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MY WORLD, YOUR WORLD, GOD'S WORLD.

Existentialists have brought out in a new guise what was clearly assumed by Jesus - that we each live in a world of our own. His preaching of the 'Kingdom of God' was to show us that this world could be made far more wonderful and spiritually more deep and significant. As an analogy of this let us consider a peasant of 100 years ago living in a small village. He would know little beyond its immediate vicinity, but today he has a television set and sees and knows much of the whole world.

What of our spiritual world? As John so clearly saw, the entrance to this world was through the door of love, unlocked by Jesus. John sees the key that Jesus used - "He cannot love God, whom he has not seen, if he does not love his brother, whom he has seen." The spirit of Jesus' teaching and life, epitomised in the 'Good Samaritan', shows us that there is no one in God's World who is not our brother.

Continued page 27

Cover Illustration - Water-god Ea, two-faced god, and minor deities.

The Kingdom in the Parables and Sayings of Jesus

by

John Weaving

In this article we are continuing our search of the teachings of Jesus in an effort to make Jesus and his message more real to us⁽¹⁾. It might be thought by many that after the outstanding rediscovery of the teaching of the Parables by Julischer, Jeremias and Dodd, virtually all had been said on this subject and that the only problem remaining (admitted as the biggest problem), was to put the principles into practice ! However, the depths of Jesus' teaching are still not exhausted and recent research has highlighted above all the greatness of their challenge. The parables are largely, if not entirely, about the Kingdom of God and are, therefore, essential to an understanding of it.

It will be remembered that Julischer pointed out decisively that the Parables were not intended as allegories (an allegory being a story where the various characters or elements represent something different from themselves). With an allegory it is first necessary to find the key to the interpretation before the message is revealed. A parable on the other hand is a story which makes a comparison in simpler language to make a difficult concept more apparent; often an abstract idea into a concrete analogy.

Julischer's work went unnoticed until taken up by C.H.Dodd,⁽²⁾ who by placing the parables in their likely 'setting in life', brought new life to them. Then Jeremias recognising the great work Dodd had done went on to point out that he had not quite achieved his objective due to his predisposition to his theory of 'Realised Escatology' * as the explanation of the Kingdom of God.

Dodd's thesis was that the 'last things' had come in this great intervention of God through Jesus. He argued that the Aramaic original behind the Greek *eggiken* of Mark 1:15 should be translated 'has come'. This gives us as the start of Jesus' proclamation of the Good News - The Kingdom of God has come. He has difficulty in explaining passages and parables that are clearly in the future, but he argues so convincingly on parables that show the present aspects of the Kingdom that few would dispute that 'The Kingdom of God' has both present and future facets.

* Greek - Last things

In other words, Dodd has fitted the parables to his theory. Jeremias, endeavouring to find Jesus' teaching of the Kingdom from his parables has 'reset' some of Dodd's settings by grouping them into nine sections⁽³⁾ :-

1. Now is the Day of Salvation
2. God's Mercy for Sinners
3. The Great Assurance
4. The Imminence of Catastrophe
5. It May Be Too Late
6. The Challenge of the Hour
7. Realized Discipleship
8. The Via Dolorosa and Exaltation of the Son
of Man
9. The Consummation.

This work has become a classic for the interpretation of the parables, but good as it is, valid criticisms have been made by some commentators, mainly from the U.S. It is pointed out⁽⁴⁾ that Jeremias, contrary to Dodd, let the parables themselves define the Kingdom of God. There is, of course, justification for this as many of them start - 'the Kingdom of God is like' but the danger lies in the fact that Jesus did not only speak of the Kingdom in parables; so if we consider the parables only we may well get a distorted view of the Kingdom, as well as losing some of the force of the parables. However, it is equally true that if we neglect the parables we shall not get an adequate notion of the Kingdom at all, because Jesus used them to help make clear his message of the Kingdom.

It would be presumptuous to try to define the Kingdom of God as Jesus conceived it; we can only continue the discussion that effectively started once the so-called 'liberal' view of the nineteenth century was proved to be fallacious. However, it may be useful to define a broad concept to which one can relate the various teachings of Jesus as we have them from the evangelists. The evangelists themselves were using this same teaching for the somewhat different purpose of showing that the Good News was salvation through Jesus Christ. We cannot at this time demonstrate this, but the prominence given to the passion narrative in each gospel makes it fairly clear.

If we start from the words themselves our definition can range from the concept of Israel that God was their King to the concept of Daniel that God will set up an earthly Kingdom at the time of the end. But this by no

means exhausts the possibilities, a further concept being that the teaching of Jesus, when properly understood, will lift the recipient into a divine realm where enhanced spiritual relationships, exist between each other and God. This clearly has existential overtones - the 'authentic life' and 'non-authentic life' of Heidegger, or in John's gospel - 'eternal life' :- "This is eternal life that they might know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." John 17:3

We propose to examine firstly the present aspects of the Kingdom largely because Jesus was so reticent about details of the final consummation, and we shall begin by looking at the 'Parable of the Talents'. (We have examined several parables in previous articles⁽¹⁾) In Matthew (Matt. 24:45-51) and Luke (12:42-46) it is placed in a 'parousia' context. Luke differs considerably from Matthew and it is quite certain that if it were originally a 'parousia' parable it would have meant nothing to Jesus' audience, the people not even appreciating that he was going to the cross, let alone that he would rise from the grave.

It is first necessary to make a critical survey of the texts available to us and in this we follow Jeremias⁽³⁾. Luke has several additions and modifications - the 'merchant' in Matthew is replaced by a 'nobleman' who goes on a journey to claim a kingdom; his fellow citizens send a deputation after him to frustrate him, but he returns as king and has his enemies slaughtered before his eyes. This feature reflects the historical situation of 4BC when Archelaus journeyed to Rome to get his kingship over Judea confirmed and a Jewish embassy followed him. When he returned as king he inflicted a bloody revenge. Whilst Jesus may well have used this incident, only too well remembered by the Jews, there are two good reasons for concluding that it was not part of the original parable of the Talents. Firstly, it shifts the focus to the 'return' (parousia) which fits into the teaching of the early church, which expected his imminent return, but realised it was delayed; and secondly it ties up with the prophecy of the 'Son of Man' coming to the 'Ancient of days' in Daniel which the early church certainly took as Messianic.

We will therefore take the Matthew Text, as Jeremias. However, Jeremias fits this into his framework as a 'Crisis' parable (a parable to warn the disciples that he will be taken from them and killed and they must be prepared). Later interpretations warn us that we must not try to fit

* Greek, - 'presence' - a technical term for the 'second coming'.

the parables into a scheme, but let them speak for themselves. If they then tell us more of the Kingdom of God, well and good, but no bending. This principle of course is one of the most important for all exegesis but how hard to learn!

Eta Linnemann makes an important thesis, which we can test for ourselves, "A successful understanding of a parable is an experience that decisively alters a person's situation." It creates possibilities that did not exist before in the situation of the one addressed by the parable. Moreover the parable not only creates this new possibility, it also compels the making of a decision with regard to it. In the parable is the 'moment of truth'. Jesus addressing his hearers by means of parables offers the possibility of achieving a new existence. To quote, "Jesus, by compelling his listeners to a decision through a parable, gives them the possibility of making a change of existence, of understanding themselves anew from the depths upwards, of achieving a 'new life': (4) in existential terms, 'inauthentic existence' on to 'authentic life': in John's terms, 'death' to 'eternal life'.

We will now look at Dan Otto Via's discussion of the Talents. Accepting Jeremias' textual criticism, he observes that the 'focus' of the parable lies in the experience of the one - talent man. He made a free decision to bury his talent in the ground. This decision led to the tragic consequence of his losing his existence.

In making a wrong decision at least three possibilities confront us:-

- 1) We may know what to expect and not be surprised at our consequent misery.
- 2) We may hope for success and not be aware of the disaster the decision entails.
- 3) We may proceed and suffer in ignorance.

Jesus in warning us of the second of these consequences, shows the one-talent man coming face to face with his master in direct confrontation. There is a clear breach of faith in failing to do business with his master's goods. He started as a free man; he refused to take responsibility. He recognised he was a victim of the circumstances; he accepted this and was unable to act significantly. To sum up in Via's own words, "When we look at the world through the window of the understanding of existence in The Talents, we will have to say that the man who so understands himself that he seeks to avoid risky action rather than trusting God for the wellbeing of his existence, though he may

live in time, will have no 'present'. His time will be evacuated of content."

To be continued.

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Book Review

by

Ralph Lovelock

TESTING GOD

'Scripture says "You are not to put the Lord your God to the test."
(Matt. 4:7. Lk. 4:12.)

"Faith and Knowledge" by John Hick. Fontana paperback £1.25.

John Hick has spent the majority of his working life developing, in logical sequence, the Christian attitude to the fundamental problems facing acceptance of biblical teaching. At ten yearly intervals, approximately, he has issued a new volume dealing with the problems one by one as his development reaches them and those at present issued are:-

- 1957 - Faith and Knowledge
- 1966 - Evil and the Love of God
- 1976 - Death and Eternal Life

His encyclopedic knowledge of the Bible and of Christian theology through the past 19 centuries; his researches into the other major world religions and his acute logical mind, with its ability to analyse all viewpoints in detail, have made these three volumes of such importance that they are likely to be standard works for many years. It is hoped, in three issues of Endeavour, to present a summary of the contents of each of the three, and this article covers the first as noted under the title above.

The basis of the book is stated clearly in the introduction - that today only the Roman Church clings to the delusion that the very existence of God is subject to a logical demonstration, and that only the man incapable of thinking logically can deny that existence. The philosophical developments of Kant and Hume have demonstrated that it is logically impossible to prove or disprove the existence of God, which becomes a matter of faith and not of logic. Thus, there are three basic attitudes to the proposition that God exists, it is "for the theist the conviction, for the agnostic the hypothesis, and for the atheist the delusion." Hick then narrows this down to define his own attitude as not only a conviction, but the monotheistic conviction that God, one supreme deity, exists; furthermore he then defines his own conviction, upon which the book will be based, as being the "ethical" monotheism of the Judiac-Christian tradition." He continues to amplify this basis, "For this book is not a comprehensive treatment of the place of faith in the religions of the world, but only an essay on the epistemology

of faith as it occurs in that form of religion which constitutes a live option for most of the participants in our Western stream of culture." Then follows, in the first section of the book, a survey of the four types of theory which have been advanced during the Christian centuries "concerning the nature of theistic faith."

The first of these is that developed by Thomas Aquinas, which still forms the basis of the theology within the Roman Church. Aquinas, of course, was himself convinced that the existence of God could be logically demonstrated, but that element of his teaching is not covered here, only his outlook on the nature of faith and not that of the 'basis' of that faith. The fundamental definition of faith which was originated by Aquinas is one which the vast majority of Christians would accept; it is the believing in a proposition which the believer can never know to be true, that is, its acceptance can never be forced upon us, we are not compelled by its objectivity and hence to believe is a 'virtue' in man because the acceptance is a voluntary act of free will. Our knowledge of God consists of knowing propositions about him, thus the immediate objects of faith are propositions and our cognitive knowledge of God consists of believing those propositions.

He acknowledged however that although not logically demonstrable, there were 'reasons' which inclined us to believe them; much of the Roman treatment of faith consists of teaching about those reasons; in particular about the relative importance of private opinion and Church tradition. The very difficult problems arising from this Roman position are examined in this section, but treatment of them is left to a later portion of the book.

Philosophers during the last few centuries have been actively examining the basis of a voluntary adoption of belief in certain propositions, and this is the subject of the second type of attitude examined, and named, for the purposes of later reference, 'voluntarist'. They started with the well known 'Pascal's Wager', the argument that if a certain wager would bring in a return if won, and negligible loss if not, then a man would be a fool not to make it. This raised great antagonism as an argument for belief in God, and arose from the circumstance that 'faith' was more than the acceptance of a proposition, but was in fact a personal commitment to a way of life. William James advanced the idea considerably when he dropped the objectionable details; he postulated faith as a working hypothesis with odds in its favour so great that a man was justified in considering it to be true. He pointed out that in any case, a firm conviction and positive dedication to an object often resulted, for psychological reasons, in success; this aspect, however, cannot apply to faith in the existence of God, since if He does not exist, there will be no 'reward'.

continuance of this line of thinking through into our own day, with considerable development, is followed by Wick, terminating in the present recognition that all progress in science has been on the basis of adopting a working hypothesis (an act of faith) and living on that basis with considerable advancement, even when wrong in some details, but correct fundamentally. So, it is argued, the adoption of the Christian beliefs on the basis of faith, has proved of great benefit overall to those who did so. This attitude of faith goes right back through the history of mankind, and like the other factors in the evolutionary development of life, indicates its extreme probability of truth by the fact that it is one of the evolutionary factors which has endured.

The third outlook, which originated in its full form with Cardinal Newman, was called by him the 'illative sense'. Hick surveys this in great detail because of its importance, but because there is no room here to cover his 22 pages of closely reasoned development and analysis, a very much simplified and abridged summary must suffice. The outlook is based upon the fundamental difference between inference and assent; to argue logically from 'p' to 'q' is to accept that "if p is true, then so is q", and this is inference; faith however is acceptance (assent to) of a proposition as absolutely true irrespective of attached conditions, and the consequent commitment of life to that proposition. The human mind carries out many functions below the level of consciousness, and although we are not aware of the many items of experience and steps in development, we merely feel the certainty of certain matters - quite often calling this process 'intuition'. Perhaps it will suffice to quote Newman's own words, "I think it is the fact that many of our most obstinate and most reasonable certitudes depend on proofs which are informal and personal, which baffle our powers of analysis, and cannot be brought under logical rule."

A fourth basis which was claimed by Kant, and developed by Baillie, rests upon 'moral judgement' as resident in most, if not all, men. It is argued that man in general feels that he should strive for the 'good'. Even if he does not do so, and feels guilty because he thinks he will be happier doing something else, he still has an ideal, often varying in detail with experience, and the fact that the greatest satisfaction in the end is obtained by those who follow that ideal supports the postulate of a 'good God'. The outlook suffers from many difficulties, including the fact that many men who have lived such a life have been atheists, and that the hypothesis of God has not been present in their consciousness.

The various problems, and the relationship between these four human attempts to draw up a logic of faith, are analysed in the third section of the book, but first comes a second section in which the nature of faith as it has been held by men, and the place it has held in the development of their religious lives, is carefully considered. It is noted that so far as his religion is concerned, a man does not isolate a few of the many features of life, and adopt limited propositions concerning them. Such faith is a 'total interpretation' of all life and the universe in which it is lived. It can, and almost always does, consist in a large number of parts interconnected to make one whole, although there have been some outstanding 'simple souls' who have made a total commitment on the basis of a simple undetailed confidence in God. However the detailed human faith may vary from man to man, it provides an interpretive element which allows him to view all of his experience as a whole which possesses 'meaning' on the basis of his faith. Thus, just as adoption of a hypothesis in science will enable the mind to relate physical phenomena in a way which will free it to utilise nature for a desired end, so the proposition of faith will free man from the worry of ignorance, and allow him to live freely with other matters in mind. This, however, is too simple an analogy between the two; adoption of propositions in science which have been only partly true and partly false have been able to allow utilitarian advancement, and in limited circumstances there is no difference between two propositions, one of which is true in all cases, and the other false in those not of immediate concern. There is the same 'illative' feeling of reality about 'faith' that distinguishes in life between the remembrance of a dream and the memory of a waking experience; we feel that our interpretation of life on the basis of faith has a reality which is totally missing from any interpretation which we might base on a dream.

The section then passes from the nature of faith which convinces man that there is a God, and that his life should be ordered accordingly, to the question that if in fact there is such a God, is there any reason why He should make any revelation to us, and not leave us in total ignorance of his attributes which we cannot experimentally establish? It is argued that "not only awareness of the divine but all awareness of environment contains an unavoidable element of personal interpretation." There is an important difference, however, between such interpretation of our physically sensual environment, and that of our relationship to another person. Evolutionary pressures on survival have ensured that there is among us a communal agreement in interpretation of the former, whereas there is a personal variation in the latter, as also in our reaction to artistic values and to the 'unobservable' entities of theoretical physics. The Christian proposition

of God which forms the basis of faith in Him is that of a 'personal' deity with personal relationship with man. There is, therefore, a pressure of communal consensus upon our interpretation of sensual environment, but none such upon our outlook towards individuals. We have, however, a sensual experience of other living men, on which we are 'free' to make our own interpretation. Only, therefore, if God does not desire to force our acceptance of Him by direct contact, but desires to give us the freedom (free will) to make our own interpretation concerning Him, will we be able to make the same kind of judgement if we can learn of Him through a revelation which itself will have to be interpreted in much the same way as we value artistic environment. This outlook is then developed and analysed at length, and the conclusion, so far as our interpretation of the divine is concerned, is given in the words "It is a question for each individual exercising his cognitive powers in relation to the environment in which he finds himself, and responding to his own personal freedom and responsibility to its claims and calls."

The third section proceeds to examine those 'intuitional' features which serve to give us a sense of 'reality' to the propositions of faith. If faith is an interpretative element, it raises at once "the question whether faith entails any factual claims about 'what there is' and 'how things are' in the universe, or whether it is a way of looking at the world which terminates in the world itself." Faith is defined as an uncompelled mode of 'experiencing as', the whole world being experienced by us as a place in which we have at all times to do with a transcendent God. This mode is 'uncompelled' because it is not possible to support or deny it by 'probability'. Many philosophers have attempted to show that from its nature our universe was created by God to a high degree of probability; this is an unjustified use of probability, which, mathematically, is concerned with the relation between two independent entities; if we knew many independent universes, we could speak of the probability that one of them was created by God, but our universe is experienced as the totality of all that we know, and the questions which we would like to ask are logically unaskable. The various branches of probability theory are all examined as applicable to the several modes of 'proof' which have been proposed and claimed, and the conclusion demonstrated that so far as probability is concerned, "There is no test observation, no crucial instance such that if A occurs theism is shown to be true, while if B occurs theism is shown to be false."

Attention then turns to the claims that our experience in accepting the world as under the control of God is such as to give 'verification' to the proposition

of faith. In recent years considerable philosophical discussion has occurred about the inter-related factual and psychological factors of verification; in this examination these are ignored, and the core of the idea is taken to be "the removal of ignorance or uncertainty concerning the truth of a proposition." Some 30 pages are devoted to a detailed and convincing discussion of all the facets of such verification, and it is shown that the only possible verification which might be possible to the individual lies beyond death for him. From this point a final question is considered - "Is the religious man entitled to describe his awareness of God as a form of knowledge? Or should faith be equated with belief, in sharp distinction from knowledge?" From the time of Plato 'knowing' was equated with direct and infallible acquaintance with 'reality', and modern philosophy has merely replaced 'reality' with the term 'truth'. The mechanism of cognition so far as the outside world is considered and shown to be but an interpretive scheme imposed by the structure of our senses and our brain. Theoretical physics has destroyed for ever the assumption that the outside world has a unique reality such as is the 'concept' associated with our 'percepts'. It is shown that the experience of the religious man, counted by him as 'knowing God', is neither more nor less true than our sensual experience by which we claim to 'know the world'. During this present life we are seeking the answer to an unaskable question if we expect to find any human mode of 'knowing' which is fundamentally different from that in which we experience both God and the world, and certainly no difference in the modes by which we 'know' those two.

The previous sections of the book have been concerned with 'religious faith' in general, and not related to a specific religion; the final section takes up the general concepts developed, and applying them to the Christian religion, seeks to ascertain whether, so related, it differs fundamentally from the general case. The nature of the new circumstances thus introduced to the general case are defined as "In Christianity the catalyst of faith is the person of Jesus the Christ. It is in the historical figure of Jesus the Christ that, according to the Christian claim, God has in a unique and final way disclosed himself to men." Such faith is divided into two broad classifications - faith in Christ, and faith from Christ; the first is concerned with the acceptance of Christ as a unique person, and the resulting interpretation of life as oriented towards the growing of man into the full glory of a child of God; the second is concerned with the type of life and priorities of motive which result from the acceptance of the Christ as Son of God and Son of Man. While it is seen that no difference results so far as the relation between faith and reality result from this, nevertheless the Christian faith has practical results (both targets and works) which differ

radically from those of religion in general. The treatment is analytical and excellent. Its practical results spring from the fact that "all men live in the world as they see and experience it; and religious faith is seeing and experiencing the world as being under the ultimate control of sovereign personal love."

For anyone who intends to undertake the rewarding task of reading and pondering both this book and the other two to be reviewed, two books which can be recommended as outstanding in the coverage of fundamental points basic to all three are:-

"The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking".
Dorothy M. Emmet. MacMillan 1945.

"Myths, Models and Paradigms".
Ian. G. Barbour. SCM Press 1974.

Both of these are fairly tough going, but both are now recognised as having made an important original contribution to their subject.

The Christian Person

Fear and Love

by

George McHaffie

"There is no room for fear in love; perfect love banishes fear. We love because he loved us first. But if a man says, 'I love God', while hating his brother, he is a liar. If he does not love the brother whom he has seen, it cannot be that he loves God whom he has not seen." (1 John 4:18-20 NEB).

Thus, John sums up one of the main facets of Christ's teaching, an integral part of his 'Good News of The Kingdom of God'. Jesus largely taught in succinct sayings and stories - parables. This often left problems open-ended and people went home having to think out just what he meant, but the time came when people said to him - if we may use a modern idiom - "Don't hide behind the jargon, just tell us plainly what it is you are getting at." With this idea in mind I am hoping to deal with various aspects of subjects of this kind which were central to Jesus' teaching.

If we look at the history of the subject of Love, and particularly the commandment 'Love your Neighbour' in our community we will see that it has gone through various phases. Not so long ago it was a very difficult argument to suggest that you had some obligation to love people who were not Christians, or indeed were not Christadelphians! At that stage we were faced with arguments which were suspiciously political in their base; for example, the general doctrine was, that the world was divided up into more or less good types, who were on God's side and bad types who were not. At one state of the world's affairs there would be a tremendous row between the two and thus on the one hand we should see the Western Nations, America and Britain, and on the other hand the Common Market, Russia, the Arabs and the Chinese. Indeed, it was hard to make the point that these were all real people. If you quoted their difficulties for example, starving and homeless Arabs, the subject was brushed aside. It was most difficult to get through the idea that God's love is not conditioned by Western politics! It was a major step forward when collections were taken for Arabs and a Samaritan Fund set up. Unfortunately, there are still some residual objections among the 'hardliners'. At one fraternal gathering, for instance, an address was given with the statement that you were under no obligation to love God's enemies. So it is all right to help your enemies - your personal enemies, but you are under no obligation to love God's enemies. Who are God's enemies? Well, all those I fear are God's enemies and so it comes to the same thing in the end and we go on hating our enemies.

Another example of this kind of reasoning you may have come across is - "I cannot very well love someone I do not know. I do not know these starving Asians or people in South America and therefore I am under no obligation to love them." However, I think that this type of approach is probably running itself out. We are faced with a very general feeling that there is an obligation to love, and love all, it is enshrined in that tremendous feeling that everybody knows that 'God so loved the world' and this does not mean solely the good folk in the world, it means the world which lies in wickedness and so it is because God loved all people, many of whom were unlovable in any normal context and terms, that Christ died. It is from here that the general obligation to love starts. It is easy to make this statement, the difficulties appear when we come down to apply it ourselves in practice. Why is it that difficulties apply? Firstly, I think, they appear because people function best when they band together in groups and they can see other groups with which they do not agree. There are, of course, some families that may have a Christian calling, but even within the family everybody may not be in harmony. Those out-of-line are to some extent under suspicion and one does not feel towards them the same obligation as one may do to the rest of the little band. It is the same with tiny sects the members of which visit each other across the world. They see in their little group, an elite called by God and they protect and defend it from all other groups whom they see as enemies that have got to be destroyed. Not of course literally in this liberal age but destroyed in argument and denegated. I do not think myself that it is possible entirely to avoid this attitude and there is a positive side to it. I am not sure even that Jesus avoided it. He talked in terms of the Christian group on the one hand and the world on the other and in John's Gospel for example, there are definite statements about the fact that the world may hate Christians, which is clearly setting one group against another. Because of the sharing of a common purpose it is inevitable that we function in groups but trouble develops when these groups become too introspective and fail to recognise their obligations to society in a wider sense. However, in another gospel - Luke - we read that Jesus said - "He who is not against us is on our side." The statement may be difficult to interpret in a twentieth Century context, but one thing is clear - Jesus is inviting us to approach society on a wide front. This is in contrast to the approach - "He is not one of us, what is the matter with him?" For instance, when we are at work and there are no Christadelphians around, we may well feel that others who have a Christian commitment are extremely helpful with any problems we may have. Nothing they do has a good motive; even if a person is very sincere we think him misguided. If so, we should try to see what his good points are and see if there is a constructive way of looking at them to discover any common ground on which to build an understanding and a bridge for communication.

Let us look at a situation in life. In my own particular field at the moment, which is juvenile justice, one has got the whole question of how best to treat a delinquent child. What do you do with him once you have identified him and what is your goal with him? In this field of work, there are vastly different views and many committees which guide the work are made up of a variety of people - Catholics, Methodists, Congregationalists, members of the Church of England and Church of Scotland and so on. Conferences on the subject are frequently arranged and rapidly it becomes apparent where different people stand. First it is clear that there is agreement among those with Christian bias, whereas those who have not, it seems to me, very often side with the delinquent whom they are supposed to help, and these people are often highly critical of the Christian approach.

The next point which I want to take up is how love works in practice. This is where fear comes to the forefront, not quite in the same sense as 1 John 4, but in the sense where one has an encounter with a malignant youth. If you are not a Christian you can use whatever weapons you choose to obtain the desired end. In this situation my observations tell me that a person who is in that position feels vastly more secure than an individual who is going to use the methods of love at least in the first instance. Hence you get soldiers, apparently going very cheerfully off to the front, saying that it will be all right, we are going to knock the stuffing out of the enemy. As long as they believe in their weapons and they think that they can give as good as they will get, they seem to be able to draw together a certain amount of courage; but suppose you are faced with a highly irate and aggressive person who does not like Christianity and who never listens very carefully to you and you cannot elude him and the only weapon you have got is the method of love. Well, what is the method of love or methods of love? Of course one attempts to seek peace, to be reconciled, to be helpful and certainly to maintain a calm, unruffled un-anxious reaction whatever he might say or do. My own experience of this is that it is a highly fearful thing, and it is not at all easy to contain oneself. It is very easy to adopt his aggressive system and start shouting or getting very aggressive, abusive or cynical, and trying to be sarcastic about the stand he is taking and that of course is the opposite to love. It is indeed, the product of fear. This is what is wrong with the world we see about us - we are not prepared to sit down and help each other in the spirit of love. In the International situation no one would dare to try a Christian approach. Diplomats all hedge around one another, seeking a chink in their opponents armour, all the while trying to get bigger and better weapons. The methods of love, therefore, are methods which open us up to all sorts of fears and because of this we probably do not investigate them very much. Most of us would not approach a gang of delinquents in the street and we would be very wise not to if we have had no experience of delinquent gangs. Those who carry weapons, fight regularly amongst themselves, and not infrequently 'mug' people. How does one deal with that sort of individual? Many will say that there is virtually nothing that can be done. However, there are people doing something for these individuals. These are detached youth social workers who are willing to go along

to the pubs where these youths congregate to engage them in conversation, to go where they meet on the street corners and again go with them to listen to them, to talk, to join in etc, all with the aim of helping the delinquent gang members to become more adaptive to the society in which they live. One such endeavour is reported in a very interesting study in York. Here a Christian has tackled a highly dangerous job, carrying no weapons, with the methods of love at his disposal. Surely we can see here an example of - 'He who is not against us is on our side'. These methods are not acquired suddenly one has got to learn. That is why it is particularly important to start with discussion - feeling your way is highly important. Before you can ever start to understand a delinquent you must know something of his thought patterns.

Another difficulty in the matter of love is the size of the problem. When we look around this troubled world and observe the numerous posters for charities such as Oxfam, we see millions of people in desperate straits starving. We are well filled and comfortable and if we do not get a good lunch we moan. We do not remotely understand what these people's lives are like. We do not know what it is like to be stuck for the next few pence. So we have to ask the question, "How far can one spread one's love in any practical and real sense?" The problem is so big one sits down and feels totally defeated. This is one of the real dangers of standing up and making broad generalisations about love; broad generalisations about what God demands of us in love, and broad generalisations about 1 John 4:17. John in the fourth chapter of his letter makes it very clear where we should start - we start with our neighbour, our brother or our sister. He points out that if you cannot love your fellow man, your brother or your sister, whom you have seen, you are not going to be able to love God, whom you have not seen. So likewise neither are you going to be able to have a proper feeling for the individual on the other side of the world. Clearly, we have got to start by making absolutely certain that our relationships with the people that we come into contact with are based on true Christian principles of love. They are not gang leaders or delinquents; they are probably ordinary people who are struggling with an ordinary life. If you cannot make proper peaceful approaches to individuals who are right by you, the chances of you being able to have the right attitude towards the very aggressive are remote and you will be well advised not to try to tackle this size of problem. I suggest, though this may be open to discussion, that one starts by making sure that one's immediate relationships are right and these start in the home as well as in the ecclesia, then we can move out to a wider context.

First it is probably a good start if we can decide what the Bible has to say about love. Have we grasped what Jesus meant by love even intellectually? Even if we have it is not the time to jump and embrace the whole wide world in your orbit of love but instead feel your own way out of your niche and test it; make it real in your actual life. This is the same with most other things. You do not spring into full maturity; you must test it out and you have not tested it out until you have faced someone whom you really cannot love very much. There are some children who have been noted as being almost unlovable from birth; the type of child that screams

all the time, not seeming to want its parents, rejecting their advances and growing into an adolescent that gets into all sorts of anti-social acts. These people are very difficult to love, and when you face such an individual you begin to plumb the depths of what it means to try and offer love when it is not being returned. So we have developed, through experience, to come to some sort of maturity in how to handle these problems. I would suggest that if you have done that then the wider world will fit into its place. I cannot imagine an individual, for example, who is able to make a proper approach with Christian love to his neighbours and to people who are on the whole unlovable, when confronted by suffering in Africa or suchlike having a nasty unhelpful attitude. Again, I cannot imagine such a person looking at a charity poster and not feeling his heart strings torn apart, or not offering to do something about it. We must not forget that we are all part of a body as well as individuals. It is characteristic of our age to be individualistic, but a Christian is essentially a person who belongs to a community and the Christian community is what the people, who are non-Christians, will see. They obviously see individuals as well, but if the Christian community as a whole is presented in a balanced fashion then many of the problems of our time can be eliminated. For example, the 'Meal-a-day' scheme is an excellent scheme that shows love is action, but that does not mean that we should all pounce on the same scheme and get heavily committed to it. The fact of the matter is that the body, as such, has a scheme. We can contribute in various other ways. No doubt a lot more help could be given, but on the whole the body being looked at in this way operates with love, providing, of course, that there is some feeling of support from the body of what is being done. Likewise it may be that one's own particular niche is not far afield; it could indeed be on one's doorstep and as far as most of our activities are concerned they are just simply there. In the same way as everybody has a mind and a heart and his own hands, so it follows that every individual in the body ought not to be doing the same thing. What we ought to be aiming at is to ensure that the atmosphere within the body is such that what is being produced is in the spirit of Christ. I think some of the problems of love and the way which it affects life would be solved if we thought in these lines.

So let us sum up. The definition of love ought still to be pursued, though not endlessly. The methods of putting Christian love into practice could be looked at more carefully perhaps because there may be some different system of thought in this. Similarly the limits of one's sphere of action ought to be thought about in relation to each individual's capabilities and commitments and, of course, the practicalities of our activity do require examination.

(This article is a slightly abridged version of a talk given by G. McHaffie at the Summer School 1977).

Creation Myths

by

W. G. Lambert

"How did the heavens and the earth originate?" "Who are the gods that made and control them?" - "Why are we here?" Primitive man has asked these questions in a variety of ways. For some answers we may turn to the ancient Near East, especially Mesopotamia from where we have most of the evidence. How does this evidence relate to the Biblical accounts? If we look at encyclopedias or other works of reference we are usually told that there is a Babylonian 'Epic of Creation' and a short account is given of what the Babylonians are supposed to have thought. This is a very much over-simplified approach to the problem. There are indeed particular texts which most people know about, but it is foolish to say that there is a Babylonian 'point of view' - a view which all Babylonians shared. In fact if one looks deeply into the subject there is plenty of evidence that there were quite diverse views circulating at the same time and our first finding is that there was no more agreement in the ancient world than there is in the modern world today!

We will take a Mesopotamian account, usually entitled 'The Creation Epic', the English translation of which is called, 'The Babylonian Genesis'. According to the story there were in the beginning two watery beings, one called Apsu and the other called Tiamat. Apsu was male and Tiamat female. Apsu, to the ancient Mesopotamians meant the water and he lived beneath the earth. The reasoning behind this is fairly obvious - the Babylonians and Sumerians noted that there were springs coming up from the earth at various points and there must be, of course, resources on which they drew. So Sumerians and Babylonians had conjectured that under the earth there must be a great underground sea from which all springs obtain their water. So we observe how they reasoned and what conclusions they drew from their observations. Their observations were correct in this case, but their deduction that there was one great subterranean sea from which springs draw their water was incorrect, but it was a plausible explanation and they called it Apsu, conceiving it to be male. Tiamat is simply the ordinary Babylonian word for 'sea' and they believed it to be feminine, the word itself being grammatically feminine. Their universe, therefore, commences with two great bodies of water, which mingle together to produce new generations of primeval beings and eventually out of these generations emerge the gods that were actually worshipped in ancient Mesopotamia. Thus, the beginning of this story explains to the Babylonians first of all the origins of the universe and also the generation of their own gods. They assumed that their own gods must have had beginnings since everything they knew had a beginning and they concluded that there must have been in the very beginning one primeval substance which they

differentiated into two parts, male and female. Male and female gods were chosen because they had observed that male and female are necessary for generation; so they concluded that in the beginning there must have been male and female water! The modern scientist does not do things so differently from this if you think about it. The modern scientist also has this idea that everything must have had its beginning - it must go back to some original substance from which everything else emerged, somehow. This is now some kind of gas but the idea is not so different from what the Babylonians seemed to be saying with water. Neither hypothesis, of course, is capable of proof, the modern one any more than the ancient.

Well now to continue the story. As the gods began to beget more gods the young gods began to get very noisy and disturbed the primeval generation of Apsu and Tiamat; so the primeval generation decided that to abate the noise they would kill off the younger generation of gods! Unfortunately, the primeval generation were not very discreet in keeping secret what they planned and so the younger generation heard of it and one of them took quick action and killed Apsu, thereby abating the threat. Tiamat, the original mother, was much upset by this and was urged by some of her companions to do something about it, otherwise she would suffer a similar fate. She got to work, therefore, to produce a series of monsters with which to wage war on the younger noisy gods. The younger gods got together to decide what to do to counter this and two of the more elderly among them decided to face the monsters, but the very sight of them put them off. Thus, they asked the younger god, whose name was Marduk, the city god of Babylon, whether he would take up the challenge and he was willing to do so, but he made a condition that if he were to do this and be successful, then they would have to abdicate in favour of him and he would become the ruling god in the universe. The other gods agreed to this and imposed their own condition in turn that if he was made their elder, then he must make provision for them so that they would not have to labour for their daily bread, which was very wise!

There we have it then, Marduk was to take up the challenge and armed with all sorts of mythical weapons, including winds, he set off to meet Tiamat and her monsters. The 'meeting' duly took place and Marduk engaged his gods in battle eventually emerging victorious after a somewhat shaky start. When he had won he proceeded to reorganise the universe taking Tiamat's body and splitting it into two parts. One part he made into the heavens with stretched skin across, to keep back the water. The other part of Tiamat's body rather incongruously became the earth; incongruous because the earth is solid and not water. Finally underneath the earth he put Apsu, the body of the dead male, the second of the original pair. We have, therefore, a sort of three tiered universe; Apsu beneath; the earth in the middle, and the heavens above. Heaven was where most of the gods lived; the earth was where Marduk himself lived and Apsu where the remaining

gods lived. You will notice that there is yet no mention of man. When all this was finished and details of the universe worked out Marduk was formally declared King of the gods. At the same time he was reminded of the condition that he should do something to save the other gods the necessity of hard work and after discussing this aspect with his father he decided to create man, to undertake the hard work of the universe. Thus he took blood from one of the defeated gods and created man to do this, which included providing the temples of the gods with food and drink. And so everything ended happily ever after.

The real purpose of this epic is not to describe creation but to describe how Marduk became head of the gods. It had to be explained because Babylon was not one of the oldest Mesopotamian cities at all. It only became powerful about 1700 B.C. say 1300 years after the intervention of writing. Marduk was the City - God of Babylon and became head of the gods for purely political reasons, his town becoming the capital town, in due course the rulers making him the most important god. However, it was then necessary to explain theologically how this came about and so this epic story was concocted. Incidentally, it is the same god that crops up in the Bible where he is called Merodach - for example in the name of the King of Babylon - Merodach - baldan. So here is one story and its primary motive is not to tell us about creation, that only comes in secondarily.

Let us now look at some of its details. The answer of this particular account, 'The Epic of Creation', to the question "How did everything begin?" - Everything began with water! This explanation is not unique either for Mesopotamia or elsewhere. Here is a translation of another Mesopotamian account of water and this will give you an idea of the style of some of these texts:- A pure temple, a temple of the gods had not been made in a pure place. A reed had not sprouted. A tree had not been created. A brick had not been moulded. A brick mould had not been created. A temple had not been made. A city had not been created. A city had not been made. A settlement had not been created. The town....had not been created. The temple....had not been created.....the town had not been made.....his temple had not been created. The Apsu had not been made. The town had not been created, but all the land was sea. We observe in this account that a start is made when everything was sea, even Apsu the 'male water' had not at this time existed. So although we have a similar idea to that which so-called Babylonian evidence of creation presents, it differs in one particular aspect to that presented in the Epic of Creation where it is male and female water from the beginning. According to this other account there was only female water in the beginning! Apsu came later. There are, in fact, many more accounts and illusions to creation in other Mesopotamian texts. Water is very commonly said to be the first thing, but not always. Sometimes land or earth is said to be the original element that existed. And rather rarely but very interestingly 'time' is said to be the original element from which everything

else arose. Interesting because 'time' is not, of course, concrete and modern thinkers always imagine that primitive, ancient thinkers could not think abstractly!

Well, looking outside Mesopotamia what else does one find? In Egypt the idea that everything began with water is also present. In Syria and Palestine one does have a little material, but not very much. In early Greece this is also the case. The ocean, according to Homer, was the origin of the Gods.

Let us now turn to the Bible, and if we look at the first verses in Genesis we have exactly the same kind of thing. Our readers will be familiar with these verses so we will look at them in a different translation to get a more detached view - "When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep and the spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said 'Let there be Light'".(R.S.V.) There has always been a difficulty in the translation of the first verse of Genesis. Some people put a full stop after the first sentence; in fact this is the traditional rendering. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." However, it is an equally good translation of the Hebrew to say, "When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters." This, of course, gives one a rather different picture of what is happening. In the first case it states what happened in the beginning; in the other case it merely says that at a certain stage, when God began to create the heavens and the earth, there was water but no light. Now which translation one takes is in fact a matter of taste; you cannot prove that one is right and the other wrong. But we should note that with either translation there is no essential difference in the understanding of the verses, but the important point is that there is water at the beginning. Then we note that as things begin to develop it is necessary to separate the waters. "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, to separate the waters. Water above the firmament and waters below. So one does have here something remarkably similar to the Babylonian Version as we know it there being primeval water which was divided between the upper part and the lower part, but the Babylonian is rather confused due to the combining of traditions. Thus, when we actually get to it the lower part is not water any more, but it has somehow changed in the process. Nevertheless, we have to admit that there is a very striking similarity - first water, then the separation of it into an upper level and a lower level and after that dry land is created and so forth. We will not draw any conclusions from this at this stage, but there is an essential difference in that the Mesopotamian account considers the water to be the primeval god; the water itself is divine. In the

account in Genesis God exists outside the water; the water is part of the universe which he controls. In the Mesopotamian version there is a battle when the waters are divided; they cannot be divided until Marduk has defeated Tiamat and then decides to use her body in the making of a re-organised universe. Contrariwise, Genesis gives a much more noble and rational account. However, in the other parts of the Old Testament particularly the poetic books, one does find a closer similarity. Take the Book of Job Chapter 38 for example. Here God answers Job.

" Who is this that darkens counsel by
words without knowledge?
Gird up your loins like a man,
I will question you, and you shall
declare to me.

" Where were you when I laid the foundation
of the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.
Who determined its measurements - surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
On what were its bases sunk,
or who laid its cornerstone,
when the morning stars sang together,
and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

"Or who shut in the sea with doors,
when it burst forth from the womb;
when I made clouds its garment,
and thick darkness its swaddling band,
and prescribed bounds for it,
and set bars and doors,
and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and
no farther,
and here shall your proud waves be
stayed'?

(Job 38:2-11) R.S.V.

This, perhaps, is a poetic allusion to a battle with the sea at creation; where the sea bursts forth and has to be kept back. Some people, however, would like to interpret this as referring to the flood, but I do not think the context will allow this. However, there are other passages which suggest more clearly that these are creation references. In Proverbs we see that there is the same general account clearly connected with creation:-

Does not wisdom call.....

The Lord created me at the beginning
 of his work,
 the first of his acts of old.
Ages ago I was set up,
 at the first, before the beginning of
 the earth.
When there were no depths I was brought forth,
 when there were no springs abounding
 with water.
Before the mountains had been shaped,
 before the hills, I was brought forth;
before he had made the earth with its
 fields,
 of the first of the dust of the world.
When he established the heavens, I was
 there,
 when he drew a circle on the face of
 the deep,
when he made firm the skies above,
 when he established the fountains
 of the deep
when he assigned to the sea its limit,
 so that the waters might not transgress
 his command,
when he marked out the foundations of
 the earth,
 then I was beside him, like a master
 workman;
and I was daily his delight,
 rejoicing before him always,
rejoicing in his inhabited world
 and delighting in the sons of men. (Prov 8:22-31)

It will be noticed that this is all part of creation; it has nothing to do with the Flood but it speaks (v.29) of God's command to the waters. There is a similar passage again in Psalm 74 where a conflict between God and the sea at creation is described. In the Mesopotamian version the sea is, in fact, conceived as a king-god the great monster and one might ask "Is there any Biblical reference to this sort of thing or not?" As a matter of fact, there are references to two monsters by name in the Bible; not in the Book of Genesis, but in some of the poetic passages. Leviathan is one and it occurs in Isaiah. Rahab is the other. Turning to the first verse of

Isaiah Chapter 27, which is not looking back to the past but rather looking forward to the future, we read :-

In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.

Here is a sea dragon and the language used by Isaiah is certainly symbolic; therefore one has to ask, "Where does the symbol come from?" "What does Psalm 74:12-17 reveal?

Yet God my King is from of old,
working salvation in the midst of the
earth.
Thou didst divide the sea by thy
might;
thou didst break the heads of the
dragons on the waters.
Thou didst crush the heads of Leviathan,
thou didst give him as food for the
creatures of the wilderness.
Thou didst cleave open springs and
brooks;
thou didst dry up ever-flowing
streams.
Thine is the day, thine also the night,
thou hast established the luminaries
and the sun.
Thou hast fixed all the bounds of the
earth.

So one sees then that there are certainly similarities, not perhaps so many in Genesis, but when one starts reading the rest of the Bible, especially the poetic passages in the Psalms, one sees the similarity.

What of the creation of man himself? God made man from the dust of the earth according to Genesis. In the Babylonian text man is normally referred to as being made from clay and blood, but there is another version according to which he sprouted from the ground like a plant. Clay and dust are similar words and by dust it does not necessarily mean dry matter; it can simply mean earth without regard to it being wet or dry. So once more there is a certain similarity. Again, we have seen that when Marduk was given his conditions, one of them was to create man so that the Gods might rest. This is indeed common to all the Mesopotamian accounts. Rest is necessary to the

gods and that is why man was created and for no other purposes! In the account of Genesis, however, there was no selfish aim on the part of God, but indeed, God rests on the seventh day the Sabbath. Thus the pattern was set that mankind should also rest on the Sabbath and not work. Is it a coincidence or not? Well perhaps we should not make too much of this. But as far as the other points go the similarities are too striking to be ignored. If you asked me what the explanation was, I would reply that I think it to be relatively simple, if one has an open mind about it; that God has taught men down the ages His truths, using the language of the environment in which his people find themselves. God could have chose to do things differently. He could have given a scientific account of creation, but there would be no point in this at the time of Moses, of course, or indeed at any other time in the history of the Hebrews, because they would not have understood it. Instead, the men who were used by God were given an inspired version of what happened in the beginning. They knew existing accounts of creation, so they removed from them all the offensive things and used them for a quite different purpose. Whereas, therefore, in Mesopotamian accounts the gods are part of nature and are within it, in Genesis one finds that God is outside nature and He is creating the natural world for his purposes. The language and descriptive material that we have in this Genesis account or creation might not necessarily correspond with that which one thinks one knows from modern science but, nevertheless, the basic truth is unchangeable, namely that God is not part of the physical universe as we see it, but He is outside it, creating it in the first place, then molding it and finally using it for this purposes.

Here, then, is one of the ways in which God reveals himself, using ideas that were current at this time and inspiring men to modify them so that basis and fundamental truths were conveyed. The principle truth in this case is that God is the Creation of all, including man that inquires into these things.

EDITORIAL CONTINUED

So let us look around in our world. Is it one of peace and love? How many people are there in it? How many do we love? How many do we hate? How many can we not stand? How many parts of this world do we neglect, which we should indeed foster? What of those we know to be in need one way or the other? What is our example like in this world?

It is easy to ask the questions. Have we courage to supply the answers?

J.H.W.