DISCOVERY SERIES, Lecturer's Guide. Companion to "GOD OR NO GOD',

**THINKING ABOUT GOD**

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**FOREWORD**

No one doubts that there is a wide-spread crisis of religion, particularly among youth, all over the world. There is an ever-growing number of persons who deny the existence of God- This is particularly so among university students. Surveys have shown that the crisis is found within Catholic circles also.

We should not place the blame for this phenomenon merely on materialism and lack of faith. Today there is a need to rediscover old values and truths. It is true that values cannot change, but the expression of values can change.

In this light the Discovery Series of Fr. J. N. M. Wijngaards are most welcome. The adventure of discovering God is fasci­nating and appealing to the mind of youth.

This unit in the series called "God or No God?" with its companion booklet "Thinking About God" is presented in an original and creative manner. Every such initiative in the direction of catechetical renewal ought to be encouraged. The signs of the times have manifested the validity of such an exis­tential approach. In this way we are enabled to share our experience and convictions and make them relevant. This method also helps our youth to identify its problems and disco­ver new values and create new areas of commitment.

I do hope that these booklets enjoy support and patronage among all sections in our colleges and other institutions.

S. ARULAPPA,

Archbishop of Hyderabad and Chairman CBCI Commission for Education

SECUNDERABAD

21 February 1975

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**CHAPTER ONE: SETTING THE STAGE**

**Doubts about God in Indian coll**eges

Our present world is witnessing a renewed debate on God. Many intellectuals turn atheists or agnostics. The trend has a visible impact on the generation of students attending univer­sity colleges. The new wave of doubt has come to India too. In spite of their Hindu, Muslim, Christian or Parsee backgrounds, many college students in India experience deep-seated prob­lems about God. An enquiry among students entering colleges in Hyderabad in 1974 showed that this "crisis" with all its characteristic traits is wide-spread and growing.

The results of the Hyderabad probe may be reckoned to be indicative for the whole of India. The overall conclusion, overwhelmingly clear from many responses, is that the existence of God is no longer taken for granted. The existence of God is questioned, doubted, argued about, conveniently forgotten or resumed with fresh persuasion. With those who manifest their acceptance of God we find appallingly primitive ideas about Him. We will analyse a few characteristic samples.

The number of those who bluntly *reject God or admit doubts* is far greater than what is usually assumed. Persons who express these views normally add that they hide them from parents and teachers.

"I am not sure there is a God for I have not seen any evidence that He exists. I would not know what He looks like or what He does. God, to me, is just what everybody talks about." (Hindu)

"I wonder whether there is any person in the world who completely and faithfully believes in God. Most people are half way between, more or less, and I hap­pen to be one of them. In the olden days it was very easy to attribute many inexplicable things to God, but today when there is a reason and explanation for everything, it is pretty difficult to believe in God." (Christian)

"Outwardly I show an interest in going to Church and taking part in religious activities, for that is what my parents expect me to do, but inwardly I don't know...

As the years go by, when I am supposed to under­stand more and feel more the existence of God, I feel the reverse happening to me. We had some small discussions at home which finally led to arguments. So I never bring up the topic anymore." (Christian)

"Being a science student, I have come across various theories as to how the earth began and was created. So I am still at a loss to know how it actually began, whether God created it or something else did." (Hindu)

"Many a time I debate in my mind whether there is a God... From my very early days I was told about God, but I have an instinct which tells me that there is no God and Adam and Eve stepped into this world by some scientific way." (Parsee)

Many students, even those who express belief in God, indicate that it is *the attitude of* *science* and the example of unbelieving scientists that causes them to doubt. It is as if they have realised, with shock, that they live in an unbelieving world.

"From ancient time people used to believe in God, but now in the modern age about 80% of the people do not believe in God." (Sikh)

"In this modern world people do not believe in God. They feel that hard work is the essential thing. They say when the scientists went to the moon, it was by their own power that they went to the moon." (Hindu)

"God is almighty. He is the supreme being. He is infallible: but is all this credible??? I might have a positive answer and say that I do believe in God but there are many scientists, astronomers, geologists and others who do not." (Hindu)

"Nowadays I find many of my friends just don't believe in God." (Christian)

"Being a science student, I have come across many theories and proofs against

the existence of God." (Hindu)

"Does a superior being, that is God, exist? This is one of the most controversial topics discussed today. There are many who deny the existence of God." (Hindu)

"I am terribly upset by the fact that there are many great men who are as unsure about the existence of God as me. How can religious people speak so vaguely about God in a scientific age, an age of shrewdness and correctness?... I believe that there are many atheists who are so morally noble and well principled, while so many "holy" people behave so badly." (Christian)

Generally speaking, the students connect their faith in God with *parental instruction.* Many, quite rightly, insist on the right of making up their own minds. Acceptance of God, they feel, should result from a personal conquest of truth.

"Right from an early age I had been acquainted with God through my parents. At first I used to blindly believe. Then came the stage where I started puzz­ling, and finally the stage where I was convinced that there was a God." (Hindu)

"My mother is a firm believer. Well, I am not yet sure whether I believe in God or not." (Hindu)

"Being brought up in a Christian family, I think I am supposed to behave and think as Christians of yes­terday used to do. But I feel confused about my own ideas." (Christian)

One of the most influential and spontaneous arguments against the existence of God is the fact of *suffering in this world*. God is called partial, hard-hearted, cruel and a friend of the rich.

"Until some time back God meant hope. But now looking at the futility of so many things, the very existence of God is doubtful to me. Even if He does exist and is the Creator, He has made man to make a mess of his creation. Right now my faith in Him is so low that the only prayer I can utter is "0 God, if there is a God, save my soul, if there is a soul." (Christian)

"If God is really in control of the universe, then why do cyclones, storms, earthquakes and volcanic erup­tions occur so frequently? God, in my opinion, is not always merciful and then one cannot blame people turning atheists." (Hindu)

This problem of suffering is intimately linked to mytholo­gical notions entertained by almost all regarding God's provi­dence. Most attribute every success and failure, every stroke of good fortune or illness, to the direct intervention of God. This is clear from the way they speak about the *prayer of petition*. One student writes she lost her faith in God when her father died of throat cancer. God was "mean" in not listen­ing to her prayer. Another stopped praying after failing in an examination for which she had offered many petitions to God, even a vow. Persons who maintain such simplified notions are logically forced to atheism. A few frightful samples of such dangerous simplicity may suffice.

"This happened a few days ago. When I gave my camera to a photo studio to be washed, I took a photo for my student identity card which is issued by the airlines for going to Kashmir by plane. And the day came when I had to get my photos back. The studio is very far away, and my car was not available because my grandfather took it because he had to go on some important business. I had no other way to go. And it was the last day to give it back to the college. So I could not do anything. Then I prayed to God for help. And, it is a miracle, the car came at the last moment." (Hindu)

"I always pray to God, not only to get things, but also to worship Him... Yet often He does not listen to my prayers. After all my believing, trusting and being sincere to Him, instead of encouraging me by now and then granting a favour. He does just the opposite." (Christian)

"If we believe God, we will not be harmed by anything. We will be happy and at peace. Every busi­nessman pleads to God in the morning that he may run his business properly and with profit. From my childhood I am praying God to pass me in the exami­nations. I passed the classes every year. I have a good trust and faith in God." (Hindu)

Problems about God frequently derive from undigested traditional practices and beliefs. For some God is still the punishing Father, the policeman, who "hates you if you don't obey Him." For some He is the "collective sum of all forces in nature controlling man." For some the question what God looks like ("Like a man with arms and legs? Like a blazing tree?") is still a very realistic one. Many admit failure in finding an answer to their problems.

"My questions remain still unanswered and though I try hard to reason them out, the answers I give myself do not satisfy me." (Hindu)

"Sometimes I feel God must exist. I ask people, but they do not know much about God. I try to find an answer and a solution, but in vain." (Parsee)

"Somehow when I sit and think leisurely about God, l am not satisfied with what man discovered about Him. I have a feeling of dissatisfaction left in me. There is something more which I have to know and I do not know what it is. I sit and argue with my parents, but still I cannot get the answers to my questions.” (Hindu)

"A few years ago I seriously wondered whether I did believe in God or not. In the end, I have decided that I do, though there are many things about religion and God, that I do not understand. I find it difficult to believe things which can't really be proved." (Christian)

The quotations given so far are characteristic samples from 250 responses obtained on the question: "What do you think of God?" The low number does not allow any valid statistical conclusions. But as a probe it is significant enough. It illus­trates that our students have *intellectual* problems about God. The problems arise from the teen-age need of personal convic­tion, the confrontation with atheist claims and the inability to maintain simplistic ideas of God in a world of suffering. As far as I could make out, the religious adherence of the students does not make much difference to their doubts. (Perhaps Mus­lims tend to simply repeat traditional doctrines in Islamic phra­seology: Hindus usually take issue with myths and idol wor­ship). It is clear that a simple witness to one's own faith will not help. The students are clamouring for *rational* arguments. The "will to believe" is usually there. What they need is the *logical* sub-structure by which they can understand what they believe. In other words: they need solid natural theology.

When we speak about "rational arguments", about a "logi­cal sub-structure" and "solid" natural theology, it should not be concluded that we are advocating the need of simplistic rational "proofs". God's existence cannot be proved by a mathematical formula or by a trip, to the local museum. God is a persomto.be met. His presence needs to be grasped by our intelligence, not.demonstrated.by computer-deduction. But the "flash o! insight" by which we suddenly become aware of God is made possible by correct thinking. What our students are asking for, and what they have a right to demand, is a rational justification for their belief in God; an approach that is not1 based on feelings or tradition alone; an acceptance of God that springs from personal thought and conviction. For this; they need the help of natural theology.

The most extensive report on religious trends among college youth all over the world is: "Western Youth and the Future of the Church", *Pro Mundi Vita 33* (1970), special issue. About col­lege students in India I recommend the excellent background studies published in: The Indian Youth: Emerging problems and Issues^ P. MEHTA (Ed.), Somaiya Bombay 1971.

**Natural Theology and its use**

Natural theology is the study of what we can know about God with the help of human reason. Revelation too is a source of knowledge about God, in fact the most important.one. But in natural theology we do not take this information into account. In natural theology we investigate what man can know about God without the help of historical revelation.

At first this may look a waste of time. Is it not like buying flowers in the market if we can pluck them in our own garden? No, it is not. For super-nature is built on nature and revelation presupposes natural reason. When God speaks to man He addresses him as a rational being. God’s Word presupposes; man's intelligence, man's own effort in thought and reflection. Man cannot meaningfully understand God's message and res­pond to it, if he has not formed some idea of who God is. Natural theology is like the tray on which we collect the flowers given us by revelation.

Paul condemned the pagans of his time for their wrong notions about God. He knew that they had the advantage of a direct revelation such as the Jews had received. "Yet", he said, "they are inexcusable. For what can be known about God is plain to. them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world. God’s invisible nature, namely his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made” (Rom. 1,19-20). Quoting Wis­dom 13, 1-9 Paul blamed those who had not arrived at a know­ledge of God with the use of natural reason. Paul held that persons who had not received revelation could know God in two ways: by reflection on the created world (Rom. 1, 19-20) and by listening to their conscience (Rom. 2, 14-16).

In our modern age neither God nor revelation are taken for granted. There are many well-meaning thinkers who reject the existence of a personal God. They consider all religion equal to superstition and are convinced that it has done a lot of harm to the progress of mankind. A person who believes in God, they think, cannot at the same time shoulder full responsibility in his task of building up the world. Actually it is not God himself whom atheists, agnostics, humanists and communists are fighting against, but certain traditional ideas of God. By opposing such wrong ideas, they are often doing what we Christians should have done in the first place. Atheists point out weak spots in our theology, things we have taken for gran­ted because we were not critical enough ourselves in our own thinking about God. We Christians have to demonstrate to atheists that in by-passing God, they make the mistake of their lives. Natural theology is this meeting ground where believers and non-believers learn from each other.

Some prominent Christian theologians have rejected natu­ral theology as an insult to God. They say, that the attempt to reach God by human reason springs from pride. Man presumes haughtily that he can know something about God on his own strength. Especially after sin, they say, it is mere vanity and self-deception to think that man could have a correct thought of God. If man imagines he can prove something about God, he is subjecting God to the test. It is as if he puts up his own reason as the judge and allows it to pronounce a verdict on the truthfulness of falsehood of God.

"The great majority of men judges unworthily about God, affirming in a foolish, if not in a presumptuous way, that God is like this or like that. No human being can attribute to God greater honour than affirming that His majesty is infinitely superior to man's judgement and man's reason."

M. Luther

God is so highly elevated above our human condition that it looks sinful even to question the fact of His existence. Dis­cussing whether there is a God, or what His nature is like, or what qualities we can ascribe to Him, seems like making God the object of our human mind. It is as if we expect God to be at our disposal, to be considered by us as we think right.

"God is a being which is not at anyone's disposal. He is less at the disposal of man that we can imagine. He cannot be used for any purpose. Everything is subject to his use whereas He himself cannot be used for any other purpose."

K. Barth

The objection merits some serious consideration. Obviously, small human creatures that we are, we should never forget our total dependence on God. It is the objective reality of God and not our subjective knowledge of Him that matters. It is truth and not our understanding of it that is the ultimate norm. We\* should approach the mystery of God not as judges, but as seekers and learners.

The Lutheran objection is valid in as far as it requires the right attitude in man. But it is not valid, if on this account it would rule out natural theology as such. For it is God him­self who has implanted in man's mind the search for truth. It was the Creator who gave man the power of reasoning. God himself wanted to be present to us through the created realities that Surround us. In searching for God by human reason, in arguing about His existence and nature, in attempting to disco­ver His presence, man is not being presumptuous in any way. He is simply being true to his nature of being "mind in matter."

The purpose of this booklet is to give a short survey of natural theology. It will not be possible to work out the diffe­rent arguments in detail. For this, specialised books should be consulted. The present booklet merely intends to be a "guide"-: it will introduce various approaches to God and try to give a short evaluation. After each section references will be given to books that could profitably be read on the aspects discussed. The booklet hopes to provide a unified view within which the readers will be able to select the topics that interest them most.

The bibliography suggested after each section has not been composed as a scientific justification, but to give suggestions for further reading. In order to serve my readers better, I have limited my recommendations: (a) only to books published in *English;* (b) only to *books* and not to articles in periodicals; (c) if possible to books that are readily *available*. Frequently books recommended under one section also contain useful information pertaining to other sections. In spite of the limitations unavoidable in such a bibliography l am persuaded that a thoughtful use of it will help many a person to a more integra­ted and reflective study of natural theology.

Some useful general reference works are: C. C. WEBB, *Studies in the History of* *Natural Theology,* Clarendon Press, Oxford 1915; Ch. HARTSHORNE, *Man's Vision* *of God,* Willett, Clark and Co, Chicago 1941; Ch. HARTSHORNE and W. L. REESE, (Ed,), *Philosophers "Speak of God*, University of Chicago Press 1953; J. COLLINS, God in Modern Philosophy, Regnery, Chi­cago 1959.

Good Catholic introductions to Natural Theology: J. DILLEN- BERGER, *God Hidden and Revealed*, Muhlenberg, Philadelphia 1953; V. WHITE, *God the* *Unknown*, Harper, New York 1956; C. L TRESMONTANT, *Towards the Knowledge of* *God*, Helicon, Baltimore4961; G. MACGREGOR, *God Beyond Doubt*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1964.

The modern exponent of the Lutheran objection against Natu­ral Theology is especially: K. BARTH, *Church Dogmatics*, T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh 1936; *Dogmatics in Outline*, SCM, London 1949; *A Short Commentary on the Epistle to the* *Romans*, SCM l959.

**The three kinds of thinking**

• Most people imagine thinking to be a very straightforward action. Just like sleeping and walking, thinking seems simple and natural. In fact, few people stop to examine their mode of thoughts. They take their thoughts for granted. Yet many problems in life take their origin from our thoughts.

''There is nothing either good or bad

but thinking makes it so."

Hamlet II, ii, 259.

And it should be recognised that this is not only true of those people of whom Aldous Huxley said that most of their lives is "one prolonged effort to prevent thinking." (Green Tunnels). It is also very much the problem for those who sincerely *try* to think. Often we think in circles and we cannot go out of them ourselves. If we are caught in the mael­strom of a particular trend of thought, we may not reach a shore of sound reason so easily.

"It is not difficult to censor foreign news,

but it is hard today to censor one's thought—

to sit by and see the blind man

on the sightless horse,

riding into the bottomless abyss."

1. Waly

Experience over hundreds of years has shown that it is useless to speak of God before we start examining our way of thinking. This is not an excuse or an escape, but real necess­ity. If theology means reflection on God, it is by definition bound up with thought. Whatever meaningful word be uttered about God is ultimately based on a category of our mind. And our mind is "an apparatus with which we think that we think" (A. Bierce, the Devil's Dictionary). It is too much to say that God is "the product of human minds," as Julian Huxley main­tained, but it is correct to say that our *understanding* of God is the product of our mind. Just as music cannot be played without an instrument producing the notes, so our speaking of God rests on the quality of our thinking.

.

As man has evolved to higher civilizations, he has developed different approaches in the sphere of action. Originally man travelled on foot. Later, he trained the horse and covered great distances on horse-back. Later again he mechanised his transport and even took to travelling by air. Walking, riding on horse-back and flying in an aeroplane are three totally diffe­rent approaches to the same action of travelling. They are three kinds of travelling, related to the same basic need of going to another place, but this need is met with different techniques. To cut stone man first invented the chisel and hammer. He then invented dynamite. Later again he found the chemical solution of making cement, enabling himself in this way to make concrete of any kind and shape required. The basic pur­pose of using stone for construction is still there, but radically different approaches of doing so have been developed. The same is true of human thinking. In the course of centuries man has developed some fundamentally different approaches in his thinking. These ways of thinking are just as different from one another as walking is different from flying in a plane. Man developed the new ways of Thinking out of necessity, as he developed better techniques of cutting stone in the struggle for survival.

It will now be my purpose to show the three main kinds of thinking which man has developed and to explain how they are different. The three kinds I refer to are called: mythopoeic, metaphysical and functional. Mythopoeic thinking is the kind of thinking that sees coherence in the world by the presumed existence of invisible, supernatural agents in man's immediate environment. Metaphysical thinking understands reality as a universal, all embracing whole, subject to the same laws of being. Functional thinking limits the understanding of the world to particulars aspects of it and those only in as far as they are seen to have a meaningful function. As these defini­tions are too abstract to permit a correct grasp, I will work out the difference by means of an example.

Recall the way in which an orthodox Hindu approaches the mystery of "fire". Fire is for him a manifestation of the god Agni. In ancient times man used to make fire by rubbing two pieces of wood together. Whenever the spark as "a living being" sprung out of that dry wood, this was considered a supernatural event, a creative act of Agni. The aggressive nature of the fire god was derived from the fact that as soon as it was born it began with unnatural cruelty to consume the parent wood from which it had sprung. Agni is a god who brings prosperity, but also a god who makes heavy demands, ill the Mahabharata it is recounted how Krishna sacrificed a whole forest with all living beings in it, to the hunger of the god Agni. The "Homa" is the Hindu's sacrifice of fire in which ghee and other precious materials are offered to the god.

The supernatural nature of fire is attested to in everyday Hindu religious superstitions. If a person dreams that his house is destroyed by fire, it is reckoned to be a very auspicious sign. The fire of a lamp will never be placed towards the south, the abode of death. Fire may not be lent out at night to another person. One should never wear a burned cloth. Most of all the function of fire is sacred at the cremation of the dead body. It is a handing over of one's body to the god of fire. In ancient days the wives of a deceased husband would voluntarily throw themselves into the arms of fire.

If we analyse this kind of thinking, we find that it rests on the assumption that under the appearance of fire there is the Supernatural agency of the fire god. It is the fire god who is supposed to bring prosperity and protection. It is also the fire god who ultimately claims life. The reality of everyday fire is linked with the imagined action, the "myth" of the fire god. That is why this kind of thinking is called "mythopoic", that is "myth-making".

The Greek philosophers approached fire in a totally different way. They were asking themselves fundamental questions •bout the universe in which we live. Looking at the reality around them they were convinced that it was ruled by some basic laws that would apply to everything. Aristotle in parti­cular stressed that underlying the many different external forms of beings, there is a homogeneous construction of the world. In this, fire too has a part to play.

Following on Empedocles, Aristotle maintained that all substances in this world were a combination of fundamental •laments, namely -. fire, air, earth and water. The four elements were distinguished on a logical basis. Warmth and coldness.

dryness and wetness, are the primordial qualities, Aristotle said. The four elements are distinguished because fire is warm and dry; air warm and wet; the earth cold and dry; and water cold and wet. The elements also differ in their tendencies of upward or downward motion. Earth and water are "heavy" and tend downwards/while fire and air tend upwards. That is why, according to Aristotle, the elements in their pure forms lie on one another in layers: the earth underneath, then the water, then the air and finally fire.

The understanding of fire as a basic element which is somehow related to the whole of created reality is an example of metaphysical thinking. Metaphysical thinking tries to understand the nature of things. It argues by general laws. It approaches reality by considering over-all qualities that can be applied to reality as such.

In modern, functional thinking fire is approached once, more in a different way. If we strike a match, we see a flame leap up from the stick. The scientist asks: "What happens?" His answer will bear upon the chemical reaction. At specified degrees of heat, material substances tend to combine with oxygen This is a rather violent reaction which changes the original compound drastically (by, for instance, reducing wood to ashes) and which releases energy in the form of heat and light.

The modern scientist is not interested in the "nature" of fire in a philosophical sense but in how it can be used in technological processes. After having analysed the com­ponents of fire, the scientist studies its applications. On the strength of his studies he designs furnaces to cast iron or blow glass. He makes engines with which the combustion of fuel can be converted into energy. Most of our modern machinery, from the steam engine to the Jumbo Jet, derive their energy from carefully controlled processes of fire. The scientist knows how fire, works and he makes it work for man.

When studying a phenomenon such as fire, a scientist will limit himself to what he observes and what he can deduce with certainty. He only claims to have a functional knowledge. He would feel it to be unjustified for his conclusions about fire to be applied to other fields of experience, unless they be proved. He will not admit "a priories" and generalisations.

Primitive man ascribes a fire to a supernatural agent, the metaphysician tries to understand its being and the modern scientist tries to find out how it works. Each of these three modes of thinking springs from a different phase in the development of man and each has deeply affected our under­standing of God.

It was the atheist A. COMTE who first identified the three different stages in human thinking, which he called "mythological, metaphysical and positivist”; *Th*e *Catechism of Positive Reli­gion*, Trubner, London 1883. C. A. VAN PEURSEN corrected and refined the notion, calling the three stages "mythological, metaphy­sical and functional”: *Man and Re*ality. *The History of Human Thought*, in "The Student World", Vol. 56,1963. H. COX worked it out more fully in *The Secular City*. *Secularization and Urba­nization* in *'Theological Perspective*, Penguin 1968. Although this last book goes much beyond Natural Theology, it provides excellent theological reflections through which the modern discussion on God will. be better understood.

**CHAPTER TWO**:

**GOD IN MYTHOPOIC THINKING**

Mythopoeic society

Mythopoeic thinking developed in the earliest ages of human existence. It probably arose as soon as the human mind was able to consider the world with some degree of abs­traction. It may have begun more than a hundred thousand years ago when small clans of human beings roamed from one hunting place to another in East Africa, Southern Europe or the sea coasts of Asia. Mythopoeic thinking was man's first attempt at understanding reality.

Let us put ourselves back into man's situation at the time. Relying on archaeological evidence and adding a little from our imagination we may reconstruct man's day-to-day life in quite accurate terms. Let us imagine enjoying the rare privilege of meeting a typical tribal group on the coast of the Mediterranean about 100.000 BC.

We find the human family sunning and playing on the beach in an ideal spot. A little river flows nearby: so neces­sary for supplying drinking water. For man has not yet inven­ted pots and jars. There are some rocks with overhanging cliffs under which they can find shelter. Man has not yet constructed artificial houses. And the edge of the evergreen forest remains within walking distance. That is where man has to hunt for his daily meat.

When we approach the group we may find them in a relaxed mood. They have just finished eating a reindeer, cut to pieces of stone and distributed raw. Zalu who is sitting in is their undisputed leader. He is naked, brown and He makes the impression of being a wary and tough person. Baka, Talin and Teka are other adult men. They are brothers. The rest of the group are women and children of various age. The whole clan is one big family with Zalu as the patriarch.

At first sight this human family would look to us very much like a troupe of chimpanzees or gorillas. Many of their habits and customs seem so much the same. But soon we notice important differences. These human beings walk erect. Their hands are better equipped for precise work. Their eyes look more intelligent. And, above all: they can speak, even though their words are simple and short. If we watch them during the hunt or when preparing food, we observe other features which we would never find with animals. Before undertaking a work. they plan their action together. And to achieve their purpose they use instruments: pieces of wood, stones, animal bones or whatever seems to fit the need.

An interview with Zalu would prove an enlightening ex­perience. Presuming that he be prepared to speak to us (after lengthy introductions and with the help of an interpreter), he might describe his hunting expedition in words such as these:

'Zalu belly ache. Men belly ache. Children belly ache." (He means: Yesterday everyone felt hungry). "Men dance. Men power-catch reindeer" (Yesterday evening the men performed a religious dance during which they killed a symbolic reindeer that had been drawn in the sand). "Moon power-fill night. Moon power-fill men" • (Because of the moonlight the men felt confident they would make a good catch). "Men enter forest, walk, walk. Men see reindeer, power-circle reindeer, run, catch

reindeer. Zalu kill reindeer."

Analysing Zalu's speech we would find a limited number of categories. His thinking is bound up with the immediate, visible realities of his world: the forest, the men, the moon, the reindeer. Most of his thoughts move in the realm of hunting, food, family, travel. His thinking has the main task of expressing and organizing his external behaviour: his walking, running, throwing, cutting. Zalu does not distinguish clearly between things, animals and persons. Of course, he knows there is a difference, but this difference is not fully grasped. For him all things are alive. The sand, the river, the tree, the moon, the reindeer are living realities he has to face.

A little reflection will show that we need not be surprised at this. Weknow that water flows because by gravitational laws it seeks the lowest place. Zalu thinks water walks as man walks. For him the sun, the moon and the stars are mys­terious living beings influencing his life. When Zalu tries to understand this world, he will see in all things around him manifestations of "life” or "power". Moonlight is "power". Rain is "power”. Plants, trees, animals and children grow by "power”. Accepting such a mysterious "power” is an intellectual necessity for Zalu for it is the only thing that makes sense or his world. Believing there is such "power", he need not be surprised at the inexplicable events of his daily life: the ebb and flood of the ocean, storm and lightening, an earth­quake, the birth of a baby in the womb of his wife. This is the origin of Zalu's religion.

Studies of anthropology and comparative religion prove that man slowly developed the idea of a divine reality, "power", as distinct from the profane reality of everyday life. The con­cept of "taboo”, of the sacred prohibition, is one of the oldest religious notions of man, a notion derived from it. According to this notion man should avoid certain places, things, animals, practices or words because they would bring him into conflict with the underlying divine "power”. The concept of the "sac­red" also grew out of this mode of thinking. This means that certain places (hilltops), days (new moon), things (stones), animals (the bull) and-so-on were considered to be specially filled with the divine reality. Man would naturally tend to seek "power” from living contact with these sacred realities. After some time, the divine "power” experienced in such sacred and events were concretized in the form of "spirits" or "gods”. This was no doubt the origin in man of the idea of “God”.

A readable and attractive account of the oldest human socie­ties can be found in: F. CLARK HOWELL, *Early Man***,** Time-Life International 1970. Other good background books are: G. CHILDE, *What Happened in History*. Penguin 1957; W. E. Le GROS CLARK, *History of the Primates*, British Museum London (also in paperback); T. H. HUXLEY, *Man's Place in Nature*, University of Michigan Press, Cresset 1959 (also in paperback); D. MORR1S, *The Naked Ape*, Corgin London 1968.

Among Anthropological works on primitive societies we can recommend: A. GOLDENWEISOR, *Anthropolog*y: *An Introduction to Primitive Culture*, London 1937; E. DURKHEIM, *Elementary forms of Religious Life*, London 1926; B. MALINOWSKI, *Magic, Science and Religion*, Boston Press 1948.

On the specific topic of the earliest ideas of the "divine" the followingbooks areconsidered classics*; E. CASSIRER,* Language and Myth, Dover Publications 1946; J. FRAZER, *The Golden Bough,* ,Macmillan New York 1924; A. R. RADCLIFFE-BROWN, Tabu, Cambridge 1940; M. ELIADE, *Patterns in Comparative* Religion,Sheed and Ward, London 1958.

**The myth of God**

When man first conceived of the notion of "power" as a way of understanding reality, he produced the first "myth", Anthropology defines myth as the display of the structured, predominantly culture-specific, semantic system which enables the members of a culture area to understand each other and to tope with the unknown. In other words, myth is the way in which some very important notions of a particular culture are related to one another. Myths are often expressed through stories in which the so called "strong components" of seman­tic systems (systems of understanding the world) are symboli­cally represented.

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To explain this, let us return to Zalu. Zalu will always hunt in the same way. He will first draw a reindeer in the sand, dance around it, and then beat his stick on the figure. We Will hunt at night, preferably during the full moon. He will never kill pigs, for they are taboo to him. In this way he may follow many particular customs which are important to him. Asked about a reason for observing them, he might tell the following myth (here freely translated into our twentieth cen­tury way of speaking):

"Once upon a time Rabu-Rabu our ancestor walked through the forest and saw a heavy sow pregnant and ready to give birth to many young piglets. Rabu-Rabu saw that she was full of power, but he laughed to himself. He knew he should have respected the motherhood of the sow, but in his pride he did not care. He cornered the sow and clubbed it to death. He gave it and its young to his wives and children as food. But Rabu-Rabu's dearest wife and eldest son died. And when Rabu-Rabu went into the forest again, he could not catch any animal. For many days he roamed around, hunting in vain. His wives and children cried for hunger. Rabu-Rabu was des­perate. And in the middle of the night, while there\*was a full moon he wept. And the moon took pity. She came down to Rabu-Rabu and showed him how to draw a reindeer on the sand, how to dance round it and how to power-catch it. Rabu- Rabu learned this art and caught a reindeer during that very night."

This kind of myth, of which we have many examples in primitive cultures, superficially resembles a simply story. We might be inclined to ask: Has it happened or not? But this would be a sorry misunderstanding. To Zalu the story does not express something of the past. It explains relationships with which he is vitally concerned in the present. It unifies the "strong elements" of his world such as: hunting, reindeer, pig, moonlight, and fixes a norm by which he can judge them. For him the truth of the myth lies in the validity of the "structure" which he imposes between the various "strong elements" of his experience.

As man’s thinking grew more conscious and myths more explicit, the notion of good and evil spirits, of gods and goddes­ses became more pronounced. Often such "gods" related in the myth, were nothing more than personalised expressions of a Power which had been experienced. Zalu would speak of the moon as a goddess" because that expressed to him the fact was successful in hunting on moonlit nights. But calling the moon a goddess necessarily entailed a mental picture of her. And having an image of her, he embellished it with a face, with weapons or with characteristic actions, until the moon goddess slowly became a real personality to him- never actually seen, but always thought to be present and encountered in her manifestations. So the idea of "God" and his existence was born from the myths of primitive society.

Archaeology tells us that the most ancient representations of God found are small statues of the mother goddess or the goddess of fertility. It shows that man felt the need of symbolically expressing to himself the reality of the God shaped in his mythopoeic thinking. The idol shaped by his hands was a copy of the notion that had earlier been shaped by his thoughts.

P. MARANDA (Ed.), *Mythology*: *Selected Readings*, Education Penguin 1972; is the best compact introduction to authors and opinions on myth. Also two earlier bundles are very informative; T. A. SEBEOK (Ed*.), Myth: A Symposium*, *Indians University Press 1958 (also in paperback); J. MIDDLETON (Ed.), Myth and* Cosmos: *Readings in Mythology and Symbolism*, American Museum of Natural History 1967.

C. LEVI-STRAUSS is at present one of the recognised authorities on primitive myth-making. We recommend: *The Savage Mind*, University of Chicago Press 1966; *The Raw and the* *Cooked*, Harper and Row 1969.

For some mythological prayers in the context of drought and rein, read *God or no God,*

**The Inadequacies of the mythological gods**.

Primitive man "made his god" because he needed a god to understand the world. The historical origin of most religions can be traced to this beginning. And mythopoeic thinking is not restricted to primitive man alone. We may safely say that many of people's religious convictions rest on the same grounds as those found with primitive man. Even today many people believe in divine powers and pray to them because

they are overcome by the same basic fears and lack of under­standing that characterised our early ancestors.

It does not take long to realize that such a "mythological" basis for religious convictions reveals many inherent weak­nesses. First of all, it looks as if the existence of God itself derived not from actual fact but from the inner psychological necessity of man. Many modern scientists, and especially psychologists, have maintained that belief in God is no more than an escape from a feeling of inadequacy in day-to-day living. As a young and weak child needs a father to support and protect him, so primitive man needed the father figure of God to give him the psychological feeling of protection.' Although the rejection of all belief in God on this ground is not justified as I will explain presently, we have to agree that; a purely mythological basis for accepting God will not do. Just as exaggerated reliance on one's parents makes it impossi­ble for a man to be mature and independent, so a religious person may never tolerate that his so-called dependence on God be a psychological substitute, making up for his lack of: maturity.

Another obvious defect of the mythological approach lies in its inability to discover the real nature of God. Because mythopoeic man sees the divine in every sphere of nature, he is likely to experience God under the most diverse forms. The history of man's religions confirms this fact. Mythological thinking leads to thousands of different kinds of god, usually representing different powers of nature: the gods of the sun. the moon and the stars: the goddesses of beauty, prosperity, fertility and wealth; the gods of storm, the rain, the lightning, of health and many other things. In many religions external objects and animals have been considered as direct manifestations of such gods. In this way even the most unlikely I animals such as cows, monkeys and snakes have come to be worshipped as divine. The reason for this development is clear. In mythopoeic thinking logical argument has no place. It is not kept in check by a critical mind. It does not disti­nguish between God himself and what God brings about. It does not have the power of reasoning by which contradictions between various statements can be pointed out and corrected. The confusion of polytheism is the immediate result of mythopoeic thinking.

Mythopoeic thinking necessarily considers God in human terms. This gives rise to another basic defect of its approach, attribute *anthropomorphism*s to God. In primitive man’s thought, God eats, drinks, walks, sleeps, like an ordinary man, even though he will do so in a very special way. All the Hindu gods, for example, marry or get married as if they are sexual beings. They are imagined to have hands, arms, legs, a stomach, and all other parts even if these differ from human organs in size and number. Anthropomorphisms continue to exist in all major religions. Even though Muslims and Christians reject anthropomorphisms on principle, in actual fact many of them still think of God in anthropomorphic terms. They imagine God sitting on his throne high in heaven listening to the prayers of man which come up to him from all over the world. A Christian may say “God hears my prayers", as if God possesses ears! Or he may say: "If you do this God will be angry with you”, as if God has moods like any human being! If we examine our own thinking and speaking of God, we may discover that they are full of anthropomorphic expressions. To some extent this is unavoidable, as I will show later, but at least we should be aware of the imperfections inherent in this type of religious thinking. If God is God, He simply cannot be like man. Our imagination plays tricks on us.

Wherever real human reason began to flourish, it tried to overcome the weaknesses of mythopoeic thinking. We will discuss this more fully when dealing with metaphysical thought. For our purpose here let it suffice to note, that mythopoeic thinking, when left to itself, has all the inborn defects of emotional judgements. A teacher at school may like one of her pupils at first sight. But she should realize that such a spontaneous attraction is not the same as an objective, impartial judgement. The mythological approach to God springs from man's emotional reaction to reality; it proves a perilous road to walk on

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Comparative Religion is the science that collects and analyses data from religions that exist or that have existed. A. C. BOUQUET, Comparative Religion, Penguin 1941, updated 1967, provides a good survey of the results obtained. A systematic observation of religions is given by G. VAN DER LEEUW, Religion in Essence and Manifestation, George Allen and Unwin, London 1938.

About the characteristics and origin of the oldest religious beliefs information can be had from: P. RADIN, *Primitive Reli­gion*, Hamish Hamilton, London 1938; J. MARINGER, *The* *Gods of Prehistoric Man*, Weidenfield and Nicholson, London 1960; E. 0. JAMES, Prehistoric Religion, Barnes and Noble, 1961 (also in paperback).

The most influential writer on the psychology of religious belief at the beginning of this century was W. JAMES. His books are still widely read in paperback reprints: *The Will to Believe,* Dover Publications, New York 1956; *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Fontana 1960. Other leading psychological authors who ascribe belief in God to the immaturity of primitive man: S. FREUD, The Future of an Illusion, Hogarth, London 1949;

E. FROMM, Psychoanalysis and Religion, Yale, New Haven 1950: M. MURRAY, The Genesis of Religion, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1963. An excerpt from FROMM'S work is printed in God or No God, pgs. 30-31.

A thought-provoking discussion on mythological thinking in Christianity is offered in: J. A. T. ROBINSON, *Honest to God*, SCM, London 1963; E. L. EDWARDS (Ed.), *The Honest to God Debate,* SCM, London 1963.

**Mythology and the Intuitive grasp of God**.

Considering all the inadequacies of the mythological approach we might be tempted to reject it altogether. But this would be a mistake. It is true that we cannot rely on a piece of poetry when we need evidence in a court case. Yet a poem does contain something valuable. It often expresses a gem of truth not found elsewhere. Shelley once said: "Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds". Poetry expresses the intuition or insight a person has of reality at a particular moment.

"Oh give me a home

where the buffaloes roam

where the deer and the antelope play,

where seldom is heard a discouraging word

and the skies are not cloudy all day." (B. Higley, 1873).

Just as poetry catches an aspect of reality through intuition, an aspect which it expresses emotionally, so in mythological thinking an aspect of reality is grasped through intuition and expressed withy feeling rather than with cold reason.

Intuition is a valid way of grasping reality. S. Radhakrishnan expressed it this way: "When a religion of blurred facts becomes suddenly lit up, illuminated as it were, to what do we owe this enlightenment? It is due not so much to a patient collection of facts as to a sudden discovery of new meaning in facts that are already well known" (The Idealist View of Life, London, 1961, pgs.138ff). He also calls it a "synthetic insight by leaps", a "deeper consciousness”, “an intuitive experience". This is the kind of experience primitive man had when he "understood" that the world around him could not simply be explained without a "super-worldly power” that made it what it is.

Mythopoeic thinking led to polytheism, anthropomorphism and idol worship. Yet it gave man the first intuitive grasp of all reality. With his slowly awakening intellectual powers man could see what animals had never seen: the presence of the divine. Man saw the glimmer of that light and groping for it he blundered into many blind alleys, but it was a true light and should be recognized as such. If properly corrected by rational thought, mythopoeic intuition is a good starting point in man's search for God.

In ancient Indian thought we find good examples of how mythological thinking can give rise to valid religious meditation. Consider the notion of the divine as the "Athma", the ''breath” of all existence. This immanence of the divine, this discovery of God's presence in the very substance of created things, flows spontaneously from the mythological perception of "divine power". If suitably corrected as in the following text, it opens our eyes to a valid aspect of reality.

“He who dwells in the fire,

Yet is different from the fire,

Whom the fire does not know.

whose reality shows up through the fire,

who controls the fire from within - -

He is your Self (Athma), the inner controller,

the immortal"

Bruhad Aranyaka Upanishad, 111,7.

Many modern authors, following the example of Rudolph Otto, make the fact of religious experience itself the starting point of their apology for God. All men and all nations give! testimony of some spontaneous respect for the "hold", for what is "numinous", "divine", "supernatural", they say. Even! if in many cases this experience is linked with irrational fear! of the powers of nature, the experience itself remains valid.) Also civilised and educated men have this experience. "Every man, either to his terror or consolation, has some sense of religion" (J. Harrington, 1677). Even great scientists such as J. Jeans and R. Einstein feel they cannot explain the world without the aspect of mystery and religion.

John Henry Cardinal Newman has worked out this experience of God's presence in a special way. He reminds us of the fact that man has a voice of conscience by which he knows that an invisible supreme judge is watching. When we do something good or wrong, we are emotionally affected. Newman says. We are upset when we sin, even if we do so in secret, when no human person knows. Since our feelings are involved, it proves the presence of some other person, A someone who sees us and who will judge us. This is often! called: the proof for God's existence from conscience. As a strictly logical proof is defective, because we will never be! able to adequately prove the existence of an outside agent on the strength of man's inner feelings. The inner feelings could] just as well arise from groundless fears of an immature person or from instructions given by the parents. Many people are afraid of demons or ghosts who do not exist. But if we take the voice of conscience as part of that natural intuition we spoke of before, it certainly is an important phenomenon. It is one more reason to seek for a rational understanding of the existence of God.

S. RADHAKRISHNAN develops the idea of the "integral experience" of God in many publications. Available with Allen and Unwin, India are : "Indian Philosophy"; *"An Idealist* *View of Life”;* *East and West in Religion*"; "*The Hindu View of Life”; Recovery of Faith*"; etc. Read also: J. G. ARAPURA, *Radhakrishnan and Integral Experience*, Asia Publishing House, 1966. Excerpts in: *God or No God*, pgs. 10-11.

The nineteenth century counted quite a few European exponents of the approach to God through the "numinous". Principal time have been re-printed: R. OTTO, *The Idea of the Holy*, Oxford University Press, London 1923. A. E. TAYLOR, *Does God Exist?* Macmillan and Co., London 1945; excerpt in J. Hick (Ed.). The Existence of God, Macmillan, New York 1964, pgs. 153-164.

Also J. H. NEWMAN's books are available in modern editions. Most important for our purpose: *Grammar of Assent*, Double-day, New York 1955. Excerpts in: *God or No God*, pgs. 22-25. Complementary reading: P. FLANAGHAN, *Mewman, Faith and the Believer,* Westminster, Maryland, 1946; A. J. BOEKRAAD, *The Personal Conquest* of Truth *according to J. H. Newman*, Nouwelaerts, Louvain 1955.

Modern forms of the intuitive grasp of God are defended by: J. MARITAIN, *Approaches to* *God,* Harper, New York 1954; *Our Knowledge of God*, Oxford University Press, London 1937; *The Sense of the Presence of God*, Oxford University Press, London 1963; H. D. LEWIS, *Our Experience of God*, Allen and Unwin, London 1959.

**CHAPTER THREE:**

**GOD IN METAPHYSICAL THINKING**

The birth of genuine philosophy

From about 10,000 BC a revolution took place in the history of mankind. Man the hunter discovered the possi­bilities of agriculture and changed over to settled existence. This change-over seems to have taken place in more than one continent at roughly the same period. The first permanent settlements were established precisely where we would expect them, viz. In the lowlands bordering on large rivers. The valleys of the Indus, the Ganges, the Euphrates and the Nile provided the fertile, easily irrigated riverbanks which enabled man to stay in the same place and live.

Man had been engaged in some agriculture for tens of thousands of years before, mainly in the form of reaping natural crops. The new development consisted in the fact that man learned the art of sowing the seed and so procuring the crop himself. This kind of agriculture soon proved a more reliable means of securing food than hunting. It also enabled larger groups to stay together. But switching over from hunting to agriculture as the principal source of food procurement entailed some other drastic changes.

Man now had to stay in one place. He had to build permanent shelters, and so he invented huts and houses. Man also needed better and new tools. This led to the development of skills and crafts. There was the need of storing things from harvest to harvest and the need of keeping things in the home. The first vessels were made of straw, then of straw covered with clay. Then man discovered the art of baking earthenware pottery from mixture of clay and finely cut straw. Man invented the wheel and the axle. Women devised new ways of weaving cloth from agricultural products. In sites of the most ancient cities such as Jericho we can follow the rapid transformation from hunters to craftsmen with amazing precision.

One important consequence of the new life style was the social structure it produced, viz. the "polis", the township. The accumulation of wealth in the homes of the new agricultural community made it a ready prey for thieves and robbers. People had to organize themselves against such attacks from within and without. This they did by electing a leader who would fight for them against the enemies. The leader soon acquired definite right. Exact boundaries of land were demarcated. The homes of the community were surrounded by a protecting wall. The rights and duties of all citizens had to be laid down. In this way the small kingdom, the township, arose

By his new way of life man acquired one great advantage; stability and continuity. Man's thinking was put into a new direction. Instead of being exclusively concerned with the day to day struggle for survival, man could now devote himself to an exploration of all his talents. The birth of civilisation brought about the first flourishing of all the arts: of music of scales and instruments; of painting, with increasingly daring artistic creations; of sculpture and architecture, of writing and literature. Man invented the sports and the games, the celebrations and rituals with which he could fill his newly found time of leisure. Because of the stability of his existence man could now spend time on the building up of his wealth and culture.

In his old existence as a hunter, man had undergone life rather much in a passive way. Things happened to him rather than that he took an active part in them. But now it was different. Man began to *organize* his own life, to order, to plan, to fit things together and to construct. Man learned by experience the two processes of construction: the breakdown of material into manageable components and their reassembling into new structures. Man's *though*t followed the same pattern; analysis and synthesis; abstraction and re-integration in logical frameworks.

Solomon was a typical city builder. The Bible mention the new sciences which Solomon fostered. "He spoke of plants, from the (huge) cedar that grows on mount Lebanon to the grass that sprouts from the wall; he spoke also, of beasts and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish" (3 Kgs 4,33). Notice how in these "listing" sciences two logical processes are involved: distinguishing objects by categories such as plants beasts, etc. (abstraction) and arranging them in a logical order (e.g. from the biggest to the smallest plant).

From a more superficial abstraction of general properties man could not fail to arrive at a consideration of the most fundamental properties, such as beauty, goodness, and being. From cataloguing material objects he necessarily came to the quest of an interlocking view of all reality. Man learned to ask questions, to argue, to reject what is wrong and to accept logical deductions. It is in the town civilizations of the Indus Valley and of Greece that thus real philosophical speculation was born.

A good introduction to the Harappa culture in the Indus valley and the philosophy to which it gave rise, is provided by A. L. BA­SHAM, The Wonder that was India, Orient Longmans, Calcutta 1963. See also: D. D. KOSAMBI, The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1965.

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Concerning the rise of philosophy in Egypt, Mesopotamia and other Middle Eastern civilisations we recommend: H. FRANKFORT et al., Before Philosophy, Pelican 1951. For the growth of a typical city between 10.000 - 20.000 BC read: J. GARSTANG and J. B. E. GARSTANG, The Story of Jericho, London 1948; K. M. KENYON, Excavations at Jericho, London 1960.

The birth of metaphysical thinking is best documented in the case of Greek philosophy. History books and introductions to Greek philosophy should be studied side by side. I recommend : C. M. BOWRA, *Classical Greece*, Time-Life International 1966;

J. C. STOBART, *The Glory that was Greece*. Nicholls, Four-star Paperback, London 1962; F. COPLESTON, *A History of Philosophy*, vol.1, part 1, Greek Philosophy. Doubleday, paperback. New York 1962; F; M. CONRFORD, *Before and After* *Socrates.* Cambridge University Press 1968.

**Proving the First Cause**

Primitive man had had the intuitive insight that reality was filled with a divine presence. The philosopher now found himself faced with the question: Is it true? Does a supernatural reality exist? Are there gods and goddesses? Is there a rational foundation for accepting the divine?

Among the Greek philosophers it was Aristotle (384-32 BC) who gave he logical argument for God's existence in its lasting form. He started from the observed fact of change. Things in this world continuously change and this change is best exemplified in locomotion. Aristotle argues as follows: If a thing moves it is either moved by itself or by something else. For instance, if a stone is moved, it may be moved by a stick. If we consider this stick, it again can either be moved by itself or something else. In this case it may be that stick is moved by my hand. Now, if I consider man, I can ask again whether man is moved by himself or by something else. Well it is clear that man himself also undergoes changes and is therefore, moved by something else. If we consider reality in this fashion, we see that there are chains of things moved by other things. A moved object is moved by a mover, but the mover itself is again moved by another mover. Like this we have a succession of moved movers. Now Aristotle points out, it is impossible that this chain or succession of moved movers be an infinite chain. Somewhere we should reach a “*first mover”*, an agent that itself is not moved but which can mover other things. Suppose that we see a chain hanging from a wall. The lowest link will be suspended from the link above it. This link will again be supported by the link above it. Like this, one link will depend upon the other, but finally we should reach the link that I nailed to the wall, and from which the whole chain is suspended. Similarly, if secondary causes exist which in turn cause one another, but are themselves caused by other secondary causes, we must eventually accept the exis­tence of a “First Cause “that is not caused itself but that causes everything else.

We could put Aristotle's argument in this way: the world we see requires a Cause, but this cause must itself be different from the world (therefore not be caused itself) otherwise it could not be the ultimate cause of the world. This argument returns in many forms with all the old philosophers of different civili­sations. If one sees a statue hewn out of rock, one knows that it was made by a craftsman. Likewise, if we study the world, we know that it was made by God. The Book of Wisdom (100 BC) states: "For all men who are ignorant of God are foolish by nature. For they are Unable from the good things that are seen to know Him who exists. Neither did they recognize the craftsman while paying heed to his works ......

For from the greatness and beauty of created things we can, by comparison, understand their Creator" (Wisdom 13,1.5).

Philo of Alexandria (20 BC -54 AD) uses the comparison of a city. Anyone who enters a city and sees its buildings can understand that it has been built by human beings, he says. On observing the order and the planning that must have gone into the construction, one can deduce that some competent ruler has been the king of the city. Similarly, Philo says, when we study nature, how well ordered it is, with light during the day and food for all living beings, we can understand that the world too must have had someone who was "the Father and Creator and Governor of all these systems". "For there is no artificial work whatever which exists on its own accord. And the world is the most artificial' and skilfully made of all the works".

In the Indian Nyaya and Vaisesika schools of philosophy there was much argumentation about the proof of God's exis­tence from causality. Traditional Indian philosophy stated: "Whoever sees a pot, knows there must have been s potter. So whoever sees the world, knows there must be a Creator." The Buddhist thinker Dharmakirthi (600-660 AD) did not agree

with this argument. He explained his reason why. "When we find an earthen pot we can prove that there must have been a potter who made it. But we can only draw this conclusion caus9 we have seen other potters make pots. A person who never seen other potters mould pots might, for instance, hide that an anti-hill is also made by a potter. In this same y, although we have seen craftsmen make smaller things, no have ever seen God making the universe. As this direct experience is lacking, we cannot prove God from looking at the universe alone. Our argument is not complete".

The best answer to Dharmakirti's objection was given by Trilocana (about 800 AD). He formulated his reply in words as the following: "The objection is based on the assumption that our argument from causality needs to rest on factual observation. However, this is not true. Our mind has the power deduct from the observation of external facts qualities that long to the being of objects. From observing the way in which pots are made by potters, our mind does not only stop at external reality, but can draw conclusions about common qualities which we always find present in pot making. For example, the mind grasps that every pot depends on a potter- quality of pots is not something accidental, but a thing belongs to their nature, their being (svabhava). The dependence of a pot on a potter is its relationship or dependence of being (svabhavikah sambandhah).

Now, observing many instances of potters making pots is •inly helpful to focus attention on this dependence. But necessary? No. One case by itself would suffice. Because, if we study a pot well, we can observe that it must have been made by someone; we can see its "dependence of being". Our grasp of this fundamental principle is verified even in one particular case. The same happens when we study the Universe. We haven't seen God and we have not seen gods creating other universes. Yet, looking at reality surrounding us we see in its very essence a dependence of being that points to an Original Cause".

As Trilocana demonstrates, the argument from causality is to the question of being. This leads us to consider the necessity of the Creator and contingency of created beings.

Aristotle's *Metaphysics* has been published in English by J. WARRINGTON, Dent and Sons, London 1956. Read also: G. E. R. LLOYD, Aristotle. *The Growth and Structure of his Thought*, Cambridge University Press 1968.

The discussion between Dharmakirti and Trilocana has been described by G. OBERHAMMER, in three articles: *Wiener Zeit-schrift* *f.d.K.S.O.A*. 8 (1964) 131-181; *Numen* 12 (1965) 1-34; *Zeitschrift fur Katholische Theologie* 89 (1967) 446-457.

A good general exposition of the issues that have traditionally been part of metaphysics can be found in: J. HOSPER8, *An Intro­duction to* *Philosophical Analysis*, Allied Publishers, Bombay 1971. On causality: R. E. D. CLARK, The Universe: Plan or Accident? Muhlenburg Press, Philadelphia 1961.

Select texts on the causality argument from Philo and Ibn Tumart are printed in *God or No God,* pgs. 8-8.

The analogy of being

Suppose that a certain Pandit Rao has a palm tree in hit garden. No other palm tree in the world is quite the same. Yet there are some general qualities in it which we find also in other things. Pandit Rao's palm is a "tree" like many other trees. It is "tall" like a house or a Church tower. It is "living" like grass, insects, buffaloes and men. Pandit Rao's palm tree is also a "material object" like a rock, a beam of iron or a lorry, General qualities such as "trees", "tall", "living", and "material objects" are called universals because they do not name one individual object, but denote a universal quality observable in many objects.

If we study the universals that we use, we find they are of] two kinds. Some are univocal because the quality does not! admit of degrees. A certain thing either is a tree or not; it cannot be more tree or less tree. Other universals are analogous, that is: they apply more to one object than to another.: A Church tower can be taller than a tree. Man can said to be more living than a tuft of grass. When we apply an analogous' universal, we know that it is partly true and partly false. A tuft of grass is living in as far as it can grow and propagate itself.1 But it is not living in as far as it cannot see or understand.

The most universal quality we find in things is the predicate of being". Man "is“ a buffalo “is", a tree and a tuft of grass are “Being" is obviously an analogous universal, grass, animals and men have being in different degrees. In fact, it is this analogy of being that makes our thinking and ring possible. When I say “the cat is alive", I am really saying that the cat has being in as far as it has life. We use the predicate “being" to connect names with universals (“John is a teacher”) and to connect universals with one another (“Teachers are learned men").

If we take our starting point from the discovery that everything has “being" and if we think of the origin of all the it kinds of beings we find in the world, our mind is naturally led to accept one, necessary, always-existing, infinite Being from which all other beings had their existence. In the Chandogya Upanishad (VI, 2,2; 8,6) we read :

In the beginning, my dear there was Being alone, one only without second.

Some people say: 'In the beginning there was non-being alone, one only, without second.

From that non-being, being was produced.'

But how, indeed, my dear. Could it be thus? said he.

How could being be produced from nonbeing?

In the beginning there was Being alone, one only, without second.

AII these creatures, my dear, have their root in Being,

They have Being as their abode. Being as their support".

Thomas Aquinas (1224 - 1274) developed the same argument in this way:

“We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to.be, since they are found to be generated, and to be corrupted, and consequently, it is possible for them to be, and not to be. But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which cannot be, at some time is not. Therefore, if everything cannot be, then at one time there was nothing in existence, because that which does not exist begins to exist only through something already existing. Therefore, if at one time nothing was in ex­istence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist; and thus even now nothing would be in existence - - - which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes. Therefore, we cannot but admit the existence of some being having of itself own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as God".

We see that in this argument two conclusions are reached. First of all, the existence of God is established. Secondly, it is deduced that God must be infinite and different from all created beings. In Muslim theology the same thought was developed extensively. From the contingent beings of this world (things that could be or could not be) the existence of one supreme Creator can be known. This creator cannot resemble any created things. "If it is known that Allah is the Creator of everything, it is known also that He does not resemble anything, since a thing resembles only what is of its own species. The Creator - glory be to Him - cannot possibly be of the species of created things, for had He been of that species He would have been incapable with their incapacities" (Ibn Tumart, 1103 AD).

It should be noted that the validity of this argument in support of the existence of God depends on the analogy of being. From the imperfect way in which the world "is" we deduce the perfect way in which God "is". -Actually we can­not see God's being nor fully understand It. Yet Using the term "being" in an analogous way we can say "God is'\* with some real meaning. We know that what we say is partly true and partly false. It is partly true, because God in some real sense "is" as things in the world are. It is partly false because God

has this being in an infinite sense, a sense in which we cannot predicate it of anything we know.

The arguments of Thomas Aquinas can be found in: Ch. 29; *Summa Theologica,* I, q. 2, a 2-3. J. F. ANDERSON brought out an English translation of the *Contra Gentiles as On the Truth* *of the Catholic Faith*, Doubleday paperback in six volumes, 1956. Dis­cussion on St. Thomas' arguments in: J. F. ANDERSON, *Natural Theology*, Bruce, Milwaukee 1961; R. L. PATTERSON, *The Con­ception of God in the Philosophy of Aquinas*, Allen and Unwin, London 1933; E. G. JAY, The Existence of God, SPCK, London 1949.

For a contemporary presentation of the traditional arguments the following books will be helpful:

R. GARRIGOU LAGRANGE, *God: His Existence and His Nature*, Herder, St. Louis 1914;

E. L. MASCALL, *He Who Is,* Longmans and Green, London 1943; Id., Existence and Analogy, Longmans and Green, London 1949; M. PONTIFEX, *The Existence of Go*d, Longmans, London 1946;

*R. JOLIVET, The God of Reason*, Burns and Oates, Faith and Fact, nr.15, London 1956.

The ontological argument

The classical form of the metaphysical argument for God's existence took its beginning from existing beings. St. Anselm tried to develop an even more fundamental form of this argu­ment, which is called the "ontological'' argument, which took its beginning from the idea of being itself. Put in a nutshell its reasoning comes to this: The very fact that I can think of the most perfect being proves that it exists. Because, if it would not exist in my thought, I would not have the most perfect idea of being. Therefore, if it must have existence even in my thought, it must also exist in reality.

"For it is one thing for an object to be in the understand­ing, and another to understand that the object exists. When a painter first conceives of what he will afterwards perform, he has it in his understanding, but he does not yet understand it to be, because he has not yet performed it. But after he has made the painting, he both has it in his understanding, and he understands that it exists, because he has made it.

Hence, even a fool is convinced that something exists in understanding, at least, then which nothing greater be conceived. For, when he hears of this, he under- ds it. And whatever is understood, exists in the understan­ding. And assuredly that, then which nothing greater be conceived, cannot exist in the understanding alone, suppose it exists in the understanding alone: then in be conceived to exist in reality; which is greater.

Therefore, if that, then which nothing greater can be conceived, exists in the understanding alone, the very g, that which nothing greater can be conceived, is than which a greater can be conceived. But obviously this is impossible. Hence, there is no doubt that there is a being, then which nothing greater can be con­ed, and it exist both in the understanding and in reality ……”

It does not require a genius to see that Anselm's argument is not valid. However much he may argue about the necessity for the idea of God to include its existence, he rom the mental "idea" of God conclude that God really exists. Anselm actually maintains that the idea of the existing God is self-evident; it needs no other proof than the idea itself. It is self-evident that "every woman is a human because the predicate "human being" is implicitly in the subject "every woman". But when we say: its", the predicate "exists" is not self-evident of God. we do not know God directly, His existence or non- existence is not obviously implicit in our idea of God, be proved from actual beings. In short: the fact thing exists in our mind does not prove that it exists This also applies to the idea of God.

An English translation of ANSELM's De Veritate was published by R. MCKEON, in *Selections from* *Medieval Philosophers*, vol. 1, Charles Scribner's, New York 1929. Excerpts are I in CH. HARTSHORNE and W. L. REESE (Ed.), *Philosophers Speak of God*, University of Chicago Press, 1953, pgs. 96- with introduction and comment). In *The Existence of God*, Macmillan, London 1964 (p.b.), pgs. 23-47, J. HICK (Ed.) publishes side by side all the classical texts related to the ontological argument: excerpts from ANSELM, DESCARTES and LEIBNITZ in its favour; the arguments of AQUINAS, KANT and MALCOLM against it

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K. BARTH, has revived ANSELM's argument in a strictly theological understanding: Anselm: *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, SCM, London 1931. A thorough discussion of the original argu­ment and its interpretation in : E. GILSON, God and Philosophy, Yale University Press, New Haven 1941; H. BOUILLARD, The Knowledge of God, Burns and Oates, London 1969.

The onslaught on the metaphysical argument

Today most philosophers outside the Catholic Church reject the metaphysical argument for God's existence. Their reasons are: the believer argues from his own ideas to facts which he cannot observe; the law of causality may not apply to the whole universe as such; belief in God cannot be verified or falsified; evolution has proved that the universe can explain itself. Many of these reasons were formulated first by David Hume (1711-1776). But it is especially through Kant (1724 - 1804) that they have come to be almost universally accepted.

Immanuel Kant held that the metaphysical argument for God's existence as it was used by Thomas Aquinas, depends on the ontological argument and is, therefore, equally invalid. The argument from contingent beings, Kant said, has two parts: first one argues from unnecessary beings to the existence of a necessary being; then one deduces that this necessary being must be infinite and perfect. The first part of the argument is based on experience and leads to some kind of valid conclu­sion.' From the contingent beings in the world we can deduce that there must be some “cause” which is not of the same con­tingency. The second step, however, leading us from the necessary to the perfect being is, according to Kant, a dis­guised form of the ontological argument. For in this part of the argument we are no longer in touch with observable objects, but from the idea of the non-contingent being, we argue to the fact of an infinite and perfect being outside our observable world.

Kant stated that it is -impossible for man to demonstrate God's existence in this way because man is caught in the Categories of his own mind. Our intellect is based on the perception of sense knowledge. Once we move outside the realm f observable categories our thinking becomes purely speculative, "self-made", subjective, unverifiable and consequently unreal. If God is outside and above our earthly reality as we presume when we call Him infinite) He falls outside the scope of our valid human argument "God is a fancy of the mind” said Dennis Diderot (1713-1784). "If you want me to believe in God, you must make me touch him".

The Thomistic philosophers of our century have made gallant efforts to defend the validity of the metaphysical approach to God. Everything hinges on a correct understanding of analogy they say. Kant would be right in rejecting the metaphysical argument if this would be claimed to lead to an idea of God as we have of other persons or objects which we have experienced as we have no direct experience of God /e no positive idea of Him. We only have *analogous* idea of God, an idea constructed from comparison things that we do have ideas of. I cannot have a positive idea of my own death or of myself flying in outer space because I have not experienced them. But from what I know of other people dying or flying in space l can have an analogous idea of what my death or my participation in a space programme would mean. This analogous idea is limited, of course or (“partly wrong"), but that does not mean that it is totally useless or totally false. In the same way the idea we out God as the necessary being derives from our knowledge of other beings. The idea is very limited and partly distorted, no doubt, but still it contains a valuable kernel of truth.

Kant’s objection could also be put like this: the principle of causality holds good in our world, in the world which we can observe; we may not, without evidence, apply this principle to reality outside this world. From causality "within" the lay not legitimately conclude to a causality "outside this world. They are two different logical spheres. Bertrand 72 - 1970) illustrated it in this way: every man who mother but this does not mean that the whole human race should have a mother. Similarly, although we can say that within the universe one thing is next to another, or over or below another thing, we could never say that the uni­verse itself is next to something else. It belongs to a different category in which the same principles that affect inner-universe objects are no longer valid. From the fact that objects within the universe are caused by one another we may not conclude that the whole universe as such is caused by something else.

The Thomists have an answer to this objection too. "What you say is true of individual objects and their mathematical totals," they would say. "Even though every man has a mother, it does not follow that the added totality of all men has a mother. Even though every soldier wears a helmet, it does not mean that the whole army as such wears a helmet. But our question does not concern the mathematical totality of beings, but the depth and totality of being as such".

"Your argument", they would continue, "really means this: About things within the universe we may and can ask questions, but not about the universe as such. But this is surely illogical. For the philosophical question regarding the origin of being and order is nothing else but going deeper than mere physical or biological questions".

"Let me give you an example. Suppose a railway accident has happened. A train has run off the rails and many people have been killed as a result. The committee of investigation may find out that the cause of the accident lay in the engine driver going too fast through a curve. The investigation could stop there. But the committee might also carry on to ask deep­er and more general questions: 'How sharp are the curves in our railway lines? What is the maximum safe speed trains can travel at when passing those curves? Have sufficient safety measures been taken?' These questions do not concern trains as a mathematical totality (all trains together can't fly off a curve!), but as a totality of being".

"Questions about the totality of being are very useful and can be answered", they would conclude. "The causality of a more fundamental mistake underlies the particular causality of One accident. The causality of being as such must underlie casualty of particular things within the universe".

Another way of putting Kant's objection has been expressed by Anthony Flew. Flew says that we can prove the metaphysical argument wrong because it cannot be "falsified". In n science it is generally accepted that every proof must be such that anyone could use the same proof, either proving e correct (by verification) or proving it to be wrong (by falsification). The demonstration to support that a molecule of contains two hydrogen atoms can be verified or falsified by any competent person. But what philosophers say about the necessary, infinite and perfect being, can neither be d nor falsified. "What evidence should there be" Flew 'for the metaphysician to accept that there is no God?" Flew devised a parable in which he illustrates this. Two explorers come to a patch in a forest where many plants grow and flourish. "This plot is tended by a gardener", says one (the metaphysician). "There is no gardener", maintains the other (the scientist). They watch day and night to see if a gardener comes. They notice nothing. "But perhaps he is an invisible gardener". They put up a barbed wire fence, use bloodhounds and try every possible means, but still they find no trace of the gardener and the plants keep growing. But the metaphysician still maintains: "There is a gardener, but he cannot be seen, felt touched, smelled or heard. Invisibly he comes and tends his garden". The scientist then exclaims: "What can I do to your statement about the gardener? How is your invisible, intangible, eternally elusive gardener different from an imaginary gardener or no gardener at all?"

Thomists answer this objection pointing out that every argument should be verified or falsified in its own way. Proofs in Physics which rest on experimental observation should be I right or wrong by the same kind of observation. But philosophical arguments, which are based on logics and the of being, can only be accepted or rejected in terms of me logics and -reason. "It is stupid", they would d "to try to see an invisible gardener. Moreover, if we were to compare the First Cause with a gardener, we should be certainly not think of his care for the garden in terms of external actions such as pruning or pouring water. As the First Cause, he establishes the plants in their being and this depen­dence cannot be demonstrated or falsified by putting barbed wires or keeping bloodhounds."

For many scientists the fact of evolution has become another reason for rejecting the metaphysical proof for God's existence. Evolution seems to imply that a Creator is no longer needed. A scientist such as Gordon Childe (1892- 1957) would explain his point of view as follows: "The proof for God's existence rests on the assumption that the universe depends on something outside itself for its order and being. However, this assumption is unfounded. Modern science has demonstrated that the universe can explain itself."

"We can show how from very simple atomic material the universe slowly connected into stars and constellations. We can prove that life and the higher forms of beings arose through evolution. We can follow the path of development from the 'formation of the first chemical molecules to the first living cells in the ocean, and then up the ladder of plant and animal life. Even man himself and his power of thinking and dominating the world can be explained by natural growth. There is no need to accept a Creator. Man made himself."

"Add to this that from 1948 astronomers have shown that the origin of matter in the world can be explained by what is called 'continuous creation'. This means that according to certain well-defined patterns, particles of matter appear in certain places of the universe from nowhere' whereas other particles disappear 'into nothingness'. Here we see being come about without causality!"

Believing scientists do not find it difficult to counter this line of thinking. Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) was both an eminent archaeologist and a theologian. He maintains that an evolved world needs a creator all the more. "Both evolu­tion and the balance of matter" (continuous creation)", he world say, "increase rather than diminish the necessity of accepting a Creator. They have underlined as never before absolute submission of matter to the higher principles govern it."

'What do you mean when you say that the world 'can in itself'? Let us take an example. The reasons for the ng of a thermometer are in the thermometer itself: if the temperature rises, the mercury will automatically expand. A seed will, in favourable circumstances, naturally grow plant. In this, sense it explains itself. But in another neither the thermometer nor the plant can. explain them- s, because they cannot understand their own operation have no mind), nor could they bring themselves about are contingent beings)".

It is difficult to correctly evaluate the present state of the debate. Some kind of stalemate has been reached. Both Thomists and Kantians speak their own language. Both sides a valid contribution to our search for God; the Thomists listing that we can say something meaningful about God; the Kantians by pointing out that discussing God or inner world objects involves different thought processes and that cannot be simply identified. God is not an object in the world. It would seem that the deadlock can only be broken by a approach to the problem such as is presented in functional thinking

The following works are representative of the Kantian stand:

1. KANT, *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Dialogues Concerning natural Religion*, by N. K. SMITH (Ed.), Oxford 1935\* J. LAIRD, *Theism and Cosmology*, Allen and Unwin, London 1940; A. J, AYER*, Language, Truth and Logic*, Gollancz, London 1946; B. RUSSELL, *History of Western Philosophy*, Allen and Unwin, .London 1946; Id*., Why I Am Not a Christian*, Allen and Unwin, London 1957; V. GORDON CHILDE, *Man Makes Himself*, Mentor paperback, New York 1951; A. FLEW (Ed.), *Logic and Language*, Blackwell, Oxford 1955; Id., *God and Philosophy*, Hutchinson, London 1966; A. FLEW and A, MACINTYRE (Ed.), *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, SCM, London 1955; H. J, PATON, *The Modern Predicament*, Allen and Unwin, London 1955; A. MACINTYRE, *Difficulties in Christian Belief*, SCM, London 1959.

The Thomists have replied in publications such as these;

H. S. BOX, *The World and God,* SPCK, London 1934; *God and he Modern Mind*, SPCK, London 1937; R. P. PHILIPS, *Modern Thomistic Philosophy*, Burns and Oates, London 1935; H. DE L1IBAC, *The Drama of Astheistic Humanism*, Sheed and Ward, London 1949; Id., *The Discovery of God*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1960; C. A. COULSON, *Science and Christian Belief*, Oxford University Press, 1955 (also in p.b.); E. A. SILLEM, George Berkeley *and The Proofs of the Existence of God*, Longmans and Green, London 1957; Id., *Ways of Thinking about God*, Thomas Aquinas and some recent problems, Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1961; D. JENKINS, *The Christian Belief in God*, Faber and Faber, London 1964.

if 1 would be asked to indicate one prize champion for either side, I would designate ANTHONY FLEW as the most powerful spokesman for secular philosophers and EDUARD SILLEM for faithful Thomists.

CHAPTER FOUR:

GOD IN FUNCTIONAL THINKING

**Secular society and its Thinking ?**

Modern technology has changed the township of former centuries into the city of today. Urbanized society is not just different from township society in the number of people living together or in other quantitative aspects. The quality of life and the internal structure of human relationships have been profoundly altered.

The secular city of today is not a 'community' but a network of functional relationships. In a township society people had different professions but these professions were not the basis on which relationships in the community were built up. In an urbanized life the opposite is true. An urban citizen meets hundreds of people every day but mainly in their professional capacity: the ticket collector, the waiter, the clerk in the bank, the customer, the policeman. He could not pos­sibly have a deep personal acquaintance of them. He does not need to know their name, their home background or their reli­gion. Social life in the city will only work if these many rela­tionships are maintained on a strictly functional level. Of course a city man will have some personal friends, but the very structure of city life makes it necessary to restrict their number. He could not possibly begin close acquaintance with all the persons attending his school or working in his factory or travel­ling with him the bus I

In urbanized society communication too has taken on new dimensions. It is manifold, fast and public. In townships people used to pick up rumours at the local teashops, on the market or at unofficial gatherings. News was carried by word of mouth. Contacts were made face-to-face., Communication was with persons one knew. The citizen of today is constantly speaking to people he cannot see: by telephone, by the micro­phone or by correspondence. He is continuously being addres­sed by persons who do not know him: through the newspapers, the radio, the film and television. He knows what is going on in society and he is in unceasing and multiple contact with it. But communication is functional and not addressed to him as an individual.

City life is extremely mobile. It is enough to watch traffic in the peak hour between eight and nine in the morning to see the implications. Everyone in the city is constantly on the move: to one's place of work, to shopping areas, to one's home, to places of entertainment. The whole commerce and traffic in the city are constructed to allow for this multiple in­terchange of places, for this moving of crowds into all direct­ions at the same time, City life presupposes adaptability. If one shop is closed another will be open. If one job is lost, another job in some other firm must be accepted. The tradit­ional pattern of the stable home with the inherited trade cannot survive.

Urbanized society is achievement-oriented. What counts for survival and making a living is not one's own likings of beliefs, but success. The article that is bought by many people proves to be a good product: factories and shopkeepers will model their trade to supply it. Skills that are in demand are rewarded with good salaries: talents however praiseworthy in themselves that are not experienced as useful will find no means of subsistence. The houses, shops, banks, workplaces and schools are designed to afford the maximum output of utility. The outlook of city people is necessarily pragmatic. The question is not: 'What is the intrinsic value of this or that,' but: ‘Whet is its use? Will it work? Is it practical?'

Another feature of modern society is that it is secularized. What we mean by this is that in the various aspects of its orga­nization the causality of religion is consciously and on principle excluded. When treating patients in a hospital the doctor is not supposed to do faith healing or recite mantrams: he has to diagnose the disease and give medical treatment as if God does not exist. The policeman who is investigating a murder may not spend his time in a temple praying for a divine revelation. He is expected to gather evidence and pursue the criminal as if God does not exist. The same applies to all other professions: the mechanic, the schoolmaster, the bus- conductor, the accountant have their own specific tasks which they have to fulfil in accordance with professional and scien­tific norms. To the modern citizen his allegiance to a particular religion or his personal belief do not enter his function or profession in society. Whatever individuals in society may believe, society as such is organized as if God does not exist.

This process of changing from a township to a secular society is still going on. It is further advanced in some coun­tries and retarded in other ones. The important thing for us to note is that the change-over implies also the new way of think­ing which has been called functional thinking. It can be called a "new way of thinking" because it entails a fundamen­tal difference in the understanding of life and reality. The phi­losopher of past ages tried to see how persons and objects fitted into some kind of totality of truth. The pragmatist of secular society tries to understand how persons and objects function in the immediate context of his world. This is not an attempt to deny the larger reality or to reduce objective truth to subjective utility. It is simply that the citizen of today has come to realise the relativity of general concepts and the necessity of tackling problems within a manageable scope.

An example may illustrate the difference in approach. A traditional Catholic who lived, let us say, in 1850, found it difficult to join a Lutheran colleague in a prayer service. The underlying reason was the approach of 'total truth\* implied in metaphysics. The Catholic felt that he could not join the Lutheran without first checking on the whole faith of the

Lutheran Church. He felt that the condition of error in which he had to hold the Lutheran to be, somehow affected everything the Lutheran did. Also his prayer was the prayer of a "heretic''. Moreover, his own participation in the Lutheran service would to some extent involve the whole Catholic Church, he thought- It seemed impossible to him to join the Lutheran in prayer before some fundamental principles and general truths had been established. We see here how universal concepts domi­nated his thinking: error, the whole Church, heresy, Catholi­cism, Lutheranism, etc. The secular, functionally thinking Catholic will exclude such general concepts as irrelevant to the particular problem of his joining the prayer service. Whether the Catholic or the Lutheran Church is the right Church has no bearing on this problem. What other beliefs the Lutheran has< does not concern him here and now. In fact, it seems of little importance whether he is a Lutheran, a Baptist or a Methodist. For this particular, limited problem of whether he should pray together with his colleague, the urbanized Catholic feels he only needs to consider if it has a function and if it is justified in the immediate context of their relationship. Probably he will find that the proposed common prayer is extremely meaningful and will then decide to join without feeling the need of settling many questions of theoretical truth and general principle.

It should be stressed that, if properly applied and properly understood, functional thinking is not a loss, but a gain. Yes, it is virtually a necessity, if we want to liberate the mind from the falsehood of over-generalization. The universal mediator-ship of Christ may serve as an example. Astronomy has come to the conclusion that the likelihood of life and even of intelli­gent beings outside the earth is extremely high. Within the radius of 10.000 light years from the earth there are reckoned to be at least 1000 civilizations as well developed as man's- If we take the words "Christ, firstborn of all creation" (Col 1, 15) in a metaphysical sense ("in him all things were created") we would also have to accept that the Incarna­tion had a special effect on the civilizations in outer space- Were these intelligent creatures also redeemed by Christ? Do they share in our adoptive son- ship? Metaphysical thinking works itself into a knot here. Functional thinking points out that whatever Christ did should be judged in relation to the human race only. Also Scripture was inspired with this limited scope in view. Asking the question of Christ's relationship to men in outer space is not relevant and, therefore, cannot be meaningfully replied to.

The features of today's city life are described in : P. K. HATT and A. J. REISS (Ed.). *Cities and Society*, Free Press, New York 1957; N. ANDERSON, *The Urban Community*; *A World* *Per­spective*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York 1959; E. MAYO, *The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilization*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1959; C. F. STOVER, *The Technological Order*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit 1963; T. BURNS (Ed.), Industrial Man, Penguin 1969.

Some consequences for Christianity: P. ALBRECHT, *The Churches and Rapid Social Change, Doubleday, New York 1961;*

*G. WINTER, The New Creation as Metropolis, Macmillan, New York 1963; P. vanBUREN,* *Theological Explorations*, SCM, London 1968. See also the works of Van PEURSEN and COX recommended in the first chapter.

**Existentialism**

While the industrial revolution put its stamp on a new kind of society, a parallel revolution began to take place in the minds of many great thinkers. The old universalistic scheme of the world, characteristic of metaphysical thinking, was seen to be hollow and abstract. Metaphysicians liked to talk of the world in terms of being. Every person or object was identified by its general nature or “essence". Philosophers had been try­ing for centuries to build conceptual frameworks in which all “essences" could be logically arranged. Modern man found these attempts unacceptable in. the light of every day experience.

Samuel has been trying to get work for many weeks. Hungry and frustrated he stands outside the factory gate. He is anxious that his little daughter, Suzan, should not suffer on account of his poverty. But how will he meet her school fees and the shopkeeper's bill? “if I don't get work today", he says

to himself, "I will have to sell my bicycle".../This, existen­tialists maintain, is reality; what a particular person experien­ces at a particular moment. Only this is a true happening, an event. It cannot be reduced to generalities. It is unique for each person, for each place and time. Samuel experiences what it means to be man in and through his existential encounters with reality, not through abstract reflections on the essence of human nature.

Some forms of existentialism developed into closed sys­tems of thought and so became once more neo-metaphysical structures. But genuine existentialism has become an integral part of functional thinking. Kierkengaard's protest against all organized religion, against institutionalizing Christ and the gospel, has become part and parcel of modern thinking. When Sartre rejected the Noble Prize for Literature in 1965 it was for the same reason: books should be judged on their own merit; recognition cannot be institutionalised. Modern theology has absorbed this approach. God's dealings with each person are unique and irreplaceable. God's revelation is not seen so much as an event in the past, but as the Word of God addressing me here and now. Religion does not mean adherence to general principles and beliefs, but a surrender to Christ in the particular circumstances in which I find myself at this moment.

Existentialist thought has led to some interesting new ap­proaches to God. Martin Buber (1878 - 1964) begins from the observation that personal relationships belong to man's authentic self-existence. Only by meeting the "Thou" in another person, man becomes an "I". The "l-Thou" experience moulds me into the person I am. The "l-Thou'' relationship brings me to my highest fulfilment. But, while growing through such rela­tionships with other human persons, I also sense that the "Thou" of another man cannot be the full ground for my being the "I" l am, not can it be the complete fulfilment of my per­sonality. The small "Thou’s" of our human relationships postulate the existence of an Infinite "Thou" through whom I really am what I am.

Emmanuel Levinas comes to a similar conclusion from a different starting point. The metaphysician, he says, arranges the universe according to the categories of his own mind. He meets reality as his own world, the world that belongs to him, the world he wants to subject by his thought and his work. But in doing so the metaphysician by-passes the fundamental experience of "The Other" in the world. The characteristic of life is precisely that the world is different from what I would have thought or liked. Moreover, I meet other people who have their own needs and desires which vary from mine. I can cate­gorize the sameness in things and in people, but I can never categorize their "otherness". As long as I am thinking my own thoughts, I am speaking a monologue. But when I meet "The Other", I enter into a dialogue and engage in direct contact with reality. "The Other" is the one whom people have traditionally called "God".

It is the attempts of the past to prove God ontologically that have made atheism possible, says Gabriel Marcel. Trying to prove God exists, is presuming that His existence is pro­blematic. Both when we justify God and when we deny Him, we treat Him as a problem, and therefore as a thing. God who is a personal reality and not an object cannot be reached by such impersonal arguments. The human self is the surest point of departure for gaining knowledge of God. In exercising free­dom the self either pretends to be totally autonomous or acknowledges that it only participates in being. By reflecting on this fundamental choice man can become aware of how the acceptance of participation includes the recognition of a tran­scendent person as the source of his participated personal being. Awareness of my own Self implies awareness of the Absolute Self.

While some existentialists such as Nietsche and Sartre deny God, others have pointed new ways of encountering God undreamed of in metaphysical philosophy. The starting point is man's factual experience. The argument evolves from an analysis of our inner awareness. The outcome is the discovery of a personal God who is not the God of the philosophers, but the "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob". We sense the Self, we are grasped by the Infinite Thou, we learn to see the face of The Other.

An extensive background book to existentialism with brief characterizations of important thinkers is: H. SPIEGELBERG, *The Phenomenological Movement*, vol. I-II, Nijhoff, The Hague 1969. More manageable introductions: J. COLLINS, *The Existen*tialists: A Critical Study, Regnery, Chicago, 1952 (also p. b.); R. BOR' ZAGA, *Contemporary Phil*osophy, Bruce; Milwaukee 1966.

The writings of M. BUBER dealing more directly with our topic are: *I and Thou*, T. and T. Clark, Bdinburgh 1937; *The Eclipse of God*, in "Religion and Ethics", Harper, New York 1951; *Good and Evil: Two Interpretations*, Scribner, New York 1953. Selections are available in the paperback edition of W. HERBERG (ed), *The Writings of Martin Buber*, Meridian, New York 1956. Extract in: *God or No God*, pgs. 26-27.

E. LEVINAS is a prolific and influential writer in French. I have not been able to trace references to English translations except for Totality and Infinity, Duguerne University Press, Pittsburgh 1969.

G. MARCEL can be read in: *The Mystery of Being*, vol. l-II Regnery, Chicago 1951; *The Philosophy of Existence,* Philoso­phical Library, New York 1956.

**Language games and God-talk**

To express what he thinks man uses language. In the past it had been taken for granted that man's words correspond to concepts and these concepts to objects. Truth meant: the statement in human language, and outside reality agree. False­hood: they don't agree. All language was taken in an objective sense. In fact, philosophers of the past simply forgot about language, just as writers today do not think if worthwhile to reflect on the pens they hold or the typewriters they use.

Modern man has discovered that language is a much more complicated tool than this. If I say: "Prabhat Singh is your opponent", it gives a different message in different circums­tances. It could be that I am sports master and hereby telling you that I appoint Prabhat Singh to oppose you in a game of tennis. It may also be that I am giving you information on whom is your opponent in an election campaign. I may also be a police instructor who is presenting an imaginary case to pupils in a detective school. The precise meaning of what we are saying can only be determined from a knowledge of the activity we are engaged in. Linguistic analysts called a whole set of human actions taking place in a particular context and having its own specific symbols and expressions a "language game".

The business man, journalist, the politician, the scientist, the housewife, the college student: each uses his *own* "language game" with its specific rules and meanings. For judging the truth and validity of a statement we have to judge it within its own language game. When the farmer says: "Lot is my shepherd", it had decisively a different meaning than in the believer's prayer: "The Lord is my shepherd."

Linguistic analysis was taken up first by English scientists. On account of their empirical training they were inclined to take scientific object-language as the norm of relevance. Ordinary language, they maintained, can be verified or falsified by direct observation. Only such object-language as "There John comes riding a bicycle" is obviously meaningful. The metaphysical use of language falls outside empirical observa­tion and was therefore ruled out as having only secondary meaning The word "God", they said, was an artificial and meaningless word, because it could not be verified.

At first sight it looks as if the advance of knowledge proves these linguists right. In the past people ascribed many occurrences in nature to the direct intervention of God. These have\* now been proved to have a simple scientific explanation. Lightning is not fire thrown by God but an electrical discharge from one cloud to another. Cholera is not a disease brought about by the hand of God, but an infec­tion carried by bacteria. Plants do not grow because God blesses them, but because they are given the right kind of fertiliser. When talking about the weather, agriculture, medi­cine, etc. one cannot meaningfully talk of God as if He has a role in them, the scientists maintained. Within this modern world of ours God is "dead". We have to admit that there is a lot of truth in this contention. God is not a causality within the world. It is nonsense to think of God as one doctor among so many others, or of His blessing as a healing drug competing with Penicillin in effectiveness. Within the science of medicine God does not exist. It is not correct to ascribe illness and cures to some kind of miraculous inter­vention of God in human life. God does not belong to the language game of science.

But this does not mean that the word “God" is not very meaningful in other spheres of human language. Many valid aspects of our human existence fall outside the immediate scope of scientific observation. The scientist who makes a new discovery may be jumping with joy in his laboratory. But the experience of joy or sadness are typically human experien­ces that cannot be defined in descriptive scientific terms. Science can analyse the inner composition of sound in a Spectrograph. But it cannot judge the beauty of a melody. It cannot appreciate paintings\* sculpture and architecture, as an intelligent man can do. Most of all, science cannot judge about the moral value of its inventions. Science can produce the atom-bomb, but it requires responsible human beings to decide in what circumstances it may be used. Man is, there­fore, much greater than science and shows in his life an invol­vement in reality that goes beyond descriptive object language.

Some theologians have explained the meaningfulness of God in terms of ethics. According to them "God" is part of the human language game of moral responsibility. By speaking of God the creator of all men and the supreme judge of all our actions, we are expressing our dependence on other beings and the need of subordinating our aims to the common good. The kind of language we use when we speak of God is the language of "parable", they say. We speak of God as if He is our "Father", who "sees us", who "leads us on the right path", etc. When employed in religious language these expressions do not have their face value, but express some other reality in a transferred sense.

If this is understood as if the reality of God is nothing else but human ethics, the approach is obviously inadequate. We have then reduced God to a mere fiction. He would not have any reality apart from the existence of human society and thus He would exactly be the opposite of what we want to express by the term "God". But many philosophers speak of religious language as the language of parable in a much -more positive sense. They are convinced that God is a true reality, even though He is not an object in the every-day world in which we live. As our human language is based on this object-world, we can only use its terms about God in a transferred sense. In reli­gious "language of parable" we employ every-day terms, but remember that they have a different meaning when applied to God. When I say: ''God sees me and watches over me every moment of the day", I know that these terms are not true of God in the object sense of the words. God has no eyes. He does not move through time, and He is simply not like any other object or person in our world. But I know that the statement expresses something valuable to me. It Is like a parable. It conveys God's relationship to me in the image of a watchful father.

As these developments in linguistic philosophy are rather recent, it is difficult to survey them accurately. Moreover, it is not easy at this moment to discern what is passing and what will be of lasting value. One thing seems certain: many philosophers are making the discovery that the language game of religion has an objective basis. From among the various new lines of thought I would like to single out two that seem to me of special importance.

Linguistic analysis shows that human communication is taking place at more levels at the same time. There is a communication of contents and a communication of relation­ship. The second is called meta-communication. If I say, "Please, have lunch with me tomorrow," I am inviting someone to lunch (the contents), but by the words I choose, by my attitude and facial expression, I am at the same time conveying that this invitation is an expression of friendship (relationship). Sometimes we also express meta-communication in words, for instance when we say: "I mean this as an invitation." Under­lying this second level of communication there again is a deeper level by which we express our general attitude to oursel­ves and to others. And below this over-all relationship level there is a fourth level closely related to the fundamental posi­tion of our personality regarding existence as such.

Each of these four levels of communication is real. Human language, however, developed particularly in view of first-level communication. It is geared to be useful in the accurate transfer of informational messages. Using human language to explain what is going on in second, third or fourth level communication is progressively difficult, if not utterly impossi­ble. Language simply cannot do the job. Religion, these linguists point out, lies on the fourth level of communication as it concerns our basic attitude to ourselves, to existence and reality. The difficulty of religious language arises from our attempt to express our real experience of fourth level commu­nication in terms of first level content language.

Other philosophers start from the reality of religious ex­perience itself. The essence of a genuine religious experience, they say, is a flash of insight and commitment by which we are brought face to face with ultimate reality. Religion makes use of descriptive language in which it talks about God and realities related to Him, as if they are objects of our day-to-day world. But these "words about God" are only the launching pad from which our religious experience can take off. In genuine religious language the descriptive meaning of the word is transcended by a "cosmic disclosure" in which I suddenly understand an aspect of ultimate being and surren­der myself to it. If I exclaim: "God, my God, why have you forsaken me?", I am using descriptive language (complaining like a child left by his father), but through these words I may experience a "disclosure situation", a break-through to the reality of God.

Summing up we may say that awareness of the linguistic side of the question is one other important aspect of the func­tional approach. Language is an instrument, a tool, a means we use for a variety of purposes. To understand what is happening we should go beyond the obvious, external impres­sions created by words and ask: "What is their function in this particular context?" If I pray: "Lord, King of the Day of Judgement, guide me along the right path", I am using words from our object world (king, judgement, guiding, path) and address them to God with a new meaning. The words have a new function in the religious "language game". They express a deeper reality, an experience that transcends the objective world.

L. WITTGENSTEIN was the first to clearly distinguish the language games". Read esp. his *Philosophical Investigations*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1968. Other good introductions: J. L. AUSTIN, *How to do things with words*, Oxford University Press, London 1970; J. R. SEARLE (Ed.), *The Philosophy of Language*, Oxford University Press 1971.

For "God-Talk" explained as ethics, see R. B. BRAITHWAITE, *An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief*, Cam­bridge University Press, 1955. A more acceptable presentation of it as the "language of parable" is given by T. R. MILES in *Religion and the Scientific Outlook*, Allen and Unwin, London 1969.

Meta-communication and its implications for belief in God are exposed by P. WATZLAWICK et al., *Pragmatics of Human Communications*, Norton, New York, 1970.

The best theological discussion of the linguistics of "God- Talk" has been provided by I. RAMSEY in *Religious Language*, SCM, London 1957; *Christian Discourse*, Oxford University Press, London 1965\*

CHAPTER FIVE:

THEOLOGICAL AFTER-THOUGHTS

**God the Great Unknown**

The history of man's thinking about God should make us realise one thing: in his deepest mystery God will remain un­known to us. God is beyond our understanding. He cannot be contained within our human concepts. By the very fact that we formulate a thought or coin a term about God, we im­pose a limitation on Him characteristic of human thinking. All great philosophers have understood this. The Tao Te Ching (500 BC) begins with the words:

"The Tao that can be expressed is not the eternal Tao.

The name that can be named is not the eternal name."

Indian teachers of the past never tried of reminding their disciples that God could only be described by denying imper­fections about Him: the way of "neti-neti". "He is not this, not that." The Jewish Philo of Alexandria (20 BC-54 AD) said:

"God alone can assert a positive assertion respecting Himself since He alone has an accurate knowledge of his own nature, without the possibility of mistake."

The Muslim scholar and mystic Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) arrived at the same conclusion- He stated:

"There are two ways to knowing God: the one (of logi­cal thought) is inadequate: the other (of mystical experience) is barred. As for the inadequate way, it consists in mentioning Names and Attributes (of God) and in thinking in the manner of analogy to what we have known in ourselves……. The second way, which is barred, would consist in the servant of God wait­ing until he acquires all the traits of divinity (by mys­tical contemplation) until he becomes divine himself .... But it is impossible for this divine essence to he had by anyone other than God....It is impossible for anyone to know God truly except God."

Through revelation we know more about God. We know Him to be Love. We know Him to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We have learned to encounter Him in a special way through the humanity of Jesus Christ. God has come nearer to us and his reality is more tangible in the experience of his saving action. But the unknowability of his mystery still remains. In fact, the nearer we come to God and the more we understand of his being, the more we come to realise God's utter transcendence.

Dionysius, a Christian writer (about 500 AD), wrote a classical treatise about this: "The celestial Hierarchy," which had a great influence on Christian theology in the Middle Ages. Dionysius speaks of the paradox that only by accepting the unknowability of God we can come to know Him. By under­standing the limitation of conceptual thought, we can be uni­ted to God in direct experience.

"The mind, liberated from that which is seen and which sees, penetrates into the darkness of true mys­tical not-knowing from which all intellectual under­standing is excluded. Joining itself to that which is completely intangible and invisible, the mind gives itself wholly to Him who is above all things. Belong­ing to one, neither to oneself nor to anyone else, the mind, is united to the pure Unknowable in its highest part where there is no conceptual knowledge. Knowing nothing conceptually, its knowledge trans­cends all that can be conceived".61

This comes very near to what our great Christian mystic Ruysbroeck (1293-1381) describes in one stanza from "The Book of the Twelve Beguines". I will give a free translation of it here:

"Pure not-knowing is the light in which one sees God. Those who live in this not-knowing feel as if they are in the desert even though God's light is there. Pure not-knowing surpasses human under­standing but does not suppress it …. It is in this unconditional not-knowing that one sees God, but without knowing what one sees, for what is seen transcends all things".

Thomas Aquinas, the uncrowned king of traditional Catho­lic theology stresses the same truth.

"The ultimate reach of man's knowledge of God con­sists in knowing that man does not know Him. For then man realises that what God is surpasses all that he understands of Him". (De Pot. vii, 5, ad 14).

"Having arrived at the summit of our knowledge, we know God as unknown. Our mind arrives at a better understanding of God precisely to the extent it realises that the nature of God is above all that our mind can grasp in this life. Therefore, What God is (in Himself) remains unknown to us, even though we understand that He exists". (In Boet. deTrin.

1,2, ad 1).

The recognition that God's own nature is beyond human understanding makes us see why God may be reached validly in more than one way. In mythopoeic thinking God's presence is somehow grasped intuitively. Allowing for all its inherent imperfections, it is one way in which people are in contact with God. Newman's approach through conscience may be the legitimate step whereby a person discovers God. Meta­physical thinking too has something meaningful to say about God. Through causality and the analogy of being we do somehow arrive at a ‘notion of God that is extremely useful. Functional thinking has cleared the way to some other approaches which are no less rewarding. All these ways of thinking have their limitations, through all point to God. It is not God who varies, but our thoughts about Him. This distinction between God Himself and our limited thoughts about Him is fundamental for understanding the age-long discussions and reflections of man on God.

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If we want to meet a person, we can learn about him in a variety of ways. We may study his handwriting or read his books. We may observe his features in cartoon drawings, in a portrait painting or on a photograph. We may even see him "live\*\* on television. All images we form will be helpful, though some may be more accurate than others. In the final analysis they are all only images. They cannot substitute for a face-to face encounter with the person himself. In the same manner the different ways of thinking about God present a variety of images, some more-accurate than other ones. To meet God Himself we have to remember that they are only images and that we have to reach beyond them to his living personality. After studying the images we need the courage to discard them and to step beyond them and to face the Great Unknown in the mystical embrace of a knowledge that is at the same time not-knowing.

Ch. JOURNET, has given an excellent Catholic exposition of God's unknowability in ***The Dark Knowledge of*** *God,* Sheed and Ward, London 1948. I also recommend two other classics **on** the same topic: G. F. FENG and **J.** ENGLISH (Ed.), ***Tao***

***Chlng*,** Wildhouse, London 1973; F. SHEHADI, ***Ghazali's Unique Un­knowable*** *God*, Brill, Leiden 1964.

Some reflections on prayer of petition

This is a typical example of a popular Christian prayer of petition. It is quite likely that John and Theresa have a rather crude idea of how their prayer can make Peter pass the exam. They may imagine that their prayers ascend to heaven and reach the throne of almighty God. Originally, they may think, God had not yet decided to make Peter pass the exam. If they do not pray, God may allow him to fail. But their prayers ascend day after day. If God sees the anxiety in their hearts and if some saints keep interceding on their behalf, God may finally decide to make Peter pass the exam. Almighty God may do this by arranging the course of events in favour of Peter. He may give Peter grace so that he answers correctly. He may soften the heart of the person who marks the papers. He may see to it that, by a stroke of good luck, Peter gets the questions he is able to answer. Moved by the prayers of the parents, God somehow makes Peter pass the exam which otherwise he might have failed.

This is the "Making-God-do-a-miracle" kind of prayer. My grandfather may die but if I pray for him God may give him an extra ten years. I might have an accident during the journey, but if I pray God will somehow keep me safe. We might not get enough rain during this season, but if we pray with suffi­cient faith God may send some showers which otherwise we would not have received The underlying idea is always the same. Our human petitions persuade God to interfere in the normal course of events by giving us a special favour.

If prayer of petition is accompanied by the crude ideas we just described, it is clearly mythological. As we discussed in chapter two, there may be a genuine religious element in my­thological thinking. This is the "intuitive grasp" of our de­pendence on God which all petitions contain. But, being mythological, this popular concept of petition is at the same time full of anthropomorphisms and heresies. Let us analyse a few of them.

Theologically it I not correct to say that something we do would make God change His mind. By what we do we can effect a change in ourselves, but never in God. By saying that

God changes His mind on account of our prayer, we also imply that He is very small. It implies that we know better than God what is good for other people. Or at least it seems to imply that we love other people more than God does. God might have let Peter fail the exam, but, fortunately for Peter one would say, John and Theresa loved him more. So they persuaded God to give a favour He would otherwise not have given.

By this popular notion of “petition” we also reduce God to being some kind of “super-manager" who has made a bad job of the world. Our petition helps God to “patch up" some of his mistakes. In this world of ours many people fail exams. By reminding God at the right time of Peter's special case, we give Him a chance to patch by making Peter pass. So many people fall ill and all of us will die sooner or later. But by putting in a word on behalf of some of our friends, we give God a chance to give some extra life to them. Many regions of this ugly globe on which we live do not receive sufficient rains. But by timely prayer now and again, we help God to prevent some disasters that would otherwise have occurred. By our prayer of petition, we hope that God will do some minor miracles that will take the sharpest edges off our human suffering. Whenever God does the minor miracle, it seems to us that He shows special love to us.

What is left of God in such a conception? How inefficient is He to have made such a rickety world to begin with How cruel is He since hard-hearted man is more easily moved to compassion than He is I How partial since He only helps those for whom his friends pray; and not the many millions about whom no one cares! Atheists and agnostics are quite right in rejecting a God of this nature. Moreover, if this was the true idea of God, we Christians would have no answer concerning human suffering. Woe to our Christian faith if it rests on confidence in this repair-style miracle working anthropomorphic God.

The first religious act of man when encountering his God, should be to accept what he is: a creature. Man should accept himself with all his possibilities and limitations. If God

has given man two hands, he should not wish to have four. And suffering is part of our human nature. Because we depend on food, because we age and grow older, because cur bodies are frail and weak, we necessarily decay and suffer Our fundamental disposition as Christians should be to accept this condition and all its consequences as the will of God. When God became man in Jesus Christ, He did not eradicate our human limitations. Bather He lifted up suffering and gave it a new meaning.

Scripture teaches us that God loves every person equally, whether he is rich or poor, young or old. Jew or Gentile. It is a theological blunder to see the special love of God in things we possess: in riches, comfort, fame and health. Jesus teaches just the opposite: "Woe to you rich … Blessed are you poor" (Lk 6, 20-25). God shows His fundamental love to each person by giving him life, by granting him a free will and so making him an image of God, by calling him to adopted son-ship in Christ. The accidentals of health or sickness, riches or poverty, success or failure, do not bring us nearer to God. Christ wants us not to be anxious about these things and, therefore, not to pray for these accidental things as if they are of primary impor­tance. "Seek ye rather the kingdom of heaven and these 'accidental\* things will be given you in addition" (Mt6,33).

Christ stressed prayer of petition. But it was not for accidental things He wanted us to pray. When saying that we should ask with great faith, that we should importune God as the unhappy widow did, or as the friend who needed loaves for his guest, Christ is thinking of the graces of the kingdom which we should pray for. For God is anxious to give us these gifts. If earthly fathers give what is good to their children, "how much more will your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" (Lk 11, 13). When Christ says that the Father will grant "whatever we ask in His name" (John, 15. 16), He does not expect us to ask for trifling things, such as food, or clothes or health, in His name. He expects us to pray for the gift of "living in Him and He in us” and the other petitions expressed on our behalf in his high priestly prayer (John 17, 1-26).

If we pray for conversion, for grace, for the Holy Spirit, our prayer will certainly be heard. Because through our prayer we predispose ourselves to receive these gifts. We take away the obstacles in ourselves that impede the divine light from entering our inner selves. We provide the psychological soil in which the seed of divine action can bear fruit. In this way through our prayer of petition we do not change God, but change ourselves. On the other hand, it does not mean that we ourselves produce the conversion, the grace, or the Holy Spirit that comes from God. Being persons with a free will, we have to open the windows ourselves: but the light comes from God, the Sun. On account of our human solidarity also prayers for religious gifts for others partake to some degree of this inner psychological preparation.

Being the creatures we are, we experience the presence of God in every event that happens to us. When things go well, we grasp in them God's generosity. When we suffer, we feel our dependence on Him. If such is our fundamental disposi­tion, will there still be room for petitioning God for material favours? Not in a mythological sense, as I have explained above. But there will be in the sense of functional or parabo­lic prayer. The accidentals of sickness, drought, failure and death are so upsetting, that it is natural for us to raise sponta­neous prayers to God asking Him to safeguard us from these evils. We do not expect God to do a minor miracle on our behalf. But accepting our human condition and realising his love whatever may happen, we express our dependence on Him in the form of such a petition. In this case the petition is "func­tional" as it has the function of expressing our dependence. The utter need we feel becomes a "disclosure situation" in which we spontaneously reach out to God. The best example of such "functional” prayer is given by Christ himself. Although He knew He would have to undergo suffering and death, and although He had already accepted this sacrifice, his human nature made Him spontaneously pray: "Father, let this chalice pass Me by" (Mt 26,39). By praying in this way to his father, Christ disposed his human nature to receive the strength it needed in the passion (Lk 22, 43-44). But as could be ex­pected, Christ's petition was not granted in the literal sense of the word. He himself did not want it to be granted on its own strength. He said: "But not my will but your will be done" (Mt 26,39). Is this not the pattern for prayer of petition which Christ wanted to teach us? “Not my will, but Your will be done”.

C. S. LEWIS' Letters to Malcolm, Fontana, London 1966, provides good reading on the correct approach to prayer of petition. Also recommended are: R. VOILLAUME, *Interpersonal Relations with God*. Vita Evangelica, Ottawa, 1967; S. MOORE and K. MA­GUIRE, *The Experience of pr*ayer Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1963.

**On "proving" the existence of God**

In the first chapter I pointed out that college students have intellectual problems about the existence and nature of God. They need rational arguments as sub-structure to their faith. The last question then that remains to be discussed is: "How should we go about proving the existence of God? What arguments can we adduce? How can we help students to become intellectually convinced of God's reality?"

What we should realise from the outset is that the "proofs" for God's existence are of totally different nature than other proofs we know. They are not physical proofs which show hypotheses to be true by demonstration. The proof that sugar dissolves in water lies in its being done under observation. Neither are they mathematical proofs. To prove that (a + b) x (a - b) = a2-b? we have to perform calculations and deductions. Some mental operations are involved, but they remain on the surface of thinking. A computer can do the same. The so-called "proofs" for God’s existence require something more typically human, viz. an act of intelligence insight, understanding, discernment and mental discovery, penetration into the nature of reality. To speak of "proofs" in this context is misleading. All we can do is to provide ref­lection and thought so that our hearer can "grasp" the truth by an act of his own mental discernment. Our reflections on God are as petrol, vaporized and mixed with air, ready for the explo­sion. But it needs the electric spark of the human mind for its ignition.

The intellectual act of accepting the existence of God is something very personal. It is rooted in the deepest realms of our being. The spark of understanding by which all of a sud­den we face God, is always an existential happening, an event that affects us deeply. In the lives of some people the sharp­ness of the experience is blunted by distraction, lack of depth, routine and religious externalism. But every thinking person will experience in his life a time of deep existential commotion when he will have to face up to the question of God in an inti­mate and direct manner. Rational arguments are very impor­tant during this period. Perhaps they may not immediately convince a person, but they will help him to be aware of the real issues.

I would like to illustrate this process by the help of a living example. It is the true story of Elisabeth Skobtsova, a woman so characteristic of our time. I will tell the story somewhat at length because in life the complete picture matters. Although it is historical, the story has the force of being a paradigm, a parable in which the various elements of life: religious upbring­ing, doubt about God, the search, for truth, the flash of insight and the existential change are distinctly portrayed.

Elisabeth Skobtsova was born in Russia in 1891 in a family of we 11-to do farmers. Her parents were Christians of the Russian Orthodox Church. Already early in life Liza had doubts about God and about religion. When she was 15 years old, her father died. This finished her belief in God. She writes:

"The only thing that worried me and tortured me was the need to answer the most vital question of all: Do I believe in God? Does God exist?

Then came the answer . . . My father died I The thoughts in my had were quite simple.

This death is needed? by no one.

It is unjust.

Therefore, there is no justice.

And if there is no justice, there is no just God.

If there is no just God, it means that there is no God at all.

For me there were no doubts, no arguments against this proof.

Poor world, in which there is no God, in which death rules!

Poor people, poor me - suddenly adult, because I had found out the adults' secret that there is no God, and that the world is full of misery, evil and injustice. So ended my childhood."

(Sovremennye Zapiski, Paris 1963, pg. 211)

Liza went to St. Petersburg and took a degree as teacher. She joined an active revolutionary student movement. As a writer and activist she shared part of the revolutionary turmoil that shook Russia in 1917. In 1918, only 27 years old, she was elected town mayor of her home city Anapa. She had a rough time on account of the civil war between the Reds and the Whites. Often she was in danger of death. Twice she was imprisoned and saved just before execution. She herself saved various people from a cruel death by her intervention with revo­lutionary friends. In 1922

During all these years of feverish activity, of unrest, of anxiety and of struggle with her neighbour, Liza kept seeking for the meaning of life. She began to read books about religion. She reflected on the arguments of the prominent atheists of her time. She studied d'Holbach, Hume and Nietsche. At the same time she also reconsidered her own religious traditions. She examined the works of Christian philosophers as Bergson, Husserl and Marcel. Slowly she began to recog­nise the force of the reasons for accepting God. She started to suspect that without God her whole existence was empty, crippled and closed to the source of light and truth.

Strangely enough, the final flash of insight came when she was hit hardest by the death of her dearly loved daughter Nastya. During the night she watched near Nastya's dead body, she felt a spontaneous prayer welling up out of her heart. Standing at the open grave she realised all of a sudden the "ultimate meaning" of her life. She herself describes the experience in these words:

"At Nastya's side I felt that my soul had wandered through side streets all my life. I wanted a real and purified road . . .

"(Looking into the grave) was like the sudden opening of doors into eternity:

My whole natural life had been shaken, it had disinte­grated, desires had faded, meaning had lost its meaning and another incomprehensible Meaning had caused wings to grow at my back . . .

Into the black, yawning grave flew all hopes, plans, habits, calculations, and above all, meaning: the meaning of life."

She comments on her experience as a total upheaval of her inner self by which she became a new person. She calls the experience "a visit from God":

"In cases like this, everything has to be re-examined, rejected, seen in the light of corruption and falsehood.

People call this a 'visit from God'.

A visit, bringing what?

Bringing sorrow?

Much more: God suddenly reveals the true nature of things, and we see on the one hand the dead skeleton of a human being .... and all creation likewise mortal;

while on the other hand and at the same time we see the life-giving, fiery, all-penetrating and all-consuming com­forter, the Spirit of God".

Some other sayings of Skobtsova that throw light on the depth of her insight:

"God told me: Go,

Live among the tramps, the poor,

and tie a knot that shall never be served again uniting you with them, the world with Me".

"I think that anyone who has had this experience of eter­nity, if only once;

who has understood the way he is going, if only once; who has seen the One who goes before him, if only once. . .

will find it hard to turn aside from the new path. To him all comfort will seem secondary, all treasures valueless, all companions unnecessary, if he fails to see among them the One Companion who makes his life meaningful."

"Awareness of God fills the soul like a fever,

like a flood,

like a fiery furnace."

This flash of insight changed Liza Skobtsova. In France she began to live as a religious hermit. She opened a home for the homeless. She went round bringing help and refuge to unemployed girls, to beggars, alcoholics, women working in the docks and in the mines. When the Germans occupied France? In 1941, she helped many Jews escape from them. For this reason, she was tortured and taken to the Ravensbruck concentration camp. After inspiring hope and confidence in her fellow prisoners during two years' of unbearable hardship, she was executed in the gas chamber on the 31st of March 1945.

Few persons will have a life as dramatic as that of Elisabeth Skobtsova. But often the pattern will be the same. When talking about God to college students, we should remember that they find themselves in various stages on the way to meeting God. Some may need to be shaken out of their super­ficial religious complacency. Some will need help in clarifying their thinking, in distinguishing myth from reality, in under­standing how we can speak about God. Some will require that we go with them some distance along various paths to God: the road of analogy of being towards the Final Cause; or the road of existential discovery of the "Thou", the "Other". As the acceptance of God depends on the power of the mind we should not worry about the outcome of our discussion. Truth will re-assert itself. We need not "over-state" the case for God. In sincerity we should present whatever influential men have said about Him. There is something to be learned from each. Above all, every seeker must be free to discern the undeniable reality of God by his own act of understanding. The search will reach its goal in prayer.

"Life of my life,

I know your living touch is upon all my limbs.

I know You are that Truth

which are kindled the light of reason in my mind.

I know it is your power

that gives me the strength to act.

I know You have your dwelling

in the inmost shrine of my heart,"

(adapted from Rabindranath Tagore)