, viz., the 'continuity' between God's revelation to Christians as well as to non-Christians, and with this, the continuity between the moral and religious experience of man, Christian and non-Christian alike, in regard to the question of religious truth, as we shall see later. From this Toynbee develops his 'synthesis'. But Niebuhr, being deeply rooted in the Christian tradition, refrains from going into such a speculation, and this Christian tradition is reflected also in his personal view of God.

In this study we have looked into the question how cultural elements have shaped the formulation of the anthropology of each writer. In the following we shall enquire into how our writers understand the question of God and his revelation. At the same time we shall also try to find out to what extent their understandings of man have affected their interpretations and their thoughts.
STUDY THREE: AN INQUIRY INTO THE ULTIMATE: CONCERNING THE
QUESTIONS OF GOD, REALITY AND REVELATION

Having examined the various ways in which relativism has
influenced the choice of method by the writers of our concern, and
also the different views of man which they have developed in full
interaction with the religious and cultural ethos of our time, we
now come to a closer analysis of what they understand as the
ultimately real: the ground of all that is. In other words, the
question of 'God', which is the focal point in worship and religious
writings. It is a subject to which we have already made scattering
references in our previous discussions. Now we wish to see how the
various presuppositions work themselves out in this specific area
of our writers' religious thought. Two closely inter-related
issues shall occupy most of our attention. They are also vital
issues in our dialogue with non-Christians. The first one is
concerned with the style and manner of their reference to God: how
do they refer to God. It can be put in another way: Is God
'personal', or is he more? What is this 'more'? What is the
meaning of the 'personal'?

In our time we have witnessed the popularity of a type of 'God-
talk' which is modelled on a strictly and exclusively Christocentric
basis. It requires that all theological statements about God must
be related to Jesus Christ, from whom they derive their content and
norm. The thought behind this approach is that any genuine discourse
about God must come from the side of God himself. Now since God
has already provided the basis for such a discourse in Jesus Christ,
therefore the person of Jesus Christ becomes the only valid frame of
reference for discourse about God. The language of such a discourse
is intensely personal. God is personal because Jesus Christ is a person. This intensely personal language, together with the exclusively Christocentric emphasis, may be taken as a reaction against the depersonalising effect of the amalgamation of theism and Idealistic philosophy which was still popular at the beginning of the present century. It is not surprising that the reaction should have taken this turn, because most of the Christians in modern times in fact encounter God only through the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The starting-point of their reference to God is Christ, apart from whom the word God has little significance. (1)

But we should also note that it is not difficult to develop from this situation to the point that God is identified with Jesus Christ, which is borne out by the evidence of popular religious piety and theological speculations. (2)

Radical Christocentricism, however, is not beyond criticism. In our generation we also see a 'counter-reaction' against the intensely personal and Christocentric language about God, notably in the writings of Tillich, for whom the personal category is not necessarily the ultimate one. Instead of referring to God in terms of the God and Father of Jesus Christ alone, Tillich utilizes the concepts of being, power of being and 'ground', for example. This 'reaction' arises not only because the ghost of theistic-idealism has not been safely laid, but also because the ever-growing dialogue with oriental religious thought persuades theologians to adopt a wider basis in their reference to 'God'. 'Being' therefore

(1) See John McIntyre, God and Personality (Mimeographed lectures), 3f, 10
(2) See Niebuhr's criticism in Purpose, 44-46, Radical Monotheism, 59-60
is not only considered wider than such language as 'the Father and Lord of Jesus Christ', but, for Tillich at least, transcends the personal category altogether. (1)

In the case of our writers, Kraemer represents the Christocentric tradition which arose as a reaction against the depersonalising effects of earlier popular Protestant thought, and Niebuhr the 'counter-reaction' against what he calls 'Christism', a tendency to identify God with Jesus. Niebuhr's language is similar to that of Tillich. But because Niebuhr would not transcend the 'personal' category, so his treatment of 'being' is markedly different from Tillich's. Toynbee is fully aware of the difficulty of reconciling the personal view to the impersonal view of Reality on the normal, rational pattern of thought in the tradition of western culture. So he resorts to the Hindu Vedantic scheme, and on this basis he also hopes to effect a 'synthesis' of the different views of God as represented in the different world religions.

The second issue is already in some way involved in the first. If we are to speak about God at all, we have to ask what makes such talk possible. How do we know that God corresponds to what men symbolically or analogically affirm about him? It is mainly to provide the ground for our language about God that the concept of 'revelation', with all its modern ambiguities, is called into service. It is interesting (as well as telling) that our writers accept the need for revelation as a matter of course, even though their methods and their views of the being of God are widely different from one

(1) For reference to Tillich's thought, see below, 434ff
another. The popularity of the word has blurred the fact that it has only acquired a special significance for the Christian writers in the western tradition in the last hundred years or so.\(^{(1)}\) It has even been pointed out that 'revelation of God' is 'not a characteristic New Testament idea.'\(^{(2)}\) But in our time it has become synonymous with the totality of the Christian faith, the criterion of truth and falsehood, and even with 'Jesus Christ.' The writers who use this concept always give their readers the impression that they know what it is, and that its content has been generally accepted as a matter of course. But the confusion created through controversies over the problem of revelation shows that the concept is far from clear. Not only is its content uncertain, but its appropriate use is by no means agreed.\(^{(3)}\) It seems that the character of 'revelation' as a formal structure has not been seriously reckoned with. 'Revelation' at most is a 'second-order model' which must depend on other categories for its content, and of course, the content very much dependent on the standpoint and presuppositions of the writer concerned. Our investigation is intended to elucidate this point of our observation.


\(^{(2)}\) John Knox: The Death of Christ, 1959, 146, quoted in F.G. Downing, Has Christianity A Revelation? 1964, 17. Downing finds that the way 'revelation' is used in contemporary theology has no biblical support.

\(^{(3)}\) For examples, see Downing, Has Christianity A Revelation, 1964? 9-13
I. A.J. TOYNBEE: A RADICAL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF THE ONE AND THE MANY

In Toynbee’s mind there are two guiding principles, viz., the principle of plurality and the principle of unity. The historical method which he develops in the context of relativism is pluralistic in so far as he recognizes the fact of civilizations, their autonomous status as well as their individual characteristic development in history. The principle of unity is seen at work in the teleological interpretation of the fact of human life on this planet, as for example when he enquires into the purpose and meaning of human existence. Even though civilizations adopt widely different courses of development, nevertheless men in civilizations are all striving towards one common end. They are to progress, by means of creative responses in freedom to the challenges of God, from Sub-Man to Man and finally towards Sainthood. Now in the exploration of religious affairs these two principles are also clearly visible. In regard to the phenomena of religions his attitude is pluralistic, in the sense that he recognizes the fact of religions. Each religion has its own distinctive historical and cultural patterns which are too concrete to be lightly dismissed. Though he suggests that each higher religion should recover for itself what he calls the essence of religion, he does not attempt, and indeed has never entertained, the idea of reducing them in structure and form to one religion. But again Toynbee sees unity behind, or rather, in the context of, plurality. This unity is to be found in the object of man’s religious devotion in the different religions. Our previous analysis of his anthropology has made it clear that Toynbee regards God-man
encounter as a perpetual possibility in the progress of human life on earth. (1) This means that man of different ages and civilizations are capable of knowing God, though often in a very limited way. So no religion can claim monopoly of knowledge of God. But at the same time, being a historian of an exceptionally wide intellectual horizon, he is fully aware of the fact that men in different cultures and religions in the past and present have greatly differed in their understanding of what they hold to be ultimately real, or what they regard as the objects of their religious devotion. To Toynbee, the spiritual ultimate can only be one, in as much as truth is one. How is it possible then to solve the tension posed by the problem of the one and the many? the 'personal' and the 'non-personal' which are both represented in the many views of Reality in world religions? He attempts to do this in two ways. In a more philosophical manner, he regards the spiritual ultimate as the undifferentiated unity or what he calls Reality. But in a less philosophical and more down-to-earth way he takes seriously the 'personal view' of the object of worship in the world religions, or 'God,' and compares the various ways in which 'God' is claimed to have been understood in different religions. The scheme resembles that of philosophical Hinduism. Let us now turn to his philosophical treatment of the 'spiritual presence higher than man.'

---

(1) See for instance the idea of 'challenge and response', above 113ff
A. The spiritual presence as the ultimate, undifferentiated Reality

Reality for Toynbee is that which is better known to the mystics than the ordinary mortals, because it is only accessible to mystical intuitive experience and not by means of logical reasoning or apprehension. About its true nature he says, 'For all that we know, Reality is the undifferentiated unity of the mystical experience.' But even of this he is not very certain. Having said what we know, he immediately qualifies it thus:

We cannot know whether it is or is not, because we cannot know anything without being in a state of consciousness, and we cannot be conscious without our mental image of Reality - or Reality's image of itself, mirrored in a human mind - being diffracted or articulated into subject and object. (1)

The 'fact' of Reality as an undifferentiated unity can only be stated, but cannot be explained. Explanation, he would argue, belongs to the activity of consciousness, which is a part of Reality but most prone to misrepresent Reality. This point is made in an important passage which is a continuation of what has just been quoted.

Our human consciousness, after its self-generating - or Reality's self-generating - articulative act, goes on to dissect Reality farther into the conscious and the subconscious, soul and body, mind and matter, life and environment, freedom and necessity, creator and creatures, god and devil, good and bad, right and wrong, love and power, old and new, cause and effect, and so on. Such dichotomies are Indispensable categories of thought: they are our means of apprehending Reality, as far as this is within our power. At the same time they are so many boundary-marks indicating the limits of human understanding, since they misrepresent Reality by breaking up its unity in our apprehension of it. (2)

There is no other clearer statement of the undifferentiated, monistic nature of Reality than this passage in all Toynbee's works.

(1) History, xii, 8
(2) History, xii, 8-9
This position has several consequential implications. First, it means that Toynbee regards logical descriptions, classifications, arguments and reasonings as having only an operational function, or as a matter of expediency so that we can comprehend Reality. There is no means of guaranteeing that what we conceive with our intellect, upon which modern western civilization places so much emphasis, necessarily corresponds to the true nature of things. This point is brought out in his reply to Spate's criticism. On the one hand he agrees with Spate that man and his environment cannot be too sharply distinguished - Toynbee in fact goes to the extent of affirming that man and his environment are 'fictitious products of an unwarrantable mental fission of a monolithic Reality', - yet on the other hand he justifies his dissection of Reality by saying that it is necessary for mental apprehension. Thus, from this monistic viewpoint, all differences, diversities, rational arguments or even logical contradictions are taken with less seriousness than by his fellow philosopher-historians.

It is with the same ease that he moves round among the different religions which have different

---

(1) Spate criticises Toynbee for having too sharply distinguished Man and his Environment in the exposition of his theory of challenge and response in regard to the genesis of civilizations. 'Environment taken by itself is a meaningless phrase,' says Spate, 'without Man, environment does not exist.' Environment always means 'the environment of people x,' and the environment affects Man through the idea formed of it. See The Geographical Journal, vol cxviii, part 4, (Dec. 1952), 419, quoted in History, xii, 146f. Toynbee admits the validity of Spate's criticism. Ultimately Toynbee thinks that 'the distinction between a challenging environment and the people challenged by it is a fiction of mythology.' The truth is that 'man and his environment are fictitious products of an unwarrantable mental fission of a monolithic Reality'. This statement, if taken by itself, may mean that though Toynbee disavows any sharp dichotomy between man and his geographic environment, nevertheless they are distinctive entities, a point with which Spate would probably agree. But in the light of the long passage in which we are told that life and environment are only real to our mental apprehension, it is more than likely that ultimately Toynbee would allow the distinctions to fade away.
viewpoints in regard to the 'higher presence' which man worships, trying to reconcile, as far as possible, the different views in his own way.

The second point we wish to mention in regard to Toynbee's monistic interpretation is that this view, taken seriously, means the annihilation of man. In the Hegelian Idealistic tradition man's concrete historical existence is threatened. (1) What is ultimately real is thought. Man becomes the medium through which absolute reason knows itself and eventually comes to perfection. Now in Toynbee we see a similar idea at work. Instead of absolute reason there is Reality. It is Reality which articulates itself in man, thus constituting man's consciousness, his mental apprehension, and so on. What is real is this Reality itself, and man is but a fraction of it. It is surprising that this view of man is not worked out in his anthropology, though it is implicit in his monistic position. In fact, we see the monistic position as a whole falling into the background.

The third point we wish to make is that Toynbee's position not only implies the annihilation of man, but also the annihilation of God, if by God we mean the absolute power behind the universe which is qualitatively different from the sum total of the whole creation conceivable by man, and with whom man can enter into a personal relationship. Monism 'annihilates' God because 'God' is a 'personal' way of approaching Reality which strictly speaking is impersonal and undifferentiated, void of quality and beyond description. As long as this point is grasped, Toynbee does not mind whether one approaches Reality in the personal or impersonal way, as both ways are equally valid.

(1) For Hegelian point of view, see also below, 571f
It is this Reality of which each higher religion has an imperfect glimpse, and which constitutes the 'identical object' of worship. Basically this Reality is approached in two ways, viz., the Judaic and the Indic. The Judaic approach as represented largely by Jews, Christians and Muslims is a 'personal' one, in which Reality is understood in terms of 'God'. But even within this approach there are mystics, so Toynbee points out, who pass on from a personal conception to the impersonal one, to a 'union with Reality in which the distinction between personalities fades away.'(1) In so doing they come close to the Indic approach, viz., Hindu and Buddhist believers, or, more strictly, the more philosophical among them. According to the travellers of this Indic road, Reality is understood either as Brahman (undifferentiated, and therefore ineffable, being) or as Nirvana (a state attained through the extinction of desire).(2) Actually Brahman and Nirvana are, as pointed out by King, quite different from one another. But in his attempt to recover unity from the diverse phenomena of religions Toynbee has glossed over differences which are not capable of being harmonized.(3)

(1) Approach, 18
(2) Approach, 19, also see 86, 276ff.
(3) The 'Reality' Toynbee refers to carries the idea of substance or being, even though it is to be understood as spiritual substance. It may be all-inclusive and all-transcendent, as he spares no effort to state that it is beyond all phenomena. (Approach, 275, 78) Nevertheless Reality is an entity and not ethereal, because he also says that we can have communion with it. To a large extent Brahman may be said to fulfil these conditions, but it cannot be said of Nirvana, except in some sense of the Nirvana in the Mahayana schools. The Hinayana view of Nirvana is more of that of a transcendent state than that of a transcendent being, entity or unity. So W.L. King observes that 'even to call it "unconditional being" or "ultimate reality" is not quite enough or exactly right ... "being" and "reality" have connotations of some kind of substance or life or position or quality about them. And by definition Nirvana has none of these.' (Buddhism and Christianity, Some Bridges of Understanding 1963, 47). Nor is it that which underlies, and so serves to explain the phenomena. It is therefore not even to be taken as Ground or Absolute, words which Toynbee uses to describe Reality. For Nirvana see also Ninian Smart, Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy, 1964, 36f.
It is interesting to see that Toynbee is not consistent even in his view of Reality. His basic conviction is that Reality is 'undifferentiated' and therefore void of characterization and moral affirmation. But to bring Reality within human apprehension it has to be dissected and described. However, descriptions and affirmations made with this understanding in mind should not, and indeed cannot, be regarded as ultimately valid, otherwise we would be 'doing violence to the very Reality that we are trying to apprehend.'\(^1\) But a closer look at what he says about Reality shows that he does not seem to have been able to hold consistently to his own conviction. His 'descriptions' of Reality are more than a matter of expediency, to enable us to have some idea of Reality. His affirmations are meant to be true to the structure of Reality itself. It is to be taken as true in the ultimate sense, as a criterion in the context of which truth and falsehood must be decided. To substantiate this observation let us examine some of the things he affirms about Reality in its undifferentiated and impersonal aspect.

Reality, Toynbee says, is 'something spiritually greater than (man) himself.' He also calls it the 'spiritual presence higher than man.'\(^2\) It is, however, not quite correct to use the word 'something' to describe it, though Toynbee himself sometimes does, because 'something' implies that Reality is but one among the many, whereas it is the One behind all phenomena. It can also be said to be beyond the many if by that is meant that Reality is not to be identified or equated with any single phenomenon.\(^3\) What is

---

\(^{1}\) **History**, xii, 47, to be understood together with **History**, xii, 8-9, as quoted earlier.

\(^{2}\) **Approach**, 265, also **History**, xii, 68, 621, 84, 101.

\(^{3}\) **Approach**, 275
important is that Reality is spiritual, which is called also 'absolute spiritual reality.' (1) As such, it is also 'omnipresent.' (2) Now when Toynbee says that Reality is spiritual, he is rejecting (by what he affirms) the possibility that Reality can also be material. Toynbee is 'dissecting' Reality when he affirms its 'spiritual' nature, and using an antonym (as 'spiritual' can only be understood in contrast to 'material') in his affirmation. He is in fact saying that what we affirm about Reality can have ultimate validity, being true to the nature of things, despite what he said elsewhere. (3)

Again, Reality is positively characterized (in similar fashion) by freedom. He encounters this aspect of Reality in his 'empirical' study of history, and he draws this conclusion:

> I believe that necessity, in the sense of a predetermined and therefore potentially predictable nexus of cause and effect, is not all-pervasive in the structure of Reality. I believe that Reality has in it a vein of something genuinely unpredetermined and therefore intrinsically unpredictable. (4)

We do not have to elaborate here the importance of this conviction because the idea of freedom, as we pointed out earlier, has been worked into and become the basis of his anthropology and his historical method. However, 'freedom' also makes a strong impact on him when he meditates on the mystery of Reality. Though Reality is essentially undifferentiated, yet it is possible for consciousness, which itself is the articulation of Reality, to analyse Reality into subject and object, to classify Reality into categories in order to apprehend it. In the context of challenge and response, this possibility becomes obvious:

---

(1) Idem.
(2) Approach, 280, also History, xii, 621
(3) Toynbee has said that the dissecting of Reality into dichotomies 'misrepresent(s) Reality by breaking up its unity in our apprehension of it.'
(4) History, xii, 315
In analysing Reality into an observer and an observed encounter between two parties, we have put our finger on the vein of freedom in Reality, and a reintegration of Reality does not get rid of this discovery about its nature .......(1)

So besides being 'spiritual', Reality has also within itself freedom. The attribution of freedom to Reality must carry an ultimate validity, because freedom is, in his own words, 'a vein', in the structure of Reality itself.

Again, we are told that Reality is 'an Absolute Good.'(2) This is surprising even if one takes into consideration that moral differentiations are necessary for mental apprehension, because Reality can still either be good or bad. Each moral reference can be a genuine possibility. Why must it be an 'absolute Good' when there is so much in human experience which seems to contradict such an affirmation? Is there any ground within the method employed by Toynbee for the support that Reality must be Good and not Bad? It is unfortunate that Toynbee has not provided us with answers. Furthermore, Toynbee also attributes 'love', a very strong personal and moral category, to Reality. He says, 'the meaning of Life, Existence and Reality is Love,'(3) love is so much a feature of Reality that whoever accepts suffering on the promptings of Love 'will be swimming with the current of Reality.'(4)

These affirmations about Reality are meant to correspond to the structure of Reality, and being such, they serve as criteria for our understanding of it. This is obvious in the case of his discussion

(1) History, xii, 259
(2) Approach, 265
(3) Approach, 143
(4) Approach, 128 also 108
on the problem of evil in the context of the personal approach to Reality. There he rules out 'evil' in God. Evil exists rather in our vision of him.\(^1\) If our observation is right, that Toynbee not only 'dissects Reality' into 'dichotomies', but also regards some aspects of such dichotomies as more valid or true than others, then it is difficult to see how this tallies with what he affirms in such words as: 'in making our assumption that there is an effective division in Reality corresponding to our dissection of it, we are, as we know, doing violence to the very Reality that we are trying to apprehend.'\(^2\) The 'effective division' is taken more seriously by him than he realizes.

We have earlier said that the monistic position means also the annihilation of God. This is so because it does not regard personal categories and moral differentiation as ultimately valid. An extreme example of the annihilation of God is found in Hinayana Buddhism in which even the ultimate existence of an undifferentiated monistic Being is denied. The strict non-dualistic Vedantic position also points towards this direction,\(^3\) and Toynbee's 'undifferentiated Being' seems to be in the same vein also. But it is questionable how consistently Toynbee has been able to maintain his monistic position, because personal and moral categories are not absent in his affirmations of the character of undifferentiated Being. They do more than fulfil some operational purposes. They are regarded as the positive way of referring to the essential structure of Reality. He has not been able to fully transcend his

\(^1\) See below, 296
\(^2\) History, xii, 47
\(^3\) For this aspect of Hindu thought, see below 308ff
own Christian background, even though he prefers to call himself a 'Hindu.'

B. The Spiritual Presence as the One True God of Love

Reality, according to Toynbee, can also be understood in terms of 'personal God.'

The phrase 'personal God' has been widely used, both by Christians and non-Christians, but perhaps the complexity of it has not generally been recognized. We shall deal with the meaning of this phrase in more detail in an Appendix. (1) We use it in the context of our discussion in the sense of the possibility of personal relationship (of worship, trust, love) between God and man, a relation characterized by reciprocity, a sort of mutual involvement in one another.

The personal approach to Reality in the form of the worship of a 'personal God' is an approach which is perennially fraught with 'anthropomorphism,' the attempt of man to depict God in his own image. Anthropomorphism is 'unavoidable' as long as men yearn to enter into fellowship and communion with God as a 'spiritual presence higher than man.' They cannot do so unless they can imagine and describe God in terms which they know or are capable of comprehension.

(1) See Appendix IV, below 607ff
In doing so men fell back on their own image, for 'we have nothing in our human experience that is a more adequate model for picturing God to ourselves.' Yet anthropomorphism is 'inadequate.' Not only does man know that even in the highest flight of his spirit he is still far from being perfect, but also it is extremely difficult to bring together, even in our imagination, the superhuman qualities (such as omnipresence and omnipotence) and the human qualities which we know in our daily encounters with our fellow beings.

In the early days of man's religious life, men used to have 'theriomorphic' vision of God, i.e., God is perceived through the wonders and images of the 'animal creation.' This form of apprehension still persists in Hinduism in our time. Then there is the crude anthropomorphic vision, in which God is seen and worshipped in the likeness of men and women of flesh and blood who are thought to be his incarnation. In the higher religions, Toynbee concedes, this 'corporeal version' of anthropomorphism might have been dropped, as creatures of flesh and blood are not accepted literally as 'a revelation of the ultimate nature of God.' This is evident in the case of Christianity in which the doctrine of Incarnation, Toynbee points out, is coupled with the idea of Kenosis, 'an emptying of God's own ultimate nature.' But even so, the Christian faith cannot avoid 'anthropomorphism', because

(1) Experience, 173
(2) Experience, 175
(3) Experience, 173-4
(4) History, vii, 466
when Christians sought to know God, their conception of God was still 'anthropomorphic' in being in terms of the feelings, will and intellect of a human personality— in terms, that is, of elements of conscious human psychic life which they had never encountered at first hand except in association with human bodies. (1)

This type of anthropomorphism which refers not so much to the physical body as to the thought and feelings, will and intellect, can be called 'etherial' anthropomorphism. (2) But no matter how 'etherial' it is, it must be regarded as 'a form of idolatry.' Man sets himself up as 'the measure of all things, including the God whose image is dimly revealed through the dark glasses of Human Nature.' In order to extricate himself from this sin, man must, in his continuing search for God, transcend anthropomorphism together, including the 'less imperfect' moral faculty 'which marks the highest intellectual apprehension of God. (3) It is this attempt to transcend what the intellectual, moral faculty has achieved that points to mystical intuitive experience in which 'personality' is transcended,' and with it the separateness that is personality's limitation.' He continues to say,

At this supra-personal spiritual height, the experience is unitive. At this height, God and man do not commune with each other because, at this height, they are identical. 'Tat tvam asai.' (Thou art that) The supra-personal ground of a human being's existence is the supra-personal ground of ultimate spiritual reality. At this height, personality is left behind, and with it, the perhaps insoluble puzzle of divine personality. (4)

The direction of Toynbee's thought points eventually to monism, to the 'undifferentiated Being' which is the spiritual ground of all

(1) History, vii, 467
(2) This phrase is not coined by Toynbee himself, but its use is justifiable in view of the fact that Toynbee also uses the word 'etherial' to qualify 'anthropomorphism'; see History, vii, 468. Perhaps 'personalism' is a better word.
(3) History, vii, 470
(4) Experience, 177
that is. But as we have said before, even in the idea of the 'undifferentiated Being' the personal, moral category is not altogether absent. It is therefore questionable whether Toynbee himself has been able to transcend 'anthropomorphism'. The category of love which he identifies with the essence of God is also the characteristic feature of his 'undifferentiated Being' or Reality. The idea of God (as a personal, One True God) thus imposes on his monistic view of Reality, making it less radically 'monistic' than it should be. But the idea of 'God' itself is also affected by his monistic view, viz., 'God' in his thought can no longer be the 'God' as understood by the Christians and the Jews, because 'God' is no longer regarded as ultimately distinguishable from man, or for that matter, from the universe. Toynbee's position, which is the product of the marriage between his Christian, 'personal' background and the Hindu mentality which he adopted rather late in his career, is a strange one. He is neither a fully-fledged Vedantic Hindu, nor is he as 'ex-Christian' as he imagines himself to be. It is the Christian idea of 'love' which, as we shall see, forms his criterion for love and goodness.

It is also worthwhile to notice that the word 'personal' has an anthropomorphic connotation for Toynbee, and 'supra-personal' stands for a unitive, monistic view of Reality. In other words, what is 'supra-personal' is also impersonal and monistic.(1) In view of

---

(1) It seems that 'supra-personal' is also used in another sense, viz. that which is beyond the individual, but not necessarily beyond the category of the personal. Thus Toynbee speaks of the 'supra-personal' manifestation of God as love which inspires man to 'self-sacrificingness.' This manifestation of God is also understood in terms of the Holy Spirit. But one wonders whether ultimately the notion of the 'supra-personal' belongs to the category of the personal, because Toynbee identifies the Holy Spirit with Brahma of Hinduism. See Experience, 157f.
the popularity in the use of 'supra-personal' in Protestant circles we have to ask ourselves seriously whether the term can avoid the monistic reference which Toynbee here unfolded before us. (1)

Since 'personal God' represents the 'personal' approach to Reality which is 'omnipresent' and 'absolute', so we expect 'God' also shares the same omnipresent and ultimate character, insofar as he is the same Reality but from another perspective. But Toynbee is also criticised for having preached the idea of 'finite God.' So Father Walker says, 'Toynbee professes belief in a transcendent God, but his God is apparently finite and subject to limitations.' (2) What then is the status of Toynbee's God? Let us turn for a while to the examination of this issue before we analyse Toynbee's moral characterization of him.

(1) **The finite God?**

The idea of a 'finite God' is not new in philosophical circles. (3)

---

(1) For discussion on the 'personal' and the 'supra-personal', see below, 477ff. Notice that even Kraemer also refers to the 'supra-personal.' See below, 343.

(2) Review, 343.

(3) The idea of 'finite God' has been held by philosophers who affirm personality of God. Bosanquet, for instance, refuses to ascribe personality to the Absolute or Ultimate Reality, because the latter must transcend moral distinctions, whereas personality and morality go together. This would mean that God of whom personality is affirmed cannot be identified as the Absolute. This idea seems to have come out more clearly in Bradley's philosophy. To Bradley, God is a personal God with whom man can enter into relationship. But he is a 'finite God,' though he may appear absolute. Bradley maintains the idea of finite God in order to escape the difficulty of relating personality to the absolute and the infinite. Even though Toynbee affirms personality of God, he has not taken the trouble of tackling the philosophic and theological problems concerned, nor has he worked out any 'analogy' to relate the personality as affirmed of God, and the personality as affirmed of man. But this does not mean that he is unaware of the 'infinite distance' between man and God. See for instance, Approach, 277.
In the early works of Toynbee there is also evidence which points towards this idea. It is mainly found in the first volume of his History when he is expounding his theory of challenge and response. \(^{(1)}\) To illustrate the principle that 'creation is the outcome of an encounter' Toynbee takes the case of the creative activity of God as presented in mythology.

In the world of mythology God is depicted as creator of the world, and at some stage is confronted by the Devil. The world which he has created is thought of as perfect, existing in its Yin-state, as in the Hebraic myth of Creation. Very often, 'the impulse or motive which makes a perfect Yin-state pass over into a new Yang-activity comes from an intrusion of the Devil into the universe of God.' \(^{(2)}\) Without this intrusion it is not possible for the change from Yin to Yang to take place, and the assumption is that the world cannot forever stay in one state alone. However, the emergence of the Devil presents, as Toynbee sees it, a logical problem. 'In logic', he says, 'if God's universe is perfect, there cannot be a Devil outside it, while, if the Devil exists, the perfection which he comes to spoil must have been incomplete already through the very fact of his existence.' \(^{(3)}\) Even though logical contradiction is not something insurmountable in religious imagination and mythology, nevertheless the fact remains, that God is subjected to limitations. First, in the perfection of what he has already created, he cannot find an opportunity for further

---

(1) See for example, History, i. 279ff., to which Fr. Walker also refers.
(2) History, i. 278
(3) History, i. 279
creative activity. Second, when the opportunity for fresh creation is offered, he cannot but take it.\(^{(1)}\) When the Devil challenges him, he cannot refuse to take up the challenge. He comes under Toynbee's principle of challenge and response.

Perhaps at this stage of his work one can see the influence of Bergson. Like Bergson's \textit{elan vital}, Toynbee's God is also envisaged as the 'omnipresent power' behind all the creative events.\(^{(2)}\) It manifests itself 'in the conduct and achievements of all Mankind and Life.' It is the upsurging creative thrust forever challenging man, bringing man to higher levels of development. It is in this force or power that 'we recognize the philosopher's \textit{Elan Vital} or the mystic's God.'\(^{(3)}\) In the context of the study of the genesis of civilization, when man interacts with his environments in that fateful moment of confrontation, we find that 'the environment resolves itself into an omnipresent object confronting the omnipresent power which manifests itself in life.' It is a confrontation of the creative thrust of Life and the obstacle which is on its way. We can conceive, says Toynbee, of the 'object as an obstacle lying across the path of the Elan Vital or as an Adversary challenging a living God to halt or do battle.'\(^{(4)}\) There is a tendency for the living God to be assimilated into the elan vital of the philosopher of creative evolution. As such, God is finite, limited and immanent.

But the idea of the finite God recedes into the background in the later works of Toynbee,\(^{(5)}\) which were written mainly from an ex-

\(^{(1)}\) Toynbee takes the Parable of the Tares (Mtt.13.27-30) as an illustration of this idea. Idem.
\(^{(2)}\) For Bergson's concept of \textit{elan vital}, see above, 110 n.1
\(^{(3)}\) \textit{History}, i,270
\(^{(4)}\) \textit{History}, i,270
\(^{(5)}\) \textit{History} ix, 399 refers back to the idea of God understood in relation to the \textit{elan}. 
Christian, Hindu point of view. Now God is not so much the mystic's elan as the personal aspect of the omnipresent, Absolute Reality. God is not limited by any factor outside himself, or any being in the created order. He is infinite(1) and omnipotent. (2) His omnipotence does not crush human freedom, because he suspends in Love 'the fiat of omnipotence' so that man may decide in freedom to choose between good and evil, life and death. (3) A finite God, in his opinion, is unable to satisfy the religious needs of the worshipper. Indeed, 'man cannot have a vision of Absolute Reality in terms of personality without both feeling God to be good and also knowing him to be omnipotent.' (4) Immanence was suggested when God was understood in terms of the mystical elan. Now Toynbee wishes to emphasize the 'transcendent' aspect. This is suggested in his use of the phrase 'the spiritual presence higher or greater than man himself,' (5) or 'the trans-human presence.' (6) But Toynbee's idea of 'transcendence' is rather ambiguous. It does not seem to mean more than that God is 'more' than man, or for that matter, the universe, as, for instance, when he says, 'this presence is not contained either in some of the phenomena or in the sum total of them'. (7)

(1) See for example History, vii, 524 where 'infinite' refers to the divine creativity which is the source of all human creativity.
(2) See Approach, 277, 278, History, ix, 382
(3) History, ix, 382.
(4) Approach, 278, also 277
(5) Approach, 275
(6) History, xii, 97
(7) Approach, 275. Fr Walker sees a strong note of immanence even in his later works. This is suggested in Toynbee's phrase, 'God the Dweller in the Innermost.' (History vii 501) This phrase suggests 'pantheism' or 'anatheism' to Fr Walker. It is difficult to see how Toynbee can escape the charge of pantheism, or at least anatheism, to coin a word from the Greek, for God is the 'Dweller in the Innermost', i.e. in the subconscious depths of the soul. Thus Toynbee has confused 'man's being with God's being.' (Review 343) But the charge is not fair because Toynbee does not say God is to be found in the depths, but only the 'intimations' about him. See above 127ff. Furthermore, Toynbee's criticism of the Hindu identification of Atman with Brahman as 'psychic anthropomorphism' shows that he is very much alive to the danger of such confusion. See above, 144f.
The 'higher' spiritual presence suggests that God's moral perfection(1) and his will(2) are 'immeasurably unequal' and beyond the achievements of man. There is no suggestion that he is 'qualitatively different' (in the ontological sense) from man and the universe as a whole, which is required in the Christian understanding of 'transcendence.' On the contrary, we find Toynbee saying that at a higher level of experience, the truth that God and man are ontologically identical would become obvious.(3)

Briefly summing up, the criticism that Toynbee holds the view of God as finite does not exactly apply to his later thought, when God is understood not in the context of the immanent elan but as the 'personal' vision of the absolute and infinite Reality. God is 'omnipotent' and 'infinite'. He is 'greater' and 'higher' than man and the world, though his monistic mentality renders the idea of 'transcendence' very ambiguous.

In the world of mythology, God is finite because he is challenged by the Devil. Even though the 'Devil', in the context of 'response and challenge', is a personification of the 'object', or the 'obstacle' which lies on the path of the elan, nevertheless the problem of evil in relation to God still has to be faced, especially when God is regarded as absolute and omnipotent. In the following let us see how Toynbee tackles this problem.

(1) History, vii, 470
(2) History, ix, 381
(3) See above, 283
Is evil to be found in God?

We have said that the category of morality, in Toynbee's opinion, is the highest reach possible for man in his understanding of God. The central moral attribute which he can affirm of God is goodness, understood in terms of love and care. 'In virtue of his goodness, God, or a bodhisattva, cares for human beings, loves them, and helps them.'

Perhaps one can say his goodness is the essence of his love, and his love being goodness in action towards his creatures. In the end, it is the affirmation of love which is the basic feature of Toynbee's vision of God. There is nothing unusual about such an affirmation, especially to the Christian ear. What is interesting is perhaps the ways by which he comes to such a conclusion.

There are two ways in which the problem of evil makes its impact on Toynbee. First, if the God of love is also the omnipotent, absolute Creator, as Toynbee affirms together with the Christians, then God must be regarded as the author of good and evil. In other words, evil as well as good are to be found in God. But if God is 'absolute good,' then the creator of this 'ailing universe' must be a different God of a morally antithetical character, thus dualism becomes inevitable. Neither of these conclusions are acceptable. Second, the problem also comes in the context of his analysis of man's psychic behaviour, which has already come to our notice.

'Nature' in the psychic dimension presents herself to man as monster as well as the victim who sacrifices herself. This,

1. See Approach, 278
3. See above, 126ff
we suggested, is rather to be interpreted as a picturesque way of describing the polarization of the libido in the human psyche. This would mean that the worship of the God of love as well as the worship of the God of evil are both real possibilities to man, each leading to consequences antithetical to one another. A question then arises, which we have not dealt with before. Does it mean that the God of love and the monstrous God have the same reality? If so, dualism will be the natural conclusion. Of course Toynbee can revert back to monism in which the ultimate distinction between god and evil is unreal. But in that case, the 'One True God' no longer remains! So he must solve the problem in the personal, theistic context which he regards as being 'independent' of the monistic position, and 'equally valid'. Thus we come to a rather puzzling idea, viz., God's nature characterized by a 'union of opposites.'

This phrase is originally used to describe 'Human Nature.' Human Nature is a 'union of opposites' in the sense that 'incongruous', 'conflicting' and 'contrary' elements or moral attributes are affirmed of man. In man are found the 'divine and the animal, consciousness and subconsciousness ... unselfishness and self-centredness, saintliness and sinfulness ....' (1) These elements are 'not only united there, they are inseparable from one another.' From this he goes on to say,

(1) Approach, 289
Our experience of the union of conflicting yet inseparable opposites in Human Nature may explain more things in Heaven and Earth than Man himself. This ordeal of serving as a battlefield on which opposing spiritual forces meet and struggle with one another may be characteristic of the nature, not only of man, but of all life on this planet. It might even be characteristic of the nature of God, if we use the traditional name for the personal aspect of an Absolute Reality which must have other facets besides. (1)

These sentences have a characteristic monistic ring about them. The assumption behind them is that the microcosmos (man) and the macrocosmos (universe) are correlated. According to Kraemer, this is just typical of 'naturalistic monism.' (2) These sentences also have an epistemological implication. If the microcosmos is reflective of the macrocosmos, then what man needs to do is to turn in contemplation to the microcosmos to comprehend the macrocosmos. (3) It is therefore understandable that this type of thinking is at odds with the idea of 'revelation' maintained by the Semitic religions, according to which supreme spiritual truth is given to man from a source 'wholly other' and qualitatively different from man. It comes to man from 'without', whereas monistic thought tends to find it from 'within'. It is in this vein of thought that Toynbee comes to the idea of God as 'union of opposites,' a predicate the reality of which is first established in human experience.

The 'union of opposites' characteristic of God, as in the quotation, refers on the one hand to the union of the 'personal' and the 'impersonal' facets of Reality. God is the 'personal'

(1) Approach, 290, italics mine.
(2) For Toynbee's reference to 'microcosm' and 'macrocosm' see above, 107. For Kraemer's comment on these words, see above, 40f.
vision of Reality which has within itself also the 'impersonal' facet at least. Yet on the other hand, the 'union of opposites' refers also to the 'opposing spiritual forces' which man experiences in himself, which he also thinks 'characteristic of the nature of God.' In other words, the 'union of opposites' in the case of God also refers to the antithetical moral forces of good and evil. The question then is how it is to be understood in the case of God.

If we take a closer look at the idea of 'union of opposites' in relation to God, we can see that it can be interpreted in two different ways. First, it can be taken as characteristic of the nature of God. That is, it describes what is actually in the Godhead. This seems to be a natural rendering of the reference in the passage which we quoted. There the idea of 'union of opposites' is patterned after, or analogous to, the union in the human nature, and so we expect such a union to be also in the divine nature. The nearest Toynbee comes to affirming such a union in God is the short discussion of the problem of different moral visions of God in the ninth volume of his major work.\(^{(1)}\)

Toynbee indicates in that discussion that he is profoundly disturbed by the suffering, pain and sorrow which do not seem to be capable of being turned to moral account. God is love and therefore man's Redeemer, but he is also the Creator of this 'ailing Universe', and as such, cannot but be implicated in the evil and suffering. But the author of love and the author of evil and suffering are morally antithetical to one another. 'When a human soul thus finds itself confronted with two

\(^{(1)}\) *History*, ix, 396–402
numinous presences which are morally antithetical to one another ... the most obvious conclusion is that there must be, not one god, but two gods in the Universe. (1) This is the conclusion to which Marcion comes. He posits the existence of two gods, sacrificing the unity of God in order to keep 'the hem of a divine Love's garment unspotted.' Here we see that Toynbee is on the verge of affirming antithetical moral categories in God. He has been suggesting that it is this Janus-faced moral character of God which leads man to believe erroneously that there are two Gods. But Toynbee falls short of making just this positive affirmation. He does not say that there is actually love and evil in God, though he does not deny the truth of such a vision man has about him.

Second, the ambiguous phrase under discussion can be taken to refer not to what is in God, but rather to what is in our understanding of him. This is what Toynbee actually suggests, though the argument is sometimes difficult to follow. The essence of the argument is that God's nature appears to us as a 'union' of good and evil because we see him through a morally antithetical lens of good and evil. This is a 'logical and moral paradox' which is an unmistakable indication of the limit of human comprehension. God in his love has given man freedom, 'and that a freedom which gives vent for Creation thereby opens a door for Sin ...' (2) Because man has freedom, he has to make decisions between 'Life and Death, and between Good and Evil.' This 'ordeal' of man can be, in his opinion, faithfully described as 'challenges from God and as temptations from

(1) History, ix, 398
(2) History, ix, 399
the Devil.' For man, therefore, good and evil become inseparable. It also means that 'every encounter between a human soul and God is thus inevitably fraught with possibilities of Evil as well as Good, and this chain that links Evil, as well as Good, to Love cannot be severed by the knife-edge of Marcion's logic.' (1) To emphasize his point Toynbee refers us to 'the findings of at least one school of post-Modern Western psychological research,' (2) showing that it is not impossible for man to have conflicting images of the same reality. The case taken is the relation of the baby to his mother. To the baby, the mother represents the external world and mediates its impacts on the child. She is the child's object of love, security and peace. But she is also Authority, the chief source of power mysteriously set over the child and thwarting some of the impulses along whose paths the new life quests outwards. The frustration of infantile impulses generates aggression, i.e., anger, hate and destructive wishes against the thwarting authority. But this hated authority is also the loved mother. Thus the infant is involved in a 'primal conflict' in his relation to the mother who is also the centre of his universe. The seemingly irreconcilable visions of God in the mature moral personality of saints and scholars are already prefigured in the primal conflict of the child. On the analogy of the relation between the mother and the baby, the morally antithetical epiphanies of God should be regarded as being only real in our vision of him. The conflicting principles of good and evil is 'not a faithful reflection of the divine reality, but a mirage

(1) idem.
reflecting merely a diffraction of the unitary image of the One True God in the prismatic lens of an imperfect human spiritual vision. (1)

So far only one point is made clear, viz. there is no evil in God. The monstrous God is therefore only a diffracted image of God in our imperfect spiritual vision. Strictly speaking, Toynbee has not yet given us an adequate or systematic treatment of the problem of evil in any of his works. Evil as a reality in human experience is accepted as a fact of life. (2) However, he spares no effort to remind us of the limit of our knowledge. What we regard as 'evil' may turn out to be an instrument in the service of God in a way which we do not understand now, because we cannot 'view the travail of creation with the all-comprehending vision of a Divine Creative Love ...'. (3) In the end it may be transformed, or rather, 'transcended.' ... the service performed for God by Evil as an instrument of creation in His hands is a reality in God's creative work in Time which is transcended in those higher spheres that are entered by a contrite Doctor Marianus in the last act of the second part of Goethe's Faust. (4)

We should also notice that when Toynbee speaks of 'evil', it is 'moral evil' that is primarily referred to, viz., 'evil' which in one way or another is connected with man's freedom. It is that 'evil' which man chooses. (5) Evil and sin are the same reality insofar as they share the same characteristic feature: self-centredness. (6) Suffering ensues when man chooses to serve his

(1) History, ix, 401
(2) See for example, Experience, 137, 138, 152, 153. Approach, 277, besides the section in History, ix, 396ff
(3) History, ix, 402, also see x, 105 where Toynbee uses the phrase 'good of evil'. Evil may serve to bring about good.
(4) History, ix, 402.
(5) See Experience, 152f. History, ix, 399
(6) Experience, 152, see also above, 142ff for 'sin' and 'suffering'.

self-centred interest and purpose, instead of 'exerting manfully'
his will to overcome sin. Admittedly, 'moral evil' is a formidable
problem. Yet when compared with what is generally called 'natural
evil' and what Campbell calls 'underserved suffering of a
protracted nature', moral evil appears to present less difficulty
to the belief that God is good. In the case of moral evil, there
is human 'freedom' to account for, but there is no such convenient
opening in the case of evil and suffering of a different nature. (2)

However, Toynbee is not unaware of the non-moral evil and suffering
which cannot be rendered to moral account. (3) He even calls this
'ailing Universe' the 'chamber of horrors.' But he is not prepared
to accept the Marcionite view that the universe (creation) has
nothing to do with the God of love. (4) He cannot explain exhaustively
the enigmatic 'why' of human suffering, or for that matter, the
suffering of all life. In the end he can only affirm in an act of
faith that God is love, despite the many sufferings in the world,
'we may venture to believe that Love is also the God who has created
the tentacles of the squid and the teeth of the whale-shark.' (5)

The important point to notice in this section is the affirmation
that God is the God of love, and that the antithetical moral
principle of evil is not in him, but rather in our apprehension of

(1) By 'natural evil' we mean things like plague, earthquake etc during
which much suffering is inflicted on life. We also call these 'non-
moral evil' to distinguish it from 'moral evil' which is
associated with human will and freedom.

(2) Prof. C.A. Campbell even says that 'moral evil' presents no real
challenge to the theology of theism. Only 'undeserved suffering
of protracted character' does. See On Selfhood and Godhead, 1957, 287ff

(3) History, ix, 398
(4) History, ix, 399
(5) The images are taken from T. Heyerdahl, Kon-Tiki Across the Pacific
by Raft, 1950. The sea creatures are taken as symbols of the
sufferings and horrors man has to endure through life.
History, ix, 400
him. Evil is certainly a reality to be seriously reckoned with. But it does not, in Toynbee's case, destroy the conviction that God is love.

The One True God is the God of Love, and the self-sacrifice of Nature in the psychic dimension has led on to man's worship of God as love. Thus the self-giving of Nature, we can say, provides Toynbee with a concept of love, and hence also love of God.

(3) The One True God of Love

If the archetypal image of Nature sacrificing herself in the human psychic cosmos leads Toynbee on to the worship of the God of love, then it is his 'ancestral religion', viz., the Christian faith, that furnishes the fundamental expression of the love of the One True God. This is specially so in his earlier work (e.g., in the 6th volume of his major work) in which the 'love of God' is developed in close reference to Jesus Christ, who still occupies a place of overall importance in his thought. The Kingdom of God, for instance, at this stage is understood in terms of the Augustinian Civitas Dei, with Christ as the King. For those mundane citizens who wish to enrol themselves as member of this Kingdom, the 'omnipresent commonwealth here and now,' their 'allegiance' must be pledged to 'Christ the King.'(1) But in later volumes, when the higher religions are accorded full membership of the Kingdom, the exclusive note of paying allegiance to Christ the King is markedly absent. With this

(1) History, vi, 156-158
also goes the seemingly unique place of Jesus Christ in his scheme.\(^\text{1}\) We therefore now wish to explore his teaching on the love of God and the direction of its development.

The emphasis on the love of God ties in very well with his other emphasis, viz., freedom, which has been, as we have seen, the basic concern in Toynbee's anthropology. When man is confronted by the challenge of God, he is free to do the will of God or not. He is free to choose good or evil, though history bears witness that the latter is almost the inevitable for the majority of mankind. God cannot bend man's will to do his will without destroying man's freedom. But for the salvation of mankind men must be coaxed to will and to do the will of God. Herein also lies the 'moral goal' of man. 'Human Nature's moral goal is to make the self's will coincide with God's will, instead of pursuing self-regarding purposes of its own.'\(^\text{2}\)

How is it possible for God to bring man to do his will and yet preserve intact man's freedom? In Toynbee's vision, God does so by winning man over through his love for man. Love is the most potent (though not omnipotent\(^\text{3}\)), creative spiritual force ever experienced by man. It breaks down man's resistance to the challenge of God towards sainthood. What is more important is that God's love is able to elicit man's love in response, the result being that man is able to do his will creatively and spontaneously. Love

---

\(^{1}\) An interesting example can be found when we compare what he says in his Burge Memorial lecture, Christianity and Civilization (1940) which is also included in Civilization on Trial, 1948, 225-252, with what he says later in History, vol.7, where the substance of the lecture is virtually reproduced. In the Burge lecture, Toynbee talks about the 'rise of the higher religions' and their 'culmination in Christianity.' Civilization on Trial, 251. But the phrase 'culmination in Christianity' is significantly absent in History, vii, 566.

\(^2\) History, xii, 563

\(^3\) Experience, 147
is almost exclusively the moral and emotive category Toynbee can say of the nature of God and his relation with man. The other expressions which are also central to the doctrine of God in his ancestral religion, such as 'the just God,' and 'righteous God,' the 'wrath of God,' and the idea of 'justification' are banished from his rarefied vision.

Furthermore, the love of God is largely understood in terms of God's self-giving to man. This understanding of love, as we said before, is already suggested in the primal, archetypal image of Nature sacrificing herself. One can almost say that this archetypal image is the controlling factor in Toynbee's vision of the love of God. So when he turns to his ancestral religion, he finds that such an image of love is well expressed in the idea of the crucifixion of the Son of God. It is indeed doubtful whether Toynbee sees more than this aspect of the Christian faith when he turns to it for an understanding of God. In the New Testament, especially in the instruction given to Nicodemus, Toynbee says,

Love is revealed as being both the motive that moves God to redeem Man at the price of incarnation and crucifixion, and the means that enables Man to win access to God. The working of love in God's heart - in moving God to suffer death on the Cross - is brought out in the Synoptic Gospels in their account of the circumstances in which Jesus announces to His disciples that His destiny is the Passion instead of being a Jewish Messiah's conventional world success ... The meaning ... is that a Love which loves to the death is the essence of God's nature ... The love of God for Man - as manifested to man in Christ Crucified - calls out in Man an answering love for God, and this love of Man for God flows on Earth along the channel of Man's love for his human brother.(1)

The words Crucifixion and Passion suggest suffering. Suffering is included, in Toynbee's opinion, in the idea of love. Indeed, 

(1) History, vi, 164-165
one can say that love will not be love unless suffering is involved. Suffering is also pre-figured in the archetypal image of Nature’s self-sacrifice. Since suffering inflicts all life, so the Savior God must also be a suffering God to prove that he is also involved in the agony of man, thereby bringing home to man the love of God for him. Thus, 'an epiphany must lead on to a Passion, if God manifest is to become Man’s Saviour by proving himself "a very present help in trouble." Suffering is the key to salvation, as well as to understanding, and a Saviour’s suffering must fathom the uttermost the depths of agony.'

The vision of God as a suffering and dying God is by no means unique to the Christian faith. The same theme of God suffering and dying is also found in other religions and in ancient mythology. He 'dies for different worlds under diverse names,' for a Minoan World as Zagreus, for a Summeric World as Tammuz, for a Hittite World as Attis, for a Scandinavian World as Adonis ('Our Lord'), for an Egyptian World as Osiris, for a Shi‘i World as Husayn, for a Christian World as Christ. (1)

The epiphanies are many, but only one Passion. The oldest appearance of the suffering and dying God, the anthropologist would point out, says Toynbee, is 'in the role of the ἐνιαυτός ἄνωθεν, the spirit of the vegetation that is born for Man in the spring to die for Man in the autumn.' (2) Seen in the context of this immemorial, time-honoured tradition, Christ is but one among the many gods or manifestations of God, and a common one on the same level as the rest.

(1) History, vi, 275
(2) History, vi, 276
(3) Idem.
Though dying at the extreme limit of suffering, it is precious and contributive to man's salvation only when the 'God manifest' undergoes it willingly. So the important questions about the suffering of the Redeemer are: does the Dying God die by compulsion, or by choice? With generosity, or with bitterness? Out of love or in despair? These questions must be asked of the many gods and saviours who claim man's allegiance and worship. Only a willing death in suffering for man can bring about man's salvation, because in communion with such a saviour-god man will 'repay, by acquiring ('like a light caught from a leaping flame.'), a divine love and pity that have been shown to Man by God in an act of pure self-sacrifice.'(1)

Before these questions are asked of the many saviour-gods, they are similar to one another, all on the same level. But in the light of the penetrating inquiry, 'we shall see the goats being separated from the sheep.' Even in Calliope's lamentation for the death of Orpheus there is a note of bitterness which 'strikes, and shocks, a Christian ear.' It cannot be compared with the God who 'so loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son ...' The willing self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ distinguishes him from the other saviour-gods, because 'at the ordeal of death', few have dared, 'to put their title to the test by plunging into the icy river.' So according to Toynbee, the Christian God alone remains, who has vindicated his love in the death of his Son. The supreme place of Jesus Christ is beautifully described as follows:

And now, as we stand and gaze with our eyes fixed upon the farther shore, a single figure rises from the flood and straightway fills the whole horizon. There is the Saviour; 'and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand; he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.'(2)

(1) History, vi, 277
(2) History, vi, 278. Note that Toynbee does not say who this 'Savior' is. But the context indicates that he is Jesus Christ.
This supreme place accorded to Jesus, however, is withdrawn in his later work. Now he sees the redeeming nature of self-giving and suffering love of Christ is also expressed in the bodhisattvas of Mahayana Buddhism. The bodhisattva is a candidate for Buddha-hood in Mahayana mythology. Like the Buddha at his Enlightenment, he has also reached the threshold of Nirvana. Theoretically he has the power 'at any moment to take the last step on the course of his exit.' But he forsakes this privilege. Instead, he makes a vow not to enter eternal bliss unless and until all sentient beings are rescued and enlightened. He vows to give himself to save others not for the merely short span of one's earthly life, but for a period of aeons upon aeons. He condemns himself to an age-long penal servitude of suffering which is well within his power to avoid.

The reality of the bodhisattva's love and the love found in Jesus Christ therefore are equal, both being voluntary and directed to the salvation of all men.\(^{(1)}\) Both the Christian and the Mahayana approaches are positive affirmations of the nature of absolute Reality as love. In each approach the spiritual traveller has been offered 'an ideal figure to follow as his exemplar and his guide.' He must accept suffering as an opportunity for acting on the promptings of love and pity, because the trail has been blazed for Man by a Supreme Being who has demonstrated his own devotion to the ideal by subjecting himself to the Suffering that is the necessary price of acting on it.\(^{(2)}\) In other words, in both the Christian and the Mahayana ways, the absolute Reality as love is demonstrated by a 'Supreme Being'. Therefore they are both valid ways to God. This

\(^{(1)}\) History, xii, 617. For his description of bodhisattvas, see Approach, 87.

\(^{(2)}\) Approach, 85, 89
argument of Toynbee's, as we shall see later, is strained, because the Christian view of what Reality is radically differs from that of the Mahayanist. (1) But Toynbee, in his enthusiastic pursuit of unity, has blurred the radical difference between the two. Nevertheless, this Christian-Mahayanist concept of love serves as the criterion of love for Toynbee. Wherever such love is found, there the personal aspect of Reality, or 'God', is.

(4) The Incarnation of Jesus Christ

It is obvious that Toynbee's Christian-Mahayanist view is incompatible with the 'exclusive' emphasis of his 'ancestral' religion in which the claim for the 'uniqueness' of Jesus Christ as God Incarnate has never been abandoned. Toynbee is fully aware of this, and that is the reason why he calls himself an 'ex-Christian'. Whatever complication and difficulties the doctrine of Incarnation of Christ may encounter in different theological schools in Christian circles, there are certain essential elements which are commonly accepted. The Incarnation signifies a historical event in which God takes upon himself human flesh, to be born as a man, at a particular point in history. It is 'unique', 'final', as God has not done so before, nor will he do so again. Hence all claims of spiritual truth must be judged in relation to this universal event which constitutes the sole legitimate criterion of religious truth. It is these ideas of uniqueness and finality which Toynbee finds most unacceptable. Such claims by the Christians betray their

---

(1) See below, 320ff. Here 'Supreme Being' in Mahayana refers to a bodhisattva; and in the Christian faith, he is the suffering Christ.
'tribalism', 'parochialism' and their intolerance, which are all at odds with the idea of love. 'How can the presence of a hypothetically infinite and eternal God be supposed to make itself felt more palpable in Palestine than in Alberta, or in the Hijaz than in Eastern Bangal?'(1) For Toynbee, the thought of God uniquely present in Palestine than anywhere else is not in consonant with his nature which is love. To make the point more impressive he resorts to a series of questions:

Which is the more consonant with the Christian belief that God is love? The other Christian belief in the uniqueness of Christ's incarnation? Or the Hindu belief that Vishnu has subjected himself to more avatars than one, and the Buddhist belief that more sentient beings than one have taken the bodhisattva's tremendous vow to forgo his own self-liberation until he shall have shepherded all his fellow beings into the fold that he himself will have forborne till then to enter?(2)

Obviously Toynbee prefers to see that God has manifested himself in more than one place in the world, and more than one point in history. But then we still have to ask the question: what does Toynbee really make of the 'incarnation' (or 'incarnations') of God? Does he believe that God the supreme Being takes upon himself humanity ('human flesh') and dwells among men? In his latest book, Experience, he has a short discussion under the heading, 'My inability to pass the tests of Religious orthodoxy', in which he argues that the idea of 'incarnation' has to be looked at in the context of the whole universe, not just this planet of ours. If God in this manner 'has sacrificed himself for redeeming us, he will have done so for the fallen human-like inhabitants of all other

(1) History, vii, 430f
(2) History, xii, 624f
habitable planets.' His rejection of 'incarnation' in terms of God assuming humanity in a unique manner is implicit in the question with which he concludes his discussion: Is it credible that God has been incarnate and been crucified on every one of these? (1)

To clarify our discussion let us take a brief look at what Toynbee means when he refers to Jesus as the 'God Incarnate'. (2)

The Christian Church traditionally affirms the divinity of Christ by saying that he is God's only begotten 'Son', being ontically one with the Father. ('Very God of Very God.') Being such, he mediates to man the fullness of the glory of the Father. His Incarnation and his Sonship belong together, rooted in the basic identity of being between the Father and the Son. But this identity is rejected by Toynbee. He says that he can believe that 'Jesus was God's son in the sense that Jesus was inspired by love more wholeheartedly than any other human being of whom we know.' (3) In other words, to be God's son is to be inspired by the self-giving love of God, as it is adequately symbolized by the Crucifixion. In Jesus the Christians may find the supreme expression of this love, but by no means he is the 'only' one, though it is 'possible that no other human being has been God's son to Jesus's degree.' God's Incarnate Son 'represents the conception of God as being a human personality of the highest human spiritual height.' The 'Ressurection' and 'Ascension' are the 'anticlimax' to the Crucifixion, because they have tempered with Jesus's humanity 'in a way that diminishes his spiritual stature instead of enhancing it.' (4)

(1) Experience, 131
(2) For references to Jesus as a 'God Incarnate', see History, vii, 72, 441, 515, 524, 559, 567.
(3) Experience, 134
(4) Experience, 177f
Thus it is clear that when Toynbee refers to Jesus as a 'God Incarnate' he means no more than this, that in this earthly human life the reality of the self-giving love of God finds a powerful expression. God's incarnations are to be recognized wherever such a divine love is known. Jesus may not be the unique historical 'incarnation' which the Church affirms him to be. But the revelational value of this historical life is not diminished because he is not ontically one with God in his being. Moreover, the impact of the self-sacrificing love of God can also be effectively mediated to man through mythical figures such as the bodhisattvas and the many avatars in Hinduism, who can also be called 'God Incarnate.' For Toynbee what is important is the truth of self-sacrificing love, and its inspiring effect on man, rather than the 'historical' person who is the carrier of such truth. Spiritual truth is 'historical' if it has been enacted by men in history, and has produced effects which can be studied in history. It does not necessarily enhance its value by being associated with a historical being, no matter how 'unique' he is.

On the matter of 'incarnation' and criterion of spiritual truth Toynbee differs radically from the Christian position. Not only has he rejected the *assumptio carnis* idea which the Church stands for, but also he holds a value-scale which is incompatible with the Christian one. He sets idea over event, thus challenging the Christian emphasis on 'history,' and 'recurrence' over 'uniqueness,' which reflects his relativistic mentality. (1)

(1) The Christian preference for 'uniqueness' is reflected in Dawson's criticism of 'incarnation' in Indian thought, which is a 'recurrence process'. The implication is that it is inferior to the 'unique' occurrence as claimed in the Christian faith, not only that there is much mythical and nonhistorical element involved. See *Dynamic of World History*, (Mentor edition, 1962) 233. See Toynbee's comment in *History*, xii, 624-625 in which he opts for 'recurrence' as superior. There is a clash of value scales here.
The notion that what is ultimately real is both impersonal and personal at the same time strikes one as nothing less than a defiance of logic. Indeed one needs to suspend the logical reasoning faculty to appreciate it. What Toynbee says may sound very strange to the Christian ear, yet in the Indic circles it is a commonplace. Indic thought is rich, complicated and variegated, but one can see some similarity between the type of thought championed by Sankara and that of Toynbee. The striking thing about Toynbee is that in metaphysics he is monistic, yet in religious devotion he is strongly theistic and personalistic. To a large extent this is also true with Sankara who is very much under the influence of the Upanishads and the metaphysics of Mahayana Buddhism. In modern times, Sankara's thought dominates Hindu Intellectual activity, and is made widely known to the western world through the apologist of Hindu philosophy, S. Radhakrishnan.

Sankara's metaphysics is non-dualistic, and its central notion is that Brahman or Power (as Smart prefers to call it) alone exists. The individual self is identified with this Power which sustains the universe. Perhaps it is better to say that the self is identified with Power, as he affirms only one Self, and not a plurality of selves. This Self is manifested as the inner witness which illuminates the myriad psychological organisms with consciousness. For this reason it is wrongly taken by individuals to be broken up

(1) A brief acquaintance with Ninian Smart's good introduction, *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy*, 1964, will show one how complicated and rich Indian thought is.

(2) Kraemer points out that Vedantism, in the version of Sankara, has since the fourteenth century been the most fashionable among the intellectuals, and certainly among the Western-trained ones. It overwhelms the revolt of Ramanuja. See *Christian faith*, 114.
into a multiplicity of selves. Since the apparent multiplicity of selves is an illusion, so by extension the whole variegation of empirical experience is also illusory. Brahman alone is real. This is also the Absolute Reality. If it must be described at all, it can be done in terms of being, consciousness and bliss. Being and consciousness can be taken as the two approaches to the two sides of the Brahman-Self equation. If one looks 'outwards' one can conceive Brahman as pure being underlying appearances; if 'inwards' then as the Self underlying psychological states. The experience of 'release' is the experience in which one realizes one's essential identity with the one Reality which is behind all phenomena.

Because there is Reality on the one hand, and illusion on the other, a 'double-decker' system of truth can be developed to give some order to man's perception and experience. There are two levels of truth, the higher and the ordinary. The higher truth refers to the world as illusion from the standpoint of the Absolute, while the ordinary truth refers to the true assertions that can be made from the standpoint of common sense. In the framework of this double-decker view of truth a synthesis of non-dualistic monism and theism is worked out, and of course with theism very much in the second place. It can be described in the following manner.

From the standpoint of higher truth, the world as a whole is an illusion. The origin and nature of illusion cannot be explained, as it is a concept of the higher level. But the empirical existence of the world can be explained as due to the creativity of a Lord, who is the Power or Brahman as seen from the standpoint of the worshipper.
To understand this one must grasp first the meaning of the word 'illusion.' In the period preceding Sankara, this word takes on the meaning of untrue appearances, 'as though men, in being deceived by appearances, were subject to conjuring tricks.' (1) But in earlier times it means 'creative power' or 'creative substance,' referring to the capacity of God in bringing the cosmos into existence, or the material he uses therewith. In this way God can well be described as the 'great illusionist.' And 'the association of the word with the creative energy of God made it easier for Sankara to present a picture of the Power underlying the illusion as also being (from the standpoint of this world) the Lord of the cosmos.' (2) Thus, in the realm of higher truth, Brahman or Power is pure being and qualityless, and in the realism of ordinary truth, a personal Lord. For Sankara, the Lord appears as Shiva or as other gods. One may worship his Lord in the most elaborate ceremonies and rituals. But one must transcend it, in the sense of ascending to the higher reaches of intuitive realization, in contemplative experience, of the Absolute.

Much of Sankara's teachings are reflected in Radhakrishnan's writings, though he has his own bent. According to the latter, 'Being is the foundation of all existence, though it is not itself anything existent.' Like Sankara, he regards being as absolute and transcendent, that is, beyond quality and distinction. But it also has a dual reality. 'There are two sides of the Supreme, Essential Transcendent Being which we call Brahman.' Looked at from one side,

(1) Smart, Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy, 1964, 100
(2) Smart, Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy, 1964, 100
it appears as the Pure, Absolute Being 'without any expression or variation.' It is the 'foundation of all existence.' But when this Being 'moves out of its primal poise,' it appears as Isvara, which is free activity, being 'the timeless, spaceless reality' creatively 'pouring out its powers and qualities ...' Thus Isvara is 'the Absolute in action as Lord and Creator.' (1) The impersonal, monistic Absolute and the personal 'God' represents two ways of looking at Reality. But does Radhakrishnan follow Sankara in his strict hierarchically assorted of truth? He refers to Sankara's scheme in his 'Confession' in these words, 'There is a tendency to regard the Supreme as Isvara or God as subordinate to the Supreme as Brahman or Godhead.' But does he endorse it? His answer seems to be tactful and restrained, 'I feel that these disclose great depths in the Supreme Being and only logically can we distinguish them. They are all united in the Supreme.' (2) It is likely that Kraemer is correct when he argues that Radhakrishnan regards the 'It' more 'real' than the 'He.' (3) But Brightman, having subjected Radhakrishnan's thought to searching criticism, comes to the conclusion that he is more emphatic on the 'personal' than otherwise.

(1) Radhakrishnan, Fragments of a Confession, 39, in The Philosophy of S. Radhakrishnan, ed. Schlipp, 1952. See also The Hindu View of Life, 1926, 31. In fact, Radhakrishnan finds no less than 4 distinctions of Being in the Upanishads: (i) Brahman, The Absolute Being, (ii) Isvara, the unconditioned free activity, which he calls God, (iii) Hirany-garbha, Praja-pati, Brahma, the World Spirit in its subtle form and (iv) Viraj, the World-Spirit in its gross form.

(2) Radhakrishnan, Fragments of a Confession, 41 in The Philosophy of S. Radhakrishnan, ed. Schlipp, 1952

(3) Kraemer, Christian Faith, 128. He refers to Radhakrishnan: Eastern Religions and Western Thought, 1939, 27. But also see 22, 24ff. Radhakrishnan says that symbols used in our attempt to grasp 'the reality superpersonal in itself, personal from the cosmic end' are at best provisional, incomplete, and relative. They tell us not what God is in himself, but only what he is in relation to us.
He is, Brightman says, more close to Ramanuja than to Sankara. (1)

One of the many problems which this type of Hindu philosophic thought poses is the problem of the reality of man, or that of the world as a whole. In referring to the world Radhakrishnan abandons the concept of 'maya'. 'The world', he says, 'is not an illusion; it is not nothingness, for it is willed by God and therefore is real.' It has 'dependent, created reality.' (2) This applies to man too, as man is also God's creation. In his reply to his critics he wants to make it clear that there is no question in his scheme of the individual being absorbed by the Divine Reality. But he also says that 'till the end of the cosmic process is achieved, the individuals retain their distinction though they possess universality of spirit.' But what happens when the cosmic consummation is reached? To this he replies, 'When this universal incarnation is reached, the cosmic is taken over into the Absolute.' (3) His belief is that 'it is impossible for man, a child of eternity, to distinguish himself from God in the long run.' Even in the highest state of mystical experience, 'the individual being is absorbed in the Supreme.' (4) In brief, Radhakrishnan is saying that in the end, only the Absolute is real.

(1) Brightman sees a large body of interpretation of mystical experience by Radhakrishnan being made in the form of personalistic pluralism. See The Philosophy of S. Radhakrishnan, Ed. Schlipp, 1952, 411. But also see Radhakrishnan's reply, 797.

(2) Radhakrishnan sets himself to defend Hinduism against the reproach that it denies the reality of the world. In doing so, he even makes Sankara a 'realist', very much to Kraemer's surprise. See Christian faith, 123.


There is much attraction in such an 'Indic' approach to what is ultimately real, for it recognizes both the personal and the impersonal claims, thus removing the otherwise insurmountable tension created by the two visions of Reality. But there are inherent weaknesses in such a philosophical approach. In the Sankara version, the theistic approach is plainly regarded as secondary, a stage to be transcended. This attitude will hardly be compromised by theists who regard the personal God as ultimate, and with it the eternal distinction between God and man. Christians traditionally affirm this theistic conviction, which is buttressed by the doctrine of creation. As to the eternal distinction between God and man, both Sankara and Radhakrishnan are not prepared to grant such a possibility. Monism prevails ultimately in their system. If this personal-impersonal Indic approach is taken as a convenient framework for a synthesis of world religions, then the result is bound to be disappointing. The gulf between this Indic approach, and the personal approach, say, as represented by the traditional Christian faith, remains as wide as ever.

In the light of this type of Indic thought, let us look at Toynbee again. The similarity between this non-dualistic, monistic thought and that of Toynbee the 'ex-Christian Hindu' is astounding. Toynbee's metaphysical assertions about the nature of Reality is monistic. If this view is consistently held all through, the outcome will not be different from the Indic philosophers, viz., in the end, only the Absolute is true. But Toynbee, being deeply influenced by his 'ancestral' Christian faith, attempts to see the personal approach as genuinely 'independent' from the monistic
position, and 'equally valid.' The impersonal and the personal are both true to the structure of Reality, but, as we have seen, the moral, personal categories such as love and good are regarded as being in the very structure of Reality itself, and not just in our mental vision of it. The personal approach therefore has played a more dominant part than Toynbee himself has realized.

But can Toynbee, having committed himself to monistic speculations, avoid the hierachical assortment of truth which is typical of Sankara's scheme? His latest writings clearly show that he is not very successful in maintaining the 'independent' character of the 'personal' approach to Reality. At a 'higher' spiritual level, Toynbee says, 'personality' is transcended, including the 'divine personality.' (1) The word 'higher' implies a 'lower' order of spiritual attainment, and 'personality' belongs to this level. Thus we can say Toynbee in this aspect is toeing the lines familiarized by Sankara and Radhakrishnan. But Toynbee has not given up the idea that Absolute Reality is love, (2) and the meaning of love cannot be understood fully except in 'personal' terms and imagery. If his metaphysical position can be called 'monism', then it is a heavily qualified 'monism,' in which the personal category is true ultimately and on the same level as the impersonal, undifferentiated view. Apparently these two views are irreconcilable in thought, but this does not trouble Toynbee.

(1) Experience, 177, quoted also in full, see above, 283
(2) Experience, 158, where he says in the sub-title, 'Love and conscience may be indicators of the character of ultimate reality.' Love is given an 'absolute' character. It is an absolute spiritual reality. See ibid, 157f
D. A possible synthesis?

In his reply to Christopher Dawson's criticism of the idea of 'philosophical equivalence' (or rather, 'theological equivalence') of religions Toynbee says,

I do believe that all the higher religions, and, indeed, religions of all kinds, have in common an inkling of an identical truth about Reality and of an identical goal of salvation for human beings. But I do not hold that the religions themselves are identical ......(1)

This statement of belief has been referred to, but now we must explore its full implications in the context of man's visions of Reality as Toynbee understands them. At least two things are implied in this statement. First, if the religions are in any sense philosophically equivalent, it can only be taken as having in common an inkling of an identical truth about Reality. Thus, on this basis Toynbee's thought moves towards the possibility of some kind of synthesis. Second, the religions themselves are not identical. Not only do they have their own distinctive doctrines, practices and institutions, but also even in their inkling of the identical truth there is a difference in measure and intensity. He does not believe that 'all religions have seen the truth in equal measure and have found roads to salvation that are equally good.'(2) Such a statement suggests the need for criteria, for he must find means by which to judge one better than the other. So Toynbee's relativism is not unqualified.

It is obvious that Toynbee favours the Indic personal-impersonal view of Reality because it provides him with a convenient metaphysical framework to effect some sort of synthesis of religions. It also

(1) History, xii, 100. See above, 25
(2) History, xii, 99
settles for him the problem of truth, which is a major preoccupation in Kraemer's thought. Now Toynbee can say that Hinayana Buddhism and Judaism, for instance, are both true in their visions of the ultimate, despite their differences which to the Christian appear quite insurmountable. The word 'synthesis' is used here to refer to the bringing out of the general identity of the higher religions' visions of Reality.

Toynbee's synthesis seems at least to proceed along two lines. First, all higher religions have their own vision of Reality, either personal or impersonal. But since both type of visions are valid and true visions of the same Reality, so the religions can be said to have 'an inkling' of an 'identical truth about Reality.' In other words, the religions are at one with one another because they have in their visions the same Reality. Their oneness is grounded on the oneness to be found in the mystery of Reality. Thus Toynbee hopes to remove the tension and contradiction in regard to man's vision of the ultimate which is a major obstacle in the encounter of religions. This aspect of thought is by now familiar to us, and so there is no need to elaborate it further. Second, the two types of visions should not be kept too far or too sharply apart, for they do involve each other, or, in Toynbee's own words, 'each of them implies the other.' Therefore according to his peculiar logic, 'if either of them is a true insight into Reality, the other cannot be a delusion.'

---

(1) The 'higher religions' which are brought into his survey are: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Christianity, and with occasional references, Zoroastrianism.

(2) History, xii, 101
out, both types of visions are more often then not found co-existing in the same religion which officially accepts only one type, with the exception of Hinduism, and Mahayana Buddhism. To illustrate his case Toynbee makes a very brief survey of the viewpoints of the different higher religions. The Semitic group of religions, viz., Judaism, Christianity and Islam, understand Reality in its personal respect as God. This is also true of Zoroastrianism, though the question of its monotheism is still a debatable issue. But the mystics of the Semitic religions 'pass on from this worship of Reality as a personality to a union with Reality in which the distinction between personalities fades away.' A vision of the impersonal aspect of Reality in these religions are to be found in the mystics' experience. In the Persian, the impersonal aspect can be found in the abstract attribute of Ahuramazda. In the Indic group, Hinduism plainly recognizes both aspects in the official teaching. Mahayana Buddhism in its metaphysical aspect is monistic, not much different from the philosophy of Sankara. But in practice, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas are personal aids for the worshippers towards their salvation. So, on this practical level, Toynbee can say that 'the bodhisattvas are virtually divinities akin to the gods or God in whom Absolute Reality reveals Itself in Its personal aspect in the view of the other five religions.' It follows that the 'superhuman presence', as 'manifested in the bodhisattvas,' is personal. But what about Hinayana Buddhism then? It is like a

---

(1) Perhaps the psychologically inclined reader will find here the idea of 'compensation' as expounded by Jung. See also below, 595

(2) See History, xii, 435. But Toynbee seems to have come down heavily on the side of monotheism, as for instance when he refers to Zoroastrianism's personal vision of Reality as 'singular', like that of Judaism and Islam. See Approach, 276.

(3) Approach, 18

(4) Approach, 276
thorn in the flesh in Toynbee's synthesis, because this type of Buddhism adamantly maintains its impersonal outlook throughout. It does not fit neatly into Toynbee's synthesis. He has to acknowledge this exception, but does not succeed in concealing his dislike for it.(1)

So here is the 'general identity' of the world religions in regard to their visions of the ultimate. 'All seven agree with one another in holding that Absolute Reality has an impersonal aspect.. but six of the seven — all, in fact, except the Hinayana — also agree with one another in holding that Absolute Reality has a personal aspect as well. For them, Absolute Reality has a facet which is personal in the sense in which a human self is personal.' Of course, Toynbee would agree that there is difference among them, as in the case of the nature of their personal visions of Reality in which Toynbee has a greater interest. For the Mahayanist, this personal aspect as manifested in the bodhisattvas is plural; for Hinduism and Christianity it is triune; for Zoroastrianism, Islam and Judaism it is singular. 'These differences are momentous.' But nevertheless the general consensus constitutes the 'bond of unity' that transcends all differences.(2) Furthermore, since the two basic visions of Reality are implied in one another, Toynbee even suggests that the seemingly irreconcilable difference between the Indic and the Judaic vision is not a difference in view, but only a difference in emphasis.(3)

Toynbee's critics used to say that he has a passion for unity.(4)

(1) Toynbee even suggests, putting himself in the position of the Mahayena Buddhist, that it is Mahayana Buddhism and not Hinayana Buddhism that understands and represents Buddha's mind correctly. See Approach, 294. Also see below for his criticism of the Arhat's ideal.
(2) Approach, 275f
(3) Approach, 19
(4) See E. Barker, in Review, 94f in relation to his study of history. W. Gurian, The review of Politics, Oct., 1942, 511, that Toynbee has 'a passion for synthesis.'
Now we see how the principle of unity works itself out in his teaching on the nature of God. The obvious reason for a synthesis like this is his desire to settle the problem of truth each religion claims for itself on the basis of its supposedly unique understanding of the nature of the ultimate. With the synthesis Toynbee wants to remove hostility and to abandon the 'religious parochialism' which have plagued men for centuries. It is for this reason also that he attacks his own ancestral religion all the more, because the Christian faith is most uncompromising on its claim of 'uniqueness' and 'finality' for God's authentic revelation in Jesus Christ. The settlement of hostility should also be seen in the context of Toynbee's anthropological view, which gives an added urgency to his scheme. If man were to remain free and in freedom develop his spiritual capacity the conscious personality must be in harmony, on the one hand, with the subconscious cosmos, yet taking it under its control. On the other hand he must be in harmony with other conscious personalities. This latter condition, in his opinion, cannot be met by man merely depending on his own resources, because of the inherent sin of self-centredness. Man can overcome it only when he orients himself to God, seeking to enter into communion with him and do his will. (1)

But we cannot stop here. Not only must we seek communion with God and to do his will, but also all men must know that they are in their own religions dealing with the same God and seeking to do the same will which is love. In other words, men must have a vision of the 'unity' of God in all the gods men worship under different names. (1) See above, 139ff
The unity of Mankind can be achieved only as an incidental result of acting on a belief in the unity of God, and by seeing this unitary terrestrial society sub specie aeternitatis as a province of a Commonwealth of God which must be singular, not plural, *ex hypothesi*.

In Toynbee's vision of the unitary, earthly dimension of the *Civitas Dei* God plays a unique part in promoting unity among men. In his Kingdom he is 'a party to the relation between each human member and himself.' But there is more to it, for 'in virtue of this, he is also a party to the relation between each human member and every other human member.' This idea of man's relation with one another in the society does not greatly differ in essence from Niebuhr's triadic structure of relations, in which God is involved in all our relation to others. It is only through the 'participation of God' that human wills can be reconciled. Since God is the centre of unity, Toynbee makes it his task to demonstrate that there is only one centre, despite many theophanies, so that no clash of centres or loyalties is possible. Perhaps from this point of view one can say that his synthesis has a somewhat mundane and utilitarian aspect.

Sympathetic though one may feel towards Toynbee's attempt, one finds it hard to be convinced by his synthesis, which is strained and rather superficial, in the sense that it has not taken the 'difference' between faiths seriously enough. The Christian reader feels very uneasy in finding the Indic personal view placed side by side (and on the same level) with that of the Christian as though they belong together. In fact there is a fundamental difference which holds them permanently apart. Take the case of the Mahayana of which

---

(1) *History*, vii, 510
Toynbee has a high respect. The only difference which Toynbee has suggested is that the Mahayana's view of the personal aspect is 'plural' while the Christian's 'triune.' It sounds as though the difference is more or less a matter of quantity and emphasis. But the Christian sees more to it than this. The central concept of Mahayana Buddhism is the doctrine of the Void. In Mahayanist metaphysics the idea of Void or distinctionless, 'Such-ness,' functions as a sort of Absolute which is, in effect, ultimate reality. It becomes correlated with the idea of nirvana, and so 'the apprehension of the Void becomes equivalent to the attainment of nirvana.'

But since in Mahayana the quest for nirvana is also the quest for Buddhahood (bodhi=enlightenment), so Void is also equated with Buddhahood. When this development is linked up with the doctrine of Trikaya (the Three-Body formula) the distinctionless Suchness becomes phenomenalized as the celestial Lord and the historical Buddha, thus giving a coherent schematization to both the experience of religious devotion and metaphysical mysticism. But the point is that ultimate Reality remains distinctionless and therefore impersonal. The whole system resembles that of Sankara. It is not without reason that Sankara was described as a 'crypto-Buddhist.' Thus the personal view in Mahayana is ultimately unreal. In the light of this understanding of the Mahayana about the ultimate, it is obvious that the Christian cannot accept the suggestion that his view of the 'personal', or for that matter, his understanding of what Reality

(1) For discussions of the Mahayana doctrine of the Void, see Smart, Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy, 1964, 53-61 also see A Dialogue of Religions, 1960, 75ff; E.J. Thomas, History of Buddhist Thought, 1933, 212-229
is, can be grouped harmoniously together side by side. The radical difference renders any attempt to find 'general identity' impossible.

Again, the Christian reader will not be happy to find the allegation that both personal and impersonal views of Reality are found in the Christian faith, even though Toynbee is careful enough to confine the impersonal view to the Christian mystics. Mysticism is of course not particular to any religion, but a common feature in all world religions. There are many Christian mystics whose spiritual insight is treasured by the Church as a whole. But there are different types of mysticism. There is the mysticism of union in which the mystics desire closest union with God without losing their personalities in the divine. To this category Christian, or rather, 'Catholic mysticism', in Mascall's opinion, belongs. Even St. John of the Cross, at the highest of his mystical experience, still maintains that 'the substance of this soul (of man) ... is not the substance of God, for into this it cannot be substantially changed.' But there is also mysticism of absorption in which the

---

(1) The 'plural' nature of the personal aspect of Reality refers to the diverse phenomenalizations of it in the many bodhisattvas who were regarded as 'Supreme Beings.' See above, 303f

(2) Kraemer points out that 'mysticism is a very complicated phenomenon.' It is the 'most sublime and most dangerous products of naturalistic monism.' In mysticism of naturalistic nature the Identity of the divine essence with the essence of man or the world is its fundamental presupposition.' This type of mysticism expresses itself in different forms: in theophanistic mysticism, contemplative mysticism and emotive system. Christian Message, 358f. Contemplative mysticism is also found in Medieval Christian mysticism.

(3) Living Flame of Love, second redaction, II, 33, 34. Quoted in E.L. Mascall, Christ, the Christian, and the Church, 1946, 97. Mascall also says that even a mystic so inclined to "pantheizing" as Ruysbroeck affirms clearly that "We do not become God." ibid, 97 n.2.
mystics feel they are one in essence with the divine. (1) It is clear that it is this latter type which Toynbee has in mind when he says that the Christians 'pass on from this worship of Reality as a personality to a union with Reality in which the distinction between personalities fades away.' While the Church could find a place for mysticism of union, she could hardly tolerate mysticism of the latter type, even though it is rare in the history of the Church. (2) The Church staunchly holds to the idea of the 'personal' despite the inability of saying exactly how it is to be understood, (3) because the 'fading away' of personalities in thought and worship inevitably results in the confusion of the divine and the human. Toynbee has misrepresented mysticism in the Christian religion in his attempt to make Christianity commensurate with the Indic faiths in which mysticism of the monistic type definitely has a supreme place. Thus we can say, from the Christian point of view, Toynbee's attempt is not only a superficial but also a misguided one.

Toynbee's synthesis also requires a criterion, as we mentioned before, because he needs some means to judge which is preferable to

---

(1) This type of mysticism is what Kraemer has in mind when he refers to the mysticism of naturalistic monism. Brunner calls it 'radical mysticism.' Revelation and Reason, 1946, 235. Mascall points out that theologians of 'neo-Protestant School' regards mysticism in general as the assertion of man before his Creator. For Mascall's defence of Catholic mysticism, see Christ, The Christian, and the Church, 1946, 214ff.

(2) Otto in Mysticism East and West, 1932 compared Eckhart and Sankara in respect of mysticism. In both cases the ideas of the pure unconditional esse and the identity of God and the soul are markedly similar. But Otto also emphasizes the difference in stress in Eckhart's mysticism. For Eckhart, 'the proper expression of the feeling of at-one-ness (with God) is not a mystical pleasure, but agape, a love of a kind which neither Plotinus nor Sankara mentions or knows,' 214. It is also pointed out that even in the highest reach of his mystical experience, Eckhart still longs for grace and justification. This makes one wonder whether even in Eckhart the identification of the soul with God is ever complete.

(3) For references to difficulties about the use of 'personal,' 'personality' see below, 477f.
the others, since he does not believe that all religions have seen truth in equal measure and intensity.\(^1\) In view of Toynbee's heavy stress on the personal, moral category of love it is only natural that the Christian inspired (or rather, the Christian-Mahayanist) idea of self-sacrificing love should be taken as the criterion. The issue of man's salvation occupies much of Toynbee's attention. The troubles of mankind spring from 'moral infirmity' of 'self-centredness.' This sin of self-centredness not only brings about war and conflict among conscious personalities but also deprives the conscious of the lead it has over the subconscious creative-destructive forces. In the realm of man's spiritual life it manifests itself in religious parochialism which blinds man to the mysterious redeeming activities of God in all the world religions. Salvation therefore means nothing less than the destruction of this self-centredness which is present in every soul born into this world. Much of his dislike for Hinayana Buddhism can be traced back to this reaction of Toynbee against this basic moral infirmity of man. Religion is meant to assist man to overcome this evil, but Hinayana brings it back in the name of religious ideal:

\[...\]

Since self-centredness brings conflict and destruction to the soul, therefore salvation means a self-giving, other-centred existence. In fact, self-giving in terms of love is the only way to 'self-

\(^1\) See above, 315.

\(^2\) Approach, 294
fulfilment.' 'If the Self submits to Suffering for the sake of service, it can transcend itself by devoting itself, at the cost of Suffering, to acts of Love and Pity, and in these acts it will be attaining, without seeking it, the self-fulfilment which an innately social being can never attain through self-centredness.' (1)

But the overcoming of self-centredness cannot be achieved unless man commits himself to doing God's will which is love. With this understanding of human nature and its need in mind Toynbee turns to the world religions. He finds that the truth of self-sacrificing love is being affirmed largely by Christianity and Mahayana Buddhism, and their insights help to embellish his vision of love. In the end it is personal language and concepts which predominate in his thought, though his metaphysics in theory remains monistic. The idea of salvation in terms of an existence of self-giving love for other beings cannot be discussed or even entertained apart from personal, moral categories.

E. Progressive Revelation

So far we have mainly dealt with the nature of Reality in its impersonal and personal aspects in Toynbee's thought, and the related problem of synthesis. Much attention has been paid to these aspects because it is here that Toynbee's main interest lies. The question of 'revelation', which is the ground for man's affirmation of God, has been to some extent incorporated into our previous discussion

(1) Approach, 90
because of the peculiar structure of Toynbee's concept of man and God. It is implied in the idea of 'microcosmos' and 'macrocosmos'. To know the 'macrocosmos' man needs to turn inward to contemplate the 'microcosmos', for instance. Again, it is also implied in the anthropological understanding of man, insofar as the depth of man's psychic cosmos is said to be naturally in tune with 'God.' In what follows we shall concentrate only on an examination of what 'revelation' means to Toynbee and of the idea of 'progressive revelation'.

Like Kraemer and Niebuhr, Toynbee also thinks that God's 'revelation' is the ground of man's knowledge of him, 'we apprehend God's existence and divine His nature thanks to the Creator's revelation of Himself through His works.'(1) The word 'revelation' in Toynbee's use is flexible. It refers on the one hand to God 'manifesting' himself, trying to make himself known, and on the other hand, the activity of the human agent which results in putting man in touch with Reality either in its impersonal or personal aspects. Thus 'revelation' can also be called 'enlightenment' which comes through contemplation, or 'illumination,' 'discovery' or 'revealed discovery' in regard to the 'true nature of God and the true end of man here and hereafter.'(2) To the Christian these words inevitably provoke suspicion. He would probably react against him in the manner of Father Walker, saying 'Toynbee has confused the action of God and the action of human nature.' But Toynbee has no intention of being guilty of such confusion. The fact that man knows God and can speak validly about him at all is a powerful witness to God's self-manifestation. If man comes to know him by

(1) History, vii, 460
(2) Civilization on Trial, 249, also see History, xii, 219
look 'inward' (which the word 'enlightenment' suggests, for instance), it is possible because God has given man intimations about himself in the depth of the human psychic cosmos. The self-sacrifice of Nature in the psychic dimension opens the way to man to worship God as God of love. The many mythical themes and symbols such as the tableau of Mother and Child, the symbols of Resurrection and so on express general truth about God and man. They are there in the subconscious because the 'diffracted' rays of the divine light has sunk into the 'well-springs of lowly folk-lore and lofty poetry in the Psyche's intuitive and emotional depths.'(1) Such a view of 'revelation' is possible only if ideas and symbols are accorded as high a revelational value as 'historical events' are for Christians.(2) Toynbee's attitude is reflected in an imaginary debate with his Christian critic who charges him for denying the historical reality of certain elements in the Gospels. To this Toynbee retorts, 'Is God's economy, we may ask, to be dictated to God by Man? Is God to be prohibited by a human veto from revealing Himself through Dichtung if He wills, as well as through Wahrheit? Are not all human modes of expression at God's disposal? Is no divine truth revealed in the fictitious Lazarus and an anonymous Dives?'(3) Indeed, if we have not forgotten his dichotomization of truth, it should not be difficult for us to see why Toynbee is so favourably inclined towards Dichtung.

Since God has 'revealed' himself by leaving 'intimations' about himself in the depth of man's psychic life, 'every human being is

---

(1) See above, 127f Also see History, vii, 388 for reference of similar nature.
(2) See also his comment in History, xii, 621: also above, 307
(3) History, vi, 538.
(4) See above, 31.
capable of catching a vision of the transhuman presence and of entering into communion with It.' There may be difference in intensity in man's visions of the higher presence, but there is no difference in kind. If one holds certain phenomena or experience to be divine or numinous, one should not rule out that other elements may be equally divine or revealing to other people. This note of inclusiveness (or rather, relativity) is expressed by Toynbee in the words of a writer in the collected papers of the Hippocratean school of medicine, on the 'Holy Sickness,'

I too hold that these phenomena are divine, but I also hold that everything else is likewise, and that nothing is either more divine or more human than anything else. Each phenomenon has its own nature, and none occurs in any but a natural way. (1)

Since there is no place for any 'unique' revelation, there is also no tension between 'general' and 'special' revelation such as concerns Kraemer. Special revelation, in Christian circles, is regarded as the criterion by which general revelation is to be recognised. So if there is no tension between them, does it mean that in Toynbee's scheme there is no criterion to judge revelation at all? This, as we have seen, is not so, because Toynbee does have his own preference. But his own criterion is not special revelation in the Christian sense, because its reality is accessible to members of all higher religions in so far as they have also a personal vision of Reality.

If God's self-manifestation is accessible to all men, so much so that 'every creature that had ever been raised by God to the spiritual stature of Humanity' can have 'communion with God and

(1) History, xii, 98,n2
behold the Beatific Vision, why does mankind not come to know, right from the beginning, that God is the One True God of love, and work for the goal of unity under one 'common fatherhood'? Why should not God, in ways clear and unmistakable, have 'declared himself to Man once for all in some instantaneous blaze of His divine light'? The question can be put in another way; could man have become the recipient of the full revelation of God, all at once? The answer is quite obvious, it is not in man's capacity to understand spiritual truth all at once. The apprehension of such truth is 'gradual', or 'progressive.' The gradualness of revelation is not an arbitrary decree of an omnipotent God, he says, but is a necessary consequence of the mundane limitation of man. Like all other activities of man, this apprehension must be a process that has its own specific pace, following the law 'proclaimed by Aeschylus' and by 'the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.' It is the law of learning through suffering.

The empirical basis of such a law, in Toynbee's opinion, is provided by the epiphanies of the higher religions which are culminations of 'spiritual endeavours' of men in different civilizations. These religions took shape largely among the 'internal proletariats' of disintegrating societies whose human suffering is magnified by wars and the loss of creative internal control. Christianity, for instance, arose out of spiritual travail that was a consequence to the breakdown of the Hellenic Civilization. But this is only part of a long story, for Christianity had Jewish and Zoroastrian roots.

(1) History, vii, 565
(2) History, vi, 11
(3) History, xi, 1, 537f.
(4) History, vii, 423. For Toynbee's idea of suffering, see above 45ff
and these faiths in turn sprang from the earlier breakdown of two other civilizations of the second generation, viz., the Babylonian and the Syrian. Yet the story can be pushed back further still. The Judaic root, for example, had a 'Mosaic root' of its own which had been the outcome of a previous secular catastrophe, i.e., the breakdown of the 'New Empire' of Egypt. Abraham's flight from Ur can be regarded as the result of the break-up of an 'Empire of the Four Chapters' which had been the final embodiment of a disintegrating Sumerian civilization. The 'men of sorrow' who had learnt through suffering in this long tradition, whether they were statesmen or prophets, were all 'precursors' of Christ. The successive sufferings through which they won a 'progressive enlightenment' stood out as stations of the Cross in anticipation of the Crucifixion. And if one asks the question how one learns from suffering, or, in what way suffering brings about 'enlightenment', one gets at least two answers which we have already encountered. First and negatively, suffering has the effect of stripping one of the mundane 'prison walls' of one's own making. Then one is face to face with God whose presence is hidden no more. Second and positively, suffering offers man the opportunity of acting on the promptings of pity and love. In doing so, man's eyes are open to the vision of Reality and in its personal aspect as the One True God of love, who is also man's suffering saviour.

The apprehension of the truth of God is gradual, and comes to man by 'instalments.' The past is important, because it adds up to

---

(1) *History*, vi, 423ff. For a brief reference to the historical origin of the higher religions, see, *Approach*, 77-91.

(2) *Approach*, 85.
form the totality of man's spiritual insight. The history of religion, which has been eclipsed in recent theological development, is given an important place again. It is here that the 'instalments' of revelation are to be found. For this reason Toynbee also regards himself as a religious 'evolutionist'.

It is from this standpoint that he understands, for instance, how monotheism evolves into fully-fledged monotheism as in the Semitic religions, or how Yahweh evolves from the status of a mountain god to the monotheistic God of Judaism and Christianity.

'Progressive revelation', in terms of increasingly clear vision of God, coincides with what Toynbee regards as the progress of human life on earth. We have seen earlier that progress is understood in terms of etherization, a progressive transference of the field of action from the outer to the inner world. The emphasis is shifted from the outer, material environment to the spiritual world.

Now in the later volumes in which religion is regarded as the 'master-activity' of man, progress is expressed in practical terms as the 'increasing of possibilities for individual human beings in this world to live good lives.'

A good life is a life in close communion with God which is made possible by man's beatific vision of Reality. This is man's salvation, which is what really interests Toynbee. To help man achieve salvation, all the higher religions must be enlisted into service in a joint effort. Since revelation is progressive and cumulative, as witnessed by the history of religion, Toynbee believes that the founders of the living higher

---

(1) History, vii, 760
(2) History, vi, 29f
(3) History, vi, 36–49
(4) See above, 116
(5) History, xii, 658ff Religion is 'master activity' in the sense that it embraces all man's other activities in itself.
(6) History, vii, 562
religions, as well as the followers of their founders, 'had made their own contributions in diverse measure to the growing spiritual heritage of Mankind on Earth.' They are all involved in accumulating, preserving, communicating and transmitting to successive generations of men a 'glowing fund of illumination' which is tantamount to an 'enlargement of the spiritual opportunity offered to souls for spiritual progress in this World during their transits from birth to death.' In the long and progressive process of putting men in touch with the One True God for the sake of their own salvation, the higher religions can be regarded as but 'the variations of the single theme'. Their common bond of unity is also to be found in the discharging of this most important mission in the world, to make salvation and grace of God real to his creature. (1)

In the long, difficult process of leading man towards the goal of sainthood which is also the goal of history and life, God's revelation has been made accessible to all men since the beginning. His grace and love have been patiently and silently at work among men. The working of God's grace can be compared with the silent working of the Gulf Stream on the life of man on the Atlantic seaboard of Europe. Life in this area would be quite intolerable without the Stream. Yet many generations had lived and died unaware of the Gulf Stream's existence or its provenance to their lives. (2) Likewise, God's grace has been at work throughout the history of mankind. To those who are ignorant of its operation, revelation seems to be merely man's achievement through contemplation. But to those whose life is oriented to God, revelation is seen as the fruit of his grace in the life of man.

(1) For reference to the higher religions as a 'new dispensation' of God's grace, see History, vii, 566
(2) History, vii, 565
F. Summary Remarks

Toynbee's concept of God is markedly different from the other writers under consideration because it is developed in the framework of Indic thought such as that championed by Sankara. His preference for this type of Indic thought is determined by his principle of relativism, and he hopes that with the Indic metaphysical framework he can effect some sort of synthesis to settle the problem of the one and the many in men's spiritual visions. But his synthesis is not convincing, because he has not taken seriously the radical difference underlying the Indic religions and Christianity.

His metaphysics is monistic in theory, yet his religious preference is personalistic. In his thought he tries to maintain the 'independent' character of the 'personal' approach from the 'impersonal' approach to Reality. He does not seem to be successful because he affirms that at a 'higher' level of spiritual experience 'personality' can be transcended. Thus 'God' of the 'personal' approach to Reality at the end will fade away. Only the unitive, undifferentiated Reality is real. But on the other hand his characterization of Absolute Reality (even in its undifferentiated aspect) is not altogether free from moral, 'personal' categories. This indicates that Toynbee has not fully transcended his own Christian background.

His Christian background certainly accounts for his preference for the moral, personal language of love in his religious discourse. This is especially marked in his understanding of salvation. Salvation is not a pursuit of nirvana in the Hinayanist fashion, but rather as the overcoming of self-centredness by acting on 'love and
pity', and man can live a self-sacrificing existence only when he commits himself to God who is love.

The anthropological understanding is reflected in his view of man's knowledge of God, or 'revelation'. It is obvious in the belief that the sacrifice of Nature in the psychic dimension leads man on to the worship of God who is love, and it is also evident in the idea of 'progressive revelation.' 'Revelation' is 'cumulative' and by 'instalments' because the truth about God is accessible to all men in all religions if they turn 'inward' to the 'rock bottom' of their psychic cosmos, which is by nature in tune with God. The bringing together of the diverse 'intimations' or 'spiritual insights' of God means also an 'enlargement of the spiritual opportunity offered to souls for spiritual progress.' Toynbee's belief here makes a synthesis the more desirable.

Even though Toynbee's synthesis cannot be said to be successful, nevertheless it represents a courageous attempt to tackle the problem of the one and the many, the 'personal' and the 'impersonal'. His failure should have enabled us to see more clearly the difficulties involved in any attempt to effect a reconciliation between these two poles in man's visions of Reality. Toynbee has also raised difficult questions for the Christian theologians who would not transcend the 'personal', viz., can we refer to God as 'personal' without falling into 'anthropomorphism'? This question, as we shall see, haunts Niebuhr. Again, is 'personality' or the category of the 'personal' really ultimate, non-transcendable?
Toynbee's preference for Dichtung and myth in his religious discourse is a challenge to the Christian position in which 'historical event' is given a supreme importance in any reference to 'revelation'. Clearly there is here a clash in value we given to the 'medium' of revelation. Generally the Christian theologian would think that what is not 'historical' is necessarily secondary, if not altogether invalid. But can we unambiguously settle the question of the 'historical' in the Christian faith? Are not the 'saga' and the 'supra-historical' referred to in Christian circles similar to the non-historical in Toynbee? Does the Bible affirm that God reveals himself through 'historical events' alone? A confrontation with Toynbee does require us Christians to clarify not only our ideas of the 'personal' and the 'historical', but also the revelational values which we give to them.
II. HENDRICK KRAEMER: A RADICAL DISENGAGEMENT OF THE ONE FROM THE MANY

On the matter of God and revelation, Kraemer's position is, as might be expected, diametrically opposed to that of Toynbee. While Toynbee is prompted by relativism to adopt the principle of unity and identity of the objects of worship to settle the dispute among religions, Kraemer chooses the principle of discontinuity (1) which means a radical disengagement of God from all non-Christian talk about God, and an isolation of 'revelation' from moral experience as well as from all non-Christian references to revelation. Such a result is actually implied in his dialectical anthropology. The natural man, being shut up in the state of ἀξιόκλειος, has no concrete and positive knowledge of God and his revelation. Even though Kraemer has ostensibly maintained that his dialectical view of man is derived directly and purely from revelation, yet our previous analysis has shown that its formulation is not free from non-biblical elements. Kraemer's position raises questions as to the nature of general revelation and the validity of the logos doctrine, for instance. It also throws into sharp contrast revelation and religion, a matter which dialectical theology takes for granted.

To facilitate our inquiry we shall first examine the style of Kraemer's references to God, noting how the word 'God' is used and the basis for such affirmations. Next we shall examine his notion of revelation and its related problems, followed by a brief look at the puzzling antithesis of revelation and religion. Of course we have to bear in mind always that these elements in Kraemer's writings are interwoven into one another in an inseparable whole, and so our division is only for the convenience of analysis.

(1) See Authority, 14-15, also Christian faith, 352 for reference to his choice of the discontinuity principle.
A. God as the living God and Father of Jesus Christ

It is interesting to see that not only Toynbee, but Kraemer also uses the phrase 'one true God.' (1) But their similarity does not go beyond the verbal form. In Toynbee's use, as we have seen, it takes upon itself an inclusive and a relativistic connotation. It is a general name referring to the personal aspect of Absolute Reality represented in the objects of devotions in the higher religions. The word 'God' in philosophy of religion and in the history and phenomenology of religion is also used in this general way. It is exactly this use of 'God' that Kraemer questions, and his attitude is made plain in his criticism of 'Natural Religion.'

Natural Religion or Natural Theology in its current sense, consciously or unconsciously, works with an idea of Deity common to everybody who believes in God and transcending all 'specific' ideas of God. (2)

If 'God', taken in this generalized sense, is also used to refer to the God of Biblical faith, then, in Kraemer's opinion, he would become 'a subordinate idea, which can be fitted in with a philosophy of religion ...' He will no more be the 'only true God' (John 17.3) of Biblical realism. For this reason Kraemer feels that it is necessary to disengage the Biblical 'God' from the general references found in philosophy and non-Christian religions. In other words, not only the idea, but also the reality of the 'God' of Biblical realism is discontinuous with any reference to him apart from it.

The God of Biblical realism is, according to Kraemer, always the living, eternally active God, whose dynamic character is well expressed in the words of Pascal, 'God! the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! The God of Jesus Christ! Not the God of the philosophers

(1) Christian Faith, 244
(2) Christian Faith, 361
and the scholars. (1) The God of philosophy is not the God of Biblical realism because the former lacks the dynamic quality of the latter. For this reason Kraemer distrusts any alliance between theology and philosophy. (2) Furthermore, the God of philosophy is always in danger of being confused with man, and being assimilated into 'naturalism.' This to Kraemer is what is actually happening in Tillich's thought. Tillich assumes the identity of the being of God and man. Even though he refers to God as the 'Ground of Being', nevertheless it is not clear that there is any 'real possibility of clear distinction between Being and its Ground which is more than verbal declaration.' Kraemer's criticism of Tillich takes the form of questions:

Is not ontological philosophy always driven towards deification of Being, or the θeò θεî, and is it really possible to distinguish the 'Ground' clearly and meaningfully from Being? Is it really possible to avoid the recognition of de facto identity with the de jure identity, which means the identity of God with nature and the universe, and which, philosophically speaking, unveils ontology as a disguised, non-atheist naturalism? (3)

Apart from such confusion, the phrase 'Ground of Being' is also totally incompatible with the living God of Biblical realism. Biblical faith recognizes God not so much as 'Ground' of Being but rather 'Creator' of being. As Creator, he is qualitatively different from the created Being or its Ground. So Tillich's attempt to bring together Biblical faith and philosophy is not successful. This is inevitable, because 'all ontological philosophy is, by necessity, ultimately monistic, whether it is pantheistic, materialistic or naturalistic, i.e. God and nature, God and world are one. (4)

(1) Christian Message, 65, also 122.
(2) See his remarks about the relation between philosophy and theology in Christian Faith, 449f
(3) Christian Faith, 435, for further references to Tillich's idea of 'Ground', see below, 436 also see 419ff
(4) Christian Faith, 437
This being so, the Biblical, triune God must be disengaged from the philosopher's God.

From what has been said so far it seems as though the disengagement or discontinuity Kraemer advocates is mainly a matter of the meaning and definition of words. If so, it is indeed difficult to see how one can object to his principle, because everyone has a right to define the meaning of a certain word and use it in a certain way. But this is not what Kraemer primarily means. The idea of disengagement cuts deeper than the superficial distinction and meaning of the word 'God'. It concerns the question of the reality of 'God' apart from Biblical realism. Having made the point that for a Christian God 'can only mean ...... the Triune God, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ,' he goes on to make the claim that 'all other "ideas" of God, though they may be lofty and theistic, are, Biblically speaking, non-existent "gods", function as idols.'(1)

Here we see Kraemer's thought move from a specific understanding and use of 'God' to a straight denial of the reality of 'God' apart from the God of Biblical realism. This move is an 'illogical leap,' because there is no apparent reason why he must make such a move. While it may be readily agreed that the 'God' who has manifested himself in Jesus Christ is truly God, it does not necessarily follow that reality should be denied of 'God' outside the Christian use. So the move or leap must have been determined by some factor which is not immediately obvious but all the while assumed. This factor, we suggest, is his anthropological consideration, viz., the natural man has no valid or positive knowledge of God. Therefore, whatever

(1) Christian Faith, 361
God he speaks about is the 'God' of his own imagination, sometimes not much different from his projected self.

Therefore when Kraemer says, from the standpoint of Biblical realism, that 'all other ideas of God are .... non-existent gods, functioning as idols,' not only the 'God' of philosophical speculations, but also the 'God' of non-Christian faiths are at stake. The God of Tillich's ontology may be dismissed as being confused with man and the world, but can, for example, the God of Islam be dismissed likewise, as no more than an idol? Islam's God is a good test case for Kraemer's principle because Islam belongs to the 'prophetic apprehension' group of religions and shares with the Christian religion the Semitic heritage. Islam is not only 'theistic', but also 'monotheistic'. Kraemer thinks that Islam is 'radically theocentric', and 'it takes God as God with aweful seriousness. God's unity and soleness, His austere sovereignty and towering omnipotence, are burning in white heat in Islam.(1)

But when it comes to the reality of the Islamic God he says, 'it is not possible to equate Allah with the God and Father of Jesus Christ.'

Kraemer's answer is rather ambiguous, as it can be taken in two ways. First, Allah in Islam and God the Father of Jesus Christ in the Christian religion are so widely different (despite similarities) that equation is impossible if not meaningless. But nevertheless at bottom they can be said to be the same deity understood in two diversely different ways. Toynbee would have been very much satisfied with this solution. But it is not so with Kraemer.

(1) Christian Message, 220f.
There is no God but the God of Jesus Christ who in his self-disclosure has unfolded to man his triune character. This leaves us with the only alternative, viz., Allah is no 'God' at all. That is why he cannot be equated on the same level with the 'only true God'. But Allah has many followers whose devotion to him is intense and admirable. If Allah is, according to Kraemer's Biblical realism, only one of the 'non-existent gods,' does it mean that he functions as an idol? Even though Kraemer nowhere says Allah functions as an idol, yet the logic of his position seems to point inevitably to that conclusion. Perhaps Barth is more frank when he says outright, 'the God of Muhammad is an idol like other idols.' (1)

So far we have only established one point in Kraemer's thought, viz., that for him 'God' can only legitimately be the God and Father of Jesus Christ, who alone is real and true. All other ideas of God are 'non-existent gods.' They have not reality, only function as 'idols.'

This 'only true God' is also a 'personal God.' Let us see how Kraemer handles this difficult problem in our understanding of God.

Kraemer rejects ontological philosophy not only because it confuses man with God, but also its monistic tendency reduces the personhood of God, making him into some sort of a 'Divine Quintessential It.' He divines that the vindication of 'the personal conception of the living God' will be an important issue in the 'coming dialogue' with oriental religious thoughts. (2) His

(1) Quotation taken from G. Parrinder: Comparative Religion, 1962, 48
(2) World Culture, 24. He compares this 'coming dialogue' with the confrontation of the Early Church with Gnosticism, 35.
understanding of the meaning of the 'personal God' corresponds to what Webb says about the 'personality of God,' viz., its emphasis is on God's relation to man. (1) Kraemer brings out the personality of God by dwelling on his 'personal' dealing with man. 'The God of Israel and of the Church is a God who is related to a people by His words and acts, by His electing grace.' In the Old Testament it is expressed thus: 'I will make of thee a great nation and I will bless thee ...' (Gen.12.2) In all this God takes the initiative. It is he who creates relationship with man, and it is he who established covenants with Israel, and through his people, with the whole of mankind. Therefore man is able to enter into an I-Thou relation with him. But this I-Thou relation must be 'subsumed under the I-We relation, and finds its true place in it. The individual relation to God, and of God to man, is of paramount importance in the Bible, but never as an isolated thing.' (2)

Further, God's personal dealing with man is, as we have seen before, a dialectical dealing, which furnishes the basis for Kraemer's dialectical anthropology. 'God is the Lord and abides in the undiminished glory of His saving Godhead throughout everything - in salvation and rejections, in grace and wrath, in forgiveness and justice, in punishment and restoration.' (3) In this dialectical dealing with man he shows his love and patience. The supreme act of his love is his act of redemption, viz., the events of the Incarnation, the Cross and the Resurrection. From then on we are to understand him as the God and father of Jesus Christ. This act of

---

(1) For Webb's view on the 'personality of God,' See Appendix IV, below, 607ff
(2) Christian Faith, 244
(3) See his article, The Riddle of History, in the International Review of Mission, vol XXXII, 1943, 84.
God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ establishes for us the only criterion for our understanding of 'God.' In doing so the triune God has not only shown us that he is Creator, but also man's Redeemer, with whom man can enter into intimate fellowship.

Kraemer takes the Incarnation more seriously than Toynbee or Niebuhr. In contrast to Toynbee Kraemer regards Jesus as the solely valid source for man's knowledge of God, and contrary to Niebuhr he sees Jesus not only as the Son in the moral sense, but also the son who is ontically one with God. In Jesus God has taken upon himself human flesh, entering into human history to effect salvation for all men. (1) God's coming in the historical person Jesus, or rather, God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ, becomes the model of Kraemer's reference to God. The adoption of this model naturally issues in a very strongly personalistic understanding of God.

However, there is one place in his works in which there is some indication that he is prepared to go beyond the language of the 'personal.' There he uses the ambiguous phrase 'super-personal' to characterize God. But to avoid possible misunderstanding he hedges this phrase with qualifications.

In saying this (i.e., the 'super-personal' character of God) I am not making the same point as Paul Tillich makes with his category of the 'trans-personal', in the interest of his ontological bias. What I mean by saying 'super-personal' is, though maintaining unequivocally the personal character of God, to show due awareness of the fact that we only know God as He has revealed and disclosed Himself. We do not know him in His essential being. (2)

(1) See his exegesis of John's Prologue in Christian Faith, 273ff; for other references to Incarnation, ibid, 62, 381. Also see Christian Message, 122
(2) World Culture, 24
This is an interesting passage because it raises in our mind several difficult questions. Does not Kraemer say that in Christ God has 'revealed himself'? (1) If so, what is this 'himself' if it is not also his 'essential being' which, according to Kraemer, is not revealed? (2) Can Kraemer make any meaningful distinction between God's self and his being? What is actually revealed? It is ambiguity of this kind which makes the whole idea of God 'revealing himself' very unsatisfactory. Now regarding the nature of God, Kraemer says that he is 'personal' only as he has revealed himself to us. The implication is that he may be other than 'personal' as he is in himself. This recognition seems to have opened up a range of possibilities in our references to God. Are not the mystics and the Vedantic Hindu philosophers in various ways affirming the point that God is more than the 'personal'? Is it possible that there is some truth in what they affirm? Toynbee, as we have seen, also has attempted to go beyond the 'personal'. But his 'super-personal' turns out to be not different from the 'impersonal'. (3) Can Kraemer succeed where Toynbee has failed? Unfortunately we shall never be able to know, because Kraemer is not prepared to tackle these difficult philosophical questions. He meets these problems with a flat rejection. 'We are quite aware,' he says, 'that there are philosophical problems involved in the representation of God as personal'. But when compared with the dynamic personal relation which the believer has with his God, these problems become too trivial to bother with. 'When one has learnt to say "Our Father",

(1) Christian Faith, 353, also see 18,52,341,381,433 for references to God's self-disclosure in Christ.

(2) The idea that God's essential being is not revealed has a long history in theology. It is found in Summa Contra Gentiles 1,14 in which St. Thomas says, 'the divine substance exceeds by its immensity every form which our intellect attains.' So while we can know that God is (quod sit) we cannot know his essence or what he is (quid sit).

(3) See above 283f
one knows that these philosophical questions are ultimately toys, and no more.

He is content to let the reason of the heart prevail over the reason of the head. It is not surprising to see that Kraemer takes this drastic way out, because the model he has adopted for his reference makes it impossible to allow for any recognition of views other than the personal one.

Not only has Kraemer failed to tell us what 'super-personal' really means, but he also has not been able to say in regard to the 'personal God' more than the fact that God and man are capable of entering into a reciprocal relation of love and trust. The problem of anthropomorphism which has tormented the sensitive minds of Toynbee and Niebuhr is left as it stands.

In fact, it does not seem to bother Kraemer at all, for he frankly admits that the Biblical accounts of God are 'delightfully anthropomorphic and spiritual.' Perhaps Kraemer's refusal to deal with the philosophical problems is an indication of his practical wisdom, because, as we shall suggest, the solution of these problems is beyond the resources at present available to us.

The affirmations that only the God and Father of Jesus Christ is truly God, and that he is irreducibly personal, reflect his reaction against the monistic and relativistic trends of thought in contemporary philosophy and the study of religions. The denial of reality to the non-Christian God (Gods) is highly unsatisfactory, but we refrain from any criticism of this point at this stage. As Kraemer's reference to God needs to be understood in the light of

(1) Christian Faith, 432
(2) For Toynbee's view, see above, 281ff; for Niebuhr's, see below, 463
(3) Christian Faith, 249
(4) See below 477-484
his idea of 'revelation', which provides the ground for man's valid knowledge of God, let us now turn our attention to this very complicated problem of revelation, and the difficult issues which are related to it.

B. Revelation as the sole source of man's knowledge of God

Revelation is for Kraemer the personal mode of communication with man by the 'personal God.' It is an act of condescension and an act of pure grace on God's side. It makes known to man who God is, and at the same time, in the light of his understanding of the truth of God, what man is and what he should be. Thus, revelation is 'not only the revelation of God, but also of man.' (1) Revelation is also the judgment of God on man's sin, for the cross, where 'God reveals His loving heart', also throws into sharp focus the 'blindness' of man. Revelation is also man's salvation in as much as man is not only brought to a confrontation with God's condemnation but also a healing confrontation with God's saving grace for forgiveness. Thus Kraemer says, 'the revelation of God in Christ the crucified is therefore at the same time an act of divine revelation and of divine judgment.' (2) Here we see the idea of revelation and salvation merging into one. They are different ways of referring to the same reality. 'The revelation in Christ,' he says, 'is a free divine act of redemptive irruption into the life of man and of the world.' (3) The importance of this fusion of

(1) Christian Message, 69
(2) Christian Message, 71
(3) Christian Message, 70
revelation and salvation cannot be overstated, and we shall come back to this point later in our analysis. (1)

In an inclusive sense, man's knowledge of God, of anthropology and soteriology are taken up into the framework of revelation which constitutes the ground of Kraemer's theological pursuit. But we should note the different ways in which the word 'revelation' is used here. In its proper sense it refers to the 'revelation', i.e., God's act of self-disclosure. Only in its derived sense is it used to refer to something other than God's self-disclosure, e.g., the 'revelation' of man.

A corresponding distinction of the different uses of the word is also found in Kraemer's discussion of revelation in the scriptures. 'Revelation' in the Bible is objective divine action, decisively in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the 'Word made flesh.' This is the 'primary' meaning, we are told, of the word. But the 'transmission of the kerygma', for example, by means of 'persons and writings' can also be called 'revelation', only in a 'subjective, secondary sense.' (2) To understand Kraemer's idea of revelation, we should pay more attention to the 'primary' or proper sense of the word.

(1) See below, 354; also see below, 539
(2) Christian Faith, 345
(1) The problem of the 'given'

However, it may be questioned whether the distinction between the primary and the secondary senses can be too sharply drawn. Even the 'primary' act of God's self-disclosure needs to be witnessed and responded to in order to become 'revelation' for man. Kraemer would not dispute this fact, though his emphasis is on the primary act of God, to such an extent that the human element involved seems to have been unduly played down. This is obvious as one reads these words:

The Revelation in Christ hangs entirely upon God's sovereign initiative, it is an action of His in which the human element plays no part ....(1)

This 'primary', 'non-derivative,' 'original' free act of God is the 'given' of Christianity, he affirms. It 'produced Christianity and was not itself made or produced by it.'(2)

Now we are told that this 'revelation', the 'given', this 'action' of God is an action of God which is totally his own, and that the human element is not involved. But then why should it be called 'revelation'? A 'revelation' is 'revelation' only when it is made a revelation to man. In other words, 'revelation' is 'revelation' only when it is 'apprehended' by man. So if Kraemer wants to use 'revelation' to describe this 'action' of God, he cannot say that the human element is not involved, unless he wants to suggest that God's action is 'revelation' whether man understands it or not, which sounds ridiculous.

---

(1) Why Christianity, 79
(2) Why Christianity, 72
We absolve Kraemer however from this judgment because he does maintain elsewhere that human reception of this action of God is necessary. 'The necessary correlate to the conception of revelation' he says, 'is faith', which is also 'the only organ of apprehending it.' (1)

It is not difficult to appreciate the motive behind such ambiguous and difficult assertions aimed at making 'revelation' primarily an act of God, with the necessary human element suppressed. In the realm of religions Kraemer is aware that revelation is a common phenomenon. Under cover of the word, such notion as 'enlightenment, a sudden intuitive insight, a luminous idea, or knowledge about the so-called occult facts 'are brought together.' (2) In order to draw a sharp distinction between the Christian revelation as witnessed by Biblical realism and all other references of revelation Kraemer, comes down heavily on the 'given', the 'non-derivative' elements so as to bring out the point that there is no way from man to God. Our knowledge of God can only come from God through his 'revelation' to us. But unfortunately such emphasis does not always do justice to the importance of the human element involved.

Once it is conceded that human elements are involved in 'revelation' then we have to admit that the 'given' of our faith is a construct with certain variables, and therefore, a non-simple notion. (3) The variables are the witnesses of the Biblical writers, the historical and Biblical criticism through which their witnesses

(1) Christian Message, 69 But this absolution is made at the expense of leaving the quotation ambiguous. In the quotation Kraemer certainly suggests that the human element is not involved in 'revelation.'

(2) Christian Message, 69

(3) For a brief reference to the complexity of the 'given', see John McIntyre, The Shape of Christology, 1966, 26ff.
are unfolded before us, the proclamations of the Church, i.e., the creeds and confessional statements of faith, and, not the least, our personal response which is often characterized by the historical and cultural situations in which we find ourselves. If we call 'revelation' the 'given' of our faith, we should regard it as the 'interpreted given'. (1) It is interesting to see that a parallel case can be found in the problem of 'fact' in historical sciences. There is, as we have seen earlier, no such a thing as bare fact. All facts are 'interpreted facts,' and the myth of the 'fact' pure and simple has been powerfully exploded by Carl Becker early in this century. (2)

Kraemer is aware of the place of 'apprehension' or interpretation in the structure of 'revelation,' because it is a revelation to man. One way in which he acknowledges this truth is by emphasizing faith as the 'inherent correlation' or 'the necessary correlate' to revelation, as we saw earlier. The other way, which is more directly concerned with the problem of interpretation, is implied in his notion of Biblical realism. Biblical realism is a 'deeper, more realistic' way of talking about the unique character of revelation. (3) As such, it is a way of apprehension required by faith. In other words, God's action is revelation to us when it is interpreted in the context of Biblical realism. So 'revelation' is not a bare 'given', but rather, an 'interpreted given' or a complex.

---

(1) This point is also reached by Kaufmann in his philosophical analysis of the problem of human perception. "When we speak of the object over against us as that which is "given" to us, we are already speaking of givenness in a secondary and derived sense." Gordon Kaufmann, Relativism, Knowledge and Faith, 1960, 68

(2) See above, 117

(3) See above, 218
Biblical realism now functions as a variable which is integral to the 'given.'

It may seem that the calling into service of Biblical realism is timely and apt, because it brings out the complex structure of revelation. But it also has its disadvantage. Our previous analysis of Biblical realism shows that it embraces a certain understanding of God and man which is determined more by Kraemer's reaction against the threats of secularism and relativism than by scriptural evidence.\(^{(1)}\) The sovereignty, the wholly otherness of God is set sharply overagainst the sinfulness of man. Man being shut up in his \(\delta \kappa \iota \alpha \) has no positive knowledge of God save as impotent, shadowy awareness of him. The magnified qualitative difference between God and man is the ground and source of Kraemer's principle of radical discontinuity. So when Biblical realism is taken as integral to 'revelation', it also means that this particular understanding about God and man, and with it, the idea of discontinuity or disengagement,\(^{(2)}\) also find their places in the complex structure of 'revelation'.

\(^{(2)}\) The 'uniqueness' of the Christian Revelation

The 'uniqueness' or the 'sui generis' character of the Christian revelation is repeatedly emphasized in Kraemer's writings.\(^{(3)}\)

\(^{(1)}\) See above, 216ff
\(^{(2)}\) The words 'discontinuity', 'disengagement' and 'isolation' are interchangeable in our discussion.
\(^{(3)}\) See Christian Message, 66, 121, 125, Christian Faith, 379, 382 for examples.
Generally, the argument for the 'uniqueness' of the Biblical revelation can be taken in two ways: (a) The Christian revelation is 'unique' because here God has 'revealed' himself fully in Jesus Christ. As such, this 'revelation' is to become the 'norm' or 'criterion' by which all other revelations are to be judged. In short, the meaning of the 'unique' coalesces with the meaning of the 'normative.' Thus while we can hold to the idea that the Christian revelation is the criterion for the truth about God, there is no need for us to deny the reality of the 'revelations' outside the scriptures, such as those claimed by the non-Christians. (b) The Christian revelation is 'unique' because it alone is true. It alone is 'revelation' in the proper sense. The non-Christian 'revelations' have no reality. The non-Christians think they are talking about God while all the time they are talking loudly about themselves.

The interpretation of 'uniqueness' in terms of 'criterion' is found in Kraemer's writings when he says, for instance, that Christ is the 'crisis' and the 'Caller in question' of all religion. (1) He is to 'judge' and to 'lay bare' the dialectical condition of the non-Christian religion: 'apprehension of the totality of existence.' (2) The possibility of 'revelation' in the non-Christian world is acknowledge in these words:

Whosoever by God's grace has some moderate understanding of the all-inclusive compassion of God and of Christ rejoices over every evidence of divine working and revelation that may be found in the non-Christian world. No man, and certainly no Christian, can claim the power or the right to limit God's revelatory working. (3)

(1) Christian Faith, 339, 221 for Christ as criterion of truth, see below, 369ff
(2) Christian Message, 125, Christian Faith, 350
(3) Christian Message, 122
It seems therefore that Kraemer is prepared to accept the validity of non-Christians' claims of 'revelation,' and that a positive understanding of God and his salvation is not denied of them, no matter how imperfect such a knowledge may be. But a closer examination of his thought suggests otherwise. It shows that his thought is moving towards (b), viz., a denial of the reality of 'revelation' to non-Biblical claimants. In two aspects this attitude expresses itself; in his re-interpretation of the so-called 'general revelation,' and in the restrictions he imposes on the use of the word 'revelation,' which he thinks should be isolated from religious experience and valuation to which the non-Christian (or non-Biblical) 'revelations' turn for the claim of validity. We shall deal with the question of 'general revelation' later. It suffices here to point out that this phrase is so heavily qualified in Kraemer's rendering that it has lost its ordinary meaning. It no more suggests the possibility of any positive knowledge of God and his salvation.\(^1\) For the time being let us turn to an examination of his use of 'revelation' and his isolation of it from the human in order to emphasize its divine origin.

Kraemer maintains the need for such an isolation in uncompromising terms, 'the only way to maintain strongly that the Christian revelation contains the one way of truth is to isolate it entirely from the whole range of human religious life.'\(^2\) It is the only way of truth because God means it to be so. It belongs to the mystery of God's ways.

---

\(^1\) For a discussion of 'general revelation', see below, 376ff, also 396f
\(^2\) Authority, 3
It has pleased God in His plan of world-redemption to exercise self-limitation by becoming flesh in this special, historic man, Jesus Christ, and so to express clearly and exclusively in Christ's life and work His judgment on and purpose for man and the world. (1)

This passage is interesting as well as important because it shows us how the issues of salvation ('world-redemption') and revelation ('express') have become merged in Kraemer's thought. The claim of exclusiveness and sole validity which should properly belong to salvation (2) becomes, through the coalescence of the two concepts, also applicable to 'revelation.' In other words, the Christian revelation of Biblical realism is the exclusive and the only way of truth because salvation in Christ's name is the only salvation possible.

Again, the word 'exclusively' in the quotation demands further attention. It does not refer to God's 'becoming flesh', which would have been less problematical, but instead, to 'express'. The implication is that only this act of God's becoming flesh in Jesus Christ is properly 'revelation.' There cannot be any other revelation, (otherwise the 'revelation' in Christ cannot be 'exclusive') The 'one way' is not just the most perfect one among the many, but literally the one and only one. That this idea is in Kraemer's mind is evident in what he regards the proper use of 'revelation'.

This terms 'revelation,' we are told, must be used 'with great circumspection.' (3)

(1) Christian Message, 122, italics mine.
(2) See Christian Faith, 30 where Kraemer affirms the truth that there is 'no salvation in any other than in Christ.'
(3) Christian Faith, 382.
in the strict sense there is only one revelation, that is God's self-disclosure in Christ, the Savior, as the righteousness and the wrath of God. (1)

However, Kraemer also uses 'revelation' in a wider context in his writings. Does this contradict his belief that there is 'only one revelation' viz., the 'revelation' in Jesus Christ? For instance, he refers to the history of Israel as the 'revelation under the old covenant' without which the events of Jesus Christ cannot be understood. But 'revelation' here is used in an extensive and derived sense, in so far as the history of Israel is a (and the only) preparatio to the unique act of God in Christ. (2)

Again, Kraemer also speaks of 'modes' of revelation as mentioned in the Bible, such as God's disclosure 'in nature,' (e.g., the Psalms), in 'historical human life and activity, and human consciousness,' including man's 'moral and social life.' (e.g., the prophets, the Wisdom and historical books and Rom. 1-2) (3) Yet we are warned that we should not think these 'modes' are either isolated activities of God, or inferior to his activity in and through Christ. Instead, we should understand them as, so to speak, organically related to the revelation in Christ.

In developing a Biblically based doctrine of God's revelation in nature, history and conscience it is indispensable not to treat them as isolated, self-contained domains and modes of revelation, but as modes within the one central revelation in Christ. (4)

The revelation in Jesus Christ no doubt is 'different' from them because it is the 'focal' or 'central' point in the light of which they are meaningful. (5) But it does not alter the fact that these modes, together with their 'focal' point in Christ, do constitute one organically related whole of God's self-disclosure.

(1) Christian Faith, 379, also 345
(2) Christian Faith, 379
(3) Christian Faith, 353
(4) Christian Faith, 363
(5) Christian Faith, 354
In the light of what Kraemer says so far it is indeed tempting to suggest that the non-Christian 'revelations' might be regarded as God's revelation in the history and conscience of man in diverse cultures and times. Can they not also be taken as organically related to the revelation in Jesus Christ? This suggestion, however, does not meet with Kraemer's approval. It is wrong to indulge in the 'wholesale talking about all religions being the product of revelation,' as the supporters of the logos doctrine do.(1) The 'world of realities' revealed in Christ are characterized by their 'otherness.'(2) No doubt God does work outside the realm of Biblical realism, nevertheless we must remember that 'God's revelation and the working of the true Light which lighteth every man (John 1:9) in the religions (culture, etc) of men is qualitatively speaking in a different category from His revelation in Israel.'(3) True knowledge of God is given only in this Biblical revelation culminating in Jesus Christ. Outside the Christian revelation man cannot be said to 'know' God without heavy qualifications. In maintaining the 'qualitative' difference between the Christian revelation and all other claims of revelation Kraemer has not only disengaged the former from the latter but has also rendered the latter unreal.

Let us see how the disengagement works out in relation to questions of religious experience and moral value.

(1) Christian Faith, 349, for a discussion on Kraemer's treatment of the logos doctrine, see below, 386ff
(2) Authority, 5
(3) Christian Faith, 382
The disengagement of revelation from religious experience

In our analysis of the anthropology of Kraemer we have seen the extent to which his reaction against the 'self-sufficiency' of man has shaped his thought. This unhealthy exaltation of man has its counterpart in Protestant circles and in the field of religions. Barth's theology is a radical protest against the anthropocentricism of Schleiermacher and Ritschl who appeal to religious experience and value as their frame of reference. A brief note on this trend of thought in the liberal theology of the nineteenth century and Barth's protest is given in an Appendix below. It suffices us here to mention that Kraemer allies himself with Barth in his protest against this mistake in theology, though Kraemer confronts this mistake more in the context of the study of religions. The general Barthian concern is reflected, for instance, in the idea of revelation as senkrecht von oben which Kraemer also asserts. 'The revelation in Christ,' he says, 'however, is vertically related to all human religious life and wisdom, because it is the "wisdom of God" which is "sheer folly" to the Greeks, and not perfection or crown of human reason or religion.' As such it 'contradicts and upsets all human religious aspiration and imagination.' In this sense, revelation is 'an offence to man.' The divine and the human are set in sharp contrast to one another.

The isolation of revelation of which Kraemer speaks, as we saw earlier, is an isolation from the whole range of human religious

---

(1) See below, Appendix V, 11ff
(2) This phrase originally was used by Kierkegaard to denote the infinite qualitative difference between God and man.
(3) Christian Message, 115
(4) Christian Message, 122
(5) Christian Message, 70
life. Naturally religious experience is involved. His acquaintance with Indian religious thought makes him more vocal on this point. Indian philosophical and religious thought is 'truly a gigantic enterprise for self-release by self-realization.' and self-realization is given the status of 'revelation.' (1) Religious experience is stressed to such an extent that Radhakrishnan can say, 'Religion is more a transforming experience than a notion of God.' (2) Among Protestant, religious experience is given a heavy stress in the study of religions by Söderblom. He sees all religions, (Christianity included) as belonging to the domain of 'general revelation,' because all religions, according to Söderblom, are rooted in divine self-disclosure. (3) This acknowledgment compels Söderblom to accept the possibility that the 'a-cosmistic, monistic, mysticism and prophetic Christianity have to be regarded as equivalent culmination-points of religion witnessing to the same reality.' Even though Söderblom holds fast to the belief in a 'special revelation' which makes Christianity 'different in kind' from all other religions, nevertheless in his general survey of religions Söderblom also adopts the idea of Frömmigkeitstypen— the type of piety, as a decisive criterion, and the degree of sincerity he detects in the religions and their representatives (Buddha,

---

(1) Christian Faith, 167, 110, Christian Message, 143
(2) Radhakrishnan, Eastern Religion and Western Thought, 21
(3) Kraemer's criticism of Söderblom is based on the latter's Gifford lecture, The Living God, 1933. Söderblom believes that the affirmation of special revelation also necessitates the affirmation on general revelation. Either there is real revelation outside the Biblical sphere, he says, or there is no revelation at all, not even in the Bible. See Christian Faith. 210 Kraemer points out that Söderblom's loyalty is divided between being true to his own Christian faith and being true to the method of the Science of religion of his time. See Christian Faith. 212.
Zarathustra, Confucius, etc) as the sure indicator of the Reality of the encounter with God and the experience of revelation. Thus Söderblom has, in Kraemer's opinion, fallen into 'the trap of not clearly distinguishing between religious experience and revelation as God's act, independent of any experience. Söderblom belongs to the line of Schleiermacherian subjectivist theology.'(1)

In view of this emphasis on religious experience it is not surprising that Kraemer emphatically maintains that 'the search for supreme religious experience is foreign to Biblical realism, because the emphasis falls exclusively on what God does and reveals, and the correlate religious experience is secondary in the strongest sense possible.'(2) However, 'secondary' seems to have been a rather mild way of putting it. In his criticism of Söderblom he has said that revelation is 'independent' of experience. Indeed, as he says later, as far as the expressions of religious feelings and sentiments are concerned the non-Christian religions often do better than the Christian religion.(3) But it does not mean that they have the 'revelation' of God. Thus there is no genuine correlation between religious experience and revelation. On this matter Kraemer shares with Barth the fear that once revelation is allowed to be identified with certain elements in experience, or, the 'human likeness or face of the revelation', then revelation would be lost in the 'human psychological and historical structure.' Once revelation becomes a 'historical and psychological phenomenon,' it

(1) Christian Faith, 213
(2) Christian Message, 144
(3) Why Christianity, 115
will no longer be 'absolutely unique.' (1) This fear reflects their assumption of the antithetical relation between the human and the divine, or rather, the incompatibility of the human for the divine. (2) As a result, the revelation which comes from above remains aloof, it touches yet without conjoining with the human.

Yet the isolation of revelation from religious experience must also be understood along with the isolation of truth from what man considers as valuable. Revelation is truth, and it contradicts man's cherished values. Let us see how it works out in Kraemer's debate with his critics.

(4) The disengagement of revelation from value

It has been argued that if a certain type of religious experience, whether Christian or non-Christian, can satisfy profound religious needs, it should be deemed valuable, and hence true. Here the assumption is that whatever is valuable must be true. In brief, this is an argument from 'sublimity of religious experience' to its 'authenticity.' Value-judgment coincides with the question of truth. This assumption, as Kraemer sees it, is behind the thought of P. Chenchiah. Chenchiah argues that in Hinduism man searches

(2) G. Wingren in Theology in Conflict (E.T. 1958) argues powerfully that in Barth's thought the gulf between the human and the divine remains unbridged all through his works. It is evident, for example, in his notion of the Incarnation, and also in his angelology. See ibid 31ff. The failure to maintain the divine-human union greatly affects his view of religion, see below,399f, also

(1) Authority, 19
for salvation and is capable of finding deep satisfaction. Kraemer rejects such an argument as 'superficial', because sublimity of religious experience is not necessarily proof of authentity. It can even be the contrary — Satan disguised as the Angel of Light. Besides, 'psychic experience of satisfaction' can also be derived from 'fictions', and it is therefore no guarantee for the presence of Truth. (1)

In similar fashion D.G. Moses poses the question of experience and truth. He also thinks that satisfaction should be the criterion of truth in religion.

If we enlarge the essence of religion so as to include not only the conservation but the creation and the practical realization in life of values, and think of religion in terms of the fundamental human needs which it satisfies, we get a clue to the answer of the question of the criterion of religious truth. The criterion of a religious truth will be the extent to which it satisfies these universal and insistent needs of religion. (2)

It is obvious that both Chenchiah and Moses want to ground the criterion of truth in value-judgment, and in their cases, value-judgment with an anthropocentric orientation. This to Kraemer is tantamount to setting man up as the ultimate criterion for truth, thus signifying a return to liberalism and relativism. For this reason Kraemer disengages the question of truth from value-judgment. The question of truth can only be settled by reference to revelation. One of Moses' mistakes, in Kraemer's opinion, is that he assumes that man, by nature, knows what are his religious needs, and that he also

(1) *Christian Faith*, 84f. The implication is that Truth must be historical.

knows 'what is the right objective satisfaction of his religious needs.' But in fact, man does not know, as witnessed in Biblical realism. (1) This perhaps is a good illustration of how Kraemer's thought must be understood in the context of his anthropological presuppositions.

Kraemer has not only disengaged the question of truth from value or value-judgment, but he also isolates the 'Truth' of God (which coincides with his revelation) from the truth as man understands it. This 'Truth' is embodied in the historical Incarnate, the God-man Jesus Christ. Kraemer frequently refers to Jesus Christ as the Truth. Perhaps it is better to take 'Jesus Christ' as a shorthand reference to the 'spiritual realities that are in Christ.' (2) In other words, revelation is not to be identified with the truth of man, which is man's highest spiritual achievements. (3) What is morally sublime, or 'what is best' in man does not have any necessary correlation to Truth. Kraemer's list of 'what is best' in man is indeed impressive. It refers to a pursuit of ideals which transcend himself and enables him to conceive of a more precious good than life (Mancius), an awareness of being put into this world with a divine commission and calling .... (a) quest for Truth for truth's sake ..... (a) striving after goodness for goodness' sake and for communion with the Transcendent, in his search for salvation and liberation from what he feels to be the fundamental anxieties and frustrations of life. (4)

(1) See above, 188, 200
(3) Christian Faith, 342.
(4) Christian Faith, 312.
These elements are 'sublime' and 'lofty,' but when seen in the light of the Truth of revelation in Christ they become 'erroneous' and gestures of man's self-assertion. There is, in the end, a profound diastasis between the Truth of revelation and the truth of man. In other words, revelation is to be disengaged from the moral experiences and valuations of man.

(5) **Problems involved in the emphasis of radical 'discontinuity'**

The motive behind the idea of disengagement is certainly commendable, in so far as it attempts to safeguard against any possible confusion between the divine and the human in our thought and moral experience. But if revelation is radically disengaged from all that is human, including such elements as experience and valuation, then it would become difficult for human apprehension. This point is in Niebuhr's mind when he criticizes the 'Theology of Crisis.' The theologians of this tradition 'make revelation their starting point.' But in refusing 'to relate it to the value cognitions of men, they fail to give an understanding of the process whereby revelation is received.'(1)

Perhaps it is unfair to say that Kraemer's notion of revelation is totally without empirical basis, because he also maintains, as we have said before, that revelation must be apprehended by man in

(1) Niebuhr, in Value Centre and Theology, in The Nature of Religious Experience, by Bixler, Colhoun and Niebuhr, 1937,112. This quotation is given in full below, see 411
faith, if it is to be a revelation to man. Such a response issues in a course of life, a pattern of commitment which is observable. 'The right knowledge of God expresses itself necessarily in the right life-relationship with him.'(1) So if revelation needs to be 'expressed' in a pattern of commitment characterized by self-giving and trust, then moral behaviour or even religious experience must be taken seriously as genuine correlations to revelation, no matter how 'secondary' they might have been regarded by Kraemer himself. If this is admitted, as Kraemer does admit it(2), then the isolation of revelation cannot be said to have been complete.

This opening brings with it at least two consequences. First, even though revelation, in the case of a Christian's life in faith, is not directly identifiable with a certain element of experience or of commitment, nevertheless the keen observer can now say whether the Christian's claim of having been exposed to revelation is true or not, on the basis of the presence or absence of such observable behaviour. By their fruits ye shall know them. Thus the reference to revelation is given a much desired empirical basis.

If this is granted, then from this a second and more radical consequence follows.

The second, radical consequence can be put in this way. If revelation necessarily calls forth a correlated mode of behaviour, or manner of life as a means of response to revelation, then it must also be allowed that a similar mode of behaviour found among non-

---

(1) Christian Faith, 294, also see above, 187f. See also Christian Message, 77, 78, where the Christian 'way' and 'quality of life' are described. This new possibility of life is a 'reflex' upon the Christian revelation, a life of self-giving and trust in God.

(2) See above, 348, also 187f
Christians must betoken a similar revelation. (1) This argument becomes more plausible and more powerful in view of the fact that revelation, according to Kraemer is also the revelation of love. (2) This affirmation puts revelation right in the centre of moral life, and moral action should be regarded as more than 'secondary' as it is in Kraemer's scheme. If God has made known to man his love, then to claim to 'know' God man must respond in love. (3) Now if similar quality or intensity of self-giving love as expressed in the Christians is found outside the Christian circles, one must also, on the principle that similar moral acts betoken similar revelation, grant the non-Christians the possibility of having 'revelation' given to them. Of course one can still resist this conclusion by questioning the 'love' of the non-Christians in different ways. It

(1) This argument, in a slightly different form, is powerfully argued out in Downing, Has Christianity a Revelation? 248ff. Also in J. Baillie, The Sense of the Presence of God, 1962, 207. G. Parrinder also goes along this line of thought, and he quotes W.C. Smith in support. See Parrinder, Comparative Religion 1962 58f. W.C. Smith, The Christian and the Religions of Asia, 6. It may seem that the logical structure of this argument is questionable. We have argued that 'revelation' involves, and includes, 'response' or 'commitment' to a pattern of life, with certain recognizable direction and style (such as 'obedience,' 'love,' etc.) So the claim of 'revelation' (symbolized by A) must be accompanied by such an observable 'response' (symbolized by B). In short, if A, then B. Now there is a similar B outside the realm of Biblical realism, and we suggest that such B betokens A. It seems that we are saying, if A, then B. Now B, therefore A. The difficulty comes in the argument from B to A, for B does not necessarily lead to A, because it might have been caused by something else. But we can answer thus: such a criticism is valid if A and B are separable or independent, unrelated entities. But in our case, A and B are inseparable, one implied in the other in the act of apprehension. If AB by definition form a unit, then B must involve A.

(2) Why Christianity, 83

(3) For a brief discussion of the logic of the word 'know' as well as its Biblical meaning, see Downing, Has Christianity a Revelation? 1964 205f. Downing points out that one cannot 'know' a much stronger and more forceful personality than oneself (as in the case of man knowing God) without being affected. Thus to 'know' God also means to be transformed by love.
may be said the quality of love expressed in the non-Christians is ambiguous, as it is mixed with 'self-seeking' and 'self-justifying' purposes, even in the realm of religion. But in this case, neither can the Christians' love be shown to be better on the whole. Or again, the Christian, holding to the last ditch, as it were, can still say, 'apart from the revelation of God in Christ, man do not understand what love really is.'(1) But, is the noetic factor decisive in our argument against the non-Christians on this matter? Does an act of love become 'non-love' if the doer does not understand the full nature and implication of love? If the answer to the latter question is positive, then one has to say that there is no 'love' outside the Christian faith to which alone love has been 'revealed'. But such a view is not only arrogant but also unfounded. And if the answer is negative, then revelation does not change the act itself, except that it provides information to the doer as to what love really is, so that he may see a more profound significance from a new viewpoint. Thus revelation becomes a sort of higher knowledge or supernatural truth, a notion which definitely smacks of Thomism. Needless to say, neither alternative appeals to the Protestant theologian!

Is Kraemer's position shaken by these arguments derived mainly from empirical observation? Not really. It does not seem to us

(1) In substance, this is what Kraemer suggests in his criticism of Toynbee who, in his opinion, indulges in love-talk. See Why Christianity, 44f.
that Kraemer would ever agree that the acts of love of the Christians can be described on the same level as those of the non-Christians. (1) Nevertheless he certainly suggests that there are elements in the religious life of non-Christians which are similar to those found among Christians, be they moral aspirations or religious expressions. After all, our religious and moral convictions are expressed through the common 'psychological apparatus' since we share a common humanity. (2) So on this 'anthropological,' 'phenomenal' (for want of better words) level he can say with regard to the 'sublime elements' in non-Christian faiths that they are 'impressive qualities,' 'grand endeavours', and therefore one must not say there is 'nothing of truth or value' in them. (3) But the 'anthropological' level is not decisive. What is important is the 'theological' level (again, for want of a better word) in which the question of Truth must ultimately be decided. (4) It is only here, or from this viewpoint, that what is true and good outside Biblical revelation becomes 'erroneous', as gesture of man's assertion before God. It is on this level alone that the Truth of revelation, which is identified with 'Jesus Christ', can be said to be 'sui generis'.

(1) See Why Christianity, 98. The 'love' in Buddhism which Toynbee praises so much is seen by Kraemer as qualitatively different from that of the Christian. In Buddhism it expresses itself in the form of 'universal benevolence' and in 'altruistic behaviour.' But this judgment is not accepted by all Christians. For example, Niebuhr regards 'universal benevolence' as the highest ideal, grounded in the 'consent of being to being.' See below, 442.

(2) See Why Christianity, 105, and also implied in the questions of 'similarities' and the 'point of contact', Christian Message, 131ff, also see below, 504ff.

(3) Why Christianity, 96.

(4) Bouquet also mentions the 'level of practical evangelism and ordinary human contact,' and the 'level of exclusive concern about the question of truth.' These two levels in Kraemer's thought, Bouquet says, 'should not be confused.' Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions, 1958, 400.
This two-level judgment, grounded in the principle of discontinuity inherent in the idea of revelation, enables Kraeiaer on the one hand to accord 'truth' and 'value' to sublime moral and religious behaviours outside Biblical revelations, thus acquitting himself of the possible charge of not seeing any good in other religions. Yet on the other hand, what is true and valuable in them is reduced, on the 'theological' level, to no more than gestures of man's self-assertion. The reality of 'truth' once ascribed to the 'sublime' elements outside Biblical revelation eventually fades away. (1)

Let us briefly sum up the problems involved in Kraemer's radical disengagement. If revelation is radically disengaged from experience and valuation, then it will be void of the empirical basis required by human apprehension. Kraemer's acknowledgment of a 'necessary correlate' is an attempt to give revelation such an empirical basis. But this acknowledgement also invites the argument, viz., similar modes of behaviour betokens similar revelation. But Kraemer is quite unperturbed, because his thought can be said to move on two levels. It is on the 'theological' level that what is best and true of man is seen to be otherwise.

(1) A parallel case of the two-level judgment can be found in Barth's understanding of what is true in religion and his judgment on Yodoism. What is true in religion is not in religion itself but in Jesus Christ who chooses to express himself through it. The name 'Jesus Christ' is the divine reality which is isolated from all human reality. (Church Dogmatics, I, 2, 334, E.T. 1956) Yodoism, like Christianity, is also a religion of grace. It admittedly has similarities compared with Christianity. But Yodoism is not a true religion because it is a religion of grace. A religion is true only when God's grace chooses to work through it. It cannot be said of Yodoism because the 'name' Jesus Christ the divine reality, is not there. Thus in the field of religion, the Christian religion can enter into an encounter with other religions solely on an anthropological basis. It is not a meeting of truth and falsehood. One can therefore carry out a comparative, phenomenological study between them. The confrontation in terms of truth and falsehood takes place only when it is carried out on the theological level, when religions are confronted by Jesus Christ. See the discussion in Johannes Aagaard, Revelation and Religion, in Studia Theologica, 1959-1960, XIII-XIV, 17ff.
We have seen from various angles how the principle of disengagement inherent in the structure of revelation worked itself out, and how satisfactory the result is. Kraemer has not only removed the reality of what is 'best' and 'true' outside Biblical revelation, but also regarded the non-Christian religions as no better than 'self-justification' and 'self-will', which are highly debatable. (1)

Since Kraemer bases his judgment on 'Jesus Christ' as the criterion of truth, our next step must be to see how this criterion operates in his thought. In what follows we shall only concentrate on Kraemer's treatment of the issue at hand. The question in regard to "Jesus Christ" as criterion will return in our discussion later on.

C. Concerning 'Jesus Christ' as the criterion of judgment

Jesus Christ is the criterion of truth because he is the revelation of the only true God. Revelation and Jesus Christ are so involved in one another that we sometimes find Kraemer simply equating revelation with Jesus, who is also its substance.

Jesus Christ is Himself the Revelation in His own Person; and He is likewise its substance. 'Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,' says the Scriptures (John 1.17) (2) ...... it is not the book, the Bible, which is the Revelation, but Christ. (3)

(1) For a different opinion on the nature of non-Christian religion (Hinduism) see above, 210f
(2) Why Christianity, 83
(3) Christian Faith, 315
The close identification of revelation with Jesus Christ gives added force to the argument of the *sui generis* nature of revelation. Revelation is *sui generis* because Jesus Christ is unique. The implication is not difficult to see. Since there is only one Jesus Christ, the only Incarnate of God, so there can only be one revelation. Hence no other claims to revelation by philosophers or non-Christians can stand.

It is, however, a far cry from the formal criterion 'the Person of Jesus Christ' to the conclusion that even what is best, apart from Kraemer's Biblical realism, is necessarily 'erroneous' in the 'ultimate and essential meaning and purpose.' Actually it is not clear how the conclusion can be deduced from the formal criterion. The 'Person of Jesus Christ' as the 'non-derivative', the 'given', is only a formal principle, with no application. If it is used for any practical purposes, it must be further qualified, i.e., it must be given adequate content. Kraemer is of course aware of such a necessity, for he also provides qualifying statements like, 'the world of divine realities revealed in Jesus Christ.'(1) 'Jesus Christ himself and the quality of love revealed in Him.'(2) 'Jesus Christ and His kingdom.'(3) But the moment this is done there immediately arises the possibility of having doctrinal elements introduced into the criterion. This is a step Kraemer does not wish to take, as evident in the warnings he gives us,

(1) *Authority*, 5.
(2) *Why Christianity*, 83
(3) *Why Christianity*, 196
I personally am sure that it is wrong, for example, to take as a criterion any doctrine or system of doctrine, however relatively admirable an expression of Christianity it may be. I hold it to be equally wrong to adopt as a criterion this or that alleged 'basic principle' of Christianity. Doctrines, systems and principles are all things deduced from Christianity. They are and will always be the work of man.\[^{[1]}\]

The implication is that if Kraemer takes 'Jesus Christ', as he does, the 'non-derivative', 'given' criterion, he can avoid making the mistake. But we have already argued that no matter how one takes the 'non-derivative' nature of the 'given', it must necessarily be an interpreted given.\[^{[2]}\] As such, it is difficult to keep 'doctrines' and 'principles' out because the interpreter necessarily belongs to some tradition or school. In the case under discussion, we find that the 'given' is interpreted very much along the line of the evangelical tradition. To substantiate our judgment let us see how Kraemer describes Jesus as the revelation of God.

The figure of Jesus Christ Kraemer portrays for us, to begin with, is the familiar figure in the Gospels. Kraemer shows that he is not neglecting the 'historical Jesus.'

This man, who called to gentleness and humility of heart, who made the naive simplicity of children an object of emulation and who did not come to be served but to serve, claimed confidently his central place in God's plan for the world. He is who ushers in the Kingdom of God; He claims as a right from His followers that they be witnesses to His name and be gladly prepared to suffer on His behalf; He represents Himself as the Messiah whom the prophets announced ... He knows that He is the confidant of the Father and the Instrument in His dealing with the world and with mankind. He tastes death ... performs it as a Messianic act, and yet suffers it, with its preceding struggle, as a common deathlike death, full of anxiety that weighs on man ... It was not finished. He rose from the dead, because He, the Son of God, conquered death by tasting death ...\[^{[3]}\]

\[^{[1]}\] Why Christianity, 71  
\[^{[2]}\] See above, 349 ff.  
\[^{[3]}\] Christian Message, 81f. The controversial issue of Messianic consciousness is presupposed rather than discussed in Kraemer's account of Jesus, that is, Jesus is aware of himself as the Messiah whom the prophets of old foretold.
The loving quality of Jesus is also brought out. As a man Jesus was 'full of prophetic fervour, whose heart was moved with pity over the multitudes because they were like sheep which have no shepherd, who did not break the broken reed ... who claimed as His brother and sister and mother all those who obeyed His Father in heaven.'(1) It is in this historical life that God has 'communicated' or 'revealed' himself.

However, Kraemer also more specifically spells out the divine involvement. God has, he says, revealed in Jesus Christ 'The Way, the Life and the Truth.'(2) For this reason Christ alone can only be regarded as Truth. All claims of truth must be judged in the light of Truth. Again, we are told, revelation also refers to 'the quality of Love' which is revealed in Christ.(3) Again, revelation is also a revelation in Jesus of the Will of God. It is not very clear what the 'Will' of God means, as Kraemer uses it in several ways. It refers to the 'creative act' of God,(4) but more primarily it refers to the 'Will' that is made known in Jesus, with a concrete moral content. It means 'love'.(5) In the history of Christian thought, the idea of God's will is associated with the doctrine of predestination. Kraemer admits that there are cases in the Bible where the 'hardening of hearts' are mentioned, (Is.6.9-10.Jer.6.10,11 and Mt 13.15) but he warns against turning these texts into a rigid doctrine of predestination, an error he sees exemplified in Calvin.(6) Again, the revelation of God in the coming of Jesus also means 'the integral realization' of a 'new order of life', which is nothing

---

(1) Idem.
(2) Christian Message, 107
(3) Why Christianity, 83
(4) In relation to Creation, see Christian Message, 68
(5) Christian Message, 88
(6) Christian Faith, 378-380
other than 'the Kingdom of God'. The Kingdom is a 'transcendental, super-historical order of life.' It is a 'living, working reality and yet not realized.' Even though Kraemer also identifies it with the 'real Church,' but the boundary is not for man to map out.\(^1\)

This picture of Jesus is the familiar picture as presented in the Gospels. So far we still have not been able to see how the conclusion mentioned earlier can be deduced from this understanding of Jesus. Jesus is Truth, but it does not mean that there is no truth to be found outside the Christian revelation which is also true on the theological level and organically related to the revelation in Jesus Christ.\(^2\) Jesus embodies in his person the divine 'quality of love', but it does not necessarily follow that there is no love outside the Christian faith. In Jesus God's will is made known, but the 'will' refers in general to God's desire for the salvation of the world, to his love and to Christians finding out what it is by existentially living a life of love. In Christ the Kingdom is inaugurated. But we do not know exactly who belongs to it and who does not. In all these aspects there is no direct relation to the problem we have in hand. So far there is no ground to support Kraemer's conclusion in regard to truth and validity in non-Christian claims of revelation.

Kraemer has also briefly dealt with the question of Jesus' attitude towards non-Jewish faiths. From the evidence presented in the Gospels Kraemer comes to the conclusion:

\(^1\) \textit{Christian Message,} 80f, 93  
\(^2\) \textit{Generally speaking, this is what the supporters of the logos-doctrine affirm.}
It is superfluous to make any statement about Jesus' attitude towards non-Jewish religion. He did not know them. He was certainly not interested in other religions in the sense we in our time are obliged to be ..... (he knows) neither an attitude towards, nor a value-judgment on, 'religion.'(1)

Kraemer's statement is certainly correct. Jesus Christ himself does not offer us any direct guidance on matters pertaining to the encounter of religions. It all sounds very enigmatic: Jesus Christ is, according to Kraemer, the criterion of truth, especially in relation to truth claimed by non-Christian religions. Yet Jesus Christ himself has nothing to say on that matter. His preaching and teaching have not provided us with any support in the affirmation of the ultimately erroneous character of what is best and true outside the Christian revelation.

Where then does Kraemer find support for his view? For this we have to go beyond the Gospels. One can safely say that he finds it not in the life and teachings of Jesus as presented in the Gospels, but in the interpretation of the significance of his person in Pauline writings. Here the revelation in Jesus Christ is largely the revelation of the righteousness of God. Thus Kraemer says,

The only thing that should be said is that the central or focal revelation is the revelation of the righteousness of God in Christ ..... in the strict sense there is only one revelation, that is God's self-disclosure in Christ, the Savior, as the righteousness and the wrath of God.(2)

God's δικαίωσύνη is set over against man's δικία. Man by his δικία suppresses the truth.(3) The whole of mankind live in

---

(1) Christian Faith, 259
(2) Christian Faith, 354, 381
(3) The ideas of δικαίωσύνη and δικία have been dealt with, see above, 185ff
sin, his total mode of existence moves in sin, in self-will and self-centred self assertion. (1) It is this understanding of δίκαιον in relation to the revelation in Jesus Christ which provides grounds, as we have seen before, for Kraemer's affirmation of the ultimate errancy of all truth outside Biblical revelation.

This particular presentation of Jesus Christ as the criterion focuses on the person rather than the life and teachings of Jesus, on the notion of righteousness rather than the life of Jesus Christ through whom it is revealed. On the whole, the Jesus of the Gospels, together with his teachings, stays largely in the background. When 'Jesus Christ' is put forward as the criterion of judgment, it is actually the idea of the righteousness of God, with all its doctrinal implications, that comes to the forefront. (2) Thus we are told that not only what is best and true outside Biblical revelation is necessarily erroneous when judged on the theological level, but also that non-Christians cannot be said to 'know' God in a positive sense, apart from a dim, shadowy awareness of him. But we have already expressed our disagreement with this attempt to derive a dogmatic attitude from the Pauline teachings. (3)

Summing up, Kraemer's criterion of judgment of truth, 'Jesus Christ', is interpreted with a strong Pauline bias, (not forgetting that his interpretation of Paul is 'strained'), reflecting his own anthropological considerations which are coloured by his interaction

(1) Christian Faith, 292, 293, also see 359.
(2) See above, 184ff. For a different approach, see E.C. Dewick, The Christian Attitude to Other Religions, 1953. Dewick lays stress on the message of Jesus Christ rather than on Paul's teachings. See his discussions on 73-98, 139-143.
(3) For our criticism, see above, 189ff
with the contemporary cultural ethos.

We have said earlier that Kraemer re-interprets 'general revelation' to strengthen his case against claims of 'revelations' outside Biblical realism. (1) Let us now turn to this complicated aspect of his thought.

D. The question of 'general revelation' and 'natural theology'

General revelation and natural theology are different things. But in the history of thought the distinction is not always clearly defined. Though Kraemer accepts some kind of general revelation, nevertheless he does not allow natural theology. In the following we shall examine briefly the notions of general revelation and natural theology, the idea of the logos-doctrine and Kraemer's protest against it. We shall also examine Kraemer's re-definition of general revelation in the context of the famous Barth-Brunner controversy.

(1) The complicated notion of 'natural theology' and its relation to 'general revelation'.

The phrase 'natural theology' has been used in different ways. It signifies, for instance, any attempt to construct by argument a theory of ultimate being or an all-inclusive world-view, and theism.

(1) See above, 352
is not necessarily involved, even though 'theology' is used. (1) Again, it may refer to theism in traditional Christian thought, and the 'theos' signifies the one supreme, personal, self-subsistent Mind with all the familiar appellations of good, wise, creative, powerful and so on. In this sense 'natural theology' means an attempt to define God's nature by means of reasoned argument and to demonstrate his reality as so defined. It can also be described as the philosophy of theism, and it is supposed that the arguments adduced are able to gain the assent of any man who is capable of understanding them, irrespective of his prior belief and experience. (2) Arguments in this context can be advanced from either the position of a priori logical deduction from ideas regarded as self-evidently present to the mind, as in the case of the traditional ontological argument, or from the position of a posteriori induction, from observable facts and their relation to one another. (3)

Again, 'natural theology' sometimes refers to those beliefs about divine reality which arise out of some kind of spontaneous religious response to the world and not out of rational reflection. In this sense 'natural theology' is roughly equated with 'natural religion'. So when 'primitive' people are said to have 'natural

---

(1) The various ways in which the phrase 'natural theology' is used are discussed in H.H. Farmer, Revelation and Religion, 1954, chapter one.

(2) In our time this view is held by E.L. Mascall, see Existence and Analogy, 1949, 11,75. The modern, urban man, Mascall argues, may fail to understand, or regards as irrelevant, the arguments of natural theology, but such responses do not imply the falsity or inadequacy of the arguments themselves. See He Who Is, 1943, 60f

(3) F.R. Tennant suggests the former should be called 'rational theology' and the latter 'natural theology', which properly applies to arguments from nature which claims for themselves only the force of reasonableness or probability. See Philosophical Theology, 1930, II, 79.
theology', it is more probable than not that 'natural religion' is meant. The various Weltanschauungen which are found in different ethnic groups or cultures also belong to this category. But the distinction between these two phrases are not always clearly observed. (1)

Perhaps it is less complicated if we see with John Cobb Jr. that 'natural theology' in the history of Christian thought appears largely in four major categories. The first is that of a modified Aristotelian philosophy as employed by Roman and Protestant scholasticism. The second is that of the rational deistic beliefs. The third is Hegelian philosophy as adopted by Biedermann and Dorner, and the fourth is some form of creative evolutionism, being either the inference from creativity in nature to a transcendent God, or more often than not simply the identification of this creativity with God. (2)

What does natural theology take as its authority? The obvious answer is that it is 'reason.' So we are told, 'natural theology ... excludes, by definition, all appeals to any authority other than reason itself.' This means that 'natural theology is a branch of philosophy and cannot employ a non-philosophical method.' (3) But even so, reason is taken in different contexts by different writers. The deists and Kant regarded reason as defining the content and

(1) Farmer gives an example from the works of Söderblom, see Revelation and Religion, 1954, 5.
(2) For examples of these types of natural theology, see J. Cobb Jr., Living Options in Protestant Theology, 1962, 17-32. Cobb himself tries to evolve a natural theology with the help of Process Philosophy. For an excellent historical sketch of the development of natural theology see N. Söderblom, Naturliche Theologie und allgemeine Religionsgeschichte, 1913, which is summarized by Farmer in Revelation and Religions, 1954, 5-9
limits of authentic religion. But the Thomists take a different view. Though reason provides the framework within which theology operates, nevertheless, in Mascall's opinion, natural theology is factually quite impossible apart from revelation. (1) Farmer's natural theology is a 'frank christological and soteriological theism' grounded in the revelation of God in Christ, in the central concepts of the Incarnation and Reconciliation. (2) One may perhaps ask, why such a 'natural' 'theology' should be called 'natural theology' then? (3) Perhaps the desire to synthesize reason and revelation has not yet been fully dispelled.

Natural theology in the form of a synthesis between reason and revelation reached its peak in the theology developed in a Hegelian framework. But Hegelian philosophy successfully resisted Christianization, and the efforts of the theologians failed. Hegelian philosophy of religion sought to supersede theology rather than to provide it with a basis. With the decline of Hegelianism, Protestant theologians, especially those on the Continent, turned away from natural theology in general. The "Theology of Crisis" arose as a strong protest, and natural theology has not yet recovered from the near-mortal wounds it received at its hands.

It is, however, interesting to see that even in neo-orthodox circles in which natural theology is banned, the idea of 'general revelation' finds support in the writings of Brunner and Kraemer, despite the ambiguity of the phrase. When man's knowledge was

(1) E.L. Mascall, Existence and Analogy, 1949, 11
(2) H.F. Farmer, Revelation and Religion, 1954, 18
(3) Farmer is not altogether happy with the phrase 'natural theology', and as far as he is concerned, he would gladly see it dropped out of use, ibid, 20.
dichotomized into 'natural knowledge' of God (natural theology) and
'revealed knowledge' of God (revealed theology) the idea of 'general
revelation,' says Kraemer, is 'wholly or nearly wholly identified'
with theologia naturalis. 'The whole concept is, in its ordinary
use, tainted by all kinds of notions, contrary to the way in which
the Bible speaks about revelation.' (1) Thus in the time of the
Enlightenment, 'general revelation', being assimilated into the
complex of 'natural theology', had taken upon itself a rational
character. 'Men began to consider general revelation as the
primary and superior one, even to the extent that special revelation
was wholly absorbed by it, and degraded.' (2)

When interest in the study of religions arose, the idea of
'general revelation' again became a popular presupposition. Being
a counterpart of Biblical revelation, it helped scholars to solve,
'at least verbally, the problem of how to estimate the non-Christian
religions in the light of the Biblical revelation very neatly.'
From this point of view, it was argued that at least the 'highest
and best elements' were the result of general revelation. (3) The
difference which characterized the many 'similarities' produced by
the phenomenologists of religion was not taken seriously. (4) In
the field of religions, the rational character of 'general revelation'
has not been abandoned.

(1) Christian Faith, 343
(2) Idem, see also Christian Message, 116
(3) Christian Faith, 342
(4) Idem, see also John Baillie's criticism. Baillie who is
sympathetically disposed towards 'general revelation' nevertheless
points out that not all the light God has imparted to the various
non-Christian peoples is general to them all. 'There is something
that is special to each.' Sense of the Presence of God, 1962, 188
With the decline of natural theology, the idea of general revelation also went into disrepute. But Brunner also sees that unless some kind of 'general revelation' is allowed, the question of man's responsibility to God would be difficult to account for. Also the idea of 'special' revelation (Biblical revelation) requires the belief in a 'general revelation.' This is pointedly summarized by Cairns in these words.

If the special revelation clearly reveals man's guilt, and, when accepted in faith, removes it, there must be a revelation in creation to which it appeals. Otherwise the special revelation does not reveal man's guilt, but actually creates it.(1)

Thus we now have a distinction, not between natural and revealed knowledge of God, but between the general and special revelation. The emphasis now is on God's activity among both Christians and non-Christians. It stresses the fact of man's relatedness to God. If God is known at all, it is because God desires to be known. If this point is clearly grasped, then it is safe for the Christian to talk about 'natural theology', as Kraemer does.(2) Here we see a reversal of the role of 'natural theology'. It is no more 'unaided reason' trying to seek out the mystery of God. Rather, it depends on revelation which gives it its direction.

However, we must not forget that there is also a strong tradition in the Christian faith which champions 'general revelation' with no less devotion to 'special' revelation than Brunner or Kraemer. This tradition is represented by the 'logos doctrine'. One main difference between these two attitudes towards 'general revelation'.

(1) David Cairns, Natural Theology, in A Handbook of Christian Theology, ed. Halverson and Cohen, 1958, 254f. For Brunner's view, also see below, 394f
(2) For Kraemer's re-definition, see below 397
is reflected in the answer to the question of 'knowledge' of God which the non-Christians claim to have. The supporters of the logos doctrine are not afraid to attribute 'positive' knowledge of God to non-Christians, and the idea of 'fulfilment' is an accompanying concept, while Kraemer would not grant such positive knowledge of God to non-Christians. (1) Needless to say, the attitudes to 'general revelation' is not the same, which will be borne out in our ensuing discussions.

The difference can be brought out clearly if we examine how Kraemer attempts to dislodge the logos doctrine.

(2) Can the logos doctrine be defended?

The logos doctrine came into prominence again at the beginning of the century, and became an important issue in missionary discussions both before and after Kraemer's Tambaram book. In the Tambaram debate this doctrine was championed by K.L. Reichelt, following a line already made familiar by Söderblom in 1913. It also found support among Anglican leaders, in the persons of William Temple, E.C. Dewick and A.C. Bouquet. The Archbishops' Commission on Christian Doctrine of 1922 also endorsed it. (2)

(1) We have already come across this point in our study of his interpretation of the Pauline writings earlier. For further remarks, see below, 397f.

The basic assumption of this logos doctrine is that the eternal, creative logos which became flesh in the historical person of Jesus Christ is also the same logos by which the non-Christians know the truth about God and man. There is a continuity between God's revelation in Jesus Christ and in the hearts and minds of man, before and after the Incarnation, who live \textit{K\ddot{a}t\ddot{a} \lambda\omicron\omicron\nu}. So if there is any truth, whether within or without the Christian community, it must be taken as having come from God who is the sole source of truth. 'The process of the acquisition of true knowledge about anything in the cosmos is rightly described as "God causing Himself to be understood."'(1) Even though there is a continuous act of revelation in the world at large and in Jesus Christ, nevertheless there is no need to think that the continuous accumulative development of man's understanding of truth will naturally end up in Jesus Christ. Instead, Jesus Christ should be regarded as a discontinuous act of God in history, by whom all truths are to be judged. He is not the product of evolution, yet he is not discontinuous with the truth of God already in the world, in the hearts and minds of those who strive to live \textit{K\ddot{a}t\ddot{a} \lambda\omicron\omicron\nu}. Instead Jesus brings it to its 'fulfilment.'(2) Thus Augustine says, 'In all religions some truths are to be found. And these truths in all religions are really Christian truths although the name Christianity had not yet appeared.' This idea is also expressed by Temple in these words,

\begin{enumerate}
\item For a discussion of the idea of 'fulfilment', see below, 557ff
\end{enumerate}
By the word of God - that is to say by Jesus Christ - Isaiah and Plato, Zoroaster, Buddha, and Confucius uttered and wrote such truths as they declared.

There is only one Divine Light, and every man in his own measure is enlightened by it.

It is this understanding of the working of logos that Reichelt represents in the Tambaram debate. He says, 'in spite of all the superstitions and perversities which often characterize the non-Christian religions, grains of truth and beams of light are to be found .... sometimes sparkling in genuine splendour and richness. Sometimes these elements may only be used as a psychological stepping-stones, sometimes they give real points of contact.'

The truth these writers talk about is not the truth which turns out, as in Kraemer's scheme, to be 'errancy' on the theological level, though they are not blind to the fact that there is also much darkness and error in non-Christian faiths and in philosophy.

The idea that Jesus Christ is the eternal logos who is also the logos understood at work in the gentile world was presented in the writings of Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria and Origen. Justin is important because he laid down a programme which was later developed by Clement and Origen. He drew on the idea of 'siminal logos' \( \lambda \omega \sigma \omicron \rho \omicron \omicron \sigma \tau \iota \iota \kappa \omicron \\) which, in his opinion, has sown the seeds of truth in all men. All rational beings share in the universal logos who is Christ. So Socrates as well as Abraham were 'Christians before Christ.'

We have shown that Christ is the logos of whom the whole human race are partakers; and those who lived

---

(2) K.L. Reichelt, in Authority, 94
(3) References to Justin are taken from Henry Chadwick, Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition, 1966, 9-23, unless otherwise indicated. Also see J.N.D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrine, 1958, 96-98, on Justin.
are Christians even though associated atheists.'

Though Justin worked hard towards harmony and co-operation between faith and philosophy, yet, according to Chadwick, 'there is no sign in Justin of any tendency to mitigate or to attenuate traditional beliefs.' Clement and Origen were far removed from the popular theology which Justin took for granted, yet they followed Justin in taking Christ the logos as the summation of wisdom. 'Every wise man', Origen says, 'to the extent that he is wise, participates in Christ who is wisdom.' Man has the capacity to recognize the good, and the desire for God, and the human mind is the correlate of God and is made for God. The two-level judgment which we find in Kraemer and Barth was absent in these early writers.

Is there any scriptural support for the logos doctrine? Did Justin the forerunner take the idea of logos from the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel? Of course it is impossible to find scriptural support for some of the fancies of these writers. But the point is, does the New Testament, or rather, the Fourth Gospel, provide any ground for the logos doctrine? Does not the Evangelist also talk about the logos who is the light which lightens every man coming into the world? So it is indeed tempting to think that John is the founding father, through Justin, of the logos doctrine of the Greek Apologists. But this temptation, in Chadwick's opinion, must be resisted, for though Justin probably knew John, nevertheless 'no real Johannine influence is discernable' in Justin.


(2) For Clement, see Chadwick, ibid, 40ff, 64, for Origen, ibid, 103, 104

There is little relation between Justin and The Fourth Gospel. Would this conclusion affect the validity of logos doctrine in general then? Not at all. Though Justin did not refer to John, it may be probable that both writers attempted, each independent of the other, to carry on a dialogue with the Hellenised world with the help of the logos idea. In other words, to deny the logos doctrine any Biblical support, it must be shown that the logos idea in John is discontinuous in meaning with the logos which is familiar to the gentile philosophers. This is what Kraemer tries to do in his exegesis of the Prologue of John.

There are at least two things which Kraemer tries to show in his exegesis. First, he wants to disengage the logos of St John from the Hellenistic philosophical context in which it is generally understood. The Evangelist did not look to the Hellenistic world, Kraemer says, but to the Old Testament, for the idea of logos. The hypostasized form of Wisdom (Chokma) is the 'forerunner of the logos-idea in the New Testament.'(1) Kraemer has in mind Job 28 and Proverb 8. In the latter the idea of pre-existence of Wisdom is already evident. 'She' is the divine playmate and associated with God in his creation. Job spoke of her 'mysterious, omnipresent and multifarious activity, manifesting itself in the splendours of the world and the creative work of man.'(2) It is this idea of Wisdom that leaps to the mind when one reads, according to Kraemer, I Cor.3.18-23 and Col.1.15. But Kraemer also reminds us that the 'Wisdom' in I Corinthians 3 refers to the plan of salvation,

(1) Christian Faith, 263
(2) Christian Faith, 264
eventually unfolded in the scandal of the Cross. As such, 'Wisdom', can only be understood in the light of the Cross. (1) But from this point of view, the divine 'Wisdom' is also seen as 'contrary to all human "Wisdom"', showing the fact that man is 'incapable of really knowing God'. (2) The implication is that the logos, which is this divine 'Wisdom', is not the logos of the Greek philosophers who think they have it within their reach through the faculty of the mind.

Now when the Evangelist, says Kraemer, refers to the logos who is the life and light of man (John 1.4-5) he harks back to the hypostasized Wisdom in the Old Testament. (3) And this logos became flesh, 'the logos, from eternity with God and Himself God, is the fact Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth.' (4)

Any attempt to understand the incarnate logos in terms of (and in association with) the universal, philosophical logos is ruled out. In short, the Johannine logos is discontinuous with the idea of the logos outside the scriptures. They are, so to speak, qualitatively different from one another. That is why the Greek apologists' emphasis has to be rejected.

This conclusion of Kraemer's, however, has not gone unchallenged. In particular, Bouquet has questioned its validity. Bouquet agrees with Dodd that the Fourth Gospel was intended for the Hellenistic gentile world primarily. So the logos in John cannot be without

---

(1) The alert reader might find here a shift in Kraemer's argument. Earlier, Wisdom refers to the Wisdom whose activity is manifested in the 'creative work of man', meaning his cultural activity. To this extent Wisdom is knowable by man. But then Wisdom later is meant to refer to God's plan of salvation as manifested on the Cross. The emphasis is now shifted to Wisdom as 'contrary' to human wisdom, and, as such, unknown to man. This shift is certainly in favour of his anthropological presupposition, if not altogether determined by it.

(2) Christian Faith, 264
(3) Idem.
(4) Christian Faith, 275
any relation to the logos which is familiar in Hellenistic literature. Bouquet also cites cases from gentile philosophical writings which show resemblance in thought and words to what the Evangelist says in the Gospel. Even the idea of some sort of incarnation of the cosmic logos is not absent in the gentile world. At this time, Philo's work on the LXX was well known to the Hellenistic Jews and Christians, and his idea of the logos is also reflected in St. John. So Bouquet concludes that the Evangelist might have been 'looking in two directions' in the compilation of his works, hoping that 'he would also convince Hellenistic Jewish readers, if they were of the same school of thought as Philo and others like him ...' Bouquet's arguments are persuasive, and we incline to think that Kraemer fails to establish his case.

The second task Kraemer seeks to carry out is to show that man, contrary to what the logos doctrine presupposes, does not know the truth of God and life apart from the Christian revelation. He wants to rally the Evangelist to his support. So John 1.5 becomes the crucial verse. 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.' (RSV). To make this verse epistemologically significant Kraemer translates $\kappaαιλθεν$ as 'apprehended', and so it reads, 'man did not apprehend it.' The climax is reached in 1.10, 'and the world knew him not.' Thus

---

(2) Philo's idea of the logos is briefly referred to in Anderson, The Theology of Christian Mission, 1961, 188f. But detailed information is given in Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religion, 1958, 146f where Bouquet summarises R.G. Bury's view in fourteen points, showing how deeply Philo's influence is on the Evangelist. Bury's work is now out of print. (Bouquet has not given the title of the work).
Kraemer says, 'The consequence of the Fall is that man .... does not recognize God when he meets God .....'(1)

The accuracy of rendering \( \kappa \alpha \tau \varepsilon \lambda \beta \varepsilon \nu \) as 'apprehended' is questionable, (2) though it is not without support. (3) Hoskyns' treatment is interesting. Though he uses 'apprehended' in his text, and also says that it is a possibility which must be taken seriously, his exegesis nevertheless shows that his emphasis is actually on 'overcome.' For example, the reference to the light being 'unquenchable' (John 1.5) he thinks refers rather 'not to the age long opposition of men to God's revelation of Himself but to the opposition of the Jews to Jesus ....'(4) If so, this verse cannot be used as a case against the logos doctrine.

The verb \( \kappa \alpha \tau \varepsilon \lambda \beta \varepsilon \nu \), however, also appears in John 12.35 in a similar context. There the meaning is clearly 'overcome', 'overwhelm' or 'overtake.' So it would be unreasonable if the same verb is rendered otherwise in 1.5. Kraemer cannot therefore be said to have made his case.

Yet verse 10 in the Prologue seems to support Kraemer's claim, for it says, 'the world knew him not.' But on a closer look even this support is uncertain, because the Evangelist also went on to say that there were some who knew him. (John 1.12f) (5) In short, the logos doctrine has not been dismissed.

(1) Christian Faith, 274
(2) Westcott, Brook, Moffat, Strachan, Bernard, R.H. Lightfoot, Barrett, among many British scholars support the idea of overcome, mastery or conquer. R.V. has 'overcome' in the margin.
(3) R.H. Lightfoot, Hoskyns think both rendering possible. R. Knox and Bernard also make allowance for 'apprehend', but they relegate it to second order of importance compared with 'overcome'.
(5) Christian Faith, 274. Also note that John 1.10 refers not to the logos but rather to the historical figure Jesus Christ.
Yet Kraemer’s objection to the logos doctrine does not stop with the exegesis of the Prologue of St. John. He also attacks it from the point of view of criterion. The logos doctrine is vague, tending towards ‘abstract generalization, so that one talks about the religions as a whole being results of the logos spermatikos, or being embodiments of Praeparatio evangelica.’ People who talk in this way neglect the ‘ambiguous character’ of all religions, Christianity included. He further says,

The whole talking about all religions being the product of revelation results, in fact, either in theological myopia or in a practical relativism or in an indifferentism in regard to the concern for truth. In brief, it blunts spiritual alertness .... it is simply impossible to speak responsibly and reasonably about truth and revelation in whatever religion, if one has not a clear idea oneself in the light of what standard and criterion one discovers and points out evidences of truth and revelation.(1)

Of course Kraemer is right in his demand for a criterion by which to judge truth and falsehood. But he is wrong when he thinks that the holders of the logos doctrine do not rise above ‘practical relativism’ and ‘indifferentism’ in regard to truth. It is exactly these dangers which both Reichelt and Bouquet want to avoid. Both writers take Christ as the criterion. Even though there are elements of truth in other religions, nevertheless, in Reichelt's opinion, 'in all cases they must be redeemed from their old setting, baptised by the Christian spirit and thus lifted up to the specific Christian plane - under His blessing hands who says, "Behold, I make all things new."'(2) Bouquet is even more vocal on this issue. The criterion for truth is the historical Jesus. The Christian

(1) Christian Faith, 349
(2) Reichelt, Authority, 92
who holds the logos doctrine never expects other religions 'to survive in a state of merely peacefully co-existence. However gradual the process, it is not destined to be one of mere syncretism, but of displacement, accompanied, no doubt, by a measure of reconception, but displacement in the end. The standard is largely one of sincerity, and provides for the recognition of the partial adherence to a life lived \( \text{Kata Logos} \)\(^{(1)}\).

What we have said so far is enough to show that Kraemer's criticism of the validity of the logos doctrine is wide of the mark. It has done little to destroy it. If our judgment is correct, then it follows that if 'revelation' is to be used at all, one must extend it beyond 'Jesus Christ' or 'Biblical realism.' One must recognize that there are elements of truth outside Biblical revelation which are not ultimately 'erroneous' and gestures of man's self-assertion, despite the error and darkness which seem to engulf them. This affirmation is quite in line with the spirit of the Fourth Gospel in which it says, 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.' (John 1.5)

This affirmation requires that 'general revelation', ambiguous as it is, (and one cannot see how 'revelation' is not!) must be given a positive and concrete content. But this is not so, as we shall see in a moment, in Kraemer's works.

There is also evidence that Kraemer's rejection of the logos doctrine is determined by extra-Biblical factors. This doctrine, in his opinion, tends to evaluate the 'best and highest elements' as 'indications that they are well on the road to Christ.'\(^{(2)}\)

---

\(^{(1)}\) Bouquet, in Anderson, The Theology of Christian Mission, 1961, 194

\(^{(2)}\) Christian Faith, 276.
This is true if these 'elements' are interpreted in the context of evolutionism, which is a characteristic feature of liberalism of a certain period. (1) But it is not true of the logos doctrine rendered by, say, Reichelt and Bouquet. Indeed, it would be difficult to find a responsible writer in our time who still thinks in the context of evolutionism. (2) Kraemer's criticism cannot be said to have invalidated the logos doctrine, but it goes against the evolutionary context in which it is interpreted, a context which the defenders of the logos doctrine want (no less than Kraemer) to discard.

Let us briefly sum up Kraemer's attempts to demolish the logos doctrine. He has tried to do so by (a) an interpretation of the logos of the Prologue solely in Hebraic context. The logos is 'the fact Jesus Christ'. The emphasis is on 'man does not know'. (b) an interpretation of terms of 'apprehension' in order to make it

(1) The evolutionary spirit is reflected in Schleiermacher, On Religion, Speeches to its Cultural Despisers, 21, 39. C.P. Tiele, Elements of the Science of Religion, 1897, vol. I, chapter 2. Both writers think that the Christian religion is the highest peak of the human spirit, and the consummation of the development of man's religious life. See also Hallencreutz, Kraemer Towards Tambaram, 1966, 107f for references to Tiele. Hallencreutz also mentions Chantepie de la Saussaye who regards Christianity as the peak of development of religions, with no definite discontinuity between it and the non-Christian religions, ibid., 94.

(2) It is doubtful whether this view is held even in the heydays of liberalism among the liberal writers on mission. Take the case of a liberal thinker like J.N. Farquhar, the author of The Crown of Hinduism, 1913, who sees Christianity as the crown and fulfilment, as well as 'supplement' of Hinduism. Yet the same author also says, even in regard to Judaism which is near enough to Christianity, that 'when Jesus used the term fulfilment, he did not mean that the Jews, if left to themselves, would have reached his teaching in the ordinary course of evolution, say in a century or more.' See The Relation of Christianity to Hinduism, in International Review of Mission, 1914, vol 3, 427.
epistemologically significant. (c) questioning it with regard to
the absence of any criterion of judgment, and (d) criticising it in
the context of evolutionism, which is by no means inherent to its
structure. None of these arguments or criticism is convincing,
in our opinion.

(3) Kraemer's attitude towards the Barth-Brunner controversy
Since Kraemer stands within the so-called 'neo-orthodox' circles,
it is as well to understand his position is relation to what he
says about the leaders of this group on the subject in hand.
While Kraemer commends Barth for having placed revelation at
the centre of Protestant thought, he feels that he cannot agree with
him in his outright rejection of 'the notions of General Revelation
and Natural Theology, including the point of contact and the rest.'(1)
He appreciates the fact that Barth was fighting the dangerous
teology of the Deutschechristen as he framed his thought on the
question of natural theology.(2) His aversion to the dangers of
synergism and the obscuring of the sola gratia also has done much to
forge his radical attitude. So he 'rightly asserts the discontinuity
of "nature", and "grace" or "reason" with revelation by rejecting
all natural theology.'(3) He wants to 'establish with relentless

(1) Christian Faith, 356.
(2) Christian Faith, 357. It may be better to say that Barth's real
opponent is not so much the Deutschechristen, whom he does not
take seriously as theological opponents. His real concern is
Roman Catholicism and its emphasis on analogia entis.
(3) Christian Message, 120
completeness that human activity or participation is totally nonexistent in the whole story of salvation. (1) But his attempts strike Kraemer as something 'artificial' and 'overdone'. His judgment on religions reflects his rigid attitude. Religion, according to Barth, is 'unbelief', as the great concern of the godless man. (2) His aversion to synergism makes him blind to the question whether 'this whole business of religion (has) anything to do with God, or has God anything to do with it?' (3) In other words, Barth is not prepared to discuss how God works and has worked outside the Biblical sphere of revelation. For this reason Kraemer joins Brunner in his protest against Barth in favour of 'a critical and right kind of natural theology.' (4)

But does Brunner's position satisfy Kraemer's demand for strict Biblical realism? Brunner thinks that we cannot do away with 'natural theology', a phrase which he uses in two senses. The objective sense, which he accepts, refers to the knowledge of God in his creation as can come only to those who are already enlightened by the Christian revelation of him, while the subjective sense, which he rejects, refers to the knowledge of God as might be supposed to be accessible to the heathen or to independent argumentation. But to avoid misunderstanding Brunner is quite prepared to substitute for the phrase such descriptions as 'the Christian doctrine of general revelation or of revelation in nature.' (5) Brunner's idea of 'general revelation' is developed in relation to the dual notion

*(1) Christian Faith, 192
2 Barth, Church Dogmatics, I, 2: 299-300.
3 Christian Faith, 193, see also Christian Message, 120f.
4 Christian Message, 121
of *imago Dei*, viz. the formal and the material, about which we have spoken in detail earlier.\(^1\) Further, the formal image is also taken in the sense of man's *Wortmächzigkeit* (capacity for word) which is also the presupposition of man's responsibility. In virtue of this capacity Brunner speaks of the natural man's knowledge of 'God', the 'law' and 'his own dependence upon God', even though such a knowledge is confused and distorted.\(^2\) Such knowledge of God in creation, including the 'ordinances of creation' known 'through the preserving grace of God', has little saving value. Only the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ saves. And this aspect of Brunner's thought is well criticized by Barth,

> how can Brunner maintain that a real knowledge of the true God, however imperfect it may be (and what knowledge of God is not imperfect?) does not bring salvation? And if we really do know the true God from his creation without Christ and without the Holy Spirit - if this is so, how can it be said that the *imago* is materially 'entirely lost'?\(^3\)

Brunner's dual notion of the *imago* is untenable, according to Barth, because one cannot have the form without matter, and Barth has successfully shown that the form of which Brunner speaks is bound to pass over into matter, however hard Brunner tries to keep them apart.\(^4\)

---

\(^1\) For references to Brunner's 'formal' and 'material' *imago*, see above, 171, 175.

\(^2\) *Natural Theology*, 3lf. Brunner's *Wortmächzigkeit* is interpreted by Barth as *Offenbarungsmächzigkeit*, (capacity for revelation).

\(^3\) *Natural Theology*, 1946, 82.

\(^4\) Barth's contention is that Brunner is not satisfied with stating the formal concept, defining the humanum of the natural man, but rather makes salvation dependent upon this formal addressability, thus attributing to man a positive share in achieving salvation. The material is also read into the formal. See *Natural Theology*, 89. John Baillie who is sympathetic with Brunner concedes nevertheless that Barth has made his case. See *Our Knowledge of God*, 1939, 31.
Kraemer sees Brunner's failure on this point as the result of deviating from the 'logic' proper to Biblical realism, namely the 'dialectical' nature of truth about God and man. Brunner suddenly lapses into 'old categories' and betrayed by his speculation on Wortmächtigkeit. He fought 'his battle as a defence of Natural Theology without making it sufficiently clear that if we go on using this "natural Theology", it must have an entirely different content from the usual one, although he aimed at a Biblical reformation of Natural Theology.'(1)

The course is now set for Kraemer's own re-definition. Two things he must do. (i) Contrary to Barth, he must enquire into the question how God works outside the sphere of Biblical revelation, especially the question whether God has anything to do with the many religions in the world. (ii) Contrary to Brunner, he must see that such an attempt is not rational speculation but in line with the logic of Biblical realism.

(4) General revelation and natural theology - a redefinition

Kraemer agrees with Brunner in speaking of 'general revelation', even though he himself is not altogether happy with the phrase. (2) Like Brunner, by it he refers to God's work of manifestation in nature, history and the conscience of man, but he also emphasizes the fact that they serve to conceal as well as to reveal the majesty and truth of God. (3) It means that we cannot derive clear knowledge

(1) Christian Faith, 348, 356
(2) Christian Faith, 355. Kraemer also notes that Brunner also speaks of 'original revelation', ibid 356.
(3) Christian Faith, 352f.
of God and man from such a 'revelation'. 'General revelation' as revelation must be understood in close relation to the 'special' revelation in Christ. But compared with the latter, it belongs to a 'different order' altogether. Kraemer defines it in these words:

General revelation can henceforth only mean that God shines revealingly through the works of His creation (nature), through the thirst and quest for truth and beauty, through conscience and the thirst and quest for goodness, which throbs in man even in his condition of forlorn sinfulness, because God is continuously occupying Himself and wrestling with man, in all ages and with all people. (1)

What is 'natural theology' then? It is no more an attempt to 'construe preparatory stages and draw unbroken, continuous lines of religious development ending and reaching their summit in Christ,' but an attempt 'to lay bare the dialectical condition not only of the non-Christian religions but of all the human attempts towards apprehension of the totality of existence.' (2) It is dissociated, together with general revelation, from the context of any 'rational or discursive knowing' of God altogether.

Let us turn to his idea of 'general revelation' again. We are told that 'God shines revealingly through' the various media, nature and man. But when we ask what is really 'revealed', we find that it is not 'God' but rather man's quest for 'God' (which is dialectical and ambiguous); it is not even 'goodness' or 'truth' but man's 'thirst' for them. Thus 'general revelation' does not give man any positive or concrete knowledge about 'God', or 'goodness' or 'truth', for that matter. The implication is that outside the

(1) Christian Message, 125
(2) Idem.
Biblical revelation (in Jesus Christ) any references to God or truth are ultimately ambiguous, void of reality. In the non-Christian world, what is considered as light turns out to be darkness, salvation becomes man's self-assertion. Here we are up against an enigma: 'God' is the subject of 'revelation', but in such a 'general' revelation we do not have 'God' revealed. It makes one wonder why it should be 'revelation' at all. It is indeed puzzling if not mockery to say that it is 'God' who 'shines revealingly through' when there is no revelation of 'God'.

At the end of the day, critics of Kraemer may well echo sympathetically the words of Bleeker,

If we take the Christian belief in the love of God seriously, we cannot possibly assume that God would allow the peoples who have not had or still do not have the privilege of living in the light of the gospel to wander for centuries in spiritual darkness with only pious, but powerless aspirations for comfort. This vision of God's plan for salvation conflicts flagrantly with His love as Christians know it from the New Testament.(1)

Before we draw this section to a close, we still need to look at one last issue on the agenda, viz., the antithetical relation between revelation and religion, which more than anything else mirrors the problematical relation between the divine and the human in dialectical theology.

(1) C.J. Bleeker, Christ in Modern Athens, 1966, 119f.
E. The antithesis between revelation and religion

Having discussed rather extensively the meaning of 'revelation' and the working out of the inherent idea of disengagement, we are now in a better position to understand the antithesis between revelation and religion.

Even though Kraemer has criticised Barth for not having gone into the question how God is involved in the religions of mankind, nevertheless his attitude towards religion reflects Barth's influence. This is more obvious in Kraemer's early writings. Religion, he says, echoing Barth, is Unglaube, unbelief. He also refers to the heading of the seventeenth chapter of Barth's Dogmatics: I, 2, Gottes Offenbarung als Aufhebung der Religion. This reference is telling because Kraemer translates Aufhebung in terms of 'dissolution', thus restricting it to only one meaning of the word. (1)

The idea of revelation as the 'dissolution' of religion is certainly suggested in the use of the word, Aufhebung. This negative attitude is clearly expressed when Barth says that revelation 'contradicts', 'displaces' and 'abolishes' religion. (2) But Barth also uses Aufhebung in a positive sense, meaning 'elevation.' (3) In this sense, religion is 'elevated', or rather, 'exalted' in revelation. On the analogy of the justification of the sinner, a religion can even be said to be a 'true religion.' (4) The Incarnation has shown that it is possible for God to take what is human into unity with his Word. Thus the key to the relation between revelation and religion is Christology. Aufhebung in this sense is understood

(1) Authority, 13, 18, 20
(2) Church Dogmatics, I. 2, 297, 299-303
(3) This positive notion runs parallel to the negative one, as is already present in Romans, 1929 where Barth used 'religion' to translate 'law', thus transferring the tension between 'law and gospel' to 'religion and gospel'.
(4) Church Dogmatics, I, 2, (E.T. 1956) 326, 'exalted' (wohl aufgeheben)
in terms of the theologica assumptio carnis of the early fathers.

It is interesting to see that this aspect of Aufhebung is not taken up by Kraemer, despite the fact that since Tambaram he has been trying to inject a positive note into the treatment of religion. We cannot say that Kraemer is ignorant of this aspect of Aufhebung because he makes explicit reference to it in Christian Faith, when he sums up Barth's opinion. The nearest he comes to the idea is when he discusses whether Christianity is an 'absolute' religion, an assumption which he rejects. Instead of turning to the idea of elevation or justification, Kraemer resorts to dialectics, which we have seen when we examine his concept of religious consciousness. Since religion is the concrete embodiment of man's dialectical responses to the working of God, it may be regarded as a mixture of truth and error. Thus we are warned that not everything in non-Christian religions is to be labelled erroneous. But Kraemer is not prepared to say what or which particular elements are 'true'. Indeed, religions, according to Kraemer, are 'in the end paths which man has discovered and has made for himself.' Despite his genuine recognition of God's involvement in all religions, Kraemer still is not prepared to see religion as anything more than man-made paths. As such,

\[1\] Christian Faith, 189
\[2\] Why Christianity, 116. He rejects it because it is not Christianity as a religion but Christ who is 'absolute'. Christianity as a religion is full of errors like other historical religions.
\[3\] See above, 367
\[4\] See above, 208f
\[5\] Why Christianity, 118f
\[6\] In an excellent review of Kraemer's book, the Christian Faith, Bishop Kulandran also came to the conclusion that there is basically no change in the position of Kraemer in regard to his attitude to the non-Christian religions in his later work. See Kraemer, then and now in International Review of Missions, vol. 46, 1957, 175f.
'revelation' is not only denied of them, but also set in antithetica. relation to these human efforts.

Perhaps it is right that Kraemer does not take up Barth's idea of 'true religion', because Barth does not seem to have followed through the analogy of assumptio carnis. (1) Actually Barth does not really think that the Christian religion, though 'justified', purged and sanctified, can be regarded as 'true'. Religion is never true in itself and as such .... If by the concept of a "true religion" we mean truth which belongs to religion itself and as such, ..... no religion is true. (2) So even in the 'true religion', what is 'true' is not the 'religion' but 'Jesus Christ' who chooses to express himself through it. This point is already made familiar to us when we referred to his handling of Yodoism. (3) This understanding of the 'true' in religion necessarily produces a two-level judgment which we find present in both Barth and Kraemer. It ultimately goes back to the problematical relation between the divine and the human which is characteristic of "Theology of Crisis" as a whole.

This problematical divine-human framework is not conducive to a really positive evaluation of religions and their claims of 'truth'. So we see that even though Kraemer deliberately sides with Brunner against Barth, he has not been able to go much beyond Barth's condemnation of 'religion'.

---

(1) Lutheran writers usually charge Barth for failing to maintain a true unity between the divine and the human, even in the Incarnation. See Wingren, Theology of Conflict, 1958, 23-44. J. Aagaard, Revelation and Religion, in Studia Theologica 1959-60, 169ff. The cleavage between 'truth' and 'religion' is thought to reflect the cleavage between the divine and the human, as in Incarnation.

(2) Quoted by Baillie, in Sense of the Presence of God, 1962, 180

(3) See above, 368 n.1
There is yet another puzzling aspect about the dialectical attitude which has not been taken seriously. Since revelation is set in sharp antithesis to religion, we should have thought that the demarcation between revelation and religion is crystal clear. But is it really so? Religion, we are told, is the 'human likeness or face of revelation,' which 'constitutes the human psychological and historical structure,' including the 'human conditions, experience and activities.'

But the point is, if 'revelation' is to be 'revelation' to man, it has to take upon itself this 'human face' in order to be apprehended. This point seems to be conceded when Kraemer says (summarizing Barth's thought), 'The Christian revelation, to which prophets and apostles bear witness in the Bible, appears also under the guise of a "religion", i.e., Christianity.'

Now the enigma is this: revelation must assume the human face to be understood, yet revelation and this human face, religion, are in sharp opposition to one another. One wonders where revelation stops and religion begins. If revelation already includes the human face which is necessary if it is 'revelation' for man, then how can one avoid the conclusion that the 'revelation versus religion' affirmation is not due to a confused linguistic or conceptual error?

Can we really separate revelation and religion so sharply as to play them off against each other? Are we not falsifying one or the other, or both of them by imposing a hypothetically sharp demarcation between them? It is no use dodging the issue by simply referring revelation to the 'events' or 'acts' of Jesus Christ, because we still

(1) Authority, 19 Kraemer summarizing Barth's thought.
(2) Idem.
have to take into consideration the part played by the 'human face' involved in our apprehension.\(1\) The notions of 'events' or 'Jesus Christ' are non-simple notions, as we said earlier. Just because 'revelation' needs to refer to these notions, or to the 'person of Jesus Christ', therefore 'revelation' is a non-simple category.\(2\) The complicated structure of revelation is powerfully stressed by L.S. Thornton whose thesis is concerned with the 'inextricable involvement of every revelation in the particular culture within which it was first given, so that "a supposedly essential core" of religion cannot be isolated from the cultural forms with which it is interwoven.' He even makes the point that it is impossible to distinguish revelation from religion without infringing the 'incarnation principle of the hypostatic union.'\(3\) One may disagree with the more extreme and radical utterances of Thornton, yet one must grant him the credit of bringing the complicated nature of the issue into sharp focus.

Of course, dialectical theologians have every right to use any form of expression they like. But to be responsible in their utterances, they must provide a satisfactory delineation of the demarcation of revelation and religion. As far as Kraemer's works are concerned, this task is not tackled.

\(1\) We have in mind the worship and fellowship of the Christian community which provide the proper context of knowledge, for instance. See also the variables mentioned above, 349f.

\(2\) For the non-simple structure of 'revelation' see above 348ff. Professor McIntyre sees 'revelation' as a 'model' of a second or even third order, see The Shape of Christology, 1966, 166-88, 162ff. James Barr says that for 'Biblical studies, this distinction (between revelation and religion) seems to be unprofitable.' In O.T. such a radical contrast is quite unknown. It is more appropriate to say 'religion comes before revelation and provided concepts within which revelation had meaning.' Old and New in Interpretation, 1966, 99

F. Summary Remarks

In the previous discussion on Kraemer's anthropology we came to the conclusion that Kraemer would not allow the 'natural' man who is in the state of ἐνδικенным any positive and valid knowledge of God except a vague, shadowy awareness of the transcendent. Accompanying this idea is the notion of the antithetical relation between the divine and the human which is the characteristic of dialectical theology. The present discussion is largely a continuation of the previous one, and much attention has been given to the examination of how the idea of discontinuity is worked out in various ways as 'revelation' enters into the realm of the human.

The striking example in his exposition of 'revelation' which reflects his presupposition is found in his dealing with 'general revelation'. He re-interprets 'general revelation' in such a way that it is no longer the source of man's knowledge of God, and his dispute with the logos-doctrine is a step in this direction. We have already pointed out that his emphasis on the 'uniqueness' of revelation is accentuated by the belief in the uniqueness of the salvation offered in Jesus Christ. Now in the case of 'general revelation' we have the feeling that the same thing happens. If Kraemer allows non-Christians a knowledge of God (no matter how imperfect it may be) then the uniqueness of the Christian salvation, i.e., salvation only through Jesus Christ, would be in question. This is so because 'knowledge of God' is necessarily 'saving knowledge,' a point which is well made in Barth's criticism of Brunner which we mentioned earlier. It is therefore not without reason that Kraemer
chides Brunner for having deviated from the logic of Biblical realism. Indirectly we see in Kraemer's treatment of 'general revelation' how the ideas of salvation and revelation interwine.

Kraemer's attempt to disengage 'revelation' from the acts of man may well be interpreted as an attempt to recover the 'non-derivative' and the 'given' so as to overcome the problem of relativism of our time. But the use of the word 'revelation' is unfortunate because 'revelation' must necessarily imply human participation. In other words, 'revelation' can only mean a 'revelation' to man, and must be so recognized if it had any meaning at all. It does not only refer to God's act, but also the knowledge of this act, or rather, the 'right knowledge' made available to man through this divine act. It is therefore not without reason that the word 'revelation' has been criticised as being too 'intellectualist'.

Since 'right knowledge' of God, as Kraemer rightly observes, must necessarily express itself in certain patterns of commitment or behaviour, the 'disengagement' can never be complete. But this human empirical aspect of 'revelation' (the observable, moral pattern of commitment) is not taken seriously enough by Kraemer when he makes a two-level judgment which reduces the reality or truthfulness of similar moral commitments outside Biblical revelation to the shadowy limbo of ultimately misguided and arrogant assertive gestures of man.

There is much in Kraemer's two-level judgment which reminds us of the 'totalitarian' view of religion which was originally used to dislodge the idea of 'points of contact' and fulfilment. 

(1) See Downing's criticism in Has Christianity a Revelation, 1964? 18, 249ff, 264f, also below 491
(2) See above, 187, 363f
(3) See above, 43ff, also below 504, 507
The basic argument is that since a religion is a living unity, all aspects of it must be understood in its 'totality' in the context of its fundamental apprehension. Now in the case of the two-level judgment, we find that Kraemer attempts to see all claims of 'truth' and 'revelation' outside the Biblical realm in the general context of 'self-will', 'self-justification' and self-assertion, a general, dogmatic description of the general condition of man which he has derived from Paul, or rather, his interpretation of Paul. It is not surprising that when the 'sublime' and 'lofty' elements outside Biblical revelation are seen in the 'totality' of man's self-will and self-justification, they take on an 'ultimately erroneous' character. Ultimately the truth of God vouchsafed to man through 'revelation' is disengaged from all human moral and religious aspiration and commitments. It is set over against them, it judges and abolishes them. We are fully aware that Kraemer's position is widely different from Barth's, yet on the matter of Truth and extra-Biblical claims of 'truth' and 'revelation', one wonders whether there is any real difference at all.

Kraemer, unlike Barth, does sincerely try to see how God is involved in non-Christian religions. He is not afraid of raising the question of 'general revelation' and even accepting the idea of 'natural theology'. His idea of God wrestling with man for his salvation is moving. But unfortunately his re-interpretation of 'general revelation' and 'natural theology' has emptied them of positive content, as every trace of positive and valid knowledge
of 'God' is removed from such possibilities. At the end of the day one can safely say that the gap between the divine and the human, between the Truth of God vouchsafed through 'revelation', and the truth as represented in man's moral and religious aspirations outside the realm of Biblical realism, remains unbridged.
III. RICHARD NIEBUHR: CONFESSING THE ONE BEYOND THE MANY
WITH THE MANY

If Toynbee's emphasis can be characterized by 'unity' and
Kraemer's by 'discontinuity,' Niebuhr's emphasis may best be
described as 'conversion' or 'transformation.' Like Toynbee
Niebuhr sees man as a created being engaged in a perennial
encounter with God whom he also calls the 'universal being,' or
the 'principle of being' and who is not beyond the knowledge and
experience of the 'natural' man. Man is never 'godless.' So the
important question for Niebuhr is how the natural man's notion of
God is transformed or converted into the more accurate and less
imperfect notion of God which is given through 'revelation.'
Transformation does not involve only our concept of God, but also
our life, or rather, the ultimate perspective of our life. Such a
transformation is only possible because of 'revelation.' So
attempts must be made to find out what 'revelation' is in Niebuhr's
scheme. Briefly, the first half of this section is devoted to the
question of God and being, how they become one and interchangeable
in Niebuhr's theology. We shall also examine the change in
emphasis in his references to God, and the cultural elements
reflected therein. In the latter half we shall deal with the
complicated notion of 'revelation' and the related problem of the
Trinity. Attention will be given to the roles played by man in the
complex of 'revelation.'
A. **The God of Radical Monotheism**

Under this general heading we shall concentrate on two things. First, we shall examine Niebuhr's approach to the question of the reality of God. In the course of his career, Niebuhr has shifted his emphasis at least twice in regard to his reference to God. We shall look into the reason why he thinks such a shift is necessary. Second, since Niebuhr's language is intensely personal, we shall examine the meaning of the 'personhood' of God in his thought, and the ground for such a personal reference. This task is made the more urgent because of the fact that Niebuhr makes extensive use of the concept of 'being,' especially in his later writings, to designate the object of man's loyalty and confidence. This 'being' is, in his opinion, accessible to reason such as when we enquire into the mystery of being by the power of which we are. It is not immediately obvious that this highly abstract concept of being should take upon itself a personal character. What ground has Niebuhr for his personal reference then? Is such a personal reference determined not so much by the intrinsic character of being itself but rather by his theological method?

(1) **From relational value theory to existentialism**

In our analysis of Niebuhr's thought earlier we have already made some brief references to the value theory adopted by some
Protestant theologians, and its weaknesses and dangers. Yet he still thinks that one's theological position should 'begin where Schleiermacher and Ritschl began for the same reasons that prompted them.' The awareness of the inevitability of historical relativism keeps him away from making any metaphysical or ontic statement about God. Instead, he feels that one can only speak about God as a historical being in all its involvement. It is in actual living, in our concrete life-situations that we are brought face to face with the being by whose power we are. Theology, he says,

considered as a pure science does not have as its object God in isolation ... The God who makes himself known and whom the Church seeks to know is no isolated God. If the attribute of *aseity*, i.e., being by and for itself, is applicable to him at all it is not applicable to him as known by the Church. What is known and knowable in theology is God in relation to self and to neighbour, and self and neighbour in relation to God. This complex of related beings is the object of theology. The main point to note is that one can only speak of God in a relational context. One must speak of God in the context of one's faith relation with him. Thus Niebuhr associates himself with the empirical theology of the nineteenth century which regards faith as a constituent fact in our knowledge of God. Into this faith relation value or valuation enters. It is value which gives the noetic content to faith, and valuation becomes the clue to our knowledge of God. 'The knowledge of God is ... knowledge of a being

(1) See above, 79ff
(2) Revelation, 36
(3) For historical relativism and its effect, see above, 57f
(4) Purpose, 112f
having value of a certain sort. \(^1\) He takes issue with the 'Theology of Crisis' because it rejects the relational value method. The theologians of this school 'leave value-theory wholly out of consideration,' Thus,

They make revelation their starting point, but by dealing with it as though it were a bolt out of the blue and by refusing to relate it to the value cognitions of man, they fail to give an understanding of the process whereby revelation is received. They insist upon the uniqueness of revelation ... but by setting the unique revelation completely apart from other faiths, they fail to show the relation of various faiths to each other and to describe intelligibly how one faith supplants another.\(^2\)

Relational value method, however, is not without problems. The danger lies in talking about our relation with God rather than God. Schleiermacher and Ritschl had already fallen victim,\(^3\) and the same also applies to the noted 'American realists', viz., D.C. Macintosh and H.N. Wieman. Macintosh makes values out of the 'processes the value of which ought to be (or can reasonably be) recognized and appreciated as having positive worth, always, everywhere and for all.' These values are absolute for persons, but it is these which are made the criteria of the divine. Wieman defines God as that structure which not only promotes and maintains but which constitutes value. Though he acknowledges the fact that human interests are not final, instead, it must be brought up into an all-inclusive system, nevertheless, they remain the starting point of the system. God becomes the deity which yields the maximum security and increase of human good.\(^4\)

\(^1\) Value Centre and Theology, in The Nature of Religious Experience, by Bixler, Colhoun and Niebuhr, 1937, 112.
\(^2\) ibid, I11. The context suggests he has dialectical theology in mind.
\(^3\) For references to Schleiermacher and Ritschl, see above, 79-82
\(^4\) Value Centre and Theology, 107f.
The general mistake made by these value theory theologians, according to Niebuhr, is that they subordinate the question of the priority of God to that of value. Values gained from non-religious experience are employed as the absolute criteria of theological thinking. To extricate value theology from this mistake it is necessary to abandon such an approach 'from values known as absolute prior to the experience of God.'

The clue to the possible solution of the problem, in Niebuhr's opinion, lies in the proper recognition of the nature of value — how values arise. In his attempt to state its true nature, Niebuhr wants to avoid two extremes. On the one hand value has been approached from an objective viewpoint. Thus Hartmann attempts to define value abstractly as essence, as that which ought-to-be without dependence on the existent, and Moore seeks to indicate the meaning of value in abstraction from every relation. When applied in theology, this would mean that man apart from his relation to God already knows what absolute value is, and God is called in to give support to it. On the other hand there are writers like Hume, Schlick and Ayer who approach value from the angle of subjectivism. Hume regards value as a function of feeling, and Schlick thinks that 'value' is nothing more than a name for the dormant pleasure possibilities of the value object, while Ayer dismisses 'value' or 'good' as nothing but the expression of emotion.

(1) Value Centre and Theology, 110, also 112, 113
(2) G. Shrader rightly points out that 'it is not the meaning of value, but the ground of value, the conditions under which it occurs and the justifications for employing it as a predicate of any specific situation or experience' that really interests Niebuhr, See Faith and Ethics, ed. Ramsey, 1957, 175.
(3) References to Hume, Schlick and Ayer are taken from Radical Monotheism, 101f.
the values associated with him will be nothing more than the projection of what is purely human.

Niebuhr's own position can be described as 'objective relativism' or, better still, 'relational objectivism,' in order to avoid the loaded word 'relativism.' According to this position, value and being are inseparably connected. But value cannot be identified with a certain mode of being or any being considered in isolation. Value is present whenever being confronts being, wherever there is becoming in the midst of plural, interdependent and interacting existences. In other words, value is the good-for-ness of being for being in their reciporcity, their animosity, and their mutual aid. Value is not to be identified with the relations between being, but arises 'in the relations of being to being.' The intention of Niebuhr is to give being the priority over value. Being has independent existing, not value. Value exists only in relation to the valuing self and its object. In this sense he differs from the objectivist who tends to abstract value from its relations, as though it can exist in isolation. He also draws the line between himself and the subjectivist when he says that value is objective 'in the sense that the value relations are understood to be independent of the feelings of an observer but not in the sense that value is an objective kind of reality.'

With this 'relational' understanding of value Niebuhr seeks to correct the mistake made by the empirical theologians whom he has

(1) Niebuhr himself uses the latter phrase in his later writings, see for instance, 'The Centre of Value' in Radical Monotheism, Ramsay his interpreter also favours 'relational objectivism', see Faith and Ethics, 142, 152.
(2) Radical Monotheism, 107
(3) ibid, 102.
criticised. Now man can no longer affirm of God any value taken from non-religious experience, prior to 'man's experience of faith in him.' Instead, the value proper to God, or in Niebuhr's words, the 'value of deity,' becomes contingent upon and established only within the divine-human relationship. This value is independent of us because it is 'quite independent of human desire and the consciousness of need.' Yet it is not unrelated to us because it is 'not independent of the human constitution and its actual need.'(1)

Niebuhr thinks that his theory is an improvement on the method used by the empiricists because now he interprets value in relation not just to desire but to 'structure', 'organic needs' and basic 'human constitution,' besides restricting such value strictly within the divine-human relation. Now the important question the religious man asks is not whether God exists, but 'what being or beings have the value of deity.' This question can be phrased differently, 'what among the available realities has the value of deity or has the potency of deity?' Or again, 'which reality has those characteristics which are the foundation of the value of deity, or which fulfil the human need for God?' The underlying conviction is that the being who can be regarded as God must be the being who has for the worshippers 'the value of deity not as a separate quality but by virtue of those characteristics which enable it to fulfil the need for deity.'(2)

This need for deity, or 'religious need,' is further characterized as 'the need for that which makes life worth living, which bestows meaning on life by revealing itself as the final source of life's being and value.'(3)

(1) Value Theory and Theology, 113
(2) ibid, 114
(3) ibid, 115
However, it is difficult to see how Niebuhr's method is in any sense really better than that of the theological empiricists. He has criticised them for having allowed values known prior to the experience of God to determine their references to God, but is he not doing the same thing, only in a slightly different form, when he speaks of the inherent 'human need for God'? It seems that such need has already in some way determined how the fulfilment should be, and God is brought in as some sort of a 'necessary postulate.' He is there to make sure that life is worth living and meaningful. This is also the criticism made by one of Niebuhr's critics.

If the perfections of God are known to us by virtue of their fulfilment of 'the human need for God,' then do we not assimilate our knowledge of God to certain prior, independent 'felt needs', i.e., values, even if they are never hypostatized. (1)

There is perhaps another way one can interpret Niebuhr's thought on human need and value which seems to by-pass much of the difficulty. Accordingly, the need is contingent upon and hence to be understood only through criteria established within the framework of the divine-human relation. In other words, the need is known when the 'value of deity' which fulfils it is realized. Thus the charge of having pre-conceived need determining the value-relation between God and man does not apply. But this interpretation of Niebuhr does not tally with what he really says. According to this interpretation, the need of deity is only known when the deity value is realized, and before that it is not known. This, however, is not what Niebuhr has in mind when he asks the question. 'Which reality has those characteristics which ... fulfil the human need?

(1) Hans Frei, in Faith and Ethics, ed. Ramsey, 1957, 72
for God?' This question obviously presupposes the possibility of knowing the human need for deity before the deity value is realized. Thus we cannot acquit Niebuhr of the charge that he has allowed some concept of value to determine the value of deity.

The main criticism which any value theology has yet to answer is that it fails to do justice to the concrete reality of the being of God. If one begins with values, or human need, it is doubtful whether one can grasp the majesty of God's being, and not only the value-quality of God in the process of knowledge. When God confronts man, he gives himself to man. Therefore the emphasis concerning such a confrontation is on the being of God, even though knowledge about him is not neglected. But as it is, the chief concern in value theology lies in value or valuation. It may indicate with some force that there is a supreme value that allows the importation of no prior value into the divine-human relation, but, as Frei points out correctly, 'it is doubtful that by itself the valuational method can express the meaning of confrontation by him who is the Lord of all being and not only the Creator and Guarantor of values, human or otherwise.'(1) True enough, God as God has the 'value of deity' for man, but he is more than any value man can affirm of him. Value is dependent on being, and as such, can never exhaust, nor represent adequately enough the fullness of being.

Niebuhr must have come to believe more and more that relational value method is just inadequate. Since Value-Theory and Theology he has shifted his emphasis. Instead of concentrating on value or

(1) Faith and Ethics, ed. Ramsey, 1957, 77
human need for deity, he talks about the being of God and the irreducible self which is given in the divine-human encounter. As a theological method he utilizes the insight of modern existentialism, the operation of which in relation to his anthropology has already been referred to in the previous study. (1) The change is already obvious in Revelation (1941) in which 'internal history' where revelation is supposed to have occurred is handled after the fashion of existentialism. (2) At the same time the idea of conversion or transformation is also taking shape. While relational value theory has no place for values prior to the actual confrontation in faith between man and his God, the idea of transformation, on the other hand, suggests that such prior values which man brings to the confrontation may well play a positive role in it. Such transformation is possible because something radically new has happened in our history, and the events associated with it is 'revelation.' In his later writings, notably in Radical Monotheism, it is the idea of transformation rather than relational value theory that is emphasised in the discussion on man's knowledge of God.

The insight of relational value theory, however, is not abandoned altogether. Throughout his career he is convinced that God can be known only in his relation to man. Thus even when he concentrates on the question of being, his interest lies not so much in being-itself as such, but in being as it is related to us. He comes very near to metaphysical language, yet he keeps away from it. In the following we shall examine his reference to God as being, and the question of the 'personal' or 'personhood' of God.

(1) See, for example, above, 235ff for instance
(2) For Niebuhr's view on 'internal history', see above, 63ff
(2) **God as being and the question of personhood**

While the value-theorist is always in danger of concentrating on value to the neglect of being, the existentialist, on the other hand, must point directly to being *qua* being in the relation of one being to another, and not simply to the value involved. The existentialist approach has significant implications for Niebuhr's reference to God. When Niebuhr subjects the human situations as well as the mystery of the self's being to critical analysis he comes to see that man as a created being is perennially confronted by the universal, divine being before whom he must make his decision and render the proper response. **Radical monotheism is the form of human faith** which points man to this being which is the ground and object of his confidence and loyalty. The confidence is the confidence that 'Being is God, or better, that the principle of being, the source of all things and the power by which they exist, is good, as good for them and good to them.'

This quotation is interesting because here we see a marriage between the existentialist and the value-theory methods. Man is up against being which confronts him, but Niebuhr is not so much concerned with being in itself as it is in relation to man, how it impinges itself on man. For the moment we shall not go into detail how he comes to the conclusion that being is good, but concentrate on the question of being which he identifies with God — how such an identification comes about, and how being is conceived and spoken of.

---

(1) *Radical Monotheism*, 38
The awesome power of being

One can look at the mystery of being in two different ways, viz., from a location apart from revelation and from a location within revelation. In other words, one can speak of it from the viewpoint of the natural man, or from that of the Christian.

From the viewpoint of the natural man, the phenomena of passing and becoming in the world may indicate that 'reality' which stands for the 'nature of things' is nothing but the 'void of meaninglessness'. Our values, causes and loyalties, ideals and hopes all doomed to pass away, and 'on us and all our race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark.' But this 'void' which Niebuhr speaks about is not just 'emptiness' or 'nothingness.' It is vaguely substantial, being the ground 'out of which everything comes and to which everything returns.' It is also called the 'source of all things and the end of all,' 'the great abyss into which all things plunge and ... the great source whence they come.'

Since it is the source of all things, it is also the source of creativity. This understanding of the 'void' brings him very near to the speculation of German mysticism as represented by Jacob Boehme and Eckhart. Boehme is convinced that behind all created beings, and even behind the first positive determination of being there stands something quite indeterminate, which he calls Das Nichts. This formless entity he regards not as the ground of being, but only the Ungrund, a bottomlessness beyond the Grund which is also called the Abyss. This Ungrund is not just 'nothingness', but contains a 'will' towards being something. From it there emerges a Grund, 'the unfathomable

(1) Radical Monotheism, 122f
will has brought itself into a Ground'. So at least to this extent, it can be said to be creative. It is not certain whether Boehme read Eckhart, but the latter did talk about a Grund and an Abgrund, together with metaphors of darkness and 'nothingness'. In modern philosophical theology this trend of thought finds its way into the writings of Berdyaev and Tillich. Berdyaev calls the formless entity of Boehme 'a dark void which precedes all positive determination of being.' This is, to him, the 'meonic freedom,' a sort of 'nothingness' which is also a source of creativity. (1)

In Tillich's theology, Boehme's Nichts is echoed in the concept of 'nonbeing'. As a concept, non-being is included in being, though it perverts and resists being. 'Being embraces itself and nonbeing', says Tillich, 'Being has nonbeing "within" itself as that which is ... eternally overcome in the process of the divine life.' (2)

Concerning being he also says, 'Being is inseparable from .... the structure that makes it what it is.' This 'structure' is in turn described as 'the power of being conquering nonbeing.' So his reader is taken back to the familiar Grund and the Ungrund. When Tillich speaks of God's transcendence he also refers to nonbeing more along the idea of the Ungrund or meonic freedom which is infinite and potential. This, in the opinion of Professor Emmet, seems to be what he is referring to in The Courage To Be when he speaks of the God beyond the God of theism. (3)

(2) Tillich, The Courage To Be, 34. See also A.J. McKelway, The Systematic Theology of Paul Tillich, 110f
(3) D. Emmet, The Ground of Being, 287, 288. Also notice that Tillich's nonbeing is ὄντος, to be distinguished from ὀντὸς. For a difference in meaning see McKelway, ibid, 111.
It is true that Niebuhr does use words like 'abyss' and 'void', but we must notice that they are not used in the way these writers use them. The general tendency in the mystical tradition is to regard 'void' or 'abyss' as some kind of 'Ungrund' beyond being, or as in the case of Tillich, in opposition to being. So metaphysical speculations become necessary to determine their relation to one another in the structure of being. But when Niebuhr refers to 'void' or 'abyss', he does not have it in mind that it is something that is more primordial than being in the sense of the bottomless 'Ungrund', or 'meonic freedom.' 'Void' is used interchangeably with words like 'reality', 'the great abyss', 'the last being', 'being' and the 'slayer of all', without any attempt to delineate their ontological and structural relationship. He can do this because his interest does not lie in their metaphysical aspect. The 'void' is the 'slayer' because man comes to experience it in his own life-situation in which his hopes and values are thwarted and his own being threatened. This 'reality' stands before him as the 'last being' and the 'last power'.(1) In short, man comes to such a conclusion about reality not through metaphysical speculation into the ontological structure of things but through actual living in his historical situation. This concrete, non-speculative use of these words marks the difference between Niebuhr and the writers associated in one way or another with speculative German mysticism. This rather dark picture of reality is, in Niebuhr's opinion, what the natural man is up against when he enquires into the mystery of

(1) Radical Monotheism, 123
being. He finds that he is confronted by being which negates him and all his efforts. (1)

However, the reference to 'being' and 'reality' involves Niebuhr in the problem of making a distinction between the being of the enquirer and the all-inclusive being or 'being itself.' If the distinction is not clearly defined, then there will be no 'confrontation' or 'encounter', for encounter presupposes the confrontation of two clearly distinguished entities. Unless he can maintain a clear distinction he will fall under the criticism which Kraemer makes of Tillich, viz., that Tillich fails to distinguish between the being of man and that of God. (2) In fact, there are times when Niebuhr's utterances come very close to the Tillichian, Idealistic tradition, as for example when he says,

And now I came to understand that unless being itself, the constitution of things, the One beyond the many, the ground of my being and of all beings, the ground of its 'thatness', was trustworthy .... could be counted on by what had proceeded from it .... I had no God at all. (3)

The difficulty is how to differentiate 'my being' from the 'ground' which is also 'being-itself.' It is obvious that Niebuhr is also aware of the problem involved, because he lays emphasis on the universal being as the 'One beyond the many,' in order to distinguish it from the many. Moreover, when being is identified with God, the idea of creation also comes in to buttress the distinction. The universal being is the One beyond all beings because he is the Creator of all that is. (4)

(1) Niebuhr, however, does not rule out the possibility that man outside the Christian faith may also come to an understanding and a response to being similar to that of the Christian's. His description of the natural man's vision of being as the hostile, awesome power is therefore not absolute. Here once again we see the 'confessional' standpoint shining through. See Responsible Self, 172,177, especially 178, Also How My Mind Has Changed, 73.

(2) See above, 338

(3) How My Mind Has Changed, 72

(4) See below, 426
(b) The identification of being with God

The dark picture of reality, or being, however, is not normative in Niebuhr's understanding of the mystery of being. He also looks at it from the point of view of the Christian. From the Christian standpoint, the being of which man through the analysis of his existential situation is made aware becomes identified with God. How does such identification come about? The answer is that such an identification is a truth given in revelation. This is what Niebuhr wants to suggest when he quotes at length from the Catholic scholar, Professor E. Gilson:

In order to know what God is, Moses turns to God. He asks his name, and straightway comes the answer: Ego sum qui sum, Ait: sic dices filius Israel: qui est misit me ad vos (Exodus III.14) No hint of metaphysics, but God speaks, causa finita est, and Exodus lays down the principle from which henceforth the whole of Christian philosophy will be suspended. From this moment it is understood once and for all that the proper name of God is Being and that ..... this name denotes his very essence.(1)

The concept of being in itself may not have made much impact on man. But now being is identified with the living God who declares himself to Moses, as reported in the story of the 'burning bush,' 'I am God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Issac, and the God of Jacob ..... I have seen the affliction of my people ..... and I have come down to deliver them.' (Exodus 3.7) It is this

---

(1) E. Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, 51, see Radical Monotheism, 42. We should also notice that Niebuhr is not unaware of the ambiguity and uncertainty involved in the interpretation of the 'I am' statement, even the figure of Moses. But such uncertainty does not seem to worry him much. If the principle of radical monotheism - the disclosure of God as being - was not reached in the time of Moses, at least, in his opinion, it was so in the time of Second Isaiah. See Radical Monotheism, 43 n3
identification together with the challenge to Moses to take up God's cause (Exodus 3.14f) which, according to Niebuhr, makes an event 'revelation.' In so far as the story of the 'burning bush' is 'revelatory', three things are involved: (a) God is nothing less than being; (b) being is God, namely, valuer and saviour; (c) Moses is challenged to choose God's cause as his own. These elements form a sort of pattern which is called 'revelation', and Niebuhr thinks that when the Old Testament prophets speak of 'revelation' that came to them, these notes are inevitably present. This pattern is important for us to understand his thought, because here he makes it clear that 'revelation' refers not only to certain knowledge about God, not even the knowledge that God is being, but also to the responsive action. 'Revelation' can legitimately be used when such action of the self who claims to have been exposed to it is elicited. This is why Niebuhr finds it hard to regard dogmatic statements, or 'events' in the past, as 'revelatory' by themselves. We shall examine his 'existentialist' view of revelation in more detail later. Meanwhile we need to notice that Niebuhr's reference to being (the normative reference) is inseparable from his reference to God. This means that when being is mentioned, God is meant, or referred to simultaneously. In other words, there is a tendency here to regard the knowledge of the living God, the Creator and Redeemer, as the content of the abstract being or being itself, even though many theologians of the more 'conservative' predeliction would question Niebuhr's rendering of the Christian view of God. This fusion of the conceptions of God and being is clearly expressed in these words:

(1) Radical Monotheism, 43
there is but one God and this God is Being...
and the One God who is Being is an 'I', or like an 'I',
who is faithful as only selves are faithful.\(^1\)
If, following Professor Gilson, we say that 'from the
moment it is understood once and for all that the
proper name of God is Being,' we ought to follow it
with the observation that from this moment it is also
acknowledged once and for all that the principle of
Being is the First Person.\(^2\)

Thus the abstract concept of 'being' takes on a 'personal'
character. This is obvious when Niebuhr refers to the 'power' of
being, or of the 'One', which acts upon man through the many actions
he encounters in his life, calling forth his confidence and loyalty
in being. The crisis of human life is therefore a decision in the
form of a 'trust or distrust in being itself,' and 'trust or
distrust of being, or better, of the power by which I am and we are,
is a highly personal response.'\(^3\) This fusion also explains,
besides his relational outlook, why he keeps away from metaphysical
speculation about being so characteristic of Idealistic philosophy.

The calling into service of 'revelation' in the identification
of being with God has certain advantages for Niebuhr. First, in
regard to the problem of setting the difference between the being of
God and the being of man, now there is a better possibility of
making a good case. The God who reveals himself, as witnessed in
the scriptures, is also the Creator. He is certainly being itself,
but he is also the Creator of our being and all beings in the
order of creation. The idea of God as creator gains importance in the
thought of Niebuhr since the writings of Revelation, in which a
Trinitarian scheme is already materializing.\(^4\) Speaking, for

\(^1\) Radical Monotheism, 45
\(^2\) Radical Monotheism, 44.
\(^3\) Responsible Self, 118-120
\(^4\) In this connection Niebuhr's article on The Doctrine of the Trinity
and the Unity of the Church is also important, see Theology today,
1946/7, 371-84. Also see below, 469ff.
example, in *Christ and Culture*, of the God to whom Jesus Christ points, he says,

> As Son of God he points away .... from all that is conditioned to the Unconditioned. He does not direct attention away from this world to another; but from all worlds, present and future, material and spiritual, to the One who creates all worlds, who is the Other of all worlds.(1)

In *Responsible Self* where the emphasis on God as being and the One is much stronger than the two books just mentioned, the idea of being as the One who is the creator of Man's being is expressed in the phrase, 'the radical power by which I am.'(2) This power is also the principle of creativity. Now when the problematical 'being' or 'being itself' is identified and also interpreted in terms of God the Creator of all beings, a truth given in 'revelation', the 'qualitative difference' between the being of God and the being of man can be maintained. In short, it is through 'revelation' that the idea of creation is brought in to safeguard the difference between God the infinite and universal being and man the finite being.

The other advantage of falling back on revelation in his identification of God with being is that Niebuhr now can refer to 'being' in personal terms. It is no more the abstract, unattractive concept of ontology but a dynamic, personal power with whom man can enter into fellowship, and whose cause one can share.(3) Being is personal because God, with whom it is identified, is personal. But this identification also raises some difficult points, to which we now turn.

---

(1) *Christ and Culture*, 28  
(2) See above, 235ff  
(3) See *Radical Monotheism*, 33. *Responsible Self*, 126
(c) The question of the 'personal' in Niebuhr's reference to God or being

The argument that being is personal because God is personal holds only for those who do not question the truth that 'God is personal.' But the question can still arise, how can one be so sure that God is personal? The possible answer may be this, that he is personal is a fact which coincides with revelation through which we have knowledge of him. Revelation is one being disclosing itself to the other, a 'dialogue' between the two cast in a personal mode. (1)

But is it really necessary that revelation and the concept of God in terms of the 'personal' go inseparably together? One would naturally at this point think of Tillich who falls heavily on revelation, recognizing that fullness of revelation can only be possible in the life of a person, yet whose view of God is nevertheless beyond the personal. So revelation and the 'personal God' does not necessarily go together. On what ground then does Niebuhr conceive God, or, for that matter, 'being' which is identified with God, as irreducibly 'personal'?

To understand Niebuhr on this issue, it is important to go back to his method of approach to the question of revelation, through which the normative notion of God or being is known. It is also at this point we see the major difference between Niebuhr and Tillich. Tillich soars above the categories of the personal and the impersonal, whilst Niebuhr regards the 'personal' as the ultimate category of reference.

(1) The emphasis of the 'personal' in revelation is well brought out by such writers as H.H. Farmer, The World and God, 1935, 85-88; William Temple, Nature, Man and God, 1934, 319
According to Niebuhr, revelation, as we have seen before, is to be located in the realm of 'internal history' to be interpreted in the existentialist fashion. Here the influence of Kierkegaard is obvious. Like Kierkegaard, Niebuhr also emphasizes the untranscendable relation between subject and subject, between self and other. So God who confronts man in the process of revelation becomes the 'irreducible self', the concrete 'Other,' the ultimate 'One' beyond the many. The notion of the 'person' is used to depict the ultimate 'One' because in revelation one deals with 'persons'. This is expressed by Niebuhr in an important passage in Revelation.

The most important fact about the whole approach to revelation to which we are committed by the acceptance of our existential situation, of the point of view of faith living in history, is that we must think and speak in terms of persons. In our history we deal with selves, not with concepts. Our universals here are not eternal objects ingredient in events but eternal persons active in particular occasions; our axioms in this participating knowledge are .... certainties about fundamental, indestructible relations between persons. We need, therefore, to put our question in the following form, 'What persons do we meet in the revelatory event and what convictions about personal relations become our established principles in its presence?'

Just because revelation deals with persons, so the disclosure of God would also mean the disclosure of the 'infinite person.' 'Revelation', says Niebuhr, is the 'self-disclosure' of the 'infinite person,' to be realized through faith in terms of personal commitment.

Let us briefly retrace Niebuhr's thought. Being is 'personal', as the 'first Person,' because God who is identified with being is

(1) See above, 65
(2) Revelation, 143. Italics mine.
(3) Revelation, 154. See also 175, 176.
'personal'. God is 'personal' because revelation through which we come to know God is a personal mode of communication in which God declares himself to man. This mode of communication is to be found only in 'internal history' which deals solely with personal categories. This line of reason presents some difficulty which Niebuhr does not seem to have faced squarely. Since revelation is to be found only in 'internal history' interpreted in the existentialist fashion, does it not mean that the question of the 'personal' eventually is determined by the method employed? It is indeed difficult to see how Niebuhr can clear himself of this charge. In this case our situation, viz., a situation in which we cannot help thinking in terms of persons, or the personal, (as required by the existentialist approach) prescribes the nature of revelation, and subsequently, the character of God as he is known to man. This is as far as his relational, existentialist method would go in regard to man's knowledge of God. One cannot help feeling that in the background, as Frei points out, there still hovers the questions, 'even if God, because of the exigency of our situation, discloses himself as person and can only be known as person, what right have we to assume that he really is, in his inmost being, person?'(1)

The implication is that in his innermost being, he may be other than personal, a point which Tillich or Toynbee would have readily accepted. There is evidence which seems to indicate that Niebuhr is not unaware of this possibility, as descriptions of the deity in

(1) Frei, in Faith and Ethics, 1957, 86.
terms of 'abyss' and the 'great X' seem to point to this direction. But limited by his own existentialist, relational method Niebuhr is not prepared to elaborate on the question of God's aseity.

So far we have been making reference to phrases like 'the personal God', the 'person' or 'personhood' of God, without enquiring into how they function in the context of Niebuhr's thought. We must now make up for this deficiency.

The words 'person' and 'self' are used interchangeably in Niebuhr's writings. For instance, he says, 'The most important fact about the whole approach to revelation ... is that we must think and speak in terms of persons.' This is immediately followed by a reference to 'selves', 'In our history, we deal with selves ...'(1) So a 'person' or a 'self' is that irreducible entity which confronts me, who enters into a dialogue with me and to whom I refer to as 'thou.'(2) How then is the divine 'Thou' understood?

For the Christian who sees in Jesus an ontic relation with God, it is not difficult to understand the statement that God is personal, because Jesus Christ is a concrete, historical figure in whom dwells the fullness of the Father's glory. In traditional Christian thought, the divine personality is understood as triune, in which the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit constitute a communal whole. There is communication within the Godhead, and the idea of communication is taken later to be the determining characteristic of what 'person' or 'personality' is. In other words, God is first a 'personality' in himself, as Webb reminds us, before he is

---

(1) See the long quotation, above, 428
(2) See Responsible Self, 78ff
conceived as a 'personal God' in his relation to us.\(^{(1)}\)

It is, however, different with Niebuhr. The awareness of man's historicity leads him to a non-metaphysical position in which the notion of 'Jesus Christ' is devoid of the structural ontic relation with God which is common in traditional Christology. The consequence is that he is not committed to spelling out the plurality in the ontic structure within the Godhead. Indeed, from his relational standpoint, this speculation is futile, because the Godhead itself is unknown to us. As a result, the notion of the 'personal' aspect of God is reduced to his relation to us, to the possibility of 'communication' and 'confrontation' and 'meeting'.

He is the God who confronts us as the One, as the Other, to whom we must respond and to whom we can say, 'Thou art my God.'\(^{(2)}\) In this respect Niebuhr differs from theologians who ground 'personality of God' in 'personality in God.'\(^{(3)}\) To Niebuhr, God is a 'personal God' because he is the objective Other over against us. God's person is in actual fact defined in terms of his positive relation with his creature.

Can one however say anything more concrete about God's 'person' than the vague and elusive 'confrontation' or 'meeting' of the 'Other'? Obviously Niebuhr wants to say more in order to give 'person' a more tangible content. In revelation God, he says, is the person who meets us as 'our knower, our author, our judge and our only saviour.'\(^{(4)}\) These are the roles which the divine 'person'

\(^{(1)}\) God and Personality, 21. Notice that Webb also includes the idea of incommunicability in the idea of 'personality', ibid 55. It means 'concrete individuality' and does not mean incapable of communication, see Appendix below, 608. The idea of 'personal God' or 'personality' in modern use, Webb points out, refer mainly to the capability of 'personal relation' in terms of love and trust. This idea of 'personality' coincides with Niebuhr's idea of 'person.'

\(^{(2)}\) Revelation, 154

\(^{(3)}\) See the reference to Barth, below, 436f

\(^{(4)}\) Revelation, 152
plays when he confronts man. But the concreteness of these roles can be brought out only by reference to historical events or personality in and through which they are known. Thus for example, to say that this 'personal God' is our 'saviour' one has to point to the historical events associated with the figure Jesus Christ in and through whom the 'slayer' comes to be known as the 'life-giver.' (1) The historical figure Jesus Christ has to be brought into our reference to God if he is in any way 'normative' for the Christian discourse on God. This Niebuhr would not dispute, because he accepts in faith that Jesus Christ is the adequate 'image' given to men to help them understand God as well as human destiny, about which we shall say more later when we examine the idea of 'revelation.' Now Niebuhr is faced with a dilemma. The 'person' of Jesus is, he must admit, our sure clue to the 'person' of God. Yet, having accepted this as necessary, how can one avoid being anthropomorphic, ascribing to God what is proper to the human personality? To avoid this danger Niebuhr on the one hand emphasizes that when we speak of the 'person' who confronts us in revelation is not 'the person of Jesus' or 'human personality'. Instead, revelation refers to something 'more fundamental and more certain than Jesus or than self.' It refers to God. (2) This theocentric emphasis has the effect of making the revelation of God as God disclosing himself in what he did to Jesus rather than what Jesus did in his own person. In the case of God's goodness, for instance, God's goodness is revealed in what he does to Jesus, about which we shall say more. (3) On the

(1) Radical Monotheism, 124f, also see below, 462, 468
(2) Revelation, 147, 152
(3) See below, 465f
other hand, Niebuhr tries to give a negative description of our knowledge of God's role as 'person'. In this case it is not so much a concrete apprehension of God's person but rather a negative knowledge of ourselves as being known, being apprehended and being judged. Thus to speak of the revelation of the 'personal' God as our 'knower' means that we refer to 'the moment in our history through which we know ourselves to be known from the beginning to the end, in which we are apprehended by the knower.' (1) When man is confronted by this 'Other' and attempts to evaluate him, he finds that he is being valued and judged instead. (2) This negative description of our knowledge of God's 'person' does avoid the possible charge of anthropomorphism, but only at the expense of depriving the concept of any concrete content. This would also mean that Niebuhr cannot provide any positive indication about the process of the reception of revelation, a criticism which he had earlier made against dialectical theology. (3) This negative description is only found in Revelation. But the other trend of his thought, characterized by a reluctance to see the 'person' of Jesus as revealing the 'person' of God, remains throughout his career. It affects Niebuhr's understanding of the role Jesus plays in 'revelation'. We shall return to this point when we examine what Niebuhr means when he refers to Jesus as the focus of transformation of the natural man's knowledge of God, and how far he is successful in avoiding anthropomorphism.

(1) Revelation, 152, 153.
(2) Value Theory and Theology, 115
(3) See above, 411
In order to sharpen our understanding of Niebuhr's thought on being and its related problems, it may help if we locate his position in relation to those of Tillich, Barth and Edwards. This comparative study also serves as an appropriate conclusion to the whole of sub-section A.\(^{(1)}\). We refer to Barth and Edwards because Niebuhr himself has mentioned these two writers as having influenced him in the development of his thought.\(^{(1)}\) Tillich also comes into the picture because, as we have already seen, the language of being he uses is similar to that used by Niebuhr.

\(\text{(d) Niebuhr compared with Tillich, Barth and Edwards}\)

For Tillich, being-itself when used in reference to God becomes the only direct, non-symbolic reference we can make about God. 'God is being-itself.' God has being, God is being, but he is not a being. He is the ground of being and therefore cannot be placed in a category with other beings. 'As being-itself God is beyond the contrast of essential and existential being.'\(^{(2)}\) As such, he is also beyond selfhood and personhood. 'God cannot be called a self because the concept "self" implies separation from and contrast to everything which is not self.'\(^{(3)}\) This is obvious, because if

\(^{(1)}\) Revelation, x, How My Mind Has Changed, 1961, 70ff
\(^{(3)}\) Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 1951, 270.
God is the ground which by definition is beyond the subject-object distinction, he must also be beyond the category of the personal. (1) This attempt to transcend the subject-object structure and distinction lands Tillich in a type of monistic view of God which, according to Hamilton, is difficult to be distinguished from Pantheism. (2)

It seems that there is a type of dualism in Tillich's thought, viz., the dualism of being and non-being. Being-itself is always threatened by non-being. But in fact this dualism is not real, for, as McKelway points out in his summary of Tillich's thought, 'while non-being stands over-against being, it is a part of being, it is a part of being-itself. Non-being does not stand alongside of being-itself, for in God non-being is continually overcome by his power of being.' (3) God transcends not only structure and distinction, but also the duality of being and non-being.

While Niebuhr agrees that God can be described in terms of being-itself, he nevertheless would say that such a statement as 'God is being-itself' taken in its non-symbolic (proper) sense is beyond the capacity of man to make, man who is conditioned by his relative, historical existence. Since in theology man can only make assertions from the relational point of view, it would be doubtful if the notion of being beyond the contrast of essence and existence could have any positive and concrete content at all. Further, Niebuhr's existentialist, rational predilection would not allow him to surrender the irreducible duality of the self and the

(1) Systematic Theology, I, 1951, 172.
Other in his reference to God or being. In other words, the structure of the self and the Other in the human-divine encounter is untranscendable. Such a relational notion of being tends to make God a being rather than the vague and Idealistic 'being-itself' of Tillich. Yet this being ('the universal being; 'the infinite being') is not the One among the many, but the One beyond the many in Niebuhr's scheme. It is also the 'ground' of all beings, inasmuch as they are created and sustained by its power.

In contrast to the seeming dualism of being and non-being in Tillich, Niebuhr's dualism in the form of the self-Other structure is real and untranscendable. It is the 'confrontation' of this irreducible 'Other' which provides for Niebuhr the primary meaning of the 'personhood' of God.

Karl Barth, from a very different point of view, also speaks of being in his reference to God, but he keeps away from philosophical speculation altogether. The being of God is known to us through the being-in-act who defines all being and value, rather than being defined, comprehended and included in the general concept of being. Again, this being-in-act who is revealed is no general notion of personhood but a particular person who defines for us the meaning of all personhood, and whose identity is that he is the one God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The priority of this particular person, God, must be affirmed in all our theological endeavour. Only when this is done can we speak of his relation to other realities. The ground of such relation lies in an analogy of relation: God as he is first of all related internally to himself, relates himself then as the same One to us. The personhood (or personality) of God is
defined by and in himself, and man is person only in a derived sense. The triune God in his revelation has shown us that he is the Creator, and he alone is properly 'person', and we cannot get behind this Triune God for any notion of being, value or personhood. The possibility of knowing the being of God and his person is grounded in the identity of God with himself when he is God for us - the identity of God's immanent Triune being with that being as it is revealed to us in the incarnation of the Son of God. He who becomes God for us is none other than God himself. The question of the being and personhood of God is therefore given a strictly Christological basis.

Barth's notion of God's being, like Tillich's statement, 'God is being-itself,' is proper because it is completely identical with the particular act which God is in that he is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But this approach to the question of God is unacceptable to Niebuhr, even though he is quick to acknowledge his indebtedness to Barth's insight on other matters such as the sovereignty and grace of God. In Niebuhr's opinion, statements about God's being in the proper sense are not for man to make. Such statements only represent man's vain attempt to penetrate the divine mystery of God's being which is beyond man's capacity. Further, to speak of God's being in terms of the historical Incarnation is nothing other than anthropomorphism. It also smacks of 'Christomonism'. His resistance to this Barthian emphasis is evident behind these words written upon reflection of his own theological career. 'I must include my rejection of the tendency

(1) For discussion on Barth, see Frei in Faith and Ethics, 1957, 101-104, and quotations of Barth therein.
in much post-liberal theology to equate theology with Christology and to base on a few passages of the New Testament a new unitarianism of the second person of the Trinity. (1) To speak of God's being in terms of this particular Incarnate 'person' also fails to account for the 'other' whom man confronts the mystery of being. It fails to give adequate emphasis to the self-Other structure which is a 'given' in the human situation.

Barth is in line with traditional Christological emphasis when he recognizes in Jesus Christ an ontic relation with God. Thus he can develop the notion of a Triune Godhead. The being of God is three-in-one. The 'personality of God' therefore is grounded in the 'personality in God' in which the Father, Son and Spirit are internally and externally related to one another in the Godhead. (2)

This ontic structure in the being of God is absent in Niebuhr's thought, as we have seen. As a result the 'personality (or personhood) of God' is not grounded in the Godhead itself. In his attempt to give the 'person' of God a concrete content, Niebuhr vacillates between a sort of 'anthropomorphic' description which must take into account the historical figure of Jesus, and the formal concept of 'confrontation' which is inherent in the self-Other structure.

Basically, Niebuhr's approach to the question of being is guided by his religious interest rather than by 'pure' or theoretical

(1) See How My Mind Has Changed, 1961, 78
(2) cf. Frei in Faith and Ethics, ed. Ramsay, 1957, 103
reason. In this respect he stands very close to Jonathan Edwards, and for this reason we must give some attention to Edwards' thought. According to Edwards, 'being includes in it all that we call God, who is, and there is none else besides Him.' (1) This quotation may give the impression that being is more inclusive than God. But this is not what Edwards means. In fact, God as the ultimate, infinite being is all-inclusive, 'an infinite being .... must be an all-comprehending being. He must comprehend in himself all being.' (2)

God is equated with being in Edwards' writings, yet one must say, in order to be more precise, that God is not in being; being is in God. Any prediction of being, Edwards says, 'is a supposition of the being of God; it not only presupposes it, but it implies it; it implies it not only consequentially but immediately.' There is nothing outside Divine Being, because 'all things are in Him, and He in all.' (3)

The whole universe therefore, in Edwards' vision, is a closely-knitted net-work of being in and through which God as the ultimate source and creative presence is all in all. (4) In philosophical language, Edwards' position can be called 'pantheism', though Elwood also calls it 'concrete theism.' (5)

---

(1) Edwards, Miscellanies, No.27a. Quotations are taken from The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards, by D.J. Elwood, 1960.
(2) Miscellanies, No.697 also in Townsend, Philosophy of Edwards, 262
(3) Miscellanies, No.880, Townsend, Philosophy of Edwards, 1911, 87

(5) Pan-en-theism allows for a mutual immanence regarding God and the world. God is in the world and the world in God. Yet God is 'infinitely more besides.' He is in the world, yet distinct from it. Thus panentheism is a position between Theism which, according to Hartshorne, tends to separate God from the world, and pantheism which identifies God with the world. Panentheism holds together God's unity with and distinctness from the world. See Elwood, ibid, 18ff.
The sovereignty of God is brought out in Edwards' affirmation of 'the absolute, universally unconditional, necessity of God's being' by whom all things are. God is the unconditional subject who can never be turned into an ontological object. As such he is the presupposition of all our experience and can never become an inference from any particular experience. In his early days he still considered that beginning from a particular object to which the verb 'to be' applies, one could use reason to establish the logical necessity of being-itself (which he prefers to call Being-in-general).(1) It is true that man renders intuitive response to God, yet logic can demonstrate the need for such a God with a large degree of certainty. But in the mature years of his life he finds increasing satisfaction in the view that God is known surely by an immediate awareness of his creative beauty in and through the things he has created. In this respect Edwards stands in the tradition of the Augustinian mystical-realism which emphasizes the immediate awareness of esse-ipsam. God enters directly into consciousness 'in, with and under' our total environment. Every particular being offers a glimpse of the being that is eternal.(2) The awareness is immediate, but the knowledge of being is not immediate. The knowledge-content is mediated 'in, with and under' the 'images or shadows of divine things.'

Edwards' concept of being, in virtue of its equation with God, is charged with religious meaning and value. Being is essentially good, and the unity of being and goodness is an axiom of the

---

(1) See for example, his essay Of Being in The Works of J. Edwards, ed. Dwight, I, 1865, 107. This essay is believed to have been written by Edwards when he was only seventeen.

Augustinian mystical-realism which has its root in Neoplatonism. (1) Inspired by the latter, Edwards also stresses absolute beauty, as excellency, in the being of God. So goodness is inherent in being-itself and determines its structure. Everything that is good and beautiful 'implies its consent and union to Being-in-general.' The idea of 'consent to being' has become the principle of ethics in The Nature of True Virtue. (2) Since God is the 'head of the universal system of existence, the foundation and fountain of all Being and Beauty ... of whom and through whom and to whom is all Being and perfection, (3) consent to being means 'the consent to serve in the total scheme of things.' (4) It means the seeking of the good of all beings in their interrelationship. It desires the justice in the universal community. This ethics is the ethics of universal benevolence. (5)

There is much in Niebuhr which echoes Edwards' thought. If God is known assuredly to Edwards by an immediate awareness of his creative beauty through the things he created, then the same applies to Niebuhr in and through the immediate awareness of the mystery of being. (6) In both Edwards and Niebuhr religious feeling points man

(1) It is not certain to what extent Edwards had known Augustine or the works of the Christian Neoplatonists. Elwood thinks this trend of thought, as represented in the writings of Edwards, can be attributed to the influence of Malebranche and the Cambridge Platonists upon Puritan thought in general. See Elwood, ibid, 29f, 168 n47.
(2) This book is considered by Niebuhr himself as having influenced him. See Niebuhr, Ex Libris, in Christian Century, LXXIX (1962), 754.
(3) Nature of True Virtue, 396.
(6) For reference to the mystery of being, see above, 235f.
immediately to the divine. But perhaps the more striking resemblance between these two writers lie in the idea of the unity of being and goodness, and in ethics of universal benevolence. Like Edwards, Niebuhr's idea of being is not separable from value. This understanding of Niebuhr's is expressed in the affirmation of the identification of the 'principle of being' with the 'principle of value', (1) and 'value' is taken, as we have seen earlier, in the sense of 'the good-for-ness of being for being in their reciprocity, their animosity and their mutual aid.' (2) This understanding of 'value' naturally results in an ethics of universal benevolence. Since being of God is the creative source of the universal system and ground of all beings, who is also good towards all, therefore whatever participates in such a universal system is good. This is neatly summed up by Niebuhr in a short statement. 'Whatever is, is good.' (3) The same point is also expressed in a long but rather moving passage in his latest book:

..... should I learn in the depths of my existence to praise the creative source, then I shall understand and see that, whatever is, is good, affirmed by the power of being, supported by it, intended to be, good in relation to the ultimate centre, no matter how unrighteous it is in relation to finite companion. And now all my relative evaluations will be subjected to the continuing and great correction. They will be made to fit into a total process producing good - not what is good for me ... nor what is good for man (though that is also included), nor what is good for the development of life (though that also belongs in the picture), but what is good for being, for universal being, or for God, centre and source of all existence. (4)

(1) For 'principle of being' and 'principle of value' see above, 64, n2. Notice that 'the principle of value' is not immediately identifiable with value. Niebuhr stresses that such an affirmation is made in faith, in the light of revelation. See Radical Monotheism: 32f. The natural man knows being as the hostile awesome power of religion.
(2) Radical Monotheism, 104, 107, but also see above, 413.
(3) Radical Monotheism, 37
(4) Responsible Self, 124f. Italics Niebuhr's.
Since the 'principle of being' is good to all beings, therefore to commit oneself to it means to be loyal to the realm of being.'(1) This means that one must, on the basis of 'whatever is, is good,' serve the good of all beings in the universal community. On this matter both Edwards and Niebuhr are at one in their emphasis.

There is, however, a difference in the understanding of 'goodness' between Edwards and Niebuhr, a difference which goes back to their methods. Influenced by the Idealistic tendency in Neoplatonism, (2) Edwards' notion of goodness takes on an ontic character, in the sense that it is grounded in the structure of being-itself. In other words, goodness is intrinsic in being-itself and determines its structure. Since God is identified with being (even though it is more correct to say that 'being is in God' in Edwards' thought) goodness therefore is understood as being inherent in the Godhead. Thus he says that 'the beauty of the Godhead' is also the 'infinite Fountain of Good.' (3) But the goodness which Niebuhr uses as being (or God) does not carry such an ontic character. Goodness is understood in the relational context, as a 'good-for-ness' of one being for another. When Niebuhr says 'being is good,' he means that 'the principle of being, the source of all things and the power by which they exist, is good, as good for them and good to them.' (4)

In other words, God is good because he is good for us

---

(2) Plotinus develops the ambiguous Platonic idea of the 'One'. He understands this 'One' as that which is above the realm of being, and is essentially 'good'. (This 'One' is also identified with 'God'). All that participates in the One is therefore 'good'. Evil is but sheer privation, the absence of the good. See the article on Plotinus, by Philip Merlan, in the Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. P. Edwards, 1967. vol.6, 355ff.

(3) The Works of J. Edwards, Miller, II, 274

(4) Radical Monotheism, 38

(1) Radical Monotheism, 33
and good to us. There is no indication that goodness can be ontically affirmed of God, that goodness is intrinsic in the Godhead, or of being as it is in itself.

Perhaps at this point his readers may ask, 'Though God is good to us, can we however be sure that he really is good in himself?' This question is comparable to the other question concerning whether ultimately God is a 'person' in himself or not. (1) These questions, Niebuhr would say, only reveal the limits of what man can know in respect of our knowledge of God. They cannot be answered in our present human situation. We do not know whether God is good, for instance, in his inmost being, but we should have a faith strong enough to say with Job, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.' (2) Such a radical faith is cast in the form of a hope. On the basis of what we know of him in his relation to us, we hope that God is, when he finally reveals himself, essentially good. 'Hope' is that which, in Niebuhr's writings, bridges the gap between the relational viewpoint of faith and the religious object as it is in itself.

'In a sense hope is the form which the love of God takes on the part of man in time who loves the God who is not yet manifest, the God who is the Father of Jesus Christ, God who is love.' (3) In faith we hope that God is (ontically speaking) personal and good, as we now come to know him in his relation to us.

---

(1) See above, 429
(2) Radical Monotheism, 124. This quotation is made in the context in which the transformation of faith in God as enemy to God the companion is discussed.
Let us briefly sum up. Niebuhr's 'personal' reference to God is determined by his existentialist method of approach to what 'revelation' is. The notion of being conceived by Niebuhr, in contrast to that which is understood in Tillich's Idealistic scheme, is marked by a strong sense of the personal Other, which is lacking in Tillich. But Niebuhr's notion of 'person' or 'personhood' when applied to God is vague when compared with that of Barth's because of the former's rejection of the ontic structural relation between the historical person of Jesus and the eternal Godhead. However, Niebuhr's emphasis on an actual encounter, and the possible positive relation with this Other, is absent in Barth. Together with Edwards Niebuhr holds the unity of goodness and being, but unlike Edwards, he understands goodness in the relational context only. Ultimately the gap between the relational understanding of God, known to us in our worship and theological reasoning, and God as he is in his eternal Godhead, can only be bridged by hope.

B. Revelation and the Continuous Transformation of the Human in the Divine-Human Encounter

So far we have only referred to 'revelation' without examining carefully its meaning, nor the role played by 'Jesus Christ'. In the following we shall take a closer look at the issues connected with the notion of 'revelation,' beginning with an exploration of the different meanings of the word.
(1) The meaning of revelation

The reader with a disposition towards linguistic exactness, who must define terms with clarity and precision before he starts a discussion on any subject, will be at a loss when he approaches the meaning of 'revelation' in Niebuhr's thought. It is difficult to know what exactly he means when he uses the word. He has not given his reader any formal definition. Instead, he offers a large number of 'descriptions' which are lyrical and rhetorical rather than formal. A few examples can be given to illustrate the point.

'Revelation,' Niebuhr says, 'means that we find ourselves to be valued rather than valuing and that all our values are transvaluated by the activity of a universal valuer.' Again, 'revelation is the emergence of the person on whose external garments and body we had looked as objects of our masterful and curious understanding.' Again, 'revelation means the moment in which we are surprised by the knowledge of someone there in the darkness and the void of human life.' Revelation in history means 'that special occasion which provides us with an image by means of which all the occasions of personal and common life become intelligible.'

In Radical Monotheism in which the idea of God as being is developed, revelation becomes the occasion in which being is identified with the God and Saviour who challenges men to take up his cause as their cause. Revelation is understood, as we have seen earlier, as a pattern with certain identifiable elements. Revelation is a word, according to Niebuhr, which takes on different meanings when used in different contexts.

---

(1) Revelation, 153, 109
(2) Radical Monotheism, 43, see above, 424
(3) Revelation, 42
A more careful scrutiny, however, shows up certain central ideas which come within the complex notion of revelation, and they indicate how the word is used. It is used, for instance, in the popular sense as the self-manifestation of God in Jesus Christ. Thus Niebuhr speaks of 'Jesus Christ as the revelation of God.'

Because 'Jesus Christ', or rather, the 'Christ event' is a historical event of the past, therefore 'revelation' in this case is also necessarily a matter in the past. It refers to 'the critical point in man's conversation with God,' 'the intelligible event' which illuminates all other events. As such it functions as 'a rational principle .... which enables us to understand.' In the epistemology of faith it constitutes the 'first principle' in our reasoning in faith.

It is important to remind ourselves that Niebuhr's emphasis is strictly theocentric. Even though he speaks of 'Jesus Christ' being the revelation of God, nevertheless it is God and not so much Jesus Christ that is foremost in his mind. This shift means that 'revelation' can no more be completely identified with the 'Christ-event' as it is in the thought of Barth who assimilates theology into Christology. 'Revelation' is a revelation of God's reconciling acts in the human situation now and then. Revelation therefore must be a present reality, referring to the present situation. It happens since God is our eternal contemporary who is also acting upon us here and now. Revelation happens to us when our human situation becomes transparent, through which we see the actions of God upon our life now.

---

(1) Revelation, 43
(2) Revelation, 129, 93
(3) Revelation, 94, 136
means that we find ourselves to be valued rather than valuing .... When we speak of revelation we mean the moment we are given a new faith, to cleave to and to betray, and a new standard to follow and deny.' (1) Not only the present situation, but also the significance of the past events of our life becomes illuminated. The events of human life are not a disjointed series of meaningless events, but are meaningful dramas united in the all-inclusive redemptive purpose of God. This notion of revelation - one that comprehends the present and the past, that points to God and to the human situation - is not unrelated to the 'Christ-event' in the past which marks the 'decisive moment' in the divine-human conversation. Instead, it provides us with the first principle in our reasoning in faith so that 'every new event and every reinterpreted memory 'may become a 'part of revelation.' (2) This is what the Hebrew prophets and priests did when they looked at their own history and tried to understand it from the viewpoint of some critical moments in the past divine-human conversation. This is what Christians are doing when they try to understand themselves and their fate. Revelation is not something of the past, because 'every event which the revelatory moment clarified has been in a sense a repetition and continuation of that moment .... (3) It is this wider notion of revelation (one that lays stress on revelation as a present reality) which Niebuhr develops largely in Revelation.

The function of revelation in human life is described in terms of 'transformation' or 'conversion', and it is here that the self

(1) Revelation, 154
(2) Revelation, 133
(3) Idem.
is seen in full participation in the structure of revelation. Revelation is revelation for the self when he is able to apprehend the action of God upon him in his human situation, and to appropriate its significance. This 'conversion' Niebuhr speaks about is a conversion of man's understanding of the present and his perspective of the past, as well as his notion of deity, which we shall examine later. It suffices us to point out that such conversion requires interpretation, and interpretation in turn requires reason. Thus reason and revelation belong together. Reason is written into the structure of revelation. Thus revelation can also be described as a 'rational principle.'

Revelation in the wider sense receives a strong noetic (intellectual) emphasis, because its function is to make events 'meaningful' and 'intelligible'. The 'conversion' of human religion, for instance, according to Niebuhr, is 'what we mean by revelation.'

In Revelation the noetic aspect of revelation, in the sense of reinterpretation with the help of the 'image' (Jesus Christ), is given much attention. But in Radical Monotheism we notice a subtle change in emphasis. The emphasis is now more on the response and commitment in terms of moral acts and loyalty to the universal being and its cause. Revelation refers to the occasion in which radical faith in God is elicited. Radical faith is radical action characterized by trust and loyalty, resulting in a 'consent of being to being.' Since radical response and commitment belong to the structure of revelation, it means that there is no revelation

---

(1) Revelation, 94
(2) Revelation, 191
(3) See above, 424
if such radical response is not elicited from the believer. This change in emphasis has the effect of making revelation something empirically describable. This new emphasis in fact is already evident in Revelation, in the words of Herman which Niebuhr quotes,

We can call any sort of communication revelation only then if we have found God in it. But we find and have God only when he so incontestably touches and seizes us that we wholly yield ourselves to him.... God reveals himself in that he forces us to trust him wholly.(1)

The thought suggested by these words is that revelation and radical trust in God belong together. But this idea of revelation is not pursued in Revelation, and only comes out on its own in his later writings. With this new emphasis we also notice in Niebuhr a tendency to drift away from the more traditional viewpoint. In Revelation the idea of revelation, though not identifiable immediately with the 'Christ-event', is nevertheless regarded as being inseparably bound to it. Revelation is a present reality because the 'image' is already given, with the help of which we understand our present as well as our past. We understand God and his dealing with man because we have this 'revelation' in the Christ-event which also transform our natural religion. We have some knowledge of God even in our natural religion,(2) but there is no indication at this stage that such knowledge of God yields any correct understanding of deity or proper relation with God. Instead, the stress is on the 'transformation' and 'conversion' of our

(1) Herman, Der Begriff der Offenbarung, 1887,11, quoted in Revelation, 152.

(2) See Revelation, 180ff for reference to our natural religion. Niebuhr also believes that man has some sort of knowledge of God apart from the revelation associated with Jesus Christ, see 155,157f.
natural religion so that we may have a proper understanding of deity in the light of 'revelation' given through the Christ-event. (1) The implication is that there is no proper understanding and response apart from Jesus Christ. This emphasis on 'transformation' of man’s natural religion remains essential in his later works, but then Niebuhr no longer insists that radical trust in being and commitment to its cause is possible only through the revelation given in the Christ-event. Instead, he admits that there might be other ways and means than 'Jesus Christ' through which such radical faith in being or God may be had. (2) Indeed, we may try to understand, he says, how we might have received faith and confidence in being without Jesus Christ. But for Christians it is difficult, because 'when this faith is given, Jesus Christ was there.' (3) In other words, it is necessary for Christians to speak of revelation in close relation to Jesus Christ, though revelation is not strictly confined to that historic event. But it does not mean that this same requirement holds true for non-Christians whose radical faith (though admittedly rarely found) is also inspired by the same God. (4)

Let us briefly sum up the various meanings of 'revelation' in Niebuhr’s thought. In a narrow sense (akin to traditional usage), 'revelation' refers to the historical events associated with Christ, through which God rather than the person of Jesus is revealed. In a wider sense it refers to (a) the illumined human situation,

(1) Revelation 182. Hoedemaker even says that Revelation is the most 'Barthian of Niebuhr's writings because of its Christocentricism.' See Faith in Total Life, 194.
(2) See Responsible Self, 178
(3) Radical Monotheism, 124f
(4) This attitude of Niebuhr’s reminds us of Troeltsch. See below, 547
present and past, (with the help of the given image) through which we come to see God's reconciling act in human life, and (b) the occasion in which the radical response in terms of commitment of the self to the universal being and its cause is elicited. It means faith and confidence in being, and a consent to serve all beings.

It is the wider sense of 'revelation' which is more important in Niebuhr's scheme. Also we see that the response-element (commitment) attracts more attention.

(2) Revelation and the integrity of selfhood

The emphasis on radical response to being coincides with the development of the idea of integrity of selfhood which functions in Niebuhr's thought as 'redemption' or 'salvation' would do in any traditional scheme. (1) In our earlier analysis of his anthropology we have seen that sin, or rather, the sinful state of man's existence, is characterized by a lack of integrity. It is the result of the conflict of value-centres. In moral behaviour this means that one's responses are disconnected and unreconciled. (2) In short, man sins because he responds to the many rather than to the One beyond the many.

(1) Redemption or salvation in traditional theology calls to our mind the idea of 'atonement' and its many interpretations. But Niebuhr has not developed any doctrine of 'atonement'. As we see in this discussion, words like salvation and reconciliation change meaning in Niebuhr's scheme.

(2) See above, 255ff.
The integrity or unity of which Niebuhr speaks is not a unity in man, which man possesses in virtue of his manhood, and which he has somehow lost it. Rather it is a by-product of his response to the One who is his Creator and Redeemer. In other words, the integrity of selfhood depends on a proper response of the Self to God, and such a response presupposes some proper understanding of the nature of this God or the One who acts in all actions upon the self. This One must be regarded as trustworthy, being loyal to those who are loyal to him. He must be the affirmer of our being, and not its denier. Here the question of revelation comes into play, because it is in revelation that the Christian comes to realize that being is trustworthy and good to all beings, at the same time challenging him to a radical response. Salvation in Niebuhr's thought means the achievement of the integrity of selfhood,\(^1\) The possibility is a gift from God who has demonstrated to man through the events of Jesus Christ that he is one in his dealing with man, one in power and goodness, and hence trustworthy.

At the same time we also find the question of revelation being subordinated to the controlling motif of salvation in Niebuhr's scheme. Now the noetic interest in revelation is more or less confined to our knowledge of God as the being in whom power and goodness are one, manifested in his dealing with man. It is this oneness of God which is taken as the basis of the integrity of selfhood. Man is in fact seeking his own integrity when he seeks the oneness of God.\(^2\) The fact that Niebuhr refrains from

---

\(^1\) In *Responsible Self*, the ideas of sin and salvation are discussed in the context of the integrity of selfhood. See chapter 5,127ff.

\(^2\) *Responsible Self*, 126. See also Hoedemaker's remark, 'We must not lose sight of the centre of gravity in Niebuhr's thought: in seeking God's unity man seeks his own unity.' *Faith in Total Life*, 1966, 204.
speculating about interesting items such as the infinity, omnipresence and omnipotence of God which have interested traditional theology indicates that his main concern even in the issue of revelation is not so much in our noetic grasp of God but rather in our radical response to him wherein lies our 'salvation'. We do not know the mystery of the Godhead. We do not know whether God in his inmost being can be called 'personal'. God has still to manifest himself. Now we know only that which is barely necessary for our salvation, viz., that he is goodness and power at one, and beyond this Niebuhr does not seem to be willing to go. Eventually, even the description of salvation is hardly distinguishable from the description of revelation itself:

..... salvation now appears to us as deliverance from that deep distrust of the One in all the many that causes us to interpret everything that happens to us as issuing ultimately from animosity or as happening in the realm of destruction. (1)

Such a conversion of our natural religion, including our knowledge of the nature of deity, is, as we have seen before, what 'revelation' is meant to accomplish. (2) We have the feeling that in Niebuhr's thought, the question of revelation eventually merges with, and is even subordinated to, the greater concern of the integrity of selfhood, which is man's salvation.

(1) Responsible Self, 142
(2) See above, the identification of God with being (which changes the meaning and content of being) through revelation, 423ff, also below, 460ff, also Revelation, 191, revelation means a conversion of our natural religion.
(3) Revelation and Jesus Christ

What then is the role of Jesus Christ in the complex of revelation? Revelation in the wider sense, as we have said, refers to the illumined human situation. We shall examine how this is possible, or in what way Jesus Christ has enabled it to come about. But revelation also refers to God who has manifested himself. So we shall also see how Jesus Christ is related to the revelation of God himself.

(a) Jesus Christ and the transformation of the human situation

Niebuhr's notion of the self as the 'time-full' self is already familiar to us. The self exists in the present, but the present is such a moment that the past and the future come together in it to form an organic whole. In the epistemological activity of the self the past plays an important role. This past is 'what we are', and which endures in the present in the form of traditions and folklore, language and symbols, values and concepts, ideas and tastes and so on. The self interacts with other selves and with all the actions exerted upon it by means of interpretation with the help of this 'past' in it. Interpretation depends upon images and symbols upon which the 'reasoning heart' operates. But in its sinful situation the self employs inadequate and even evil images which reflect more the self-interest of the interpreter than objective reality. To extricate itself from this situation the self must be

(1) See above, 241ff
able to reinterpret its past that endures in the present with an adequate image. Freedom of the self also consists in the ability of the self to reconstruct its own 'past'.(1) Since the 'past' is in the present determining the present act of the self, any change in one's past means also a change in one's present course of action and future expectation.

Revelation, says Niebuhr, is the moment through which we are given this adequate image with which we understand our past which is in our present. This given image functions in three ways. First, it helps to make our past intelligible. The human past, with its many failings, brutality and sin appears to be just 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.' It is meaningless and without unity, only to be remembered with sorrow and despair. But the birth of Jesus in the fulness of time has changed our human situation. It means that 'all things which had gone before seemed to conspire towards the realization of this event,' which is the coming of 'a great salvation.' From this point of view the whole human past becomes a 'single epic' in which no part can be regarded as 'beyond possibility of redemption from meaninglessness.'(2) In other words, interpreted with the help of this image, the meaning of human existence becomes revealed to us. Life is not a tale told by an idiot, but there is a redemptive purpose running through it. Second, the image of Jesus Christ helps us not only to understand the past, but also drives us to remember what we have forgotten. When we use inadequate or evil images we tend to drop out of our consciousness or suppress those memories

(1) See above, 249ff
(2) Revelation, 112f
which are at odds with the picture of the self or history we cherish. But the ignored or suppressed past is 'indestructible,' and it takes its abode in our unconsciousness, reflecting itself in the folklore and customs, in the economic structure and status of groups, in racial prejudices and assumptions. Now Jesus Christ, in whose cross we see the sins of man and in whose obedience we find the faith of man, demands that we bring into the light of attention our hidden past, our betrayals and denials, our follies and our sins. There is nothing in our lives, in our autobiographies and our social histories that does not fit in (the revelatory image of Jesus).

In our reasoning in faith and repentance we must reinterpret our personal and social past in order to come to grips with our true self. Third, the image Jesus Christ helps us to appropriate the whole human past as our past, so that the whole of mankind becomes a universal community. A community is a group of people who share in a common history or tradition. Where common memory is lacking, where men do not share in the same past there can be no real community, and where community is to be formed, common memory must be created ...." 

The Christian community is a community of common memory of the Christ-event. However, the community is divided and each faction acknowledges and confesses only that part of the tradition which fits in with a self-centred image. Each group uses its own separate history as means for defending itself against the criticism of others and justifies its action by it. We cannot, says Niebuhr, become integrated parts of one common church until we each remember our whole past, with its sins, through Jesus

(1) Revelation, 114
(2) Revelation, 115
Christ and appropriate each other's pasts. The unity of Christendom is but the pattern of a wider unity we seek, as 'the problem of human reunion is greater than the problem of church reunion.' (1) None of the rational images and symbols men use in interpretation and recollection of their past suffice to bring about unity. But by the 'larger pattern' of Jesus Christ 'all the struggles, searchings after light, all the wanderings of all the peoples, all the sins of men in all places become part of our past through him.' Thus through him we also 'become immigrants into the empire of God which extends over all the world and learn to remember the history of that empire, that is of men in all times and places, as our history.' (2) To remember all that is in our past is to achieve unity of self, to remember the human past as our past is to achieve community with mankind. (3) Until such attempts are made with the help of the 'larger pattern', Jesus Christ, and until we are driven to remember what we do not wish to remember, we are and remain ignorant of our true self, which is hidden from us in our sin. Confusion in our vision of our own past also means confusion in our understanding of our 'present scene', because our present is that which grows out of the past and dependent on the past for its intelligibility. The self, standing in the present which grows out of the past, and looking at its own past which is enduring in the present, finds explanations of its actions hitherto undreamed of. (4) The present becomes transparent, through it the redemptive acts of God in human life is known.

(1) Revelation, 120
(2) Revelation, 116
(3) Revelation, 117
(4) Revelation, 124
In Revelation the question of the unity of selfhood is not yet fully developed. Here unity refers rather to the incorporation into the self of all the human past. It is a unity more in the sense of sharing a common past in the universal community with all other beings in the fullest possible way, whereas in his later books the unity of selfhood is understood in terms of the responsible self. But this earlier sense of unity is not irrelevant, because the responsible self is at the same time a member of a universal community which also includes the notion of sharing all the human past as one's past.

The conversion of our past must be 'progressive', and the process continuous without ceasing, because our past is almost 'inexhaustive.' Revelation is 'progressive' because the 'revelatory pattern', Jesus Christ, is 'progressively validated in the individual Christian life as ever new occasions are brought under its light, as sufferings and sins, as mercies and joys are understood by its aid.' Through conversion, every event, past and present, which the revelatory 'image' or 'moment' clarifies is 'in a sense a repetition and continuation of that moment.' As such, it becomes 'a part of revelation.' Revelation in this wider sense of the word seems to be something forever growing. It is a past affair, in so far as it refers back to the 'critical moment' in our history in which the revelatory image is given, and it is this image and pattern that decides the meaning and content of all latter (or former) revelations.

Yet this revelation is also a present reality, a forever 'moving thing

(1) The idea of unity in the sense of the unity of selfhood is, however, briefly mentioned in Revelation, towards the end. See Revelation, 185, 'And so the oneness which the God of Jesus Christ demands in us is.... our integrity, singleness of mind and unity of heart.'
in so far as its meaning is realized only by being brought to bear upon the interpretation and reconstruction of ever new human situations in an enduring moment, a single drama of divine and human action. 

This understanding of revelation lays emphasis on the participation of the human in a complex which is essentially a divine gift. It also brings to realization the issue of human freedom in so far as freedom is understood in terms of re-interpretation of the past that endures in the present. The content of such a 'revelation' is the human situation seen in a new perspective. This notion is not what 'revelation' is traditionally understood to be. Let us now examine the other aspect of 'revelation' in Niebuhr's thought, in which revelation is mainly a revelation of God, and the problems associated with it.

(b) Jesus Christ and the transformation of our natural religion

Revelation, Niebuhr says, 'is not the communication of new truths and the supplanting of our natural religion by a supernatural one.' It rather means the 'fulfilment and the radical reconstruction of our natural knowledge about deity through the revelation of one whom Jesus Christ called "Father".' The words

(1) Revelation, 132, 133, 135, 136.
(2) For Niebuhr's view on freedom, see above, 249f.
(3) Revelation, 182, also see viii.
'natural religion' and 'natural knowledge about deity' are used in the quotation as though they are interchangeable. The affirmation of the self-disclosure of God in the Christ-event, in Niebuhr's opinion, must presuppose the possibility of some previous knowledge of God, otherwise the 'revealed self' could not be recognised in 'revelation' by man as God.\(^1\)

In the context of God referred to in terms of being, this 'previous knowledge' may be described as the awareness of the awesome power of being which is man's first experience in his encounter with ultimate reality.\(^2\) This aspect of being presents itself to man as the great 'void of meaningfulness, as a hostile, destructive power aimed at the negation of our being and all that we treasure.\(^3\) It is our 'slayer'. It cannot be otherwise, because 'the natural mind is enmity to God, or to our natural mind the One intention in all intentions is animosity.'\(^4\)

Faced with such a hostile situation in which man finds animosity all around him, he turns to whatever beings that seems to be good and powerful for deliverance. 'When man notes his inability to live by his own power and the power of everything that is against him becomes manifest, he may be led to trust in the goodness of that which is most evidently powerful.' Or he may take a Stoic attitude of resignation to the world, to the powers which hold him under way.\(^5\) But the objects to which man turn proves to be as powerless as everything else when confronted by the ultimate power

---

\(^1\) Revelation, 176, also see 155.
\(^2\) See above, 119ff
\(^3\) Radical Monotheism, 122f, Responsible Self, 139f.
\(^4\) Responsible Self, 140
\(^5\) Revelation, 186
which negates. They do not qualify for 'deity' because 'what is powerless cannot have the character of deity.' Deity must be goodness and power at one. (1)

Now a miracle has happened which makes possible the transformation from God the enemy to God the companion in our conception of him. The God whom the natural mind understands in terms of the power of hostility now meets us in the Christ event as one who is the unity of power and goodness, and it is this unity that expresses the fulness of God's undivided deity. (2) In other words, this transformation of our understanding of God is possible because God has made himself known in the Christ-event. Niebuhr refers to Jesus Christ as the revelation of God in different ways; God, he says, comes to man 'in Jesus Christ.' The person of God is revealed 'through Jesus Christ.' Hence Jesus Christ is said to be the 'revelation of God.' (3) These prepositions are meant to bring out the relation between Jesus Christ and God, but how Jesus Christ 'reveals' God is a very complicated affair, about which we have already made some brief remarks. (4)

The idea of God having revealed himself in Jesus Christ in traditional theology means that God has taken upon himself 'human flesh' and lived "a man among men in history. The goodness of God is demonstrated by the whole event of the Incarnation which is also man's redemption. Traditionally this assertion is followed by a few events in the life of Jesus to substantiate the claim. The

(1) Revelation, 185
(2) Doctrine of the Trinity and the Unity of the Church, Theology Today, 1946, 372. Also see Revelation, 189f.
(3) See Revelation, 164, 170, 173-76, 185f, 189 for God having revealed himself in Jesus Christ. Radical Monotheism 43, Jesus as the revelation of God.
(4) See above, 430ff
person of the Incarnate Christ mediates to man the essential goodness of the Godhead. This is admittedly an anthropomorphic way of describing God's character, ascribing to God what we find in the historical figure of Jesus. Behind this attempt also lies the conviction that Jesus and God are ontically related: Jesus being one in respect of Godhood and manhood. But Niebuhr does not go along with such an ontic assertion concerning Jesus, nor does he entertain the anthropomorphism of traditional Christian faith, which tends either towards a 'tri-theism' or 'Jesus-cult.'

Now the dilemma before Niebuhr is: how to take Jesus seriously as the 'transformer' of our knowledge of deity without falling into anthropomorphism in our thought? The question can be put in another way, how can Niebuhr describe revelation as a revelation of God and not of the 'person of Jesus'?

In Niebuhr's description of Jesus, the idea of loyalty and confidence occupies an important place. Jesus Christ is described as a man who is 'utterly loyal' to God, as one who has 'complete confidence in God and complete loyalty to God.' The sort of 'loyalty' and 'faithfulness' to God in Jesus Christ is even more than in Job, (who says, 'though he slays me, yet will I trust him.') 'Though he crucify me yet will I be loyal to His Kingdom and will uphold the idea and reality of His Kingdom.'

The confidence and fidelity of Jesus Christ are 'those of a son of God - the most descriptive term which Christians apply to him as they contemplate

---

1) See above, 86
2) For references to the loyalty and faithfulness of Jesus Christ, see Radical Monotheism, 42f, 59f. Christ and Culture, 254f. Triad of Faith, 9f.
3) Triad of Faith, 10 Niebuhr interpreting the mind of Jesus.
the faith of their Lord.' (1) Yet the absurd thing happened in our history. This utterly loyal Son was crucified and died, which also signified the defeat of the worthiness of value and person. If the death and defeat prove anything at all, it can only be the hostility of the ultimate reality against all that Jesus stood for. But death is not the end. God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. The resurrection has not only vindicated the confidence and loyalty which Jesus has in God, but also demonstrated that there is a power stronger and more ultimate than the last enemy which is death. This power is good because it affirms our being and not its denier. The resurrection is crucial in the transformation of man’s understanding of God, because

Unless God was loyal to the one who was loyal to Him and who trusted Him to the uttermost, we shall forever remain suspicious of the Source and Origin of all things, the One whom Jesus Christ called Father, but whom we can’t call Father unless He saves Christ from the dead. (2)

Since God has demonstrated that he keeps faith with Jesus Christ, therefore he has also proved that he is trustworthy, worthy of our devotion and adoration.

Jesus Christ through his utter loyalty to and confidence in the goodness of God also ‘invites our loyalty to him.’ (3) But he invites us to trust him only in order to point us away to the One in whom he has trusted. In other words, we are asked to share in the loyalty and confidence of Jesus Christ who points us to God, who is goodness and power at one.

(1) Radical Monotheism, 42
(2) The Triad of Faith, 10
(3) Idem.
To be related in devotion and obedience to Jesus
Christ is to be related to the One to whom he
undeviatingly points. As Son of God he points
away from the many values of man's social life to
the One who alone is good; from the many powers
which men use and on which they depend to the One
who alone is powerful....(1)

We can believe that God is good because Jesus Christ himself
calls him 'Father', as one being 'fatherly in goodness toward all
creatures,'(2) and whose goodness and power are demonstrated in the
miracle of the resurrection. This understanding of God's goodness
and power keeps the emphasis on God rather than on Jesus Christ.
His goodness is revealed in what he did to Jesus rather than in
Jesus. We are called to have a faith of Jesus Christ, viz., a
faith like that of Jesus' who has utter confidence in God's goodness
and power, rather than to have faith in Christ. This approach has
the advantage of not having to say anthropomorphically that the
'person' of Jesus Christ 'reveals' the person of God. But it also
plays down the significance of the historical life and deeds of
Jesus of Nazareth. This neglect in the historical life of Jesus
seems to reflect the development of post-liberal theology
(approximately between the twenties and the forties of our century)
whose 'Christocentric' revelation is marked by the lack of such a
reference to detail in the 'life' of Jesus.

We must, however, be careful in our judgment because Niebuhr
has also tried to take the historical life of Jesus seriously in

(1) Christ and Culture, 28
(2) Radical Monotheism, 42
Christ and Culture, where he offers us a brief but important statement of his understanding of Jesus Christ. He takes as a clue to the person of Jesus the idea of 'sonship', albeit a moral one, in order to avoid certain one-sided emphases of the past. (1) From the point of a moralist, Niebuhr describes Jesus Christ by his virtues, viz., 'the excellences of his character which on the one hand he exemplifies in his own life, and which on the other he communicates to his followers.' (2) The 'virtues' which he seeks to bring out in the life of Jesus are his love, hope, obedience, faith and humility, which must be understood in the totality of his 'sonship' before God. (3) The characteristic element in the idea of the moral sonship of Jesus Christ is the role he plays as the 'moral mediator' of God to man and man before God. Jesus exists 'as the focusing point in the continuous alternation of movements from God to man and man to God.' (4)

Because he is the moral Son of God in his love, hope, faith, obedience and humility in the presence of God, therefore he is the moral mediator of the Father's will towards man. (5)

The role of 'moral mediator' of God to man implies that God is revealed in the way in which Jesus is a man, and therefore his manhood becomes the context and bearer of such a revelation. This

(1) In choosing 'sonship' Niebuhr tries to correct the one-sided stresses such as love (Harnack), obedience (Bultmann) and hope (Schweitzer). These individual aspects have been magnified and dramatized out of the total context of Jesus' role as the moral Son before God.

(2) Christ and Culture, 14f.

(3) For a discussion of these virtues, see Christ and Culture, 15-27

(4) Christ and Culture, 29

(5) Christ and Culture, 28
point is repeated in another place in different words, 'Love of God and neighbour is the gift given through Jesus Christ by the demonstration and incarnation, words, deeds, death and resurrection that God is love - a demonstration we but poorly apprehend yet sufficiently discern to be moved to a faltering response of reciprocal love.'(1) The point we must notice is this: the moral character of God's person (be it God's will or love) is revealed in the totality of Jesus' own person. This is but another way of saying that the person of Jesus reveals the person of God, or the person of God is given a content of that which we find in Jesus, thus an inescapably 'anthropomorphic' way to the person of God.

The 'anthropomorphic' note is obvious, for instance, in Niebuhr's description of the love of Jesus. 'Because he loves the Father with the perfection of human *eros*, therefore he loves men with the perfection of divine *agape*, since God is *agape*.'(2) In Jesus Christ we see the love of man for God and God's love directed in unity with Christ's person to man. Thus we are cautioned not to regard Jesus's love for men as merely 'an illustration of universal benevolence.' But rather, it is 'a decisive act of divine *agape*, and that Jesus loves man 'as only God can love.'(3) Thus the love of Jesus for man is identifiable with the love of God for man. Since love involves the whole person in action, in effect Niebuhr is saying that it is the person of Jesus which is revealed in 'revelation', and that it is the moral character of this person which defines for us the moral person of God.

(1) *Purpose*, 32 *italics* mine.
(2) *Christ and Culture*, 28
(3) *Christ and Culture*, 18,19
The fatherly goodness of God is manifested in his love for all his creation. This goodness, we can say, is expressed in Niebuhr's writings in two ways. First, God is good because of what he did to Jesus. Second, God is good because Jesus in his person has revealed it in the act of love for man. These two ways of approach to the moral person of God shows Niebuhr's aversion to (and his failure in avoiding) the suggestion that the revelation of the person of God is identifiable with the revelation of the person of Jesus.

Even though now we see through the Christ-event that God is good, yet the reality of the awesome, hostile power which the 'natural mind' encounters is not erased, or made to disappear by being transformed into love. This awesome hostility still remains, only now it is brought into unity with goodness which is also love. In other words, the experience of the natural mind is basically correct. The God whom we meet in Christ is the God who is hostility and goodness, or rather, wrath and mercy at one. The hostility is made evident in the death of Jesus, 'We encounter in the event of Jesus Christ,' Niebuhr says, 'the presence of that last power which brings to apparent nothingness the life of the most loyal man. Here we confront the slayer ....' (1) But this power rests with the God who is also good, and so this power is also the power which affirms our being, as it is in the resurrection of Jesus. God is the slayer as well as the life-giver, whose power is never exercised apart from his goodness, nor goodness apart from his power, which in the Biblical context would be the expression of God's

(1) Radical Monotheism, 19
righteousness. This view of the deity of God steers clear of the inadequacy of Liberalism in which the love of God as revealed in Jesus is romanticised, and the extreme form of piety in which the idea of sovereignty and awesome majesty overshadows the goodness of God.

(4) The question of the Trinity

It is interesting to see that in Niebuhr's thought the unity of power and goodness has taken the place of the traditional discussion of divine unity in terms of the ontological union of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit in the eternal Godhead itself. This is the natural consequence of the existentialist, relational position which he has taken to heart. The God as he is in himself apart from his relation to us has no place in his writings, and the God as he is related to us is the God shown to be mercy and wrath, goodness and power at one. So he recasts the traditional Trinitarian question in the existentialist manner:

The existential problem of God and of man's relation to him leads inevitably to the question about the deity of the Creator of nature, that is of his goodness, to the question about the deity of Jesus Christ, that is of his power, and to the question about the deity of the Spirit, that is, whether among all the spirits there is a Holy Spirit.(1)

It is not difficult to see that even in this reformulation of the question, the major interest is still in the unity of power and

---

(1) The Doctrine of Trinity and the Unity of the Church, Theology Today, III, 1946, 372.
goodness, and it is not easy to fit the Holy Spirit into this 'goodness-power' unity. Niebuhr's mentality is essentially binitarian-inclined. The interaction between God and Jesus alone is enough to clarify for us the character of God's nature in his relation to us. This inclination is obvious in Revelation in which the traditional emphasis on the mediating function of the Spirit is taken by 'internal history' which mediates the Christ-event through the believing community to the present generation. (1) So there is no real place, or any need, for the Holy Spirit. Even though casual reference to the 'unity of the God who appears as Father, Son and Holy Spirit' is not altogether absent, the function and nature of the Spirit is not spelt out nor is it shown how it is related integrally to the various aspects in his thought. (2) One wonders whether he is not just paying lip-service to the traditional formula.

In his later writings Niebuhr seems to have paid more attention to the question of the Trinity. He makes it clear that the three persons of the Godhead cannot be confused, 'the Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Father, and the Spirit cannot be equated with either.' (3) The Holy Spirit must, he says, be regarded as having proceeded not only from the Son (thus reflecting his reaction against 'Christism') but also from the Father - an unmistakable allusion to the 'double procession' in the traditional discussion on the Trinity. (4) But references to the distinctness of the personae and 'double procession' presuppose, as in the case of the

---

(1) cf. Frei, in Faith and Ethics, ed. Ramsey, 1957, 100 note 100. (2) For Niebuhr's reference to the Trinitarian formula in Revelation, see 184ff. (3) Purpose, 45. (4) Idem.
traditional discussion, an ontological affirmation of the triune nature of the Godhead. The God whom we encounter in our religious experience is in himself three-in-one, the personae being eternally and internally related to one another. It is this emphasis on the 'personality in God' which makes concrete the distinctness and individuality of the divine personae. But such an affirmation of the ontological structure of the Godhead is impossible on Niebuhr's relational method. Hence it is difficult to see how Niebuhr can follow the traditional thought even though he uses a language very much similar to it, nor can the concreteness of the person of the Holy Spirit be protected against abstraction. Thus in his writings we find a shift in meaning not only of the 'Son' but also of the 'Holy Spirit.' The 'son' is primarily the 'moral son' being the 'moral mediator' who points man to God and God to man. There is also indication that 'confidence' and 'fidelity' are taken as the characteristic marks of 'sonship.' The incarnation is taken to mean the incarnation of 'radical faith,' or 'God's oath of fidelity becoming flesh' in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit becomes the 'immanent divine principle not only in the Church but in the world created and governed by God, being equated with the possibility of man's awareness of the presence of God in his being and history.

Even though Niebuhr is not concerned with the inter-relation of the eternal persons in the Godhead itself, nevertheless he thinks that in our apprehension of God some sort of trinitarian structure is implicit. In other words, our religious experience

(1) For references to traditional Trinitarian formula, see Purpose, 20, 23, 31, 38.
(2) This is the primary emphasis in the Christological section in Christ and Culture, 11-29.
(3) Radical Monotheism, 42, also see 59. Christ and Culture, 27
(4) Radical Monotheism, 42
(5) An attempt at a Theological Analysis of Missionary Motivation, an Occasional Bulletin, Missionary Research Library, N.Y., 2
does suggest some trinitarian formula in order to clarify what we mean when we say we apprehend God. This idea is developed in his essay on the question of the Trinity and the unity of the Church, about which we have already mentioned. There he points out the tendencies in the history of the Church towards turning the Trinity into three unitarianisms: of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each unitarianism has found support in different ages and among different traditions. But a brief analysis shows that the unitarianism of the Father (Creator), for instance, cannot stand alone. The Creative power as seen through the order of creation must be understood as 'personal' and 'good' before faith and worship is possible. Thus the 'unitarianism of the Creator discovers that it is dependent not simply on reason but also on the faith of Jesus Christ and that the God it worships is after all not simply the God of nature but the Father of Jesus Christ,' because

the Fatherhood of God and the nature of the Father is not known save through his relation to a Son. The religious belief in the Fatherhood of God always implies that the Son who is obedient to him to death is not destroyed but remains victorious and powerful. (1)

Likewise, the unitarianism of the Son cannot stand alone. 'Though it has had no doubt about the goodness of Christ, about his deity in terms of value, it has not been able to avoid the question of his power.' So faith in Christ implies faith in God the Creator who is known through nature and who has made himself known in Christ. (2)

(1) Doctrine of the Trinity and the Unity of the Church, 380
(2) Doctrine of the Trinity and the Unity of the Church, 382
We can well understand the mutual dependence of the Father on the Son and the Son on the Father. But where does the Holy Spirit come in? In both the unitarianism of the Father and of the Son, the Spirit comes in in the form of 'religious experience.' While Niebuhr points out that there are occasions when the unitarianism of the Father and of the Son change into the unitarianism of the Spirit, there is no indication that the Spirit is indispensable (as in the case of the mutual dependence of the Father and the Son) in our understanding of the person of God. On the contrary, the unitarianism of the Spirit must 'postulate faith in the Creator,' if the Spirit is known to be the Saviour powerful enough to save. Also this unitarianism must refer for criteria to Jesus Christ to determine what is and what is not divine spirit. 'Experience-theology tends to test the God-consciousness of Jesus and the individual conscience by its conformity with the historic utterances of Jesus Christ.'(1) In the course of Niebuhr's discussion the person of the Holy Spirit tends to be assimilated into 'spiritual experience' or 'spiritual life' it effects through which the unity of power and goodness becomes vivified.

Even though for the sake of the unity of the Church Niebuhr suggests that all these three unitarianisms must come together in a 'synthesized formula' (a doctrine of Trinity), nevertheless one has the feeling that he may be able to dispense with the Spirit in his scheme.(2)

---

(1) Doctrine of the Trinity and the Unity of the Church, 383
(2) Hoedemaker reports that Niebuhr personally affirms in his class that he knew only two starting points in theology: God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. The Spirit is not a third starting point but only a derivative from the Father and the Son. See Faith in Total Life, 1966, 205. For a scathing criticism of Niebuhr's 'Trinitarian' thought, see Kenneth Hamilton, Trinitarianism Disregarded, in Encounter, 1962, Vol.23 343-347. Hamilton refers only to Niebuhr's thought as reflected in Radical Monotheism.
C. **Summary remarks**

In the development of Niebuhr's thought on God and revelation we see once again how his interaction with the contemporary cultural situation affects his thought. His acceptance of 'historical relativism' which accounts for his rejection of metaphysics results in the choice of relationalism as a method. Even though later in his career he adopts the existentialist approach to God and revelation, nevertheless he has never given up relationalism. The effect on his theology is obvious. In regard to the question of Trinity, Niebuhr departs from the traditional belief in the sense that he does not entertain the concept of any ontic, internal and eternal relation between persons in the Godhead. This absence of ontic reference also makes the concept of 'person' vague. If Webb is right (which we affirm) that it is the traditional affirmation of 'personality in God' which safeguards against the loss of the concreteness of the personality of God, then Niebuhr's concept of God's personhood is in danger of losing its concrete individuality in worship and thought. But it does not happen in this way with Niebuhr, because he falls back on an existentialist frame of reference in which the concreteness and reality of the personal 'other' is presupposed. It is from this existentialist viewpoint that he understands the question of God and revelation. Thus God as the irreducibly personal Other becomes an accepted fact. Here we see clearly how his method determines his notion of God.

There is another sense in which his notion of 'person' is vague. This is because Niebuhr rejects the ontic relation between Jesus and
God. As a result, 'person' becomes a merely formal reference to the 'Other' in the divine-human encounter, and 'personal' becomes the formal description of relation in terms of meeting and confrontation. This handling of 'person' reflects Niebuhr's desire to escape anthropomorphism. But this understanding is unsatisfying for worship and theological reflection. So we find him trying different ways to give a moral content to the notion of 'person'. In our judgment he is not successful in overcoming the problem of anthropomorphism. But the lack of ontic reference in Niebuhr's affirmation of God does leave us wondering whether ultimately God is really personal or good.

Again, in Niebuhr's discussion of revelation we also see the influence of his anthropological assumption at work. From the analysis of the human situation and experience Niebuhr comes to understand the 'normative' self in terms of the 'responsible self', characterized by oneness or integrity of selfhood. To be saved is to become one, integral self. But to become one man must respond to God. The deity of God lies in the oneness or unity of goodness and power. This 'oneness' of God can therefore be said to be rooted primarily in Niebuhr's anthropological concern, in so far as man is seeking his own integrity when he seeks the oneness of God. Now when God reveals himself, it is the oneness of his power and goodness that is made known in his dealing with man. Thus 'revelation' becomes subordinate to the idea of salvation, therefore also subsumed under his anthropological concern.
The idea of 'revelation' in Niebuhr's thought is a complicated issue. It refers to God and to man, to the 'given' in the past, and the participation of the human in the present. In our opinion, the meaning of 'revelation' in terms of response to God with a certain observable pattern of commitment is an important concept, not least because it points towards the direction in which we can meaningfully carry on a dialogue with non-Christians, about which we shall say more later.
IV. CONCLUSION

The investigation in this Study has largely been confined to the questions of God's nature and his revelation, which constitute the most important yet most difficult epistemological problems in any theological discourse. Their importance merits a rather lengthy treatment in this section, which also serves as a useful introduction to the development of our own position later. Some current discussions on the subject will be brought in here in order to emphasize the significance of the positions of the writers of our concern.

The question of God's 'personhood' (personality) has been for a long time a thorny problem, especially when 'personality' in modern times has taken on heavy psychological overtones. It refers to 'character traits' or patterns of behaviour which are meaningful only in relation to an embodied 'self.' Thus its application to God becomes problematical, for God is not such a 'self.' The word 'personality' itself is a difficult one, because, as Dean Matthews has long ago pointed out, it is 'indefinable,'(1) even though one can vaguely describe it in terms such as integrity, creativity and so on. Further, 'personality' as a concept is derived from experience. The application of this word to God would imply that the nature of God is prescribed by human experience, a sin which Niebuhr and all good Protestant theologians would not tolerate. But ingenious attempts have been made to get round the problem. Webb and Baillie, for instance, argue that 'personality'

(1) W.R. Matthews, God in Christian Thought and Experience, 1930, 164
is basically a non-empirical concept, though it is observable to some extent in experience. 'Personality', Baillie says, 'is... not a posteriori but a priori, describing not the actual, but the ideal.' (1) From this Baillie argues that personality is something we find in God. This Platonic handling is not impressive. Though personality in its ideal form cannot be defined, nor even known, nevertheless, as Maclagan says, the fact that it is realized in different measure is itself an empirical fact, and the 'further hypothesis that there is a perfection towards which the series of less and more adequate realizations tends is one that... requires for the mere framing of it no appeal to non-empirical insight.' (2)

The problem does not end here. When 'personality' is used of God (irrespective of whether it is a priori or a posteriori), what is the status of the language so used? Are the emotive qualities proper to human personality also proper to the divine nature? This brings us inevitably into a very difficult area in theology, viz., that of analogy, about which we do not wish to elaborate. It suffices us here to quote the opinion of Maclagan, who affirms on the one hand with Gilson, that 'on the level of the concept there is no middle way between the univocal and the equivocal,' yet on the other hand, 'between meaninglessness and univocity we have still found no middle way.' (3) Between the two poles of univocity

---

(2) W.C. Maclagan, The Theological Frontier of Ethics, 1961, 173f.
(3) Maclagan, ibid, 175, 178.
and equivocity there are indeed different noble attempts, such as Mascall's restatement in the form of the analogy of proportionality and the analogy of attribute\(^1\) and Barth's analogy of grace.\(^2\) But no matter which form of the analogy is used, the language that makes sense to us is still, according to Maclagan, the language used univocally. This is most obvious in the Thomistic tradition as represented by Mascall.\(^3\) In the end of the day we still have to face the problem: how can we use 'personality' univocally (hence meaningfully) and yet avoid the charge of anthropomorphism when it is used of God?

The problems involved in using 'personality' being so immense, it comes as no surprise to find that the philosophical theologian Tillich prefers to take it as but a symbolic manner of speaking about God who ultimately is beyond the category of the personal. In short, the category of the personal is not ultimate. This is also the position which Toynbee has arrived at via the 'Indic' road. He knows as though by intuition that this problem of the 'It' and the 'Thou' concerning the ultimate cannot be solved by man on the intellectual, conceptual level. So he holds together the two fundamental orientations without any attempt to reconcile them.

But neither Kraemer nor Niebuhr take this idealistic or Indic path,

---


\(^2\) Henri Bouillard in The Knowledge of God, 1969, p. 122 points out that Barth's analogy of faith (of grace) includes, or has as its presupposition, the Catholic analogy of being. Bouillard also gives a summary of Barth's thesis.

\(^3\) Maclagan and Cobb come to the same conclusion on this point, See Maclagan, ibid, 177, John Cobb, ibid, p. 58.
for fear that the dynamic character of Biblical realism (for Kraemer) or the concrete reality of the Other (for Niebuhr) would dissipate. Thus they hold fast to the personal, despite the many problems involved. Kraemer is less concerned than Niebuhr with the question of anthropomorphism because the former is prepared to let the reasoning of the heart take precedence over the reasoning of the head. The dynamic character of Biblical realism lies in its anthropomorphic description of God. God is one who 'speaks' to us, who came to us in Christ for our salvation, having taken upon himself human flesh. Niebuhr has tried, as we have seen, in different ways to avoid the suggestion that it is the person of Jesus which is the content of revelation, yet his attempts are, in our judgment, not successful in so far as he wants to give a content to an otherwise abstract notion of being.

There is yet another more profound concern involved in the use of the category of the personal of God, compared with which the problem of anthropomorphism seems to be light. This is the major question concerning the distinction between the subject and the object of our religious experience, or between God and man. Words like 'personality' or 'person' are used to safeguard against the confusion between God and man. 'Personality' carries the idea of 'concrete individuality' (individua substantia), (1) and so when it is used of God it brings out the point that it cannot become something else. In the case of worship, for instance, it cannot become the 'personality' of the worshipper. Once the category of the personal, or 'personality', is transcended or removed, then confusion

---

(1) Webb, God and Personality, 1918, 55
becomes inevitable. Kraemer sees this confusion actually happening in Tillich's thought, and indeed in all philosophy of ontology. It also happens in the case of Toynbee. It does not happen to Niebuhr because he falls back on the existentialist approach which is heavily 'personal' and in which the irreducible Other is presupposed.

Furthermore, among Christians there is general distrust and suspicion towards any view of God other than the personal one. The alternative to 'personal' is 'impersonal'. The personal category marks the highest reach of human thought and expression, whilst the 'impersonal' always signifies that which is less than human, or person. As such it cannot be used of God, because he cannot be in any way less than man. It is suggested that the 'super-personal' seems to be a viable alternative to the 'personal', yet without carrying the weakness of the 'impersonal.' But unfortunately, this 'super-personal', like the ideal concept of 'personality,' defies our understanding. We do not know what it really is. Maclagan warns us not to understand 'supra-personal' as merely 'personal plus ....' Rather, it is a 'more' which transforms the meaning of 'personality' itself. But we still want to know whether 'personality', after such a transformation, would

(1) See, for example, W.R. Matthews, God in Christian Thought and Experience, 1930 160ff. William Temple, among many others, also has a similar view, see above.

(2) Maclagan, The Theological Frontier of Ethics, 1961, 180 'The "supra" in "supra-personal" does not indicate simply a "more"; it indicates a "more" such that the "more" transforms the meaning of the term "personality" itself ... the term "supra-personal" would be abused whether it were taken simply to negate the meaning of "personal" or to supplement it in a merely additive way.'
still bear any resemblance to what we now understand to be 'personality', which is still largely an empirical concept. Because there is such an ambiguity accompanying its use, so in practice 'supra-personal', as both Matthews and Maclagan have noticed, often takes on the meaning of 'impersonal'. (1) We also have seen this happening in Toynbee's thought, in so far as he identifies the 'supra-personal' ground of man's existence with the 'supra-personal ground of ultimate spiritual reality' which is monistic and undifferentiated. (2) We can perhaps safely say that between the 'personal' and the 'impersonal', or beyond them, we have not yet found a viable category.

Yet we have not forgotten that there is some indication in both the writings of Kraemer and Niebuhr that God may possibly be other than 'personal'. Thus, Kraemer speaks of the possibility of God being 'super-personal' and Niebuhr refers to God as the 'great X,' the 'abyss.' (3) It looks as though some sort of rapprochement with idealistic of Hindu Vedantic thoughts can be affected. But this is not true, because neither Kraemer nor Niebuhr really allow the super-personal to have any place in their schemes. Niebuhr's language of being is essentially existentialistic and relational, whilst Kraemer labels any views of God other than the personal as 'naturalistic' or 'monistic', only to be summarily dismissed.

Matthews, God in Christian Thought and Experience, 1930, 163
(2) See above, 283
(3) See above, 421
We must not ignore, however, the cultural dimension in our attitude towards 'personality'. 'Personality' is doubtless the highest and most valuable conceptual achievement in Western culture which has been nurtured in the Christian faith. But it is not so regarded in non-Christian cultures. To the Buddhists and Hindu philosophers of the non-dualistic tradition, it is not ultimately real. It does not seem possible that we can ever reconcile to one another the two 'fundamental orientations' in man's vision of the ultimate spiritual Reality. The Buddhist has as much right to his 'impersonal' view of Reality as the Christian to his 'personal' view of God, and each view is completely meaningful and intelligible within its own cultural-religious context. This realization certainly makes the question of Truth very problematical. As Professor Watt sees it, each religion (or each view of what is ultimately real) is entrenched in its own ideation. When it comes to the question of criterion, each, on the basis of its own set of values, gives reasons for holding that it is superior to all the others. The clash is a clash of rival sets of value, and there is no objective intellectual basis upon which the quarrel can be settled. (1) When this is understood, we are then in a better position to see why 'relativism' is such an appealing conclusion for many in our time.

Confronted with the fundamental options, a decision must be made, because refraining from making it would result in 'intellectual suicide.' The Christian's choice is inevitably the 'personal' view, not only because 'personality' is epistemologically the highest

---

category within our reach, but also it is so far the only way open to us to maintain, at least conceptually, a distinction between God and man. Thus he must reject Toynbee's synthesis because Toynbee has not grasped the full meaning of the 'personal' in the Christian context. Yet when the Christian is challenged to state exactly what he means when he uses 'personality' of God he finds himself falling back on anthropomorphism and unable to overcome the philosophical problems involved. He hopes in faith that God in his love may grant him a glimpse of his beatific vision through the very imperfect language and symbols which are within his reach in his historical situation.

The question of 'revelation' is no more certain, and in fact proves to be more confused, as it is used as a blanket term to cover a variety of meanings. Our investigation has shown that 'revelation' cannot be considered alone, but must be understood in the wider context of the writer's conception of the relation between God and man, and of the question of how man understands himself. The radical difference between Kraemer and Toynbee is a good illustration of this point. From a psychological perspective Toynbee understands the relation between God and man as essentially natural and harmonious at the subconscious level, in so far as man's subconsciousness is naturally tuned to God, who has left intimations about himself in this realm of the psychic cosmos of man. (1) To men of all ages and civilizations God has given the possibility of a beatific vision of him and his love, only if they have learnt, and are prepared, to

(1) It is interesting to see that W.M. Watt who also draws from Jung understands 'revelation' as 'prophetic intuition' which emerges from the collective unconsciousness. See Truth in the Religions, 1963, 151.
see him. So 'revelation' for Toynbee means 'intuition' or 'enlightenment' made possible to man if he turns inward to the psychic and spiritual cosmos within.

This 'inward' orientation is not accepted by Kraemer as a valid approach to 'revelation.' Because man exists in a state of enmity with God, he does not really know him. Since the relation between the divine and the human is essentially 'antithetical', therefore 'truth' cannot be said to be 'in' man. He must therefore orient away from him to God who in his grace has vouchsafed to man the saving truth in Jesus Christ. In other words, truth comes actively to man, it is not to be found passively in man. Behind this emphasis lies the fear that if truth is in man, then it will become the possession of man. Man would thus turn to himself, to what he has achieved and not to God. It is not that Kraemer does not believe that God is perennially engaged in human affairs. On the contrary, he sees the perennial encounter between the divine and the human taking place in the realm of 'religious consciousness', from which 'deep Ahnungen (intuitions) of divine love' surge up. But unlike Toynbee, Kraemer would not suggest that this spiritual 'organ' (for want of a better word) could yield any valid knowledge of God. Thus the 'God' of non-Christians is at most a shadowy 'God' if not an idol, and the 'grace' and 'forgiveness' they speak about are products of their imaginations.

There is still another major difference between Kraemer and Toynbee on the issue of 'revelation'. It is concerned with the

(1) See above, 202
question of 'history,' or the revelational value given to history. Kraemer and most Protestant theologians have given history a supreme revelational value. This is very natural because the Incarnation happened in the midst of history, and hence history became an important factor in the structure of revelation. If we are to look for 'revelation,' we have to turn to history. It is in history that God has 'acted,' especially in the events of Jesus Christ. Even though Niebuhr, who does not entertain the traditional notion of the 'ontic' relation between Jesus and God, nevertheless has taken the Jesus of history seriously and reflected on how the history of this man has affected our relation with God and our fate as beings in history. But this presupposition about history is not shared by Toynbee, who has given to myths, symbols, and poetry very high revelational value in his scheme. He agrees that the historical figure Jesus has demonstrated adequately the love of God, but he also holds that the many avatars of Vishnu serve the same purpose. Their demonstrations of God's nature as love is not less true because they are not historical figures as Jesus.

(1) Perhaps at this point we should be aware of the fact, which Barr has pointed out for us, that scholars have not been able to agree about what 'Biblical view of history' is. In our time 'history' means a host of things to different writers: it may mean 'a historical way of thinking, or a historical form of self-understanding or perception of life ...' Barr also reminds us that there are indications in the Old Testament which imply that God is known or knowable without appealing to series of historical events. Such indications are many of the Psalms and the Wisdom literature in general. See Barr, Old and New in Interpretation, 1966, 67ff, 72ff. Our discussion of Niebuhr's external and internal history above should have made us wary of any glib reference to 'revelation' in 'history,' and Niebuhr himself fails to hold the 'internal' and 'external' history together. T.A. Roberts has also pointed out that there is much non-historical element involved in what the Christian historical theologians regard as 'historical'. The resurrection is a case in point. See History and Christian Apologetics 1960, 144-174.
So the clash between Toynbee and Kraemer is basically a clash of values which each writer gives to what is and what is not history.

By now we can see why 'revelation' cannot be discussed in isolation. It does not only presuppose the question of man (his make-up and his relation to God) but also the question of history (the revelational value given to what is, and what is not history).

The difference between Kraemer and Toynbee does not indicate fully the confusion over the issue of 'revelation'. After all, Toynbee makes it clear that he does not share the same faith as Kraemer. He prefers to be called a 'Hindu'. But when the two devout Christians who believe in the same God, who read the same Bible and share in the fellowship of the Church differ radically and irreconcilably, as in the case of Kraemer and Niebuhr, then it is a different matter altogether. (1) Such a difference not only throws into sharp focus the ambiguity of the notion of 'revelation', but also makes one wonder whether God has really 'revealed' himself - a word which suggests a considerable degree of clarity in our vision of him. It is perhaps one of the most paradoxical developments in language that a word which originally means 'making clear', 'unveiling', turns out to be most unclear.

(1) The trouble is that not only two, but most of the theologians who speak of 'revelation' have not been able to agree about what 'revelation' is. The vague phrases such as 'revelation of God' or 'of God in Jesus Christ' fail to provide the unity and clarity desired. See Downing, Has Christianity a Revelation? 1964. Chapter one. For a brief survey of the various ways of speaking about 'revelation', see Donald Evans, Protestant and Roman Views of Revelation - Protestant View in Canadian Journal of Theology, X, 1964, 256ff. Evans sees the many theories propounded by Protestant theologians as being different 'radically from each other.'
Niebuhr, like Toynbee and Kraemer, also believes that God is perennially involved in human affairs. God is the One, the Other who confronts man eternally, and the 'self-Other structure' is given in the human situation. Even though man is, on the whole, 'idolatrous,' nevertheless the 'monotheistic' faith in terms of trust and confidence in being which comes to the Christians through 'revelation' is also occasionally found outside the Christian faith. This shows that God's 'revelation' is not confined to the Christian faith, nor is man so misguided as Kraemer understands him to be. Again, there is no agreement between Niebuhr and Kraemer as to 'what' is being revealed. For Niebuhr, 'revelation' can be a forever growing thing. An event in the human situation, once clarified by the 'revelatory moment', becomes not only a 'repetition and continuation of the moment' but also 'part of revelation'. But Kraemer regards such a rendering of 'revelation' as 'inappropriate and misleading.'(1) 'Revelation' should refer to God's self-manifestation, especially in Jesus Christ.

Niebuhr, however, also refers to Jesus Christ as the 'revelation of God' as Kraemer does. But again their agreement does not seem to go much beyond verbal resemblance, as they disagree on the status of Jesus Christ, which in turn affects their interpretation of how God reveals himself through him. For Kraemer, Jesus Christ, being ontically one with God, 'reveals' God in his own person. His acts are the acts of God himself in human flesh and situation. So Kraemer claims for the Christ-event 'revelation' which is

(1) See Christian Faith, 383 for his criticism of the idea of 'continuing revelation' and its aberrations.
qualitatively different from all other 'revelations'. But Niebuhr does not affirm such an ontic relation. So we find that the 'revelation' of God's 'goodness' (which is primary in Niebuhr's scheme) is given through what God did to the man Jesus, in the supreme act of raising him from the dead. Even though Niebuhr, as we have seen earlier, has not been able to avoid seeing the 'revelation' of God in terms of the revelation of the person of Jesus, nevertheless he tries to keep the emphasis on the moral sonship. Since Niebuhr does not entertain the idea of God having become flesh in the historical figure Jesus, there is no necessity to hold that the 'revelation' connected with Jesus is 'qualitatively' different from any other 'revelation' God might have given outside the Christian faith. If what happens through the Christ-event is 'unique' and 'final', it is so for us Christians, as we have nothing else. Indeed Niebuhr reminds us that there are 'other ways' in which God has elicited this monotheistic faith which the Christians come to know through Christ. In short, Niebuhr prefers to see the difference (if difference should be pressed for) of God's 'revelation' through the Christ-event as a difference in degree and intensity rather than a difference in kind from God's revelatory activities outside the Christian faith.

The difference in the understanding of the status of Jesus also affects one's view of God. For Kraemer, God is truly and ontically a Triune God because the incarnated logos was in the beginning with God, sharing together with the Father and the Holy
Spirit the divine life in the Godhead itself. The traditional notion of Incarnation, as Webb points out, has given the 'personality of God' a moral significance and content, as the moral and personal relation between God and Jesus is now understood as a relation also within the life of the Godhead itself.\(^1\) So one can say, the Godhead is essentially moral and personal in character. But such an affirmation is not found in Niebuhr, nor is it possible on his relational method. His notion of the Trinity departs from the traditional view in that he sees God as a 'triune' God in a purely epistemological context, i.e., the three aspects of the Godhead is implied in one another in our understanding of him.\(^2\) Niebuhr's interpretation leaves us wondering whether God is ultimately really 'personal', and whether moral qualities such as goodness and love which we come to know through Jesus Christ are eternally abiding.

'Revelation' therefore means different things to different writers. The result of such an 'unveiling' is rather puzzling, as we see it represented in the writings of Niebuhr and Kraemer. There is no agreement on 'what' is being revealed, or how 'Jesus Christ' is to be regarded, or how 'God' and his 'love' are to be understood. The confusion shows us that not only the issues of the understanding of man and his relation to God, but also the question of the status of Jesus Christ determine to a large extent what 'revelation' really is. This finding is significantly different from the popular view which claims to derive the contents

\(^1\) Frei calls Niebuhr's view 'economic Trinitarianism', see Faith and Ethics, ed. Ramsey, 1957, 98. Hoedemaker labels it 'value-trinitarianism', see Faith in Total Life, 1966, 204.

\(^2\) For Webb's view, see Appendix IV, below, 609
of such issues solely from 'revelation'. The radical difference (or rather, the lack of unity) in our understanding of 'revelation' should have made such a claim untenable.

If 'revelation' means 'unveiling', 'making clear', and the 'revelation of God in Jesus Christ' refers to the 'unveiling' of such a 'knowledge' of God, or even of 'God himself' to man, then we may have to ask ourselves seriously whether we have such a 'revelation' of God at all. If we admit that our vision of God is ambiguous and confused, as the current controversies over the issue 'revelation' shows, then we may as well ask why we should speak of 'revelation' of God, or suppose we know enough to qualify us to use of 'revelation'. Is there any other way in which we can more meaningfully (and less confusingly) speak of the redeeming act of God which is given to us in association with the Christ-event?

'Revelation' is by nature intellectualistic, because it deals with man's knowledge and understanding of God. Its intellectualistic emphasis is not mitigated even if it refers to God revealing 'himself.' (1) Thus Kraemer speaks of the 'revelation in Christ' in the context of the 'knowledge' of God and of man, (2) whilst Niebuhr

(1) In the quarters in which 'revelation' is used to refer to propositions which require an abstract and conscious mental activity for their apprehension, the rationalistic character is readily seen. But the rationalistic or intellectualistic note is not mitigated in the reference to 'revelation' in terms of 'God revealing himself.' Even in this case it is, as Downing points out, still consciousmental appreciation of the other person in the divine-human encounter that matters. See his discussion in Has Christianity a Revelation, 1964, 249ff, 264ff. For reference to revelation as being 'intellectualistic,' see John McIntyre, On the Love of God, 1962, 225ff.

sees 'revelation' as a 'rational principle' which enables us to see God in our human situation. 'Revelation' as such refers to the noetic grasp of God's truth, or of his nature. But at the same time we also notice a tendency in their references to 'revelation' which emphasizes the response and commitment on man's part. This tendency is important because we think there is much in this aspect of their notion of 'revelation' which may point towards a more meaningful way of speaking of God's act in Christ. It also suggests a new approach to the question of dialogue between the Christian and the non-Christian which does not fall into the 'inclusive' category of Toynbee's, nor the 'exclusive' attitude in regard to truth as we find in Kraemer's scheme. We shall return to this in a later study.
STUDY FOUR: CONCERNING THE PHENOMENA OF RELIGIONS

In our previous analysis of the thoughts of Toynbee and Kraemer we have already come across some ideas which have played an important part in determining their attitude towards the encounter of different religions. We have in mind the idea of the 'psychological types' (Toynbee) and the concept of the 'totalitarian' understanding of a religion (Kraemer) which so far we have only mentioned in passing. In this Study we propose to take a closer look at them. We shall also ask if 'religion' is an adequate concept for missionary encounter. As Niebuhr has not written directly on the question of religion we shall not bring him into the present Study. It does not mean that he has to be left out altogether in regard to matters concerning the question of attitude towards non-Christian faiths. On the contrary we shall suggest in the following Study that there is much in his writings which is fruitful and suggestive for the formulation of a viable Christian attitude.

I. A.J. TOYNBEE: PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPES AND RELIGION

The anthropological basis of Toynbee's religious relativism has, as we have mentioned before, two facets or aspects. First, the subconscious, being naturally attuned to God, is regarded as the

(1) See above, 29, 43f
(2) See above, 26ff
repository of 'intimations' about God from which all religions draw their supply. Second, the whole human psyche is differentiated into types and sub-types which in turn require Reality to be apprehended differently. In other words, Toynbee tries to explain the difference in beliefs and practice among religions in terms of the difference in the psychological make-up of man. We have already examined the first aspect. Now let us turn our attention to the second. In this aspect Toynbee follows closely the teaching of Jung.

Briefly, Jung distinguishes two antithetical attitudes and four diverse 'functions', which Toynbee calls 'faculties'. The two attitudes are an 'introversion' towards the inner world of the Psyche and an 'extraversion' towards the outer world of objective reality. The four faculties are thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition. They can be divided into two pairs: thinking and feeling are rational, controlled by judgment and proceeding in accordance with logical steps, whilst sensation and intuition are essentially irrational and operate without the discursive process. All these six elements are to be found in every man, some being emphasized more than others, some even repressed into the subconscious. Together they form a great variety of combinations.

Classification can be by attitude and by faculties. Thus, the

(1) Toynbee gives a summary treatment of Jung's teaching as represented mainly in Psychological Types, 1925, 412-517, see History, vii, 723ff. Toynbee also refers to F.G. Wickes, The Inner World of Man, 1933, 56-64. But a good treatment and clear exposition of Jung's position can be had in Jolande Jacobs, The Psychology of C.G. Jung, 1962, chapter one, 'The Nature and Structure of the Psyche', 5ff. Our references to the psychological types here are taken from Toynbee.
'introvert' and 'extravert' types are those in which respectively 'introversion' or 'extraversion' is the dominant attitude while the other is repressed. Similarly in the case of faculties, the thinking, feeling, sensory (sensation) and intuitive types are those in which the faculty from which the type is named is the predominant one. It is the faculty 'of which the Consciousness is the most clearly aware and over which the Will has the greatest power of control.'(1) Each one of the faculties can be the dominant one, taking into junior partnership with it other faculties, and repressing into the Subconscious whatever it does not take into partnership. The repressed faculty is always the sister faculty of the predominant one 'because the Consciousness cannot serve two masters simultaneously, even when one of them is under the other's command, if they have an identical modus operandi but make use of it for incompatible purposes.' So the predominant faculties have to choose from the opposite pair because of their difference in psychic operation, and 'either of which is a possible junior partner for the predominant faculty.' Actually both of them are taken as its auxiliaries.(2)

Now from this understanding of man's psychological make-up Toynbee seeks to explain the difference in man's visions of God as embodied in the higher religions. Hinduism and Buddhism are mainly 'introvert' in character. Therefore the Ultimate Reality, as Brahman

(1) History, vii, 723
(2) For convenience sake we can tabulate the predominant faculty, its auxiliaries and the repressed faculty in each case as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predominant faculty</th>
<th>Auxiliaries</th>
<th>Repressed faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. thinking</td>
<td>sensation and intuition</td>
<td>feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. feeling</td>
<td>sensation and intuition</td>
<td>thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. sensation</td>
<td>thinking and feeling</td>
<td>intuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. intuition</td>
<td>thinking and feeling</td>
<td>sensation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and Nirvana, is 'impersonal and the approach to It (is) to be found by the conscious personality in turning inwards to remerge itself in the Subconscious.' But the Ultimate Reality as represented in Christianity and Islam, for instance, is a personal God, and the approach to him is to be found by the soul turning outwards to enter into a communion with him, which is characteristic of religions which are basically 'extravert.' Thus the essential difference between these religions is due to the difference in attitude.

But when we look at these religions in terms of faculty-groupings we see that there is much in common between them, and the difference is one of emphasis. Hinduism, Toynbee says, has thinking as its predominant faculty. Its main spring 'is a thought' which is the 'comprehension, by the Consciousness of its psychic antithesis the Subconscious, and the realization that this subconscious underworld of the consciously individual soul was, not merely impersonal, but supra-personal.' But Hinduism is not purely abstract and philosophical, because the auxiliaries of thinking is sensation, which gives rise to 'ritual'; and intuition, which gives rise to the psychological exercise and experience in the form of yoga. Furthermore, the repressed faculty of feeling is not at all inactive in the Subconscious. It breaks through 'from the subconscious on to the conscious level' of Hindu religious life in the worship of Shiva and Vishnu. The craving for the I-Thou personal relation is catered for in the bhakti sects. This feeling element in Hinduism is akin to that which plays the leading role in the Christian faith.
However, Toynbee also observes the 'apparent absence of love and absence of zeal for righteousness' which are the 'negative aspect of Hinduism' to the non-Hindu eye. (1) Perhaps this can best be attributed to the basically 'introvert' character of Hinduism.

In Christianity, the feeling faculty is proclaimed in these words: God is love. Associated with this faculty of feeling are the auxiliary faculties of sensation and intuition. Sensation in the Christian faith expresses itself in ritual, in the 'congregation rite of the Eucharist.' The association of feeling and sensation in the context of an 'extravert religion' produces what Toynbee describes as 'an incongruity between the ethereally sublime feelings that united with his worshipers a God who had become man and had suffered death on the Cross, and the strangely primitive rite in which this communion was consummated.' (2) The ritual of communion is originally that of a food-god, but now has become the vehicle for the intense feeling in the Christian faith.

The other auxiliary faculty is intuition, which expresses itself in the Christian faith in the form of mysticism. But in the context of an 'extravert' faith, the mystic's goal is a Beatific Vision in which 'personality' is not obliterated. Yet the 'introvert' attitude is not absent in Christianity. The 'introverted' Christian souls do not always find satisfaction in the 'extravert' mystical or sacramental way of communion. Thus Jung sees the Protestant's experience of the real presence of Christ in the overwhelming spiritual event of a sudden ineffable change in the heart an attempt

(1) History, vii, 727
(2) History, vii, 728
made to meet the need of 'feeling introverts.' But introversion in a basically extraverted faith can never be complete. So, in Toynbee's opinion, the limited Protestant attempt to express the 'introvert' attitude is as much a failure as its attempt to deal with the faculty of thinking. This latter faculty is a repressed faculty in the Christian faith. Being predominated by feeling, thinking is not as free in Christianity as it is in Hinduism in which it is free to follow wherever the argument leads. In Christianity, it is confined within the prison-wall of a mythology, a matter of 'thus far and no further,' as evident in the imposing works of Thomas Aquinas.

So far only examples of the dominant 'rational' faculties and their auxiliaries are dealt with. There are still the 'irrational' faculties of sensation and intuition which are respectively the dominant faculties in Islam and in Buddhism. 'Sensation' is uncritical apprehension of matters of fact, and in Islam this is expressed, in Toynbee's opinion, clearly in the great confession of faith, 'There is no god but the God, and Muhammad is the Apostle of the God,' and in the Islamic commandments to observe the five hours of prayer and to make the pilgrimage to the holy cities of the Hijaz. Islam shares with Christianity the 'extravert' attitude, and hence the belief in a personal God. But in the former, feeling is only an auxiliary faculty. So God is not so much a God of love, but rather, a God of power. The feeling aspect does find expression in such description of God as 'the merciful, the
Compassionate, but even so he is regarded as primarily aloof, arbitrary and vindictive, with an overwhelmingly transcendental nature. Only in sectarian Islam does one find strong expressions of the feeling element. Thus 'for Shi'is, Ali had the pathos of the incarnate saviour who "came to his own, and his own received him not", and the Passion of Ali's martyred son Husayn was annually commemorated in the Shi'i world with an emotion that reminded a Christian spectator of the traditional Christian feeling about the Passion of Christ.'(1) Actually, the extremists even identify Ali with God.

The thinking faculty plays, in Toynbee's opinion, a 'more responsible part' than in Christianity because here it is not repressed. It expressed itself in the handling of the traditions, which the Sunni theologians built into a formidable Shari'ah. The task set for the building of the Shari'ah by the faculty of thinking is more congenial to thought than the attempt to elicit a law of logic out of the law of love, as in Christianity.

The repressed faculty in Islam is 'intuition'. But it comes back in terms of mysticism. On the whole, mysticism in Islam, like its counterpart in the Christian religion, also retains the distinction between God and the self. To the 'introvert' Hindu eye, 'this Christian and Islamic yoga would seem to be all but stultified by an apparently wilful refusal to see through a Judaic hallucination of a personal God masquerading as the Ultimate Reality.'(2)

(1) History, vii, 731-732
(2) History, vii, 732
In Buddhism, 'intuition' is the predominant faculty. In the Hinayana type it is in partnership more with thinking, while in Mahayana, with feeling. By an act of intuition Buddha came to see that life is pain and suffering. Thinking helps in mapping out the course of extinguishing life in the goal of Nirvana. But feeling is not absent in Hinayana. It finds expression in the veneration of the remains of Buddha whom the primitive Buddhist community had transfigured into a superhuman long before the Mahayana attempt. In this the faculty of sensation is also seen to have asserted itself, for sensation 'requires a tangible object to apprehend (the Black Stone, the wood of the Cross, the blood of St Januarius).'

In Mahayana in which feeling is stronger than Hinayana, the figure of the arhat has been replaced by the bodhisattva. The faithful not only look to the many bodhisattvas and celestial Buddhas for help in times of need, but also look forward to having fellowship with them in the Mahayanian Paradise. But since Buddhism, even though in the Mahayana form, is essentially 'introvert' inclined, Nirvana is still the official goal. The doctrine of the Void and the idea of Trikaya affirm a non-personal Ultimate Reality. (1)

This approach to the phenomena of religions from the viewpoint of psychological types is meant to show that religious truth takes on radically different forms because of the complicated structure of the human psyche. The difference is not in Reality itself but

(1) For the doctrine of the Void and Trikaya, see above, 321. It is not clear how Toynbee understands the expression of 'sensation' in Mahayana Buddhism. He has not explained it.
rather in our visions of it. Therefore no religion can be 'catholic' (universal) because no religion can serve all the needs of the different types equally well. The heavenly music which satisfies human need is only heard in a symphony, not in a solo.

Toynbee's endeavour is a remarkably fresh and courageous attempt to solve the problem of the relation between different religions in their dispute over the question of truth. But it is doubtful if the soundness of the method matches the nobility of his motive. There are too many uncertainties involved. The psychological theory of Jung is but one of the many theories. It is best regarded, in M. Wight's opinion, as 'no more than the intuitive schematizing of a great psychological artist.' (1) It may be useful if it is taken for its suggestiveness, (2) but it is doubtful if it can serve as a theoretical basis for such a grand

(1) Toynbee's critic, Martin Wight, in a paper 'The Crux for a Christian Historian', offers a short but good criticism of Toynbee's psychological types theory. This paper is reproduced in History, vii, 737-748. See especially 740ff, 746. But Toynbee offers no reply. Wight also criticizes Toynbee from the point of view of method. Toynbee not only has limited the discussion to four higher religions, but also has assumed a certain finality about them which is not warranted by experience on account of what had happened to many abortive or potential religions in the past. The implication is that these higher religions may pass away, and new religions of different nature may take their place which would render the present correlation impossible.

(2) Jung's suggestion is also taken up by Watt who also thinks that 'different people appear to be most deeply moved by different dynamic images.' He himself suggests three main types of images with which man enters into relation. See Truth in the Religions, 1963, 114ff. Watt even thinks it worthwhile to ask whether 'the Scottish love for the Presbyterian system and the English preference for bishops may not be linked with a deep interest' associated with the dynamic images, ibid, 116. But Watt offers no grand correlation.
correlation as Toynbee has tried to give us. The distribution of the various psychological types as suggested by Toynbee's correlation seems too neat to be true. The psychological theory could only be upheld if there is a numerical predominance of each psychological type in the region of the world where its "corresponding" higher religion has the ascendency, and for this there is no evidence whatever. (1) Moreover, the assumption that each religion can only satisfy certain needs of the human psyche is hardly warranted. In the Roman Empire of the first century A.D., for instance, there were many types of religious faiths and philosophy which competed with the Christian faith for a hearing. On Toynbee's view, it is difficult to see how these faiths and philosophies could have been displaced by the vigorous Christian faith, for they were supposed to fulfil certain needs which the Christian faith failed to satisfy because of its inherent limitations. In other words, the victory of the Christian faith makes Toynbee's assumption dubious. The possibility of Christianity being a truly 'catholic' religion cannot be ruled out. Furthermore, his psychological characterization of the higher religions may be disputed. It is, for example, doubtful whether the faculty of thinking should be regarded as 'repressed' in the Christian religion in view of its relation with so many types of philosophy in its history which have to a large extent changed the theological character of the faith. If we had to give an example of a 'repressed' faculty, perhaps we would be nearer the mark if we say 'intuition', for 'mysticism' has never been regarded as something belonging to the main stream of Protestantism, or indeed the whole history of Christianity.

(1) Wight, in History, vii 741
This correlation on the basis of differences in man's psychological make-up ties in well with Toynbee's 'synthesis' which we have examined earlier. Together Toynbee tries to account for the unity and diversity in man's visions of Reality. (1) Reality is one even though visions of it are many, and this 'many' (manifoldness) is required by the difference in the 'lens' with which Reality is perceived. If he were right - then his synthesis would be an inevitable choice. But this correlation is as inadequate as his 'synthesis'. It is not only questionable as a theoretical basis but also vague and superficial. However, our rejection of Toynbee's speculation does not mean that we are not prepared to grant the non-Christians any vision of truth. Indeed the vision of God as love, and the commitment to a life of love and devotion are not unknown outside the Christian faith. It is to do justice to this conviction that Toynbee calls into service the anthropological as well as the Indic metaphysical theories, and any formulation of the Christian attitude must reckon seriously with this insight of his.

(1) For Toynbee's synthesis, see above, 315ff. What is important about a religion for apprehension is, according to Toynbee, its 'essence'. To study a religion also means to recover its essence. This 'essence' is chiefly confined to the nature and character of the 'higher spiritual reality.' Thus a synthesis of man's visions of this Reality is the best way of bringing the religions together. For his view of 'essence' in a religion, see Approach, chapter 19, especially 275ff.
II. HENDRIK KRAEMER: THE TOTALITARIAN VIEW OF RELIGION

At the other extreme we have the 'totalitarian' view of religion propounded by Kraemer who first came to grips with it in his study of oriental religions. The important element in this notion is the belief that religion is a living, 'indivisible unity' with a 'fundamental apprehension' in the context of which all its composing elements must be interpreted. This point was mentioned in detail earlier when we outlined the meaning of Kraemer's 'totalitarian' view. In this section we shall concentrate on a critical examination of its validity. But before we take up this task let us see how this idea contradicts the once popular notions of 'point of contact' and 'fulfilment'.

The discussion in Kraemer's writings on the issue of the alleged 'point of contact' is complicated because it is conducted in different contexts. To begin with, Kraemer affirms his belief in a 'point of contact' in respect of the relation between God and man. The confirmation comes from the side of God in the form of the Incarnation. But what is it in or about man which constitutes the 'point' of contact? Or, what exactly is this point? Kraemer however does not wish to say more than that man is capable of entering into responsible partnership with God. When God addresses him in his grace, man is capable of responding to him.

(1) See above, 43f. The 'totalitarian' view is mainly developed in his Tambaram book.
(2) Christian Message, 131. The subjective side is expressed in the universal quest of man for God, which constitutes 'a point of contact for the Message of the Gospel.' ibid, 130.
(3) Christian Message, 133f. Also see our analysis of his understanding of man as the imago Dei, 169ff, especially note his rejection of the substantialist viewpoint. Note however also the substantialist trace in his thought, 176ff, and his affinity to Brunner's view.
In other words, the 'point of contact' is understood in terms of the possibility of communication between God and man. (1) Again, this possibility of human response must be understood, Kraemer warns us, in the context of the dialectical character of human religious life. If 'point of contact' refers to man's response to his religious consciousness which naturally leads him to the revelation in Christ, then there is no point of contact. (2) This conviction is consistently held all through Kraemer's career, and is stated in these words in his later work, the Christian Faith.

There is no point of contact. There is, theologically speaking, no point of contact between the world of God's Righteousness and Wisdom of Christ, and man's δόξα, righteousness, and wisdom knew not God. (I Cor. 1.21) (3)

This understanding of the 'point of contact' is in reality but another way of expressing his notion of the dialectical relation between God and man, which we have already examined. (4)

There is however another aspect to the question of 'point of contact.' This question is also discussed on the 'anthropological' level, viz., the contact' between the Christian Faith and non-Christian faiths, in which the idea of the 'totalitarian' interpretation of religion comes fully into play. Kraemer refers to the meeting of religions in terms of the 'concrete point of contact.'

(1) See Communication, 26, where Kraemer affirms that the possibility of communication belongs to the very essence of 'revelation.'

(2) Christian Message, 132, 136, also 300.

(3) Christian Faith, 363. But note that Kraemer allows a 'practical, human contact' in the sense that the Christian preacher himself who shares in the human religious needs and aspirations provides this 'contact' if he has an 'untiring and a genuine interest' in the whole range of life of the people among whom he works, Christian Message, 140, also 300. Also Christian Faith, 363f.

(4) See above, Study Two, II, B and C.
When the Christian preacher out of his 'apostolic desire' seeks to reach non-Christians with the message of the Gospel, he looks for 'concrete points of contact,' between himself and the non-Christians with whom he wishes to communicate. The temptation is that he turns to the 'similarities' between the Christian faith and the non-Christian religions and regards them as concrete points of contact. This gives rise to the belief that 'it is possible and feasible to produce for every religion a sort of catalogue of points of contact.' Such a catalogue consists, for example, of such items as the ideas of God, of man, of the soul and of redemption and so on. But this belief is misguided because when the individual components of the non-Christian religions are understood in the context of the whole to which they belong, or in the context of their characteristic fundamental apprehensions, they will be seen to be totally different from those in the Christian religion. Thus Bishop Kulandran observes, 'the field of Comparative Religion used for long to hum with activity ... all this activity however, came to a sudden stop when H. Kraemer's book The Christian Message in a non-Christian World came almost crushing into the field ... with his immense authority Kraemer had pronounced the whole project of comparison utterly senseless.'

(1) Christian Message, 134, 135
(2) Kraemer has given us some examples: (a) the 'high-god' (Shang-ti) in the Chinese classical literature. Kraemer admits that Shang-ti is weakly 'theistic', but Chinese culture cares little for 'personality in the Divine.' It is wrong to think that the dynamic character of Biblical God can be 'grafted' onto Shang-ti. Kraemer even refuses to use 'theistic' of the Biblical God, as the word 'theism' is too vague and too philosophical. (b) the difference between the Buddhist and the Christian view of the 'transcendency' of human existence. (c) (in a later part of Christian Message) the difference between Hindu Bhakti theism and the Christian theism. Kraemer rejects any similarity not only because Biblical realism is not 'theism', but also because the monotheistic theism of Bhakti-religions is 'in its total religious apprehension a secondary and inorganic growth', characterized by 'anthropocentric and soteriocentric' considerations. Christian Message, 137r, 229r.
The affirmation of difference also goes against the notion of 'fulfilment'. This idea presupposes a continuity and similarity between the 'truth' which the Christian claims to have been 'revealed', and that which some of the non-Christians treasure in their own traditions. This 'truth' is expressed in beliefs and practices, which accounts for the existence of 'similarities' between the Christian and the non-Christian religions. In Christ the non-Christian's apprehension of 'truth' is supplemented and at the same time purged of error. This idea of 'fulfilment', according to Kraemer, suggests the 'erroneous conception that the lines of the so-called highest development a point naturally in the direction of Christ, and would end in him if produced further.' But this does not happen because the non-Christian elements exist in a different spiritual world altogether.

Let us now ask: how valid is the 'totalitarian' notion of religion? Does Kraemer himself consistently maintain it in his scheme?

There is certainly an element of truth in the 'totalitarian' view, because religion is man's organised understanding and response to the mystery behind phenomena. As such, one would expect some kind of unity running through its various aspects. But it does not mean that this 'unity' allows no autonomy of the parts. The fact that mysticism, even in its extreme forms, is found in the Christian

(1) For a definition of 'fulfilment', see E.C.Dewick, The Christian Attitude to Other Religions, 1953, 47.
(2) Christian Message, 123, See also, 124.
(3) Otto points out that there are utterances in Eckhart which resemble those of Sankara, see above, 323, n.2a 3.
religion, and that the emphasis on the need for mediation in Islam, are facts which compel us to accept the limited autonomy of parts. In other words, the claim of 'individual unity' must be balanced, as Watt points out, by 'the recognition of relative autonomy in the parts.' At times Kraemer seems to have been forced by his own arguments to this conclusion. For instance, he refers to Islam as a 'great syncretistic body wherein are welded in one system' many disparate elements. For this reason, it is an 'unoriginal religion.' This judgment of Islam, as Watt is quick to notice, at least implies that some of these elements can be compared with similar elements in Christianity, and thereby judged in isolation from the indivisible unity of Islam. If a religion like Islam - or Roman Catholicism - is, as he says, 'an indivisible unity of existential apprehension', then it is out of place to speak of it as 'syncretistic' and 'unoriginal.'

Furthermore, Kraemer also admits the possibility of the existence of a 'radical distortion' within a religion, as for instance, in the case of the Christian religion in which 'revelation' is understood by some Christians in a quasi-Islamic fashion. This admission of Kraemer's is, in Watt's opinion, inconsistent with the idea of 'indivisible unity.' 'How can there be "a radical distortion" within an "indivisible unity of existential apprehension" unless this unity is not so indivisible as it is claimed to be? That is, unless some parts are able to develop in relative independence of the whole?'

(1) This is expressed in the deification of Mohammed. In the Shi'i world, Ali is even identified by the extremists with Allah, see above, 499.
(3) Ibid, 5f. For Kraemer's reference to Islam, see Christian Message 215, 220.
(4) Christian Message, 218n.
Not only is the idea of 'indivisible unity' difficult to maintain, but also the identification of an over-all fundamental apprehension of a religion for the explanation of the whole is extremely difficult. In a religion as complicated as 'Hinduism' the difficulty is magnified. This religion, together with all other non-Semitic religions, are called by Kraemer 'naturalistic religions of trans-empirical realization.' As such, Hinduism is a religion which strives 'towards realizing and grasping the identity of (man's) real life with divine reality.' (This is in fact what 'trans-empirical realization' amounts to.) The fundamental apprehension is 'primitive', characterized by 'naturalistic monism.' In other words, God, man and the world are conceived within a monistic totality. (1) 'This absolute monistic Idealism is the inner logic of the whole system (i.e., the total Indian system of life) in all its multiple and dazzling ramifications.' (2) Such a characterization of Hinduism is in fact more in line with certain tradition in Hinduism, such as the mystical non-dualistic trend of thought, (3) which is certainly popular enough. But it is questionable whether it should be made into the over-all principle for interpreting all other aspects of the whole complex of 'Hinduism.' Perhaps the question should be: can it be done without prejudicing the autonomy of other elements in the structure of Hinduism?

(1) See above, 40f
(2) Christian Faith, 104
(3) It should perhaps be further specified that it is the monistic aspect which is emphasized by Kraemer.
There is, for example, a very strong theistic trend in Hinduism to which Kraemer has referred more than once. But from the viewpoint of naturalistic monism, Kraemer understands it only as an 'inorganic growth', as 'anthropocentric' in emphasis and intention, as man's attempt to realize the identity of man with Reality. 'God' is only brought in as a means. 'God' in Hinduism is bereft of 'all real significance,' and man is put in his place. 'Atheism must be considered the most appropriate position.' Religion in this context becomes 'a means for psychological satisfaction or utility.'(1) Kraemer does not for a moment doubt that Ramanuja affirms a personal God of love, because 'the religions demand of the heart for a real deliverance makes a real, personal God necessary.' But he points out that the 'all pervasive naturalistic-monistic spirit with which these authorities (i.e., the scriptures from which Ramanuja derives his teaching) are imbued keeps his conception of God, notwithstanding his religious intention to the contrary, in principle monistic.'(2)

In short, the particular, fundamental apprehension which Kraemer has adopted in his interpretation of Hinduism does not allow him more than a passing recognition of the importance of the theistic trend in Hinduism.

This handling of the theistic trend, however, is challenged by other authorities. 'His conclusion' says Slater, 'that this influence

(1) Christian Faith, 111
(2) Christian Message, 170, 171, italics his.
511.

has been swamped by the monistic emphasis is indeed questionable. (1)

Instead of being secondary in the complex of Hinduism, the theistic trend, in Slater's opinion, is found even in the fundamental Upanishads. In these scriptures there is indication that the universe came into being as the result of the personal decision by a personal Brahman, (2) and that he is the personal God. (3) Furthermore, modern analysis of religious language suggests that some fundamental passages may be interpreted in either a monistic or a theistic sense. (4) The theistic trend is therefore as independent as the monistic trend. Regarding the Bhakti movement Slater further says,

(1) R.H.L. Slater, World Religions and World Community, 1963, 51. Slater also quotes Dr. Basham to support his view. According to Basham, the devotional theism of Ramanuja and his successors has been far more influential than the monism of Sankara. It is theism which is the real inspiration for many Hindu reformers. See Hinduism, in Concise Encyclopedia of Living Faiths, ed. Zaehner, 239. For a short summary of the idea of the personal God, Isvara, in the Bhakti tradition, see Raymond Panikkar, The Unknown Christ in Hinduism, 1964, 119ff.

(2) Slater refers to Chandogya Upanishad, VI, 2.1.3. But see S. Kulandran, who says that 'there are absent from Hinduism the two doctrines of Creation and Fall.' God, he points out, is never a real Creator in Hinduism. Creation is envisaged rather as an 'evolution,' and according to Ramajuna, it is rather in terms of 'emanation.' Kulandran stresses heavily the difference between the Hindu conception of Creation and that of the Christian. Grace in Christianity and Hinduism 1964.

(3) Slater, World Religions and World Community, 1963, 71. He refers to Isa Upanishad, 8

(4) Slater sees in the school of Madhva as the school which 'clearly reflects Christian influence.' This school affirms that salvation does not mean union with God, but rather a drawing close to God by God's grace, and God being eternally distinct from man. The mediatoryship of God's son is also present. Followers of Madhva call his school Sad Vaishnavism in contradistinction to Sri Vaishnavism of Ramanuja. For reference to Madhva's teachings, see Kulandran, Grace in Christianity and Hinduism, 1964, 177ff. N. Smart, Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy, 1964, 115-122. Contra Slater, Krishnaswami questions the alleged Christian influence on Madhva, see Sri Madhva and Madwism, 68.
It was not confined to any one of the schools, monistic or theistic, nor to any one of the sects, Visnaivite nor Saivite, which developed through the same period, a period which began in the centuries preceding the Christian era and produced the Hinduism encountered by the British and other traders from the West in the eighteenth century.... It is a mistake to separate the Bhakti movement and name it, as did Rudolph Otto, another religion. It is indeed a religion of grace, but it should be seen as something which is very much at the heart of the total expression of Hindu faith.(1)

It is difficult to see how full justice can be done to the importance of this development in Hinduism if models like 'naturalistic monism' and 'trans-empirical realization' are made the dominant if not the exclusive models in the interpretation of Hinduism, as in the case of Kraemer, for these models lead naturally towards 'atheism' rather than to the genuine recognition of the autonomous belief of a 'personal God.'(2)

The idea of 'fundamental apprehension' is essential to a 'totalitarian' view of religion. But Kraemer's failure to find an apprehension broad enough to comprehend the greatly variegated elements in Hinduism shows that the relative autonomy of the parts cannot be denied. Such an autonomy renders any attempt to identify the basic 'apprehension' hazardous. There is no need to reject the attempt to identify the fundamental apprehension for a religion, because there is always some trend or trends in it which are dominant. The dominant element may create an ethos within which other elements develop. Yet the acceptance of the presence of a fundamental

---

(1) Slater and H.D. Lewis, World Religions, 1966, 47f.
(2) Bishop Kulandran, while affirming that Hindu Theism is distinct from monism, nevertheless says that theism is constantly in danger of falling back into monism, Grace in Christianity and Hinduism, 1964,235f, also see 232f.
apprehension should not blind us to the possibility of finding autonomous elements which are quite different in emphasis in the same religion.\(^{(1)}\)

The 'totalitarian' concept of religion is difficult as well as ambiguous, and even Kraemer himself fails to maintain it consistently. If the idea of 'radical difference' is thought to be required by the 'totalitarian' view of religion, the exposition of the dubious validity of this view perhaps has encouraged us to take the 'similarities' between the Christian religion and the non-Christian religions more seriously. We have not forgotten Kraemer's affirmation that religions are the concrete expression of the universal 'religious consciousness', thus a form or forms of the human response to the working of the divine Spirit among men. If we find similar responses in worship and behaviour outside the Christian faith, we cannot easily dismiss the non-Christians' claims for a share in the participation in the 'truth' and 'revelation' of God.

Of course it can still be argued that the dialectical nature of the human response which is characteristic of man's religious consciousness, renders his response unacceptable to God, Man being in the state of \(\delta\iota\kappa\iota \kappa\) not only has no knowledge of God except perhaps a shadowy awareness of the transcendent, but also seeks to justify himself even in his approach to 'God.'\(^{(2)}\) In the context of

\(^{(1)}\) It is significant that even Kulandran, who cannot be said to be unsympathetic to Kraemer's 'totalitarian' view, (which he reproduces in essence on page 225, though in a mild way) still finds it necessary to point out that there are individuals like Manikavasagar and Tuka Ram who are capable of rising above the religious systems in which they were nurtured. Grace in Christianity and Hinduism, 1964 238. In them the longing for grace springs from the desire for God's forgiveness, and not from the more frequent desire to solve a metaphysical problem.

\(^{(2)}\) On the question of man's knowledge of God and Kraemer's exegesis on Romans, see above, 184ff
what Kraemer calls man's fundamental errancy, non-Christian religions become man-made paths to his own salvation. (1) But we have already expressed our disagreement with this judgment of Kraemer's. It is a 'dogmatic' attitude which largely reflects the basic dilemma in his understanding of the relation between the divine and the human. (2)

In our opinion, the dialectical view of man does not necessarily rule out any positive response to God, or any valid knowledge of him on the part of the non-Christians. (3)

Not only should we take the 'similarities' between the Christian and non-Christian religions seriously, but also the question of 'points of contact' even on the theological level cannot be brushed aside, a truth which the advocates of the logos doctrine seek to vindicate.

---

(1) See above, 400
(2) For example, see the Summary remarks of Study Two, II,E
(3) See our criticism of Kraemer's dialectical view of man in respect of the issue of man's knowledge of God outside the Christian revelation. above, 189ff, 210f
III. IS 'RELIGION' AN ADEQUATE CONCEPT FOR MISSIONARY ENCOUNTER?

The importance we have given to the 'similarities' between the Christian and the non-Christian religious phenomena might have suggested that 'religion' is the locus of meeting, and that the question of encounter, or even of truth, is largely a matter of comparing the structures and forms of religion. This is certainly not correct. Recently the word 'religion' has again come under attack because it has attracted too much importance in the Christian's understanding of non-Christians. It may help us to clarify our own thought if we look at the word 'religion' more closely in the light of recent criticism.

The meaning of 'religion' is most confusing, as Professor Smith has taken pains to delineate. In our work it has been used mainly in the sense of 'system' of belief, worship, values and patterns of behaviour. In the world there are more systems than one, and these systems are distinguished from one another by such adjectives as 'Christian', 'Hindu' or 'Moslim' and so on. Inevitably the non-Christians are classified according to the 'systems' to which they belong. Thus there arises the temptation for the Christians to see non-Christians more in terms of the 'systems' by which they are labelled than as persons who are living in the presence of God, and who are confronted and acted upon by God.

(1) Smith sees 'religion' first being used in the sense of 'personal piety,' and then as 'overt systems, whether of beliefs, practices, values, or whatever,' and again, as a 'generic summation, religion in general,' to distinguish 'religion' from all other aspects of life. See W.C. Smith, The Meaning and End of Religion, 1963 (Mentor edition) 47f.
Recent attacks on 'religion' come from different quarters and for various reasons. According to van Leeuwen, a distinguished scholar and a disciple of Kraemer, the traditional concept of 'encounter' understood in terms of an 'encounter with religions', as characteristic of the post-Tambaram discussions, is most inadequate. In the modern world, secularization has become world-wide, and it has broken down the oriental 'ontocratic' world as much as the 'Christian' west itself. The non-Christian religions have proved inadequate in meeting the challenge, and in many cases have become subservient to secular ends. The encounter therefore is no more the Christian faith versus the non-Christian faiths but rather an encounter between the Gospel and man as he lives in the secularized society. In the present situation the Gospel can reveal its very actuality, for in the non-Christian world of today the relevance of a life-system and worldview is not, in the first instance, its spiritual power and religious content but the question whether it possesses the power to liberate and renew human society.

The crucial point in van Leeuwen's thought is neatly summed up by Douglas in these words:

The significance of the encounter between religions, therefore, can be measured by the extent to which it reckons with this process (of secularization) and the 'secularism', which may result and which challenges all religious world-views.

(1) A.Th. van Leeuwen, Christianity and World History, 1964, 416f.
(2) Much of van Leeuwen's thesis was already to be found in a paper which he wrote for the International Missionary Council, Department of Missionary Studies, under the title: How Should We Continue the Post-Tambaram Discussion? A tentative outline of a long-term and short-term Programme of Study and Discourse, 1956, see p. 9f.
While van Leeuwen attacks the inadequacy of 'religion' in view of the more urgent issue, secularization, which threatens all religions, Smith questions 'religion' from an existentialist, personalist viewpoint, which for our present discussion is a more important challenge. Smith's objection to 'religion' (or, the specifically named 'religions') is based on two considerations. First, 'religion' or 'the religions' as a concept is but an intellectual reification of a living reality or realities the meaning and significance of which they have for the involved believers are not easily available to the observer. Such a reification fails to bring out the vital, central issue in religion, viz., the living relation of the believers with 'transcendence.' So Smith says,

Not only do reifying concepts of 'religion', in terms such as 'Buddhism' and 'Zoroastrianism,' misrepresent by freezing the inherently personal, living quality of man's religiousness. Further, they do so by omitting not only the vitality but the most significant of all factors in that vitality, namely its relation with transcendence. The observer's concept of a religion is by definition constituted of what can be observed. Yet the whole pith and substance of religious life lies in its relation to what cannot be observed.

The other consideration is the failure of 'religion' to do justice to the dynamic historical character of man's religious existence. The observer of 'religion' often aspires to abstract and generalize, and to define the essence of the variegated religious phenomena which confronts him. But the search for essence is misapplied.

(1) van Leeuwen stresses more than once that there is no going back to the 'age of religion' in our discussion on the question of encounter. See Christianity and World History, 409ff. His stand reminds us of Bonhoeffer's notion of 'religionless Christianity.'

when directed to the reality of historical responses to the transcendent. It is impossible to reduce the 'richness, the radical diversity, the unceasing shift and change, the ramification and complex involvement of the historical phenomena of "religion" into 'essence' without distortion. He gives the example of Hinduism, The empirical religious tradition of the Hindus 'is not to be compressed within or eviscerated into or confused with any systematic intellectual pattern.' (1)

'Religion' in the sense of 'overt system' is not helpful to the historian of religion or the theologian in their understanding of the religious life which they confront. 'The concept is necessarily inadequate for the man who believes and therefore cannot but be misleading for the outsider who does not.' Formalities of one's 'religion' such as creeds and moral code, cult and ritual are at best channels through which one's relation to the transcendent is expressed, and at worst a substitute for such a relation. 'The more direct, immediate, and profound his faith, the more he is concerned with something, or Someone, that far transcends anything that can be denominated as religion. This concept is fundamentally a distraction to his religiousness.' (2) If 'religion' should be used at all, Smith suggests that it should be confined to 'personal piety', which corresponds to what he means by 'faith'. (3)

As a term 'religion' has suffered much first at the hands of the neo-orthodox theologians and their followers, and now even at the hand of a scholar of religion of the highest repute such as Smith. It is

(2) Smith, The Meaning and End of Religion, 1963, 117
(3) Smith, ibid, 47. By 'faith' Smith refers to the 'personal, inner quality in the life of man' which orients towards the transcendent, See 165ff.
interesting to see that these recent attacks are quite unlike the attacks launched from dialectical theology. 'Religion' is not abolished by 'revelation', but rather rejected as being misleading and inadequate as a tool for the job in hand. There is much in Smith's objection when he says that 'religion' does not do justice to the transcendent dimension of man's religious life. When the Christian looks at the non-Christians, it is solely in terms of their systems that they are understood. Moreover, there is also the tendency that when the Christian refers to his own religion, he speaks of it in its ideal form, as what 'it ought to be,'\(^{(1)}\) while referring to the non-Christians he speaks of them as what they are. Perhaps we can add that not infrequently it is the worst in them which is singled out for emphasis. At least some of the extreme utterances in the early Kraemer can be shown to belong to this category.\(^{(2)}\)

Referring to the oriental religions Kraemer says he finds 'no sign of spirituality'. Even the sublime elements are but 'the garb in which the unbridled, materialistic instincts of life try to obtain satisfaction.' A great deal of the so called 'religious life' therefore is pure 'crass materialism.'\(^{(3)}\) It is utterances like these which provokes Smith to write these words,

---

\(^{(1)}\) Smith, 48, 127.

\(^{(2)}\) Besides the early Kraemer,\(^*\) extreme view is also expressed by Professor Schlink of Tübingen. Christianity is placed in sharp contrast to non-Christian religions, as 'Truth' against 'falsehood'. Non-Christian religions represent the 'daemonic impulse to picture God in one's own image,' and therefore any attempt to make links with them 'would be to make links with lies and deception.' Theology and Mission, in International Review of Missions, 1938, 465, 470. Quoted in Dewick, The Christian Attitude to Other Religions, 1955, 41.

The concept 'a religion', and the conceptualizing of named religions, omit..... the transcendent dimension from what they seek to represent. This has to do with the fact that Christians have regularly failed or refused to recognize that the faith of non-
Christians has that transcendence: that God does in fact encounter men in Buddhism, Muslim and Hottentot forms, as he does in the Christian.(1)

While we are sympathetic with Smith's complaint, we must also point out that he has overstated his case. In the case of Kraemer who represents a large section of 'conservative' opinion, 'religion' is not used in a context totally devoid of reference to the transcendent. This is most obvious in his later writings in which the idea of 'religious consciousness' is given a prominent part. Religious consciousness can be said to be the 'locus' in which the divine-human encounter is taking place. As such, it has a transcendent reference. Since religion is but the concrete expression of this consciousness, therefore it also carries a transcendent dimension. Man is inescapably related to God in all aspects of his life, and there is no religion in which God is not involved in some ways. But again, we must grant some validity to Smith's complaint even though he seems to have overstated his case when he says Christians are not prepared to see any transcendent dimension in other religions. Kraemer's recognition of the non-Christian religions' relation to the transcendent is made only in the context of a dialectical view of man which, as we have pointed out earlier, is not congenial to a positive relation of man to the transcendent. This applies to the position of Kraemer and Brunner. (2) In Kraemer's opinion, man in

---

(2) For Kraemer's view and our criticism, see above, 201-211, 399-403 for example. In his book, Smith gives an example in the case of Brunner who neglects the transcendent reference, see The Meaning and End of Religion, 1963, 127
his can only render a 'distortedly positive' response to God in his religion. Thus even in his relation to God he is still asserting himself, defining for himself what the term of that relationship should be. In the end, religion, despite the transcendent dimension implied, is very much a man-made 'path' built to bridge the gap from man's side to God. Here we see man forcing his way back to the 'tree of life.' We can agree with Bishop Kulandran that there is not much difference between Kraemer's earlier, radical view and his later, purportedly more 'sympathetic' view. There may be a difference between saying that non-Christian systems are human achievements and saying that they are distortions; but the difference is slight.\(^{(1)}\)

Perhaps we should modify Smith's criticism: it is not that (as in the case of Kraemer) the transcendent dimension is totally absent in the notion of 'religion'. It is rather that this dimension has not been taken seriously enough, due to the presupposition (viz., the antithetical divine-human relation) of the dialectical standpoint.

Smith has accentuated for us the importance of the transcendent dimension in our understanding of the religious life of the non-Christians. The importance of this point cannot be overstated. If we believe that God is involved in all human religious life (as Kraemer rightly affirms) and that he is acting in all actions on the self (as Niebuhr says) then the response of the self cannot be understood only in terms of his response to his environments, or in the context of religions, only in terms of the religious traditions.

\(^{(1)}\) Kulandran, Kraemer Then and Now, in *International Review of Missions*, vol.46, 1957.176
and intellectual creedal formulations in which he is nurtured. His response is a response basically to God, whether he is fully conscious of it or not. In other words, he is capable of transcending his own environments and even the religious systems to which he belongs. Bishop Kulandran has given us two examples, in the persons of Manikkavasagar and Tuka Ram, whose responses cannot be fully explained by the religious traditions to which they officially belong. (1) Smith himself emphasizes this point in these words:

To live religiously is to live — in a given (religious) context, yes; and the context matters, yes. Yet to live, at least as a human being, and especially as a religious human being vis-a-vis God is to be more than simply a prisoner, a victim, an autonomic reaction to one's mundane environment. (2)

Once this point is grasped, then we are in a better position to understand why Kraemer’s attempt to interpret the religious phenomena or life of the non-Christians with models such as 'naturalistic monism' or 'fundamental errancy' in terms of self-justification, self-assertion and self-redemption are unsatisfactory and misleading. These models do not only rule out the possibility of any valid response to God which transcends one’s religious systems, but also nullify the validity of those similar patterns of responses as embodied in the religious traditions of the non-Christians.

The emphasis on man’s response to God has direct bearing on the question of truth. Since what is important in man’s religious life is his response to the impact of the divine on him, religious truth therefore is more likely to be found in the area of response or commitment than anywhere else. This understanding of truth is not

(1) See above, 513 note 1
(2) Smith, Question of Religious Truth, 1967, 80.
in contradiction to the treasured Christian belief that truth is in the heart of God, or the affirmation that it is revealed in Jesus Christ, who is the truth. As in the case of 'revelation', the truth of God needs to be responded to, interiorized and lived if it is to become a living truth for man. Religious truth therefore is a living relation between God and man, crystallised in a life truly responsive to God, which means also truly responsive to man and to one's total situation.

We should not forget Smith's warning that the believer's relation to 'transcendence' often eludes the observer. 'The participant can see very clearly that the outsider may know all about a religious system, and yet may totally miss the point.' So in our attitude towards, or evaluation of, the religious life of the non-Christians we must know our own limitation. We are handling something the essential 'pith and substance' of which is most elusive. But it does not mean that we can say nothing about the non-Christian's faith at all, or must be silent on the question of truth. In so far as man's relation to God needs to find expressions in life, it is not impossible for the observer to infer, by the exercise of 'imaginative sympathy,

(1) Dodd, concluding his examination of the notion of 'truth' in the Fourth Gospel, says that the term ἡγεμόνεια in John rests upon common Hellenistic usage in which it hovers between the meanings of 'reality' or the 'ultimately real,' and 'knowledge of the real'. So the knowledge of God which is life eternal at least carries the meaning of apprehension of ultimate reality. But now this reality is manifested in Christ who is himself the ἡγεμόνεια. Thus ἡγεμόνεια is now identified with a concrete person. To know the truth means to be united with Him who is the truth. Truth involves personal relation with Jesus Christ. The Fourth Gospel 1953, reprinted 1958, 177f.

(2) This understanding of religious truth in terms of commitment or response is developed by Smith in the last two chapters of his book, Question of Religious Truth, 1967.

disciplined by intellectual rigor and checked by elaborate procedures, cross-checked by vigorous criticism,' what goes on in another man's heart and mind.\(^1\) We do not suggest that the method of sympathetic inference can overcome the problem posed by subjectivity,\(^2\) nor can we, being historically and culturally limited, fully grasp the thought and symbols through which the non-Christian's commitment is expressed. So our interpretation as well as our judgment of the non-Christian's religious life, even on the matter of truth, can only be approximate. Should we see a non-Christian response to God (and man) which bears some resemblance to that of the Christian in direction and intention, we should be quick to recognize the grain of truth embodied in such a response.\(^3\)

The language of response or commitment in relation to the question of truth is personal, and its content theistic. As such it has, as we must admit, only a limited range of application.\(^4\) It is more

\(^{(1)}\) The way of inference is recommended by Smith in our understanding of the religious life of the non-Christians, ibid, 169ff.

\(^{(2)}\) See our reference to Kristensen and Kraemer above, 36ff.

\(^{(3)}\) Smith has given an example in the case of Islam how the question of truth transcends the earthly path by which man has arrived at his faith in God. See _Question of Religious Truth_, 1967, 20.

\(^{(4)}\) We suspect that Smith's use of 'transcendence' instead of 'God' is prompted by the desire to widen his existentialist notion of 'truth' to cover even the 'atheistic' religions. Faith is, in his scheme, man's relation to God. But he also understands it as man's living relation with 'transcendence.' The word 'transcendence' is confusing and ambiguous in Smith's thought. When he refers to the 'transcendent' dimension of religious life, he is in fact saying that religious life is more than the external phenomena represented in the forms and structure of 'religion'. Thus 'transcendent dimension' refers man to the beyond which eludes the observer. But when 'transcendence' is used as that to which man's reference is directed, it takes on at least three meanings: (a) It refers to divine reality, to primal being, which is the primary meaning. (b) Transcendence may simply mean any object or idea that elicits man's whole-hearted allegiance. Object can be mundane or super-mundane. (c) Transcendence can be the ideal pattern of behaviour, such as dharma in Buddhism. For an analysis of Smith's use of 'transcendence', see Antonio Roberto Gualtieri, _Faith, Tradition and Transcendence: A Study of Wilfred Cantwell Smith_, in _Canadian Journal of Theology_, vol. XV, 1969, 102-111, especially 110f.
readily applicable to the Semitic group of religions which bear a
general identity in regard to the vision of God. It may also be
applicable with greater difficulty to the Bhakti tradition in
Hinduism, for example. We do not know how it is applied (if it can
be at all) to Buddhism which on the whole is adamantly atheistic,
even though commitment in terms of self-giving love to fellowmen,
which the Christians treasure, is not absent. Perhaps even in this
case we can still recognize the truth-value in such a response,
hoping that God will one day 'reveal' to us the mystery of his working
among men as we continue to learn to listen to what he has said and
is still saying to man in a language which is still beyond our
comprehension.

Let us close this sub-section by looking at the question with
which we began. Is 'religion' an adequate concept for the understanding
of the missionary encounter with the non-Christians? Obviously, it
is not, because the Christian does not go into an encounter with
'systems' of beliefs and forms of worship, important as they are for
the life of millions of people. What he encounters is not a system,
but a person, one who like himself is also living in the presence of
God whose impact on man demands a response, and the love of God
forbids us to think that there is no valid and acceptable response
outside the Christian faith. If 'religion' directs our attention
solely, or even mainly, to the question of structure and form of the
'systems', to which the non-Christians are classified, so much so that
we understand them only in terms of the dominant systems and institutions,
(very often the worst side of them) then 'religion' should be dropped,
as Smith has suggested. (1) However, it is difficult to visualize that

(1) Smith himself suggests the phrase 'cumulative tradition' to take
its place.
such a popular word (comparable to the enigmatic 'revelation') will ever be banished altogether, as Smith would have it. Perhaps it is more realistic a proposition if we supplement the traditional connotation with a strong sense of what Smith calls the 'transcendent' reference, though admittedly the word 'faith' is a better and more narrow, hence exact, carrier of the 'transcendent dimension'. However, 'religion' as a concept calls our attention to the fact that it is this historical-cultural-sociological structure which provides the context in which man's response to the impact of the divine takes place, and it is this context which provides his response a content totally and a direction, even though his response is not necessarily conditioned by the context. It is not the locus where religious truth is to be found, nevertheless it is also in a particular religious content that we can better understand the response of man to God. It seems that a firmer grasp of the limitation of the word is what we need, not its abolition.
IV CONCLUSION

Toynbee and Kraemer represent two vastly different attitudes. We have examined them and found them wanting. We affirm with Toynbee that truth is not to be denied of the non-Christians even though we reject his superficial and strained synthesis. The psychological theory of religion which he puts forth to account for the diversity in unity is too general and insubstantial to be taken seriously. But the belief that non-Christians also participate in the truth of God is in fact quite in line with the general emphasis among Christian leaders who hold some kind of logos doctrine, which Kraemer has failed to dislodge. This belief is prompted by our understanding of the love of God. God's love forbids us to think that the non-Christians wander for centuries in spiritual darkness without comfort and guidance. (1)

Despite the exaggerated emphasis on the radical difference between God's truth and man's aspiration, between the treasured truth of one religion and another, Kraemer does touch on an important issue: a frank recognition of the particularity of the Christian faith is necessary in any attempt to formulate the Christian attitude to the non-Christian world, even though Christianity as a religion also stands alongside with the non-Christian religions under God's judgment. The 'historical' nature of the Incarnation and the affirmation of the 'personal God' for instance, cannot be sacrificed in order to achieve a harmonious and congenial synthesis. The Christian must realize that he encounters the non-Christians as a Christian, and his commitment to his Christian faith is his presupposition. He must begin from

(1) See the reference to Bleeker, above, 398
this particular point of view, with a particular criterion of judgment. A genuine recognition of the particularity of his position, and an unswerving loyalty to 'Jesus Christ' as the criterion of judgment, are the only means to overcome the threat of 'relativism.'

In the missionary encounter, the question of truth is bound to come to the forefront of our thought. The Christian must know that it is non-Christians, living persons, with whom he enters into a dialogue, and not with 'systems' and institutions which are conveniently called 'religion' or 'religions'. The transcendent character of man's religious life points to response as the locus of religious truth. In the following Study we shall return to the question how 'Jesus Christ' can be the 'criterion' of truth in terms of man's response to God, and consider whether Kraemer and Niebuhr are not also concerned with the truth in human response when they speak of 'revelation'.
STUDY FIVE: IMPLICATIONS FOR A VIABLE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE

In this concluding Study we shall ask: what have we learnt from our writers in regard to the question of missionary encounter? Or rather, what are the implications in our study of their thought for the formulation of a viable Christian attitude towards non-Christians with their different views and practices?

From our previous analysis of the thought of our writers we can draw some conclusions which we consider adequately established. First, there is no escape from the reality of 'relativism' which makes its impacts upon man in different aspects of life: historical, cultural, social, religious and so on. One has to decide for oneself to what extent one wishes to remain or not to remain a relativist; and for the theologian, how to be a relativist without being agnostic. This is the problem with which Niebuhr wrestles when he says, 'It is not apparent that one who knows that his concepts are not universal must also doubt that they are concepts of the universal, or that one who understands how all his experience is historically mediated must believe that nothing is mediated through history.' (1)

Toynbee and Kraemer represent in themselves two rather extreme reactions to the impact of 'relativism,' especially in regard to the encounter of faiths. While Toynbee regards it as positively emancipating, as the best means to settle the quarrel among religions (and wars of religions), Kraemer regards it as an evil which undermines the question of truth. To fight this evil of our time he calls into service the loaded notion of 'revelation'. But unfortunately 'revelation' is basically an intellectualistic concept, as we have argued earlier.

(1) Revelation, 18f.
Intellectual activity is involved. But it is this intellectual activity which must bear a historical, relative character in view of the history-relatedness of man. In so far as 'revelation' is intellectualistic, it does not escape the plight of 'relativism', and therefore is incapable of overcoming the problems the latter has posed.

Not only has 'revelation' failed to overcome the epistemological problems involved in 'relativism', but on the contrary, to the sensitive mind of Niebuhr, 'revelation' is threatened. The notion of 'revelation' in traditional Christian use refers to the 'events' in history through which God has made himself known. But the uncertainty about what really happened throws the notion of 'revelation' into question. Thus Niebuhr comes up with the suggestion that revelation is not to be found in 'external', but only in 'internal' history. But the price he has to pay is too high, because he has allowed the method to impose itself on the very content of 'revelation'.

Second, our analysis of the anthropologies of our writers also suggests that one's understanding of man greatly affects one's view of God and the question of 'revelation'. Again, one's notion of man is characterized by one's interaction with the cultural situation, to which we have paid much attention. For example, the existentialist method of Niebuhr which results in the formulation of the 'responsible self' (not forgetting that there are other factors which have gone into the formulation of this notion) determines the meaning of 'salvation' which again leads to his concentration on the unity of power and goodness in his understanding of God. His rejection of
metaphysics, grounded in his awareness of man's history-relatedness, has created difficulties in his treatment on the personhood of God and the Trinity. In the case of Toynbee, a 'synthesis' is thought possible only in the context of the Jungian type of psychology and the Indic monism which he has taken to heart. Kraemer's anthropology is characterized by a fundamental problematical relation between the divine and the human, expressing itself in a rather lopsided dialectical method which in turn determines his understanding of God, revelation and the dialogue between the Christian and the non-Christians in a manner which brings the dialogue to a standstill. Again, all the three writers accept some sort of general revelation, but because of the difference in their understanding of man, and of God's relation to man, quite different notions of man's knowledge of God is produced, about which we need not elaborate any more. Our analysis of their views of man is illuminating in so far as it enables us to see how far their interaction with contemporary culture has affected their notions of man, God and revelation which are the major issues in the religious thought of a writer.

Third, the concept of revelation is far from clear. It is a blanket term covering a wide range of things which are incompatible. The confusion and contradiction, as illustrated for us by a comparative study of Kraemer and Niebuhr, show that we do not have as clear a knowing of God as the word suggests. We have already dwelt long on this point, and we shall come back to it again later. The confusion is quite understandable because the method with which the theologian approaches 'revelation' often imposes itself on the content and form of 'revelation'. Meaning varies as approaches are many. If we do
not have a clear knowledge of God, should we still use 'revelation' when we speak of God's involvement in human history?

Yet the popularity of the notion 'revelation', despite ambiguity, has not abated among Christian writers. Kraemer uses it as the criterion of truth in his dialectical judgment on man's religious life. In doing so he has inaugurated in missionary encounter a new epoch, which is still very much the rule of the day. We have already expressed serious misgivings about the validity of his view. We do not think it justifiable to exclude non-Christians in the participation of the truth of God on the theological level on account of 'revelation' (which he identifies, as we pointed out earlier, with Jesus Christ), even though there is much in the non-Christian world (so also in the Christian world) which one could hardly conscientiously regard as 'truth'.

To break away from the tradition of Kraemer it is necessary not only to reject his handling of 'revelation', but also to evolve a new language to describe the divine-human encounter other than 'revelation' in view of the ambiguity of the term. Is there another way in which we can more meaningfully speak of God and the Christian faith which also opens a new dimension in our dialogue with the non-Christians? Can we find some clues in our analysis of Kraemer and Niebuhr to help us formulate a more viable Christian approach?
(A) Response and commitment - a more realistic approach for Christian theology

Even though 'revelation' is essentially intellectualistic, nevertheless in our examination of the use made of the notion by Kraemer and Niebuhr we have also noticed a shift towards response and commitment. (1) This is so because of the existential nature of our knowledge of God, of which both Kraemer and Niebuhr are fully aware. Let us take a closer look at this response-element in their schemes.

The existential nature of our knowledge of God, which comes through 'revelation', is expressed by Kraemer in these words, 'The right knowledge of God expresses itself necessarily in the right life-relationship with him.' (2) This is in line with what he says about the human correlate to 'revelation' if it is to be a revelation to man, which is mainly characterized by obedience. But what is this 'expression' of right relation? What is the content and nature of this 'obedience'? It is understood that 'right relation' and 'obedience' must be taken in relation to 'Jesus Christ.' But to make them more concrete and more meaningful Kraemer has to spell out more clearly this response to 'Jesus Christ.' This he attempts to do when he elaborates on the new existence in Jesus Christ as one of the ways we can speak about the Christian faith. (3) This new existence

(1) For Kraemer, see above, 363ff, for reference to Niebuhr, above, 449f. The terms response and commitment have been referred to many times already. We regard them as almost equivalent in meaning. Commitment is a more sustained mode of response, involving discipline and determination.

(2) See above, 187

(3) Christian Message, 77f, he also speaks of other features such as the Incarnation, justification by faith, reconciliation and atonement, the Kingdom of God as possible ways of describing the reality of the Christian faith, ibid, 73ff.
is a 'new way and quality of life,' which can also be described as 'the way of the Cross, of giving up all self-assertion and self-regard, the way of conflict with the world, of martyrdom and ruin; it is also the life of victory, of a new creation in Christ, of faith and hope and love, the way of absolute trust in the reality of God, His acts and promise in Christ....' Therefore to proclaim the Gospel is to entreat man 'to participate in this divine reality of new life, and faith means obedient receptivity to this reality.' God has acted in history, in Jesus Christ through whom he has made possible a new existence which is man's salvation. But Kraemer is quick to point out that the new life in Christ is only a 'reflex' of revelation,

But in describing the Christian faith as a way and quality of life, we must never forget that..... we are virtually describing the reflex upon this revelation, the new kind of life and the new possibilities that have been made possible by the acts of God, who created in Jesus Christ the beginning of a new order.(1)

However, it is questionable whether the 'reflex' of revelation can be clearly distinguished from revelation itself, in view of the existential nature of our knowing of God. We have already argued that the affirmation of our knowing God, or Jesus Christ, cannot be separated from response. (2) This is in fact what Kraemer himself believes, which is obvious in his remarks on the first chapter of Romans. The Gentiles did not know God because they did not respond to him in an acceptable manner. (3) Therefore, to speak of 'revelation' apart from its 'reflex' or 'inherent correlation' or response and

(1) Christian Message, 78
(2) See above:36.5., especially footnote 3, which refers to Downing's argument.
(3) Christian faith, 294
commitment is to render 'revelation' unintelligible. There is no 'revelation' except a 'revelation' to man. The logic of the use of the word requires that response and commitment should be regarded at least as belonging to the structure of 'revelation'.

Since response and commitment refer to the reality of new life made possible in Christ, therefore for practical purposes they can be equated with the term 'salvation'. Perhaps one should say, to respond, and to commit oneself to the new life in Christ is one's 'salvation'. Thus it is natural that there is the tendency for the meaning of 'revelation' and 'salvation' to become merged in Kraemer's thought, as we have observed earlier. (1)

In Niebuhr's writings, the note of response in his reference to 'revelation' is also obvious. 'Revelation' specifies those events in which radical faith was elicited. (2) Again, when Christians refer to Jesus Christ as the 'revelation of God,' says Niebuhr, they ought not to have less than three 'notes' of faith in mind: that the valuing, saving power in the world is the principle of being itself, that this principle gives and maintains worth, and that they have been called upon to make the cause of that God their cause. (3) The last 'note' clearly indicates a response, with a distinctive style. It is a universal love of being, a 'consent of being to being' which is the mark of a new life made possible for the Christians by what God has done in the events of Jesus Christ. The content of this new existence is exemplified in the moral mediator Jesus Christ, who in

---

(1) See above, 254
(2) Radical Monotheism, 42.
(3) Radical Monotheism, 42.
his own person has demonstrated how it is like as 'man living to God and God living with man.' (1) Even though Niebuhr says that the Christian should respond to God rather than to Jesus, nevertheless in respect of the content of such a response there is little difference, because the pattern of commitment is structured on that of Jesus Christ who has demonstrated how man should live before God.

The coalescence of the meaning of 'revelation' and 'salvation' is more obvious in the case of Niebuhr, with the latter emerging more important. This happens when the idea of integrity of selfhood (which is 'salvation' for Niebuhr) becomes a dominant concern in his scheme. (2) Integrity of selfhood is possible when man responds in his total being to God who acts in all things upon the self. Response and integrity of selfhood belong together, resulting in the 'responsible self.' (3) But since such undivided response to God is included in the structure of 'revelation', therefore one can also say that 'salvation' is comprehended in the same structure, though it is given more stress in his later writings than 'revelation' itself. The case of Niebuhr's is actually more involved, because it is the concern for 'integrity' of selfhood which, as we have argued, determines the content of 'revelation.' (4)

The important thing to notice in the notion of 'revelation' as in the thought of Kraemer and Niebuhr is that in both cases there is a recognition of the human role in terms of response and commitment which are taken as integral to the structure of revelation. In the

(1) Christ and Culture, 29
(2) See above, 452ff
(3) For reference to 'responsible self,' see above, 232ff
(4) See above, 453f, 475
course of their arguments there is a shift in one way or another from the noetic aspect to the response-aspect of 'revelation'. When the emphasis is on the noetic aspect, 'revelation' is taken to mean a great number of things, from 'Biblical realism' as the proper approach to the content of the scriptures to the illumined human situation through which we see the reconciling acts of God. But from the point of view of response and commitment in living relationship there is much in common between Kraemer and Niebuhr. The affirmation of knowing God (as this takes place through 'revelation') is made in terms of man's response to the events of Christ through which God has acted, and commitment to the pattern of a new existence made possible for us by God himself. The general characteristics and direction of this new life is markedly God-centred, self-giving, directed to our neighbours, motivated and empowered by the love of God. It is anchored in a radical trust in the goodness of God to all beings, and a consent to serve all beings; it is rooted in the experience of forgiveness which makes a new start possible. It is not suggested that Niebuhr and Kraemer do not differ in the spelling out of the detail of what the new life should be. Indeed, it is extremely doubtful if one could find two Christians who would agree exactly on this matter. Perhaps we should be content with a general agreement as to the direction and style of this new life made possible for man in the events of Jesus Christ, which is what it is in the case of Kraemer and Niebuhr.

(1) For Kraemer's description of the Christian faith and life, see Christian Message, chapter three. For Niebuhr's exposition of the Christian life from the point of view of love to God and man, see Purpose, 27-39. See especially the meaning of love on 35.
To concentrate on the response aspect in the structure of 'revelation' points Christian theology in a healthier direction. It gives not only the word 'revelation' but also theology an intelligible basis, in so far commitment to the reality of the new existence is capable of observation and substantiation in life and experience to a certain extent. Moreover, it is closer to the minds of the early Christians. It has been forcibly argued that it is this commitment to the new life in Christ, or rather, 'salvation', as Downing puts it, that was foremost in their minds, and not 'revelation'.

The early Christians believed that God had prepared a way out of sin and death for them in the coming of Jesus. The primitive kerygma is more or less a recital of the events of Jesus Christ in which they believed God had acted for their salvation, and hence response in terms of repentance was called forth, and commitment to a new existence made possible by Jesus Christ, required. Within this general pattern, the Christian also spoke of 'knowing' God, but such knowing was heavily qualified and assimilated into the concept of salvation. To illustrate this a long passage from Downing may be quoted:

..... the early Christians kept their feet on the ground, they live here and now. They do not pretend to an awareness of 'God' which their lives and experience cannot substantiate. But they believe that 'God' has made them his people, at the cost of the death of his 'Son', and through the coming of the 'spirit'; and to this 'God', in the pattern of behaviour his actions suggest and which the 'Son' has taught, they commit themselves ..... Within this very broad pattern of self-commital-in-dependence, the New Testament canon itself records no 'revelation'.

(1) This is the thesis of Downing's book, Has Christianity a Revelation? 1964, see especially the final chapter.
no clarity that would make exclusiveness easy; only a great variety of response and belief. The central core... was a committal that in deed, and later in word, treated the 'Son' as 'God'; and that treated the new possibility of life in love in the freedom of the community as 'God' too. This was the 'Spirit'. And it is to such a pattern of free self-committal-independence within community that today's Christian may surrender himself. (1)

We have already noticed that 'revelation' has been used to comprehend within its structure the more basic concern of the early Christian community, viz., 'salvation.' But in Niebuhr we also see the beginning of the break through of salvation into its own, which in turn determines the content of 'revelation'. It indicates at least that salvation is too rich and important to be included within the vague structure of 'revelation'. Moreover, 'revelation' fails, as it has been suggested, to sustain an adequate analysis of the death of Christ which in the New Testament has been understood in different manner, which gives rise to many theories of Atonement. (2) So there is no advantage, but confusion, in stretching 'revelation' beyond its breaking point to include 'salvation' and a host of other things. Since words like 'salvation' or response and commitment to the new existence made possible in Christ are more true to the primary concern of the early Christians when they sought to describe the mighty acts of God among men, theology may gain more clarity if the emphasis is shifted to the response aspect of the Christian faith. This way of speaking is true to the existential nature of any claim of 'knowing

(1) Downing, ibid, 283f. Downing also suggests that Christology, or even Trinity, is but a derivative from the context of salvation experience.

(2) See John McIntyre, The Shape of Christology, 1966, 165f. Professor McIntyre gives an example in which two quite different theories are concerned.
God', which is what 'revelation' primarily wants to say. There is an added advantage in the language of response and commitment. Since our commitment is a commitment to the new quality of life made possible by the Christ event, it follows that more attention has to be directed to the life of Jesus which illuminates this 'new quality' and 'pattern'. A renewed emphasis on the life and teaching of Jesus (without the distortions of liberal theology) should redress the balance upset by the development in modern theology which is characterized by a lack of interest in, and a scepticism towards, the historical life of Jesus.

It is perhaps most unlikely that 'revelation', ambiguous as it is, will ever be dropped from popular use in Christian theology. Our suspicion of the word, however, does not necessarily land us in 'relativism' (or rather 'theological equivalence' of religions) or 'scepticism.' We do 'know' (using the word now more in the sense of an intellectual grasp of truth) something of God, even though what we know is not enough to qualify for 'revelation' which in modern theological literature suggests a clarity which is hard to find. (1)

We 'know' for instance, that God has acted in a characteristic way in Jesus Christ for our salvation. But how this salvation is to be effected is not self-evident, hence the many theories of Atonement which have created endless controversies in the history of the Church. In his acting in the events of Jesus Christ it can be said that God

(1) There is in fact a tendency to make this 'unveiling' mysterious and ambiguous. See for example Kraemer's statement: 'revelation in its proper sense is what is by its nature inaccessible and remains so, even when it is revealed.' Christian Message, 69, italics his. It makes one wonder why it should be 'revelation' then.
has demonstrated that he is love, but we do not yet fully know the boundary and profundity of it. Nor do we know how God's love is related to the religious needs of non-Christians and their final destiny. We 'know' that God is powerful and good because the resurrection of Jesus shows at least that he has the final word over death and sin, and that he is the affirmer of beings and not their denier. Because he is love, it can be said that we know he harkens to our prayers as an earthly father would listen patiently to his children. We call him a 'personal God' because on the one hand we affirm that there is a reciprocity in the divine-human relation, despite the many problems associated with the idea of the personal; and on the other hand, it is the best means available to us to maintain a strict distinction between God and man in thought and worship. There is still much that we do not know, because at every point we think we can say we 'know' him in the noetic sense there is a great variety of interpretations, not always compatible with one another. For this reason, 'revelation' seems too ambiguous a word to use to denote our present state of knowledge.

Having said that we do 'know' something of God, we still have to enquire as to the nature of the word 'know' or 'knowledge' so used. Even within the very limited 'knowledge' of God which the Christians can modestly claim to have, after much qualification and hedging about, there are different types, some more direct, some less direct and more unsure. For instance, our 'knowledge' of God as a God of love can be said to have a more direct reference in the sense that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ have affirmed it. But there is a less direct type of 'knowledge' of God, e.g., the 'will'
of God to save man, which is 'made known to us'. God's will is that the whole world finally should be saved through Jesus Christ. This 'knowledge' of his will, however, is not directly demonstrated by Jesus Christ and his cross, but nevertheless it is a legitimate inference on the basis that God is love and that he has acted for man's salvation. In the Pauline epistles there is already present evidence of such inference, or rather, 'guess-work', which Christians later regarded as part and parcel of our revealed knowledge of God. In the case of God's will to save man, it can be said that both 'universalism' and 'particularism' can be traced back to Paul. The point we wish to make is that even in 'knowledge' of God there is still much guess-work involved. So it behoves us to be cautious when we say we 'know' him, or his 'will'. It is our hope that God will allow us to 'know' him with clarity, 'as we are known,' at the eschatological moment of the Last Day when our 'knowledge' of him which we now hold will be verified. Even though now there is much guess-work involved in our knowing of God, nevertheless it is not purely intellectual guess-work which is detached from our life-situation. It is rather a self-committed guess-work. When we say we 'know' we mean that we believe, we affirm, and we act on the basis of what we affirm to be true, hoping that it will be verified for us in the future.

(1) For this aspect of Paul's theology, see the contrasting passages, Rom. 11.25-32 in which universal salvation is implied, and II Thess. 1.8-9 which suggests otherwise. D.E.H. Whiteley, after examining the various passages relevant to this aspect, suggests that no clear conclusion can be drawn. Paul has not told us clearly enough what would happen to the non-Christians. See Theology of St. Paul, 271ff.
It is by clinging to the little that we 'know' that we hope to escape the plight of 'relativism' and scepticism.\(^1\) We have, for instance, to reject Toynbee's synthesis because even the little we know does not allow for the possibility of the ultimate elimination of the distinction between God and man, as Toynbee's notion of 'undifferentiated Reality' suggests. But it is doubtful indeed if we 'know' enough of God to reject very similar claims of non-Christians, or even the views from within Christian groups other than our own. Even though we 'know' that God has acted in Jesus for our salvation, we cannot rule out the possibility that he has also acted elsewhere among men in a positive way for their own good, and we should certainly not delimit for him how he should act under different circumstances, an assumption which seems to have been suggested in any view of God or 'revelation' which rigorously rejects any other view which differs, even slightly, from its own.

This comment naturally brings us to the age-long, moth-eaten general-special revelation controversy. This controversy is exciting and clear cut only if we know what 'revelation' is in unambiguous terms. But as it is, it makes one wonder whether the controversy can ever be solved satisfactorily. Kraemer's concession to 'general revelation' is not promising, because it reduces it to a shadowy limbo. Not only is there no scriptural support for the view that God has not worked in non-Christian religions (a point with which Kraemer heartily agrees), but also we cannot rule out the possibility that God is 'known' also in non-Christian religions, and not only through the historical figure of Jesus alone. The motif of the logos doctrine

\(^1\) 'Relativism' here refers not so much to 'historical relativism' from which there is no escape, but rather to 'theological equivalence of religion,' as noted before.
is just to make this point clear. We may say that their knowledge of God is not adequate, but distorted, or needs to be 'corrected' and 'fulfilled' in Jesus Christ. But we must also know that neither is our 'knowledge' of God clear, nor our response blameless. Kraemer's rejection of non-Christians' claims is more a reflection of his particular view of divine-human relation than a necessary dogma of the Christian faith.

If what is important in our Christian faith is man's response with a clear noetic grasp of the truth of God, then Christians fail badly in view of what has been said over 'revelation'. The Church as a whole has also failed badly because the many councils and creedal formulae have not been very successful in settling disputes and bringing about unity on matter of belief for all Christians. But fortunately we are not called primarily to have a sound 'knowledge' of God, or of the mystery of his activity in human history. We are called to commit ourselves to the new existence now made available to us. As to this new existence, its general direction and style, we can say with a fair amount of certainty that we 'know', but as to the mystery of God's 'revelation' we cannot. We are still looking forward to the time when he will reveal himself to us to the extent that we know enough to enable us to use the word 'revelation' meaningfully.

In the dialogue with non-Christians we agree with Kraemer that we need, as Christians, to take Jesus Christ as the criterion of truth. Since the approach in terms of response and commitment to God's act in the Christ-event is a sounder way than 'revelation' of God's involvement in human history, how is Jesus Christ to be taken as the criterion of truth in this approach? Can the language of response
and commitment help us in the formulation of a position from which we can take an open attitude to the claims of non-Christians which at the same time remaining true to our own criterion?

In view of our present concern we can see now the attractiveness of Niebuhr's confessional approach, even though it was not formulated with the intention of solving problems in regard to the Christian dialogue with non-Christians. The attractiveness lies in its characteristically open attitude, which is reflected in Niebuhr's treatment of 'revelation.'\(^{(1)}\) However, there is also some ambiguity about it which Niebuhr has not made any attempt to solve. Let us return therefore to his confessional position, this time from a critical point of view.

---

B. **Confessional standpoint – a critical evaluation**

We agree with Niebuhr that the confessional attitude or standpoint is the most appropriate one for theology in view of the inescapable relatedness of man to history. The observer can only begin with a particular and cultural **locale** because he has nothing else. If he is a theologian, it means that he has to begin with what has happened to the historical community which makes faith possible. Since he belongs to the community of faith he comes to grips with reality as it is understood in that particular community. Even though he only sees

\(^{(1)}\) See above, 450f
reality from a limited point of view, he need not question the validity of what he sees. But then Niebuhr also suggests that one should not deny other views of reality which are beyond the perspective of one's own historical viewpoint. Herein lies the ambiguity: can we simply confess a position without attempting to regard it as true universally? Or in other words, can one simply regard one's own viewpoint as valid without having to negate other views, especially those which are in obvious contradiction to what one holds as true?\(1\)

The ambiguity can be illustrated by the reference to the nature of reality (in Toynbee's sense, Ultimate Reality). As we have seen, there are two major views: either reality is personal, whom the Christians call God, or it is impersonal. We have already said that there is no viable category between the personal one and the impersonal.\(2\) Therefore it is a matter of 'either-or' when one makes a decision in faith. Niebuhr's own view is that of the personal. On the principle of non-negation, however, the impersonal view will also have to be admitted as valid. This handling of the issue will land him on the path along which Toynbee has trod, and monism as well as a rejection of reason are the natural outcome. This is a path which Niebuhr certainly does not wish to follow, because in his opinion, the self-other structure is given in life and cannot be transcended. In affirming this belief he is in fact denying the principle of non-negation, even though he has not said so, because to affirm one view is at the same time to negate other views which are in contradiction to it.

---

1. For an exposition of Niebuhr's confessional standpoint see above, 71ff. Kaufman also points out this ambiguity in Niebuhr's thought, see Relativism, Knowledge and Faith, 1960, 10n.
2. See above, 482.
The ambiguity is ultimately the result of Niebuhr's own commitment to the Troeltsch's emphasis. Like Spengler, Troeltsch is also profoundly aware of the differences in the scales of value and symbols by means of which the many cultures and religions come to grips with what is true. So if we who belong to the western civilization want to affirm the absolute validity of the Christian faith, let us remember that it is so only 'for us', and may not necessarily be so for others. This Troeltschean emphasis is reflected in the notion of what may be vaguely called 'limited validity,' viz., that one's valid concepts of the universal are not necessarily universal. (1)

It is, however, extremely doubtful whether the human mind which is set on the quest for truth will be content simply to affirm truth (no matter how vague it is) without pressing for its universality. It is more correct to think that the mind, once having grasped truth from a limited locale, always tries to go beyond the limited and the particular to the 'universal.' In other words, if 'truth' is really true, it must be true not only for me, but for all. This point is well expressed by Kaufman:

As a man who is seeking truth, he always also attempts to establish it, to buttress it in one way or another with 'rational' arguments, to satisfy himself that his position has more than simply passing and temporary interest, that it has, in some sense, 'universal' or 'general' validity. (2)

---

(1) Revelation, 18, see also Niebuhr's idea (taken over from Maurice and Mill) that man is generally right in what he affirms and wrong in what he denies, and that 'what we deny is generally something that lies outside our experience, and about which we can therefore say nothing.' See above, 74f. See also the criticism on this point by J. Cobb, Jr. Living Options in Protestant Theology, 1962, 297f.

(2) Gordon Kaufman, Relativism, Knowledge and Faith, 1960, 10
Even those who are given over to 'relativism' behave in this way. The 'relativists' do not regard themselves as merely stating a theory or a position of passing interest. They are instead trying to show that their perspective is more adequate and better than others, and what they see as true is in some sense more true than the many existing views. In other words, their claims in different forms inevitably lead on to some kind of 'universal truth' of a permanent nature. (1) In this respect, Niebuhr does not seem to be an exception. Despite his regard for the idea of a 'limited validity' (for want of better words), he does affirm something which is true not only for him but for all men. The irreducible self-other structure in the human situation is one good example. There is no indication that this is only true of western man or of the Christian believer and not men of other cultures. On the contrary, it has a 'universal' application, in so far as this self-other structure is a givenness of man as man. It does not seem therefore that Niebuhr is consistent in his confessional standpoint.

To clarify the ambiguity which is inherent in Niebuhr's confessional approach we have to say very firmly that what we come to know as true from our own limited historical point of view is not only true for us, but we believe also for all men. It is by so affirming that we can avoid the charge of scepticism which may otherwise have rendered the confessional approach unacceptable.

(1) Gordon Kaufman, Relativism, Knowledge and Faith, 1960, 10-11
Confessional approach as a viable Christian attitude

In the light of what we have said, let us reconstruct the essentials of the confessional standpoint as it relates to the missionary encounter with non-Christians: We confess that a reality has disclosed itself to us in our historical situation, and it is being witnessed to in a community of faith to which (with its tradition) we belong. It furnishes us with the sole legitimate starting point for our theological discourse. It invites our trust and confidence and through it we are able to have a glimpse, though very imperfectly, of God and of human destiny. We affirm in faith that what we see from our limited point is not only true for us, but for all men, and we are called upon to proclaim it. There is no need to exclude a priori the possibility that such a reality is unknown in non-Christian communities. In fact, the love of God compels us at least to postulate that it may be found outside the Christian community of faith. So we must approach non-Christians with a free and open attitude (which is essential to this approach). If we find it, even though in an imperfect and ambiguous form (which is not unlike what is to be found among Christians), we must joyfully accept it as evidence of the spirit of God working outside the Christian faith for men's salvation. 'I do not have the evidence which allows me to say that the miracle of faith in God is worked only by Jesus Christ and that it is never given to men outside the sphere of its working,' says Niebuhr, 'though I may say that where I note its presence I posit the presence also of something like Jesus Christ.' (1) Thus the Christians and non-Christians should bring to the dialogue what they

(1) How My Mind Has Changed, 1961, 73
are given to understand and to obey from their own historical, limited point of view, each trying to understand the other. We must not predict what the outcome would be, as it is an 'open ended' encounter. Nor should we undermine the differences between us, because to commit oneself to one view is to negate what appears to be incompatible with it. In the end, we must trust ourselves to the working of the Holy Spirit who will lead us into a clearer vision of God and of the human situation, and to unite us with the bond of unity and love which at present is still very much beyond our understanding, as reflected in our acts of 'un-love,' of inhumanity towards one another.

We have so far only indicated the general direction and concern of the confessional approach. We still have to ask what this 'reality' is which we affirm as having been made available to us, and further implications of this approach in regard to the question of truth.

(1) Confessing the new existence in Christ

In view of what we have already said about truth, and in the context of response and commitment, the 'reality' which we confess is not so much 'revelation' but rather the new life which God has made possible for us in the events of Jesus Christ. (2)

(1) See above, 522f
(2) Ogden's view comes very close to ours when he says that what has taken place in the event of Jesus Christ is a 'representation of man's existence before God.' Thus the 'eschatological event' of Christ is nothing less than the affirmation of the 'God-man relationship that is the essential reality of every human life.' It means 'the word (Jesus) speaks and is, in fulfilling his "office", is the representation to us of the possibility of such a relationship.' See Shubert Ogden, Christ without Myth, 1962, 188-189.
We agree with Kraemer that we need, as Christians, to take 'Jesus Christ' as the criterion of truth. But in the context of response and commitment, 'Jesus Christ' is but a shorthand way of referring to the reality of the new quality of life, of complete dedication to God and to man, which is exemplified in the life of Jesus who as the Son has shown how it is to be man living before God and God living with man. This new quality of life in Christ is the criterion of truth. The Christian can be said to know the truth in so far as he reflects this new existence as he commits himself to God who has acted in the Christ-event for his salvation. This new existence, characterized by the love of God and man, and rooted in the experience of God's forgiveness, is a gift of God vouchsafed to man by his grace. If we encounter a similar response to God among non-Christians which bears resemblance in direction and style to the new existence with which the Christian is familiarized through his own commitment to Christ, we should be quick to recognize the grain of truth embodied in such a response. Such a response may be difficult to find among non-Christians, but we should not forget that it is also very difficult to find among Christians.

The existential approach to truth in terms of response and commitment to the new existence in Christ permits us to have a criterion of truth which not only is in consonance with the basic concern of the Christian faith but also one which makes possible an open attitude in missionary encounter. We do not for a moment deny the importance of issues such as the doctrine of the Trinity, the historical nature of the Incarnation or the question of the status of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, questions which have been traditionally regarded as integral
to 'revelation'. These aspects of the Christian faith are important in that they help us understand better the nature of our commitment, and they also make better sense of it - why we commit ourselves to Jesus Christ and not to another, and why we must take him as the absolute criterion of truth. Indeed the Christian faith would not have been possible unless the followers of Jesus Christ firmly believed in the involvement of God in his historical life in a manner which cannot be explained from the side of man. These Christian doctrines constitute essentially the 'particularity' or even the 'scandal' of the Christian faith in the eyes of Muslims and Jews, for instance. We would even go so far as to say that the Christian faith will lose its Christian character should it forgo its 'particularity' in favour of a more harmonious relation with non-Christian faiths, of which Toynbee's 'synthesis' is a radical example. The point we wish to make is that while the Christian notion of truth is very much tied up with its 'particularity' which defines and explains its nature, nevertheless the question of truth is not wholly identical with the doctrinal issues, especially as theologians differ widely over the interpretation of most doctrinal issues. It is broader than the question of its 'particularity', in view of the existential nature of truth. In other words, while doctrines do provide a context in which our commitment to the new quality of life can be more satisfactorily accounted for, yet the question of truth in terms of living response to God goes beyond the confines of Christian dogmas and definitions. It cuts across the boundaries between Christians and non-Christians. This conclusion is natural because we believe that God is the source of all truth, and that he has acted distinctively
characteristically in Christ, but not exclusively. (1) Perhaps at this point we may quote a passage from Smith to illustrate our argument.

A devout person whose sense of the presence of God is both vivid and sincere, and of his own unworthiness as he bows in that presence may plead for God's mercy and humbly know the quiet transport of its assurance because of his personal and living faith that God is indeed merciful: at that moment the truth of that man's religiousness is perhaps a different matter from the question of the earthly path by which he arrived: at his awareness and his faith, or of the community of which he is a member. (2)

Since the existential understanding of truth coincides with the question of salvation, our argument therefore takes us to the point that we have to acknowledge the possibility of salvation outside the recognizable realm of the Christian faith. Does this belief of ours contradict the seemingly exclusive claim that salvation is only possible through Jesus Christ? (3) The problem is crystallized for us when Peter was reported to say, 'And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.' (Acts 4.12) A brief theological consideration of this verse is called for.

This verse is open to many interpretations. (4)

---

(1) This is also what B.H. Streeter and J.M. Creed, among many others, affirms. For quotations of their views see Dewick, The Christian Attitude to Other Religions, 1953, 145.

(2) Smith, Question of Religious Truth, 1967, 70, Smith has in mind the Muslim faith as he wrote these words. However, to avoid misunderstanding we prefer to understand this quotation in connection with the activity of the 'eternal Christ', something which is absent in Smith's writings.

(3) Besides Acts 4.12, other verses like Matt xi.27; Lk x 22; John xiv 6 also seem to support the 'exclusive' tendency, see Dewick, Christian Attitude to Other Religions, 1953, 92.

(4) One of the best interpretations is still that offered by the Quaker Robert Barclay in the seventeenth century, 'Though they knew it (i.e., the name Jesus Christ) not outwardly, yet if they knew it inwardly, by feeling the virtues and the power of it, they are saved by it....' quoted in Dewick, ibid, 93 Dewick's own treatment is found on pp 92-95. Also see Baillie The Sense of the Presence of God, 1962, 196-203.
context, the name refers rather to the reality of God's activity which we come to know through Christ. There is no need to confine this reality to one point in space and time, as we have argued. Furthermore, the 'name' Jesus Christ means more than simply the historical figure of Jesus. It also refers to the eternal and living Word which has been operative in human history ever since the beginning. In other words, the name must also include reference to the 'eternal Christ.'

So while on the one hand we must affirm, as Baillie does, that there is no other way except the 'way of Jesus', on the other hand we must also learn to see that the reality of this way is not totally absent outside the recognizable realm of the Christian faith. Niebuhr has tried to express this truth when he says that whenever he sees any manifestation of radical faith he would 'posit the presence also of something like Jesus Christ.' Baillie is more straightforward in his recognition of the reality of the 'way of Christ' among non-Christian faiths, to the extent that he disclaims the view which allows 'no measure of healing and saving power' in the 'teaching of other religions.' He says,

I see no ultimate hope for our distraught and fevered world.... save as we follow the Way of Christ.... this does not mean that prior to the advent of Jesus Christ, and among those who did not yet know his name, God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—was not already moving in the hearts of men for the healing of the nations, nor does it mean that even now he has ceased to move. Therefore we must not say that in the pagan religions there is no apprehension of God's healing and saving power and no measure of trustful acceptance of it.

(1) For scriptural references, see Dewick, ibid, 93. Both Dewick and Baillie speak of 'the eternal Christ', 'the Word of God'.

(2) Baillie, The Sense of the Presence of God, 1962, 199, 203, also see 193, 195.
If the non-Christians ever find salvation at all, it is because they are in touch with the reality of the 'Eternal Christ' who was made flesh in Jesus of Nazareth.' He believes firmly that 'apart from Christ' one should not speak of any saving power. (1)

Even if one disagrees with the attempt to make the 'name' refer to the reality of the 'Eternal Christ', there is still no need to take this verse as a firm support for the exclusive view. The saying that salvation is in no one or by no other name (even if it is to be taken only in a narrow sense as a direct reference to Jesus of Nazareth) can be understood as but a pointed expression to what the converted sinner feels to be the inescapable reading of his direct experience in coming to God in Christ. (2) For him, Christ is so interwoven into the new life that if he were taken away, the 'new creation' would dissolve. Salvation has now acquired for him, through direct experience, a richness of meaning of which he had no prior conception. It can only be adequately expressed with explicit reference to Jesus.

In other words, the Christian, or Peter, is making a statement of faith about how he himself has found salvation as he came to Jesus Christ. It is a statement about his own existential situation. It is not therefore to be taken as a general statement, as though given in answer to the question which has aroused our interest today, viz., whether it might be possible for men to find salvation outside the recognizable realm of the Christian faith.

(1) Baillie, ibid, 201. Tillich also believes that there is saving power in non-Christian faiths. See Systematic Theology, vol. 2, 1957, 166ff. But Baillie thinks Tillich has not adequately related this saving power to Jesus Christ. Baillie, ibid, 201. The same point is made by S. Ogden, in Christ without Myth, 1962. 183, also 180.

(2) This is in essence Hogg's argument, see Authority, 113.
Therefore whether we take Acts 4.12 in a wider or in a narrower sense we do not find enough evidence to support the exclusive view. Our own choice is with the wider interpretation as represented in Dewick and Baillie. But having said so, we may be wise to harken to the advice of Dewick. The conception of the 'larger Christ,' he says, can be turned into a vague sentimentality unless it is very closely linked with the reality of the historical Jesus. In other words, it is the life of the Jesus of Nazareth which fills the content of the larger or eternal Christ. Baillie also calls our attention to the importance of the historical life of Jesus when he says,

If we speak only of God becoming man and do not at the same time speak of the kind of man he became, men will inevitably ask us why we believe that particularly this Name rather than some other should have been given us for our salvation. (1)

This is in fact what we also wish to emphasize with the confessional approach, which takes very seriously the reality of the new existence in Christ as our criterion of truth.

This confessional approach of ours resembles Kraemer's 'theological approach' in so far as the latter also begins from what God has done in the events of Jesus Christ as witnessed in the community of faith. (2) But Kraemer's approach lays stress on 'revelation', which we find not only ambiguous but also not the best way of expressing the primary concern of the Christian faith. It has also not adequately taken into consideration our historical limitation. Furthermore, Kraemer's approach, in view of its inherent problematical presupposition about the divine-human relation, does not permit the sort of freedom and openness which our confessional approach enjoys in regard to missionary encounter.

(1) Baillie, The Sense of the Presence of God, 1962, 211
(2) For reference to Kraemer's theological approach, see above, 46ff
Our uncertainty over 'revelation', together with the belief that God is not unknown to non-Christians in view of the fact that he has not acted exhaustively in the Jesus of Nazareth, have made not only an open attitude towards non-Christians imperative, but also suggested the possibility of a fuller understanding of God in the event of the encounter. In other words, the belief in some sort of 'fulfilment' in our vision of God's truth is also inherent in the confessional approach. Compared with radical stresses such as Toynbee's 'synthesis' and Kraemer's 'otherness', which we have examined and found wanting, the emphasis on 'fulfilment' may prove to be a better way forward.

(2) Fulfilment in Jesus Christ - a re-interpretation

The idea of 'fulfilment', as it has been pointed out, has a very long history in Christian thought. But the form which is familiar to us appears unfortunately in the context of evolutionism, hence it has fallen under the righteous condemnation of Kraemer. It presents the Christian faith as the highest development on the scale.

(1) For a brief but good historical sketch, see Dewick, The Christian Attitude to Other Religions, 1953, 47-52, 120-128

(2) See Dewick, ibid, 127, who mentions Maurice as a famous example. Utterances along this line can also be found in the Edinburgh Missionary Message, vol. 4. 267ff. J.N. Farquhart is often counted as one obvious representative on the mission field, but we have already appealed for caution in this case, see above, 392 n.2

(3) See Christian Message, 123ff, also above, 507. Also notice that the idea of fulfilment often develops hand in hand with the logos doctrine.
and all others are on the way to their consummation in it. This version of fulfilment does not give, as Kraemer protests, enough stress to the difference between the Christian faith and the others which is required by the 'totalitarian' understanding of religion. In recent years, Kraemer's structure has set the pattern by which the notion of fulfilment is discredited. It is interesting to see that even Dewick rejects it along the same line. He says,

> It has been pointed out that the theory of fulfilment tends to ignore the fundamental differences of spirit and 'ethos' that distinguish the great non-Christian religions from each other, as well as from Christianity. To look for the 'fulfilment' of Buddhism or Islam in Christianity is as unscientific as to look for the 'fulfilment' of a rose-bud in the full-blown flower of an orchid.

Even though we have questioned the validity of the 'totalitarian' view of religion, nevertheless we acknowledge the validity of the rejection of the notion of 'fulfilment' as Kraemer and Dewick present it. To acknowledge the autonomy of 'parts' and their 'similarity' to what we find in the Christian faith is one thing, to think that these parts will eventually evolve into a Christian form is another. In the case of Islam, for instance, we acknowledge the similarity between the Muslim's affirmation of faith and trust in God and that of the Christian's. It is a similarity in intention as well as, to

---

(1) For instance, the Bossey document entitled *The Word of God and the Living Faith of Men* (World Council of Churches, Division of Studies) 1958, discredited 'fulfilment' on the ground that religions are wholes and complete in themselves. This conclusion bears the characteristic Kraemerian stamp.

(2) Dewick, *The Christian Attitude to Other Religions*, 1955, 51

(3) Cragg argues that the main task of the open faith is to relate itself 'to the "intention" of other religions, in so far as this can be identified, and understood.' He sees it as also Paul's missionary method, and quotes Rom 15.16 to illustrate his point. In his book, Cragg has tried to identify the 'intention' of Judaism, Islam and some African religions, *Christianity in World Perspective*, 1968, 85ff.
some extent, in form, in so far as both parties affirm a monotheistic
faith. It is difficult to see how the Muslim's faith in God points,
on the notion of 'fulfilment' as Kraemer understands it, 'naturally
to Christ, and would end in Him if (the line of development) is
produced further.' Such a view would suggest some factors inherent
in the Muslim faith which would eventually flower (at its highest point
of development) into a Christian, trinitarian form, viz., an
affirmation of faith in God through Jesus Christ, and inspired by the
Holy Spirit. To think thus is to undermine the difference between
the Muslim and the Christian confessions. If 'fulfilment' is
understood in terms of such evolutionary context only, we must then
agree with Kraemer and others that it is not a helpful term in the
missionary dialogue.

The notion of fulfilment is not only ill-received by many
Christians, but also rejected by non-Christians. They regard it as
a rather high-handed, patronizing attitude of the Christians. Why
should they be manoeuvred into this net of 'fulfilment' and become the
victims of the Christian spider? It is not difficult to understand
this feeling. They are confronted with a Christian faith which
claims to have the only clue to truth, the only monopoly of 'salvation',
which has everything to give and would recognize no possible
contribution from any other viewpoints outside the Christian faith.
Indeed, the over-confident belief in our understanding of 'revelation'

(1) Radhakrishnan sees a note of religious 'imperialism' in the claim
that Christianity is the highest manifestation of the religious
spirit. See East and West in Religion, 1933, 24
does make such an impression real in the minds of non-Christians. (1) The non-Christian faiths, or rather, the more congenial elements in them, need to be 'corrected' and 'purged' in the light of what the Christian regards as 'revelation', so that they find their 'fulfilment' in Christ, in a manner recognized by the Christians as something 'not far from the Kingdom.' As such, fulfilment is used only of the non-Christian faiths. There is no indication that it is also applicable to the Christian faith.

However, despite the many ambiguities and abuses associated with it, the notion of fulfilment still persists in the history of the Church in the area of missionary encounter with non-Christians, because many Christians rightly appreciate the insight which it tries to convey, viz., the unity of all truth in God who has acted for our salvation in Jesus Christ. 'Fulfilment' directs our hope towards a fuller understanding of this truth in the totality of human life and history and in the light of Jesus Christ. Toynbee arrives at this conclusion through intuition, though he does not use the word 'fulfilment', nor does he accept Jesus as the sole criterion. But he misses the point when he thinks that the fullness of the truth of God can be had by putting the many claims and insights (in respect of man's visions of God) of world religions together irrespective of the question of their mutual compatibility.

(1) See, for instance, the extreme case of Barth: 'God has revealed himself to man in Jesus Christ. What do we know from any other sources of God?... Absolutely nothing.' 'The whole revelation of God is contained in Jesus Christ.' The Knowledge of God and the Service of God, 1938, 43, and Credo, 1936, 47. Even for those who do not share this extreme view, the emphasis still lies mainly in what the Christian faith has to give rather than to receive. See for instance, the words of Farquhart, 'Christianity alone supplements, corrects, completes and fulfils the far-away promise of each and every system.' International Review of Missions, 1914, 431.
Nor need the lack of direct Biblical reference discourage the Christian scholars and missionary theologians. In the New Testament, fulfilment in the theological context is used in the sense of 'the fulfilment of God's promises and of His previous preparatory doings.' (1) It refers back to the Law and the Prophets in the Old Testament which are believed to have found 'fulfilment' in the events of Jesus Christ. It is even said that 'fulfilment' is an 'Ur-word of the Primitive Church, if not in fact the Ur-word, for the description of how to understand the "mission and message" of Jesus Christ,' even though the concept 'fulfilment' itself is understood in different ways. (2)

For our purpose, the most significant reference to 'fulfilment' is in Mt. 5.17 which reports Jesus saying that he came to fulfil, \( \pi \lambda \iota \rho \omega \kappa \), and not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, viz., the Old Dispensation of grace. It can be said that he fulfilled the Old Dispensation by 'completion' and bringing out the 'full intention' or 'significance' of God's saving acts as witnessed in the Law and the Prophets. (3)

(1) Christian Message, 123
(2) John McIntyre, The Christian Doctrine of History, 47. But see also pp45-76 for an analysis of the concept of 'fulfilment'. Professor McIntyre subjects the view of Marsh, Hebert Mackintosh and Bultmann to examination. It uncovers many different ways in which 'fulfilment' is understood, ranging from Mackintosh's rigid concept that fulfilment occurs 'in detailed mechanical correspondence with the letter of prediction' to Bultmann's radical notion, viz., prophecy is fulfilled in 'its inner contradiction, its miscarriage', which eventually points us to the eschatological order and Heilsgeschichte of which Christ is the end.
(3) See reference to this verse in J.Y. Campbell, on Fulfil, in A Theological Word Book of the Bible, ed. Richardson, 1950, 88. Also Sherman E. Johnson's comment, in Interpreter's Bible, vol. 7, 291. For a more detailed discussion on 'fulfil' in its theological and non-theological uses in the scriptures, see the contribution of C.F.D. Moule on 'fulfil' in the Interpreter's Bible Dictionary, esp. 329, vol. 1.
The coming of Jesus is just what is meant by the fulfillment of the Law, and the Cross is understood as the union of the consummated obedience to the Will of God declared in the scriptures with love towards the brethren in the act of self-offering. It is true that the Synoptics did not explicitly state that in this way Jesus’ fulfilling the Law, but their presentation suggests it. (1)

It is clear that when Jesus is understood as the 'fulfilment', it is the fulfilment of the Old Dispensation which is meant. There is no indication that 'fulfilment' can also be applied to contexts other than the Old Dispensation as the missionary theologians would use it today. But it does not mean that the idea of fulfilment has no bearing at all on the dialogue with non-Christians in the common search for truth. There is, for instance, scriptural evidence which indicates (though vaguely) the possibility of man 'knowing' God or truth outside the Christian faith, such as Acts 14.17, Rom 2.14f (pace Kraemer), and that eventually, as Baillie reminds us, all things are to be 'summed up and brought to a head' \( \sum \) in Christ (Eph.1.10). (2) Furthermore, we are also given the hope that the Holy Spirit will enable us to have a more profound understanding of Christ and his truth (John 14.26). It seems therefore that the notion of 'fulfilment' is not a misguided notion even if it is used in our missionary encounter with non-Christians other than

(1) See Kittel's Bible Key Words, the volume on Law, 86, in connection with Mt 5.17f.

(2) There is no need to go into the exegesis of Biblical texts at this stage. Besides those already mentioned, there are other references such as the idea of the logos of John, Acts 10.35 and John 1.9 which are also mentioned by writers who favour a sympathetic approach, if not actually defending the idea of 'fulfilment', to the non-Christians. See L. Harold DeWolf, The Interpretation of Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions, in The Theology of the Christian Mission, ed. Anderson, 1961, 209f, also Ian Douglas, Recent Theological Evaluation of the Christian-Muslim Encounter, in International Review of Missions, 1966, 428.
the Jews. We prefer to think that the use of 'fulfilment' in the new context is an extended and derived use of 'fulfilment' in the Biblical sense, because our use of it (or rather, the meaning we give to it) is not unrelated to what it originally conveys in its Biblical context.

How are we to understand the notion of 'fulfilment' in the missionary context then? Before we elaborate on its meaning, let us first briefly define its application. It is applicable not only to non-Christian faiths, but also to the Christian; and it is essentially an 'open ended' concept which points us to future possibilities. It is, in other words, a powerful expression of hope and an affirmation of faith in the reality of that which is still hidden from our full apprehension. Let us now turn to its meaning.

In terms of the language of response and commitment, truth is, as we have already argued, to be found in man's living response to God, in a living relation to God and man characterized by a sincere, whole-hearted commitment to loving God and loving his fellowmen. If we find among non-Christians such response and commitment, it is because the Spirit of God has made it possible for them to live in such a matter, and his truth has already made its impact felt. So when we say that 'Jesus is the fulfilment' of truth envisaged and enacted by non-Christians in their religious situation, the word 'fulfilment' refers to the possibility of illumination by the new quality of existence exemplified in Jesus which points towards the possibility of a more profound grasp of truth, a deeper commitment to the love of God and man. If we believe that Jesus Christ is God's gift to man, full of grace and truth the reality of which is not absent among non-
Christians (though not of the same intensity),\(^1\) then we should also believe that the coming into contact with Christ, through the preaching of the Gospel, will enable the non-Christians to see from a new perspective the reality of God's grace which is already at work among them. In other words, we believe that the preaching of the living Christ, on the basis of what we have but imperfectly understood through our own commitment to him, will quicken the awareness of the Christ who has so far been hidden and unrecognized in the religious life of non-Christians.

There is, however, no need to confine the notion of 'fulfilment' to a mere crystallizing for the non-Christians what is the best in them, as though Christ put only the required finishing touch to what has been developing in their systems. Indeed, our own experience and commitment prevent us from thinking in this way. To commit oneself to the reality of the new existence and hope in Christ is also to become a 'new creation.' To be confronted by Christ is to be brought into the transforming relationship through which God intends to renew the whole of mankind. This transforming power of Jesus is aptly expressed by Niebuhr when he says that though we have the memory of Jesus Christ, nevertheless what happens through it we cannot control. Indeed, we can only accept gratefully the newness of life which God has made possible for man in the Christ-event. The early Christians

\(^1\) F.D. Maurice says long ago, 'If we do and must attribute virtues to heathens, then we do and must suppose that their virtues had their source "in the grace of Christ and the Inspiration of His Spirit."' Quoted in S. Ogden, *Christ without Myth*, 1962, 182.
refers to the transforming experience in terms of 'conversion'. We believe that some sort of 'conversion' will also take place in regard to the quest for truth among non-Christians if they are brought to a serious confrontation with, and challenged by, the living Christ.\(^1\)

But unfortunately we are accustomed to thinking of conversion, as Cragg points out, only in terms of 'traditional pattern of intellectual credence and creed.'\(^2\) To become converted to Jesus Christ requires the affirmation of certain doctrinal statements and a baptism into the Christian faith. This understanding of conversion is certainly 'Christian', and there is much New Testament basis for its support. But if what is important, as we have been arguing, is man's response to the truth of God which is not unknown among non-Christians, the conversion triggered off through the confrontation of Christ (or his Gospel) may well be a conversion which arises within the existing traditions of a social and religious community. In other words, conversion to 'Christ' does not necessarily mean a changing over to another culture, another tradition or even another religious faith, because the reality of the living Christ is not to be confined to the recognizable realm of the Christian faith. Conversion can be what Pannikkar calls a changing 'in', viz., a changing into a new life, a

---

\(^1\) The danger latent in any missionary dialogue or encounter is that it is not a case of Jesus Christ confronting human need and spiritual aspirations, but rather a confrontation of cultural differences and human self-assertiveness masquerading in the name of religion or even 'Jesus Christ,' hence Niebuhr's stricture, see above, 85f.

\(^2\) Kenneth Cragg, *Christianity in World Perspective*, 1968, 216. Cragg gives the examples of two patterns of 'conversion' in Acts. Acts 8 in the conversion of the Ethiopian chancellor doctrinal confession precedes baptism into the church, and in Acts 16 the baptism of the gaoler is prior to doctrinal confession and catechism, see ibid, 215f.
new existence, a new creation, which is precisely the old one but transformed through radical confrontation with the Gospel of God's love. (1) We affirm Christ as the 'fulfilment' of non-Christians' response and commitment to God and man because we believe in the possibility of such a changing 'in' to a new perspective and a new existence the reality of which is recognized as being in consonance with that which the Christian comes to know through his commitment to Jesus Christ, despite the absence of Christian dogmatic statements. Thus the notion of 'fulfilment' overlaps with the idea of 'conversion' understood in a broader sense.

Just because we believe in the possibility of such a changing 'in' in the case of non-Christians in their religious situation, the missionary dialogue becomes urgent, something of the first order of importance. Having said so we must also confess our ignorance and limitation in our understanding of the operation of such a 'fulfilment' among non-Christian faiths. Such an operation belongs to the freedom of the mysterious working of God's Spirit among men. There are still many questions to which we have no answer, because fulfilment points towards the future, with an open end. Take the case of Mahayana Buddhism, for instance, if 'fulfilment' can be said to apply to it at all. Toynbee has already called our attention to the way of self-giving which the many Boddhisattvas have vowed to take as their own. This way of love for other sentient beings carries an authentic note of truth. Tillich calls the Mahayananist way 'compassion', which is

(1) Raymond Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, 1964, 18. See also Cragg, ibid, 216. who also supports the broader understanding of 'conversion'.
a state in which he who does not suffer under his own conditions may suffer by identification with another who suffers. He suffers his suffering through identification. This can be a very active way of love, and it can bring more immediate benefit to him who is loved than can a moralistically distorted commandment to exercise agape. (1)

But, in his opinion, something is lacking: it is the 'double characteristic' of agape — the acceptance of the unacceptable, and the will to transform the other one, 'either directly, or indirectly by transforming the sociological and psychological structures by which he is conditioned.' (2) If his observation is right (and we tend to agree in general), then 'fulfilment' would probably (if we can say anything at all) point to a more profound grasp of the eternal significance of the individual as well as a deeper commitment to the spiritual and social needs of one's fellow beings. This in turn would probably lead on to a prophetic attitude towards society, a more serious grasp of the evil of sin in its social content and so on which are the characteristics of the 'Kingdom of God'. But we cannot answer questions as to how the encounter of the Gospel affects the Mahayanist's notion of the ultimate in terms of the doctrine of the Void, or whether 'fulfilment' does not involve a radical change in the basic structure of the Buddhist faith, even though such a change may not point towards the Christian direction.

Yet the notion of 'fulfilment', as we have said, is also applicable to the Christian faith. We are looking forward to the fulfilment of the promise, that the Spirit will lead us 'into all the truth.' The awareness of our confusion over the issue of 'revelation' should have opened our eyes in a forceful manner to our inadequacy in the handling

(1) Paul Tillich, Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, 1964, 71.
(2) Tillich, ibid, 71-2.
of the 'things' of God. But we are not told exactly how 'all the truth' can be realized or fulfilled. We are only given a promise, and a hope, that ultimately we shall know as we are known. In our dialogue with non-Christians, we must confess our limitation and be prepared to listen to, and to learn from them. A genuine dialogue must be one in which there is give and take on both sides. In circles in which Christians are obsessed with doctrinal exactitude (as in the case of extreme types of fundamentalism), or with a Christology which in Niebuhr's opinion is in danger of falling into 'Christism' and hence 'henotheism', we might do well to be reminded by Muslims of the majesty of God (characterized by an imposing simplicity) which defies even positive descriptions.\(^1\) This is just one example of what we can learn from others.\(^2\) But the more urgent task for the Christian engaged in missionary dialogue is that he should so discipline himself through his own commitment to the new existence in Christ as to be able to discern the latent Christ in every stirring note of love, of complete dedication to God and to man, behind and beyond the many formulae and explanations which constitute the contexts of the religious life of non-Christians. It is also here that we Christians are up against one of the tensions in our faith. We have to be sensitive to the latent Christ among non-Christians, yet we can recognize him only on the basis of what we

\(^{1}\) Cragg says that the reservations of 'negative theology' in Islam preserves God's impenetrable greatness and supremacy. But the idea of divine of 'divine reciprocity' is not absent, and he seems to suggest that there is a point of contact between Christians and Muslims that is worth pursuing. *Christianity in World Perspective*, 1968, 124f, 136f.

\(^{2}\) Bouquet cautiously and briefly outlines what he thinks we might learn from others. His outline includes Islam's idea of the majesty of God, Hinduism's emphasis on divine immanence which leads to a reverence to all life, Chinese concepts such as *jen-ai* which is the 'concept of moral responsibility to the living God as it appears in the mandate of Heaven,' and the expression of filial piety and so on. See *The Christian Faith and non-Christian Religions*, 1958, 419ff.
know of him through our own commitment to the Christ manifest. But our understanding of Jesus Christ is partial and inadequate, as reflected not only in our confusion over doctrinal issues, but also in the shallowness and poverty of our response in terms of love. So we are not in a sure position to define too precisely the outline of the latent Christ. We must therefore be prepared for surprises which may come through encountering him in places where we might not have expected him to be found. In our missionary encounter with non-Christians, we are not entering into a strange realm where he has not trod. In fact it is more correct to think that we are also entering into an encounter with the latent Christ, and together with non-Christians we hope to draw near to the complete Christ, who includes a glory in the latent Christ that waits to be recognized and appropriated by the Christians who know him only as manifest. We hope that together with non-Christians we may patiently look forward to the Christ that is to come. (1)

The notion of 'fulfilment' points us to the future, towards an open end, because we do not know what form it will take eventually, whether in the case of non-Christians or Christians. At present the Christian realizes that there is much doctrinal difference between him and non-Christians, despite much similarity in intention and direction of response. It is important that in the event of an encounter each engaging party should be honest about the disagreements which exist between them, about which they do not yet see any possible solution.

(1) The idea of Christ latent in the religious life of non-Christians is developed by E.L. Allen, Christianity Among the Religions, 1960, 155. Also it is the theme of Panikkar's book, The Unknown Christ in Hinduism, 1964, see the first chapter of this book.
which leads towards an agreement, or a unity in diversity. But we also believe that the coming into contact with the living Christ would affect a conversion not only on the existential level within the existing structure of a religion, but eventually it may also create a change in the doctrinal structure as well. (1) Perhaps for the present we should agree with Cragg that the dimension of the problems of encounter may be too big for our theology, but not so for our faith. We hope that our commitment to Christ in commitment to the world should be big enough to live with loose ends of explanation, with unresolved tensions of logic and creedal statement. (2) In entering into a missionary encounter with non-Christians, we are actually inviting them to join with us in the common search for truth. We are not enticing them to follow our way. In the process of each trying to understand one another and at the same time and in a searching examination of our own belief and commitment we hope that God will lead us forward towards the moment, whether in history or beyond history, when the fullness of that which we now dimly apprehend in the events of Jesus Christ will be seen as the truth for all - so that God may be all in all.

(1) Devanandan says that the coming into contact with Christ has produced among non-Christian faiths an 'inward unsettlement, and some heart-searching inquiry,' as well as a noticeable stiffening attitude of unfriendliness towards Christian evangelism. See The Theology of the Christian Mission, ed. Anderson, 1961, 155. It is too early to say what the outcome would be. The change in doctrinal emphasis and interpretation is still going on in the Christian faith itself, especially at the impact of existentialism. We may therefore hope that it will not be impossible for us to draw nearer to one another, with a more genuine appreciation of each other's insight.

(2) K. Cragg, Christianity in World Perspective, 1968, 83. We should also mentioned that Cragg does not subscribe to the idea of 'fulfilment' as developed in our work.
APPENDIX I: Some trends in contemporary Western culture which are relevant to the understanding of the thoughts of Toynbee, Kraemer and Niebuhr

In modern western culture the tendency to understand man mainly as a rational being persists and is further elaborated. By the method of systematic doubt Descartes came to the conclusion that the 'I' whose existence he cannot doubt is the mind which thinks. It is qualitatively different from the body, so different that it can be said to exist on its own, even though in our earthly life our normal experience is that of the mind joining to the body. Thus the essential man is conceived purely in terms of thought. In the ethical writings of Kant, the moral self is the self of reason, or the intelligible self. The intelligible self is good, and even 'holy,' because it is conformable to the moral law. But the sensible self, or the self or nature, contrary to the intelligible self, is evil because of its involvement in natural vitality. As a result, all natural vital forces in the life of man are ruled out of the field of ethics. 'Kantian idealism throws the impulses of nature more completely into an outer darkness than any form of Greek classicism.'

This rationalistic trend is continued in the writings of Hegel, but with a difference. While in Kant reason is not identified simply with God, now in the absolute idealism of Hegel we find reason equated with the infinite spirit, with the absolute itself. Thus man becomes the medium in which the absolute reason knows itself, and to reach perfect self-consciousness and thus completion. It is this reason that 'makes man man.' But then man is no more a concrete man, for he is but a means by and through which absolute reason comes to its own

perfection. The individual self eventually dissolves in the absolute reason which alone is real. The obvious consequences of our concentration on the reasoning faculty in our understanding of man is that truth is regarded as that which can only be grasped by reason. It must conform to certain conceptual scheme which has an internal logical and necessary coherence, and itself being part of the conceptual scheme of the whole universe. So the individual is not only lost in the infinite spirit but also in concepts and systems. (1)

In our time we have witnessed from different quarters reactions against this dominant, rationalistic and idealistic trend of thought. Descartes' dualism has been rejected by thinkers with a behaviouristic tendency, notably G. Ryle and G.H. Mead. The irrational and non-rational elements in man's life which Kant seeks to cast into the outer darkness have been brought back in a respected form by Freud and especially by Jung, who sees in the many archetypal symbols thrown up from the unconscious mind a clue to the understanding of the self and the quest for wholeness. Many of the insights of depth psychology has been adopted by Toynbee in his anthropology and his theory of religion. In our time we have also witnessed the rise and phenomenal spread of existentialism, which is often understood as an attempt to recover from the impersonal concepts and systems the concreteness and importance of the individual who is not just a thinking being, but also one who feels, wills and makes decisions all the time. Thus we can say that existentialism, with its many shades of connotations, is a reaction against rationalism and Hegelian idealism. H.R. Niebuhr is

(1) For a brief description of the process of the equation of the real with reason in Hegel, see Karl Popper, The Open Society and its Enemies, 1957, vol.2, 41.
one among many Protestant theologians who try to elucidate the Christian faith from this point of view.

Before we turn to these different facets of modern thought let us take notice first of a dominant and pervading mentality of our time, viz., secularism. It has penetrated into most areas of learning. Briefly speaking, it is a mental attitude for which this world and this existence are the only realities about which men need to take account. It removes all concern with the ultimate meaning and finds fulfilment only in this world and this life. (1) The rise of secularism has been traced back to late medieval Protestantism which was responsible for the secularization of the world. It is the very nature of Protestantism to affirm the rights, privilege and relative autonomy of various facets of life. Thus it fought relentlessly to break the control of the Roman Church over art, literature, politics and society, and asserted the necessity of a secular reality over ecclesiastic authoritarianism, recognizing that human reason and aesthetic capacities had rights of their own which could not be controlled or fulfilled by the Church. It was also this attitude that encouraged the development of natural science. Since the world of nature is relatively autonomous, it therefore should be understood on its own terms. Furthermore, a scientific method must depend on a double assumption; that there are regularities in the

(1) For a working definition of secularism, see E.L. Mascall: Secularization of Christianity, 1965, 190f. Different writers take different attitude towards secularism, e.g., R.G. Smith thinks we have not had enough of it, see Secular Christianity, 1966, 141-149. Bernard Meland: The Realities of Faith, 1963, 63. Secularism is, to him, 'pathological' and a degradation of the human spirit. We have already drawn attention to the difference between secularism and secularization, see above, 93
world of nature, and that these regularities and realities are contingent and so need to be searched out. Now the ground for this double assumption is provided by the Christian doctrine of creation. The world was created by God who is both intelligence and will, both rationality and power. Hence there must also be patterns and regularities in the world.\(^1\) But the development of natural science bred secularism which eventually denied the religious or ultimate dimension of human existence. The rest of the tragedy, as Mascall points out, lies in the determinism of Newtonian physics.\(^2\) In the Newtonian scheme the activities of God were more or less confined to the 'gaps' in our knowledge of the working of nature. Gaps became fewer and fewer as scientific knowledge progressed. Finally, the progressive elimination of God was virtually achieved with the discovery of the evolutionary biology which ousted divine design. This loss of the religious dimension has disastrous effects on the moral life of man. How man finds ultimate meaning only within the 'this-worldly' to which man pledges his ultimate loyalty and renders his responsibility. The danger of this mentality has already been made manifested in Fascism where ultimate meaning is sought in the realities of blood and race.

----

\(^1\) For a more detailed discussion on the historical background and the relation between science and the Christian faith, see Mascall, Natural Science and Theology, 95f. For a discussion of the double assumption of scientific method and the Christian faith see the two essays by M.B. Foster, Christian Theology and Modern Science of Nature, in Mind XLIV, 1935, 439ff and XLV, 1936, 1ff. The doctrine of Creation also brings about a 'disenchantment of nature' in the sense of removing the mysterious, magical and mythical character from nature before scientific attempts to understand it is possible. For a short note on this, see H. Cox, The Secular City, S.C.M., 1965, 17ff

\(^2\) Mascall, Natural Science and Theology, 1956, 195f.
Even though Protestantism is committed to defending the relative autonomy of the world, yet it is equally committed to affirming that all areas of human life are responsible to God, to whom alone man must pledge his loyalty. This is the tension which must be preserved in the Protestant attitude, if it is true to its own nature. This tension is reflected in the thought of Niebuhr: in his concept of radical monotheism and the attempt to redefine the meaning of responsibility. Even though Toynbee is not particularly concerned with the defence of the Protestant principle, nevertheless he also maintains, with the Protestants, that history is explicable only in relation to God, and that man can fulfil his own potentialities only by doing the will of God.

Having ousted God from the world, the secular man makes himself the measure of all things as well as the source of meaning and value. This mentality has been encouraged by the Darwinian and the Spencerian concepts of evolution which puts man at the peak of the evolutionary process, and produced the fruit of humanism, especially 'scientific humanism' of which Julian Huxley champions. 'The humanist,' says Huxley, 'is one whose real faith is in the possibility of experience and achievement rather than in a supreme being or a revealed religion... modern humanism has a distinctive character which derives in general from the growth of science.'(1) Huxley believes that science alone has control over human destiny.(2) Man, being all-sufficient, is quite capable of controlling his own fate by sheer 'will and purpose', and that humanity as a whole is capable of evolving towards a 'better species.'(3)

---

(1) Julian Huxley, Humanism, 1944, 3
(2) ibid, 6,7. also see Huxley's essay in The Destiny of Man, ed. A. Huxley
(3) ibid, 6, also see* Huxley, Religion Without Revelation, 1928, 306
Huxley belongs to a tradition which is at least as old as the development of natural science, and it has also greatly influenced Protestant theology, as for instance, in the works of Harnack and Ritschl. The latter, as we have seen earlier, brought God in to give man the sense of value which he needs as he confronts nature. God is made subservient to human interest. This man-adoration is met by our writers with radical rejection. Niebuhr formulates the idea of radical monotheism as a protest against it, while Toynbee constantly reminds us that there is a spiritual presence 'higher than man', and that the most hideous sin is the sin of man worshipping himself. Kraemer's emphasis on the 'sovereignty' of God in his Tambaram book is a negation against contemporary secular, humanistic mentality as well as the line of thought taken by Hocking, as in the 'Laymen's Inquiry'.

Now let us turn back to the three specific reactions to the Cartesian dualistic, rationalistic and Hegelian idealistic understanding of man which in one way or another are echoed in the works of our writers. The first reaction is one which rejects the dualistic mind-body view, and this rejection raises the question of freedom. Since secularism reduces man's vision to the this-worldly, it also confines him to the realm of nature only. Man is but a part of nature and should be understood in this context alone. To Macrae the sociologist this acknowledgement comes as a 'liberation,' for with it a 'scientific study' of man, his history, problem and destiny can properly begin. We should not do so in the past, for religious belief prevented man from being understood in such a manner. (1) It is not difficult to

move from the understanding man as 'part of nature' to nothing but nature, an attitude which is characteristic of thinkers disposed towards behaviourism. They reduce man to those elements in nature which are most easily measurable in order to give an objective scientific basis for such a study, and they are not afraid of using the mechanistic image 'conditioning' to explain man, an image taken from controlled experiments like Pavlov's dog or rats in a maze. Thus E.C. Tolman boldly claims, 'I believe that everything important in psychology (except perhaps such matter as the building up of a super ego, that is, everything save such matters as involving society and words) can be investigated in essence through the continued experimental and theoretical analysis of the determiners of rat behaviour at a choice point in a maze.'

(1) In philosophy the behaviouristic position was supported by some of the members of the Vienna circle, like Carnap and Neurath. In Britain it finds expression in Ryle, though he dislikes the label. Ryle describes the mind (or soul, in the theological context) as the 'ghost in a machine,' being the result of a 'category mistake.' In his book, The Concept of Mind, he sets out to demolish 'the dogma of the ghost in the machine' by showing that a satisfactory account of the so called mental phenomena can be given without having to invoke the ghost. This account he gives in terms of such things as style or performance, dispositions to certain characteristic performance and acquired skill.

In the United States, this behaviouristic position is developed by G.H. Mead in the context of social psychology. Mead is very much

(1) E.C. Tolman, 'The Determinants of Behaviour at a choice point', Psychology Review, XLV, 1938, quoted in Jarret-Kerr, ibid, 63.
influenced by Darwinism. Man is regarded as only a natural organism functioning in accordance with natural laws in its reaction to the environment. But Mead understands organism in a dynamic sense. It does not merely mechanically and passively respond to stimuli, but is capable of selecting its stimuli. So organism and environment mutually determine one another. Mind emerges from this reciprocal determination. But this mind is not to be viewed as a kind of spiritual entity or a trans-empirical state. It is rather a special type of behaviour genetically emergent out of non-mental process in social experiences. It is the ability of an organism to take the role of the other towards its own developing behaviour. Thus thinking is 'implicit speech,' the internalized conversation of gestures and attitudes with one's self playing a dual inner role. The internalised role of the other becomes the 'me.' Sociality is therefore the ultimate explanation of mind, self, as well as society. (1)

Mead's version of behaviourism is a refined one. Instead of the old mechanistic 'stimulus-response fallacy' committed, for instance, by Watson, he advocates a dynamic concept of organism. He also widens it by setting it in a social context, including the introspectively observed phenomena of consciousness (or mind). It is interesting to see that this analysis of the social structure of the self is reflected in Niebuhr's thought, though Niebuhr keeps clear of behaviourism. Basically Mead's view is a form of naturalism. Together with Ryle and the others Mead speaks to reduce man to no more than nature.

(1) For a discussion of Mead's concept of the mind, see Paul Pfuetz: The Social Self, 1954, 40ff. It is also pointed out that Mead is indebted to William James for this view of the mind.
The difficulty of this natural, behaviouristic and functional approach to the understanding of man is that it fails to take account of the moral and spiritual aspects of man, viz., his purpose, sense of value, direction and meaning. It is not enough to see how man behaves or functions but one must also ask 'why' he or the society behaves in this way and not otherwise. This 'why' cannot be understood unless it is investigated in the context of man's beliefs, his moral convictions, decisions and what he regards as the ultimate concern which are too recalcitrant to be reduced to impulses and stimuli. To think that we can abstract man's behaviour from the inner spiritual dimension of life is to misunderstand man altogether. It is not, therefore, surprising to find that Toynbee's History is mainly an attempt to put man back into history, man being understood as a religious, moral and spiritual individual. What concerns him most is the often neglected 'why' of history and human existence, and he conducted his investigation in the knowledge that he is going against the stream of current popular opinion.

If man were reduced to the realm of nature alone, being only the battleground on which biological drives and social pressures strive for supremacy, in what sense can it be said that man is free, and that he is responsible for his deeds and destiny? The naturalistic view alone regards the urges and drives which often appear as the 'wills of men', as being formed by one's inherited physical organism and childhood influences which to a large extent are beyond the control of the individual. If it were so then it would seem odd to hold man responsible for, say, a course of action or his destiny. But if man has no say over his own destiny, he is no more man but sub-man. To be
a moral and responsible man, he must be free, though his freedom is not an unqualified freedom. Both Toynbee and Niebuhr show concern over this chief issue in modern thought. Toynbee's History can also be understood as an attempt to trace man struggling through the course of history towards the fulfilment of freedom of the human spirit. The quest for freedom leads man inevitably to religion, for Toynbee's notion of freedom has a strong religious flavour. Freedom turns out to be nothing other than 'the law of God which is love.' Many of Toynbee's critics see only his 'laws' and regard him as a 'determinist' after, perhaps the fashion of Spengler. They fail to see that it is freedom that is the chief concern in Toynbee's History. Niebuhr understands freedom in terms of reinterpretation of the past with the help of an adequate image, which is given in the events of 'revelation! In this sense freedom can only find its fulfilment in 'revelation.'

The second reaction which we wish to mention is that which is widely known as 'Depth psychology,' which has a profound influence on Toynbee. The rational, intelligible self which for a long time has been regarded as the dominant part of man is now seen as but a tiny island floating on the vast ocean of the unconscious. According to Jung, the unconscious is actively influencing the conscious mind all the time. In the unconscious, there are the archetypal images and symbols which are most obviously seen in dreams, fantasies and visions. These symbols attract the libido, the psychic energy which is the foundation and regulator of all psychic life. They act upon the conscious man, influencing his attitude and behaviour. While the conscious mind is always directed towards the adjustment of the ego to

\[1\] See above, 122 n.1, 123 n.1
\[2\] See above, 122 Toynbee's defence of his position.
the environment, the unconscious is indifferent to the egocentric purposiveness and partakes of the impersonal objectivity of nature. Its main function is to maintain the undisturbed continuity of the psychic process, i.e., to oppose any one-sidedness that might lead to isolation, inhibition or other pathogenic phenomena, by playing the compensatory and complementary role. Yet at the same time, it operates with a purposiveness of its own, directed towards the completeness and wholeness of the psyche. (1) The wholeness of man is to be achieved by successful integration of the creative process of the unconscious. This results in a 'deepening and widening' of the conscious, which amounts to 'enlightenment, a spiritual act.' (2) Man must live a life in which the needs of both the conscious and the unconscious are to be met. In another Appendix we shall take a closer look into the stratification and content of the unconscious, as well as the function of the libido. Here we wish only to point out that Jung's analytic approach to psychology has profound significance for the study of religion and culture. The symbols and themes which appear often in dreams and visions are universal in character, in the sense that they are to be found in all religions and cultures. So it is in religions and mythologies that the nature which is in man is consciously recognized and accepted as well as given a meaning. But the increase in scientific understanding of the world in our time has led to the abandonment of religion by the modern man. The gods and

---

(1) Jung distinguishes and contrasts the ego with the self. The ego is the actual centre of consciousness, while the self is the subject of man's totality, which also includes the unconscious. Hence the self 'would be an (ideal) factor which embraces and includes the ego'.

mythological themes are rationalized. This situation is alarming, for 'every extension and intensification of the rational consciousness, however, leads us further away from the source of the symbols and, by its ascendency, prevents us from understanding them.' That's the situation. 'With the loss of symbols and images we also lose the ability to cope with the life force within us, and hence integration and wholeness would be impossible. Jung dates the disorientation of modern man from the break of Christianity with paganism, but especially and more seriously from the Enlightenment. What we can do now to avert our fate is to 'give a little thought to what the symbols really mean. In this way not only would the incomparable treasures of our civilization be conserved, but we should also gain new access to the old truths which have vanished from our rational purview because of the strangeness of their symbols..... the man of today lacks the very understanding that would help him to believe.'(1)

Jung makes it clear that religious beliefs cannot be shown to be true in the objective, ontological sense, nor can they be shown to be false. Thus to believe or not is a matter of choice, on purely pragmatic grounds. Man needs religion because with its help we encounter and accept the content of the unconscious which is necessary for the wholeness of the individual and the society. From this point of view, religion is seen as being a means to an end. It is interesting to see that this utilitarian attitude towards religion is also reflected in his 'disciple' Toynbee, as for instance, in the latter's notion of religion as promoting unity and harmony among civilizations, (2) and that saints are necessary for the 'maintenance

(1) Jung, A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity, 199
(2) History, xii, 219. Also see J. Maritain's criticism in On the Philosophy of History, 1959, 137
of societies.' (1) Toynbee also shares Jung's unfavourable attitude towards reason on religious or spiritual matters, and the necessity for reconciliation of the conscious to the unconscious for the achievement of wholeness, Kraemer sees in both Jung and Toynbee a re-presentation of the monistic naturalism which is characteristic of oriental thought.

The third reaction to the Cartesian rationalistic and Hegelian idealistic view of man which we wish to mention takes the form of existentialism, which has a profound influence on the thought of Niebuhr. He broke with the so-called new-orthodox tradition because he thought that it asserted 'the primacy of ideas over personal relations.' (2) He opted for existentialism because it has 'served to reinforce (his) concern for the personal, for the religiously experienced, for I-Thou relations between God and man and between men.' (3)

Kierkegaard and Buber represent two contrasting types of existentialist thought though both work within a theistic context. Kierkegaard, with his stress on subjectivity and the concrete existence of the individual, has introduced into existential thinking a very individualistic note. This is obvious in his idea of the 'Single One.' 'The Single One is the very truth,' he says. (4) From the religious point of view, the 'Single One' refers to the concrete, singular person who becomes aware of himself as standing alone before God. It does not mean that Kierkegaard denies the fact of experience, that man must live in a social relation. He knows that man can become whole and truly the 'Single One' only in virtue of relation to the other.

(1) History, vii, 515
(2) Niebuhr in How My Mind Has Changed, 1961, ed. Fey, 76
(3) ibid, 77
(4) Quoted by Buber in Between Man and Man, 1948, 47. See the chapter on the exposition and criticism of Kierkegaard's 'Single One' on 40-82. For a short discussion, see P. Pfuetz, The Social Self, 194-197
But he restricts the essential relation to God, whom he must love and obey. When a man becomes a 'Single One' he will be ready and able to obey. Therefore the many must go through the 'narrow path' and become the 'Single One,' by a radical act and decision, the deepest art of life the execution of which may cost the artist his life. Nothing should come between the individual and his God. Because this relation is an exclusive and a unique one, therefore it must exclude all other relations as inessential. 'Everyone should be chary above having to do with the "other" and should essentially speak only with God and with himself.' (1) Thus he devalues man's relation to man and to culture in favour of his individual relation with God. Other people are obstacles rather than companions to the isolated individual in his search for salvation. He broke his engagement with Regina Olsen because to him any deep attachment to the finite may weaken his relation to the absolute. When one reads his 'Works of Love', Professor Roberts comments, one cannot help feeling that the 'neighbour', for all its concreteness as a norm, is but an abstraction for Kierkegaard's own feeling. (2) This individualistic trend is carried on by Jean-Paul Sartre in our time, but in an atheistic and nihilistic context which is akin to Nietzsche's thought. To Sartre the individual is threatened by the other persons who seek to objectify him in terms of meaning which he cannot choose or accept. This alien knowledge about him introduces itself into his consciousness and confounds him. There is no way of coming to terms with the other that does not end in frustration. 'Hell is other people' is a well-

(1) Buber, Between Man and Man, 1948, 50
(2) D.E. Roberts, Existentialism and Religious Belief, 1957, 141
known expression from one of his plays.

The other, contrasting trend is represented by Buber. In his thought, the self is a social self, with the often quoted 'I-Thou' and 'I-It' structure of relation. It is social in the sense that the I can only be an I when it is confronted with a Thou. The individual is a fact of existence in so far as fact of human existence is man with man... man is made man by it. The I exists only through the relation to the Thou. (1) This basic 'I-Thou' relation is characterized by mutuality, intensity, directness, presentness and ineffability. It affirms the other just as it is in itself, opening itself to the other, letting the other to present itself on its own terms without seeking to control or manipulate it. Man can only meet and find himself in the meeting of his fellowmen. He will then be released from his isolation and insecurity when he knows the other in all his otherness as himself, as man. He then realizes what it means to be a human being, bound up in relation to the neighbour in suffering and destiny. (2)

The relation between man and man has an ontological implication, because it points itself to God who meets us in the 'Thous' we encounter in our life. The various 'Thous' may be thought of as constituting a perspective the extended lines of which meet in the eternal 'Thou' of God. Every particular "Thou" is a glimpse through to the eternal "Thou". (3) Thus the I's relation to the eternal Thou is the ground of all the earthly I-Thou encounters. This follows that the true place for the realization of the divine-human relation

(1) Buber, Between Man and Man, 1948, 203, 205.
(2) Buber, Between Man and Man, 1948, 203, 205
(3) Buber, I and Thou, 1958, 75
is in the community. Fellow human beings, instead of being obstacles, as Kierkegaard sees them, are indispensable companions in one's journey through this life in search of truth. Therefore Buber seeks to give a communal interpretation to Kierkegaard's 'Single One'. The Single One does not hold himself aloof from the crowd. He is bound in relation to the crowd and must do what he can to change the crowd into Single Ones. He must live his life fully in the body politic, which is the 'reservoir of otherness,' i.e., the basic structure of otherness 'in which I and the other who meet me in my life are interwoven.'

In Buber's thought, the Single One becomes the man for whom the relation to God includes all other relations without curtailing them. Thus the Single One is also invested with responsibility towards his fellowmen. Responsibility in this case seems responding - hearing the unreduced demand of each particular hour in all its crudeness, disharmony and answering out of the depth of one's being. (1) What that demand will be, or what the answer and decision will be needed to meet it nobody can foretell. 'One thing is essential, viz., that I expose myself to the situation as it presents itself to me, waiting for the manifestation of the word, until hearing flows into being and I perceive what is to be perceived and I answer to that which has been perceived.' (2)

This communal idea of the Single One is developed by Buber as a reaction not only against individualism, as represented by Kierkegaard.

(1) See the discussion in this aspect of Buber's thought in M. Friedmann, Martin Buber, the Life of Dialogue, 1955, 93ff.
(2) Buber, Between Man and Man, 1948, 69
but also collectivism, as in Marxism, in which man is reduced to one of the mass, to economic and political functions, an 'It' rather than a 'Thou'. In individualism man asserts himself and glorifies his irresponsible freedom and his solitary state, resulting in anarchy, anxious isolation and egocentric defensiveness. In collectivism man becomes completely immersed in the group which has the effect of neutralising and destroying the living inter-personal bonds that makes him a person, thus making real personal communion impossible.

The I-Thou relation is a precarious one, for the 'Thou' can and indeed must sink back into the 'It', though each 'It' is also potentially a 'Thou'. This is the tragic side of human life, which Buber calls 'the exalted melancholy of our fate.' Other persons and even God become 'Its' as we cease to address them and transform them into objects among other objects. Herein lies the root of trouble in the modern world - the destruction in our time of the essential personal nature of man. The only hope therefore depends upon 'the renewal of dialogical immediacy.'

Buber's view is not without its difficulties. For instance, it is difficult to see how one can have a personal dialogue with a tree or a cat. It is not clear how detached knowledge, gained in the I-It relation, may enrich the meaning conveyed within the I-Thou relation which is otherwise void of content. Yet Buber's insight has been adopted by many theologians. Niebuhr would not only side with Buber in his criticism of the Kierkegaardian individualism, in fact,
his analysis of the triadic nature of human experience recalls in our mind the social nature of selfhood as stressed in Buber's thought. Kraemer also sees this personal I-Thou structure as belonging to the very heart of reality, thus 'In this whole debate on what Religion is,' he remarks, 'the ultimate anthropological question is whether it is meaningful, and true to the structure of reality, to speak of an I-Thou relation or not.'

He rejects the monism and anthropocentricism of oriental religions, including that preached by Toynbee, because they deny this basic structure of reality.

We do not for a moment entertain the idea that these three reactions which we have so far mentioned are the only reactions against the abstract, rationalistic thought in the West. There are other important trends of thought, important also for the understanding of man, such as Bergson's creative evolution and Whitehead's Process philosophy. But since our intention is to locate roughly our writers at the crossroad of modern thought we need only mention the trends which more directly constitute the intellectual background of their works.

---

(1) Kraemer, *Christian Faith*, 72
APPENDIX II  A brief note on the Subconscious, Archetypes and the Libido in the writings of C.G. Jung

According to Jung, the human psyche consists of two complementary but antithetical spheres: consciousness and the unconscious. The unconscious is very much older than consciousness. The conscious mind "grows out of an unconscious psyche which is older than it and which goes on functioning with it or even in spite of it". (1) This unconscious, for the sake of analysis, is further divided into two sections: the personal and the collective unconscious. The personal unconscious (2) is made up of "forgotten, repressed, subliminally perceived and felt material of all kinds", while the collective unconscious refers to the aggregate of the traditions, conventions, customs, prejudices, rules and norms of a human collectivity which give the consciousness of a group as a whole its direction, and by which the individuals of this group consciously but quite unreflectingly live. This collective unconscious can further be divided into 'zones' or 'layers' as though they were one upon another. At the very bottom lies the unfathomable 'central energy' out of which the individual psyche has been differentiated. This energy runs through all subsequent differentiations, living in them all and cutting across them to the individual psyche. Above this 'unfathomable ground' lies the deposit of the experience of all our animal ancestors, then next that of our human ancestors. Each layer stands for a further differentiation of the collective psyche, till, in the development from ethnic groups to national groups, from tribe to family,

(1) Jung: Conscious, Unconscious and Individuation, p281
(2) The Jungian personal unconscious covers the areas described by the Freudian 'preconscious' and 'unconscious'.
the summit, which is the individual psyche, is reached. 'The collective unconscious contains the whole spiritual heritage of mankind's evolution born anew in the brain structure of every individual.'\(^{(1)}\) But this statement should not be taken only in the materialistic sense, as Jung also says that the archetype, which is the chief content of the collective unconscious, 'is not the consequences of physical facts but rather shows how physical facts are expressed by the soul.'\(^{(2)}\)

The content of the collective unconscious can only be indirectly observed in the form of images and symbols which we encounter in dreams, fantasies and visions. 

Mythologies from all over the world contain certain recognizable symbols which man also encounters in his dreams and visions. They reflect the universal history of mankind. These symbols, which Jung at first refers to as 'primordial images' or 'dominants of the collective unconscious' came later in his works to be known as 'archetypes', a term comprehensively enough to cover both the conscious and the unconscious aspects. Strictly speaking, archetypes are only depositions to the formation of symbols, and only in a loose sense is it used to refer to actual symbols or images.\(^{(3)}\) Since 1946 Jung has distinguished between the non-perceptible archetype, which is potentially present in every psychic structure, and the actualized archetype which has become perceptible and already entered into the field of consciousness, appearing as an archetypal image, representation or process. Thus

---

(2) Jung, Das gottliche Kind, p.109, quoted in V. White, God and the Unconscious 1952 p.252, in an Appendix essay by Gebherd Frei. However, the word 'soul' in the writings of Jung seems to refer to some 'limited functional complex,' the inner attitude or personality which he also calls the anima. Cf. Jacobi, The Psychology of C.G. Jung, 1962 5n.
(3) See V. White, ibid, 251-252.
the archetype can manifest itself not only in static forms, such as primordial images, but also in dynamic processes such as differentiations of a function of consciousness. (1)

These primordial symbols of the archetypes, whether they appear in the form of images, like the wise old man, or of an object, such as a mandala of a certain type, are highly charged with psychic energy. In Jung's words:

Archetypes were, and still are, living psychic forces that demand to be taken seriously, and they have a strange way of making sure of their effect. Always they were the bringer of protection and salvation, and their violation has as its consequence the 'peril of the soul' known to us from the psychology of primitives. Moreover, they are the unfailing causes of neurotic and even psychotic disorders, behaving exactly like neglected or maltreated physical organs or organic functional systems. (2)

These symbols are 'protections' only when we are aware of their presence and are able to bring the psychic energy into a certain relation with the conscious, enlisting them in the service of life. (3) Otherwise, the individual, or even a whole people, would be in danger of being possessed and over-run by them, resulting in psychosis and destruction.

Archetypes are connected with the creative source of life because, taken as a whole, they represent the sum of the latent potentialities of the human psyche - a vast store of ancestral knowledge about the profound relation between God, man and the cosmos. To tap this source of one's own psyche, to awake it to new life and to integrate it into the conscious means nothing less than saving the individual.

(1) Jacobi, op. cit., 40.
(2) Jung, Psychology of the Child Archetype, p. 156.
(3) For a short discussion on Archetypal themes and objects, see F.W. Martin, Experiment in Depth, 1955, pp. 92-114. For examples of how archetypal images are used as a transforming symbol, see Martin, ibid, pp. 118f.
from his isolation and gathering him into the eternal cosmic process. To people who are so connected with the cosmic process, immortality becomes not only a hope, but an assurance and a matter of course.

At this point we should mention Jung's idea of the 'self', which is itself an archetype and related with man's wholeness. The self lies in a position between that of the consciousness, with its hardly won values, and the unconscious with its vitality and power. It is a union of two psychic systems at a point common to both. As the ego is the centre of the conscious, so the self can be regarded as the centre of the human psyche in its entirety. 'The self is not only the centre, but also the circumference that encloses consciousness and unconscious; it is the centre of totality, as the ego is the centre of consciousness.'(1) It unites all the opposing elements in man and woman, consciousness and the unconscious, good and bad, male and female and so on, at the same time transcends them all.

The self is also the telos towards which all inner growth and individuation tends. After those dream-pictures which reveal the 'shadow' and the 'anima' (or the 'animus') there gradually emerge those images which Jung groups under the category of 'reconciling symbols', which are representations of that telos. These symbols can be concrete objects, like the divine child, or abstract, as in geometric figures like the circle, or anything fourfold, as the mandalas(2) Jung finds that those patients of his who have seen the incomprehensible mandala symbols in their dreams usually develop a strong feeling of

---

(1) Jung. The Integration of Personality, 1939, p.96

(2) Jung even regard the figures of Christ and Buddha as the most highly differentiated expressions of the archetype of the self yet reached by mankind.
peace and harmony. (1) This experience which comes in the form of a mandala pattern, is according to June, typical of people who are no longer able to project the divine image, i.e., to find God somewhere outside them, and therefore are in danger of 'inflation'. The round or square enclosure of a mandala acts as magically protective walls, preventing an outburst and a disintegration as well as protecting an inward purpose. (2)

This interpretation of the mandala experience shows that the individual cannot be 'whole' unless he is related to a greater whole. So the 'self' is not the individual self, as it is understood in ordinary daily usage. It is similar to the all-embracing Brahman in Hindu thought.

The self which encloses me, encloses many others too; for that conscious 'conceptum in animo nostro' does not belong to me, nor is it peculiar to me. It is everywhere. Paradoxically, it is the quintessence of the individual and at the same time a collectivity. (3)

Jung in fact compares the individual and the greater self with the presence of Christ in the souls of men. Christ is the deepest life of the individual, yet he does not belong to the individual. If the self is logos, it is also anthropos or microcosmos. (4) These comparisons will not be misleading only if we remind ourselves constantly that the self represents a purely human wholeness. It is not, as logos is, also God. (5)

---

(1) For examples see Jung, Psychology and Religion, 1938, p66ff.
(2) See F. Fordham, An Introduction to Jung's Psychology, 1959, p. 67
(3) Jung, Paracelsica, 167, quoted in White,
(4) White, ibid, 259.
(5) White, ibid, pp258, 263 where Jung denies the charge of equating self with God.
For the conscious personality, the birth of the self means a shift of its psychic centre, and thus a different attitude towards life. This is nothing less than a 'transformation'.

If the life-mass is to be transformed, a circumambulatio is necessary, i.e., exclusive concentration on the centre, the place of creative change. During the process one is 'bitten' by animals; in other words, we have to expose ourselves to the animal impulses of the unconscious without identifying ourselves with them and without running away.... We must hold our ground, which means here that the process initiated by the dreamer's self-observation must be experienced in all its ramification and then articulated with consciousness to the best of his understanding.(1)

This involves tension and suffering in the individual. Jung regards suffering as a part of life. Suffering is not an ailment but the normal counterpart of happiness. It is a bane only when we from weakness, cowardice or lack of understanding try to evade it. Such a negative attitude towards suffering only breeds more suffering. It is from 'inauthentic' suffering that we must deliver ourselves. Only when we face and accept the conflicts between the mind and the flesh, the conscious and the unconscious, and the thrust of wild impulses of the unconscious that we can hope to turn suffering into 'authentic' suffering. Suffering then will bear with it an intimation of future fulfilment and spiritual enrichment. Thus, conscious realization is necessary for the transformation of an inauthentic into an authentic suffering.

(1) Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, 1953 p.138
Lastly we come to the psychic energy, libido, which is central to our understanding of the function of the human psyche. Libido is the total force which pulsates through all the forms and activities of the psychic systems and establishes a communication between them. (1) The libido flows between two opposing poles, in accordance with the fundamental principle that all psychic life is governed by a necessary opposition. Opposition is a law inherent in human nature. 'The psyche is... a self-regulating system,' and 'there is no balance, no system of self-regulation, without opposition.' (2) These opposing poles are called 'the opposites.' The greater the tension between the pairs of opposite, the greater will the energy be. Since the opposites follows a regulating function, so when one extreme is reached, libido passes into its opposite. (3) This is why love sometimes changes easily into hate, and violence calmness. Because the psyche behaves in accordance with the law of necessary opposition, the unconscious aspect of the self plays therefore a regulating, compensatory and complementary role. While the conscious, under normal conditions, responds to a situation with a reaction adapted to outward reality the unconscious responds with a reaction which is derived from the experience of mankind and also consonant with the necessities and laws of man's inner life. (4)

The libido flows forward and backward between the two poles of consciousness and the unconscious. The forward movement is progression,

---

(1) Jung's use of libido is to be distinguished from that of Freud. Freud uses it to designate the sexual drive both in its restricted and extended sense. Libido as psychic energy in Jung's understanding has no metaphysical connotation, 'it is only a sign or token for the understanding which makes use of it in ordering experience.'


(2) Quoted in Jacobi, *op.cit.*, p.52

(3) Jung, *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology*, 1953, p.71. This law of necessary, he says, was discovered by Heraclitus.

which is concerned with the adaptation to one’s environment, and regression, to one’s own needs. Both have their positive values and are equally necessary. Regression, however, among other things, can also be a symptom of disturbance if it is a result of the disruption of the natural flow of the psychic energy, as, for example, it flows back into the unconscious when conscious adaptation has failed. This may create a situation in which the content of the unconscious is unduly charged with excessive energy. Should this overcharged content of the unconscious leak through to the consciousness, fantasy, vision, or even a violent outburst in the form of psychosis will result. Consciousness must intervene long before the final outbreak occurs. Energy can be transferred from one pole to the other, or from the unconscious to the conscious, by a direct act of the will. This method is known as ’sublimation’. The transfer can also be made in a roundabout way through a period of gestation when the unconscious will produce a suitable symbol which is capable of attracting the libido and directing its natural flow. (1) To become whole, therefore, a man must be able to maintain this harmony within himself. He must first be alive to the interaction of the psychic systems. So Jung’s psychology is also a way of life, and this truth is well expressed by a trusted interpreter of Jung:

To relieve the isolation and confusion of modern man, to enable him to find his place in the great stream of life, to help him gain a wholeness which may knowingly and deliberately reunite his luminous conscious side with his dark unconscious side – this is the meaning and purpose of Jungian psychological guidance. (2)

(2) Jacobi, The Psychology of C.G. Jung, 1962, p.49
APPENDIX III The concept of time in the thoughts of Augustine and Bergson

Niebuhr's concept of time reflects that of Bergson, who represents one of the climax points in the Augustinian tradition. (1) In the following we shall examine the view of Augustine and Bergson on this subject.

Augustine's reflection on time are gathered for us in Book xi of Confession. Time is discussed in the larger context of creation. Having come to the conclusion that time is created by God, he poses the fundamental question: Quis est tempus? (What is time?) The answer he gives to it takes him beyond Plato and Aristotle, though what he says has to some extent been found in the writings of Aristotle. Aristotle shares Plato's two basic convictions about time, which the latter developed in the often quoted Timaeus (36c-39c), namely, time is a concomitant of all change, and time is a certain numeration of any change whatever. From the latter Aristotle formulates the dictum: time is the numerator or measure of motion. (2) Thus the primary concept of time as Plato and Aristotle understand it is physical or 'clock-time'. It is time in terms of the measurable movement of any body in uniform motion in space. In other words, time is, so to speak, spatialized. The standard interval of time is the correlate of distance covered by a specified body moving at uniform velocity. It is this time of Timaeus that is, according to A.E. Taylor, precisely the 'true, absolute, or mathematical time' of Newton's Principia, which has played an important role in the natural science. (3)

(1) For a good discussion of time in the Augustinian tradition, (including Bergson), see James Gustafson, Treasure in Earthen Vessels, 1961, 113-137.
(2) Physics, 221, 223. References to Aristotle are taken from the article on Greek and Christian Views of Time, by R.E. Cushman, in Journal of Religion, 1953, 254, 265.
(3) A.E. Taylor, Faith of a Moralist, 1930, 335
But Aristotle is also aware that time seems to be distinguishable from measured motion. For example, he observes that change is the changing of specified particulars in diverse phases of change, whereas 'time is current everywhere alike and in relation to everything.'(1) He also points out that velocity of change among bodies is faster or slower, but not so with time, which is rather to be regarded as a constant.(2) He is on the verge of attributing to time independent existence, as a kind of permanent possibility of change in changing things, or a quasi-independent continuum of duration. But this trend of his thought is not developed because of his basic agreement with Plato. The resultant view is somewhat equivocal: time is neither identical with movement nor capable of being separated from it.(3)

What is more important for our purpose to notice is that Aristotle is aware of change as something not merely confined to outward physical motions alone, but also can be successive movements of inward experience and reflection. The awareness of change, both inward and outward, alerts us to time's passage. Awareness implies consciousness of time. Aristotle actually raises the question whether there would be time in the absence of consciousness or psyche. He seems to come to the conclusion that time would not exist apart from some consciousness, because periods of motion would not be counted.(4) Thus, time is not dependent upon physical motion primarily, but upon the intelligent subject of experience. It is this point that is further developed by Augustine into a teleological and historical time.

(1) *Physics*, 218, b13, Cushman, *ibid*, 258
(2) *Physics*, 218 b, 16-18 Cushman, in *Journal of Religion*, 1953, 259
(3) *Physics*, 219 a2, Cushman, *ibid*, 259
(4) *Physics* 223 a22ff
The distinctive contribution of Augustine lies chiefly in his inward, 'psychological' approach to the problem: what is time in human experience? He takes note of the common partition of time into past, present and future. (1) From the standpoint of experience, he observes that time 'flows' with a definite direction, from out of the future, through the present into the past. (2) This direction is one way and irreversible. When time is analysed in terms of motion in space, the past is gone and no more, the future is not yet, and the present is a vanishing point, forever passing away, so much so that it "takes not up any space." It looks as though, from this point of view, time has to be regarded as nonentity. But when Augustine looks inward into his consciousness he observes that there are intervals of time. "We do perceive intervals of time, and we compare them with each other, and we say that some are longer and others are shorter." (3) Our experience affirms that time is real, and that it can be measured into intervals. But this does not tally with the external view of time in terms of space and motion, because there the present is a point forever passing away, and no fragments of time, past, present or future, is in the sense of interval of duration. In other words, according to the internal view, time is not broken up into fragments in the sense of sections of duration. Thus Augustine has to abandon the idea that time is identical with motion in space. "Once I heard a learned man say that the motions of the sun, moon, and stars constituted time, and I did not agree." (4)

(1) Augustine, Confession, xi, l.17
(2) Confession, xi, 16
(3) Confession, xi, 16
(4) Confession, xi, 23
His point of view is that time is interval of duration in human experience. It is but 'a stretching out in length (distentionem)' or extendedness, and only hesitantly does he regard it as the extendedness of the mind itself. (1) Thus the common partition of past, present and future is seen in a new light. The past and the future are seen as extension of the present, as memory and expectation.

Perhaps it might be said rightly that there are three times, a time present of things past, a time present of things present and a time present of things future. For these three do co-exist somehow in the soul, for otherwise I could not see them. The time present of things past is memory; the time present of things present is direct experience; the time present of things future is expectation. (2)

The mind performs 'three functions'. It expects, it attends and it remembers, so that what it expects passes into what it remembers by way of what it attends to. It is the mind which furnishes the direction of duration in which time is a movement from future through the present into the past. Without the mind, time has not directionality. Therefore, in the physical world of mechanical or organic change, there is no teleological time, which marks the difference between nature and history. Only human beings whose minds are capable of performing these three functions are capable of history. Yet these three functions are not separate, unrelated functions. They are interacting with one another, uniting in the present as a whole. Thus the present is not just a bare point, or a bare moment in time, it is rather a duration in which the past endures

(1) Confession, xi, 26
(2) Confession, xi, 20
as memory, and the future abides in the form of expectation. It is this notion of the present which Niebuhr adopts as his view of time in internal history.

In modern western culture, this inward understanding of time finds powerful (but not exclusive) expressions in Henri Bergson. His understanding of time is exposed in the context of his analysis of the human consciousness. Consciousness is characterized by mutability. It is a perpetual flux in which state follows state with bewildering rapidity.\(^1\) Now change presupposes time. It is in fact the manifestation of the work of time. Therefore, to be conscious is to exist in time. Conscious existence is essentially temporal in nature, it means enduring from moment to moment within the stream of time. But it is this time, according to Bergson, that has largely been misunderstood. To grasp what he means we have to take note of two words which are important in his discussion of time: homogeneous and heterogenous. There are two kinds of reality, the one heterogeneous, that of sensible qualities, and the other homogenous, viz., space. Bergson thinks that space can be clearly conceived by the human intellect, and that it enables us to use clear-cut distinctions, to count, to abstract and to speak. These two terms are antonyms, as 'homogeneity (is) consisting in the absence of every quality.'\(^2\) To him, true or real time (durée réelle), which is also called 'pure duration', belongs to the heterogeneous, while the popular concepts of time dwell more in the homogeneous, being spatialized

---

\(^1\) Bergson, Creative Evolution, 1911,1. where he gives an account of the states of conscious experience available to the individual as one reflects upon it.

\(^2\) Bergson, Time and Free Will, 1910 Torch ed. 1959, quotations taken from Torch ed.98, also see 97.
and intellectualized. Obviously, physical or mathematical time, or 'clock-time', represents clearly the 'transpassing of the idea of space upon the field of pure consciousness.' It does not correspond to the time which we inwardly experienced, and which is accessible through intuition. But we must be careful when we turn to the examination of our inner experience of change. It we think of our conscious states as ranging alongside one another to form a discrete series so as to admit of being counted, and that these states are external to one another, without permeating one another, we are bringing the idea of space in. '.... time, conceived under the form of an unbounded and homogeneous medium, is nothing but the ghost of space haunting the reflective consciousness.'

Contrary to clock-time, true or pure duration is 'pure heterogeneity.' It is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states. These states interpenetrate one another without absorbing one another, and they organize themselves, like the notes of a tune, to form a continuous or qualitative multiplicity with no resemblance to number, thus different from the concept of a homogeneous medium or a measurable quantity altogether.

In other words,

pure duration might well be nothing but a succession of qualitative change, which melt into and permeate one another, without precise outlines, without any tendency to externalize themselves in relation to one another, without any affiliation with number.

(1) Bergson, Time and Free Will, 1910, 99, see also 99-105 on further explanation of 'duree reelle.'
(2) Bergson, Time and Free Will, 1911, 104
(3) Bergson, 100
Because the different states interpenetrate one another, Bergson can say that both the past and the present form an organic whole in pure duration. It is a duration 'in which the past, always moving on, is swelling unceasingly with a present that is absolutely new.' Bergson's idea of duration is very much tied up with his theory of memory. The whole of our past is following us 'at every instant,' even though we are only conscious of a small part of it. This entire past includes 'the original bent of our soul, that we desire, will and act.' Our past, which we drag behind us unawares, 'is made manifest to us in its impulse: it is felt in the form of tendency, although a small part of it only is known in the form of idea.' Even though the whole past endures in the present, yet, 'our memory pours into the present only the odd recollection or two that in some way complete our present situation.' But theoretically speaking, no part of our past is beyond recall. It is interesting to note that Bergson has already accepted, in connection with his theory of memory, the reality of the 'unconscious' which was later developed in detail by the analytic psychologists like Jung and Freud. The 'unconscious' is the treasure-house of our past experience, which is to be recalled by the conscious intellect. 'The cerebral mechanism is arranged just so as to drive back into the unconscious almost the whole of its past, and to admit beyond the threshold only that which can cast light on the present situation or further the action now being prepared ....' This view is affirmed in order to refute

---

(1) Bergson, Creative Evolution, 1911, 210, also see 5.
(2) Bergson, Ibid, 6
(3) Bergson, Ibid, 176
(4) Bergson, Creative Evolution, 1911, 5
the theories of those who suppose that memories are preserved in the
matter of the brain, either in the brain cells or in the molecular
paths perception has traced.

How the past is involved in the present in Bergson's thought is
seen in his view of the relation between memory and perception.
Perception is our actual present contact with the world in which our
actions are taking place. But we never perceive anything without
remembering. Pure perception, which has nothing to do with the
past, and pure memory, which is divorced from the present, are
theoretical possibilities and do not apply in life situations. In
conscious experience perception and memory belong together. However
instantaneous perception may seem, it has some duration, and all
duration is the existence of the past in the present. It is true
that Bergson says time and again that the past is that which has ceased
to act, in the sense of present actions, and thus 'powerless'. (1)
But it does not mean that it has ceased to exist, for memory holds
the past and unites it with the present in the living reality of the
individual. Bergson would even grant that the past has a determining
effect upon the present, as when he says, 'The whole of our past
psychic life conditions our present state, without being its necessary
determinant; whole, also it reveals itself in our character, although
no one of its past states manifests itself explicitly in character. (2)
However, Bergson's emphasis has been, as we have mentioned before, (3)
mainly on the novel, original and creative acts of the 'elan'. It

(1) Bergson, Matter and Memory, 1911, 193ff, for instance.
(2) Bergson, ibid, 191
(3) See above, 247f
is not certain how the past determines our present in his thought.

Bergson's peculiar notion of time results in the formulation of two selves, or rather two views of self: the fundamental self, and the superficial self which is its social and spatial representation. The fundamental self is the self which has an existence in which all reality is the actually present, moving, changing, now. It is a self whose inner states melt into one another, constantly becoming, and not amenable to measure. To live in the reality of the duree is to be free. But the moments at which we thus grasp ourselves, Bergson admits, are rare. The greater part of the time we live as a superficial self for which the inner states are arbitrary divided into distinguishable, measurable moments set in juxtaposition to one another as quantitative multiplicity. In doing so we confuse duration with extensity, quality with quantity, reality of the inner psychic world with its representations. Bergson admits that the projection of the fundamental self in the form of the superficial self is 'much better adapted to the requirements of social life in general and language in particular,' yet unfortunately, it results often in the loss of the fundamental self altogether. Because not many of us realize what time really is, therefore, not many of us live out our true self. We perceive but 'our own ghost, a colourless shadow which pure duration projects into homogeneous space.'(1)

Niebuhr belongs to the Augustinian tradition insofar as he also understands the present being not a bare point, but a duration in which

---

(1) Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 1911, 231, also see 128-139
the past endures as memory and the future abides in the form of expectation. Or rather, time is duration in which past, present and future come together as an organic whole in the reality of the living individual.
APPENDIX IV  The 'Personal God' - the question of 'personality in God' and 'Personality of God'

The phrase 'personal God' can be interpreted in at least two ways. God is a personal God because first, there is personality in the Godhead, and second, because personality can be positively affirmed of God. The word 'personality' takes on a different meaning in each case.

The idea of personality when used in relation to God has been thoroughly and competently examined by C.C.J. Webb in his Gifford Lectures. According to him, the terminology of personality was originally theological, so that men spoke of persons in the Godhead before they came to speak of themselves as persons. (1) He makes a distinction between 'personality in God' and 'personality of God.' The former refers to the plurality of persons and their inter-relationship within the Godhead, a use which has its beginning in the Trinitarian debates in the third century; and the latter serves as a general description of the whole of the Godhead, referring to his single personality rather than the plurality of persons. While the 'affirmation of Personality in God has been a characteristic of Christian theological terminology since the third century of our era,' the use of Personality of God, in Webb's opinion, is of modern origin, probably dating from Schleiermacher. (2) In the modern use, the interpretation of personality has been given a philosophical and psychological bias. To characterize this use of personality Webb takes as his guide Boethius's celebrated definition: Persona est

---

(1) God and Personality, (first course) 1918, 20
(2) Ibid, see footnote on 62,63.
naturae rationabilis individua substantia (the individual subsistence of a rational nature). To this Webb also adds other elements which have become prominent in later discussions since the time of Descartes and Kant, though they may be brought within the scope of the Boethian formula. They are incommunicability, self-consciousness and will. (1) Admittedly this list can be extended in accordance with the philosophical and theological temperament of each writer, (2) but the important thing to note is that when personality as such is affirmed of God, God is presented as a being with whom man can enter into communion. This is in fact the point which is emphasized by writers who speak of 'personality of God' or 'personal God.' So Webb says,

When, however, the expression a 'personal God' is thus used, without reference to any plurality within the unity of the Divine Nature, what is really in the minds of those who so use it is, I think, always the possibility of personal relations - of worship, trust, love - between oneself and God. (3)

This personal relation is characterized in terms of reciprocity, a sort of mutual involvement in one another. For this reason Webb would not allow Spinoza's God as personal, for he 'neither "first loves us", nor does he return our love.' Nor Aristotle's God meets the requirement, for he can, according to the principle of Aristotle's theology, 'know and love nothing less than himself.' He is utterly transcendent, and beyond the reach of personal communion. (4)

Even though the belief of 'personal God,' in the sense of affirming the 'personality of God,' are to be found among Christians and non-

(1) God and Personality, 55
(2) For instance, H.H. Farmer takes succour and demand as the two poles of God's personal activity in his gracious dealings with man.
(3) God and Personality, 1918, 70
(4) Ibid, 73-75.
Christians alike, nevertheless there is a difference with the former. In the traditional Christian use it is inseparably tied up with the original theological idea of 'personality in God.' It is in the historic faith which affirms the personality in God, says Webb, that we can best learn what is meant by a 'personal God.' The affirmation of personality in God is a strong safeguard against any tendency of losing the distinctive personality of God in that of his worshipper, a danger magnified in the mystery religions and in philosophical mysticism. Also, with its correlative doctrine of Incarnation it dispels any attempt to remove God to a distance from the worshipper too great to admit of genuine sympathy and devotion. The doctrine of Incarnation not only vivifies the doctrine of Trinity but also gives the personality of God a moral significance and content.

It has, Webb says,

enabled the personal relation between Christ and the God whom he called his Father, with which the Gospels have familiarized them, to be regarded as a relation within the life of God himself, yet without sanctioning at any rate the tendency observable in most doctrines of Divine Personality - for it cannot be denied that this tendency has at times made itself felt even in orthodox Christian Churches - to introduce into the Godhead a clash of moral attributes fatal to that whole-hearted devotion to a single ideal of life which monotheism is especially concerned and qualified to promote.(1)

The thought in Webb's mind seems to be this: the doctrine of Incarnation, which is part and parcel of a wider discussion on the Trinity, makes the issue of personality in God concrete and meaningful. It is this idea of personality in God which provides a strong basis for the affirmation of the personality of God, which in turn also implies the idea of communion. This is at least how traditional Christianity understands the expression, the 'personal God.'

(1) God and Personality, 1918 83
Webb is certainly right when he says that the Incarnation has helped us in understanding more of the personality both in and of God, yet perhaps we should also add that it can be a potential source of confusion. In our time, the general tendency is that personality is affirmed of God because we know Jesus to be a personality and not so much because of what he has witnessed about the Father. Thus we have a situation which is the reverse of what it was in the nineteenth century (and the earlier part of this century). Formerly it used to affirm the deity of Jesus by saying that 'Jesus has the value of God.' Now it will be more intelligible to say that 'God has the value of Jesus.' Jesus's personality becomes the sole valid clue to God's personality. In this vein of thought we also find unwillingness to accord validity to knowledge of God or language about God apart from a very restricted Christological emphasis, an unwillingness which is not unfamiliar in contemporary theological discourse and worship. H.R. Niebuhr's theology is a protest against this tendency.
APPENDIX V  A brief note on the anthropocentric tendency in Schleiermacher and Ritschl, and Barth’s protest against it

Liberal theology in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were anthropocentric in at least two aspects, viz., in regard to the emphasis on religious experience and on moral value. Religious experience was given a supreme place by Schleiermacher. The feeling of being absolutely dependent which, to him, is the essence of religion, is also one and the same thing with the consciousness of being in relation with God. Thus God and religious experience belong together, and this carries the implication that to speak of man’s religious experience is also to speak about God, though Cobb points out that ‘primarily, he speaks of man’s religious experience, not about its object.’ (1) Thus, Schleiermacher revived in his concept of the feeling of absolute dependence the Augustinian notion of the inseparability of the knowledge of the soul and the knowledge of God. (2) The anthropocentric tendency in Schleiermacher is neatly summed up by Barth when he says that in the former’s theology ‘Christian pious self-awareness contemplates and describes itself.’ (3) The influence of Schleiermacher was long and lasting. Many theologians had written against him, but, in Barth’s opinion, E. Brunner, in 1924, ‘was the first man writing against Schleiermacher whose premises were really different.... Until then every attack had shown such a close similarity of content with his own writings that an effective

(1) John Cobb Jr. Living Options in Protestant Theology, 1962, 130, see also 127-131.
(3) K. Barth, From Rousseau to Ritschl, 1959, 338
antithesis had been impossible.'(1) As late as 1930 we still found W.M. Horton, for instance, writing; what is most needed..... is a new natural theology, not beginning with nature but with religious experience, not rationalistic but empirical in method.....'(2)

The other anthropocentric feature of Liberal Protestantism lies in its emphasis on value. This is an attempt to counteract both the scientific attacks on theology and the challenge of the comparative study of religions. The liberal theologians seek to 'resist this double attack in great measure by withdrawing from conceptions to values, from the question of truth to the definition of value'.(3)

Thus in Ritschl, religious statements are taken not as disinterested statements of facts, but as value judgment. Theology was reduced to dealing only with values, while theoretical judgments lay outside its sphere. In the words of the inspired follower of Ritschl, F.C. Krarup, 'the idea of God is true on account of its value; in the same way as it is with all the other things we believe in.'

'The gifts of religion are true, just so far as they are ideal.'(4)

It is mainly against this liberal anthropocentric ethos that Barth develops his 'Theology of Crisis', with heavy emphasis on theocentricism. To avoid the error of Schleiermacher, Barth refuses

(1) Barth, From Rousseau to Ritschl, 1959, 338
(2) Horton, Theism and the Modern Mood, 1931, 70f. Horton also says that Hocking, Meaning of God in Human Experience, Lyman, Experience of God in Modern Life, and Macintosh (D.C.) Theology as an Empirical Science, have contributed along this line.
(4) Quoted in Aagaard, ibid, 153. For further reference to Schleiermacher and Ritschl, see Niebuhr's treatment, above, 79ff
to start his theological discourse either with religion or piety, and instead begins with the 'Word' directed to man, which is God's address to man, and which can never become man's possession. (1)
The sole source of knowledge of God comes from God himself, who addresses us by his Word who is none other than Jesus Christ, 'the objective possibility of revelation.' (2) To bring the contrast between his method and that of Schleiermacher's he makes it clear that faith in Christ and religious experience are wholly discontinuous, and so man cannot be led by apologetic arguments from the one to the other. In fact, the apologist is the theologian who carries the white flag surrendering to the unbelievers. (3) To sharpen the idea of discontinuity Barth presents the Word coming to corrupted and rebellious man vertically from above, as 'senkrecht von oben' (Kirkegaardian phrase). This idea is meant to put an end to all talk of continuity and fulfilment. There is nothing continuous between God's Word of self-disclosure and reconciliation on the one hand, and man on the other. On the contrary, it contradicts all that is human. Overagainst the liberal emphasis on value, the divine revelation deals with truth, 'in revelation we have to do with the truth itself.' Truth is God himself, and that in revelation he becomes the God who is among us and for us. (4) This notion of revelation as truth is important in relation to Barth's (and also Kraemer's) understanding of religions, about which much has already been said.

(2) For references to Jesus Christ as the sole source of knowledge of God, see Church Dogmatics, II, 1.25, 103-4, 115, 422.
(3) Barth, From Rousseau to Ritschi, 1959, 325
(4) Barth, Church Dogmatics, II,1.68-70
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources: In the following only the works which are considered relevant for the purpose of our analysis in this work are given. In the case of Kraemer, only the writings in the English language are given, in which his major works are published. For further information about the works of A.J. Toynbee, see Monica Popper, A Bibliography of the Works in English of A.J. Toynbee, 1910-1954, 1955 for H. Kraemer, see C.F. Hallencreutz, Kraemer Towards Tambaram, 1966, 309-317. A mimeographed bibliography of Kraemer's works has also been completed by M. van den Hucht. For H.R. Niebuhr, see Faith and Ethics, ed. Ramsey, Torch edition, 1965, 291-301, also L.A. Hoedemaker, Faith in Total Life, 1966 9-13.

A.J. TOYNBEE: Books

" A Study of History, volumes 4-6, Oxford, 1939.
" Civilization on Trial (a collection of essays), Oxford, 1948
" The World and the West (BBC Reith lectures), Oxford, 1952
" A Historian's Approach to Religion (Gifford lectures), Oxford, 1956
" Christianity Among the Religions of the World, Oxford, 1956
" Comparing Notes, a dialogue across a generation, with his son Phillip Toynbee, Oxford, 1963.

Articles in Books or Periodicals

" World Sovereignty and World Culture, in PACIFIC AFFAIRS, vol.4, Sept., 1931, pp 753-778
" Far East Reaction to Western Civilization IN HARPER'S MAGAZINE, vol.155, September, 1927, pp 460-468.
A.J. TOYNBEE (contd.)


"Christianity and Civilization, (Burge Memorial lecture), 1940, reprinted in Civilization on Trial with slight modification.


"The Prospect of Western Civilization, 1949.


"Contemporary History as a Scientific Problem, in WORLD WAR II IN THE WEST, Amsterdam, September, 1950.


A.J. TOYNBEE (contd.)

- Council of Hope-The Toynbee-Jarrold Controversy, in LETTERS TO THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT, 1954, 38
- I agree with a Pagan, in THIS I BELIEVE: the personal philosophies of one hundred thoughtful men and women, ed R. Swing, 1954, 150-151
- Pharisee or Publican? (a refutation of Jarrold’s criticism), in HIBBERT JOURNAL, vol.52, July, 1954. pp319-326

HENDRIK KRAEMER: Books

- Religion and the Christian Faith, Westminster, 1956
- From Mission Field to Independence Church, S.C.M., 1958.
- World Culture and World Religions; the Coming Dialogue, Lutterworth, 1960.
HENDRIK KRAEMER (Contd.)

Articles in books and periodicals


The Christian Message in Relation to Other Religions, in CHRIST AND STUDENTS OF THE EAST, 1933, pp83-88.


The Younger Church in Relation to its Social Environment 1936


Why Mission Just Now? (from a pamphlet), 1938

The Riddle of History: thoughts on Romans 9-11, in INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF MISSION, 1943, pp 78-87.

The Foundation of the World Council and its Significance for the Relation of the Church to One Another, in ECUMENICAL REVIEW, 1948/49, pp260-266.

The Missionary Implication of the End of Western Christendom

Islam and Christian Theology, in INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF MISSIONS, 1949, pp114-116

The Bible and Social Ethics, in CONTRIBUTIONS TO A CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ETHICS, paters of the Ecumenical Institute, no. 4, 1950, pp 4-30

Introductory Survey in ON THE MEANING OF HISTORY, papers of the Ecumenical Institute, no. 5, 1950, pp3-18

University Education and Religious Syncretism in Asia, in THE STUDENT WORLD, 1951, 31

Towards a Rediscovery of Man: opening lecture at European Layman Conference at Bad Ball, Germany, July, 1951 (WCC Archives)
HENDRIK KRAEMER (contd.)

- The Christian Church in Non-Communist Muslim Asia, in INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF MISSIONS, 1953, 144-150
- The Encounter between the East and the West in the Civilization of Our Time, in ECUMENICAL ERA IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY, ed. Jurji, 1959 (subsequently being the first chapter of World Culture and World Religions, 1960)
- Islamic Culture and Missionary Adequacy, in MUSLIM WORLD, 1960, 245-251.
- Introduction to THE MEANING OF RELIGION, by W. Brede Kristensen, The Hague, 1960
- How can Revival BePermamt Rather Than a Temporary Survival 1960
- Introduction to A. Th. van Leeuwen, Christianity and World History, Edinburgh, 1964, pp ix-xi.
- The Value of Comparative Religion, date uncertain.

H. RICHARD NIEBUHR: Books

- The Social Source of Denominationism, Holt, 1929, Meridian 1957
- The Meaning of Revelation, Macmillian 1941, Macmillian paper 1960
- The Gospel for a Time of Fears (Three Lectures), Henderson Services, 1950
H. RICHARD NIEBUHR: (contd.)

" The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry, with D.W.D. Williams and James M. Gustafson, Harper, 1956
" Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, Faber, 1960

Articles in books or periodicals

" Religious Relativism in the Twentieth Century, in RELIGIOUS REALISM, ed. D.C. Macintosh, Macmillian, 1931, 413-428
" Translator's Preface, in THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION, by Paul Tillich, 1932, pp vii-xxii
" The Ego-Alter Dialectic and the Conscience, in JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY, XLII, 1945, pp 352-359
" The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Unity of the Church, in THEOLOGY TODAY, III, 1946, 371-384
" Introduction to ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY, by L. Feuerbach, Harper, 1947, pp. vii-xi
" The Hidden Church and the Church in Sight, in RELIGION IN LIFE, XV, 1945-1946, 106-117
H. RICHARD NIEBUHR (contd.)

- The Disorder of Man in the Church of God, in MAN'S DISORDER AND GOD'S DESIGN, VOL.1. THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH IN GOD'S DESIGN. Harper, 1949, pp78-88
- Review of Tillich's Systematic Theology, vol.1., in THEOLOGY, LVI, no. 396, pp 225-228
- The Triad of Faith, in ANDOVER NEWTON BULLETIN XLVII, 1954 pp 3-12
- Ex libris, in CHRISTIAN CENTURY, LXXIX, 1962, 754
- An attempt at a Theological Analysis of Missionary Motivation, OCCASIONAL BULLETIN, Missionary Research Library New York XIV 1963, 1-6
Secondary Sources: Books, and articles in books or periodicals - Works more relevant to the discussions in this work are listed below. Less important works (when quoted) are acknowledged in the footnotes and are not listed.


Allen, E.L., Christianity Among the Religions, Allen and Unwin, 1960


Dr Kraemer's Contribution to the Understanding of the Nature of Revelation, INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF MISSIONS, XLVI, 361-371


Bagby, Philip, Culture and History, Longman, 1958

Baillie, John, Our Knowledge of God, Oxford, 1939

The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought, Oxford, 1956

Some Reflections on the Changing Theological Scene, in UNION SEMINARY REVIEW, January, 1957, 3-9

The Sense of the Presence of God, Oxford, 1962

Barr, James, Revelation Through History in the Old Testament and in Modern History, in INTERPRETATION, XVII, 1963, pp 193-205

'Revelation' in Hastings Dictionary of the Bible, revised by Grant and Rowley, Edinburgh 1963, 847-849

Old and New in Interpretation, S.C.M. 1964

Barrett, C.K. The Epistle to the Romans, A. & C. BLACK, 1957

Barth, Karl, Church Dogmatic, 1, 2. T. & T. Clark, 1956

From Rousseau to Ritschl, S.C.M., 1959

The Humanity of God, John Knox Press, 1960

Natural Theology, with E. Brunner, introduced by J. Baillie Bles, 1946


Benz, Ernst, On Understanding the Non-Christian Religions, in MIDWAY, July, 1960; also incorporated into THE HISTORY OF RELIGION, ed Eliade and Kitagawa, 1959, pp.115-131

Bleeker, C.J., Christ in Modern Athen, Mowbray, 1966
Bouilard, Henri, The Knowledge of God, Mowbray, 1969
Bouquet, A.C., The Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions, Nisbet 1953
Brunner, Emil, Man in Revolt, Lutterworth, 1939
  "  Reason and Revelation, Westminster, 1946
  "  The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption (Dogmatics II), Westminster, 1952
  "  Christianity and Civilization, vols 1 & 2, Nisbet, 1946
  "  Truth as Encounter, S.C.M. 1964
Buber, Martin, I and Thou, 1937, 2nd ed. T & T Clark, 1958
  "  Between Man and Man Macmillian, 1948
  Eclipse of God, Collancz, 1952
Cairn, David, The Image of God in Man, S.C.M. 1953
  "  Natural Theology, in A HANDBOOK OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY, ed. Halverson and Cohen, Original Living Age Book, 1958
Cairns, D.S., Christianity and the non-Christian Religions, in INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF MISSIONS, vol. 28, 1939, 124-132
Campbell, C.A., On Selfhood and Godhood, Allen and Unwin, 1957
Cauthen, Kenneth, An Introduction to the Theology of H. Richard Niebuhr, in CANADIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY, Vol. 10, 1964, 4-14
Chenchiah, Paul, 'Christian Message in a Non-Christian World': an Indian View of Dr Kraemer's Presentation, in RETHINKING CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA, ed. Devasahayam and Sudansanam, 1938, p143-196
Christian, James, Toynbee's Concept of Man, a doctoral thesis submitted to Boston University, 1957
Cobb, John Jr., Living Options in Protestant Theology, Westminster, 1962
Cragg, Kenneth, Hearing the Word of God, in INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF MISSION, Vol. 46, 1957, 241-251

Christianity in World Perspective, Lutterworth, 1968


Dawson, Christopher, Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, London, 1950


The Christian Attitude to Other Religions, Cambridge, 1953

Diamond, M.L., Martin Buber, Oxford, 1960

Diem, Herman, Kierkegaard’s Dialectic of Existence, Oliver and Boyd, 1959

Dodd, C.H., The Epistle to the Romans, London, 1932


Downing, G.P., Has Christianity a Revelation? S.C.M. 1964

Eliade, Mircea and Kitagawa, Joseph M (ed), The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology, Chicago, 1959


Fordham, Frieda, An Introduction to Jung’s Psychology, Pelican Original, 1953, Revised 1959


Friedmann, Maurice S., Martin Buber, the Life of Dialogue, Kegal Paul 1955

Fuss, Peter, The Philosophy of Josiah Royce, Cambridge, Mass., 1965

Gargan, Edward T., ed., The Intent of Toynbee's History, Loyola University Press, 1961

Geyl, Pieter C., From Banke to Toynbee, Smith College Studies in History, 1952

" Debates with Historians, The Hague, 1955

" Toynbee's Answer (On Toynbee's Reply to His Critics in the 12th volume of A STUDY OF HISTORY, Amsterdam, 1961

" Encounters in History, Collins, 1963

Gollwitzer, H., Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics, T & T Clark, 1961


" Introduction to THE RESPONSIBLE SELF, by H.R. Niebuhr, 1963


" The System and the Gospel, S.C.M. 1963


Hocking, W.E., Living Religion and a World Faith, Allen and Unwin, 1940

" The Coming World Civilization, Allen and Unwin, 1958


Huxley, J.S., Scientific Humanism, (reprinted from LISTENER, BBC, 1944)


Jung, C.G., Psychology Types, Kegan Paul, 1925

Kaufman, Gordon, Relativism, Knowledge and Faith, Chicago, 1960


Jarrett-Kerr, Martin, The Secular Promise, S.C.M., 1964


Kliever, L., Methodology and Christology in H. Richard Niebuhr, A Doctoral dissertation submitted to Duke University, 1960


Kulandran, S., The Renaissance of Non-Christian Religions and a Definition of Approach, World Council of Churches, Department of Evangelism, 1956

Kraemer Then and Now, in INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF MISSIONS, vol 46 1957, 171-181

Kraemer Then and Now, in INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF MISSIONS, vol 46 1957, 171-181

Grace in Christianity and Hinduism, Lutterworth, 1964


Loomer, Bernard N., Neo-Naturalism and Neo-Orthodoxy, in JOURNAL OF RELIGION, vol. 28, 1948, pp 79-91
Lewis, H.D., with R.H.L. Slater, World Religions, Watt's, 1966
Mackintosh, H.R., Types of Modern Theology, Nisbet, 1937
McIntyre, John, The Christian Doctrine of History, Oliver and Boyd, 1957
    " The Shape of Christology, S.C.M., 1966
    " God and Personality, mimeographed lecture notes, 1966
MacLagan, W.C., The Theological Frontier of Ethics, Macmillian, 1961
Macquarrie, John, God-talk, S.C.M., 1967
Maritain, J., On the Philosophy of History, Bles, 1959
Mascall, E.L., Christ, the Christian and the Church, Longmans, 1964
Matthews, W.R., God in Christian Thought and Experience, Nisbet, 1936
    " Religion and Religions, in HIBBERT JOURNAL, 1951, 327-332
Minear, Paul, Kraemer and Missionary Theology, International Missionary Council, Study of Missionary Obligations of the Church, 1950
Ashley-Montagu, M.F.,... (ed.) Toynbee and History: Critical Essays and Reviews, Porter-Sargent, 1956
Moses, D.G., Religious Truth and the Relation Between Religions, Lutterworth, 1950
Murray A. Victor, Natural Religion and Christian Theology, Nisbet, 1956

Ogden, Schubert M., Christ Without Myth, Collins, 1962


Otto, R., Indian's Religion of Grace and Christianity Compared and Contrasted, S.C.M., 1930

Mysticism East and West, Macmillian, 1932


Panikkar, Raymond, The Unknown Christ in Hinduism, Longman & Todd, 1964

Pannenberg, Wolfhart, (ed.) Revelation as History, Sheed and Ward 1969

Pares, Richard, Review of Toynbee's A STUDY OF HISTORY (10 volumes) in English Historical Review vol. LXXI, 1956 pp 256–272


The Christian Debate: Light from the East, Collancz, 1964


Radhakrishnan, S., The Hindu View of Life, Allen and Unwin, 1927

Eastern Religions and Western Thought, Oxford, 1940 (2nd ed.)

Fragments of a confession in THE PHILOSOPHY OF S. RADHAKRISHNAN ed Paul Schilpp, Open Court, 1952


Reist, Benjamin A., Towards a Theology of Involvement, S.C.M., 1966


Richardson, Alan, Christian Apologetics, S.C.M., 1947

" History, Sacred and Profane, S.C.M., 1964

Schillp, P.A., (ed) The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Open Court, 1952 (The library of Living Philosophers)

Schlette, H.R., Towards a Theology of Religions, Herder & Herder, 1966

Slater, R.H.L., Christian Attitude to Other Religions, in CANADIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY, vol. 2, pp 215-221

" World Religion and World Community, Columbia, 1963

Smart, Ninian, A dialogue of Religions, S.C.M., 1960

" Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy, Allen & Unwin, 1964


" The meaning and End of Religion, Mentor, 1963

" The Question of Religious Truth, Collancz, 1967

" The Faith of Other Men Mentor, 1965


Soper, David, W., Major Voices in American Theology, Philadelphia, 1953

Thelan, Mary F., Man as Sinner in Contemporary American Realistic Theology, King's Crown Press, N.Y., 1946


" Courage To Be, Nisbet, 1952, Fantana, 1962


Tillich, Paul, Existential Thinking in American Theology, RELIGION IN LIFE, 1941, pp 452-455


" Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, Columbia, 1963


Troeltsch, Ernest, Historiography, in ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS, ed. James Hastings, vol.6, pp 717-723, T & T Clark, 1913

" Christian Thought, London, 1923

Van Leeuwen, Arend Th., How Should We Continue the Post-Tambaram Debate? A Tentative Outline of a Long-Term and Short-Term Programme of Study and Discourse, International Missionary Council, Department of Missionary Studies, 1956

" Christianity and World History, the meeting of the Faiths of East and West, Edinburgh, 1964.

" Hendrik Kraemer als Dienaar der Wereldkerk (H. Kraemer as Servant of the World Church) Amsterdam, 1959, German translation, 1962

Wach, Joachim, General Revelation and the Religions of the World, JOURNAL OF BIBLE AND RELIGION, April, 1954, 83-93


Webb, C.C.J., God and Personality, Allen & Unwin, 1918

Welch, C., The Trinity in Contemporary Theology, S.C.M. 1953


" Soul and Psyche, London, 1960


Williams, D.D., What Present Day Theologians are Thinking, Harper, 1952 revised 1959

Wingren, Gustaf., Theology in Conflict, Oliver & Boyd, 1958

World Council of Churches, Department of Evangelism, Department of Missionary Studies:

" Consultation on Christian and Non-Christian Religions, Devos, Switzerland, 1955

" The Word of God and the Living Faith of Man, 1958