NATHAN SODERBLOM

Theologian of Revelation

Charles J. Curtis

While it is as a pioneer in the ecumenical movement that the true stature of Nathan Söderblom has emerged in recent years, no serious consideration of his life and thought can fail to focus on his deep interest in revelation as basic to a mature understanding of religion in general and the Christian faith in particular.

"[Dr. Curtis'] book will help toward an understanding of one of the most influential Christian personalities of our time."

Bengt Sundkler
University of Uppsala

COVENANT PRESS
3200 W. Foster Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60625

The cover photograph of Archbishop Soderblom is used by courtesy of the Covenant Press, Chicago, Illinois.

the CORD

April, 1968 Vol. XVIII, No. 4

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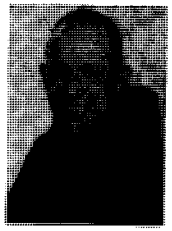
the CORD is a monthly review devoted to Franciscan spirituality and published with the approval of ecclesiastical superiors by the Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University. Editor: Michael D. Meilach, O.F.M., 600 Soundview Ave., Bronx, N. Y. 10472. Circulation Manager: Mrs. Joseph Cucchiaro, The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, N. Y. 14778. Second class postage paid at St. Bonaventure, N. Y. 14778, and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates: $3.00 a year; 30 cents a copy.

Ecumenical Theology



In an essay explaining why he was a Lutheran, Nathan Soderblom, Archbishop of Uppsala and Primate of Sweden observed that Lutherans "rejoice in the blessed light of divine love that radiated from the humble life and work of St. Francis of Assisi and that made him the greatest Christian of the Middle Ages." It seems fitting, therefore, to devote this issue of THE CORD to Protestant theology. In doing so, we honor Soderblom's memory, we join in the celebration of the 450th anniversary of the Reformation, and, hopefully, we contribute in a modest way to the progress of Christian unity, to which Archbishop Soderblom's entire life was consecrated.

It is largely through the work of Pastor Charles J. Curtis, of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Chicago, that Soderblom's ecumenical theology has become known in this country. We agree with Pastor Curtis that in many respects the late Archbishop's original theological insights offer a fine response to the challenge of radical theology; and we take great pleasure in this opportunity to present what we hope will prove a fruitful discussion of the contributions of both theologians.

Fr. Michael D. Meilach, ofm

THE GUSTAVE WEIGEL SOCIETY

The Gustave Weigel Society consists of Christian clergymen and lay people who share the vision that Father Weigel lived — Christian unity — and particularly the immediate goal which he envisioned: not conversion or compromise, but convergence through prayer and through witness to the love that should exist among all Christian brothers, even while separated doctrinally.

The goals of the Society are (1) to re-discover and manifest the love existing among all Christians by which Jesus said that men will recognize his disciples; and (2) to put this love into action through broad participation in social action programs. Activities include retreats, common services, lectures, and discussions, as well as Newsletter. Members' dues are $5.00 a year. For further information, contact Mr. Robert M. Balkam, The Gustave Weigel Society, P. O. Box 9642, Washington, D. C. 20016.

Nathan Soderblom
Theologian of Revelation and Ecumenism

Edited by Vincent Cushing, O. F. M.

An event in the Gustave Weigel Society's commemoration of the 450th anniversary of the Reformation, held in Washington, D.C., October 11, 1967, with the following participating in the Discussion:

THE REVEREND DR. HARRY E. YEIDE
Lutheran Minister, Assistant Dean,
George Washington University

SISTER ANN NORPEL, S.S.N.D.
Instructor in Theology, Trinity College,
Washington, D.C.

THE REVEREND ROBERT MONAHAN, O.F.M.
Graduate Student in Theology,
The Catholic University of America

THE REVEREND VINCENT CUSHING, O.F.M.
Instructor in Theology, Holy Name College,
Washington, D.C.

Father Cushing: Archbishop Söderblom was a man who spent a great deal of time on the question of the meaning of Revelation. Perhaps we could begin our symposium this evening by taking up some of the areas he dealt with on this question.

Dr. Yeide: For the most part, no Protestant group has wanted to enlarge the boundaries of Revelation: that which it thought of as technical, official, authoritative Revelation. Now, Revelation can be taken in a broader sense, too: viz., in that of a continuing Revelation. For instance, Protestantism, like Catholicism, has meditated on the "call" to the life of the religious professional. Of course we have understood it in different ways, and yet, Protestantism has wanted to know whether its clergymen are really called to fulfill this task or

not.... I think there is a second meaning of Revelation, too: in its official sense it comes with the question, "What does it mean for people 2000 years after the event to participate in the central event of Revelation?" One of the solutions here is to say the event is framed in propositional terms, that the event is therefore communicable in propositional terms. This understanding of Revelation is held by many Protestants, especially Fundamentalists, as well as by many Roman Catholics. In the broader perspective of contemporary Protestantism, however, that understanding is not too popular. There is a new popularity for the kind of view expressed by Luther when he speaks of the "living voice of the Gospel." He suggests that there is a confrontation in the recitation of the Gospel, which captures a man. We can talk about this propositionally; but, it seems to me, it suggests an experience that is more encompassing than that which involves only the mind. Luther, as you may recall, was very sympathetic to the mystics in the Western Church, not all of them, but some of them. I think this influenced his thinking on the point; if we all cannot be great mystics, nevertheless one should experience what later writers call the "mystical union." This had to do with participation in Revelation. You had to enter into communion with the living Christ. So I think the general picture today among Protestants is one of an effort to develop the participation possible between the Christian who lives today and the events which constitute Revelation in the technical, authoritative sense. The world **participation,** of course, is one that is most frequently used in this regard but is most difficult to analyze.

Father Monahan: I was just looking at Söderblom's chapter on continued Revelation. Basically, Söderblom views the continuation of Revelation as a sustained, divine, self-impartation, which manifests itself as a creative power and a redeeming will. Söderblom views Revelation as an experience: e. g., the man reading his Bible can realize he is a "new man," and this experience is a revelation.

Dr. Yeide: In one of his later books Söderblom treats the question of the "genius" of Revelation, and one of the figures he has in mind is Saint Francis. This means more than what I was saying before in terms of the continuation of Revelation. On the other hand it means less than, say, the Christ event as Revelation. Söderblom views a figure like Saint Francis as the man of faith who points out certain things about the world in which we live, which would otherwise remain unknown; i. e., he **reveals.** Saint Francis, according to Söderblom, does even more, however: He makes a contribution to the ongoing life of the community that stands apart from those of his contemporaries. For better or for worse, Söderblom discusses Luther in the same terms, and he introduces other writers in this regard to show that history

in the 16th century focussed around Luther despite the fact that he was a man of no power. The same, of course, can be said of Saint Francis. Söderblom feels that these events also should be regarded under the umbrella of Revelation. This raises an issue that merits some discussion: Are these events so similar to one another that they can be called "subtypes" of Revelation? Or, as many say, is Revelation centering in the Christ event so qualitatively different from any other religious or faith experience that we should somehow reserve the concept of Revelation for that alone? I think Söderblom would answer that question in the negative. He would feel that the continuity between this Revelation and other historical events is profound and meaningful, authentic and legitimate. Others would say we must "draw the line."

Sister Ann: This brings out the truth that if you view Revelation in the broad sense you realize that the person's response enters into Revelation; and then you have the response conditioning the Revelation.

Father Cushing: That's right. This is a point that Brother Gabriel Moran brings out in his book, **The Theology of Revelation,** when he says that God takes into account the action of man in his response or lack of response to the divine initiative. So, for example, Revelation would have been a good deal different if man hadn't separated himself from God. This is interesting, because ten years ago we might very well have disagreed with Dr. Yeide on his approach to Revelation, as continuing in virtue of one's response now to Christ. We Catholics have to try to situate "propositional Revelation" within the larger context of the whole experience of Revelation.

Dr. Yeide: This is what Söderblom tries to do. He always comes back to the question: How do you evaluate Revelation? He agrees that those who experience it, condition it; but then he goes on to say that you can talk about it meaningfully in terms of the content, and that you differentiate a merely ecstatic experience from Revelation in terms of content. What he is always implying is that you measure it in accordance with that historic Revelation that you find in the Bible.

Father Monahan: Doctor, maybe we can pursue this idea of continuing Revelation from the Lutheran point of view. Of course, the Catholic understanding of Revelation as propositional was a product of its time, but it is concerned, perhaps overly concerned, with finding out who is the guarantor of what is Christian Revelation and what is not. If you read Söderblom you see that he can get so broad in his approach to Revelation that you begin to wonder about how he measures what is Christian and what is not Christian. In the Lutheran Church what role does the Church have in identifying what is the continuing Revelation?

Dr. Yeide: We're in a rather peculiar position here. In the 16th Century Lutheranism had the same experience as Churches that stayed loyal to Rome: i. e., in effect, we had our partial councils. In our instance this produced the Formula of Concord. Unlike later Roman Catholicism, we haven't had any Vatican II, we haven't even had a Vatican I; and while we have since then had gatherings of the world-wide Lutheran community, we haven't had one that was understood to stake out officially the position of the Church. This gives a note of ambiguity to the answer that I give to a question like that. I can always go back to the appropriate paragraph in the Augsburg Confession and say: "That is what we say." And yet, if your question has to do with the kind of things people are thinking about today, then I can't do that. The language of the Augsburg Confession is no longer the coin of the realm; it is misleading, therefore, merely to repeat some formula of the past, however faithful people today may regard it. Now, it seems to me the only thing you can do is point to the fact that Lutheranism has by and large accepted the notion of the 16th Century that there is only one very reliable canon in this regard, Scripture. I see no indication that the Church as a whole has ever moved from that position. Thus, even in the 16th Century all of the confessions were referred to as the "normed norm," and this has been the frame of reference in which all Lutheran theology has been conducted. The work of the theologian is perceived as the "normed norm." This formally answers your question, but this is not to get away from the fact that we live in a day in which there are a welter of biblical theologies, and it's no simple matter to apply these. So, if your question meant something like this: "Do Lutherans take Söderblom's idea of continuing Revelation so seriously that they are introducing new criteria into the theological enterprise?" — then my answer is simply, "No."

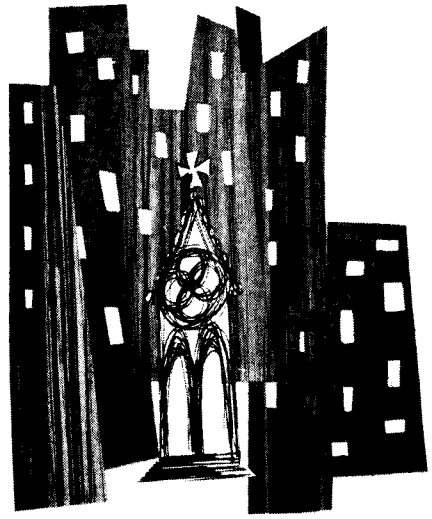
Father Cushing: We have two things which I am sure some people would object to in Roman Catholicism, even though they might have once been necessary: first, there has always been present, almost from the time of the Christological heresies when it was so hard to figure out what the Arians were speaking of, a tendency to try to pin down the truth very precisely. This was due to a real historical difficulty with heresy. This tradition is re-inforced, I think, by the scholastic concern for precision, and is certainly present in Trent and Vatican I. I'm not sure whether it was a good or a bad thing; I think it varies. It's interesting that Vatican II steps out of that way of thinking and comes up with a brace of pastoral statements that are indicative of sound Catholic thought, but the Council refuses to put any theological labels on its decisions.

Sister Ann: Where is the faith? Is it in the proposition, or is it in the people? Recently I read a survey that 64 per cent of our people believe in the infallibility of the Pope. Now, my question is this: Is the belief or the faith in the people or in the proposition?

Dr. Yeide: The proposition is transferable, independent of the commitment of the people. The proposition is true insofar as it is related to the object of one's faith, and useful to mediate faith to a person. But then, we ask, "Who is the guarantor of truth?" We always say that you can't say much more than the Holy Spirit. We are beginning to think much more actively today about the Holy Spirit experienced within the community. In our case there is no question but that the Enlightenment introduced an individualism which many people maintain is rooted in the Reformation itself, but that isn't really the case.

Father Cushing: In our conversation, Doctor, you have spoken of the "modernization of theology." What do you mean by that?

Dr. Yeide: Around the beginning of the 19th Century, and up to the present, Protestant theology has been influenced by the critical methodology of modern history and has applied these methods, not only to the study of its own heritage, but also to the other great religious histories. It began to find certain similarities in the different religious histories. Clearly Söderblom thought it raised the



question of relativism and demanded that one think over how one should relate oneself to these other religions. One of the things that most impressed me about Söderblom's volume, **The Living God,** is the way in which Söderblom again and again will make an observation about primitive religion, and then in a very creative way, show parallel phenomena in Christian history, or display what he feels to be the differences. In any case, this was clearly a major resource for Söderblom, out of which he carved many of his own concepts.

Sister Ann: Didn't Archbishop Söderblom look on these other religions as a form of Revelation? For him, weren't they a background for the Christian Revelation? It isn't that Christian Revelation wasn't there, but that God revealed himself in all the religions of men, was Söderblom's point. Is that correct?

Dr. Yeide: This is true, and perhaps it should be stated even a little more strongly. I would say that many Christians have asserted the "generalness" of Revelation, but have not been very eager to specify this. Söderblom wants to specify it in other religions.

Sister Ann: I suppose, to show the continuity of God's unveiling of himself to man.

Father Cushing: When Archbishop Söderblom points to non-Christian religions as the areas of Revelation, what specific areas does he point to as indicative of Revelation?

Dr. Yeide: One of the things he refers to most is the frequency of the mystical experience. Sometimes he is critical of it, but at the bottom of all this he asserts that the frequency of mystical experience is indicative of the presence of God. One must say that there was an encounter between the mystic and God. Another example can be found in his book, **The Living God,** where he has a long excursus on the nature of faith, placed within his treatment of Bhakti religions. He feels that this religion shows some of the primary qualities of what Christians call faith. There is, in Bhakti, a return to a notion of faith in a personal God, which has much to do with orienting one to a notion of service to fellow man.

Father Cushing: Do you think the difference between the Judeo-Christian religions and the non-Judeo-Christian religions could possibly be mainly a difference of interpretations of world events?

Sister Ann: It seems to me the sacred author who interprets an event of salvation and clothes it in a literary genre is attempting to show an awareness that God has saved a people. This whole idea of God's intervention, it seems to me, is one of the key differences between revealed religion and the modern historian.

Father Monahan: Dr. Söderblom was quite interested in establishing the continuity of other religions with Christianity. He was also interested in showing the discontinuity.

Father Cushing: In the Old Testament it was the prophet who made Revelation continuous by challenging the Jewish people in their contemporary situation to be faithful to their heritage. The continuity was not solely a question of the continuity of thought content; it was also a matter of continuity in response to God. The prophet was a man immersed in tradition and a man fully involved in the contemporary situation.

Dr. Yeide: One of the values of re-reading Söderblom today is that he reminds us of the real encounter with living tradition that grew out of the kind of work he was doing. Now we Protestants are re-examining our notion of tradition, and the work of a man like Söderblom was perhaps influential in occasioning this re-examination. One of the ways in which Söderblom justifies the value of the historical tradition

has to do with one of the things he believes about Revelation: that it is essentially God's revelation of himself.

Father Cushing: We Roman Catholics imagined that this understanding was always present within Protestantism due to the majesty of the spoken word, viewed as a living encounter with God.

Dr. Yeide: There is something to this. Luther was conscious of Scripture as the **viva vox** — the living voice. But please remember also that Luther spoke of the **Deus absconditus** — the hidden God. There is in Luther a sense of the mystery of God that is sometimes lost from what people mean when they talk about self-revelation, and they tend to speak of it in terms of "encounter" as developed by existentialism. So, while I think it may very well be true that the Reformation acknowledges this living voice, it wouldn't be quite accurate to say that it is the same thing we often hear about today.... I would be interested in hearing some of your comments, now, on the meaning of Söderblom as an ecumenical figure. In Protestantism he is a catalyst that helped bring to life the World Council of Churches.... Do you see anything in his work that might be helpful in this regard?

Sister Ann: In a sense he has become a hero for me. Teaching a course in Ecumenism, I have become familiar with him and his desire for the unity of Christians. It was through his urging that the Anglicans and the Swedish bishops could be in communion. His concern for this cause not only makes him a great ecumenical figure, but it also gives us something that we can really build on.

Father Cushing: It's a cliché, I know, but in many ways Söderblom was prophetic in the ecumenical movement. For example, in his principles of ecumenism he looks to mutual reform of the churches; he is concerned with world religions; he is involved in studies on Luther; he theologizes about the meaning of Revelation. He touched on four areas sixty-seven years ago, that are still major areas of thought in the churches. His approach to what is called "practical" or "secular" ecumenism — cooperation in ventures that affect the common good of secular society — is certainly a fine example in our efforts to break down interior barriers. His ability to see the problem of the missions in ecumenical perspective, too — all these issues pre-occupy the World Council of Churches and Vatican II in their deliberations. Perhaps Söderblom did not solve the problems, but his ability to point them out is amazing.

Father Monahan: His stress on the historical approach to Revelation is quite close to the Catholic notion of Revelation. He emphasizes an historical approach, which gives a wider vision and enables us to understand the whole notion of Revelation quite differently.

Dr. Yeide: One quality came home to me while I was reading **The**

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Living God, which might very well be a model for what we need to do in ecumenism: Söderblom's love, expressed intellectually in his taking all religions very seriously. He could become passionate about what they are passionate about. He always did so, however, without losing his freedom, without becoming captive. This love and liberty could be a model for ecumenical dialogue.... Another thing that I meditated about in Söderblom is his interest in mysticism. As you know, Protestants, by and large, are hostile to mysticism for many reasons — you can find indications of this in Luther. But one of the ideas I've been toying with is whether this might be a new period for mysticism. Generally speaking, we've had very few outstanding mystics lately: i. e., one does not see a 20th century St. Bernard or Meister Eckhardt or Jakob Böhme. And yet it's interesting to note that they frequently emerged in the past to heal cleavage. If you stop to think about it, you realize that mystics often come on the scene of troubled times and exercise a therapeutic ministry. Since the 16th Century it's quite striking that those who were mystics were ecumenical pioneers. In the 17th and 18th Centuries you find Protestants and Catholics reading the same mystical literature. I wonder if this might not be a hope in the 20th Century of a divided Church: that we may receive the ministry of the kind of mysticism that has nourished the Church in the past. I think that outside our learned circles we are already getting a burst of mysticism. It has always flourished during troubled periods; but this time, for some reason, it seems to be flourishing outside rather than within the Church. I wonder if another contribution to which we might look to Söderblom (especially for Protestantism) is his implicit suggestion that we open our eyes to contemporary mysticism as an authentic Christian expectation. Perhaps we don't find mysticism because we are not looking for it — we are not listening.

Father Cushing: What you say is so true, Doctor. The need for interior reform along the lines of holiness is a therapeutic ministry within the churches. May we end on this last point?... Thank you.

Baptism: Foundation of the Christian Life

Valens Waldschmidt, O. F. M.

Baptism has been called the door to salvation. Only by entering through this door is it possible to enter into the kingdom of God. Entrance, however, is only a prelude to the riches that lie within the mansions of God. So often the expression, "The door to salvation" is echoed so distractedly that its true meaning is overlooked. We forget that, when Saint Paul spoke of heaven, he also spoke of Baptism, the beginning of heaven. How aptly do these words of his apply also to the sacrament of Baptism with its hidden treasure: "Eye has not seen or ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love him" (I Cor. 2:9).

It is our purpose in this meditation to recognize again the pearl of great price which is ours. Because of Baptism, we are not merely men of Adam but men of God. Baptism has worked in us a change of "being."

The saints were always quick to recognize this transformation with an illumined insight. St. Louis, King of France, each time a child of his was taken to Church, baptized, and returned home, would take him in his arms and talk to him in this manner: "Up until now you have been only my child: but with the waters of Baptism you have become a child of God."

At the present moment, how much meaning does our Baptism have for us? In recent years theologians, capturing the thought of the Fathers of the Church, have laid special emphasis upon Baptism as the commencement of a new economy. To understand this new existence, it is imperative to understand the new life together with the supernatural organism initiated by Baptism. Theologians such as Karl Adam have based their entire conception of the life of the gospel upon this new supernatural elevation of man into the divine family and have marvelously unravelled its implications. "Christ our Brother" im-

plies also a similarity of life! Baptism initiates for us not only the supernatural life, but also the foundation of the religious life, the foundation of the priesthood, both lay and anointed. Through this sacrament, we become a man of another world.

The Scriptural Setting

Picture our divine Savior coming from Nazareth to the banks of the Jordan, standing before John and asking to be baptized. Although John did not know that Jesus was the Son of God until later, nevertheless John hesitates to baptize him. But Jesus insisted. Strange course of events: Christ comes to receive a penitential baptism from the man whom he had cleansed of original sin at the time of the Visitation. It is probably on this occasion that Christ changed a penitential rite into a sacramental rite. Indeed, the dove, hovering above Christ, foretells a new creation and is reminiscent of another day when a dove hovered above the waters, when the Spirit of God changed chaos into creation.

Through the waters of Baptism a new creation begins. With these limpid, regenerating waters, comes the dawn of God's kingdom in the soul. But as in a vision, only the eyes of faith can see the mysteries of God, so only through the initial insights of faith does man awaken to the desire to become a son of God, a new man. Will wonders cease? To what does the door of Baptism lead? To the mystery which is Christ. What Christ is by nature, man becomes by Baptism.

The Doctrinal Basis

We may understand about Baptism by understanding something about a saint. Recently a priest jokingly said, "Are you one of those who still believes in saints?" The quip carries a basic misunderstanding about sanctity and glides over a most enlightening source of knowledge about holiness. He who thinks he has little to learn from the lives of the saints, in some way cuts the human heart out of sanctity.

A saint is at one and the same time simple and complex. The saint appears simple because he has made out of the complex mixture of life and the simplicity of the gospel, a living and holy synthesis. The saint appears complex because he has unravelled the subtleties of human motives and habits and has reduced them to the simplicity of one idea: the love of God. In this sense a saint is a contradiction. He is a nonconformist, standing in opposition to the world; and, on the other hand, he is the greatest heroic conformist in the world because of his Baptism and his life. For Baptism and grace conform him to Christ. He has verified in himself the words of Saint Paul: "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14).

Conformity with Christ means not merely assuming the thoughts of Christ, the desire of Christ, or

the principles of Christ. It is not a vague attempt to transport into the 20th century what historically transpired in the little country of Palestine during the first century. Rather, it is the unfolding of the mystery of God in the soul and in the world, as it has unfolded in time from the Annunciation to Pentecost, from the first planting of the divine seed upon earth to the fruit of the planting: viz., the Resurrection and Ascension. So, in the conformity of the soul to Christ, we find the Passion and Death as a meritorious cause, but also the Resurrection as a distributive cause. As Saint Paul put it, "We have to be closely fitted into the pattern of his resurrection, as we have been into the pattern of his death" (Rom. 6:5). Baptism ushers man into the life of the Blessed Trinity. The canonized saint is only a man who has completed the vision of Baptism with the Beatific Vision of the Trinity.

Present-Day Needs

The modern world's most basic need is to have something to believe in. Without a faith, the world turns out to be a macaronic mixture. Man gropes his way through existence. His work, his family, his friends, his trials, his temptations are meaningless and confusing. Tying together all the thousand odds and ends of life becomes a nightmare, intermittent with restless sleep, always tossing but never satisfying. Only a faith, only a dedication, only a commitment can bind together the pieces of life. Man, whether he realizes it or not, is seeking the commitment that only Baptism can supply.

Too frequently, Baptism is for us psychologically just an historical date. We received the sacrament as an infant. With no remembrance of the act, and with no pointed personal dedication thereafter, it is difficult to crystallize our thoughts, emotions and deeds into a meaningful unit. Actually, to feel the power of the sacrament, we must in some way again baptize our minds and wills in the waters of thought and meditation. What was once an historical fact in our life must become now, at the present moment, an actual fact, salvation history for us, a commitment and a creed. In our religious life as Franciscans, Baptism is our strongest argument.

Benefits for Daily Life

Is our mind, like a television camera, concerned only with pictures that catch the eye? Have we also projected ourselves into a frightening drama in which, standing alone in some deserted street, we are frightened by the tall and ominous shadow of disbelief and empty action? In the present day, we need to know not so much "how to live," as "the life" we are to live.

For a moment, let us suppose that a biographer is writing the history of some famous Christian. He gathers the facts, the place of

birth, schooling, successes and failures, the round of narratives, the barrel of salted jokes and sayings. But he must also look for an interpretation, a theme, a guiding principle in that man's life. At the center, he should find Baptism, lifting the ordinary things of life into the realm of the extraordinary, reducing the multitude of daily acts into a unity, coloring the routine of life with the mysteries of God. To the eye of the biographer, a supernatural life blossoms like a plant unfolding under the light of God's grace. Life is not like a lonely leaf tossed about by the breeze falling to the earth, resting, dying, decaying. Baptism has saved a man from supernatural death!

Resolutions

(1) It has always been a Franciscan trait to view God's creation not as a trap but as a ladder leading to God. When, on the day of creation, chaos was baptized by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it was the forerunner of another day of creation on which a man is baptized, freed from Satan's bondage, and given the freedom of the sons of God. (2) Redemption through Christ is man's reconciliation with God. Baptism is the beginning of this reconciliation. Therefore, O Lord, permit us as Franciscans to see with greater clarity our religious life as a fulfillment of our Baptism.

Prayer

O Lord, a new day has dawned for us. We have been incorporated into your kingdom. Our gaze is no longer fixed upon earth but is now able to look over the horizons of time into the mysterious depths of eternity. Baptism has transformed us. Show us the extent of our being, for we are now new creatures. In one brief moment of washing, we have become partakers in your Incarnation, Redemption, and Resurrection. Aid us to live this commitment of our Baptism to the full. Amen.

. . . HOW SHALL WE WHO ARE DEAD TO SIN STILL LIVE IN IT? DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT ALL WE WHO HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST JESUS HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH? FOR WE WERE BURIED WITH HIM BY MEANS OF BAPTISM INTO DEATH, IN ORDER THAT, JUST AS CHRIST HAS ARISEN FROM THE DEAD THROUGH THE GLORY OF THE FATHER, SO WE ALSO MAY WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE.

A REVIEW ARTICLE

God and Metaphysics in a World Come of Age

Michael D. Meilach, O. F. M.

A remarkably large proportion of theological writing being done today, by both Protestant and Catholic authors, is addressed to the problem of how contemporary man is to conceive of God and understand Him in relation to the world whose secrets are being disclosed by scientific and cultural progress. I have singled out for discussion in the present article four books which seem to be extraordinarily helpful, each in its own way, to the reader seeking to understand the contemporary theological scene. The first two books set the stage, as it were, by explaining the status of the world said to have "come of age"; and the last two focus attention more narrowly on the "problem of God" as it may appear to men living in that world.

Each pair of books will be described as briefly as possible in each of the two parts of this article, and the description will be followed, in each case, by a discussion of the main issues involved.

"A World Come of Age"

The first two books differ widely in style but deal with essentially the same crucial subject: the new stance required of Christians in a drastically changed world.[1]

William Kuhns' study of Bonhöffer is not directly theological — it is first of all a biography, but it deals with the life and thought of the one man who, perhaps more than any other, has stirred the conscience of contemporary Christians, leading them to a renewed quest for authenticity and relevance to the emerging culture which, whatever it is, certainly differs radically from those which saw the birth of Christianity, the glory of medieval Christendom, and the challenge of the Reformation.

[1] William Kuhns, **In Pursuit of Dietrich Bonhöffer** (Dayton: Pflaum, 1967); pp. xiii-314; cloth, $6.75. Harvey Cox, **On Not Leaving It to the Snake** (New York: Macmillan, 1967); pp. xviii-174; cloth, $4.95.

To a greater degree than in most cases, it is impossible to separate Bonhöffer's thought from the cataclysmic events which did so much to shape it. Mr. Kuhns, well aware of this fact, has respected it implicitly in drawing his fine portrait of the man whom many, perhaps rightly, consider Lutheranism's greatest modern theologian. All the significant facts are duly recorded, including some that may not be too well known here: Bonhöffer's brief but fruitful visit to the U. S. (including Harlem), his life as professor at the University of Berlin, his work in England on behalf of the Confessing Church in Nazi Germany, his establishment and fruitful direction of the seminary at Finkenwalde, and, of course, his part in the Resistance, his imprisonment, and his execution.

Mr. Kuhns discusses Bonhöffer's writings in the context of their composition, from his early dissertation **The Communion of Saints**, all the way through the Prison Letters. If his account of their contents is not always crystal clear, the difficulty is no doubt largely to be attributed to the profound, complex, and often fragmentary and provisional nature of Bonhöffer's own literary efforts.

This book is not a popularization such as might attempt to gloss over the more subtle implications in Bonhöffer's thought. It should be read and studied by anyone who wants, not easy answers, but stimulation to deeper thought about genuine Christianity vs. pietism, about hard Christian truth vs. easy platitudes about "church unity," about God as he makes himself known to modern man vs. the "God" many churchmen have fashioned for themselves.

On Not Leaving It to the Snake is a collection of diverse essays published from 1963 to 1967. Already well known for his important book **The Secular City** (rev. ed. Macmillan, 1966) and his many periodical articles, Dr. Cox continues with the re-publication of these essays in accessible form, to probe for the general audience the theme of secularization and its implications for today's Christianity. Cox is a superb writer, a master of expository and rhetorical prose and therefore a most readable sociologist who uses statistics forcefully in interpreting his own widely varied experiences.

One is tempted, in fact, to suspect that there is more of the sociologist than the theologian in Dr. Cox. But this is to beg the question: his major point in almost everything he has written is that theology is in fact taking on a new character. The tension still so evident in Bonhöffer, between a traditional other-worldliness and the newer secularizationist world-involvement, has virtually disappeared in Cox. One could, of course, argue that Dr. Cox is simply continuing the line of thought so evident, if seminal, in Bonhöffer's Letters but arrested by his untimely death. And it would be untrue to say that traditional theology has no place in Cox's teaching. He speaks eloquently of Christ's presence in the world (p. 95), understood in Luther's sense as practically synonymous with the divine omnipresence. By the same token, Cox also retains an emphasis on God's initiative (p. 147) which seems difficult to reconcile with the activism that pervades his thought.

The essays in this volume are arranged in three major classifications (with an "addendum" on the Statute of Limitations on Nazi Crimes). First, there are three discussions on the new character of theology itself in a world seen as revolutionary in its social, political, and economic aspects. The second set of essays may be said to be more concrete, at least in the sense that more of Cox's personal experiences come into play; a major theme here is the change taking place in Christian - Marxist relations. The last major part focusses still more explicitly on the future: its signs in the present, the changes which the Church will have to face, and the part played by the New Breed (especially among the clergy) in bringing about these changes. Somewhat irrelevant in this context, although important and interesting in itself, is a reflective essay on "The Restoration of a Sense of Place."

What of the challenge addressed by Bonhöffer, and by Cox after him, to the perceptive Christian of our day? Theologically, Bonhöffer's seems by far the more fecund message. This is in no way to minimize the importance of what Dr. Cox has to say; it is only to point out that his calls to action are almost entirely within what Bonhöffer called the sphere of the penultimate — the area of practical, day-to-day concerns in which God's ministers are called to serve the world, in contrast to the sphere of the ultimate — the eschatological.

In Bonhöffer himself there is, over and above worldly concern, a parallel concern with more fundamental issues. He offers a most promising (but almost wholly seminal) anthropology stressing man's integrity, the need to live in the present moment, and the need to recognize the awesome responsibility with which man has been charged. He sets forth an (equally undeveloped) ethic too, which similarly stresses the person's integrity, demands a sensitizing of man's mind to the concrete and to action in the world, and emphasizes the breadth of human experience in the world.

In forging his doctrine, Bonhöffer was deeply influenced by the apathy of Christians in an atmosphere calling for heroism, by his own long nurtured hope for a new form of the Church, and by the heroic inspiration and example of men in the German Resistance who were not Christian in any formal sense at all. Influences such as these led him to ponder deeply a subject in which he was from the first passionately interested: God's concrete rev-

elation of himself and presence to the world in the mediating Church.

For these two theologians, then, the Church cannot be considered an independent organization existing for its own sake, to perpetuate its own welfare and structures. It is essentially mediative: it has no essence, no nature, no intrinsic value apart from its mediating function. The Church is not, as such, the place of salvation; rather it is the **world** that has been redeemed by Christ's sacrifice, and redemption is communicated to the entire cosmos through the Church. Like Christ, the Church is essentially a servant — one who exists for others; and its members too must take seriously the mission of service to which they have been called.

For Protestants in general, needless to say, this sort of outlook is quite revolutionary (a fact which is attested by the reaction of Karl Barth to Bonhöffer's developing thought). The temptation is to say that it is not so revolutionary at all in comparison with Catholic thought of recent centuries. And there is a sense in which this is true: the magisterium and the better theologians, as well as the saints particularly revered for their missionary zeal, never succumbed to the two-world dichotomy which Luther bequeathed to traditional Protestantism. But in another sense, Bonhöffer's corrective is as sorely needed in Catholic as in Protestant circles. Whether the present sorry state of much Catholic "piety" is due to Jansenism, or whether it is a peculiarly American (Northeastern?) phenomenon attributable to the Puritan influence, or whatever else be the explanation, it is surely evident to anyone engaged in pastoral work that an effective integrating force is badly needed in Catholic life between the religious and secular spheres.

That such an integration is eloquently demanded by some highly competent and readable Catholic authors is, of course, undeniable. Yet Bonhöffer's influence on many of these theologians and the power of his own writing, largely due to his own heroism in responding to the challenges of his turbulent life, make it highly desirable for the knowledgeable Catholic to have a more than superficial acquaintance with his life and thought. Mr. Kuhns deserves great credit for making this ideal easily realizable; and Dr. Cox, likewise, has placed us in his debt for spelling out some of the more cogent practical implications for contemporary Christian life.

"By the Light of Natural Reason"

No attempt has been made, in the foregoing pages, to enter into the more specific problems created for philosophy and theology by the emerging secular, pragmatic and, as some have called it, "cybernetic" culture. In what follows, I want to raise only one such issue: one, however, which stands out as the most important of all the questions that could possibly arise for any theology or theistic philosophy — viz., how to conceive of God in terms which are meaningful to "modern man." (I use the term **modern man** with the greatest reluctance, both because it is overworked and because it is hopelessly vague — can anyone point to "modern man"? Yet the expression has, somewhat paradoxically, acquired a certain value precisely in its use by radical and secularization theologians. Let us understand it here as characterizing a broad spectrum of educated Christians, all to a greater or less extent concerned [somewhat after the fashion of Leslie Dewart] with the possibility of knowing God's existence and nature apart from a faith-commitment to revelation.)

For Catholics — most of them, at any rate — any solution to this problem must respect as normative the insistence of the First Vatican Council that man can come to a knowledge of God without special revelation. But it seems highly significant and strikingly coincidental that the two books to be discussed here insist on the same point, that both books were written by Protestant ministers, and that both authors are currently teaching at Catholic universities in the U.S.[2]

The Task of Philosophical Theology is the latest book to come from the pen of Dr. Charles J. Curtis, Associate Professor of Theology at De Paul University. It is an exciting attempt to redefine a good number of realities with which theology has traditionally been concerned, in terms of Whiteheadian process philosophy. Some such redefinition is necessary, as Dr. Curtis points out, because of the crisis of traditional theology evident in decreasing Church membership and in the writings of the radical theologians. The author is also quite correct when he insists on the need for a rigorous philosophical base for the new, emerging theology. Philosophy is important in any elaboration of a theology for several reasons; most cogent among the many such reasons listed by Dr. Curtis are the following: a philosophical theology enables us to elucidate the rational basis of all positive religions, to purge those

[2] Charles J. Curtis, **The Task of Philosophical Theology** (New York: Philosophical Library, 1968); pp. xxvi-166; cloth, $4.50. Robert C. Neville, **God the Creator: On the Transcendence and Presence of God** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); pp. xi-320; cloth, $8.50.

religions of accumulated cultural dross, to enlarge and deepen our vision of God, to bring together science and religion, and to work for universality and unity.

Dr. Curtis has chosen the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead as his philosophical base because he feels, apparently with good reason, that that philosophy will help create a theology both scientifically relevant and religiously adequate. Whitehead's is, of course, a highly technical system; the reader is introduced to the man and his thought in a well written and attractive sketch highlighting the mystical, plotinian character of Whitehead's personal approach to religion. And a glossary of the more important neologisms is provided in an appendix culled from **Process and Reality.**

Dr. Curtis is thoroughly consistent in his program of redefinition. Examining the biblical statements regarding angels, e. g., he concludes that we need not accept them literally but may consider them as symbolic of man's own definitive, spiritualized existence at Omega, the term of the cosmic process. Baptism, the Eucharist, and Ordination are portrayed as moments in the process by which creativity, under God's persuasive influence, lures men into newer, higher, and more unified levels of existence. The Bible, itself the result of a long process, is but part of a still wider process of general revelation (here the author's dominant interest in ecumenism is most clearly evident). Perhaps the best sections of all are those on the state and history — realities which are, after all, most easily cast in process terminology. These short applications (25 in all) of process philosophy to theological realities are fascinating — highly original, often quite illuminating, and sometimes rather startling.

Dr. Curtis writes clearly and with deep conviction; the following suggestions are offered for consideration in possible future development of the work's rich possibilities and in no sense imply a rejection of the basic program which the author has so earnestly and promisingly begun.

In the first place, the fertile suggestions are not really developed. The text consists, often, of disproportionately long quotations from Whitehead (frequently these are general philosophical principles applied by Dr. Curtis to very specific realities such as the Person of Christ), with too little of the author's own explication.

Secondly, traditional theology does not always receive fair treatment. No knowledgeable theologian, e. g., ever portrayed ordination as the "handing on of a substance from above" to the ordinand; nor did the scholastics consider grace to be a substance. Aulén and, to a lesser extent, Barth are, unfortunately, allowed to speak for the whole of traditional theology.

Thirdly, Dr. Curtis allows the rubric "a process theology" to cover all sorts of statements. Some of these can clearly be attributed to Whitehead, and some to Teilhard; but many are original insights of the author and should have been presented as such. By the same token, it seems to be risky business to blend such Teilhardian notions as Omega with a generally Whiteheadian scheme. There are certainly points of contact between the two thinkers, but there are also elements which are incompatible.

Finally, it seems unfortunate that Dr. Curtis has given so global and uncritical an acceptance to Whitehead's entire system. This may be attributable to the author's indebtedness to Charles Hartshorne, whose development of Whitehead's thought is marked by an extreme rationalism. No Christian, certainly, can afford to forget that "theology never depends primarily upon the base provided by cultural insight into religious values ... [but] has its own witness to the truth revealed in Jesus Christ."[3] Dr. Curtis has brought out many areas in which Whitehead can make fertile contributions to Christian theology; but his suggestions would meet with far more sympathetic consideration if he were more discriminating in his use of Whiteheadian doctrines.

Dr. Robert C. Neville, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Fordham University, amply convinces the reader of his new book **God the Creator** that he is nobody's man but his own. The book is an awesome masterpiece of closely reasoned argument by a scholar who must certainly be regarded as one of the most original thinkers of our day. The densely packed introduction, only seven pages long, is a fine treatment in itself of the roles and inter-relationships of philosophy and religion.

The body of the book consists of three main parts, each of which might be called a stage in Dr. Neville's dialectic. Part One argues to the existence of a Creator needed as the ontological One for the many created determinations of being —a Creator transcendent and wholly indeterminate so that even his relationships to creation (which allow us to speak of him at all) are created. This Part is extremely difficult reading; but it is philosophy at its very best. It is small wonder, if this is the way Dr. Neville always philosophizes, that he can speak of philosophy as bearing within itself its own reward.

Part Two is an epistemological backtracking designed to account for the possibility of what was done in Part One: not only human reasoning but reality itself is here revealed to be dialectical in nature. And Part Three confronts the speculations already accomplished with the stubborn, irreducible facts of religious experience. This is the most fascinating char-

[3] Daniel Day Williams, **What Present Day Theologians Are Thinking** (New York: Harper Chapelbooks, 3rd ed., 1967), 45.

acterization of God and the religious life that I have ever been privileged to come across. The claims of both philosophy and religious experience are allowed full play, and religion emerges in all its profound and powerful amplitude to claim its rightful, central place in both private and public human existence. Evil, guilt and divine forgiveness are pervading themes here. Discipleship, dedication, brotherhood, conversion, solitude, faith, hope and love — all receive abundant and original clarification in light of the philosophical speculation and religious experience brought into this synthesis.

Although **God the Creator** is addressed most emphatically and explicitly to the "philosophical community," it abounds in insights which the theologian will want to take to heart. This is the first time, e. g., that I have ever seen the (primarily thomistic) notion of the analogy of being decisively refuted. Dr. Neville has a way of stalking his opponent, allowing him to set up one straw man after another only, in the end, to run his sword through the most central premise of the victim's entire system.

"God is not an explanation," Dr. Neville insists; "He is a reality to be confronted and will not be bound by what our explanation would have him be" (p. 125). And yet legitimate and rigorous speculation is necessary; it need not and should not "dissolve the reality or integrity of God into a bunch of philosophical concepts" or "substitute the practice of philosophy for the practice of religion" (p. 126).

This is Dr. Curtis' point too, and it is the point of the present article: philosophical insight and argument are necessary if the believer is to be fully rational — wholly faithful to his inmost nature and to his role in the world he likes to think has come of age. Not only the professional philosopher, but every educated believer owes it to himself and to the community to which he belongs, to articulate (at least to himself) the rational structure and meaning of his beliefs.

Dr. Curtis has offered us one way of formulating such an articulation — an approach which is almost Hartshornean in its demand for utter clarity and the integration of God into a comprehensible world-outlook. And Dr. Neville offers us the exact opposite — a plotinian theology which views God as the ineffable, transcendent Unity who has created everything else from nothingness.

We may remark in passing that both views have some knotty implications for Christian theology. To follow Whitehead to the bitter end means to introduce something like a real development into God; and to embrace Neville's system in its indivisible and tight unity means something like a modalism in one's approach to the Trinity. But neither difficulty is strictly

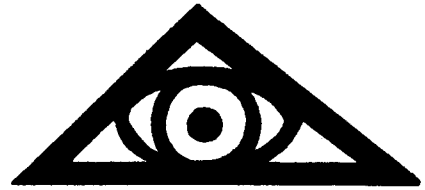
philosophical, and neither seems insoluble; neither, at any rate, can be entered into in detail here.

The precise question here is, which view is to be preferred from the philosophical viewpoint? Are the two mutually exclusive? Dr. Neville gives us a clue when he says that "every method prejudices the possible outcome by its own structure" (p. 148). We must know what we are looking for if we ever expect to find an answer, and by that very fact we prejudice our answer.

What, then, are we looking for? Leaving aside the everymannish connotations of this statement, let us say that we want an approach to God which will be meaningful to modern man. Modern man views reality as process, thanks to Darwin and the whole scientific enterprise after him. So if the world and God are real, they should be explained in terms of process, and Dr. Curtis is right.

Yes, to a certain extent. If we are looking for a logical, coherent explanation of the world in terms of its own intrinsic first principles, we do want an explanation in terms of process. Let us go further: if we want to explain God precisely in his relationship to the world, we can still do so, as Whitehead has amply proven, in terms of process. But then we are doing what Dr. Neville calls metaphysics. For this purpose Whitehead is a most admirable guide.

Metaphysics is, however, not the deepest sort of philosophy in which one may engage. Aristotle and Saint Thomas pointed out long ago the human mind's need to unify, and unity is not attained simply by making explicit the inter-relationships among a plurality of determinations. If we want to push further, to an ultimate explanation of the harmony which, de facto, characterizes the world, we cannot remain content with even those determinate relationships by which God relates himself to the world. Here a Whiteheadian metaphysics falters; what Dr. Neville calls ontology is needed, and ontology, which is just as rigorous a science as metaphysics, leads us on to transcendent being-itself, where there is nothing determinate for us to know.



There is a sense, then, in which we may have our cake and eat it too. That is to say, we may view cosmic reality as in process (even in its relationship to God who may in **this** context likewise be said to be involved in process); and yet we may recognize the existence of an utterly transcendent Ground for that process. (It will not do, incidentally, to identify this indeterminate, ineffable Ground with the primordial nature of Whitehead's God.)

Here, it seems, Teilhard's thought

complements that of Whitehead. The latter certainly gives a more precise account of the inner nature of created processes, but one may wonder whether his theology ever gets beyond the "created determinations" of being. Teilhard too, actually, manages to bind God to some sort of pre-existent plurality which he would unify in creating; but I cannot see that this is required by Teilhard's general framework, whereas it is rigorously demanded by Whitehead's. With all Teilhard's dependence on science and stress on the phenomenal, his system nonetheless seems most aptly open to a genuine ontology of transcendence in a way that Whitehead's is not. Dr. Curtis is probably right when he attributes a plotinian kind of mysticism to Whitehead, especially in the latter's own personal religious life. But Whitehead is notorious for making many statements which do not fit into his own system (pre- and post-systematic assertions, Vere Chappell calls them[4]). If I have read Dr. Curtis correctly, however, it is precisely the Whiteheadian system that he is recommending as the philosophical base for a new, ecumenical theology.

Back in 1942, Professor Stephen Ely raised the question, mooted ever since, whether Whitehead's God was "available for religious purposes."[5] I have no doubt that he was so available to Whitehead himself, and that he is so to Hartshorne today. But whether the Whiteheadian scheme can be so "opened at the top," as it were, as to provide us with an adequate vehicle for Christian theology — this is an extremely difficult question. Certainly Dr. Neville has enabled us to ask it more perceptively; and his book furnishes formidable support for a negative answer.

We do live in a changed culture, and one that continues to change at an ever accelerated pace. We do need to recast much of our thought in terms of process and togetherness. But precisely in and through all this we find reasserted with new power our human need for and openness to the ineffable and utterly transcendent One.

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[4] Vere C. Chappell, "Whitehead's Metaphysics," **Review of Metaphysics** 13 (1959), 278-304.

[5] Stephen L. Ely, **The Religious Availability of Whitehead's God: a Critical Analysis** (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1942).

Book Reviews

Spectrum of Protestant Beliefs. Compiled by Robert Campbell, O.P. Milwaukee; Bruce, 1968. Pp. 106. Cloth, $3.95.

Reviewed by Father Stephen T. Ernest, S.V.D., M.A. (Loyola, Chicago), doctoral student in philosophy at Fordham University.

Compiled by Rev. Robert Campbell, O. P., of De Paul University, Chicago, this is really a handbook in capsule summations of the wide diversity of Protestant beliefs on various issues, both of doctrine and of action in the world.

The five men chosen to submit comments are: Bob Jones, Jr. for the Fundamentalist positions, Carl F. H. Henry, editor of "Christianity Today" for the New Evangelicals, Dr. John Warwick Montgomery for the Confessional group, Ep. James Pike for Liberal Protestants, and Death of God theologian William Hamilton for the Radical end of the spectrum.

All of these were asked to comment on twenty one topics, ranging from the concept of God, Jesus, the Virgin Birth, and human nature, to pre-marital sex, race, ecumenism, communism and Vietnam. Their summations, while comprehensive in range, are quite sketchy and superficial. But by that very fact it does serve its purpose as a handy, quick reference to what the various Protestant groups hold in general about specific topics.

Because of its wide scope it is also impossible to give a summary in the true sense of the world; which leaves room then for just a few random impressions.

Both editor and contributors take pains to assure us that while there are these five categories, these are just that; the realities they are meant to represent are much more diffuse. In fact it is intellectually dangerous to try to determine Protestant belief along denominational lines. Members of one group may feel closer in doctrine or stance to members of another denomination than towards others of their own group. As with most everything else, truer divisions fall along liberal-conservative lines, and these both fall within and cut across the boundaries suggested in this book.

The same holds true for Catholicism, and this is another useful and important function of the book (although one I imagine that was not intended by the authors): it can serve as a mirror for ourselves.

While I suspect most Catholics would find themselves in positions analogous to the New Evangelicals and Confessional groups, the whole wide spectrum can find articulation in Catholicism. As we examine these five groups, and determine the consistencies and "personality configurations" inherent in each, we can discern these same consistencies and configurations in the equally wide range of our Catholic people. All of this aids us in what is probably the most difficult mission in our ecumenical activity: the dialogue with our own people of divergent views.

Finally a note about Scripture. Personally I was distressed at how Scripture seems to be not taken "as it is" but is crammed into one's particular philosophical or theological outlook. The big question, of course, is what does Scripture really say? This gave rise to the divergent categories in the first place. But since most of the book rests ultimately on Scripture, chapter five on that topic would seem to be the crucial one. Yet even here I found for the most part the practice described above. Dr. Montgomery's comments come closest (and that is a relative term) to articulating what I think would be a basic issue here; we cannot, in our initial steps interpret Scripture according to our own background but must first determine what the writer, through his literary forms (and the

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"philosophy" and "theology" inherent in those forms) actually intended to say. Once that is determined, then we can start adapting this to our contemporary outlook. But I'm afraid the reverse is happening here (as in also much of Catholic writing.)

But this is on how things **ought** to be; as the book **is** now, it serves well as a quick-glance aid in putting these various beliefs and approaches in perspective, and by the same token, serves as a reflection for ourselves.

Three Modernists: Alfred Loisy, George Tyrrell, William L. Sullivan. By John Ratté. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967. Pp. viii-370. Cloth, $6.95.

Reviewed by Father James J. Hennesey, S.J., S.T.L., Ph.D. (Catholic University), Assistant Professor of Theology at Fordham University.

Professor Ratté of Amherst College undertakes an ambitious project in attempting to introduce American readers to three representatives of the complex Modernist movement of the early 20th century. Modernism will inevitably receive a great deal more interest in years to come. Archives are opening, several ambitious studies are under way in France, Ivy League graduate schools have discovered a new lode for dissertation topics and there is a natural contemporary fascination in these not-so-long-ago revolutionaries within the Roman Catholic Church.

The present effort does not quite come off. Ratté has introduced new material on Sullivan, the ex-Paulist who died a Unitarian minister, and he makes an honest effort to evaluate Loisy the French scripture scholar and Tyrrell the mystic Anglo-Irishman objectively. On the two European figures there is nothing that will be new to those familiar with the field. It is questionable whether Sullivan belongs in their company. For the novice in modern church history, it might be a good idea to begin by reading first John Heaney's essay on Modernism in the **New Catholic Encyclopedia** to get the larger picture. Ratté's sometimes allusive style can be confusing and is rather heavy.

On the positive side, the author approaches his subject intelligently, without the naiveté that one finds in a few writers of our day who like to think of Alfred Loisy as the progenitor of reform in the church. His criticism is balanced. He points out the positive contribution that his subjects might have made and the obscurantism that blocked that contribution. At the same time, he clarifies the situation in the opening line of the chapters on Loisy: "Alfred Loisy remained a Catholic priest for twenty years after he had decided that the only statement in the Apostles' Creed to which he could give historical assent was that Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate." Loisy's narrow historicism is one of the fatal flaws in his scholarly makeup. These chapters are simply commentary. The job is better and more extensively done in Emile Poulat, **Histoire, dogme, et critique dans la crise moderniste** (Paris, 1962), but Ratté has the essential flavor. The chapters on Tyrrell read like Tyrrell himself, and the effect is not bad. Sullivan is considered too much in isolation from the general protest movement that existed in the United States at the time, and it would be wrong to see him and his few friends as the only American Catholic Modernists. But no one has yet attempted an over-all view, and at least Ratté introduces the subject.

The historical introduction is sketchy and leaves the impression that the author understands the complex factors that led to the Modernist phenomenon only imperfectly. He fails here as a church historian, yet he is not a sufficiently accomplished theologian to bring off a theologian's assessment of the situation. Finally, I suggest that he over-estimates the effect and extent of the crisis, even on the intellectual element of the church of a half-century or more ago. He falls into the avant-garde trap of identifying the concerns of a relative few with those of the much larger group of the intellectually alive faithful. Actors in the crisis period acknowledged this, gratefully or ruefully, depending on their point of view. Perhaps the most serious effect of Modernism was the intellectual inertia to which it gave birth in the church. There are lessons to be learned from the period. Ratté has made a start in teaching them.

Bultmann and Christian Faith. By René Marlé, S. J. Westminster: Newman, 1968. Pp. vi-106. Cloth, $3.95.

Reviewed by Father Anthony A. Struzynski, O.F.M., S.T.L. (Catholic University), doctoral student in theology at Notre Dame University.

Rudolf Bultmann approaches the New Testament from a point of view that is radically different from that of Roman Catholic biblical scholars. Unfortunately this has led some Catholic commentators on his work to neglect the "golden rule," **first** understand, **then** criticize.

It is, however, the careful application of this rule that characterizes René Marlé's small book **Bultmann and Christian Faith.** After the first chapter, which situates Bultmann in historical perspective and attempts to arouse interest, the book reads like a "golden application" of this rule. Each of the remaining four chapters carries a fine analysis of Bultmann's basic ideas and a valuable criticism of them.

Chapter II analyzes Bultmann's general structural understanding of human experience and human being and his New Testament Christian

understanding of both. Bultmann's basic categories, such as "existential" as opposed to "existentiel," are not simply used but are also explained. His concept of demythologizing is also briefly but clearly presented. Chapter III gives his theses on the Word of God that underlie all of his theology. A clearly illustrated distinction between the "evocative" and "creative" functions of words neatly leads the reader into these basic theses.

Chapter IV analyzes Bultmann's view of the Old Testament and offers a particularly good criticism of it. Many critics have called Bultmann a Marcionite because of his attitude toward the Old Testament. Marlé's effort to nuance this criticism properly, brings out Bultmann's positive contributions on the subject. Chapter V is actually a summary of Bultmann's concept of the Church as he developed it in his monumental work **Theology of the New Testament.** It is at this point that I feel some semblance of adequacy as a reviewer since I have read this work twice and summarized the same material. I would commend Fr. Marlé for his summary and generally agree with his criticism. Bultmann has marvelously developed the concept of the Church as the Eschatological Congregation created and determined by the Word of God and all the ramifications for the Church-concept that flow from this insight. But there are other New Testament Church doctrines that he neglects and that should have been used to further develop the New Testament doctrine. He treats the Church as the Body of Christ much too lightly and, as Marlé points out, his relegation of the doctrine of the Church as the Spouse of Christ to "gnostic themes" leaves his own doctrine impoverished. I agree with Marlé when he says that Bultmann errs when he sets up only certain aspects of ecclesiology as the absolute norm and "represents as illegitimate everything else which, in reality, deepens and complements these aspects" (p. 101).

Although this book may have to be read twice (easy enough, since it is only 106 pages), I think it serves as an excellent introduction to Rudolf Bultmann's theology.

God Is a New Language. By Dom Sebastian Moore. Glen Rock, N. J.: Newman Press, 1967. Pp. 184. Cloth, $3.50.

Reviewed by Father Howard J. Berlin, O.F.M., S.T.B. (Catholic University), Instructor in Theology at St. Bonaventure University.

The genesis of this book goes a long way towards explaining its nature and its failure. The first part of the book is a reprint of two articles from **Clergy Review** which reflect Dom Moore's "sharp discontent with current Catholic attitudes" (p. 9). Moore notes, however, that his discontent with Catholic attitudes shifted to discontent with his own attitudes — also Catholic. Thus the second section of **God Is a New Language** is the author's search through his discontent for the new language of God.

"The only order of composition in this exploratory section is this. First the pattern suggested itself, and then from day to day different religious problems occured to me and I wrote about them as I now know I had to. And so there came under review the way we think of God, the vagaries of Christian tradition, the mind of the theologian, you; what Jesus was really on about, natural theology and the Teilhard bit, the prevalent habit of 'starting with God,' how a man is 'recognized' not merely in his own society but in the whole scheme of things, and so on. All this is unsystematic, and I don't see how it could be otherwise. How can one decide in what order to recover a sense of reality?" (p. 10).

Section three of this book, "Statements," also shares the same problem indicated above in the author's own words — it is unsystematic. Moore's inability throughout the book to decide upon an order for the presentation of his discoveries makes for the exasperating reading of aborted insights. Each day the author wakes up pounding a new revolutionary drum to a different stylistic beat. True to traditional revolutionary language, his short essays are filled with the predictable sweeping and, of course, pregnant generalizations that lose their force as he increases their number.

Another of Moore's problems is that his intellectual modesty is a little on the absent side. In one place he writes, "I realize now quite clearly that what I have written has been simply my attempt to make sense of God for myself" (p. 175); and yet two pages later he can speak of the "structure I have worked out for renewing the Christian understanding of God."

What structure?

These observations may be hypercritical. **God Is a New Language** is, to be sure, far from a boring little book with a flashy title. Moore has wonderful awakening things to say, and these peep through the melange in brilliant disturbing statements. What Moore does not have is a new language of God. A language is an artificial thing that absolutely demands order to be the glorious artifact that it is. Moore's refusal to rise to that artificiality leaves him incommunicado. In this book he does not help to organize the thought of men who think as he does and will have little appeal for men who do not think as he does. He is able, I am sure, to write another and better **Future of Belief.** But this will demand that he organize in some way his many starts and spurts of insight.

Söderblom: Ecumenical Pioneer. By Charles J. Curtis. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1967. Pp. vii-149. Cloth, $4.50.

Facets of Ecumenicity: The Loyola Ecumenical Forum Public Lectures for 1966. By C. J. Curtis. Fresno, Calif.: Academy Guild Press, 1967. Pp. 76. Paper, $1.25.

Reviewed by Father Vincent Cushing, O.F.M., S.T.L. (Catholic University), Instructor in Theology at Holy Name College, Washington, D.C.

The first of these books is a popular introduction to the work and thought of the well known ecumenical pioneer, Archbishop Nathan Söderblom of Sweden. The title is indicative of the main thrust of the work: it deals basically with Söderblom's ecumenical interests: his pioneering attempts to arrange ecumenical discussions of depth and quality. Curtis also describes Söderblom's prophetic thought on the nature of mission and the relation of Christianity to other religions of the world. He goes to some lengths to show the close relationship between Söderblom's thought and many contemporary areas of theological concern, especially those concerning the Church and Revelation.

The biographical data in this work will enable a reader to follow and categorize the main events of Söderblom's life. Each chapter is followed by footnotes that can serve

as a ready source of further examination of Söderblom. Sixteen pages of photographs serve to trace the Archbishop's career pictorially and give a charming view of his devotion to his family. All in all, this is the book to read first in one's study of Söderblom.

One note of specific criticism. Curtis' attempt to use the God-is-dead theologians as a vehicle of literary introduction to Söderblom's relevance strikes me as a rather contrived effort. Curtis is far better and more perceptive when he is dealing with the work and value of Söderblom and reflecting those areas against the horizon of major theological thought rather than against the fairly limited horizons of radical theology.

Facets of Ecumenicity, like many published lecture series, suffers from over-simplification, misstatement of problems due to brevity, and stylistic devices more suited to the lecture stand than for inclusion in a book. No one doubts Dr. Curtis' wisdom or ability. I personally doubt the wisdom of printing these lectures, however; they do not confront problems but merely describe them in such a fashion as to give the impression that the description of a problem is its solution.

A case in point: the continued wrestling with the concept of catholicity in these lectures. Dr. Curtis feels Roman Catholicism should not take the title **catholic** exclusively to itself. Good point; but the challenge is to ask why this has been done, to trace the historical development, and to see that one would have to maintain catholicity if he feels it is the true Church.

I do not wish to appear as one opposed to ecumenism; on the contrary, I feel it is most important today. The question remains, however, whether it is well served by the publication of lectures that are necessarily popular, folksy, and directed to an audience that is composed of all levels of theological sophistication.

The book's four lectures are these: "A Protestant Analysis of the Decree on Ecumenism — Vatican II," "Evangelical Catholicity," "Nathan "Söderblom — Ecumenical Archbishop," "The Future of Ecumenical Theology." Dr. Curtis is at his best with the two middle lectures; the first and the last suffer from the defects described above.

The Living God. By Nathan Söderblom. Boston: Beacon Press, 1962. Pp. xxxix-398. Paper, $2.45.

Reviewed by Dr. Harry E. Yeide, Lutheran minister and Assistant Dean at George Washington University.

The re-publication of Söderblom's 1931 Gifford Lectures, subtitled "The Basic Forms of Personal Religion" and published with a biographical introduction by Ingve Brilioth, is a sign of our times. It speaks to the problem of the relation between the great religious communities of the world, a problem that has again become prominent in the years since World War II. Further, the speaker is universally recognized as an ecumenical pioneer in thought, word, and deed — and who in the western world is today completely immune to ecumenical interest?

Söderblom devotes the bulk of this work to organizing the data of the great world religions, a task for which only a few have ever been equipped but for which Söderblom qualifies by virtue of his immense erudition in the field. In his initial chapter (p. 23) he suggests a five-fold classification scheme based on differing proportions of two fundamental elements: revelation and exercise (ascesis). The first is especially noteworthy inasmuch as Christian theologians have often excluded non-biblical religions from their circle of revelation, even when they spoke of some sort of "general" revelation. Söderblom insists that the living God has spoken to all religious communities. He does not in practice restrict himself to the announced five types in a neat way; certain sub-types seem as vital as main types. Thus we have chapters on Religion as Method; Religion as Psychology; Religion as Devotion; Religion with a 'Salvation Fact'; Religion as Fight against Evil; the Religion of Good Conscience; Religion as Revelation in History; and the Religion of Incarnation. This mere recital of several chapter headings reveals also that the categories of **revelation** and **exercise** require considerable elaboration in order to perform their task. In addition to his notions of history, conscience, etc., Söderblom's understanding of mysticism and faith play a dominant role in the analysis and classification.

How might one evaluate his efforts? Regarding the encounter of the world religions, many today would clearly reject his approach; all religions are, in the end, measured by a biblical standard. But it is yet to be proven that members of the biblical religions can enter into dialogue on any other basis, despite some skill in concealing this fact. Regarding the book in the framework of Christian ecumenism, there are also limitations according to our latest criteria. Roman Catholics will not be pleased with his treatment of **Corpus Christi** (p. 338) nor Calvinists with the reference to their formula: finitum non est capax infiniti (p. 163). And yet, despite these and other touches of Söderblom's Lutheranism, the book characteristically presupposes the existence of a single community of those bound to Christ, and illumines some of the possibilities in taking this seriously.

Nathan Söderblom: Theologian of Revelation. By Charles J. Curtis. Chicago: Covenant Press, 1966. Pp. x-221. Cloth, $5.95.

Reviewed by Sister Ann Norpel, S.S.N.D., Instructor in Theology at Trinity College, Washington, D.C.

Nathan Söderblom's name emerges as the pioneer of ecumenism, theologian of revelation, apostle of peace, staunch follower of the real Luther, historian of religions, and creative genius. This book concerning Söderblom by Charles Curtis might have been organized around these titles as an alternate presentation to delineate the Archbishop's bequest to Christianity. One might wish on finishing the book that this Archbishop of Uppsala had been present as an observer at Vatican II, for since he had been so far advanced in theological position in the 20's and 30's, what insights might he not have offered for the 60's and 70's?

We shall discuss just one aspect of Söderblom's religious thought: his understanding of the nature and importance of revelation. For this remarkably open Christian, the chief bearers of revelation were the world religions and the mysticism of personality. For him there could be no possible disparity between history and faith, for God's revelation of himself always occurs in history — in the prophet, the genius, the saint; in music, in all religions, in ecumenicity. Söderblom's theology and outlook are definitely incarnational. Revelation, for him, is always in process — possessing a permanence yet continually changing as the Holy Spirit leads the Christian community forward. Revelation is not a past act, but an unending disclosure of God — a dynamic process culminating in Jesus Christ.

In the analysis of Söderblom's thought there is definitely a preview of the Vatican II documents **De fontibus revelationis** and **Lumen gentium.** Because the meaning of revelation is continually unfolding in the history of the Church, the urgent calls of our day: peace, justice, and Christian unity — have been cited as the three great passions of his life. Söderblom not only saw the

urgency of recognizing revelation in history; he himself was involved in the process. So committed to his convictions was he that men recognized the unswerving consistency between his life and his doctrine and thus awarded him the Nobel Peace Prize. This genius who inspired the Life and Work Conference of 1925 never ceased to bear witness to his theory that the chief locus of revelation is the human personality.

The Nature of Revelation. By Nathan Söderblom. Ed. and Introd. by Edgar M. Carlson; tr. Frederic E. Pamp. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966. Pp. vii-163. Paper, 2.25.

Reviewed by Father Robert Monahan, O.F.M., a graduate student in theology at the Catholic University of America.

The 1966 edition of **The Nature of Revelation** was published on the occasion of the centenary observance of the birth of its author Archbishop Söderblom. While a centennial observance is an adequate reason for publishing a book, it is not necessarily an adequate reason for reading it. This volume merits reading not just for the sake of historical completeness, but for the substantial personal enrichment it can yield.

Preoccupation with contemporary theological thought frequently obscures what has preceded it, but often the stimulus for new directions in a science comes from the re-discovery of the work of an earlier scholar. **The Nature of Revelation** could well provide the opportunity for such re-discoveries. It is striking to note that two vexing problems which constituted part of the background of Söderblom's thought remain a puzzle for us moderns today: viz., the implications for faith of historico-critical biblical research and the modern hermeneutical problem, and the relation of the sacral to the secular. Inquiry into these problems led Söderblom into the larger area of the history of religions where he was concerned with establishing the continuity of other religions with Christianity, but at the same time pointing out their discontinuity. Söderblom judged that the confrontation with these problems in his day would not have been so disturbing and confusing if "obsolete theories of literal infallibility and an unhistorical, mechanical concept of revelation had not been permitted to frighten us away from every new bit of knowledge."

In the essay, "The Portals of Revelation," the author deals with the reception of revelation and its apprehension as a genuine element in experience. He asserts that revelation involves a genuine knowledge of the essential nature of reality, of God. Here one can recognize a kind of empiricism and existentialism. His ironic attitude toward Catholicism did not prevent him from distinguishing sharply between what Rome means by 'continued revelation' and his own understanding of it which incorporates secular forces and ideas more freely. Undoubtedly Söderblom would have much to contribute to the present discussion of the task of theology as it is understood by the theological secularists.

How pertinent and viable are Söderblom's ideas in today's world? It is risky at best to make predictions, but as one reads **The Nature of Revelation** he certainly gets no feeling of being distant from contemporary theological debate. The questions of theological methodology, the translation of religious concepts into more general categories, the analyses of the religious consciousness and its history, the ecumenical dimensions of Söderblom's ecclesiology — all seem to this reader promising approaches for creative work on the contemporary theological front.

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