

Anthology



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Summary of A Level Religious Studies anthology Issue 3 changes

Summary of changes made between previous issue and this current issue	Page number
Extract added to match information in specification (Luke 6:17-26)	110
Erroneous chapter numbering in Luke 15 (the Parable of the Lost Son) removed	111
Missing chapter number for Luke 16 (the Rich Man and Lazarus) added	112
Spelling of Guru Nanak corrected	278

If you need further information on these changes or what they mean, contact us via our website at: qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/contact-us.html.

Introduction

This Anthology is to be used for students taking the Advanced GCE in Religious Studies.

The list of extracts at the end of each paper in the specification must be studied by all students; this includes the work of two named scholars for comparison. The context in which these texts could be studied is indicated by bracketed numbers in the specification, (1) for example. These extracts are not exclusive to the topic areas under which they appear; students will need to be able to apply these extracts across any suitable topic.

Please note that the Bible extracts 1–4 for New Testament Studies are also to be used for students taking the Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Religious Studies.

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Paper 1: Philosophy of Religion

Extract 1: J.L. Mackie 'Evil and Omnipotence' (1977)

Taken from: *The Philosophy of Religion*, edited by B Mitchell (Oxford, OUP, 1977), Chapter V, Evil and Omnipotence, pp. 92–104.

The traditional arguments for the existence of God have been fairly thoroughly criticized by philosophers. But the theologian can, if he wishes, accept this criticism. He can admit that no rational proof of God's existence is possible. And he can still retain all that is essential to his position, by holding that God's existence is known in some other non-rational way. I think, however, that a more telling criticism can be made by way of the traditional problem of evil. Here it can be shown, not that religious beliefs lack rational support, but that they are positively irrational, that the several parts of the essential theological doctrine are inconsistent with one another, so that the theologian can maintain his position as a whole only by a much more extreme rejection of reason than in the former case. He must now be prepared to believe, not merely what cannot be proved, but what can be *disproved* from other beliefs that he also holds.

The problem of evil, in the sense in which I shall be using the phrase, is a problem only for someone who believes that there is a God who is both omnipotent and wholly good. And it is a logical problem, the problem of clarifying and reconciling a number of beliefs: it is not a scientific problem that might be solved by further observations, or a practical problem that might be solved by a decision or an action. These points are obvious; I mention them only because they are sometimes ignored by theologians, who sometimes parry a statement of the problem with such remarks as 'Well, can you solve the problem yourself?' or 'This is a mystery which may be revealed to us later' or 'Evil is something to be faced and overcome, not to be merely discussed.'

In its simplest form the problem is this: God is omnipotent: God is wholly good; and yet evil exists. There seems to be some contradiction between these three propositions, so that if any two of them were true, the third would be false. But at the same time all three are essential parts of most theological positions: the theologian, it seems, at once *must* adhere and *cannot consistently* adhere to all three. (The problem does not arise only for theists, but I shall discuss it in the form in which it presents itself for ordinary theism.)

However, the contradiction does not arise immediately; to show it we need some additional premisses, or perhaps some quasi-logical rules connecting the terms 'good', 'evil' and 'omnipotent'. These additional principles are that good is opposed to evil, in such a way that a good thing always eliminates evil as far as it can, and that there are no limits to what an omnipotent thing can do. From these it follows that a good omnipotent thing eliminates evil completely, and then the propositions that a good omnipotent thing exists, and that evil exists, are incompatible.

A. Adequate Solutions

Now once the problem is fully stated it is clear that it can be solved, in the sense that the problem will not arise if one gives up at least one of the propositions that constitute it. If you are prepared to say that God is not wholly good, or not quite omnipotent, or that evil does not exist, or that good is not opposed to the kind of evil that exists, or that there are limits to what an omnipotent thing can do, then the problem of evil will not arise for you.

There are, then, quite a number of adequate solutions of the problem of evil, and some of these have been adopted, or almost adopted, by various thinkers. For example, a few have been prepared to deny God's omnipotence, and rather more have been prepared to keep the term 'omnipotence' but severely to restrict its meaning, recording quite a number of things that an omnipotent being cannot do. Some have said that evil is an illusion, perhaps because they held that the whole world of temporal, changing things is an illusion, and that what we call evil belongs only to this world, or perhaps because they held that although temporal things *are* much as we see them, those that we call evil are not really evil. Some have said that what we call evil is merely the privation of good, that evil in a positive sense, evil that would really be opposed to good, does not exist. Many have agreed with Pope that disorder is harmony not understood, and that partial evil is universal good. Whether any of these views is *true* is, of course, another question. But each of them gives an adequate solution of the problem of evil in the sense that if you accept it this problem does not arise for you, though you may, of course, have *other* problems to face.

But often enough these adequate solutions are only *almost* adopted. The thinkers who restrict God's power, but keep the term 'omnipotence', may reasonably be suspected of thinking, in other contexts, that his power is really unlimited. Those who say that evil is an illusion may also be thinking, inconsistently, that this illusion is itself an evil. Those who say that 'evil' is merely privation of good may also be thinking, inconsistently, that privation of good is an evil. (The fallacy here is akin to some forms of the 'naturalistic fallacy' in ethics, where some think, for example, that 'good' is just what contributes to evolutionary progress and that evolutionary progress is itself good.) If Pope meant what he said in the first line of his couplet, that 'disorder' is only harmony not understood, the 'partial evil' of the second line must, for consistency, mean 'that which, taken in isolation, falsely appears to be evil', but it would more naturally mean 'that which, in isolation, really is evil'. The second line, in fact, hesitates between two views, that 'partial evil' isn't really evil, since only the universal quality is real, and that 'partial evil' is really an evil, but only a little one.

In addition, therefore, to adequate solutions, we must recognize unsatisfactory inconsistent solutions, in which there is only a half-hearted or temporary rejection of one of the propositions which together constitute the problem. In these, one of the constituent propositions is explicitly rejected, but it is covertly re-asserted or assumed elsewhere in the system.

B. Fallacious Solutions

Besides these half-hearted solutions, which explicitly reject but implicitly assert one of the constituent propositions, there are definitely fallacious solutions which explicitly maintain all of the constituent propositions, but implicitly reject at least one of them in the course of the argument that explains away the problem of evil.

There are, in fact, many so-called solutions which purport to remove the contradictions without abandoning any of its constituent propositions. These must be fallacious, as we can see from the very statement of the problem, but it is not so easy to see in each case precisely where the fallacy lies. I suggest that in all cases the fallacy has the general form suggested above: in order to solve the problem one (or perhaps more) of its constituent propositions is given up, but in such a way that it appears to have been retained, and can therefore be asserted without qualifications in other contexts. Sometimes there is a further complication: the supposed solution moves to and fro between say, two of the constituent propositions, at one point asserting the first of these but covertly abandoning the first. These fallacious solutions often turn upon some equivocation with the words 'good' and 'evil', or upon some vagueness about the way in which good and evil are opposed to one another, or about how much is meant by 'omnipotence'. I propose to examine some of these so-called solutions, and to exhibit their fallacies in detail. Incidentally, I shall also be considering whether an adequate solution could be reached by a minor modification of one or more of the constituent propositions, which would, however, still satisfy all the essential requirements of ordinary theism.

1. *'Good cannot exist without evil' or 'Evil is necessary as a counterpart to good.'*

It is sometimes suggested that evil is necessary as a counterpart to good, that if there were no evil there could be no good either, and that this solves the problem of evil. It is true that it points to an answer to the question 'Why should there be evil?' But it does so only by qualifying some of the propositions that constitute the problem.

First, it sets a limit to what God can do, saying that God *cannot* create good without simultaneously creating evil, and this means either that God is not omnipotent or that there are *some* limits to what an omnipotent thing can do. It may be replied that these limits are always presupposed, that omnipotence has never meant the power to do what is logically impossible, and on the present view the existence of good without evil would be a logical impossibility. This interpretation of omnipotence may, indeed, be accepted as a modification of our original account which does not reject anything that is essential to theism, and I shall in general assume it in the subsequent discussion. It is, perhaps, the most common theistic view, but I think that some theists at least have maintained that God can do what is logically impossible. Many theists, at any rate, have held that logic itself is created or laid down by God, that logic is the way in which God arbitrarily chooses to think. (This is, of course, parallel to the ethical view that morally right actions are those which God arbitrarily chooses to command, and the two views encounter similar difficulties.) And *this* account of logic is clearly inconsistent with the view that God is bound by logical necessities – unless it is

possible for an omnipotent being to bind himself, an issue which we shall consider later, when we come to the Paradox of Omnipotence. This solution of the problem of evil cannot, therefore, be consistently adopted along with the view that logic is itself created by God.

But, secondly, this solution denies that evil is opposed to good in our original sense. If good and evil are counterparts, a good thing will not 'eliminate evil as far as it can'. Indeed, this view suggests that good and evil are not strictly qualities of things at all. Perhaps the suggestion is that good and evil are related in much the same way as great and small. Certainly, when the term 'great' is used relatively as a condensation of 'greater than so-and-so' and 'small' is used correspondingly, greatness and smallness are counterparts and cannot exist without each other. But in this sense greatness is not a quality, not an intrinsic feature of anything; and it would be absurd to think of a movement in favour of greatness and against smallness in this sense. Such a movement would be self-defeating, since relative greatness can be promoted only by a simultaneous promotion of relative smallness. I feel sure that no theists would be content to regard God's goodness as analogous to this – as if what he supports were not the *good* but the *better*, and as if he had the paradoxical aim that all things should be better than other things.

This point is obscured by the fact that 'great' and 'small' seem to have an absolute as well as a relative sense. I cannot discuss here whether there is absolute magnitude or not, but if there is, there could be an absolute sense for 'great', it could mean of at least a certain size, and it would make sense to speak of all things getting bigger, of a universe that was expanding all over, and therefore it would make sense to speak of promoting greatness. But in *this* sense great and small are not logically necessary counterparts: either quality could exist without the other. There would be no logical impossibility in everything's being small or in everything's being great.

Neither in the absolute nor in the relative sense, then, of 'great' and 'small' do these terms provide an analogy of the sort that would be needed to support this solution of the problem of evil. In neither case are greatness and smallness *both* necessary counterparts *and* mutually opposed forces or possible objects for support or attack.

It may be replied that good and evil are necessary counterparts in the same way as any quality and its logical opposite: redness can occur, it is suggested, only if non-redness also occurs. But unless evil is merely the privation of good, they are not logical opposites, and some further argument would be needed to show that they are counterparts in the same way as genuine logical opposites. Let us assume that this could be given. There is still doubt of the correctness of the metaphysical principle that a quality must have a real opposite: I suggest that it is not really impossible that everything should be, say red, that the truth is merely that if everything were red we should not notice redness, and so we should have no word 'red'; we observe and give names to qualities only if they have real opposites. If so, the principle that a term must have an opposite would belong only to our language or to our thought and would not be an ontological principle, and, correspondingly, the rule that good cannot exist without evil would not state a logical necessity of a sort that God would just have to put up with. God might have made everything good, though we should not have noticed it if he had.

But, finally, even if we concede that this *is* an ontological principle, it will provide a solution for the problem of evil only if one is prepared to say, 'Evil exists, but only just enough evil to serve as the counterpart of good'. I doubt whether any theist will accept this. After all, the *ontological* requirement that non-redness should occur would be satisfied even if all the universe, except for a minute speck, were red, and, if there were a corresponding requirement for evil as a counterpart to good, a minute dose of evil would presumably do. But theists are not usually willing to say, in all contexts, that all the evil that occurs is a minute and necessary dose.

2. *'Evil is necessary as a means to good.'*

It is sometime suggested that evil is necessary for good not as a counterpart but as a means. In its simple form this has little plausibility as a solution of the problem of evil, since it obviously implies a severe restriction of God's power. It would be a *causal* law that you cannot have a certain end without a certain means, so that if God has to introduce evil as a means to good, he must be subject to at least some causal laws. This certainly conflicts with what a theist normally means by omnipotence. This view of God as limited by causal laws also conflicts with the view that causal views are themselves made by God, which is more widely held than the corresponding view about the laws of logic. This conflict would, indeed, be resolved if it were possible for an omnipotent being to bind himself, and this possibility has still to be considered. Unless a favorable answer can be given to this question, the suggestion that evil is necessary as a means to good solves the problem of evil only by denying one of its constituent propositions, either that God is omnipotent or that 'omnipotent' means what it says.

3. *'The universe is better with some evil in it than it could be if there were no evil.'*

Much more important is a solution which at first seems to be a mere variant of the previous one, that evil may contribute to the goodness of a whole in which it is found, so that the universe as a whole is better as it is, with some evil in it, than it would be if there were no evil. This solution may be developed in either of two ways. It may be supported by an aesthetic analogy, by the fact that contrasts heighten beauty, that in a musical work, for example, there may occur discords which somehow add to the beauty of the work as a whole. Alternatively, it may be worked out in connection with the notion of progress, that the best possible organization of the universe will not be static, but progressive, that the gradual overcoming of evil by good is really a finer thing than would be the eternal unchallenged supremacy of good.

In either case, this solution usually starts from the assumption that the evil whose existence gives rise to the problem of evil is primarily what is called physical evil, that is to say, pain. In Hume's rather half-hearted presentation of the problem of evil, the evils that he stresses are pain and disease, and those who reply to him argue that the existence of pain and disease makes possible the existence of sympathy, benevolence, heroism, and the gradually successful struggle of doctors and reformers to overcome these evils. In fact, theists often seize the opportunity to accuse those who stress the problem of evil of taking a low, materialistic view of good and evil, equating these with pleasure and pain, and of ignoring the more spiritual goods which can arise in the struggle against evils.

But let us see exactly what is being done here. Let us call pain and misery 'first order evil' or 'evil (1)'. What contrasts with this, namely pleasure and happiness, will be called 'first order good' or 'good (1)'. Distinct from this is 'second order good' or 'good (2)' which somehow emerges in a complex situation in which evil (1) is a necessary component – logically, not merely causally, necessary. (Exactly *how* it emerges does not matter: in the crudest version of this solution good (2) is simply the heightening of happiness by the contrast with misery, in other versions it includes sympathy with suffering, heroism in facing danger, and the gradual decrease of first order evil and increase of first order good.) It is also being assumed that second order good is more important than first order good or evil, in particular that it more than outweighs the first order evil it involves.

Now this is a particularly subtle attempt to solve the problem of evil. It defends God's goodness and omnipotence on the ground that (on a sufficiently long view) this is the best of all logically possible worlds, because it includes the important second order goods, and yet it admits that real evils, namely first order evils, exist. But does it still hold that good and evil are opposed? Not, clearly, in the sense that we set out originally: good does not tend to eliminate evil in general. Instead, we have a modified, a more complex pattern. First order good (e.g. happiness) *contrasts with* first order evil (e.g. misery): these two are opposed in a fairly mechanical way; some second order goods (e.g. benevolence) try to maximize first order good and minimize first order evil; but God's goodness is not this, it is rather the will to maximize *second* order good. We might, therefore, call God's goodness an example of a third order goodness, or good (3). While this account is different from our original one, it might well be held to be an improvement on it, to give a more accurate description of the way in which good is opposed to evil, and to be consistent with the essential theist position.

There might, however, be several objections to this solution.

First, some might argue that such qualities as benevolence – and *a fortiori* the third order goodness which promotes benevolence – have a merely derivative value, that they are not higher sorts of good, but merely means to good (1), that is, to happiness, so that it would be absurd for God to keep misery in existence in order to make possible the virtues of benevolence, heroism, etc. The theist who adopts the present solution must, of course, deny this, but he can do so with some plausibility, so I should not press this objection.

Secondly, it follows from this solution that God is not in our sense benevolent or sympathetic: he is not concerned to minimize evil (1), but only to promote good (2), and this might be a disturbing conclusion for some theists.

But thirdly, the fatal objection is this. Our analysis shows clearly the possibility of the existence of a *second* order evil, an evil (2) contrasting with good (2) as evil (1) contrasts with good (1). This would include malevolence, cruelty, callousness, cowardice, and states in which good (1) is decreasing and evil (1) increasing. And just as good (2) is held to be the important kind of good, the kind that God is concerned to promote, so evil (2) will, by analogy, be the important kind of evil, the kind which God, if he were wholly good and omnipotent would eliminate. And yet evil (2) plainly exists, and indeed most theists (in other contexts) stress its existence more than that of evil (1). We should, therefore, state the problem of evil in terms of second order evil, and against this form of the problem the present solution is useless.

An attempt might be made to use this solution again, at a higher level, to explain the occurrence of evil (2): indeed the next main solution that we shall examine does just this, with the help of some new notions. Without any fresh notions, such a solution would have little plausibility: for example, we could hardly say that the really important good was a good (3), such as the increase of benevolence in proportion to cruelty, which logically required for its occurrence the occurrence of some second order evil. But even if evil (2) could be explained in this way, it is fairly clear that there would be third order evils contrasting with this third order good: and we should be well on the way to an infinite regress, where the solution of a problem of evil, stated in terms of evil (n), indicated the existence of an evil ($n+1$), and a further problem to be solved.

4. 'Evil is due to human free will.'

Perhaps the most important proposed solution of the problem of evil is that evil is not to be ascribed to God at all, but to the independent actions of human beings, supposed to have been endowed by God with freedom of the will. This solution may be combined with the preceding one: first order evil (e.g. pain) may be justified as a logically necessary component in second order good (e.g. sympathy) while second order evil (e.g. cruelty) is not *justified*, but is so ascribed to human beings that God cannot be held responsible for it. This combination evades my third criticism of the preceding solution.

The free will solution also involves the preceding solution at a higher level. To explain why a wholly good God gave men free will although it would lead to some important evils, it must be argued that it is better on the whole that men should act freely, and sometimes err, than that they should be innocent automata, acting rightly in a wholly determined way. Freedom, that is to say, is now treated as a third order good, and as being more valuable than second order goods (such as sympathy and heroism) would be if they were deterministically produced, and it is being assumed that second order evils, such as cruelty, are logically necessary accompaniments of freedom, just as pain is a logically necessary pre-condition of sympathy.

I think that this solution is unsatisfactory primarily because of the incoherence of the notion of freedom of the will: but I cannot discuss this topic adequately here, although some of my criticisms will touch upon it.

First I should query the assumption that second order evils are logically necessary accompaniments of freedom. I should ask this: if God has made men such that in their free choices they sometimes prefer what is good and sometimes what is evil, why could he not have made men such that they always freely choose the good? If there is no logical impossibility in a man's freely choosing the good on one, or on several occasions, there cannot be a logical impossibility in his freely choosing the good on every occasion. God was not, then, faced with a choice between making innocent automata and making beings who, in acting freely, would sometimes go wrong: there was open to him the obviously better possibility of making beings who would act freely but always go right. Clearly, his failure to avail himself of this possibility is inconsistent with his being both omnipotent and wholly good.

If it is replied that this objection is absurd, that the making of some wrong choices is logically necessary for freedom, it would seem that 'freedom' must here mean complete randomness or indeterminacy, including randomness with regard to the alternatives good and evil, in other words that men's choices and consequent actions can be 'free' only if they are not determined by their characters. Only on this assumption can God escape the responsibility for men's actions; for if he made them as they are, but did not determine their wrong choices, this can only be because the wrong choices are not determined by men as they are. But then if freedom is randomness, how can it be a characteristic of *will*? And, still more, how can it be the most important good? What value or merit would there be in free choices if these were random actions which were not determined by the nature of the agent?

I conclude that to make this solution plausible two different senses of 'freedom' must be confused, one sense which will justify the view that freedom is a third order good, more valuable than other goods would be without it, and another sense, sheer randomness, to prevent us from ascribing to God a decision to make men such that they sometimes go wrong when he might have made them such that they would always freely go right.

This criticism is sufficient to dispose of this solution. But besides this there is a fundamental difficulty in the notion of an omnipotent God creating men with free will, for if men's wills are really free this must mean that even God cannot control them, that is, that God is no longer omnipotent. It may be objected that God's gift of freedom to men does not mean that he *cannot* control their wills, but that he always *refrains* from controlling their wills. But why, we may ask, should God refrain from controlling evil wills? Why should he not leave men free to will rightly, but intervene when he sees them beginning to will wrongly? If God could do this, but does not, and if he is wholly good, the only explanation could be that even a wrong free act of will is not really evil, that its freedom is a value which outweighs its wrongness, so that there would be a loss of value if God took away the wrongness and the freedom together. But this is utterly opposed to what theists say about sin in other contexts. The present solution of the problem of evil, then, can be maintained only in the form that God has made men so free that he *cannot* control their wills.

This leads us to what I call the Paradox of Omnipotence: can an omnipotent being make things which he cannot subsequently control? Or, what is practically equivalent to this, can an omnipotent being make rules which then bind himself? (These are practically equivalent because any such rules could be regarded as setting certain things beyond his control and *vice versa*.) The second of these formulations is relevant to the suggestions that we have already met, that an omnipotent God creates the rules of logic or causal laws, and is then bound by them.

It is clear that this is a paradox: the questions cannot be answered satisfactorily either in the affirmative or in the negative. If we answer 'Yes', it follows that if God actually makes things which he cannot control, or makes rules which bind himself, he is not omnipotent once he has made them: there are *then* things which he cannot do. But if we answer 'No', we are immediately asserting that there are things which he cannot do, that is to say that he is already not omnipotent.

It cannot be replied that the question which sets this paradox is not a proper question. It would make perfectly good sense to say that a human mechanic has made a machine which he cannot control: if there is any difficulty about the question it lies in the notion of omnipotence itself.

This, incidentally, shows that although we have approached this paradox from the free will theory, it is equally a problem for a theological determinist. No one thinks that machines have free will, yet they may well be beyond the control of their makers. The determinist might reply that anyone who makes anything determines its ways of acting and so determines its subsequent behaviour: even the human mechanic does this by his *choice* of materials and structure for his machine, though he does not know all about either of these: the mechanic thus determines, though he may not foresee, his machine's actions. And since God is omniscient, and since his creation of things is total, he both determines and foresees the ways in which his creatures will act. We may grant this, but it is beside the point. The question is not whether God *originally* determined the future actions of his creatures, but whether he can *subsequently* control their actions, or whether he was able in his original creation to put things beyond his subsequent control. Even on determinist principles the answers 'Yes' and 'No' are equally irreconcilable with God's omnipotence.

Before suggesting a solution of this paradox, I would point out that there is a parallel Paradox of Sovereignty. Can a legal sovereign make a law restricting its own future legislative power? For example, could the British parliament make a law forbidding any future parliament to socialize banking, and also forbidding the future repeal of this law itself? Or could the British parliament, which was legally sovereign in Australia in, say, 1899, pass a valid law, or series of laws, which made it no longer sovereign in 1933? Again, neither the affirmative nor the negative answer is really satisfactory. If we were to answer 'Yes', we should be admitting the validity of a law which, if it were actually made, would mean that parliament was no longer sovereign. If we were to answer 'No', we should be admitting that there is a law, not logically absurd, which parliament cannot validly make, that is, that parliament is not now a legal sovereign. This paradox can be solved in the following way. We should distinguish between first order laws, that is laws governing the actions of individuals and bodies other than the legislature, and second order laws, that is laws about laws, laws governing the actions of the legislature itself. Correspondingly, we should distinguish between two orders of sovereignty, first order sovereignty (sovereignty (1)) which is unlimited authority to make first order laws, and second order sovereignty (sovereignty (2)) which is unlimited authority to make second order laws. If we say that parliament is sovereign we might mean that any parliament at any time has sovereignty (1), or we might mean that parliament has both sovereignty (1) and sovereignty (2) at present, but we cannot without contradiction mean both that the present parliament has sovereignty (2) and that every parliament at every time has sovereignty (1), for if the present parliament has sovereignty (2) it may use it to take away the sovereignty (1) of later parliaments. What the paradox shows is that we cannot ascribe to any continuing institution legal sovereignty in an inclusive sense.

The analogy between omnipotence and sovereignty shows that the paradox of omnipotence can be solved in a similar way. We must distinguish between first order omnipotence (omnipotence (1)), that is unlimited power to act, and second order omnipotence (omnipotence (2)), that is unlimited power to determine what powers to act things shall have. Then we could consistently say that God all the time has omnipotence (1), but if so no beings at any time have powers to act independently of God. Or we could say that God at one time had omnipotence (2), and used it to assign independent powers to act to certain things, so that God thereafter did not have omnipotence (1). But what the paradox shows is that we cannot consistently ascribe to any continuing being omnipotence in an inclusive sense.

An alternative solution to this paradox would be simply to deny that God is a continuing being, that any times can be assigned to his actions at all. But on this assumption (which also has difficulties of its own) no meaning can be given to the assertion that God made men with wills so free that he could not control them. The paradox of omnipotence can be avoided by putting God outside time, but the free will solution of the problem of evil cannot be saved in this way, and equally it remains impossible to hold that an omnipotent God *binds himself* by causal or logical laws.

Conclusion

Of the proposed solutions of the problem of evil which we have examined, none has stood up to criticism. There may be other solutions which require examination, but this study strongly suggests that there is no valid solution of the problem which does not modify at least one of the constituent propositions in a way which would seriously affect the essential core of the theistic position.

Quite apart from the problem of evil, the paradox of omnipotence has shown that God's omnipotence must in any case be restricted in one way or another, that unqualified omnipotence cannot be ascribed to any being that continues through time. And if God and his actions are not in time, can omnipotence, or power of any sort, be meaningfully ascribed to him?

Extract 2: Antony Flew and R.M. Hare, 'Theology and Falsification: A Symposium' (1971)

Taken from: *The Philosophy of Religion* edited by Basil Mitchell (Oxford University Press, 1977), Chapter I, Theology and Falsification: A Symposium, pp. 13–18.

A. ANTHONY FLEW

LET us begin with a parable. It is a parable developed from a tale told by John Wisdom in his haunting and revelatory article 'Gods'. Once upon a time two explorers came upon a clearing in the jungle. In the clearing were growing many flowers and many weeds. One explorer says, 'Some gardener must tend this plot.' The other disagrees, 'There is no gardener.' So they pitch their tents and set a watch. No gardener is ever seen. 'But perhaps he is an invisible gardener.' So they set up a barbed-wire fence. They electrify it. They patrol with bloodhounds. (For they remember how H. G. Wells's 'Invisible Man' could be both smelt and touched though he could not be seen.) But no shrieks ever suggest that some intruder has received a shock. No movements of the wire ever betray an invisible climber. The bloodhounds never give cry. Yet still the Believer is not convinced. 'But there is a gardener, invisible, intangible, insensible to electric shocks, a gardener who has no scent and makes no sound, a gardener who comes secretly to look after the garden which he loves.' At last the Sceptic despairs, 'But what remains of your original assertion? Just how does what you call an invisible, intangible, eternally elusive gardener differ from an imaginary gardener or even from no gardener at all?'

In this parable we can see how what starts as an assertion, that something exists or that there is some analogy between certain complexes of phenomena, may be reduced step by step to an altogether different status, to an expression perhaps of a 'picture preference'. The Sceptic says there is no gardener. The Believer says there is a gardener (but invisible etc.). One man talks about sexual behaviour. Another man prefers to talk of Aphrodite (but knows that there is not really a superhuman person additional to, and somehow responsible for, all sexual phenomena). The process of qualification may be checked at any point before the original assertion is completely withdrawn and something of that first assertion will remain (tautology). Mr. Wells's invisible man could not, admittedly, be seen, but in all other respects he was a man like the rest of us. But though the process of qualification may be, and of course usually is, checked in time, it is not always judiciously so halted. Someone may dissipate his assertion completely without noticing that he has done so. A fine brash hypothesis may thus be killed by inches, the death by a thousand qualifications.

And in this, it seems to me, lies the peculiar danger, the endemic evil of theological utterance. Take such utterances as 'God has a plan', 'God created the world', 'God loves us as a father loves his children.' They look at first sight very much like assertions, vast cosmological assertions. Of course, this is no sure sign that they either are, or are intended to be, assertions. But let us confine ourselves to the cases where those who utter such sentences intend them to express assertions. (Merely remarking parenthetically that those who intend or interpret such utterances as crypto-commands, expressions of wishes, disguised ejaculations, concealed ethics, or as anything else but assertions, are unlikely to succeed in making them either properly orthodox or practically effective.)

Now to assert that such and such is the case is necessarily equivalent to denying that such and such is not the case. Suppose, then that we are in doubt as to what someone who gives vent to an utterance is asserting, or suppose that, more radically, we are sceptical as to whether he is really asserting anything at all, one way of trying to understand (or perhaps it will be to expose) his utterance is to attempt to find what he would regard as counting against, or as being incompatible with, its truth. For if the utterance is indeed an assertion, it will necessarily be equivalent to a denial of the negation of that assertion. And anything which would count against the assertion, or which would induce the speaker to withdraw it and to admit that it had been mistaken, must be part of (or the whole of) the meaning of the negation of that assertion. And to know the meaning of the negation of an assertion, is as near as makes no matter, to know the meaning of that assertion. And if there is nothing which a putative assertion denies then there is nothing which it asserts either: and so it is not really an assertion. When the Sceptic in the parable asked the Believer, 'Just how does what you call an invisible, intangible, eternally elusive gardener differ from an imaginary gardener at all?' he was suggesting that the Believer's earlier statement had been so eroded by qualification that it was no longer an assertion at all.

Now it often seems to people who are not religious as if there was no conceivable event or series of events the occurrence of which would be admitted by sophisticated religious people to be a sufficient reason for conceding 'There wasn't a God after all' or 'God does not really love us then.' Someone tells us that God loves us as a father loves his children. We are reassured. But then we see a child dying of inoperable cancer of the throat. His earthly father is driven frantic in his efforts to help, but his Heavenly Father reveals no obvious sign of concern. Some qualification is made – God's love is 'not a merely human love' or it is 'an inscrutable love', perhaps – and we realize that such sufferings are quite compatible with the truth of the assertion that 'God loves us as a father (but, of course,...)'. We are reassured again. But then perhaps we ask: what is this assurance of God's (appropriately qualified) love worth, what is this apparent guarantee really a guarantee against? Just what would have to happen not merely (morally and wrongly) to tempt but also (logically and rightly) to entitle us to say 'God does not love us' or even 'God does not exist'? I therefore put to the succeeding symposiasts the simple central questions, 'What would have to occur or to have occurred to constitute for you a disproof of the love of, or of the existence of, God?'

B. R. M. HARE

I wish to make it clear that I shall not try to defend Christianity in particular, but religion in general – not because I do not believe in Christianity, but because you cannot understand what Christianity is, until you have understood what religion is.

I must begin by confessing that, on the ground marked out by Flew, he seems to me to be completely victorious. I therefore shift my ground by relating another parable. A certain lunatic is convinced that all dons want to murder him. His friends introduce him to all the mildest and most respectable dons that they can find, and after each of them has retired, they say, 'You see, he doesn't really want to murder you; he spoke to you in a most cordial manner; surely you are convinced now?' But

the lunatic replies, 'Yes, but that was only his diabolical cunning; he's really plotting against me the whole time, like the rest of them; I know it I tell you.' However many kindly dons are produced, the reaction is still the same.

Now we say that such a person is deluded. But what is he deluded about? About the truth or falsity of an assertion? Let us apply Flew's test to him. There is no behaviour of dons that can be enacted which he will accept as counting against his theory; and therefore his theory, on this test, asserts nothing. But it does not follow that there is no difference between what he thinks about dons and what most of us think about them – otherwise we should not call him a lunatic and ourselves sane, and dons would have no reason to feel uneasy about his presence in Oxford.

Let us call that in which we differ from this lunatic, our respective *bliks*. He has an insane *blik* about dons; we have a sane one. It is important to realize that we have a sane one, not no *blik* at all; for there must be two sides to any argument – if he has a wrong *blik*, then those who are right about dons must have a right one. Flew has shown that a *blik* does not consist in an assertion or system of them; but nevertheless it is very important to have the right *blik*.

Let us try to imagine what it would be like to have different bliks about other things than dons. When I am driving my car, it sometimes occurs to me to wonder whether my movements of the steering-wheel will always continue to be followed by corresponding alterations in the direction of the car. I have never had a steering failure, though I have had skids, which must be similar. Moreover, I know enough about how the steering of my car is made, to know the sort of thing that would have to go wrong for the steering to fail – steel joints would have to part, or steel rods break, or something – but how do I know that this won't happen? The truth is, I don't know; I just have a *blik* about steel and its properties, so that normally I trust the steering of my car; but I find it not at all difficult to imagine what it would be like to lose this *blik* and acquire the opposite one. People would say I was silly about steel; but there would be no mistaking the reality of the difference between our respective *bliks* – for example, I should never go in a motor-car. Yet I should hesitate to say that the difference between us was the difference between contradictory assertions. No amount of safe arrivals or bench tests will remove my *blik* and restore the normal one; for my *blik* is compatible with any finite number of such tests.

It was Hume who taught us that our whole commerce with the world depends upon our *blik* about the world; and that differences between *bliks* about the world cannot be settled by observation of what happens in the world. That was why, having performed the interesting experiment of doubting the ordinary man's *blik* about the world, and showing that no proof could be given to make us adopt one *blik* rather than another, he turned to backgammon to take his mind off the problem. It seems, indeed, to be impossible even to formulate as an assertion the normal *blik* about the world which makes me put my confidence in the future reliability of steel joints, in the continued ability of the road to support my car, and not gape beneath it revealing nothing below; in the general non-homicidal tendencies of dons; in my own continued well-being (in some sense of that word that I may not now fully understand) if I continue to do what is right according to

my lights; in the general likelihood of people like Hitler coming to a bad end. But perhaps a formulation less inadequate than most is to be found in the Psalms: 'The earth is weak and all the inhabitants thereof: I bear up the pillars of it.'

The mistake of the position which Flew selects for attack is to regard this kind of talk as some sort of *explanation*, as scientists are accustomed to use the word. As such, it would obviously be ludicrous. We no longer believe in God as an Atlas – *nous n'avons pas besoin de cette hypothèse*. But it is nevertheless true to say that, as Hume saw, without a *blik* there can be no explanation; for it is by our *bliks* that we decide what is and what is not an explanation. Suppose we believed that everything that happened, happened by pure chance. This would not of course be an assertion; for it is compatible with anything happening or not happening, and so, incidentally, is its contradictory. But if we had this belief, we should not be able to explain or predict or plan anything. Thus, although we should not be *asserting* anything different from those of a more normal belief, there would be a great difference between us; and this is the sort of difference that there is between those who really believe in God and those who really disbelieve in him.

The word 'really' is important, and may excite suspicion. I put it in, because when people have had a good Christian upbringing, as have most of those who now profess not to believe in any sort of religion, it is very hard to discover what they really believe. The reason why they find it so easy to think that they are not religious, is that they have never got into the frame of mind of one who suffers from the doubts to which religion is the answer. Not for them the terrors of the primitive jungle. Having abandoned some of the more picturesque fringes of religion, they think that they have abandoned the whole thing – whereas in fact they still have got, and could not live without, a religion of a comfortably substantial, albeit highly sophisticated, kind, which differs from that of many 'religious people' in little more than this, that 'religious people' like to sing Psalms about theirs – a very natural and proper thing to do. But nevertheless there may be a big difference lying behind – the difference between two people who, though side by side, are walking in different directions. I do not know in what direction Flew is walking; perhaps he does not know either. But we have had some examples recently of various ways in which one can walk away from Christianity, and there are any number of possibilities. After all, man has not changed biologically since primitive times; it is his religion that has changed, and it can easily change again. And if you do not think that such changes make a difference, get acquainted with some Sikhs and some Mussulmans of the same Punjabi stock; you will find them quite different sorts of people.

There is an important difference between Flew's parable and my own which we have not yet noticed. The explorers do not *mind* about their garden; they discuss it with interest, but not with concern. But my lunatic, poor fellow, minds about dons; and I mind about the steering of my car; it often has people in it that I care for. It is because I mind very much about what goes on in the garden in which I find myself, that I am unable to share the explorers' detachment.

Extract 3: Basil Mitchell and Antony Flew, 'Theology and Falsification: A Symposium' (1971)

Taken from: *The Philosophy of Religion* edited by Basil Mitchell (Oxford University Press, 1977), Chapter 1 Theology and Falsification: A Symposium, pp. 18-22.

C. BASIL MITCHELL

Flew's article is searching and perceptive, but there is, I think, something odd about his conduct of the theologian's case. The theologian surely would not deny that the fact of pain counts against the assertion that God loves men. This very incompatibility generates the most intractable of theological problems – the problem of evil. So the theologian *does* recognize the fact of pain as counting against Christian doctrine. But it is true that he will not allow it – or anything – to count decisively against it; for he is committed by his faith to trust in God. His attitude is not that of the detached observer, but of the believer.

Perhaps this can be brought out by yet another parable. In time of war in an occupied country, a member of the resistance meets one night a stranger who deeply impresses him. They spend that night together in conversation. The Stranger tells the partisan that he himself is on the side of the resistance – indeed that he is in command of it, and urges the partisan to have faith in him no matter what happens. The partisan is utterly convinced at that meeting of the Stranger's sincerity and constancy and undertakes to trust him.

They never meet in conditions of intimacy again. But sometimes the Stranger is seen helping members of the resistance, and the partisan is grateful and says to his friends, 'He is on our side.'

Sometimes he is seen in the uniform of the police handing over patriots to the occupying power. On these occasions his friends murmur against him; but the partisan still says, 'He is on our side.' He still believes that, in spite of appearances, the Stranger did not deceive him. Sometimes he asks the Stranger for help and receives it. He is then thankful. Sometimes he asks and does not receive it. Then he says, 'The Stranger knows best.' Sometimes his friends, in exasperation, say, 'Well, what *would* he have to do for you to admit that you were wrong and that he is not on our side?' But the partisan refuses to answer. He will not consent to put the Stranger to the test. And sometimes his friends complain, 'Well, if *that's* what you mean by his being on our side, the sooner he goes over to the other side the better.'

The partisan of the parable does not allow anything to count decisively against the proposition 'The Stranger is on our side.' This is because he has committed himself to trust the Stranger. But he of course recognizes that the Stranger's ambiguous behaviour *does* count against what he believes about him. It is precisely this situation which constitutes the trial of his faith.

When the partisan asks for help and doesn't get it, what can he do? He can (a) conclude that the stranger is not on our side; or (b) maintain that he is on our side, but that he has reasons for withholding help.

The first he will refuse to do. How long can he uphold the second position without its becoming just silly?

I don't think one can say in advance. It will depend on the nature of the impression created by the Stranger in the first place. It will depend, too, on the manner in which he takes the Stranger's behaviour. If he blandly dismisses it as of no consequence, as having no bearing upon his belief, it will be assumed that he is thoughtless or insane. And it quite obviously won't do for him to say easily, 'Oh, when used of the Stranger the phrase "is on our side" *means* ambiguous behaviour of this sort.' In that case he would be like the religious man who says blandly of a terrible disaster, 'It is God's will.' No, he will only be regarded as sane and reasonable in his belief, if he experiences in himself the full force of the conflict.

It is here that my parable differs from Hare's. The partisan admits that many things may and do count against his belief: whereas Hare's lunatic who has a *blik* about dons doesn't admit that anything counts against his *blik*. Nothing *can* count against *bliks*. Also the partisan has a reason for having in the first instance committed himself, viz. the character of the Stranger; whereas the lunatic has no reason for his *blik* about dons – because, of course, you can't have reasons for *bliks*.

This means that I agree with Flew that theological utterances must be assertions. The partisan is making an assertion when he says, 'The Stranger is on our side.'

Do I want to say that the partisan's belief about the Stranger is, in any sense, an explanation? I think I do. It explains and makes sense of the Stranger's behaviour: it helps to explain also the resistance movement in the context of which he appears. In each case it differs from the interpretation which the others put up on the same facts.

'God loves men' resembles 'the Stranger is on our side' (and many other significant statements, e.g. historical ones) in not being conclusively falsifiable. They can both be treated in at least three different ways: (1) as provisional hypotheses to be discarded if experience tells against them; (2) as significant articles of faith; (3) as vacuous formulae (expressing, perhaps, a desire for reassurance) to which experience makes no difference and which make no difference to life.

The Christian, once he has committed himself, is precluded by his faith from taking up the first attitude: 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' He is in constant danger, as Flew has observed, of slipping into the third. But he need not; and, if he does, it is a failure in faith as well as in logic.

D. ANTONY FLEW

It has been a good discussion: and I am glad to have helped to provoke it. But now – at least in *University* – it must come to an end: and the Editors of *University* have asked me to make some concluding remarks. Since it is impossible to deal with all the issues raised or to comment separately upon each contribution, I will concentrate on Mitchell and Hare, as representative of two very different kinds of response to the challenge made in 'Theology and Falsification'.

The challenge, it will be remembered, ran like this. Some theological utterances seem to, and are intended to, provide explanations or express assertions. Now an assertion, to be an assertion at all, must claim that things stand thus and thus; *and not otherwise*. Similarly an explanation, to be an explanation at all, must explain why this particular thing occurs; *and not something else*. Those last clauses are crucial. And yet sophisticated religious people – or so it seemed to me – are apt to overlook this, and tend to refuse to allow, not merely that anything actually does occur, but that anything conceivably could occur, which would count against their theological assertions and explanations. But in so far as they do this, their supposed explanations are actually bogus, and their seeming assertions are really vacuous.

Mitchell's response to this challenge is admirably direct, straightforward, and understanding. He agrees 'that theological utterances must be assertions'. He agrees that if they are to be assertions, there must be something that would count against their truth. He agrees, too, that believers are in constant danger of transforming their would-be assertions into 'vacuous formulae'. But he takes me to task for an oddity in my 'conduct of the theologian's case. The theologian surely would not deny that the fact of pain counts against the assertion that God loves men. This very incompatibility generates the most intractable of theological problems, the problem of evil.' I think he is right. I should have made a distinction between two very different ways of dealing with what looks like evidence against the love of God: the way I stressed was the expedient of qualifying the original assertion; the way the theologian usually takes, at first, is to admit that it looks bad but to insist that there is – there must be – some explanation which will show that, in spite of appearances, there really is a God who loves us. His difficulty, it seems to me, is that he has given God attributes which rule out all possible saving explanations. In Mitchell's parable of the Stranger it is easy for the believer to find plausible excuses for ambiguous behaviour: for the Stranger is a man. But suppose the Stranger is God. We cannot say that he would like to help but cannot: God is omnipotent. We cannot say that he would help if he only knew: God is omniscient. We cannot say that he 'is not responsible for the wickedness of others: God creates those others. Indeed an omnipotent, omniscient God must be an accessory before (and during) the fact to every human misdeed! as well as being responsible for every non-moral defect in the universe. So, though I entirely concede that Mitchell was absolutely right to insist against me that the theologian's first move is to look for an *explanation*, I still think that in the end, if relentlessly pursued, he will have to resort to the avoiding action of *qualification*. And there lies the danger of that death by a thousand qualifications, which would, I agree, constitute 'a failure in faith as well as in logic'.

Hare's approach is fresh and bold. He confesses that 'on the ground marked out by Flew, he seems to me to be completely victorious'. He therefore introduces the concept of *blik*. But while I think that there is room for some such concept in philosophy, and that philosophers should be grateful to Hare for his invention, I nevertheless want to insist that any attempt to analyse Christian religious utterances as expressions or affirmations of a *blik* rather than as (at least would-be) assertions about the cosmos is fundamentally misguided. *First*, because thus interpreted, they would be entirely unorthodox. If Hare's religion really is a *blik*, involving no cosmological assertions about the nature and activities of a supposed personal creator, then surely he is not a Christian at all? *Second*, because thus interpreted, they could scarcely do the job they do. If they were not even intended

as assertions then many religious activities would become fraudulent, or merely silly. If 'You ought *because* it is God's will' asserts no more than 'You ought', then the person who prefers the former phraseology is not really giving a reason, but a fraudulent substitution for one, a dialectical dud cheque. If 'My soul must be immortal *because* God loves his children, etc.' asserts no more than 'My soul must be immortal', then the man who reassures himself with theological arguments for immortality is being as silly as the man who tries to clear his overdraft by writing his bank a cheque on the same amount. (Of course neither of these utterances would be distinctively Christian: but this discussion never pretended to be so confined.) Religious utterances may indeed express false or even bogus assertions: but I simply do not believe that they are not both intended and interpreted to be or at any rate to presuppose assertions, at least in the context of religious practice; whatever shifts may be demanded, in another context, by the exigencies of theological apologetic.

One final suggestion. The philosophers of religion might well draw upon George Orwell's last appalling nightmare *1984* for the concept of *doublethink*. '*Doublethink* means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs simultaneously, and accepting both of them. The party intellectual knows that he is playing tricks with reality, but by the exercise of doublethink he also satisfies himself that reality is not violated' (*1984*, p. 220). Perhaps religious intellectuals too are sometimes driven to doublethink in order to retain their faith in a loving God in face of the reality of a heartless and indifferent world. But of this more another time, perhaps.

Extract 4: A Debate on the Existence of God – A Debate between Bertrand Russell and Father Frederick C Copleston (1948)

Taken from: <http://www.biblicalcatholic.com/apologetics/p20.htm>

Copleston: As we are going to discuss the existence of God, it might perhaps be as well to come to some provisional agreement as to what we understand by the term "God." I presume that we mean a supreme personal Being – distinct from the world and Creator of the world. Would you agree – provisionally at least – to accept this statement as the meaning of the term "God"?

Russell: Yes, I accept this definition.

Copleston: Well, my position is the affirmative position that such a Being actually exists, and that His existence can be proved philosophically. Perhaps you would tell me if your position is that of agnosticism or of atheism. I mean, would you say that the non-existence of God can be proved?

Russell: No, I should not say that: my position is agnostic.

Copleston: Would you agree with me that the problem of God is a problem of great importance? For example, would you agree that if God does not exist, human beings and human history can have no other purpose than the purpose they choose to give themselves, which – in practice – is likely to mean the purpose which those impose who have the power to impose it?

Russell: Roughly speaking, yes, though I should have to place some limitation on your last clause.

Copleston: Would you agree that if there is no God – no absolute Being – there can be no absolute values? I mean, would you agree that if there is no absolute good that the relativity of values results?

Russell: No, I think these questions are logically distinct. Take, for instance, G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica*, where he maintains that there is a distinction of good and evil, that both of these are definite concepts. But he does not bring in the idea of God to support that contention.

Copleston: Well, suppose we leave the question of good till later, till we come to the moral argument, and I give first a metaphysical argument. I'd like to put the main weight on the metaphysical argument based on Leibniz's argument from "Contingency" and then later we might discuss the moral argument. Suppose I give a brief statement on the metaphysical argument and that then we go on to discuss it?

Russell: That seems to me to be a very good plan.

THE ARGUMENT FROM CONTINGENCY

Copleston: Well, for clarity's sake, I'll divide the argument into distinct stages. First of all, I should say, we know that there are at least some beings in the world which do not contain in themselves the reason for their existence. For example, I depend on my parents, and now on the air, and on food, and so on. Now, secondly, the world is simply the real or imagined totality or aggregate of individual objects, none of which contain in themselves alone the reason of their existence. There isn't any world distinct from the objects which form it, any more than the human race is something apart from the members. Therefore, I should say, since objects or events exist, and since no object of experience contains within itself the reason of its existence, this reason, the totality of objects, must have a reason external to itself. And that reason must be an existent being.

Well, this being is either itself the reason for its own existence, or it is not. If it is, well and good. If not, then we must proceed further. But if we proceed to infinity in that sense, then there's no explanation of existence at all. So, I should say, in order to explain existence, we must come to a Being which contains within itself the reason for its own existence, that is to say, which cannot not exist.

Russell: This raises a great many points and it's not altogether easy to know where to begin, but I think that, perhaps, in answering your argument, the best point with which to begin is the question of a Necessary Being. The word "necessary" I should maintain, can only be applied significantly to propositions. And, in fact, only to such as are analytic – that is to say – such as it is self-contradictory to deny. I could only admit a Necessary Being if there were a being whose existence it is self-contradictory to deny. I should like to know whether you would accept Leibniz's division of propositions into truths of reason and truths of fact. The former – the truths of reason – being necessary.

Copleston: Well, I certainly should not subscribe to what seems to be Leibniz's idea of truths of reason and truths of fact, since it would appear that, for him, there are in the long run only analytic propositions. [It would seem that for Leibniz truths of fact are ultimately reducible to truths of reason. That is to say, to analytic propositions, at least for an omniscient mind. Well, I couldn't agree with that. For one thing it would fail to meet the requirements of the experience of freedom. I don't want to uphold the whole philosophy of Leibniz. I have made use of his argument from contingent to Necessary Being, basing the argument on the principle of sufficient reason, simply because it seems to me a brief and clear formulation of what is, in my opinion, the fundamental metaphysical argument for God's existence.

Russell: But, to my mind, a "necessary proposition" has got to be analytic. I don't see what else it can mean. And analytic propositions are always complex and logically somewhat late. "Irrational animals are animals" is an analytic proposition; but a proposition such as "This is an animal" can never be analytic. In fact, all the propositions that can be analytic are somewhat late in the build-up of propositions.

Copleston: Take the proposition "if there is a contingent being then there is a Necessary Being." I consider that that proposition hypothetically expressed is a necessary proposition. If you are going to call every necessary proposition an analytic proposition, then – in order to avoid a dispute in terminology – I would

agree to call it analytic, though I don't consider it a tautological proposition. But the proposition is a necessary proposition only on the supposition that there is a contingent being. That there is a contingent being actually existing has to be discovered by experience, and the proposition that there is a contingent being is certainly not an analytic proposition, though once you know, I should maintain, that there is a contingent being, it follows of necessity that there is a Necessary Being.

Russell: The difficulty of this argument is that I don't admit the idea of a Necessary Being and I don't admit that there is any particular meaning in calling other beings "contingent." These phrases don't for me have a significance except within a logic that I reject.

Copleston: Do you mean that you reject these terms because they won't fit in with what is called "modern logic"?

Russell: Well, I can't find anything that they could mean. The word "necessary," it seems to me, is a useless word, except as applied to analytic propositions, not to things.

Copleston: In the first place, what do you mean by "modern logic?" As far as I know, there are somewhat differing systems. In the second place, not all modern logicians surely would admit the meaninglessness of metaphysics. We both know, at any rate, one very eminent modern thinker whose knowledge of modern logic was profound, but who certainly did not think that metaphysics are meaningless or, in particular, that the problem of God is meaningless. Again, even if all modern logicians held that metaphysical terms are meaningless, it would not follow that they were right. The proposition that metaphysical terms are meaningless seems to me to be a proposition based on an assumed philosophy.

The dogmatic position behind it seems to be this: What will not go into my machine is non-existent, or it is meaningless; it is the expression of emotion. I am simply trying to point out that anybody who says that a particular system of modern logic is the sole criterion of meaning is saying something that is over-dogmatic; he is dogmatically insisting that a part of philosophy is the whole of philosophy. After all a "contingent" being is a being which has not in itself the complete reason for its existence. That's what I mean by a contingent being. You know, as well as I do, that the existence of neither of us can be explained without reference to something or somebody outside us, our parents, for example. A "Necessary" Being, on the other hand means a being that must and cannot not exist. You may say that there is no such Being, but you will find it hard to convince me that you do not understand the terms I am using. If you do not understand them, then how can you be entitled to say that such a Being does not exist, if that is what you do say?

Russell: Well, there are points here that I don't propose to go into at length. I don't maintain the meaninglessness of metaphysics in general at all. I maintain the meaninglessness of certain particular terms – not on any general ground, but simply because I've not been able to see an interpretation of those particular terms. It's not a general dogma – it's a particular thing. But those points I will leave out for the moment.

Well, I will say that what you have been saying brings us back, it seems to me, to the Ontological Argument that there is a being whose essence involves existence,

so that his existence is analytic. That seems to me to be impossible, and it raises, of course, the question what one means by existence, and as to this, I think a subject named can never be significantly said to exist but only a subject described. And that existence, in fact, quite definitely is not a predicate.

Copleston: Well, you say, I believe, that it is bad grammar, or rather bad syntax to say for example "T. S. Eliot exists"; one ought to say, for example, "[He,] the author of *Murder in the Cathedral*, exists." Are you going to say that the proposition, "The cause of the world exists," is without meaning? You may say that the world has no cause; but I fail to see how you can say that the proposition that "the cause of the world exists" is meaningless. Put it in the form of a question: "Has the world a cause?" or "Does a cause of the world exist?" Most people surely would understand the question, even if they don't agree about the answer.

Russell: Well, certainly the question "Does the cause of the world exist?" is a question that has meaning. But if you say "Yes, God is the cause of the world" you're using God as a proper name; then "God exists" will not be a statement that has meaning; that is the position that I am maintaining. Because, therefore, it will follow that it cannot be an analytic proposition ever to say that this or that exists. Take for example, suppose you take as your subject "the existent round-square," it would look like an analytic proposition that "the existent round-square exists," but it doesn't exist.

Copleston: No, it doesn't, then surely you can't say it doesn't exist unless you have a conception of what existence is. As to the phrase "existent round-square," I should say that it has no meaning at all.

Russell: I quite agree. Then I should say the same thing in another context in reference to a "Necessary Being."

Copleston: Well, we seem to have arrived at an impasse. To say that a Necessary Being is a being that must exist and cannot not exist has for me a definite meaning. For you it has no meaning.

Russell: Well, we can press the point a little, I think. A Being that must exist and cannot not exist, would surely, according to you, be a Being whose essence involves existence.

Copleston: Yes, a being the essence of which is to exist. But I should not be willing to argue the existence of God simply from the idea of His essence because I don't think we have any clear intuition of God's essence as yet. I think we have to argue from the world of experience to God.

Russell: Yes, I quite see the distinction. But, at the same time, for a being with sufficient knowledge, it would be true to say "Here is this being whose essence involves existence."

Copleston: Yes, certainly if anybody saw God, he would see that God must exist.

Russell: So that I mean there is a being whose essence involves existence although we don't know that essence. We only know there is such a being.

Copleston: Yes, I should add we don't know the essence *a priori*. It is only true *a posteriori* through our experience of the world that we come to a knowledge of the existence of that Being. And then one argues, the essence and existence must be identical. Because if God's essence and God's existence were not identical, then some sufficient reason for this existence would have to be found beyond God.

Russell: So it all turns on this question of sufficient reason, and I must say you haven't defined "sufficient reason" in a way that I can understand – what do you mean by sufficient reason? You don't mean cause?

Copleston: Not necessarily. Cause is a kind of sufficient reason. Only contingent being can have a cause. God is His own sufficient reason; but He is not cause of Himself. By sufficient reason in the full sense I mean an explanation adequate for the existence of some particular being.

Russell: But when is an explanation adequate? Suppose I am about to make a flame with a match. You may say that the adequate explanation of that is that I rub it on the box.

Copleston: Well, for practical purposes – but theoretically, that's only a partial explanation. An adequate explanation must ultimately be a total explanation, to which nothing further can be added.

Russell: Then I can only say you're looking for something which can't be got, and which one ought not to expect to get.

Copleston: To say that one has not found it is one thing; to say that one should not look for it seems to me rather dogmatic.

Russell: Well, I don't know. I mean, the explanation of one thing is another thing which makes the other thing dependent on yet another, and you have to grasp this sorry scheme of things entire to do what you want, and that we can't do.

Copleston: But are you going to say that we can't, or we shouldn't even raise the question of the existence of the whole of this sorry scheme of things – of the whole universe?

Russell: Yes, I don't think there's any meaning in it at all. I think the word "universe" is a handy word in some connections, but I don't think it stands for anything that has a meaning.

Copleston: If the word is meaningless, it can't be so very handy. In any case, I don't say that the universe is something different from the objects which compose it (I indicated that in my brief summary of the proof).

What I'm doing is to look for the reason, in this case the cause of the objects – the real or imagined totality of which constitute what we call the universe. You say, I think that the universe – or my existence if you prefer, or any other existence – is unintelligible?

Russell: First may I take up the point that if a word is meaningless it can't be handy. That sounds well but isn't in fact correct. Take, say, such a word as "the" or "than." You can't point to any object that those words mean, but they are very useful words; I should say the same of "universe." But leaving that point, you ask

whether I consider that the universe is unintelligible. I shouldn't say unintelligible – I think it is without explanation. Intelligible, to my mind, is a different thing. Intelligible has to do with the thing itself intrinsically and not with its relations.

Copleston: Well, my point is that what we call the world is intrinsically unintelligible, apart from the existence of God. You see, I don't believe that the infinity of the series of events – I mean a horizontal series, so to speak – if such an infinity could be proved, would be in the slightest degree relevant to the situation. If you add up chocolates you get chocolates after all and not a sheep. If you add up chocolates to infinity, you presumably get an infinite number of chocolates. So if you add up contingent beings to infinity, you still get contingent beings, not a Necessary Being. An infinite series of contingent beings will be, to my way of thinking, as unable to cause itself as one contingent being. However, you say, I think, that it is illegitimate to raise the question of what will explain the existence of any particular object.

Russell: It's quite all right if you mean by explaining it, simply finding a cause for it.

Copleston: Well, why stop at one particular object? Why shouldn't one raise the question of the cause of the existence of all particular objects?

Russell: Because I see no reason to think there is any. The whole concept of cause is one we derive from our observation of particular things; I see no reason whatsoever to suppose that the total has any cause whatsoever.

Copleston: Well, to say that there isn't any cause is not the same thing as saying that we shouldn't look for a cause. The statement that there isn't any cause should come, if it comes at all, at the end of the inquiry, not the beginning. In any case, if the total has no cause, then to my way of thinking it must be its own cause, which seems to me impossible. Moreover, the statement that the world is simply there if in answer to a question, presupposes that the question has meaning.

Russell: No, it doesn't need to be its own cause, what I'm saying is that the concept of cause is not applicable to the total.

Copleston: Then you would agree with Sartre that the universe is what he calls "gratuitous"?

Russell: Well, the word "gratuitous" suggests that it might be something else; I should say that the universe is just there, and that's all.

Copleston: Well, I can't see how you can rule out the legitimacy of asking the question how the total, or anything at all comes to be there. Why something rather than nothing, that is the question? The fact that we gain our knowledge of causality empirically, from particular causes, does not rule out the possibility of asking what the cause of the series is. If the word "cause" were meaningless or if it could be shown that Kant's view of the matter were correct, the question would be illegitimate I agree; but you don't seem to hold that the word "cause" is meaningless, and I do not suppose you are a Kantian.

Russell: I can illustrate what seems to me your fallacy. Every man who exists has a mother, and it seems to me your argument is that therefore the human race must have a mother, but obviously the human race hasn't a mother – that's a different logical sphere.

Copleston: Well, I can't really see a parity. If I were saying "every object has a phenomenal cause, therefore, the whole series has a phenomenal cause," there would be a parity; but I'm not saying that; I'm saying, every object has a phenomenal cause if you insist on the infinity of the series – but the series of phenomenal causes is an insufficient explanation of the series. Therefore, the series has not a phenomenal cause but a transcendent cause.

Russell: Well, that's always assuming that not only every particular thing in the world, but the world as a whole must have a cause. For that assumption I see no ground whatever. If you'll give me a ground I will listen to it.

Copleston: Well, the series of events is either caused or it's not caused. If it is caused, there must obviously be a cause outside the series. If it's not caused then it's sufficient to itself, and if it's sufficient to itself, it is what I call necessary. But it can't be necessary since each member is contingent, and we've agreed that the total has no reality apart from the members, therefore, it can't be necessary. Therefore, it can't be – uncaused – therefore it must have a cause. And I should like to observe in passing that the statement "the world is simply there and is inexplicable" can't be got out of logical analysis.

Russell: I don't want to seem arrogant, but it does seem to me that I can conceive things that you say the human mind can't conceive. As for things not having a cause, the physicists assure us that individual quantum transitions in atoms have no cause.

Copleston: Well, I wonder now whether that isn't simply a temporary inference.

Russell: It may be, but it does show that physicists' minds can conceive it.

Copleston: Yes, I agree, some scientists – physicists – are willing to allow for indetermination within a restricted field. But very many scientists are not so willing. I think that Professor Dingle, of London University, maintains that the Heisenberg uncertainty principle tells us something about the success (or the lack of it) of the present atomic theory in correlating observations, but not about nature in itself, and many physicists would accept this view. In any case, I don't see how physicists can fail to accept the theory in practice, even if they don't do so in theory.

I cannot see how science could be conducted on any other assumption than that of order and intelligibility in nature. The physicist presupposes, at least tacitly, that there is some sense in investigating nature and looking for the causes of events, just as the detective presupposes that there is some sense in looking for the cause of a murder. The metaphysician assumes that there is sense in looking for the reason or cause of phenomena, and, not being a Kantian, I consider that the metaphysician is as justified in his assumption as the physicist. When Sartre, for example, says the world is gratuitous, I think that he has not sufficiently considered what is implied by "gratuitous."

Russell: I think – there seems to me a certain unwarrantable extension here; the physicist looks for causes; that does not necessarily imply that there are causes everywhere. A man may look for gold without assuming that there is gold everywhere; if he finds gold, well and good, if he doesn't he's had bad luck. The same is true when the physicists look for causes. As for Sartre, I don't profess to know what he means, and I shouldn't like to be thought to interpret him, but for my part, I do think the notion of the world having an explanation is a mistake. I don't see why one should expect it to have and I think you say about what the scientist assumes is an over-statement.

Copleston: Well, it seems to me that the scientist does make some such assumption. When he experiments to find out some particular truth, behind that experiment lies the assumption that the universe is not simply discontinuous. There is the possibility of finding out a truth by experiment. The experiment may be a bad one, it may lead to no result, or not to the result that he wants, but that at any rate there is the possibility, through experiment, of finding out the truth that he assumes. And that seems to me to assume an ordered and intelligible universe.

Russell: I think you're generalizing more than is necessary. Undoubtedly the scientist assumes that this sort of thing is likely to be found and will often be found. He does not assume that it will be found, and that's a very important matter in modern physics.

Copleston: Well, I think he does assume or is bound to assume it tacitly in practice. It may be that, to quote Professor Haldane, "when I light the gas under the kettle, some of the water molecules will fly off as vapor, and there is no way of finding out which will do so," but it doesn't follow necessarily that the idea of chance must be introduced except in relation to our knowledge.

Russell: No it doesn't – at least if I may believe what he says. He's finding out quite a lot of things – the scientist is finding out quite a lot of things that are happening in the world, which are, at first, beginnings of causal chains – first causes which haven't in themselves got causes. He does not assume that everything has a cause.

Copleston: Surely that's a first cause within a certain selected field. It's a relatively first cause.

Russell: I don't think he'd say so. If there's a world in which most events, but not all, have causes, he will then be able to depict the probabilities and uncertainties by assuming that this particular event you're interested in probably has a cause. And since in any case you won't get more than probability that's good enough.

Copleston: It may be that the scientist doesn't hope to obtain more than probability, but in raising the question he assumes that the question of explanation has a meaning.

But your general point then, Lord Russell, is that it's illegitimate even to ask the question of the cause of the world?

Russell: Yes, that's my position.

Copleston: Well, if it's a question that for you has no meaning, it's of course very difficult to discuss it, isn't it?

Russell: Yes, it is very difficult. What do you say – shall we pass on to some other issue?

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Copleston: Let's. Well, perhaps I might say a word about religious experience, and then we can go on to moral experience. I don't regard religious experience as a strict proof of the existence of God, so the character of the discussion changes somewhat, but I think it's true to say that the best explanation of it is the existence of God. By religious experience I don't mean simply feeling good. I mean a loving, but unclear, awareness of some object which irresistibly seems to the experiencer as something transcending the self, something transcending all the normal objects of experience, something which cannot be pictured or conceptualized, but of the reality of which doubt is impossible – at least during the experience. I should claim that cannot be explained adequately and without residue, simply subjectively. The actual basic experience at any rate is most easily explained on the hypotheses that there is actually some objective cause of that experience.

Russell: I should reply to that line of argument that the whole argument from our own mental states to something outside us, is a very tricky affair. Even where we all admit its validity, we only feel justified in doing so, I think, because of the consensus of mankind. If there's a crowd in a room and there's a clock in a room, they can all see the clock. The fact that they can all see it tends to make them think that it's not an hallucination: whereas these religious experiences do tend to be very private.

Copleston: Yes, they do. I'm speaking strictly of mystical experience proper, and I certainly don't include, by the way, what are called visions. I mean simply the experience, and I quite admit it's indefinable, of the transcendent object or of what seems to be a transcendent object. I remember Julian Huxley in some lecture saying that religious experience, or mystical experience, is as much a real experience as falling in love or appreciating poetry and art. Well, I believe that when we appreciate poetry and art we appreciate definite poems or a definite work of art. If we fall in love, well, we fall in love with somebody and not with nobody.

Russell: May I interrupt for a moment here. That is by no means always the case. Japanese novelists never consider that they have achieved a success unless large numbers of real people commit suicide for love of the imaginary heroine.

Copleston: Well, I must take your word for these goings on in Japan. I haven't committed suicide, I'm glad to say, but I have been strongly influenced in the taking of two important steps in my life by two biographies. However, I must say I see little resemblance between the real influence of those books on me and the mystic experience proper, so far, that is, as an outsider can obtain an idea of that experience.

Russell: Well, I mean we wouldn't regard God as being on the same level as the characters in a work of fiction. You'll admit there's a distinction here?

Copleston: I certainly should. But what I'd say is that the best explanation seems to be the not purely subjectivist explanation. Of course, a subjectivist explanation is possible in the case of certain people in whom there is little relation between the

experience and life, in the case of deluded people and hallucinated people, and so on. But when you get what one might call the pure type, say St. Francis of Assisi, when you get an experience that results in an overflow of dynamic and creative love, the best explanation of that it seems to me is the actual existence of an objective cause of the experience.

Russell: Well, I'm not contending in a dogmatic way that there is not a God. What I'm contending is that we don't know that there is. I can only take what is recorded as I should take other records and I do find that a very great many things are reported, and I am sure you would not accept things about demons and devils and what not – and they're reported in exactly the same tone of voice and with exactly the same conviction. And the mystic, if his vision is veridical, may be said to know that there are devils. But I don't know that there are.

Copleston: But surely in the case of the devils there have been people speaking mainly of visions, appearance, angels or demons and so on. I should rule out the visual appearances, because I think they can be explained apart from the existence of the object which is supposed to be seen.

Russell: But don't you think there are abundant recorded cases of people who believe that they've heard Satan speaking to them in their hearts, in just the same way as the mystics assert God – and I'm not talking now of an external vision, I'm talking of a purely mental experience. That seems to be an experience of the same sort as mystics' experience of God, and I don't seek that from what mystics tell us you can get any argument for God which is not equally an argument for Satan.

Copleston: I quite agree, of course, that people have imagined or thought they have heard of seen Satan. And I have no wish in passing to deny the existence of Satan. But I do not think that people have claimed to have experienced Satan in the precise way in which mystics claim to have experienced God. Take the case of a non-Christian, Plotinus. He admits the experience is something inexpressible, the object is an object of love, and therefore, not an object that causes horror and disgust. And the effect of that experience is, I should say, borne out, or I mean the validity of the experience is borne out in the records of the life of Plotinus. At any rate it is more reasonable to suppose that he had that experience if we're willing to accept Porphyry's account of Plotinus' general kindness and benevolence.

Russell: The fact that a belief has a good moral effect upon a man is no evidence whatsoever in favor of its truth.

Copleston: No, but if it could actually be proved that the belief was actually responsible for a good effect on a man's life, I should consider it a presumption in favor of some truth, at any rate of the positive part of the belief not of its entire validity. But in any case I am using the character of the life as evidence in favor of the mystic's veracity and sanity rather than as a proof of the truth of his beliefs.

Russell: But even that I don't think is any evidence. I've had experiences myself that have altered my character profoundly. And I thought at the time at any rate that it was altered for the good. Those experiences were important, but they did not involve the existence of something outside me, and I don't think that if I'd thought they did, the fact that they had a wholesome effect would have been any evidence that I was right.

Copleston: No, but I think that the good effect would attest your veracity in describing your experience. Please remember that I'm not saying that a mystic's mediation or interpretation of his experience should be immune from discussion or criticism.

Russell: Obviously the character of a young man may be – and often is – immensely affected for good by reading about some great man in history, and it may happen that the great man is a myth and doesn't exist, but the boy is just as much affected for good as if he did. There have been such people. Plutarch's *Lives* take Lycurgus as an example, who certainly did not exist, but you might be very much influenced by reading Lycurgus under the impression that he had previously existed. You would then be influenced by an object that you'd loved, but it wouldn't be an existing object.

Copleston: I agree with you on that, of course, that a man may be influenced by a character in fiction. Without going into the question of what it is precisely that influences him (I should say a real value) I think that the situation of that man and of the mystic are different. After all the man who is influenced by Lycurgus hasn't got the irresistible impression that he's experience in some way the ultimate reality.

Russell: I don't think you've quite got my point about these historical characters – these unhistorical characters in history. I'm not assuming what you call an effect on the reason. I'm assuming that the young man reading about this person and believing him to be real loves him – which is quite easy to happen, and yet he's loving a phantom.

Copleston: In one sense he's loving a phantom that's perfectly true, in the sense, I mean, that he's loving X or Y who doesn't exist. But at the same time, it is not, I think, the phantom as such that the young man loves; he perceives a real value, an idea which he recognizes as objectively valid, and that's what excites his love.

Russell: Well, in the same sense we had before about the characters in fiction.

Copleston: Yes, in one sense the man's loving a phantom – perfectly true. But in another sense he's loving what he perceives to be a value.

Paper 2: Religion and Ethics

Extract 1: William Barclay, 'Situation Ethics' (1971).

Taken from: *Ethics in a Permissive Society*, by William Barclay (Collins 1971)
Chapter 4, Situation Ethics, pp.69–91.

When we talk about ethics, we mostly mean a series of rules and laws and principles by which we act and which tell us what to do. Mostly we take it that ethics classifies words and actions into things which are good and things which are bad, and we take it that the goodness and the badness belong to the thing as such. On the whole this is meant to simplify things and to make life easy. It means that we have got, so we think, a series of prefabricated rules and laws and principles, which we accept and apply. It saves us from the difficult and the often dangerous task of making our own judgments and deciding things for ourselves.

But in 1966 an American professor called Joseph Fletcher wrote a book called *Situation Ethics*, which has proved to be one of the most influential books written this century. Fletcher's basic principle is that there is nothing which is universally right or universally wrong; there is nothing which is intrinsically good or intrinsically bad. Goodness and badness are not built in, essential, unchangeable qualities of anything; they are only things which happen to actions in different situations; they are only descriptions of things in different circumstances; they are not properties, they are predicates. According to this theory of ethics, there is no such thing as a predefinition of goodness or badness. What we have to take to any situation is not a prefabricated decision, but an act of judgment. Throughout this chapter the arguments and the illustrations are taken mainly from Fletcher's two books, *Situation Ethics* and *Moral Responsibility*.

It has to be noted that the situation ethics man does not as it were start from nothing. He knows all the rules and the principles; he knows all that the accumulated experience of human beings has found out. He knows that there are rules and principles; but he refuses to say that any principle is absolutely binding and always valid, right or wrong in itself. Bonhoeffer said: 'Principles are only tools in the hand of God, soon to be thrown away as unserviceable.' The situationist does not deny that there are principles; he does not for a moment deny the classifications of things that experience has built up; but he completely refuses to be shackled or bound by anything.

We have got to qualify all this; for to the situationist there is one thing and one thing only that is absolutely, always and universally good – *and that one thing is love*. So Fletcher's first two propositions are:

Only one thing is intrinsically good, namely love: nothing else. The ultimate norm of Christian decisions is love: nothing else.

Quite clearly we will have to be sure of just what love is. The situationist is not talking about what we might call romantic love. In Greek there are four words for love, there is *erōs*, which means passion; there is always sex in *erōs*. There is *philia*, which is friendship-feeling; there is physical love in *philia*, but there is loyalty and companionship as well. There is *storgē*, which is love in the family circle; there is no sex in it; it is the love of a father for a daughter, a son for his mother, a brother for a sister. And there is *agapē*; this is the word. *Agapē* is unconquerable goodwill; it is the determination always to seek the other man's highest good, no matter what he does to you. Insult, injury, indifference – it does not matter;

nothing but goodwill. It has been defined as purpose, not passion. It is an attitude to the other person.

This is all important, because if we talk about this kind of love, it means that we can love the person we don't like. This is not a matter of the reaction of the heart; it is an attitude of the will and the whole personality deliberately directed to the other man. You cannot order a man to fall in love in the romantic sense of the term. Falling in love is like stepping on a banana skin; it happens, and that is all there is to it. But you can say to a man: 'Your attitude to others must be such that you will never, never, never want anything but their highest good.'

Obviously, when we define love like this, love is a highly intelligent thing. We must, as the Americans say, figure the angles. We must in any situation work out what love is. What does love demand?

Suppose, for instance, a house catches fire and in it there is a baby and the original of the Mona Lisa; which do you save the baby or the priceless and irreplaceable picture? There is really no problem here; you save the baby for a life is always of greater value than a picture.

But think of this one – suppose in the burning house there is your aged father, an old man, with the days of his usefulness at an end, and a doctor who has discovered a cure for one of the world's great killer diseases, and who still carries the formulae in his head, and you can save only one – whom do you save? Your father who is dear to you, or the doctor in whose hands there are thousands of lives? Which is love?

On the Wilderness Trail, Daniel Boone's trail westward through Cumberland Gap to Kentucky, many families in the trail caravans lost their lives to the Indians. A Scottish woman had a baby at the breast. The baby was ill and crying, and the baby's crying was betraying her other three children and the rest of the party; the party clearly could not remain hidden if the baby continued crying; their position would be given away. Well, the mother clung to the baby; the baby's cries led the Indians to the position; and the party was discovered and all were massacred, there was another such occasion. On this occasion there was a Negro woman in the party. Her baby too was crying and threatening to betray the party. She strangled the baby with her own two hands to stop its crying – and the whole party escaped. Which action was love? The action of the mother who kept her baby and brought death to it and to herself and to all, or the action of the mother who killed the baby and saved the lives of the caravan? Here is the kind of decision with which the situationist confronts us; which action was love?

The situationist is always confronting us with decisions. There is no absolute right and wrong; we have to work it out in each situation. There are principles, of course, but they can only advise; they do not have the right of veto. Any principle must be abandoned, left, disregarded, if the command to love your neighbour can be better served by so doing.

...

A friend of Fletcher's arrived in St Louis just as a presidential campaign was ending. He took a cab and the cabdriver volunteered the information: 'I and my father and my grandfathers and their fathers have always been straight ticket Republicans.' 'Ah,' said Fletcher's friend who is himself a Republican, 'I take it that

means you will vote for Senator So-and-so.' 'No,' said the driver, 'there are times when a man has to push his principles aside, and do the right thing!' There are times when principles become wrong – even when they are right.

The other is a story from Nash's play *The Rainmaker*. The Rainmaker makes love to a spinster girl in a barn at midnight. He does not really love her, but he is determined to save her from becoming spinsterised; he wants to give her back her womanhood, and to rekindle her hopes of marriage and children. Her morally outraged brother threatens to shoot him. Her father, a wise old rancher, says to his son: 'Noah, you're so full of what's right that you can't see what's good.' For the situationist a thing that is labelled wrong can be in certain circumstances the only right thing.

This leads us to the second of Fletcher's basic principles. Fletcher lays it down:

Love and justice are the same thing, for justice is love distributed, nothing else.

We can relate love and justice in different ways. Sometimes people think of love *versus* justice, as if love and justice were against each other; or love *or* justice, as if you had to choose one or the other, but could not have both; or love *and* justice as if the two things complemented each other. But for Fletcher love *is* justice; love and justice are one and the same thing. This is a new idea. Niebuhr, the great American teacher, used to say that the difference is that love is transcendent and love is impossible; while justice is something by which we can live in this present society. Brunner held that the difference is that love must be between two persons; whereas justice exists between groups. But Fletcher will have it that love is the same thing as justice. How does he make this out?

Accept the fact that the one absolute is love. Then love has to be worked out in the situations of life – and the working of it out is justice, Justice, it is said, consists of giving each man his due; but the one thing that is due to every man is love; therefore love and justice are the same. Justice, says Fletcher, is love distributed. When we are confronted with the claims of more than one person, of three or four people, we have to give them love, and it is justice which settles just how love is to be applied to each of them. Justice is love working out its problems.

So then unless love is to be a vague sentimental generalised feeling, there must be justice, because justice is love applied to particular cases. This is precisely what is so often the matter with love, the fact that it never gets worked out and never gets beyond being a feeling and an emotion. Some time ago – Fletcher cites the case – Sammy Davis Jr. the great entertainer became a Jew, and thereby repudiated Christianity. 'As I see it,' he said, 'the difference is that the Christian religion preaches, Love thy neighbour, and the Jewish religion preaches justice, and I think that justice is the big thing we need.' Sammy Davis is black, and he knew all about so-called Christian love. As Fletcher says, there are many people who would claim that they love black people, and who at the same time deny them simple justice. Fletcher goes on: 'To paraphrase the classic cry of protest, we can say: To hell with your love; we want justice.' This is exactly what happens when justice and love are not equated.

This means that love has always got to be thinking; love has always got to be calculating. Otherwise love is like the bride who wanted to ignore all recipes and

simply let her love for her husband guide her when she was baking him a cake. Love has to think, wisely, deeply, intelligently.

...

Are we going to be driven to this conclusion that nothing is absolutely right and that apparently still less is anything absolutely wrong, and that it all depends on the situation? Is it true that goodness and badness are not qualities which are built into actions, but things which happen to an action within a situation, that they are not properties but predicates?

Let us take one last example from Fletcher. He entitles it *Sacrificial Adultery*. As the Russian armies drove forward to meet the Americans and the British, a Mrs Bergmeier, who was out foraging for food for her children and herself, was picked up. Without being able to get a word to the children she was taken away to a prison work camp in the Ukraine. Meanwhile her husband was captured and ended up in a prison camp in Wales. Ultimately the husband was released. He came back to Germany and after weeks of search he found the children, the two youngest in a Russian detention school and the oldest hiding in a cellar. They had no idea where their mother was. They never stopped searching for her. They knew that only her return could ever knit that family together again after all that had happened to them. Meanwhile away in the Ukraine a kindly camp commandant told Mrs Bergmeier that her family were together again and that they were trying to find her. But he could not release her, for release was only given for two reasons. First, a prisoner was released if he or she was suffering from a disease with which the camp could not cope, and was in that case moved to a Russian hospital. Second, a woman was released if she became pregnant. In that case women were returned to Germany as being a liability and no use for work. Mrs Bergmeier thought it out, and finally she decided to ask a friendly Volga German camp guard to make her pregnant. He did. Her condition was medically verified. She was sent back to Germany and received with open arms by her family. She told them what she had done and they thoroughly approved. In due time the baby was born. Dietrich they called him and they loved him most of all because they felt he had done more for them than any one of the others. And for the German guard they had nothing but a grateful and affectionate memory. So what? Right or wrong? Adultery or love? Which?

...

What, then, are we to say to all this? The situationist claims that nothing is absolutely right and nothing is absolutely wrong; it all depends on the situation. Goodness and badness are not something intrinsic, but things that happen to actions in the doing. What are we to say?

First, we can begin with something which is a criticism not so much of situation ethics as it is of Fletcher's presentation of it. The trouble is that by far the greater number of Fletcher's illustrations are drawn from the abnormal, the unusual and the extraordinary. I am not very likely to be confronted with an Arab blood feud or a war situation in Eastern Germany. It is much easier to agree that extraordinary situations need extraordinary measures than to think that there are no laws for ordinary everyday life.

Second – and this is a much more serious matter – situation ethics presents us with a terrifying degree of freedom. There we are in front of our situation; we have

no prefabricated judgment; *you* – just *you* – have to make the right decision. Brunner has said that there is nowhere you can go – not even to the Sermon on the Mount and say: 'Now I know what to do.' There is no such thing as a readymade decision. Of course, we know the things that experience has discovered and teaches, but we are left alone in complete freedom to apply them.

Fletcher is quite right when he says that basically men do not want freedom.

...

There is no doubt that most people do not want to be continually confronted with the necessity of making decisions. They would rather have their decisions made for them; they would rather apply laws and principles to the situation. And it may well be that people are right.

The right use of freedom in our relationships with others depends on love. If love is perfect, then freedom is a good thing. But if there is no love, or if there is not enough love, then freedom can become licence, freedom can become selfishness and even cruelty. If you leave a man without love to do as he likes, then the damage that he can do is incalculable. It may well be that neither I nor any other person is at this stage ready for this lonely freedom which the situationist offers us. The situationists have a kind of phobia of law, but the lesson of experience is that we need a certain amount of law, being the kind of people we are.

...

If all men were saints, then situation ethics would be the perfect ethics. John A. T. Robinson has called situation ethics 'the only ethic for man come of age'. This is probably true – but man has not yet come of age. Man, therefore, still needs the crutch and the protection of law. If we insist that in every situation every man must make his own decision, then first of all we must make man morally and lovingly fit to take that decision; otherwise we need the compulsion of law to make him do it. And the fact is that few of us have reached that stage; we still need law, we still need to be told what to do, and sometimes even to be compelled to do it.

Thirdly, the situationist points out again and again that in his view there is nothing which is intrinsically good or bad. Goodness and badness, as he puts it, are not properties, they are predicates. They are not inbuilt qualities; they happen to a thing in a given situation. I am very doubtful if the distinction between goodness and badness can be so disposed of.

...

I think that there are things which can in no circumstances be right, To take but two examples, to start a young person in the name of experience on the experiments which can lead to drug addiction can never be right. To break up a family relationship in the name of so-called love can never be right. The right and the wrong are not so easily eliminated.

Fourth, the situationist is liable to forget two things.

(a) He is liable to forget what psychological aids can do for abnormal conditions. Fletcher took instances of cures being effected by what the Christian would simply regard as committing adultery. He cites the instance of the man who

was a danger to small girls being cured by intercourse with a mature woman. It is to be noted that such an action would by no means guarantee a cure for a man in such a condition anyway. He quotes the play *The Rainmaker*, in which the Rainmaker deliberately seduces the farmer's daughter to save her, as he claimed, from being 'spinsterised'. This completely leaves out of account the very real possibility of sublimation... There is many an unmarried woman who is very, very far from being a 'frustrated spinster' because she has found fullness of life in some other outlet. There is many a man who has had to do without marriage and who has sublimated his sex drive into other achievements and other service. One may speculate whether John Wesley would have been such a dynamic founder of a new church if he had been happily married. He poured into the church what he might have kept within the limits of a home. There are cures and compensations for abnormal conditions which do not involve breaking what we have learned to call the moral law – and in point of fact these cures are far more effective.

(b) And above all, the situationist is liable to forget quite simply the grace of God. Unless Christianity is a total swindle, then it must make good its claim to make bad men good. To encourage towards permissiveness is no real cure; to direct to the grace of God is.

...

The situationists have taught us that we must indeed be flexible; that we must indeed look on the problems of others, not with self-righteousness, but with sympathy; that we must not be legalists; but in spite of that we do well still to remember that there are laws which we break at our peril.

In the background of our discussion of situation ethics there has always been the idea of *law*. Sometimes, in fact, it has almost seemed that the idea of law and the idea of situation ethics formed a contrast and even an antithesis. I did say at one point that the situationists seemed to have a phobia of law.

...

I have left to the end one very important view of law. It is a view which is largely, but not quite universally, accepted. It is the view that it is always public morals with which the law is concerned, and never private morals, unless these private morals are an offence to public decency or a threat to public welfare. In other words, these are many things which are immoral, but which are not illegal. Or, to put it in another way, there is a wide difference between *sin*, with which the law is not concerned, and *crime*, with which the law is deeply concerned. To take the case of sexual morality, so long as a sexual act is by common consent between two adults, so long as it cannot be held to have hurt or injured either, and so long as it is carried on in a way that does not offend public decency or interfere with public order, then it is not the concern of the law. This has always been the law in regard to prostitution in this country. It has never been illegal to have sexual intercourse with a prostitute. What is illegal is solicitation, which is an offence against public order. Very recently, the situation has become the same in regard to homosexual practices, which until then were illegal as such.

...

Similarly, the Wolenden Report says:

It should not be the duty of the law to concern itself with immorality as such... It should confine itself to these activities which offend against public order and decency, or expose the ordinary citizens to what is offensive and injurious.

On this view the law has nothing to do with a man's private morals, but everything to do with his public conduct.

...So the official and the personal point of view combine to hold that private morality is no affair of the State or of the law, unless it has public effects. For the moment we shall leave this, and we shall very soon return to it.

The trouble about this whole question is that it presents us with a series of tensions, which are built into the problem of the connection between morality and law.

i. *There is the tension between freedom and law.* Here the situationists are very definite. Fletcher writes: 'Nothing we do is truly moral unless we are free to do otherwise. We must be free to decide what to do before any of our actions even begin to be moral. No discipline but self-discipline has any moral significance. This applies to sex, politics or anything else. A moral act is a free act, done because we want to ... Morality is meaningless apart from freedom' (J. Fletcher, *Moral Responsibility*, p. 136).

On the face of it, this is true. But – and it is a very big but – who of us is, in fact, free? Our heredity, our environment, our upbringing, the traditions we have inherited, our temperament, the cumulative effect of our previous decisions all have an effect upon us. Again it is of the first importance that freedom does not only mean that a man is free to do a thing; it must also mean that he is free *not* to do it – and that is exactly where our past comes in. Most of us have made ourselves such that we are not free. The whole trouble about freedom is that for many of us it is an illusion.

...

ii. *There is the tension between immorality and illegality.* We have already made the point that there are many things which are immoral but which are not illegal. For instance, to take a crude example, prostitution is immoral, but it is not illegal. We have seen that the common, one might say the orthodox, view is that the law has nothing to do with private morals, but only with public morality. Not everyone agrees with that. So prominent a jurist as Lord Devlin did not agree with the Wolenden Report. He said that it was wrong to talk of 'private morality' at all. He holds that 'the suppression of vice is as much the law's business as the suppression of subversive activities'.

...

But suppose we do accept the Christian ethic as it is in the teaching of Jesus; suppose we accept it ourselves and suppose that we are convinced that it is the best prescription for the life of society. Are we then quite happy if the law progressively makes what we think wrong easier? Are we quite happy about the legalising of consenting homosexuality? Are we quite happy about the easing of divorce regulations? Would we be quite happy to find it enacted that unmarried students living together and begetting a child should then become eligible for the

same grants as married people? The trouble is that once a thing is not forbidden, it may be felt not only to be permitted but to be encouraged. It could be argued that what the law permits, it approves... It is here, in fact, that the public aspect of private morality comes in. A man can live his own life, but when he begins deliberately to alter the lives of others, then a real problem arises, on which we cannot simply turn our backs, and in which there is a place for law as the encourager of morality.

iii. *There is the tension between the individual and the community.* This is the tension between individualism and solidarity. In the early days of Judaism there was such solidarity that the individual as an individual had hardly any independent existence... They say that to this day if you ask a man in a primitive society what his name is, he will begin by telling you, not his name, but his tribe. But in our time it is the individual who is stressed. Self-development, self-expression, self-realisation have become the watchwords of modern society. Too much law means the obliteration of the individual; too much individualism means the weakening of law. It so happens that today we are living in a time of individualism, but a man will do well to remember that it can never be right to develop himself at the expense of others.

We may well come to the conclusion that one of the great problems of the present situation is to adjust the delicate balance between freedom and law, and between the individual and society. And the only solution is that a man should discover what it means to love his neighbour as himself.

Extract 2: Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785).

Taken from: *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by Allen W Wood (Yale University Press edition, 2002), Text, second section, pp 29–47.

Every thing in nature works in accordance with laws. Only a rational being has the faculty to act *in accordance with the representation* of laws, i.e., in accordance with principles, or a *will*. Since for the derivation of actions from laws *reason* is required, the will is nothing other than practical reason. If reason determines the will without exception, then the actions of such a being, which are recognized as objectively necessary, are also subjectively necessary, i.e., the will is a faculty of choosing *only that* which reason, independently of inclination, recognizes as practically necessary, i.e., as good. But if reason for itself alone does not sufficiently determine the will, if the will is still subject to subjective conditions (to certain incentives) which do not always agree with the objective conditions, in a word, if the will is not in itself fully in accord with reason (as it actually is with human beings), then the actions which are objectively recognized as necessary are subjectively contingent, and the determination of such a will, in accord with objective laws, is *necessitation*, i.e., the relation of objective laws to a will which is not thoroughly good is represented as the determination of the will of a rational being through grounds of reason to which, however, this will in accordance with its nature is not necessarily obedient.

The representation of an objective principle, insofar as it is necessitating for a will, is called a 'command' (of reason), and the formula of the command is called an **imperative**.

All imperatives are expressed through an *ought* and thereby indicate the relation of an objective law of reason to a will which in its subjective constitution is not necessarily determined by that law (a necessitation). They say that it would be good to do or refrain from something, but they say it to a will that does not always do something just because it is represented to it as good to do. Practical *good*, however, is that which determines the will by means of representations of reason, hence not from subjective causes, but objectively, i.e., from grounds that are valid for every rational being as such. It is distinguished from the *agreeable*, as that which has influence on the will only by means of sensation from merely subjective causes, those which are valid only for the senses of this or that one, and not as a principle of reason, which is valid for everyone.

A perfectly good will would thus stand just as much under objective laws (of the good), but it would not be possible to represent it as *necessitated* by them to lawful actions, because of itself, in accordance with its subjective constitution, it can be determined only through the representation of the good. Hence for the *divine* will, and in general for a *holy* will, no imperatives are valid; the *ought* is out of place here, because the *volition* is of itself already necessarily in harmony with the law. Hence imperatives are only formulas expressing the relation of objective laws of volition in general to the subjective imperfection of the will of this or that rational being, e.g., to the human being.

Now all *imperatives* command either *hypothetically* or *categorically*. The former represent the practical necessity of a possible action as a means to attain something else which one wills (or which it is possible that one might will). The categorical imperative would be that one which represented an action as objectively necessary for itself, without any reference to another end.

...

Finally, there is one imperative that, without being grounded on any other aim to be achieved through a certain course of conduct as its condition, commands this conduct immediately. This imperative is **categorical**. It has to do not with the matter of the action and what is to result from it, but with the form and the principle from which it results; and what is essentially good about it consists in the disposition, whatever the result may be. This imperative may be called that **of morality**.

...

Thus we will have to investigate the possibility of a categorical imperative entirely *a priori*, since here we cannot have the advantage that its reality is given in experience, so that its possibility would be necessary not for its establishment but only for its explanation. Meanwhile, we can provisionally have insight into this much: that the categorical imperative alone can be stated as a practical **law**, while the others collectively are, to be sure, *principles* of the will, but cannot be called 'laws'; for what it is necessary to do for the attainment of a discretionary aim can be considered in itself to be contingent, and we can always be rid of the precept if we give up the aim; whereas the unconditioned command leaves the will no free discretion in regard to the opposite, hence it alone carries with it that necessity which we demand for a law.

If I think of a *hypothetical* imperative in general, then I do not know beforehand what it will contain until the condition is given to me. But if I think of a *categorical* imperative, then I know directly what it contains. For since besides the law, the imperative contains only the necessity of the maxim, that it should accord with this law, but the law contains no condition to which it is limited, there remains nothing left over with which the maxim of the action is to be in accord, and this accordance alone is what the imperative really represents necessarily.

The categorical imperative is thus only a single one, and specifically this: Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law.

...

Because the universality of the law in accordance with which effects happen constitutes that which is really called *nature* in the most general sense (in accordance with its form), i.e., the existence of things insofar as it is determined in accordance with universal laws, thus the universal imperative of duty can also be stated as follows: *So act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a **universal law of nature**.*

...

Now I say that the human being, and in general every rational being, *exists* as end in itself, *not merely as means* to the discretionary use of this or that will, but in all its actions, those directed toward itself as well as those directed toward other rational beings, it must always *at the same time* be considered as an *end*. All objects of inclinations have only a conditioned worth; for if the inclinations and the needs grounded on them did not exist, then their object would be without worth. The inclinations themselves, however, as sources of needs, are so little of absolute worth, to be wished for in themselves, that rather to be entirely free of them must be the universal wish of every rational being. Thus the worth of all objects *to be acquired* through our action is always conditioned. The beings whose existence rests not on our will but on nature nevertheless have, if they are beings without reason, only a relative worth as means, and are called *things*; rational beings, by contrast, are called *persons*, because their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves, i.e., as something that may not be used merely as means, hence to that extent limits all arbitrary choice (and is an object of respect). These are not merely subjective ends whose existence as effect of our action has a worth *for us*; but rather *objective ends*, i.e., things whose existence in itself is an end, and specifically an end such that no other end can be set in place of it, to which it should do service *merely* as means, because without this nothing at all of *absolute worth* would be encountered anywhere; but if all worth were conditioned, hence contingent, then for reason no supreme practical principle could anywhere be encountered.

If, then, there is supposed to be a supreme practical principle, and in regard to the human will a categorical imperative, then it must be such from the representation of that which, being necessarily an end for everyone, because it is an *end in itself*, constitutes an *objective* principle of the will, hence can serve as a universal practical law. The ground of this principle is: *Rational nature exists as end in itself*. The human being necessarily represents his own existence in this way; thus to that extent it is a *subjective* principle of human actions. But every other rational being also represents his existence in this way as consequent on the same rational ground as is valid for me; thus it is at the same time an *objective* principle, from which, as a supreme practical ground, all laws of the will must be able to be derived.

The practical imperative will thus be the following: Act so that you use humanity, as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as end and never merely as means. We will see whether this can be accomplished.

Extract 3: Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II, (350 BCE)

Taken from: Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethic*, translated by David Ross (Oxford World's Classics edition, OUP, 1980), Book II, Moral virtue, pp 23-26.

1

Virtue, then, being of two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual virtue in the main owes both its birth and its growth to teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time), while moral virtue comes about as a result of habit, whence also its name (*ēthikē*) is one that is formed by a slight variation from the word *ethos* (habit). From this it is also plain that none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature; for nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature. For instance the stone which by nature moves downwards cannot be habituated to move upwards, not even if one tries to train it by throwing it up ten thousand times; nor can fire be habituated to move downwards, nor can anything else that by nature behaves in one way be trained to behave in another. Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit.

Again, of all the things that come to us by nature we first acquire the potentiality and later exhibit the activity (this is plain in the case of the senses; for it was not by often seeing or often hearing that we got these senses, but on the contrary we had them before we used them, and did not come to have them by using them); but the virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well. For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g. men become builders by building and lyre players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.

Again, it is from the same causes and by the same means that every virtue is both produced and destroyed, and similarly every art; for it is from playing the lyre that both good and bad lyre-players are produced. And the corresponding statement is true of builders and of all the rest; men will be good or bad builders as a result of building well or badly. For if this were not so, there would have been no need of a teacher, but all men would have been born good or bad at their craft. This, then, is the case with the virtues also; by doing the acts that we do in our transactions with other men we become just or unjust, and by doing the acts that we do in the presence of danger, and being habituated to feel fear or confidence, we become brave or cowardly. The same is true of appetites and feelings of anger; some men become temperate and good-tempered, others self-indulgent and irascible, by behaving in one way or the other in the appropriate circumstances. Thus, in one word, states of character arise out of like activities. This is why the activities we exhibit must be of a certain kind; it is because the states of character correspond to the differences between these. It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather *all* the difference.

2

But though our present account is of this nature we must give what help we can. First, then, let us consider this, that it is the nature of such things to be destroyed by defect and excess, as we see in the case of strength and of health (for to gain light on things imperceptible we must use the evidence of sensible things); exercise either excessive or defective destroys the strength, and similarly drink or food which is above or below a certain amount destroys the health, while that which is proportionate both produces and increases and preserves it. So too is it, then, in the case of temperance and courage and the other virtues. For the man who flies from and fears everything and does not stand his ground against anything becomes a coward, and the man who fears nothing at all but goes to meet every danger becomes rash; and similarly the man who indulges in every pleasure and abstains from none becomes self-indulgent, while the man who shuns every pleasure, as boors do, becomes in a way insensible; temperance and courage, then, are destroyed by excess and defect, and preserved by the mean.

3

We must take as a sign of states of character the pleasure or pain that supervenes upon acts; for the man who abstains from bodily pleasures and delights in this very fact is temperate, while the man who is annoyed at it is self-indulgent, and he who stands his ground against things that are terrible and delights in this or at least is not pained is brave, while the man who is pained is a coward. For moral virtue is concerned with pleasures and pains; it is on account of the pleasure that we do bad things, and on account of the pain that we abstain from noble ones. Hence we ought to have been brought up in a particular way from our very youth, as Plato says, so as both to delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought; this is the right education.

Again, if the virtues are concerned with actions and passions, and every passion and every action is accompanied by pleasure and pain, for this reason also virtue will be concerned with pleasures and pains. This is indicated also by the fact that punishment is inflicted by these means; for it is a kind of cure, and it is the nature of cures to be effected by contraries.

Again, as we said but lately, every state of soul has a nature relative to and concerned with the kind of things by which it tends to be made worse or better; but it is by reason of pleasures and pains that men become bad, by pursuing and avoiding these – either the pleasures and pains they ought not or when they ought not or as they ought not, or by going wrong in one of the other similar ways that may be distinguished. Hence men even define the virtues as certain states of impassivity and tranquility; not well, however, because they speak absolutely, and do not say 'as one ought' and 'as one ought not' and 'when one ought or ought not', and the other things that may be added. We assume, then, that this kind of virtue tends to do what is best with regard to pleasures and pains, and vice does the contrary.

The following facts also may show us that virtue and vice are concerned with these same things. There being three objects of choice and three of avoidance, the noble,

the advantageous, the pleasant, and their contraries, the base, the injurious, the painful, about all of these the good man tends to go right and the bad man to go wrong, and especially about pleasure; for this is common to the animals, and also it accompanies all objects of choice; for even the noble and the advantageous appear pleasant.

Again, it has grown up with us all from our infancy; this is why it is difficult to rub off this passion, engrained as it is in our life. And we measure even our actions, some of us more and others less, by the rule of pleasure and pain. For this reason, then, our whole inquiry must be about these; for to feel delight and pain rightly or wrongly has no small effect on our actions.

Again, it is harder to fight with pleasure than with anger, to use Heraclitus' phrase', but both art and virtue are always concerned with what is harder; for even the good is better when it is harder. Therefore for this reason also the whole concern both of virtue and of political science is with pleasures and pains; for the man who uses these well will be good, he who uses them badly bad.

That virtue, then, is concerned with pleasures and pains, and that by the acts from which it arises it is both increased and, if they are done differently, destroyed, and that the acts from which it arose are those in which it actualizes itself – let this be taken as said.

4

Actions, then, are called just and temperate when they are such as the just or the temperate man would do; but it is not the man who does these that is just and temperate, but the man who also does them *as* just and temperate men do them. It is well said, then, that it is by doing just acts that the just man is produced, and by doing temperate acts the temperate man; without doing these no one would have even a prospect of becoming good.

5

Next we must consider what virtue is. Since things that are found in the soul are of three kinds – passions, capacities, states of character – virtue must be one of these. By passions I mean appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendly feeling, hatred, longing, emulation, pity, and in general the feelings that are accompanied by pleasure or pain; by capacities the things in virtue of which we are said to be capable of feeling these, e.g. of becoming angry or being pained or feeling pity; by states of character the things in virtue of which we stand well or badly with reference to the passions, e.g. with reference to anger we stand badly if we feel it violently or too weakly, and well if we feel it in an intermediate way; and similarly with reference to the other passions.

Now neither the virtues nor the vices are *passions*, because we are not called good or bad on the ground of our passions, but are so called on the ground of our virtues and our vices, and because we are neither praised nor blamed for our passions (for the man who feels fear or anger is not praised, nor is the man who simply feels anger blamed, but the man who feels it in a certain way), but for our virtues and our vices we *are* praised or blamed.

Again, we feel anger and fear without choice, but the virtues are modes of choice or involve choice. Further, in respect of the passions we are said to be moved, but in respect of the virtues and the vices we are said not to be moved but to be disposed in a particular way.

For these reasons also they are not *capacities*; for we are neither called good or bad, nor praised nor blamed, for the simple capacity of feeling the passions; again, we have the capacities by nature, but we are not made good or bad by nature; we have spoken of this before.

If, then, the virtues are neither passions nor capacities, all that remains is that they should be *states of character*.

Thus we have stated what virtue is in respect of its genus.

6

We must, however, not only describe virtue as a state of character, but also say what sort of state it is. We may remark, then, that every virtue or excellence both brings into good condition the thing of which it is the excellence and makes the work of that thing be done well; e.g. the excellence of the eye makes both the eye and its work good; for it is by the excellence of the eye that we see well. Similarly the excellence of the horse makes a horse both good in itself and good at running and at carrying its rider and at awaiting the attack of the enemy. Therefore, if this is true in every case, the virtue of man also will be the state of character which makes a man good and which makes him do his own work well.

Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by reason, and by that reason by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect; and again it is a mean because the vices respectively fall short of or exceed what is right in both passions and actions, while virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate. Hence in respect of what it is, i.e. the definition which states its essence, virtue is a mean, with regard to what is best and right an extreme.

But not every action nor every passion admits of a mean; for some have names that already imply badness, e.g. spite, shamelessness, envy, and in the case of actions adultery, theft, murder; for all of these and suchlike things imply by their names that they are themselves bad, and not the excesses or deficiencies of them. It is not possible, then, ever to be right with regard to them; one must always be wrong. Nor does goodness or badness with regard to such things depend on committing adultery with the right woman, at the right time, and in the right way, but simply to do any of them is to go wrong. It would be equally absurd, then, to expect that in unjust, cowardly, and voluptuous action there should be a mean, an excess, and a deficiency; for at that rate there would be a mean of excess and of deficiency, an excess of excess, and a deficiency of deficiency. But as there is no excess and deficiency of temperance and courage because what is intermediate is in a sense an extreme, so too of the actions we have mentioned there is no mean nor any excess and deficiency, but however they are done they are wrong; for in general there is neither a mean of excess and deficiency, nor excess and deficiency of a mean.

...

8

To the intermediate in some cases the deficiency, in some the excess, is more opposed; e.g. it is not rashness, which is an excess, but cowardice, which is a deficiency, that is more opposed to courage, and not insensibility, which is a deficiency, but self-indulgence, which is an excess, that is more opposed to temperance. This happens from two reasons, one being drawn from the thing itself; for because one extreme is nearer and liker to the intermediate, we oppose not this but rather its contrary to the intermediate. For example, since rashness is thought more like and nearer to courage, and cowardice more unlike, we oppose rather the latter to courage; for things that are further from the intermediate are thought more contrary to it. This, then, is one cause, drawn from the thing itself; another is drawn from ourselves; for the things to which we ourselves more naturally tend seem more contrary to the intermediate. For instance, we ourselves tend more naturally to pleasures, and hence are more easily carried away towards self-indulgence than towards propriety. We describe as contrary to the mean, then, rather the directions in which we more often go to great lengths; and therefore self-indulgence, which is an excess, is the more contrary to temperance.

9

That moral virtue is a mean, then, and in what sense it is so, and that it is a mean between two vices, the one involving excess, the other deficiency, and that it is such because its character is to aim at what is intermediate in passions and in actions, has been sufficiently stated. Hence also it is no easy task to be good. For in everything it is no easy task to find the middle, e.g. to find the middle of a circle is not for everyone but for him who knows; so, too, any one can get angry – that is easy – or give or spend money; but to do this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and in the right way, *that* is not for everyone, nor is it easy; wherefore goodness is both rare and laudable and noble.

Extract 4: Michael Wilcockson, 'Euthanasia and Doctor's Ethics' (1999)

Taken from: *Issues of Life and Death* by Michael Wilcockson (Hodder, 1999), Chapter 4, Euthanasia and Doctors' Ethics, pp.56–69.

1. Good or bad medical practice?

A 'third party' in law refers to any agent other than the principal agent and in the case of euthanasia this would generally mean a doctor (sometimes also referred to as the 'physician'). For all practical purposes if euthanasia is to be justified at all it has to be considered as part of medical practice, for it is reasonably clear that any other practice of euthanasia would be almost impossible to control or regulate. Without regulation society would permit killing or murder and whatever moral code one adopts would be regarded as untenable. The consideration of 'euthanasia', at present, is rightly a medical issue. Put simply it is this: should a doctor kill his patients in some circumstances?

The official position of the British Medical Association, for instance, suggests that there is a great deal of difference between actively terminating life and treating a patient in a manner which may in the end result in death.

In its ethical advice the BMA emphasises that it is the duty of a doctor to ensure that a patient dies with dignity and as little suffering as possible but recommends that active intervention to terminate life – that is, where drugs are given or other procedures, carried out in order to cause death – even at the request of a patient, should remain illegal.

The Rights and Responsibilities of Doctors (1992), p.77

a) Moral crisis in liberal societies

Why does the issue of euthanasia (and abortion) cause such heated debate at present? Peter Singer has argued (1994) that Western liberal societies are going through a transitional stage in ethics at present where the authority of the traditional 'Sanctity of Life' argument (SOL) is giving way to the liberal 'Quality of Life' argument (QOL). The liberal influence has already been seen in many acts of legislation, notably in the case of suicide, where the principle of personal autonomy is the fundamental principle underpinning moral and legal decisions. Singer suggests that the SOL belongs to an older more absolute value view of life but with the demise of Christianity the philosophical basis which establishes life as a gift from God or part of a Natural Law can no longer be sensibly sustained. So, while the changeover takes place there will be those who strenuously wish to oppose what they see as a corrosive force. Whilst Singer's argument may have much more to commend it we should also bear in mind that the SOL as much as the QOL argument both have to contend with the increasing technological and medical complexity. Whereas in the past pneumonia was considered to be the old person's friend or a severely brain-damaged child would have died through natural causes, the doctor now has the means to sustain a life which in the past simply would not have been a possibility. Whilst the moral basis for sustaining life and allowing death is in transition, the medical profession and legislators will continue to inspire strong reactions.

b) Three moral principles

Three principles presuppose that the doctor is working from the traditional SOL position enshrined in the part of the Hippocratic Oath which states 'I will give no deadly medicines to anyone if asked, nor suggest any such counsel' (BMA *Handbook*, p.69). Each of these principles depends on making a distinction between *direct* and *indirect* killing, i.e. **active euthanasia** or **passive euthanasia**. In the latter case there is some dispute whether the term 'euthanasia' is really appropriate.

i) Acts and omissions

If A chooses to shoot B then we classify this as an intended act; if C sees A and fails to stop A shooting B then this is an intended omission. The point is whether C is at all blameworthy. In this incident, if C is a pacifist they might well justify their action by appealing to a negative responsibility, i.e. by failing to act they were morally blameless. They might even argue that refraining from acting took a great deal of moral courage. But however one looks at it, C was prepared to condone the death of B and accept whatever the consequences this might entail. Some object to this. Can I be held responsible for failing to help stop the deaths of thousands dying in poverty in the Third World? Perhaps the notion has to be couched in such terms as 'I am only responsible when I am reasonably in a position to do something'. In other words some 'omissions' are regarded as 'acts'. The Roman Catholic Church states:

Thus an act or omission which, of itself or by intention, causes death in order to eliminate suffering constitutes a murder gravely contrary to the dignity of the human person and to the respect due to the living God, his Creator. The error of judgement into which one can fall in good faith does not change the nature of this murderous act, which must always be forbidden and excluded.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994), p.491.

The problem is particularly acute with premature babies. If a baby is born very prematurely a doctor might have to consider whether they have a duty to save the baby. Some argue that morally they may *withhold* treatment either as a form of passive euthanasia (a form of **non-voluntary euthanasia**) or simply 'letting nature take its course'. Morally if they engage in treatment and *then* decide to *withdraw* treatment on the grounds that the baby will no longer have a worthwhile life, it may no longer be considered indirect killing but an act of active non-voluntary euthanasia or murder (See Singer, *Rethinking Life and Death*, 1994, pp.75-80 for examples and discussion.)

ii) Double effect

Another *indirect* argument has a long tradition in Natural Law ethics and involves two kinds of intention. According to the double effect (DDE) argument there is a difference between foreseeing an event and directly intending or *willing* it to happen. The emphasis, therefore, is different from the act and omissions argument where the agent foresaw what was to happen and allowed it to happen. For instance, A defend themselves against an attack from B using reasonable force. They know that this *might* result in B's death but it is not their intention that this should happen. If B then dies as a result of A's defence the DDE does not hold A to be blameworthy for an act they did not intend. In Case 3 a doctor who subscribes to the DDE might argue that the principle is sound medicine (and as a well-established principle in Natural Law ethics it is therefore acceptable in Roman Catholic theology). However, the term 'euthanasia' is resisted in the same way that 'abortion' is avoided for similar reasons. But is the DDE open to abuse?

...

- Is there a satisfactory distinction between intending and foreseeing? Might one say that the DDE is *bad* medicine, that if I foresee death but fail to act, then this is an omission which is a form of indirect euthanasia – which is rejected by the SOL?

iii) Ordinary and extraordinary means.

The principle of ordinary and extraordinary means is used both by weak SOL (WSOL) arguments and QOL proponents. Another, possibly better way of considering the issue is in terms of *proportionate* and *disproportionate* means.

- In the Natural law tradition a person who refuses food and water in order to die has deliberately committed suicide which is condemned in Roman Catholic theology as a mortal sin. But a person is within their rights to refuse surgery on grounds that it is over and above what is needed ordinarily for bare existence. The BMA for instance say, 'competent patients have a right to refuse any treatment, including life-prolonging treatment' (*Medical Ethics Today*, 1993, p.149). Nature is allowed to take its course. The doctor is not involved in the *direct* cause of death of the patient. Those who criticise this suggest it is a form of passive euthanasia or even assisted suicide. For instance, if a doctor withholds life-sustaining treatment, against his or her better judgement, but through respect for patient autonomy, the result might be condemned either as an act of professional negligence or wilful killing.
- On the other hand, some argue that it is a doctor's professional duty to use whatever medicines are available regardless of the situation. A response to this might be to think in terms of *proportion* as an alternative variation of extraordinary means. Proportion is a well-established principle in the Natural Law tradition which may be applied to medicine without compromising the obligation of the doctor to treat his or her patient. This enables each situation to be seen individually so that what might be considered proportionate to achieve good ends is contingent on the needs of the patient and even the *resources* of the doctor. The issue is particularly complex with non-competent

patients. For instance, a very handicapped baby (for example one who is 'anacephalic' or with a major part of the brain missing) might be considered so ill that no amount of surgery would improve their condition significantly. In this case a doctor might then prescribe 'nursing care only' (the baby should be kept warm and fed) as proportionate to their needs, knowing that the baby will die shortly.

- The WSOL argues that where death is inevitable the doctor is bound by *compassion* or love to treat the patient accordingly. This attitude is summarised by the much quoted phrase, from Arthur Clough's poem: 'Though shalt not kill: but need'st not strive Officiously to keep alive'. Singer (*Rethinking Life and Death*, 1994, p.149) goes further. Rigid adherence to the doctrine never to kill (vitalism) is an abrogation of the doctor's responsibility to his patient. The question is not so much between ordinary and extraordinary means but whether, in some cases, direct termination of life is good medicine.
- In QOL the key factor is whether the use of extraordinary medical means would usefully promote the quality of life. The notion is essentially utilitarian. For instance, in Cases 4 and 6 above a number of factors all need consideration: the possible length of useful life; state of mind of the patient (a main consideration in the American **QALYS** or Quality Adjusted Life Year Schedules); resources needed and available. All these factors contribute towards making doctors' choices. For instance a doctor might have to weigh up whether very painful surgery or powerful drugs which cause permanent drowsiness would result in a person who is a shadow of their former self. Can he or she base his or her judgement on some minimum human life-standard? For instance John Finnis's 'basic goods' argument suggests a possible list of 'valuable' life criteria which include: play, aesthetic experience, sociability; but inevitably there is no agreement as to what these standards should be.

2. Law and morality

So far the discussion has centred on the doctor-patient relationship within the constraints of law. There is no doubt that a shift in public opinion has increased the pressure for reform especially for voluntary euthanasia, whilst the Bland case sets a precedent for severely brain-damaged patients.

a) The liberal model

Mill's essay *On Liberty* (1859) is often cited as an example of the way in which law should function in a liberal society.

- The principle is that law is *not in itself* a moral guideline. Law in a liberal society acknowledges that each person has his or her own preferences which, using the utilitarian principle, if satisfied lead to the greatest happiness. The law enables the greatest personal autonomy of the greatest number.
- The second function of law is to protect the individual. This limits the majority from exploiting the minority and also the minority from exercising too much sway over the majority. Law should have minimal interference.

In practice, though, the law has to take into account a general moral feeling and it has also to acknowledge that once legislation take place, in the mind of many this is seen to give tacit approval to certain forms of behaviour. Bernard Williams has described this as the *precedent effect* (Smart and Williams, *Utilitarianism*, 1973, p.106). Others more fearfully think in terms of a slippery slope or the thin end of the wedge. If, for instance, voluntary euthanasia were to be permitted under the law this would inevitably permit other forms of illicit killing. The British Medical Association is adamant that euthanasia should not become law:

Doctors have a duty to try to provide patients with a peaceful and dignified death with minimal suffering, but the BMA considers it contrary to the doctor's role deliberately to kill patients, even at their request. In the BMA's view, liberalising the law on euthanasia would herald a serious and incalculable change in the ethos of medicine.

Medical Ethics Today (1993), pp.175, 177

b) The case for legalising euthanasia

The two principles frequently cited are personal autonomy (and rights) and QOL. The argument is further enhanced by citing those countries/states where some form of euthanasia is permitted.

i) Britain

Euthanasia is only an extension of what is permissible as suicide. The 1961 Suicide Act in the UK for instance permits personal autonomy to choose without recrimination (in the case of attempted suicide) but forbids third-party involvement. Here is an argument typical of this kind of reasoning (Janet Radcliffe, *The Guardian Weekly*, September 1992):

The problem with voluntary euthanasia has nothing to do with the dangers of letting doctors decide whether patients live or die... The real question is quite different. It is whether people who are trapped in bodies or an institution they cannot control should be allowed to make choices freely available to the rest of us...Why... If you take a housebound friend shopping no one accuses you of kidnapping, if you cook her a meal no one thinks you are force-feeding her. Why then, if she is in agony or despair, and you bring her the lethal dose she desperately wants but cannot get, or you manipulate the syringe because she is too weak to do it herself, do you find yourself guilty of one of the worst crimes there is?

But the 1961 Suicide Act makes it illegal to aid or give assistance in a suicide. Those who argue for a change in the law cite the shift in popular support and demand for voluntary euthanasia from 51 per cent in 1969, 69 per cent in 1976, 75 per cent in 1989 to 82 per cent in 1996. The British Medical Association though still strongly opposes any change on the grounds that it will irrevocably alter the patient-doctor relationship.

ii) The Netherlands

Often people argue that voluntary euthanasia arrangements should be brought in line with the principles determining legal abortion. The situation in the Netherlands

is frequently referred to because it most clearly expresses the balance between the popular will, medical practice and legal control. (For a full account see Singer, *Rethinking Life and Death*, 1994, pp.143–7). The case is for physician-assisted suicide.

- Mercy killing is illegal, but where there is a *conflict of duties* between the doctor's medical ethics and the demands of the patient euthanasia may be permitted (the key issue therefore is that of conflict of duties.)
- Only a medical practitioner may be permitted to carry out euthanasia.
- The patient must make his or her request to die persistently and explicitly.
- The patient's request must be freely made, well-informed and without coercion.
- The patient's condition must be one where there is no foreseeable room for improvement and where there is unbearable pain. All other alternatives for relieving pain should have been considered.
- A doctor should seek advice and second opinion of another independent doctor.
- The Dutch parliament regularised this procedure in 1993. The doctor must report his or her action to the public prosecutor who then judges each situation case by case. A doctor may be prosecuted if the above criteria have not been adhered to.

iii) The USA

In the USA the movement is towards 'proxy empowerment' and developing the use of living wills. The movement is towards physician-assisted suicide. Physician-assisted suicide is strongly resisted by the pro-life movement.

iv) Australia

In Australia there is no uniform law; however, a doctor may discontinue life-support at the request of the patient. This does not constitute, for the purposes of law, assisted suicide. In the State of Victoria an act of 1988 permits a person to appoint a proxy. In South Australia a person may use an advance directive under the 1983 Natural Death Act refusing 'extraordinary treatments' should they become incapacitated.

c) Objections to legalising euthanasia

One of the primary objections to legalising euthanasia has been the slippery slope or wedge argument. The wedge argument is based on a form of logic which argues that what may be permitted initially as an *exception becomes the rule*. This is borne out by the observation that:

- there are always those who exploit a weaker rule
- what begins with the best of intentions results in undesirable ends.

Not surprisingly the wedge argument is supported by those who wish to uphold the SOL, those who have a strong deontology (that rules must be obeyed) and genuinely fear that expectations are not in the end in people's best interests. The BMA cites (*Medical Ethics Today*, p.153) the situation in the Netherlands where some 1000 (or 0.8 per cent) of all deaths a year are the result of non-voluntary euthanasia.

Helga Kuhse challenges proponents of the wedge argument to provide empirical evidence to support their case. Her own conclusion is that the wedge argument is used by scaremongers to support their complete ban on all forms of euthanasia. The most frequently cited example of the wedge argument is the active non-voluntary euthanasia practised by the Nazis during the Holocaust years as a form of *eugenics* (literally 'the production of good offspring') where the deaths of millions were justified as part of the improvement of society. Kuhse concludes:

whilst the Nazi 'euthanasia' programme is often cited as an example of what can happen when a society acknowledges that some lives are not worthy to be lived, the motivation behind these killings was neither mercy nor respect for autonomy; it was, rather, racial prejudice and the belief that racial purity of the *Volks* required the elimination of certain individuals and groups. As already noted, in the Netherlands a 'social experiment' with active voluntary euthanasia is currently in progress. As yet there is no evidence that this has sent Dutch society down a slippery slope.

'Euthanasia', in P Singer (ed). *Companion to Ethics* (1991), p.302.

The SOL deontological response is to point to a number of recent liberalisations in the law which illustrate the wedge taking effect. For instance, abortion in the UK is illegal but is permitted in extreme cases. Since 1967 (when the Abortion Act was introduced in England and Wales), the large number of abortions for 16–24-year-olds suggests that 'exceptions' (e.g. threat to psychological life of the mother) are effectively being used as a form of birth control. Many people now think that abortion is legal and in practice an abortion is usually given on demand. Another example might be the liberalising of the divorce laws and the decline of the family.

Finally, as we have already seen, there are those who argue that legalising euthanasia would not promote patient autonomy but in fact reduce it. Legislation would do irreparable harm to doctor-patient relationships and destroy the trust which is essential if a doctor is going to be able to administer the right kind of care. The following extract from the British Medical Association illustrates the point:

We have consistently emphasised the importance of patient autonomy and rights, reflecting the weight society assigns to individual freedom of choice. Supporters of a right to die often present this issue as one of personal liberty, maintaining that therefore individuals should be entitled to assistance to end their lives at the time and in the manner they choose. The BMA, however, maintains that autonomy has limits. The rights of one group cannot be permitted to undermine the rights of others. Recognising a legal right to die would have implications for the whole of society and, perhaps, most particularly for its vulnerable members.

Thus many doctors fear that even a limited change in legislation would bring about a profound change in society's attitude to euthanasia. By removing legal barriers to the previously 'unthinkable' and permitting people to be killed, society would open up new possibilities of action and thus engender a frame of mind whereby some individuals might well feel bound to explore fully the extent of these new options. Once previously prohibited action becomes allowed, the argument goes, it may also come to be seen as desirable – if not by oneself, then as something which might be recommended. A social environment which recognised the right to die, we argue, would bring about a fundamental shift in social attitudes to death, illness, old age and disablement. It would encourage the labelling of people by group and result in some groups who presented problems being seen as more expendable. It would also change the public view of the profession in an irrevocable way and undermine the trust that patients have in doctors.

Medical Ethics Today (1993). P.151.

Paper 3: New Testament Studies

Extract 1: Matthew 1:18-2:23

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Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son

1 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.

19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.^{**20**}

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21** She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins."

22 All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: **23** "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. **25** But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

The Magi Visit the Messiah

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem **2** and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. **4** When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. **5** "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

6 "'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. **8** He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. **10** When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. **11** On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. **12** And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

The Escape to Egypt

¹³ When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

¹⁶ When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. ¹⁷ Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

¹⁸ "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

The Return to Nazareth

¹⁹ After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt ²⁰ and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."

²¹ So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, ²³ and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

Extract 2: John 1:1-18

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The Word Became Flesh

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was with God in the beginning. **3** Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. **4** In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. **8** He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. **10** He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. **11** He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. **12** Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – **13** children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

15 (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") **16** Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. **17** For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. **18** No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

Extract 3: John 6:24-59, 8:12, 9:1-12, 10:1-21, 15:1-17.

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6 Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

Jesus the Bread of Life

²⁵ When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

²⁶ Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. ²⁷ Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

²⁸ Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?"

²⁹ Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

³⁰ So they asked him, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? ³¹ Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

³² Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

³⁴ "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread."

³⁵ Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. ³⁶ But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. ³⁷ All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰ For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."

⁴¹ At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." ⁴² They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

⁴³ "Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. ⁴⁴ "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me. ⁴⁶ No one has seen the

Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. ⁵⁰ But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

⁵² Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

⁵³ Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." ⁵⁹ He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Dispute Over Jesus' Testimony

8 ¹² When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

9 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

³ "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

⁶ After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. ⁷ "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

⁸ His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹ Some claimed that he was.

Others said, "No, he only looks like him."

But he himself insisted, "I am the man."

¹⁰ "How then were your eyes opened?" they asked.

¹¹ He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see."

¹² "Where is this man?" they asked him.

"I don't know," he said.

The Good Shepherd and His Sheep

10 "Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. **2** The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. **3** The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **4** When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. **5** But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." **6** Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

7 Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. **8** All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. **9** I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. **10** The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. **12** The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. **13** The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – **15** just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep. **16** I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. **17** The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life – only to take it up again. **18** No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

19 The Jews who heard these words were again divided. **20** Many of them said, "He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?"

21 But others said, "These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

The Vine and the Branches

15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. **2** He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. **3** You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. **4** Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. **6** If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked

up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

Extract 4: John 2:1-11, 4:43-54, 5:1-15, 6:1-24, 9:1-12, 11:1-57.

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Jesus Changes Water Into Wine

2 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

⁴ "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

⁷ Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

⁸ Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, ⁹ and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside ¹⁰ and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

¹¹ What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Jesus Heals an Official's Son

4 ⁴³ After the two days he left for Galilee. ⁴⁴ (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honour in his own country.) ⁴⁵ When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, for they also had been there.

⁴⁶ Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. ⁴⁷ When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

⁴⁸ "Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

⁴⁹ The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

⁵⁰ "Go," Jesus replied, "your son will live."

The man took Jesus at his word and departed. ⁵¹ While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. ⁵² When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him."

⁵³ Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and his whole household believed.

⁵⁴ This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee.

The Healing at the Pool

5 Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. ² Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. ³ Here a great number of disabled people used to lie – the blind, the lame, the paralyzed.^{[4]5} One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?"

⁷ "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."

⁸ Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." ⁹ At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, ¹⁰ and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat."

¹¹ But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"

¹² So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?"

¹³ The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

¹⁴ Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." ¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

6 Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), ² and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick. ³ Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. ⁴ The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

⁵ When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" ⁶ He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

⁷ Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

⁸ Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up,⁹ "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

¹⁰ Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). ¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

¹² When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." ¹³ So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

¹⁴ After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." ¹⁵ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

Jesus Walks on the Water

¹⁶ When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, ¹⁷ where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. ¹⁸ A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. ¹⁹ When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. ²⁰ But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid." ²¹ Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

²² The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. ²³ Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. ²⁴ Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

⁹ As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

³ "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

⁶ After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. ⁷ "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

⁸ His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹ Some claimed that he was.

Others said, "No, he only looks like him."

But he himself insisted, "I am the man."

¹⁰ "How then were your eyes opened?" they asked.

¹¹ He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see."

¹² "Where is this man?" they asked him.

"I don't know," he said.

The Death of Lazarus

11 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) ³ So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

⁴ When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, ⁷ and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

⁸ "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?"

⁹ Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. ¹⁰ It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light."

¹¹ After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."

¹² His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better."¹³ Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

¹⁴ So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

¹⁶ Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

Jesus Comforts the Sisters of Lazarus

¹⁷ On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁹ and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

²¹ "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

²⁴ Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

²⁸ After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you."²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him.³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

³² When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.³⁴ "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

³⁵ Jesus wept.

³⁶ Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead

³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

Extract 5: Luke 8:1-15, 11:14-32, 13:22-30, 14:15-24, 17:20-37, 18:18-30, 19:11-27.

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The Parable of the Sower

8 After this, Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, ² and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; ³ Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

⁴ While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: ⁵ "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. ⁶ Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown."

When he said this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

⁹ His disciples asked him what this parable meant. ¹⁰ He said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, "though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.'

¹¹ "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God.¹² Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³ Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. ¹⁴ The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. ¹⁵ But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

Jesus and Beelzebul

11 ¹⁴ Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed. ¹⁵ But some of them said, "By Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons." ¹⁶ Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven.

¹⁷ Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. ¹⁸ If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebul. ¹⁹ Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. ²⁰ But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

²¹ "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. ²² But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armour in which the man trusted and divides up his plunder.

²³ "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

²⁴ "When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' ²⁵ When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. ²⁶ Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first."

²⁷ As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you."

²⁸ He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

The Sign of Jonah

²⁹ As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. ³⁰ For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. ³¹ The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom; and now something greater than Solomon is here. ³² The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and now something greater than Jonah is here.

The Narrow Door

13 ²² Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. ²³ Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"

He said to them, ²⁴ "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. ²⁵ Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.'

"But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'

²⁶ "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.'

²⁷ "But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'

²⁸ "There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. ²⁹ People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last."

The Parable of the Great Banquet

14 ¹⁵ When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."

¹⁶ Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. ¹⁷ At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

¹⁸ "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'

¹⁹ "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'

²⁰ "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

²¹ "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'

²² "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'

²³ "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. ²⁴ I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

The Coming of the Kingdom of God

17 ²⁰ Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, ²¹ nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst."

²² Then he said to his disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. ²³ People will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running off after them. ²⁴ For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. ²⁵ But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

²⁶ "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. ²⁷ People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

²⁸ "It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. ²⁹ But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

³⁰ "It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. ³¹ On that day no one who is on the housetop, with possessions inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. ³² Remember Lot's wife! ³³ Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it. ³⁴ I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. ³⁵ Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left." [³⁶]

³⁷ "Where, Lord?" they asked.

He replied, "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather."

The Rich and the Kingdom of God

¹⁸ A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

¹⁹ "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good – except God alone. ²⁰ You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honour your father and mother.'"

²¹ "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said.

²² When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

²³ When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy. ²⁴ Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

²⁶ Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?"

²⁷ Jesus replied, "What is impossible with man is possible with God."

²⁸ Peter said to him, "We have left all we had to follow you!"

²⁹ "Truly I tell you," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God ³⁰ will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life."

The Parable of the Ten Minas

19 ¹¹ While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. ¹² He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. ¹³ So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. Put this money to work," he said, "until I come back."

¹⁴ "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.'

¹⁵ "He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.

¹⁶ "The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.'

¹⁷ "'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.'

¹⁸ "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.'

¹⁹ "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.'

²⁰ "Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. ²¹ I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.'

²² "His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? ²³ Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?'

²⁴ "Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.'

²⁵ "'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!'

²⁶ "He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away. ²⁷ But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them – bring them here and kill them in front of me.'"

Extract 6: John 2:12-25, 5:16-47, 7:25-52, 8:12-59, 9:13-34, 10:22-42, 11:45-57, 18:1-19:16.

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2 ¹² After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

Jesus Clears the Temple Courts

¹³ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

¹⁸ The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

²⁰ They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

²³ Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. ²⁴ But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. ²⁵ He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person.

The Authority of the Son

5 ¹⁶ So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. ¹⁷ In his defence Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working." ¹⁸ For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

¹⁹ Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. ²¹ For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. ²² Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. Whoever does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent him.

²⁴ "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. ²⁵ Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

²⁸ "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. ³⁰ By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

Testimonies About Jesus

³¹ "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. ³² There is another who testifies in my favour, and I know that his testimony about me is true.

³³ "You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. ³⁴ Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. ³⁵ John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.

³⁶ "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish – the very works that I am doing – testify that the Father has sent me. ³⁷ And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, ³⁸ nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. ³⁹ You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

⁴¹ "I do not accept glory from human beings, ⁴² but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. ⁴³ I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

⁴⁵ "But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. ⁴⁶ If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. ⁴⁷ But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

Division Over Who Jesus Is

7 ²⁵ At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? ²⁶ Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Messiah? ²⁷ But we know where this man is from; when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from."

²⁸ Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, "Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own authority, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, ²⁹ but I know him because I am from him and he sent me."

³⁰ At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. ³¹ Still, many in the crowd believed in him. They said, "When the Messiah comes, will he perform more signs than this man?"

³² The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.

³³ Jesus said, "I am with you for only a short time, and then I am going to the one who sent me. ³⁴ You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come."

³⁵ The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? ³⁶ What did he mean when he said, 'You will look for me, but you will not find me,' and 'Where I am, you cannot come'?"

³⁷ On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." ³⁹ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

⁴⁰ On hearing his words, some of the people said, "Surely this man is the Prophet."

⁴¹ Others said, "He is the Messiah."

Still others asked, "How can the Messiah come from Galilee? ⁴² Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David's descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?" ⁴³ Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. ⁴⁴ Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him.

Unbelief of the Jewish Leaders

⁴⁵ Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and the Pharisees, who asked them, "Why didn't you bring him in?"

⁴⁶ "No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards replied.

⁴⁷ "You mean he has deceived you also?" the Pharisees retorted. ⁴⁸ "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? ⁴⁹ No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law – there is a curse on them." ⁵⁰ Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, ⁵¹ "Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?"

⁵² They replied, "Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee."

Dispute Over Jesus' Testimony

8 ¹² When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

¹³ The Pharisees challenged him, "Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid."

¹⁴ Jesus answered, "Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. ¹⁵ You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. ¹⁶ But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. ¹⁷ In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. ¹⁸ I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me."

¹⁹ Then they asked him, "Where is your father?"

"You do not know me or my Father," Jesus replied. "If you knew me, you would know my Father also." ²⁰ He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come.

Dispute Over Who Jesus Is

²¹ Once more Jesus said to them, "I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come."

²² This made the Jews ask, "Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, 'Where I go, you cannot come'?"

²³ But he continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴ I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins."

²⁵ "Who are you?" they asked.

"Just what I have been telling you from the beginning," Jesus replied. ²⁶ "I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is trustworthy, and what I have heard from him I tell the world." ²⁷ They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. ²⁸ So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. ²⁹ The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him." ³⁰ Even as he spoke, many believed in him.

Dispute Over Whose Children Jesus' Opponents Are

³¹ To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

³³ They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"

³⁴ Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. ³⁵ Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷ I know that you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are looking for a way to kill me, because you have no room for my word. ³⁸ I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father."

³⁹ "Abraham is our father," they answered.

"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do what Abraham did. ⁴⁰ As it is, you are looking for a way to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. ⁴¹ You are doing the works of your own father."

"We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself."

⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me. ⁴³ Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. ⁴⁴ You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! ⁴⁶ Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? ⁴⁷ Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."

Jesus' Claims About Himself

⁴⁸ The Jews answered him, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?"

⁴⁹ "I am not possessed by a demon," said Jesus, "but I honour my Father and you dishonour me. ⁵⁰ I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. ⁵¹ Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death."

⁵² At this they exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon- possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death. ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"

⁵⁴ Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. ⁵⁵ Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."

⁵⁷ "You are not yet fifty years old," they said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!"

⁵⁸ "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" ⁵⁹ At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

The Pharisees Investigate the Healing

9 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind.¹⁴ Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. ¹⁵ Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."

16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath."

But others asked, "How can a sinner perform such signs?" So they were divided.

17 Then they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened."

The man replied, "He is a prophet."

18 They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. ¹⁹ "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?"

20 "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. ²¹ But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." ²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. ²³ That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

24 A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God by telling the truth," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."

25 He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

26 Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

27 He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?"

28 Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! ²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

30 The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. ³² Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

34 To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

Further Conflict Over Jesus' Claims

10 ²² Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³ and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon's Colonnade. ²⁴ The Jews who were there gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."

²⁵ Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

³¹ Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him, ³² but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?"

³³ "We are not stoning you for any good work," they replied, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are "gods"'? ³⁵ If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came – and Scripture cannot be set aside – ³⁶ what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'? ³⁷ Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. ³⁸ But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." ³⁹ Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.

⁴⁰ Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. There he stayed, ⁴¹ and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a sign, all that John said about this man was true." ⁴² And in that place many believed in Jesus.

The Plot to Kill Jesus

11 Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. ⁴⁶ But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷ Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin.

"What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation."

⁴⁹ Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! ⁵⁰ You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."

⁵¹ He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, ⁵² and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one. ⁵³ So from that day on they plotted to take his life.

⁵⁴ Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the people of Judea. Instead he withdrew to a region near the wilderness, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.

⁵⁵ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. ⁵⁶ They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple courts they asked one another, "What do you think? Isn't he coming to the festival at all?" ⁵⁷ But the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it so that they might arrest him.

Jesus Arrested

18 When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.

² Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. ³ So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

⁴ Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"

⁵ "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) ⁶ When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

⁷ Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they said.

⁸ Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go." ⁹ This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."

¹⁰ Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

¹¹ Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

¹² Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him ¹³ and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. ¹⁴ Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.

Peter's First Denial

¹⁵ Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, ¹⁶ but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

¹⁷ "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" she asked Peter.

He replied, "I am not."

¹⁸ It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

The High Priest Questions Jesus

¹⁹ Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

²⁰ "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. ²¹ Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said."

²² When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded.

²³ "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" ²⁴ Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Peter's Second and Third Denials

²⁵ Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?"

He denied it, saying, "I am not."

²⁶ One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?" ²⁷ Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

Jesus Before Pilate

²⁸ Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness they did not enter the palace, because they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. ²⁹ So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?"

³⁰ "If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you."

³¹ Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law."

"But we have no right to execute anyone," they objected. ³² This took place to fulfil what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

³³ Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

³⁴ "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

³⁵ "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

³⁶ Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

³⁷ "You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

³⁸ "What is truth?" retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. ³⁹ But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release 'the king of the Jews'?"

⁴⁰ They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising.

Jesus Sentenced to Be Crucified

19 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ² The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe ³ and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face.

⁴ Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." ⁵ When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

⁶ As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"

But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him."

⁷ The Jewish leaders insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."

⁸ When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, ⁹ and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"

¹¹ Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."

¹² From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."

¹³ When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). ¹⁴ It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon.

"Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews.

¹⁵ But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!"

"Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked.

"We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered.

¹⁶ Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

So the soldiers took charge of Jesus.

Extract 7: Luke 23:26-24:53

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The Crucifixion of Jesus

23 As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. **27** A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. **28** Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. **29** For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' **30** Then

"they will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!'"

31 For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

32 Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. **33** When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left. **34** Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

35 The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One."

36 The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar **37** and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

38 There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

40 But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? **41** We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

43 Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

The Death of Jesus

⁴⁴ It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, ⁴⁵ for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

⁴⁷ The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." ⁴⁸ When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. ⁴⁹ But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

The Burial of Jesus

⁵⁰ Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, ⁵¹ who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. ⁵² Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. ⁵³ Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. ⁵⁴ It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

⁵⁵ The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. ⁵⁶ Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

Jesus Has Risen

24 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵ In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷ 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' " ⁸ Then they remembered his words.

⁹ When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹² Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

On the Road to Emmaus

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

¹⁹ "What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

²⁵ He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." ³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

³⁶ While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.³⁸ He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?"⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence.

⁴⁴ He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

The Ascension of Jesus

⁵⁰ When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. ⁵² Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³ And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

Extract 8: Frank Morison, 'Between Sunset and Dawn (2015)

Taken from: *Who Moved the Stone?* By Frank Morison (Magdalene Press 2015), Chapter 8 Between Sunset and Dawn, pp.88–102.

It is strange that there is no escaping the clock in all this baffling story of the closing phase of the life of Jesus.

We saw in an earlier chapter how the inexorable pressure of events precipitated the arrest, forced the hands of the authorities, prolonged the hour of the preliminary hearing, and modified profoundly the character of the Roman trial. It is as though everything in this affair was done under the lash of an invisible taskmaster, from whose decree there was no appeal. So now, whether we realize it at first or not, we shall find the problem steadily narrowing itself down to an investigation of what was happening just outside the walls of Jerusalem about 1,900 years ago between sunset on a certain Saturday and the first streaks of dawn on the following morning. Let us begin by considering in some detail the various hypotheses which have been put forward to account for the facts.

There is, of course, one suggestion which few readers of this book will expect to be argued seriously. I mean the suggestion, so widely circulated in apostolic times, that the disciples themselves had stolen or abducted the body. I do not propose to devote any considerable amount of space to testing the historical accuracy of this charge because the verdict has been anticipated by the almost universal sense and feeling of mankind. So far as I know there is not a single writer whose work is of critical value today who holds that there is even a case for discussion. We know these eleven men pretty well by their subsequent actions and writings. Somehow they are not built that way. There is no trace of the daring sort of ringleader who would have had the imagination to plan a *coup* like that and to carry it through without detection. Even if it had been possible, and the disciples the men to do it, the subsequent history of Christianity would have been different. Sooner or later, someone who knew the facts would have 'split'.

Further, no great moral structure like the Early Church, based as it was upon lifelong persecution and personal suffering, could have reared its head upon a statement which every one of the eleven apostles knew to be a lie. I have asked myself many times, would Peter have been a party to a deception like that, would John, would Andrew, would Philip or Thomas? Whatever the explanation of these extraordinary events may be, we may be certain that it was not that.

We are left, therefore, with the problem of the vacant tomb still unsolved. Can we get any light by exploring the various other explanations which have been advanced?

There are, in the main, six independent lines of critical approach to this matter. Four of them assume the vacancy of the tomb as an historic fact, while the others take the extremer view that the story is either entirely apocryphal or that the tomb was not investigated under the conditions described in the Gospels. Very briefly these hypotheses may be summarized as follows:

- 1 That Joseph of Arimathea secretly removed the body to a more suitable resting-place.
- 2 That the body was removed by order of the Roman Power.

3 That the body was removed by the Jewish authorities to prevent the possible veneration of the tomb.

4 That life was not really extinct, and that Jesus recovered in the cool of the grave.

5 That the women mistook the grave in the uncertain light.

6 That the grave was not visited at all and that the story about the women was a later accretion.

This is a very wide field of presuppositions and, so far as I know, includes every serious alternative to the Gospel thesis which has been put forward. Let us look at them in turn for a few moments.

1 That Joseph of Arimathea removed the Body.

At first sight the suggestion that the man who, by universal consent, begged the body of Jesus from the Roman Procurator, might himself have removed it for private reasons to another place, is one which seems to carry considerable weight. The inferences drawn by a number of writers from the rather slender details given in the Gospels are that the tomb was probably purchased by Joseph for his own use, that its proximity to the scene of the Crucifixion suggested its temporary employment during the Sabbath, and that at the earliest possible moment Joseph would wish to remove the remains to a more permanent resting-place. All this is very understandable and, if the theory stood alone, it would present a quite remarkable and convincing aspect of self-consistency and strength. But we cannot leave a serious historical hypothesis in this state. It has to be worked out and superimposed upon the situation which it attempts to explain. The far, as well as the near consequences have to be explored and by its power to satisfy the whole of these conditions it must finally be judged.

Now a closer examination of this hypothesis reveals certain weaknesses and inconsistencies which affect its probability very gravely. In the first place the hour required for this suppositious removal (necessarily between the close of the Sabbath and the first sign of dawn) is in itself a rather strange time for a respected leader of the people to choose for a perfectly legitimate operation which could have been performed much better and more expeditiously at the break of day. It should never be forgotten that upon this theory Joseph of Arimathea and the little party of women were independently and quite unknown to each other planning to perform a service which would bring them to the tomb at the earliest possible moment consistent with the observance of the Sabbath. Having regard to the difficulties presented by the darkness that moment was unquestionably the break of day. Theoretically, therefore, Mary Magdalene and her friends upon reaching the tomb ought to have come upon the party of Joseph already at work.

There is no trace, however, of this dramatic meeting taking place. We are compelled, therefore, to put the supposed removal further back into the night. We have to think of a party of men operating with lamps or torches, working under the maximum difficulties, picking their way through the unlighted regions beyond the city wall, carrying a heavy body, probably for some considerable distance, and depositing it in another grave. We have to think of them going to the trouble of removing all the grave-clothes first, leaving these in the tomb and removing the

naked body to its destination. And we have to regard them as either forgetting to close the door of the old tomb, or not wishing for the moment to waste time by doing so.

Let us try to see the full force and weight of this particular reconstruction of the scene. I can imagine someone saying:

'Are we not here on the track of reality? Granted that dawn would have been the *ideal* time for this operation, but events may have determined otherwise. News flies quickly in proximity to a great national high road and Joseph may have feared that a task requiring at least two hours for its accomplishment might draw a large and dangerous crowd if undertaken after sunrise. May it not be that he really did carry out the preliminaries under cover of darkness and that when Mary Magdalene and her party arrived at the tomb, the party had already left for the locality of the permanent burial-place?'

This view of the matter possesses in a remarkable degree the required consistency with the records. It explains the surprise of the women on finding the great stone rolled away. It accounts for the tomb being discovered to be vacant. It agrees profoundly with Mary Magdalene's breathless message to the two disciples: 'They have taken away the Lord, and we know not where they have laid him!' If there were no other conditions to be satisfied, this would be the supremely convincing and naturalistic explanation. But again no theory, however plausible and convincing at first sight, can stand alone. It must fit the big facts of the situation as well as the little. And it is with the big facts that no conceivable adjustment seems to be possible.

There are two ways of regarding Joseph of Arimathea consistently with the narratives. Either he was:

(a) A secret follower or disciple of Jesus who seriously desired to perform openly this service to one whose leadership he had hesitated to acknowledge during life; or

(b) A pious member of the Sanhedrin who was only concerned with the fulfilment of the Jewish Law which enjoined burial of the crucified prisoner before sunset.

A great deal has been made of the second possibility, chiefly by those who are anxious to show cause for Joseph's supposed reluctance to allow the body of Jesus to remain in his own tomb. It seems to me, however, that there is one insuperable difficulty in the way of its acceptance. The Jewish Law which enjoined burial before sunset applied equally to the two thieves, and there is no suggestion that Joseph occupied himself with or even gave a thought to the remains of these two men. Now this is remarkable, because all three cases, involving as they did the capital sentence, came within the Roman jurisdiction. It was quite as necessary to obtain Pilate's permission in the case of the two thieves as it was in that of Jesus. No doubt the Priests did later obtain official authority to deal with these two men, and their bodies were probably cast into the common grave, but this was clearly after Joseph of Arimathea had made his own personal and independent request. The fact that Joseph did make this isolated application to Pilate shows that he was not

acting in an official or representative sense. In any case, why should an honourable Councillor and a member of the Great Sanhedrin have undertaken with his own hands a menial task which could more appropriately have been left to the civil guard?

Secondly, there are very definite indications in the apocryphal literature that the Priests were very angry with Joseph of Arimathea and summoned him before the Council. There would have been no occasion for such anger if he had acted merely at their behest, but very good reasons for it if he had stultified their collective action in the eyes of the people and of Pilate himself, by giving to the body of Jesus an honourable and respectful burial. Finally there is the explicit statement in St. Matthew's Gospel that Joseph was a disciple, and in St. Luke that he had not consented to their counsel and deed.

These considerations, taken together, seem to suggest that Joseph really was a sympathizer with Jesus who, stirred to the depths of his being by the illegality and fanaticism of what had been done, decided to give openly an honourable burial to the Great Teacher. With this object he went expressly to Pilate to beg the body, and with this object he chose his own tomb.

Now directly we accept this view of Joseph of Arimathea, we admit also a whole circle of ideas which are inseparable from it. In the first place it is extremely unlikely that in such circumstances Joseph would have wished to remove the body of Jesus at all. If he took the action recorded of him in the Gospels he compromised and even destroyed his social standing with the official and ruling caste. By that one act he threw in his lot irrevocably with the party of Jesus. He would hardly have adopted a bold and courageous course like that if he had not held Jesus in deep love and veneration. To one in his position, having made at long last the sacrifice he had hesitated to make during the living ministry, the thought that the revered leader and martyr rested in his own tomb would have been an imperishable consolation – the one hallowed recollection which would brighten the sad memories of his declining days. The more closely we consider this action of Joseph of Arimathea the more we get the impression of a man acting upon an inner compulsion to seize the last fleeting opportunity to align himself with the cause of Jesus before it was too late. Would he have incurred the penalties inseparable from his action – the contempt of his old associates, the deep hostility of the Priesthood, the ignominy of declaring himself a follower of the discredited and crucified Prophet – and have been willing within thirty-six hours to part with the glory? I think not. Overwhelmingly psychology is against it.

But there is another and even more cogent reason for thinking that Joseph was not responsible for the removal of the body. Within seven weeks at latest the disciples were back in Jerusalem declaring with the utmost certainty and conviction that Jesus had risen from the dead. If Joseph had made a perfectly legitimate removal of the body and (to avoid a popular demonstration) had done so in the middle of the night before Mary and her friends arrived at the Garden, the true facts of the matter must have been quite easily accessible to the Priests. After all, another tomb had to be found, and at least two or three helpers were required to carry the body. Why then, when all Jerusalem was seething with the Christian controversy, did they not simply tell the truth and thus give an effective quietus to the rumours due to the disappearance of the body?

Finally, and this to my mind carried conclusive weight, we cannot find in the contemporary records any trace of a tomb or shrine becoming the centre of veneration or worship on the ground that it contained the relics of Jesus. This is inconceivable if it was ever seriously stated at the time that Jesus was really buried elsewhere than in the vacant tomb. Rumour would have asserted a hundred supposititious places where the remains really lay, and pilgrimages innumerable would have been made to them.

Strange though it may appear, the only way in which we can account for the absence of this phenomenon is the explanation offered in the Gospels, viz. that the tomb was known, was investigated a few hours after the burial, and that the body had disappeared.

2 and 3. That the Authorities (Jewish or Roman) removed the Body

It will be convenient to take these two suggested solutions together, since the situation created by them is not markedly different from that which we have been considering.

It is no doubt possible, even at this distance of time, to suggest reasons why the body of Jesus might have been moved officially either by the Roman or the Jewish power, though the intrinsic probability of such a proceeding seems to be slight. Pilate was a very obstinate man, as his curt refusal to alter the terms of the inscription shows. He was clearly glad of any excuse to be rid of this painful incident, and if a Jew of substance desired and was granted the necessary permission to take charge of and bury the body, what more need have been done? With the Procurator in the mood in which he apparently then was, it would have required some exceedingly strong arguments to have induced him to alter his decision even at the instance of the Jewish power.

There is, of course, a very persistent tradition, both in the Gospels and the apocryphal writings, that the Jews did go to Pilate with a request. I shall deal with the very singular but important question of the guards in a later chapter. But the whole point of this tradition is to the effect that what the Priests are said to have sought of Pilate was not permission to remove the body, but to *prevent* it from being removed or stolen. There is not the slightest hint or suggestion in the earlier extant writings, apocryphal or otherwise, that the Priests ever contemplated changing the burial place, while there are a number of distinct statements that they were concerned lest some unauthorized person should abduct the body.

But the whole case for the supposed official removal of the body really breaks down when we confront it by the admitted facts of the after-situation. For if the Priests induced Pilate to change the burial place, or to authorize their doing so, they must have known the ultimate and final resting-place, and in that event they would never have been content with the obviously unsatisfactory and untrue statement that the disciples had stolen the body. They would surely have taken the much stronger ground that the body had been removed for judicial reasons by Pilate's command or at their own request. Such a statement, made on the authority of the High Priest, would have been final. It would have destroyed for ever the possibility of anyone credibly asserting the physical resurrection of Jesus, because in the last

resort, and if challenged, the remains could always have been produced. It is the complete failure of anyone to produce the remains, or to point to any tomb, official or otherwise, in which they were said to lie, which ultimately destroys every theory based upon the human removal of the body.

4 That Jesus did not really die on the Cross

I include this suggestion here more for the sake of completeness than in the expectation that the reader will desire to hear it seriously argued. It is really little more than an historical curiosity. Driven by the immense strength and cogency of the case for the empty tomb, the German rationalist Venturini put forward the suggestion that Christ did not actually die upon the Cross, but fainted, and that in the cool temperature of the grave He recovered and subsequently appeared to the disciples.

This suggestion, while attempting to produce a strictly rational explanation of the post-Crucifixion phenomena, is surely the least rational of all. It ignores the deadly character of the wounds inflicted upon Jesus, the frightful laceration of the hands and feet, the loss of strength through the ebbing away of blood, the hopelessness of human aid during the critical moments when it would be most needed, the tight-drawn bandages of the grave, the heavy stone. To try even to think of what would happen to an utterly collapsed constitution, bleeding from five torn and untended wounds, lying on the cold slab of a tomb in April without human succour of any kind, is to realize at once the unreason of the argument. But the death-blow to this theory was dealt long ago by the distinguished critic, Strauss, in a passage which will repay study.

5 That the Women made a Mistake

This brings us to a suggestion which can only be discussed fully when we have studied in some detail the historic encounter at the tomb, but there are certain broad and general consequences of the theory which can more conveniently be considered here.

The suggestion is that when Mary Magdalene and her friends came to the Garden on Sunday morning the light was very dim; indeed, that dawn was only just breaking. Things take unusual shapes in the semi-darkness, and it is thought that in these circumstances the women may have made a quite genuine mistake in identifying the grave. It is suggested that, on reaching a tomb which they unexpectedly found to be open they encountered a young man – the gardener has been indicated – who, recognizing their mission, tried to tell them that Jesus was not there. The women were terrified, however, at the discovery of their errand, and without waiting for the young man to finish his sentence and thus explain their mistake, they fled from the Garden.

It will be observed that this theory, despite its appearance of rationality, has one peculiar weakness. If it was so dark that the women accidentally went to the wrong tomb, it is exceedingly improbable that the gardener would have been at work. If it was late enough and light enough for the gardener to be at work, it is

improbable that the women would have been mistaken. The theory thus rests upon the synchronization of two very doubtful contingencies. This is, however, only part of the improbability and intellectual difficulty which gathers around it.

In order that we may get this matter in the clearest possible light, I propose to take the statement of one of the ablest of its exponents, Prof. Kirsopp Lake, D.D., who has developed the theory with great fullness and lucidity in his book *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. I shall endeavour to give Dr. Lake's view as far as is possible in his own words, because the openness and candour of his style calls for an equal frankness in those who may be opposed to him. This is no place for mere dialectics. It is the theory itself that we want to study and understand.

Now Prof. Lake begins, and I think rightly, with the assumption that the story of the women's visit to the tomb is an authentic piece of history. Whatever view we may take of what happened later, this particular episode is embedded too deeply in the primitive literature to be treated other than with respect. The story of the women's adventure is in the earliest authentic document we possess, the Gospel of St. Mark. It is repeated by St. Matthew and St. Luke, it is confirmed so far as Mary Magdalene herself is concerned by St. John, it is in the Apocryphal Gospel of Peter; and, perhaps even more significantly, it is in that very ancient independent fragment, preserved by St. Luke in chapter xxiv., verses 13–24, the journey to Emmaus.

The essential historicity of the women's visit is, therefore, not at present in doubt. But Prof. Lake is inclined to question whether the tomb to which they came really was the original and authentic grave of Christ.

There are two main passages in which Prof. Lake develops his theme. In his chapter on 'The Facts behind the Tradition', he says:

'It is seriously a matter for doubt whether the women were really in a position to be quite certain that the tomb which they visited was that in which they had seen Joseph of Arimathea bury the Lord's body... If it were not the same, the circumstances all seem to fall into line. The women came in the early morning to a tomb which they thought was the one in which they had seen the Lord buried. They expected to find a closed tomb, but they found an open one; and a young man, who was in the entrance, guessing their errand, tried to tell them that they had made a mistake in the place. 'He is not here,' said he; 'see the place where they laid him', and probably pointed to the next tomb. But the women were frightened at the detection of their errand and fled, only imperfectly or not at all understanding what they heard. It was only later on, when they knew that the Lord was risen, and – on their view – that his tomb must be empty, that they came to believe that the young man was something more than they had seen; that he was not telling them of their mistake, but announcing the Resurrection, and that his intention was to give them a message for the disciples.'

The same idea is developed further in the following passage from 'The Narrative in Mark':

'The burial was watched, probably from a distance, by the little band of women who had remained to see the last moments of their Master. None of the other disciples were present, for they had scattered after the arrest of Jesus (St. Peter had a little later than the rest), and had either already returned home or were in hiding in Jerusalem until they could find an opportunity of escape.'

'Soon all the disciples found themselves once more in their old home, and prepared to return to their old methods of life. But to their surprise the Lord appeared, first to St. Peter and afterwards to others – to those who lived in Judea as well as to the Galileans – and under the influence of these appearances of which the details have not been accurately preserved, they came to believe that the Lord was risen and exalted to Heaven, and that they were called to return to Jerusalem to take up their Master's work.'

'In Jerusalem they found the women who had watched the burial, and these told them that they had gone on the morning of the third day to supply the deficiencies of the burial given to the Lord by Joseph, but when they came to the grave, instead of finding it closed, they found it open, and a young man terrified them by telling them that Jesus whom they were seeking was not there. Thus to the already firm belief in the fact of the Resurrection – a belief which to that generation implied that the grave was empty – came to be added, on the strength of the women's report, that the Resurrection took place on the third day.'

I have given these particular extracts because they seem to me to present, very clearly and in Prof. Lake's own words, the fundamentals of his case, viz.:

- 1 That the women probably made a mistake.
- 2 That they did not immediately report their discovery, because the disciples were no longer in Jerusalem.
- 3 That the latter only heard the story when they returned from Galilee after an interval of some weeks.

I do not propose to attempt here an examination of those subtler points in the original narratives which can only be studied effectively in the light of the far closer and more detailed investigation which we shall make in a later chapter.

But there are three broad considerations which stand out and call for emphasis.

In the first place, the evidence for the supposed absence or inaccessibility of the disciples on Easter Sunday (so vital to Prof. Lake's interpretation of the case) seems to me to be of a very doubtful and precarious character. It rests solely upon a broken or partly completed sentence in St. Mark. Against this there is positive evidence of a most direct and demonstrative kind. Not only does St. Mark himself expressly imply the presence of the disciples¹⁰⁵ but the whole Synoptic tradition asserts and implies it too.

If there is one thing in the Gospel story which does not seem to admit of doubt it is that, although the earliest account says that the disciples forsook Jesus and fled, they did not all flee. One man among them at least braved the terrors of the city that night and even obtained access to the scene of the midnight trial. That man was Peter.

I do not know how the reader feels about this matter, but personally I am surer of the essential historicity of the pathetic little story of Peter's fall and repentance than of almost any thing else in the Gospels. It is one of those stories which is intelligible enough as a transcript from real life, but which would be quite inexplicable regarded as fiction. What possible explanation can we offer of a story so damning and derogatory to the repute of one of the leading apostles getting into the first Christian account of the Passion save that it was an ineffaceable memory of an actual event.

If, therefore, Peter was manifestly present in Jerusalem on Friday morning, who can say with any confidence that he and his companions had fled the city by the following Sunday?

Secondly, the behaviour of the women themselves, according to this hypothesis, is so curiously unnatural and strange. Remember who these women are. We are not dealing with mere acquaintances of the apostolic band, but with their own kith and kin. Salome was the mother of two of the disciples; Mary of Cleophas, her sister, of two others. Moreover, they were not normally resident in the city; they had come up specially for the Feast. If the disciples as a body were in any pressing kind of danger, their women-folk were in like peril. They could not leave them indifferently to the machinations of the Priests or the fury of a section of the multitude. Some attempt to secure their safety and their speedy withdrawal from the city would assuredly be made.

This interdependence of the women upon the men very seriously embarrasses Prof. Lake's theory at its most vital point. Prof. Lake is compelled to keep the women in Jerusalem until Sunday morning, because he firmly believes that they really went to the tomb. He is also compelled to get the disciples out of Jerusalem before sunrise on Sunday because he holds that the women kept silence. Finally, to harmonize this with the fact that they did subsequently tell the story, with all its inevitable and logical results, he finds it necessary to keep the women in Jerusalem for several weeks while the disciples returned to their homes, had certain experiences, and came back to the capital.

What does Prof. Lake imagine these women were doing all these weeks, in a foreign town, with every instinct and domestic tie pulling them northward? Would he himself in similar circumstances have gone off to safety leaving his wife or his mother in a situation of unquestioned peril? I find it hard to believe. If it was safe for the women to remain in the city and go unostentatiously to the tomb of Jesus, it was safe for the disciples to remain also. If it was not safe for the disciples to remain, then Salome, Mary of Cleophas, and surely the stricken Mother of Jesus would have shared their flight.

But there is a far deeper and more radical difficulty than this. Neither Prof. Lake nor the Rev. P. Gardner-Smith, who has adopted the same view with slight reservations, seem to have realized the annihilating character of the evidential case which their theory, if true, would have placed within reach of the Priests. Caiaphas and his friends must have been very different men from what we take them for if they did not see instantly that the supreme answer to all this nonsense about an empty grave was *to produce the gardener*.

Here was the one man who could have spoken with complete and final authority; whose slightest word could have blown the whole flimsy story to the winds. Where are the traces of the controversy which must surely have followed so direct and damaging an appeal to the facts? Where is the confident statement of the Priests that the grave of Jesus was not vacant, and that the mouldering remains still lay within it? There is no trace of any such controversy or statement – only the faint echo of the original charge that the disciples themselves had abducted the body.

There are, indeed, two very good reasons why, as a matter of historic fact, this young man was never called as a witness by the enemies of Christianity. In the first place, as we shall see, he was probably not the gardener at all, and his presence at the cave in the dim light of Sunday morning was due to other causes. But the supreme and decisive factor lay in the fact that, throughout the early decades of Christianity, the physical vacancy of the authentic tomb of Christ was not in doubt. Events seem to have conspired to place that beyond the reach of argument.

6 That the Grave was not visited by the Women

This brings us to a theory which is, perhaps, the only really logical alternative to the Gospel thesis.

If it could be proved that that grave was not visited on Sunday morning, and that it lay undisturbed and perhaps unthought of for many months afterwards, then the rock upon which all the preceding hypotheses ultimately founder would be removed. For if the women did not announce its vacancy, the Priests would be under no compulsion to formulate a theory, and the city would have gone about its normal life, save for the inevitable excitement and discussion occasioned by so resounding an event as the Crucifixion.

Yet I submit that none of the six hypotheses which we have been considering falls in greater or completer intellectual ruin than this. As the sequel will show, the history of what happened afterwards belies it at every turn and corner of the road.

Extract 9: Ian Wilson, 'Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?' (1996)

Taken from: Ian Wilson, *Jesus: The Evidence* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1996), Chapter 10, Did Jesus Really Rise From the Dead?, pp.139–153.

According to the gospels, Joseph of Arimathea laid Jesus in his own new, rock-cut tomb 'in which no one had yet been buried' (John 19: 41). This is described as having been in a garden, close to Golgotha (John 19: 41–2), and with a 'very big' stone rolled across the entrance-way (Matthew 27: 60; Mark 15: 46; 16: 3–4). More than sixty examples of such rolling-stone tombs can still be seen in and around Jerusalem. Their entrance boulders can weigh up to two tons, though if on level ground they can with a little effort be rolled aside by just one person. Although the John gospel's information that 'no-one had yet been buried' in the tomb might appear puzzling, in fact this is consistent with the evidence of Jewish rock-cut tombs from Jesus' time that have been excavated in recent years.

Thus, as was found, for instance, during the earlier-mentioned excavations at Giv'at ha-Mivtar, a single Jewish tomb might contain one or more benches or 'laying-out' places, together with as many as eight or more chambers cut into the rock to accommodate ossuaries, the stone boxes in which the bones were gathered once the corpse had decomposed. Since each tomb-chamber might contain two or three ossuaries, and each ossuary several sets of bones, a single tomb could be used for thirty or more people over a period of decades. For a tomb to be one in which 'no-one had yet been buried' would therefore be at least worthy of comment. It also provides an element of authentic Jewish detail bearing in mind that, for the Romans and other Gentiles of Jesus's time, cremation was the norm.

But where was Jesus' tomb located in relation to present-day Jerusalem? Today the traditional site is marked by the mainly Crusader-built Church of the Holy Sepulchre, a bewildering rabbit-warren of an edifice, always under repair and teeming with tourists, with in its midst a rather ugly, many times rebuilt edicule, or 'little building', housing a carefully protected marble slab covering all that remains of the purported bench on which Jesus was laid out in death. This location has been identified as Jesus' burial place at least since the time when Helena, mother of the first Christian Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, reputedly 'discovered' it back in the fourth century AD. As recounted by the near-contemporary church historian Socrates Scholasticus:

Helena went to Jerusalem to find what had been that city as desolate as 'a lodge in a garden of cucumbers'... after the Passion Christians paid great devotion to Christ's tomb, but those who hated Christianity covered the spot with a mound of earth, built a temple of Aphrodite on it, and set up her statue there, so that the place would not be forgotten. The device was successful for a long time – until, in fact, it became known to the Emperor's [i.e. Constantine the Great's] mother. She had the statue thrown down, the earth removed and the site cleared, and found three crosses in the tomb...With them was also found the titulum on which Pilate had written in various languages that the Christ crucified was the king of the Jews ...

From one of those three crosses found by Helena came most of the pieces of the 'True Cross' venerated in numerous churches and cathedrals throughout the world. What purports to be the titulus can also still be seen in Rome's Basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, a puzzling piece of work with an inscription just decipherable as 'Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews', written in Aramaic, Greek and Latin (see John 19: 19). The authenticity of this has to be considered doubtful; likewise probably the pieces of the cross, though no one can be sure.

But in view of the early attested marking of the spot with the Temple of Aphrodite (known to have been built by the Emperor Hadrian), there is a more than reasonable case for accepting the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as genuinely enshrining the one-time tomb in which Jesus' body was laid. Although according to the gospels Jesus' tomb was located outside Jerusalem's walls, by Helena's time these walls had been rebuilt, the reputed tomb being found inside them. There must, therefore, have been something very compelling about the location for Helena to have ignored the gospels' clear descriptions. As archaeologist Dr Kathleen Kenyon discovered in the 1960s, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre site was outside the city walls of Jesus' time, and would seem to have been within a quarry then being used for burials.

Frustratingly, however, Constantine the Great's engineers cut away the rock into which the tomb had been set, leaving it first free standing, and then before the end of the fourth century surrounded by a rotunda within a grandiose church. This church and the tomb alike subsequently became subjected to sometimes exhaustive Moslem attacks so that today almost every vestige of how it looked if and when Jesus was laid in it has been lost. This has prompted many Christian pilgrims to turn instead to the altogether more authentic-looking 'Garden Tomb', which General Gordon of Khartoum, on visiting Jerusalem in 1883, suggested might have been the true one used for Jesus. Located just a short walk north of Old City Jerusalem's Damascus Gate, this is today beautifully maintained as an interdenominational place of prayer, though as even its guides admit there is very little evidence in favour of it having been the original.

But the real question is: what happened to Jesus' body as laid in the true tomb, wherever this was, and whatever it looked like? According to every available early source, Jesus died on the cross at the hands of the world's most efficient executioners, the Romans. Before his body was taken down from the cross the Roman governor Pontius Pilate reportedly sent a senior officer to ensure that he was genuinely dead (Mark 15: 45). The author of the John gospel observed that in order to leave nothing to chance a lance was plunged into his chest, whereupon blood and a watery fluid oozed out (John 19: 34). According to the Matthew gospel's author, a guard was even mounted and official seals affixed to the entrance stone in order to prevent any possibility of trickery (Matthew 27: 66).

Because the Matthew gospel alone tells the story of the guard, also of a 'violent earthquake' and of the 'angel of the Lord' rolling away the entrance stone, it is probably safest to regard these as pious embroideries by an author demonstrably over-fond of the miraculous. It is equally impossible to know quite what to make of the differing accounts of the young man or men encountered at the tomb (Mark 16: 5; Luke 24: 4), except that the bench on which Jesus' body would have been laid,

as still to be seen in surviving rolling-stone tombs, certainly would have provided sufficient space for individuals to be seated at both head and foot. But altogether more important is the agreement of all sources that just two days after Jesus had been laid in the tomb not only had his body mysteriously disappeared but people who had known him well began to have strange experiences of seeing him among them. Sometimes, distrusting their own senses, they reported seeing him pass through locked doors, yet he was able to talk and eat with them (Luke 24: 43). Reportedly he even felt like a living person to the touch (John 20: 27, 28). The convincingness of these encounters to those on the receiving end is powerfully conveyed by the speech attributed to Peter in the tenth chapter of Acts:

Now I and those with me can witness to everything he did throughout the countryside of Judaea and in Jerusalem itself: and also to the fact that they killed him by hanging him on a tree, yet three days afterwards God raised him to life and allowed him to be seen, not by the whole people, but only by certain witnesses God had chosen beforehand. Now we are those witnesses – we have eaten and drunk with him after his resurrection from the dead ... (Acts 10: 39–42)

As even 'Jesus-did-not-exist' exponent Professor G. A. Wells has acknowledged, this powerful belief caught on very soon after the events described, at least one attestor to the resurrection, the apostle Paul, being readily dateable. In Acts 18: 12 Paul is said to have appeared before the Achaean proconsul Gallio while on his second mission, and since an inscription found at Delphi enables Gallio's administration to be accurately dated to 51–2 AD, simple back calculation establishes that Paul must have believed in Jesus' resurrection c. 40 AD, and according to some authorities, perhaps even as early as 36 AD. So what had happened to account for the fact that Paul and others held this belief? In this ostensibly simple question lies the central mystery of the Christian religion, and one for which there remains no uncontested rational answer.

The various accounts of the scene at the empty tomb on the first Easter morning are so full of inconsistencies that it is easy for sceptics to deride them. The writer of the John gospel describes Mary Magdalen arriving at the tomb alone, discovering the tomb to be empty and imparting the news to Peter and an unnamed 'other disciple, the one Jesus loved' (John 20: 2), generally identified as John. The Matthew author relates that Mary Magdalen was accompanied by 'Mary the mother of James and Joseph'. Mark adds a further companion, a woman called Salome, referred to in the Thomas gospel. Luke, who knows nothing of any Salome, speaks only of one 'Joanna' (presumably royal treasurer Chuza's wife...together with other women who go off to tell the disciples what they have seen, though according to Mark, the women, 'frightened out of their wits... said nothing to a soul, for they were afraid' (Mark 16: 8).

Similar discrepancies occur in the reports of what was seen at the empty tomb. John's Mary Magdalen saw first two angels sitting in the tomb and then Jesus, whom she was not allowed to touch. Matthew's two Marys saw one seated angel, and then Jesus. Mark's three women saw a young man in a white robe, and Mary Magdalen alone saw Jesus. Luke's group of women saw two men in brilliant clothes who suddenly appeared at their side, but not Jesus himself, who was seen only by two disciples on the road to Emmaus. All four gospels describe Jesus subsequently appearing to the full group of disciples, but while Matthew and Mark set these appearances in Galilee, the Luke and John gospels suggest that the setting was Jerusalem. Luke also indirectly mentions an earlier appearance of Jesus to Simon Peter, one which seems to have gone unnoticed elsewhere in the gospels. But it is one of Paul's letters which gives the fullest information of all:

... he [Jesus] appeared first to Cephas [Peter] and secondly to the Twelve. Next he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died; then he appeared to James and then to all the apostles; and last of all he appeared to me too ... (1 Corinthians 15: 5–8)

The documentation is an almost hopeless jumble of confusion, scarcely helped by the fact that the ever enigmatic Mary Magdalen, the only witness mentioned in every account except Paul's – for whom women didn't count – was obviously so unbalanced that she had needed to be cured by Jesus of 'seven devils'. The lack of a proper ending to the Mark gospel, as revealed by the *Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus* manuscripts, merely adds to the problem. Yet had someone wholly invented the resurrection story one might have expected them to do so more convincingly than, for instance, representing women as the prime witnesses, when women's testimony carried a particularly low weight in Jewish Law. And in their own way the garblings and inconsistencies have the same quality as the memories of witnesses after a road accident, which are, after all, personal and often highly confused versions of the same true story.

Any number of theories have been advanced in an attempt to explain what really happened, but all may be reduced to permutations of six basic hypotheses:

- 1 The women went to the wrong tomb.
- 2 Unknown to the disciples, some independent person removed the body.
- 3 The disciples themselves removed the body and invented the whole story.
- 4 The disciples saw not the real Jesus, but hallucinations.
- 5 Jesus did not actually die on the cross, but was resuscitated, or in some other way survived.
- 6 Jesus really did rise from the grave.

Although it is impossible within a single chapter to do justice to these different hypotheses, quite clear is that the disciples and gospel writers anticipated that the first four theories would be proposed to explain the mystery. All the synoptic writers emphasize, for instance, how the women had carefully taken note of where Jesus was laid (Matthew 27: 61; Mark 15: 47; Luke 23: 55). The John gospel puts into the mind of Mary Magdalen the idea that the man she mistook for a gardener (in reality Jesus, as yet unrecognized) had for some reason taken the body away (John 20: 15). The writer of Matthew acknowledged that in his time there was a story in circulation that the disciples had stolen the body. He accused 'the Jews' of having bribed the guards posted at Jesus' tomb to say this. With regard to the possibility of hallucination, both the Luke and the John gospels emphasize the disciples' own incredulity at the solidity of what they were seeing, the Luke author, for instance, wonderingly reporting '... they offered him a piece of fish which he took and ate before their eyes' (Luke 24: 43). The John author noted the disciple Thomas' insistence that he was not prepared to believe unless he was able to put his fingers into the wound in Jesus' side, and recorded that Thomas was specifically allowed to do this.

In fact, quite aside from the gospel writers' evident anticipation of them, the first four hypotheses bear little serious scrutiny. Had there simply been a mistake over the location of the tomb, it would have been an easy matter for any sceptic to go to the right location, show the body still there and set the whole matter at rest. Had Jesus' body been taken away either by a person unknown or by the disciples, we might surely have expected someone, sometime, to produce it. Such a hypothesis also fails to account for the repeated attestations of Jesus being seen alive and well. With regard to the possibility of hallucinations, it might of course be possible to envisage some bizarre mass post-hypnotic suggestion that made Jesus seem to appear to those so hypnotized, to seem to eat with them, and even to feel solid to their touch. But this still totally fails to account for the reportedly very real emptiness of Jesus' tomb.

Perhaps because the gospel writers do not take account of it, the fifth hypothesis, that Jesus did not die on the cross, has been particularly favoured by sceptics and sensationalists in recent years. In his *The Passover Plot* the late Hugh J. Schonfield advanced the ingenious theory that the sponge offered to Jesus on the cross (John 19: 29, 30) was soaked not in vinegar but in a drug to induce the appearance of death. This was so that he could be taken to the tomb by Joseph of Arimathea and there resuscitated, the lance thrust into Jesus' side being the unexpected eventuality that caused the plot to misfire. According to Schonfield, the man seen by Mary Magdalen was simply someone who had been deputed to help revive Jesus, and the 'resurrection' was therefore nothing more than a case of mistaken identity, Jesus' body having been quietly buried elsewhere.

Both before and after Schonfield all sorts of variants to this theory have been offered. In D.H. Lawrence's short story 'The Man who Died', Jesus was taken down too early from the cross, revived in the tomb, petrified his followers, who assumed he was dead, 'resurrected', and then slipped away to Egypt to enjoy conjugal relations with a priestess of Isis. The supposedly factual *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* by Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln represents Jesus' paramour as Mary Magdalen and their place of refuge as the south of France, but it follows essentially the same plot, with Jesus even going on to father a family. Within the last few years Dr Barbara Thiering of the University of Sydney has resurrected the same

idea in her *Jesus: The Man*, as have the German writers Holger Kersten and Elmar Gruber with their *The Jesus Conspiracy*. Thiering has based her arguments on the idea that the gospels were all written in a code, so that virtually everything in them has to be re-interpreted in the light of that code. Kersten and Gruber have contended that the Vatican conspired with radiocarbon dating scientists to ensure that the Turin Shroud was dated to the Middle Ages so that its purported 'big secret', that it 'proves' that Jesus was still alive when laid inside it, should not be allowed to destroy the Christian faith. Despite the ingeniousness of such arguments, they merit scant serious scrutiny.

The problem for all hypotheses of this kind, certainly those postulating some form of resuscitation, was outlined more than a hundred years ago by the controversial Tübingen lecturer David Strauss, one of those nineteenth-century German theologians who in so many ways cast doubts on the gospel story. As Strauss wrote in his *New Life of Jesus*, published in 1865:

It is impossible that a being who had stolen half dead out of the sepulchre, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening and indulgence... could have given the disciples the impression that he was a Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life, an impression which lay at the bottom of their future ministry. Such a resuscitation... could by no possibility have changed their sorrow into enthusiasm, have elevated their reverence into worship!

In support of this, and in full favour of the hypothesis that Jesus genuinely rose from the grave, is the sheer confidence about this that became exhibited by the previously denying and demoralized disciple Simon Peter. This is evident from his first post-crucifixion public speech to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and their fellow-Judeans reported in the book of Acts:

Men of Israel... Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God... This man... you took and had crucified by men outside the Law. You killed him, but God raised him to life... and all of us are witnesses to that. (Acts 2: 22-4, 32)

Peter went on to speak with similar passion on subsequently addressing non-Jews in Caesarea:

Now I, and those with me, can witness to everything he [Jesus] did throughout the countryside of Judaea and in Jerusalem itself; and also to the fact that they killed him by hanging him on a tree, yet three days afterwards God raised him to life and allowed him to be seen, not by the whole people, but by certain witnesses God had chosen beforehand. Now we are those witnesses — we have eaten and drunk with him after his resurrection from the dead ... (Acts 10: 39-42)

Likewise meriting considerable weight as evidence is St Paul's clear and unequivocal statement in his letter to the Corinthians that the resurrected Jesus had been seen not only by himself, by Simon Peter, by the other disciples and by James but also by more than five hundred people at one time, most of whom he claimed to be still alive when he was setting his pen to papyrus. As pointed out by Dr Edwin M. Yamauchi, Associate Professor of History at Oxford, Ohio:

What gives a special authority to... [Paul's] list as historical evidence is the reference to most of the five hundred brethren being still alive. St Paul says in effect, 'If you do not believe me, you can ask them.' Such a statement in an admitted genuine letter written within thirty years of the event is almost as strong evidence as one could hope to get for something that happened nearly two thousand years ago.

Overall then, while there are undeniable reporting flaws regarding Jesus' claimed resurrection, and at a time distance of nearly two thousand years knowledge of exactly what happened is beyond us, the evidence that something like it actually happened is rather better than sceptics care to admit. And quite incontrovertibly, belief in it spread like wildfire very soon after the crucifixion.

Thus the book of Acts mentions as one of the first new believers a Hellenistic Jew called Stephen. Although their ancestry and religion was Jewish, Hellenistic Jews lived in the fashionable Graeco-Roman style, and spoke the Greek language. From Josephus' information that Jesus' teaching 'attracted many Jews and many of the Greeks', Stephen's adherence need not be considered out of the ordinary. But whatever his background, he chose, just like Jesus had, to attack the material vanity of the Jerusalem Temple, harking back to the Isaiah text:

*With heaven my throne
and earth my footstool,
what house could you build me,
what place could you make for my rest?
Was not all this made by my hand?*

(Isaiah 66: 1, 2)

Stephen then went on fearlessly to accuse the Jerusalem Temple authorities of having, in executing Jesus, murdered the great prophet foretold by Moses. That same Jesus, he impassionedly declared, he could see there and then 'standing at God's right hand'. Without in this instance even pausing to refer their prisoner to the Roman governor, those whom Stephen had attacked peremptorily stoned him to death.

Stephen was but the first of many who would take up this same cause – including, as we shall see, previously reticent members of Jesus' own family. They would firmly profess Jesus as the Messiah or Christ predicted in the Jewish scriptures, and emphatically attest that he had come back to life again after having suffered the most public of deaths. What cannot be emphasized enough is that those who made such claims had absolutely no expectation of any material gain for their outspokenness. Their reward instead, as the following decades and centuries would demonstrate, was all too frequently to be faced with some form of violent death, from being stoned, to being torn to pieces by wild animals in a Roman arena, to being crucified in some yet more grotesque and painful manner.

The really unnerving feature is that time after time they accepted such terrors with an astonishing cheerfulness, totally confident that what they professed was truth, that death had been conquered, and that their eventual reward far outweighed whatever tortures ordinary mortals might try to inflict upon them in the meantime. And few of the men and women who took up this challenge would have counted themselves natural martyrs, or anything out of the ordinary. Although some were high-born, most were from every stratum of society, whether Jewish or Graeco-Roman.

We can only conclude, therefore, that whether these were among the first five hundred-plus direct witnesses, or whether they had merely come to know one or more of those witnesses at first or second hand, something very powerful had fired into them such resoluteness of belief. So, given such attestation, can the resurrection of Jesus be accepted as a real historical event? And was the one-time flesh-and-blood Jesus genuinely rather more than just an ordinary man? Whatever the answer, already born was a faith in such matters powerful enough to survive not only the early years of persecution, but even through to our own time.

Extract 10: Luke 6:17-26, 10:25-37, 15:1-32, 16:19-31

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The Sermon on the Plain

6 ¹⁷ He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon, ¹⁸ who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by impure spirits were cured, ¹⁹ and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

²⁰ Looking at his disciples, he said:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹ Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

²² Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

²³ "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

²⁴ "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.

²⁵ Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.

²⁶ Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

10 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

²⁷ He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"

²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and

wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

15 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

³ Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴ "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' ⁷ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

⁸ "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' ¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

The Parable of the Lost Son

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.'²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

²⁸ "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

³¹ "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

The Rich Man and Lazarus

16¹⁹ "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. ²⁰ At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores ²¹ and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

²² "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴ So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

²⁵ "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

²⁷ "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, ²⁸ for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

²⁹ "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'

³⁰ "'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'

31 "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Paper 4A: Buddhism

Extract 1: Karen Armstrong, 'Enlightenment', (2002)

Taken from: Karen Armstrong, *Lives: Buddha* (Phoenix press, 2002), Chapter 3, Enlightenment, pp 60-88

The legends indicate that Gotama's childhood had been spent in an unawakened state, locked away from that knowledge of suffering which alone can bring us to spiritual maturity, but in later years he recalled that there had been one moment which had given him intimations of another mode of being. His father had taken him to watch the ceremonial ploughing of the fields before the planting of the next year's crop. All the men of the villages and townships took part in this annual event, so Suddhodana had left his small son in the care of his nurses under the shade of a rose-apple tree while he went to work. But the nurses decided to go and watch the ploughing, and, finding himself alone, Gotama sat up. In one version of this story, we are told that when he looked at the field that was being ploughed, he noticed that the young grass had been torn up and that insects and the eggs they had laid in these new shoots had been destroyed. The little boy gazed at the carnage and felt a strange sorrow, as though it were his own relatives that had been killed. But it was a beautiful day, and a feeling of pure joy rose up unbidden in his heart. We have all experienced such moments, which come upon us unexpectedly and without any striving on our part. Indeed, as soon as we start to reflect upon our happiness, ask why we are so joyful and become self-conscious, the experience fades. When we bring self into it, this unpremeditated joy cannot last: it is essentially a moment of ecstasy, a rapture which takes us outside the body and beyond the prism of our own egotism. Such *exstasis*, a word that literally means "to stand outside the self," has nothing to do with the craving and greed that characterize so much of our waking lives. As Gotama reflected later, it 'existed apart from objects that awaken *tanhā*' The child had been taken out of himself by a moment of spontaneous compassion, when he had allowed the pain of creatures that had nothing to do with him personally to pierce him to the heart. This surge of selfless empathy had brought him a moment of spiritual release.

Instinctively, the boy composed himself and sat in the *āsana* position, with straight back and crossed legs. A natural yogin, he entered into the first *jhāna*, a trance in which the meditator feels a calm happiness but is still able to think and reflect. Nobody had taught him the techniques of yoga, but for a few moments, the child had a taste of what it might be like to leave himself behind. The commentary tells us that the natural world recognized the spiritual potential of the young Gotama. As the day wore on, the shadows of the other trees moved, but not the shade of the rose-apple tree, which continued to shield the boy from the blazing sun. When the nurses came back, they were stunned by the miracle and fetched Suddhodana, who paid homage to the little boy. These last elements are certainly fictional, but the story of the trance, historical or not, is important in the Pāli legend and is said to have played a crucial role in Gotama's enlightenment.

Years later, just after he had cried, with mingled optimism and despair, "Surely there must be another way to enlightenment!", Gotama recalled this childhood experience. At that moment – again, unpremeditated and unsought – the memory of that childhood ecstasy rose to the surface of his mind. Emaciated, exhausted and dangerously ill, Gotama remembered the 'cool shade of the rose-apple tree,' which, inevitably, brought to mind the 'coolness' of Nibbāna. Most yogins could only

achieve the first *jhāna* after years of study and hard work, but it had come to him without any effort on his part and given him a foretaste of Nibbāna. Ever since he had left Kapilavatthu, he had shunned all happiness as part of his campaign against desire. During his years as an ascetic, he had almost destroyed his body, hoping that he could thereby force himself into the sacred world that was the inverse of humanity's usual suffering existence. Yet as a child he had attained that yogic ecstasy without any trouble at all, after an experience of pure joy. As he reflected on the coolness of the rose-apple tree, he imagined, in his weakened state, the relief of being convalescent (*nibbuta*), after a lifetime of fever. Then he was struck by an extraordinary idea. 'Could this,' he asked himself, 'possibly be the way to enlightenment?' Had the other teachers been wrong? Instead of torturing our reluctant selves into the final release, we might be able to achieve it effortlessly and spontaneously. Could Nibbāna be built into the structure of our humanity? If an untrained child could reach the first *jhāna* and have intimations of Nibbāna without even trying, then yogic insight must be profoundly natural to human beings. Instead of making yoga an assault upon humanity, perhaps it could be used to cultivate innate tendencies that led to *ceto-vimutti*, the 'release of the mind' that was a synonym for the supreme enlightenment?

As soon as he had mulled over the details of that childhood experience, Gotama became convinced that his hunch was correct. This was indeed the way to Nibbāna. Now all he had to do was prove it. What had produced that mood of calm happiness that had modulated so easily into the first *jhāna*?

An essential element had been what Gotama called 'seclusion.' He had been left alone; he could never have entered the ecstatic state if his nurses had distracted him with their chatter. Meditation required privacy and silence. But this seclusion went beyond physical solitude. Sitting under the rose-apple tree, his mind had been separated from desire for material things and from anything unwholesome and unprofitable. Since he had left home six years before, Gotama had been fighting his human nature and crushing its every impulse. He had come to distrust any kind of pleasure. But he now asked himself, why should he be afraid of the type of joy he had experienced on that long-ago afternoon? That pure delight had had nothing to do with greedy craving or sensual desire. Some joyful experiences could actually lead to an abandonment of egotism and to the achievement of an exalted yogic state. Again, as soon as he had posed the question to himself, Gotama responded with his usual, confident decisiveness: 'I am not afraid of such pleasures,' he said. The secret was to reproduce the seclusion that had led to his trance, and foster such wholesome (*kusala*) states of mind as the disinterested compassion that had made him grieve for the insects and the shoots of young grass. At the same time, he would carefully avoid any state of mind that would not be helpful or would impede his enlightenment.

He had, of course, already been behaving along these lines by observing the 'five prohibitions' which had forbidden such 'unhelpful' (*akusala*) activities as violence, lying, stealing, intoxication and sex. But now, he realized, this was not enough. He must cultivate the positive attitudes that were the opposite of these five restraints. Later, he would say that a person seeking enlightenment must be 'energetic, resolute and persevering' in pursuing those 'helpful,' 'wholesome' or 'skillful' (*kusala*) states that would promote spiritual health. *Ahimsā* (harmlessness)

could only take one part of the way: instead of simply avoiding violence, an aspirant must behave gently and kindly to everything and everybody; he must cultivate thoughts of loving-kindness to counter any incipient feelings of ill will. It was very important not to tell lies, but it was also crucial to engage in 'right talk' and make sure that whatever you said was worth saying: 'reasoned, accurate, clear, and beneficial.' Besides refraining from stealing, a *bhikkhu* should positively rejoice in taking whatever alms he was given, expressing no personal preference, and should take delight in possessing the bare minimum. The yogins had always maintained that avoiding the five prohibitions would lead to 'infinite happiness,' but by deliberately cultivating these positive states of mind, such *exstasis* could surely be redoubled. Once this 'skillful' behavior became so habitual that it was second nature, the aspirant, Gotama believed, would 'feel within himself a pure joy,' similar to if not identical with the bliss that he had felt as a boy under the rose-apple tree.

This almost Proustian recollection was, according to the texts, a turning point for Gotama. He resolved from then on to work with human nature and not fight against it – amplifying states of mind that were conducive to enlightenment and turning his back on anything that would stunt his potential. Gotama was developing what he called a 'Middle Way,' which shunned physical and emotional self-indulgence on the one hand, and extreme asceticism (which could be just as destructive) on the other. He decided that he must immediately abandon the punitive regime that he had followed with his five companions, which had made him so ill that there was no way he could experience the 'pure joy' that was a prelude to liberation. For the first time in months, he took solid food, starting with what the texts call *kummāsa*, a soothing milky junket or rice pudding. When the five *bhikkhus* saw him eating, they were horrified and walked away in disgust, convinced that Gotama had abandoned the struggle for enlightenment.

But this, of course, was not the case. Gotama must have nursed himself slowly back to health, and during this time he probably started to develop his own special kind of yoga. He was no longer hoping to discover his eternal Self, since he was beginning to think that this Self was just another one of the delusions that held people back from enlightenment. His yoga was designed to help him become better acquainted with his human nature, so that he could make it work for him in the attainment of Nibbāna. First, as a preliminary to meditation, came the practice that he called 'mindfulness' (*sati*), in which he scrutinized his behaviour at every moment of the day. He noted the ebb and flow of his feelings and sensations, together with the fluctuations of his consciousness. If sensual desire arose, instead of simply crushing it, he took note of what had given rise to it and how soon it faded away. He observed the way his senses and thoughts interacted with the external world, and made himself conscious of his every bodily action. He would become aware of the way he walked, bent down or stretched his limbs, and of his behaviour while 'eating, drinking, chewing, and tasting, in defecating, walking, standing, sitting, sleeping, waking, speaking and keeping silent.' He noticed the way ideas coursed through his mind and the constant stream of desires and irritations that could plague him in a brief half-hour. He became 'mindful' of the way he responded to a sudden noise or a change in the temperature, and saw how quickly even a tiny thing disturbed his peace of mind. This 'mindfulness' was not cultivated in a spirit of neurotic introspection. Gotama had not put his humanity

under the microscope in this way in order to castigate himself for his 'sins.' Sin had no place in his system, since any guilt would simply be 'unhelpful': it would imbed an aspirant in the ego that he was trying to transcend. Gotama's use of the words *kusala* and *akusala* are significant. Sex, for example, was not listed among the five *yama* because it was sinful, but because it would not help a person reach Nibbāna; sex was emblematic of the desire that imprisoned human beings in *samsara*; it expended energy that would be better employed in yoga. A *bhikkhu* refrained from sex as an athlete might abstain from certain foods before an important competition. Sex had its uses, but it was not 'helpful' to one engaged in the 'noble quest.' Gotama was not observing his human nature in order to pounce on his failings, but was becoming acquainted with the way it worked in order to exploit its capacities. He had become convinced that the solution to the problem of suffering lay within himself, in what he called 'this fathom-long carcass, this body and mind.' Deliverance would come from the refinement of his own mundane nature, and so he must investigate it and get to know it as intimately as an equestrian learns to know the horse he is training.

But the practice of mindfulness also made him more acutely aware than ever of the pervasiveness of both suffering and the desire that gave rise to it. All these thoughts and longings that crowded into his consciousness were of such short duration. Everything was impermanent (*anicca*). However intense a craving might be, it soon petered out and was replaced by something quite different. Nothing lasted long, not even the bliss of meditation. The transitory nature of life was one of the chief causes of suffering, and as he recorded his feelings, moment by moment, Gotama also became aware that the *dukkha* of life was not confined to the major traumas of sickness, old age and death. It happened on a daily, even hourly basis, in all the little disappointments, rejections, frustrations and failures that befall us in the course of a single day: 'Pain, grief and despair are *dukkha*,' he would explain later, 'being forced into proximity with what we hate is suffering, being separated from what we love is suffering, not getting what we want is suffering.' True, there was pleasure in life, but once Gotama had subjected this to the merciless scrutiny of mindfulness, he noticed how often our satisfaction meant suffering for others. The prosperity of one person usually depends upon the poverty or exclusion of somebody else; when we get something that makes us happy, we immediately start to worry about losing it; we pursue an object of desire, even when we know in our heart of hearts that it will make us unhappy in the long run.

Mindfulness also made Gotama highly sensitive to the prevalence of the desire or craving that is the cause of this suffering. The ego is voracious and continually wants to gobble up other things and people. We almost never see things as they are in themselves, but our vision is colored by whether we want them or not, how we can get them, or how they can bring us profit. Our view of the world is, therefore, distorted by our greed, and this often leads to ill will and enmity, when our desires clash with the cravings of others. Henceforth, Gotama would usually couple 'desire' (*tanhā*) with 'hatred' (*dosa*). When we say 'I want,' we often find ourselves filled with envy, jealousy and rage if other people block our desires or succeed where we have failed. Such states of mind are 'unskillful' because they make us more selfish than ever. Desire and hatred, its concomitant, are thus the joint cause of much of the misery and evil in the world. On the one hand, desire makes us 'grab' or 'cling' to things that can never give lasting satisfaction. On the

other, it makes us constantly discontented with our present circumstances. As Gotama observed the way one craving after another took possession of his mind and heart, he noticed how human beings were ceaselessly yearning to become something else, go somewhere else, and acquire something they do not have. It is as though they were continually seeking a form of rebirth, a new kind of existence. Craving (*tanhā*) manifests itself even in the desire to change our physical position, go into another room, have a snack or suddenly leave work and go find somebody to talk to. These petty cravings assail us hour by hour, minute by minute, so that we know no rest. We are consumed and distracted by the compulsion to become something different. 'The world, whose very nature is to change, is constantly determined to become something else,' Gotama concluded. 'It is at the mercy of change, it is only happy when it is caught up in the process of change, but this love of change contains a measure of fear, and this fear itself is *dukkha*.'

But when Gotama reflected upon these truths, he was not doing so in an ordinary, discursive manner. He brought the techniques of yoga to bear upon them, so that they became more vivid and immediate than any conclusion arrived at by normal ratiocination. Every day, after he had collected enough alms for his daily meal, which he usually took before noon, Gotama would seek out a secluded spot, sit down in the *āsana* posture and begin the yogic exercises of *ekāgratā* or concentration. He would practice this mindfulness in a yogic context and, as a result, his insights gained a new clarity. He could see them 'directly,' enter into them and learn to observe them without the filter of self-protecting egotism that distorts them. Human beings do not usually want to realize the pervasiveness of pain, but now Gotama was learning, with the skill of a trained yogin, to 'see things as they really are.' He did not, however, stop at these more negative truths; he was also fostering the 'skillful' states with the same intensity. A person, he explained later, could purify his or her mind by cultivating these positive and helpful states while performing the yogic exercises, sitting cross-legged and, by means of the respiratory discipline of *prāṇāyama*, inducing an alternative state of consciousness.

Once he has banished malevolence and hatred from his mind, he lives without ill will and is also full of compassion, desiring the welfare of all living beings... Once he has banished the mental habits of laziness and indolence, he is not only free of laziness and indolence but has a mind that is lucid, conscious of itself and completely alert;... Once he has banished anxiety and worry, he lives without anxiety and his mind becomes calm and still;...

Once he has banished uncertainty, he lives with a mind that has outgrown debilitating doubt and is no longer plagued by unprofitable [*akusala*] mental states.

...

We do not know how long it took Gotama to recover his health after his years of asceticism. The scriptures speed up the process to make it more dramatic, and give the impression that Gotama was ready for the final struggle with himself after one bowl of junket. This cannot have been true. The effects of mindfulness and the cultivation of skillful states take time. Gotama himself said that it could take at least seven years, and stressed that the new self developed imperceptibly over a long period. 'Just as the ocean slopes gradually, falls away gradually, and shelves

gradually with no sudden incline,' he later warned his disciples, 'so in this method, training, discipline and practice take effect by slow degrees, with no sudden perception of the ultimate truth.' The texts show Gotama attaining his supreme enlightenment and becoming a Buddha in a single night, because they are less concerned with historical fact than with tracing the general contours of the process of achieving release and inner peace.

Thus in one of the oldest portions of the scriptures, we read that after Gotama had been deserted by his five companions and had been nourished by his first meal, he set off toward Uruvelā, walking there by easy stages. When he reached Senānigāma beside the Nerañjarā river, he noticed 'an agreeable plot of land, a pleasant grove, a sparkling river with delightful and smooth banks, and, nearby, a village whose inhabitants would feed him.' This, Gotama thought, was just the place to undertake the final effort that would bring him enlightenment. If he was to reproduce the calm content that had modulated so easily into the first *jhāna* under the rose-apple tree, it was important to find a congenial spot for his meditation. He sat down, tradition has it, under a bodhi tree, and took up the *āsana* position, vowing that he would not leave this spot until he had attained Nibbāna. This pleasant grove is now known as Bodh Gayā and is an important site of pilgrimage, because it is thought to be the place where Gotama experienced the *yathabhuta*, his enlightenment or awakening. It was in this spot that he became a Buddha.

It was late spring. Scholars have traditionally dated the enlightenment of Gotama at about the year 528 B.C.E., though recently some have argued for a later date in the first half of the fifth century. The Pali texts give us some information about what happened that night, but nothing that makes much sense to an outsider who has not been through the Buddhist regimen. They say that Gotama mused upon the deeply conditional nature of all life as we know it, saw all his past lives, and recovered that 'secluded' and solitary state he had experienced as a child. He then slipped easily into the first *jhāna*, and progressed through ever higher states of consciousness until he gained an insight that forever transformed him and convinced him that he had freed himself from the round of *samsāra* and rebirth. But there seems little new about this insight, traditionally known as the Four Noble Truths and regarded as the fundamental teaching of Buddhism. The first of these verities was the noble truth of suffering (*dukkha*) that informs the whole of human life. The second truth was that the cause of this suffering was desire (*tanhā*). In the third noble truth, Gotama asserted that Nibbana existed as a way out of this predicament and finally, he claimed that he had discovered the path that leads from suffering and pain to its cessation in the state of Nibbāna.

There seems nothing strikingly original about these truths. Most of the monks and ascetics of North India would have agreed with the first three, and Gotama himself had been convinced of them since the very beginning of his quest. If there is anything novel, it was the fourth truth, in which Gotama proclaimed that he had found a way to enlightenment, a method which he called the Noble Eightfold Path. Its eight components have been rationalized still further into a three-fold plan of action, consisting of morality, meditation and wisdom:

[1] *Morality (sila)*, which consists of right speech, right action and right livelihood. This essentially comprises the cultivation of the 'skillful' states in the way we have discussed.

[2] *Meditation (sāmadhi)*, which comprises Gotama's revised yoga disciplines, under the headings of right effort, mindfulness and concentration.

[3] *Wisdom (paññā)*: the two virtues of right understanding and right resolve enable an aspirant, by means of morality and meditation, to understand the Buddha's Dhamma, enter into it 'directly' and integrate it into his or her daily life in the way that we shall discuss in the following chapter.

If there is any truth to the story that Gotama gained enlightenment at Bodh Gayā in a single night, it could be that he acquired a sudden, absolute certainty that he really *had* discovered a method that would, if followed energetically, bring an earnest seeker to Nibbāna. He had not made this up; it was not a new creation or an invention of his own. On the contrary, he always insisted that he had simply discovered 'a path of great antiquity, an ancient trail, traveled by human beings in a far-off, distant era.' The other Buddhas, his predecessors, had taught this path an immeasurably long time ago, but this ancient knowledge had faded over the years and had been entirely forgotten. Gotama insisted that this insight was simply a statement of things 'as they really are'; the path was written into the very structure of existence. It was, therefore, *the* Dhamma, par excellence, because it elucidated the fundamental principles that govern the life of the cosmos. If men, women, animals and gods kept to this path, they could all attain an enlightenment that would bring them peace and fulfilment, because they were no longer struggling against their deepest grain.

But it must also be understood that the Four Noble Truths do not present a theory that can be judged by the rational intellect alone; they are not simply notional verities. The Buddha's Dhamma was essentially a method, and it stands or falls not by its metaphysical acuity or its scientific accuracy, but by the extent to which it works. The truths claim to bring suffering to an end, not because people subscribe to a salvific creed and to certain beliefs, but because they adopt Gotama's program or way of life. Over the centuries, men and women have indeed found that this regimen has brought them a measure of peace and insight. The Buddha's claim, echoed by all the other great sages of the Axial Age, was that by reaching beyond themselves to a reality that transcends their rational understanding, men and women become fully human. The Buddha ever claimed that his knowledge of the Four Noble Truths was unique, but that he was the first person, in this present era, to have 'realized' them and made them a reality in his own life. He found that he *had* extinguished the craving, hatred and ignorance that hold humanity in thrall. He *had* attained Nibbāna, and even though he was still subject to physical ailments and other vicissitudes, nothing could touch his inner peace or cause him serious mental pain. His method had worked. 'The holy life has been lived out to its conclusion!' he cried out triumphantly at the end of that momentous night under the bodhi tree. 'What had to be done has been accomplished; there is nothing else to do!'

Those of us who do not live according to the Buddhist program of morality and meditation have, therefore, no means of judging this claim. The Buddha was always quite clear that his Dhamma could not be understood by rational thinking alone. It only revealed its true significance when it was apprehended 'directly,' according to yogic methods, and in the right ethical context. The Four Noble Truths do make

logical sense, but they do not become compelling until an aspirant has learned to identify with them at a profound level and has integrated them with his own life. Then and only then will he experience the 'exultation,' 'joy' and 'serenity' which, according to the Pāli texts, come to us when we divest ourselves of egotism, liberate ourselves from the prison of self-centeredness, and see the Truths 'as they really are.' Without the meditation and morality prescribed by the Buddha, the Truths remain as abstract as a musical score, which for most of us cannot reveal its true beauty on the page but needs to be orchestrated and interpreted by a skilled performer.

Even though the Truths make rational sense, the texts emphasize that they did not come to Gotama by means of discursive reasoning. As he sat meditating under the Bodhi tree, they 'rose up' in him, as from the depths of his being. He apprehended them within himself by the kind of 'direct knowledge' acquired by a yogin who practices the disciplines of yoga with 'diligence, ardor and self-control.' Gotama was so absorbed in these Truths, the object of his contemplation, that nothing interposed itself between them and his own mind and heart. He had become their human embodiment. When people observed the way he behaved and responded to events, they could see what the Dhamma was like; they could see Nibbāna in human form. In order to share Gotama's experience, we have to approach the Truths in a spirit of total self-abandonment. We have to be prepared to leave our old unregenerate selves behind. The compassionate morality and yoga devised by Gotama only brought liberation if the aspirant was ready to lay aside all egotism. It is significant that at the moment he achieved Nibbāna under the bodhi tree, Gotama did not cry 'I am liberated,' but 'It is liberated!' He had transcended himself, achieved an *exstasis*, and discovered an enhanced 'immeasurable' dimension of his humanity that he had not known before.

What did the new Buddha mean when he claimed to have reached Nibbāna on that spring night? Had he himself, as the word implied, been 'snuffed out,' extinguished like a candle flame? During his six-year quest, Gotama had not masochistically courted annihilation but had sought enlightenment. He had wanted to wake up to his full potential as a human person, not to be wiped out. Nibbāna did not mean personal extinction: what had been snuffed out was not his personality but the fires of greed, hatred and delusion. As a result, he enjoyed a blessed 'coolness' and peace. By tamping out the 'unhelpful' states of mind, the Buddha had gained the peace which comes from selflessness; it is a condition that those of us who are still enmeshed in the cravings of egotism, which make us hostile toward others and distort our vision, cannot imagine. That is why the Buddha always refused, in the years following his enlightenment, to define or describe Nibbāna: it would, he said, be 'improper' to do so, because there are no words to describe such a state to an unenlightened person. The attainment of Nibbāna did not mean that the Buddha would never experience any more suffering. He would grow old, get sick and die like everybody else and would experience pain while doing so. Nibbāna does not give an awakened person trancelike immunity, but an inner haven which enables a man or woman to live *with* pain, to take possession of it, affirm it, and experience a profound peace of mind in the midst of suffering. Nibbāna, therefore, is found within oneself, in the very heart of each person's being. It is an entirely natural state; it is not bestowed by grace nor achieved for us by a supernatural savior; it can be reached by anybody who

cultivates the path to enlightenment as assiduously as Gotama did. Nibbāna is a still center; it gives meaning to life. People who lose touch with this quiet place and do not orient their lives toward it can fall apart. Artists, poets and musicians can only become fully creative if they work from this inner core of peace and integrity. Once a person has learned to access this nucleus of calm, he or she is no longer driven by conflicting fears and desires, and is able to face pain, sorrow and grief with equanimity. An enlightened or awakened human being has discovered a strength within that comes from being correctly centered, beyond the reach of selfishness.

Once he had found this inner realm of calm, which is Nibbāna, Gotama had become a Buddha. He was convinced that, once egotism had been snuffed out, there would be no flames or fuel to spark a new existence, because the desire (*tanhā*) which bound him to *samsāra* had been finally quenched. When he died, he would attain his *paranibbāna*, his final rest. Again, this did not mean total extinction, as Westerners sometimes assume. The *paranibbāna* was a mode of existence that; we cannot conceive unless we have become enlightened ourselves. There are no words or concepts for it, because our language is derived from the sense data of our unhappy, mundane existence; we cannot really imagine a life in which there is no egotism of any kind. But that does not mean that such an existence is impossible; it became a Buddhist heresy to maintain that an enlightened person would cease to exist after death. In the same way, monotheists have insisted that there are no words that can adequately describe the reality they call 'God.' 'He who has gone to his final rest cannot be defined by any measure,' the Buddha would tell his followers in later life. 'There are no words capable of describing him. What thought might comprehend has been canceled out, and so has every mode of speech.' In purely mundane terms, Nibbāna was 'nothing,' not because it did not exist, but because it corresponded to nothing that we know. But those who had, by dint of the disciplines of yoga and compassionate morality, managed to access this still center within found that they enjoyed an immeasurably richer mode of being, because they had learned to live without the limitations of egotism.

The account of the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment under the bodhi tree in the Pāli texts can leave the modern reader feeling baffled and frustrated. It is one of the places where these Theravādin scriptures become opaque to people who are not expert yogins, since they dwell in such detail on meditative technicalities. More helpful to an outsider is the story told in the later scripture, the *Nidāna Kathā*, which makes the notion of enlightenment more accessible to ordinary mortals. As with its version of Gotama's 'Going Forth,' this story explores the psychological and spiritual implications of enlightenment in a way that a lay person or Buddhist beginner can understand, because it has no yogic jargon but gives us a wholly mythological account of the enlightenment. The author is not attempting to write history in our sense, but draws instead on timeless imagery to show what is involved in the discovery of Nibbāna. He uses motifs common in mythology, which has been aptly described as a pre-modern form of psychology, tracing the inner paths of the psyche and making clearer the obscure world of the unconscious mind. Buddhism is an essentially psychological religion, so it is not surprising that the early Buddhist authors made such skillful use of mythology. Again, we must recall that none of these texts is concerned with telling us what actually happened, but rather is intended to help the audience gain their own enlightenment.

The *Nidāna Kathā* emphasizes the need for courage and determination: it shows Gotama engaged in a heroic struggle against all those forces within himself which militate against the achievement of Nibbāna. We read that after Gotama had eaten his dish of junket, he strode as majestically as a lion toward the bodhi tree to make his last bid for liberation, determined to reach his goal that very night. First, he circled the tree, trying to find the place where all the previous Buddhas had sat when they had won through to Nibbāna, but wherever he stood, 'the broad earth heaved and sunk, as though it was a huge cartwheel lying on its hub, and somebody was treading on its rim.' Eventually, Gotama approached the eastern side of the tree, and when he stood there, the ground remained still. Gotama decided that this must be the 'immovable spot' on which all the previous Buddhas had positioned themselves, so he sat down in the *āsana* position facing the east, the region of the dawn, in the firm expectation that he was about to begin a new era in the history of humanity. 'Let my skin and sinews and bones dry up, together with all the flesh and blood of my body! I will welcome it!' Gotama vowed. 'But I will not move from this spot until I have attained the supreme and final wisdom.'

The text emphasizes the fantastic shuddering of the earth as Gotama circled the bodhi tree to remind us not to read this story literally. This is not a physical location: the world-tree, standing at the axis of the cosmos, is a common feature of salvation mythology. It is the place where the divine energies pour into the world, where humanity encounters the Absolute and becomes more fully itself. We need only recall the cross of Jesus, which, according to Christian legend, stood on the same spot as the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden. But in Buddhist myth, Gotama the man sits in this pivotal place, not a man-God, because human beings must save themselves without supernatural aid. The texts make it clear that Gotama had come to this axis of the universe, the mythological center that holds the whole of the cosmos together.

...

But the struggle was not yet over. Gotama still had to fight those residual forces within himself which clung to the unregenerate life and did not want the ego to die. Māra, Gotama's shadow-self, appeared before him, decked out like a *cakkavatti*, a World Ruler, with a massive army. Māra himself was mounted on an elephant that was 150 leagues high. He had sprouted 1,000 arms, each of which brandished a deadly weapon. Māra's name means 'delusion.' He epitomized the ignorance which holds us back from enlightenment, since, as a *cakkavatti*, he could only envisage a victory achieved by physical force. Gotama was still not fully enlightened, so he tried to respond in kind, seeing the virtues he had acquired as defensive weapons, as a word or a shield that would destroy this deadly army. But, our author continues, despite Māra's power, Gotama was sitting in the 'unconquerable position,' proof against such vulgar coercion. When Māra hurled nine fearful storms against him, Gotama remained unmoved. The gods, who had gathered around to witness Gotama's attainment of Nibbāna, fled in terror, leaving him alone. When men and women seek salvation, in the Buddhist view, they can expect no divine support.

At this point, Māra approached Gotama and engaged him in a strange conversation. He told Gotama to 'arise from this seat; it does not belong to you, but to me.' Gotama, Māra thought, had transcended the world; he was invulnerable to all external opposition. But Māra was the Lord of this world, and it was he, the *cakkavatti*, who should sit at its pivotal center. He did not realize that the rage, hatred and violence that he had just exhibited disqualified him from taking up his position under the bodhi tree, which belongs only to the man who lives by compassion. Gotama pointed out that Māra was quite unprepared for enlightenment; he had never made any spiritual efforts, had never given alms, had never practiced yoga. So, Gotama concluded, 'this seat does not belong to you but to me.' He went on to add that in his previous lives he had given away all his possessions and had even laid down his life for others. What had Māra done? Could he produce witnesses to testify that he had performed such compassionate deeds? At once, Māra's soldiers cried as one man: 'I am his witness!' And Māra turned triumphantly to Gotama and asked him to validate his own claims. But Gotama was alone; he had no human being or god on his side who could act as his witness to his long preparation for enlightenment. He therefore did something that no *cakkavatti* would ever do: he asked for help. Reaching out with his right hand to touch the ground, he begged the earth to testify to his past acts of compassion. With a shattering roar, the earth replied: 'I bear you witness!' In terror, Māra's elephant fell to its knees and his soldiers deserted, running in fear in all directions. The earth-witnessing posture, which shows the Buddha sitting in the cross-legged *āsana* position, touching the ground with his right hand, is a favorite icon in Buddhist art. It not only symbolizes Gotama's rejection of Māra's sterile machismo, but makes the profound point that a Buddha does indeed belong to the world. The Dhamma is exacting, but it is not against nature. There is a deep affinity between the earth and the selfless human being, something that Gotama had sensed when he recalled his trance under the rose-apple tree. The man or woman who seeks enlightenment is in tune with the fundamental structure of the universe. Even though the world seems to be ruled by the violence of Māra and his army, it is the compassionate Buddha who is most truly in tune with the basic laws of existence.

After this victory over Māra, which was really a victory over himself, there was nothing to hold Gotama back. The gods returned from the heavens and waited breathlessly for him to achieve his final release, for they needed his help as much as did any human being. Now Gotama entered the first *jhāna* and penetrated the inner world of his psyche; when he finally reached the peace of Nibbāna all the worlds of the Buddhist cosmos were convulsed, the heavens and hells shook, and the bodhi tree rained down red florets on the enlightened man. Throughout all the worlds, the flowering trees bloomed; the fruit trees were weighed down by the burden of their fruit; the trunk lotuses bloomed on the trunks of trees ... The system of ten thousand worlds was like a bouquet of flowers sent whirling through the air.

The ocean lost its salty taste, the blind and the deaf were able to see and hear; cripples could walk and the fetters of prisoners fell to the ground. Everything suddenly glimpsed new freedom and potency; for a few moments, each form of life was able to become more fully itself.

But the new Buddha could not save the world vicariously. Every single creature would have to put Gotama's program into practice to achieve its own enlightenment; he could not do it for them. Yet at first, it seemed that the Buddha, as we must now call Gotama, had decided against preaching the Dhamma that alone could save his fellow creatures. He would often be known as Sakyamūni, the Silent One from the republic of Sakka, because the knowledge he had acquired was ineffable and could not be described in words. Yet throughout the Ganges region, people were longing for a new spiritual vision, especially in the cities. This became clear, the Pali texts tell us, almost immediately after the Buddha's enlightenment, when two passing merchants, called Tapussa and Bhalluka, who had been informed of the great event by one of the gods, came to the Buddha and paid homage to him. They became his first lay followers. Yet despite this initial success, the Buddha was still reluctant. His Dhamma was too difficult to explain, he told himself; the people would not be prepared to undergo the arduous yogic and moral disciplines that it required. Far from wishing to renounce their craving, most people positively relished their attachments and would not want to hear his message of self-abandonment. 'If I taught the Dhamma,' the Buddha decided, 'people would not understand it and that would be exhausting and disappointing for me.'...

But who should be first to hear the message? The Buddha thought at once of his former teachers Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, but some gods, who were waiting nearby, told him that they had both recently died. This was a great grief. His teachers had been good men who would certainly have understood his Dhamma; now, through no fault of their own, they had missed their chance and were condemned to yet another life of pain. This news could have given the Buddha a new sense of urgency. He next recalled the five *bhikkhus* who had practiced the penitential disciplines of *tapas* with him. They had fled from him in horror when he had taken his first meal, but he could not allow this rejection to cloud his judgment. He remembered how helpful and supportive they had been during their time together, and set out directly to find them. Hearing that they were now living in the Deer Park outside Vārānasī (the modern Benares), he began his journey, determined to set the Wheel of the Dhamma in motion and, as he put it, 'to beat the drum of the deathless Nibbāna.' He did not expect much. The Buddha mistakenly believed that his teaching would only be followed for a few hundred years. But people had to be rescued, and the Buddha was compelled, by the very nature of the enlightenment that he had achieved, to do what he could for them.

Extract 2: A.L.Basham, 'The Bodhisattva' (1969)

Taken from: *The Buddhist Tradition in India, China and Japan*, edited by William De Bary, (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group 2011), Chapter 3 The Bodhisattva, pp.81-109.

The Bodhisattva

The essential difference between Mahāyāna and Theravāda Buddhism is in the doctrine of the bodhisattva, who, in Mahāyāna, becomes a divine savior and whose example the believer is urged to follow. It must be remembered that all good Buddhists, from the Mahāyāna point of view, are bodhisattvas in the making, and the many descriptions of bodhisattvas in Mahāyāna texts provide ideals for the guidance of monk and layman alike. One of the chief qualities of the bodhisattva is his immense compassion for the world of mortals.

The bodhisattva is endowed with wisdom of a kind whereby he looks on all beings as though victims going to the slaughter. And immense compassion grips him. His divine eye sees...innumerable beings, and he is filled with great distress at what he sees, for many bear the burden of past deeds which will be punished in purgatory, others will have unfortunate rebirths which will divide them from the Buddha and his teachings, others must soon be slain, others are caught in the net of false doctrine, others cannot find the path [of salvation], while others have gained a favourable rebirth only to lose it again.

So he pours out his love and compassion upon all those beings, and attend to them, thinking, "I shall become the savior of all beings, and set them free from their suffering" [From *Astasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, 22.402-3].

The Mahāyāna Ideal Is Higher Than That of the Theravāda

Mahāyāna teachers claimed that the ideal of the Theravādins – complete loss of personality as perfected beings in Nirvana – was fundamentally selfish and trivial. The truly perfected being should devote all his powers to saving suffering mortals. The following passage elucidates this point. It purports to be a dialogue between the Buddha and one of his chief disciples, Shāriputra (Pali Sāriputta).

"What do you think Shāriputra? Do any of the disciples¹ and private buddhas² ever think, 'After we have gained full enlightenment we will bring innumerable beings... to complete Nirvāna'?"

"Certainly not, Lord!"

¹ *Śrāvaka*, literally "hearer", a term often applied by Mahāyāna writers especially to adherents of Theravāda.

² *Pratyeka-buddha*, one who was achieved full enlightenment through his own insight, but does not communicate his saving knowledge to others.

“But”, said the Lord, “the bodhisattva [has this resolve]... A firefly ... doesn’t imagine that its glow will light up all India or shine all over it, and so the disciples had private Buddhas don’t think that they should lead all being to Nirvana ... after they have gained full enlightenment. But the disc of the sun, when it has risen, lights up all India and shines all over it. Similarly the bodhisattva... when he has gained full enlightenment, brings countless beings to Nirvana.

[From *Panacavimsatisahasrika Prajnaparamita*, pp.40-41]

The Suffering Saviour

In many passages of the Mahāyāna scriptures is to be found what purports to be the solemn resolve made by a bodhisattva at the beginning of his career. The following fine passage will appear particularly striking to Western readers, for in it the bodhisattva not only resolves to pity and help all mortal beings, but also to share their interest sufferings. Christians and Jews cannot fail to note resemblances to the concept of the suffering saviour in Christianity and to the “Servant Passages” of Isaiah (53:3-12). It is by no means impossible that there was some Christian influence on Mahāyāna Buddhism, for Christian missionaries were active in Persia very early, and it became a centre from which Nestorian Christianity was diffused throughout Asia. From the middle of the third century A.D. Persian influence in Afghanistan and Northwestern India, which had always been felt, was intensified with the rise of Sasanian Empire; and it was in these regions that Mahāyāna Buddhism developed and flourished. Thus Christian influence cannot be ruled out. But it is equally possible that the similarities between the concepts of the suffering saviour in Buddhism and Christianity are due to the fact that compassionate minds everywhere tend to think alike.

The work from which the following passage is taken, Shantideva’s Compendium of Doctrine, dates from the seventh century. It is extremely valuable because it consists of lengthy quotations from earlier Buddhist literature with brief comments by the compiler, and many of the passages quoted are from works which no longer survive in their original form. The following passages are quoted from two such works, the Instructions of Akshayamati (Aksayamati Nirdeśa) and the Sutra of Vajradhvaja (Vajradhvaja Sutra).

The bodhisattva is lonely, with no...companion, and he puts on the armor of supreme wisdom. He acts himself, and leaves nothing to others, working with a will steeled with courage and strength. He is strong and in his own strength...and he resolves thus:

“Whatever all beings should obtain, I will help them to obtain... the virtue of generosity is not my helper – I am the helper of generosity. Not do the virtues of morality, patience, courage, meditation and wisdom help me – it is I who help them.”³ The perfections of the bodhisattva do not support

³ These six, generosity (*dāna*), moral conduct (*śīla*), patience (*ksānti*) courage or energy (*vīrya*), meditation (*dhyāna*) and wisdom (*prajñā*) are the *Pāramitās*, or virtues of the bodhisattva, which he has developed to perfection. Many sources add four further perfections – “skill in knowing the right means” to take to lead individual beings to salvation according to their several characters and circumstances (*upāyakaśalya*), determination (*pranidhana*), strength (*bala*) and knowledge (*jñāna*). Much attention was concentrated on these

me – it is I who support them... I alone, standing in this round and adamant world, must subdue Māra, with all his hosts and chariots, and develop supreme enlightenment with the wisdom of instantaneous insight!"...

Just at the rising sun, the child of the gods, is not stopped ... by all the dust rising from the four continents of the earth ... or by wreaths of smoke ... or by rugged mountains, so the bodhisattva, the Great Being, ... is not deterred from bringing to fruition the root of good, whether by the malice of others,... or by their sin or heresy, or by their agitation of mind... He will not lay down his arms of enlightenment because of the corrupt generations of men, nor does he waver in his resolution to save the world because of their wretched quarrels ... He does not lose heart on account of their faults...

"All creatures are in pain", he resolves, "all suffer from bad and hindering karma ... so that they cannot see the Buddhas or hear the Law of Righteousness of know the Order ... All that mass of pain and evil karma I take in my own body ... I take upon myself the burden of sorrow; I resolve to do so; I endure it all. I do not turn back or run away, I do not tremble...I am not afraid...nor do I despair. Assuredly I must bear the burden of all beings ... for I have resolved to save them all. I must set them all free, I must save the whole world from the forest of birth, old age, disease, and rebirth, from misfortune and sin, from the round of birth and death, from the toils of heresy...For all beings are caught in the net of craving, encompassed by ignorance, held by the desire for existence; they are doomed to destruction, shut in a cage of pain...; they are ignorant, untrustworthy, full of doubts, always at loggerheads one with another, always prone to see evil; they cannot find a refuge in the ocean of existence; they are all on the edge of the gulf of destruction.

"I work to establish the kingdom of perfect wisdom for all beings. I care not at all for my own deliverance. I must save all beings from the torrent of rebirth with the raft of my omniscient mind. I must pull them back from the great precipice. I must free them from all misfortune, ferry them over the stream of rebirth.

"For I have taken upon myself, by my own will, the whole of the pain of all things living. Thus I dare try every abode of pain, in ...every part of the universe, for I must not defraud the world of the root of good. I resolve to dwell in each state of misfortune through countless ages...for the salvation of all beings... for it is better that I alone suffer than that all beings sink to the worlds of misfortune. There I shall give myself into bondage, to redeem all the world from the forest of purgatory, from rebirth as beasts, from the realm of death. I shall bear all grief and pain in my own body, for the good of all things living. I venture to stand surety for all beings, speaking the truth, trustworthy, not breaking my word. I shall not forsake them ... I must so bring to fruition the root of goodness that all beings find the utmost joy, unheard of joy, the joy of omniscience. I must be their charioteer, I must be their leader, I must be their torchbearer, I must be their guide to safety...

perfections, especially on the Perfection of Wisdom (*Prajñāpāramitā*), which was personified as a goddess, and after which numerous Buddhist texts were named.

I must not wait for the help of another, nor must I lose my resolution and leave my tasks to another. I must not turn back in my efforts to save all beings nor cease to use my merit for the destruction of all pain. And I must not be satisfied with small successes.”

[From *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, pp.278-83]

The Lost Son

One of the reasons for including this passage is its remarkable resemblance to the famous parable of St. Luke's Gospel (15:11–32). As the Lotus of the Good Law, from which the Buddhist story is taken, was probably in existence well before Christian ideas could have found their way in India via Persia, it is unlikely that this parable owes anything to the Christian one. Similarly it is unlikely that the Christian parable is indebted to the Buddhist. Probably we have here a case of religious minds of two widely separated cultures thinking along similar lines, as a result of similar, though not identical, religious experience. For this reason the resemblances and differences of the two stories are the most instructive.⁴

The Prodigal of the Christian story squanders his patrimony in riotous living. The son in the Buddhist story is a wretched creature who can only wander around begging. His fault is not so much in squandering his property as in failing to acquire wealth (i.e. spiritual merit). The Prodigal returns to his father by his own free choice, after repenting his evil ways. In the Buddhist story it is only by chance that the son meets his father again; moreover the son does not recognize the father, though the father recognized his son – thus the heavenly Buddha knows his children and works for their salvation, though they do not recognize him in his true character, and, if they can get a glimpse of him, are afraid and try to avoid him – they feel much more at ease among their own earthbound kind, in “the poor quarter of the town”, where their divine father sends his messengers (perhaps representing the bodhisattvas) to find them, bringing them home by force if need be. Here there is no question of a positive act of repentance, as in the Christian parable.

Unlike the Prodigal's father in the Christian story, who kills the fatted calf for his long-lost son, the father in the Buddhist story makes his son undergo a very long period of humble probation before raising him to the position which he merits by his birth. The heavenly Buddha cannot raise beings immediately from the filth and poverty of the earthly gutter to the full glory of his own heavenly palace, for they are so earthbound that, if brought to it at once, they would suffer agonies of fear, embarrassment, and confusion, and might well insist on returning to the gutter again. So they must undergo many years of preparation for their high estate, toiling daily among the material dross of this world, earnestly and loyally striving to make the world a tidier place. Like the father in the story, the heavenly

⁴ The text itself purports to give an interpretation of the parable in which the son toiling as a menial in his father's house is compared to the Hīnayāna monk, who is unaware of the true glory of the enlightenment to which he is heir. There is little doubt, however, that the story here turned to purposes of sectarian propaganda was originally meant to have a wider significance, and we believe our interpretation to be that demanded by the spirit of the parable.

Buddha will cover his glory with earthly dust and appear to his children as a historical Buddha to encourage and instruct them. Thus the Buddha shows the perfection of "skills in means", that is to say, in knowing the best means to take to lead each individual to the light according to the circumstances in which he is placed.

Gradually the son grows more and more familiar with the father, and loses his former fear of him, but still he does not know that he is his father's child. So men, even though pious and virtuous, and earnestly carrying out the Buddha's will, do not know that they are already in Heaven; their lives are still to some extent earthbound, and though the Buddha offers them all his wealth of bliss long habit keeps them from enjoying it.

Only when the father is near death does he reveal himself to his son. This seems at first to weaken the analogy, for heavenly Buddhas do not die. But in fact the conclusion of the parable is quite appropriate, for when man has fulfilled his tasks and carried out his stewardship, that is to say when he has reached the highest stage of self-development, he finds that the heavenly Buddha has ceased to exist for him, that nothing is truly real but the great Emptiness which is peace and Nirvāṇa.

A man parted from his father and went to another city; and he dwelt there many years... The father grew rich and the son poor. While the son wandered in all directions [begging] in order to get food and clothes, the father moved to another land, where he lived in great luxury ... wealthy from business, money-lending, and trade. In course of time the son, wandering in search of his living through town and country, came to the city in which his father dwelled. Now the poor man's father ... forever thought of the son whom he had lost... years ago, but he told no one of this, though he grieved inwardly, and thought: "I am old, and well advanced in years, and though I have great possessions I have no son. Alas that time should do its work upon me, and that all this wealth should perish unused! ... It would be bliss indeed if my son might enjoy all my wealth!"

Then the poor man, in search of food and clothing, came to the rich man's home. And the rich man was sitting in great pomp at the gate of his house, surrounded by a large throng of attendants ... on a splendid throne, with a footstool inlaid with gold and silver, under a wide awning decked with pearls and flowers and adorned with hanging garlands of jewels; and he transacted business to the value of millions of gold pieces, all the while fanned by a fly-whisk... When he saw him the poor man was terrified... and the hair of his body stood on end, for he thought that he had happened on a king or on some high officer of state, and had no business there. "I must go", he thought, "to the poor quarter of the town, where I'll get food and clothing without trouble. If I stop here they'll seize me and set me to do forced labor, or some other disaster will befall me!" So he quickly ran away...

But the rich man... recognized his son as soon as he saw him; and he was full of joy... and thought: "This is wonderful! I have found him who shall enjoy my riches. He of whom I thought constantly has come back, now that I am old and full

of years"! Then, longing for his son, he sent swift messengers, telling them to go and fetch him quickly. They ran at full speed and overtook him; the poor man trembled with fear, the hair of his body stood on end... and he uttered a cry of distress and exclaimed, "I've done you no wrong!" But they dragged him along by force... until... fearful that he would be killed or beaten, he fainted and fell on the ground. His father in dismay said to the men, "Don't drag him along in that way!" and, without saying more, he sprinkled his face with cold water – for though he knew that the poor man was his son, he realized that his estate was very humble, while his own was very high.

So the householder told no one that the poor man was his son. He ordered one of his servants to tell the poor man that he was free to go where he chose... And the poor man was amazed (that he was allowed to go free), and he went off to the poor quarter of the town in search of food and clothing. Now in order to attract him back the rich man made use of the virtue of "skills in means". He called two men of low caste and of no great dignity and told them: "Go to that poor man... and hire him in your own names to do work in my house at double the normal daily wage; and if he asks what work he has to do tell him that he had to help clear away the refuse dump." So these two men and the poor man cleared the refuse every day... in the house of the rich man, and lived in a straw hut nearby ... And the rich man saw through a window his son clearing refuse, and was again filled with compassion. So he came down, took off this wreath and jewels and rich clothes, put on dirty garments, covered his body with dust, and, taking a basket in his hand, went up to his son. And he greeted him at a distance and said "Take this basket and clear away the dust at once!". By this means he managed to speak to his son. [And as time went on he spoke more often to him, and thus he gradually encouraged him. First he urged him to] remain in his service and not take another job, offering him double wages, together with any small extras that he might require, such as the price of a cooking pot... or food and clothes. Then he offered him his own cloak, if he should want it... And at last, he said: "You must be cheerful, my good fellow, and think of me as a father... for I'm older than you and you've done me good service in clearing away my refuse. As long as you've worked for me you've shown no roguery or guile... I've noticed one of the vices in you that I've not noticed in my other servants! From now on you are like my own son to me!"

Thenceforward the householder called the poor man "son", and the latter felt towards the householder as a son feels towards his father. So the householder, full of longing and love for his son, employed him in clearing away refuse for twenty years. By the end of that time the poor man felt quite at home in the house, and came and went as he chose, though he still lived in the straw hut.

Then the householder fell ill, and felt that the hour of his death was near. So he said to the poor man: "Come, my dear man! I have great riches... and am very sick. I need someone upon whom I can bestow my wealth as a deposit, and you must accept it. From now on you are just as much its owner as I am, but you must not squander it". And the poor man accepted the rich man's wealth... but personally he cared nothing for it, and asked for no share of it, not even the price of a measure of flour. He still lived in straw hut, and thought of himself as just as poor as before.

Thus the householder proved that this son was frugal, mature, and mentally developed, and that though he knew that he was now wealthy he still remembered his past poverty, and was still... humble and meek... So he sent for the poor man again, presented him before a gathering of his relatives, and, in the presence of the king, his officers, and the people of town and country, he said: "Listen gentlemen! This is my son, whom I begot... To him I leave all my family revenues, and my private wealth he shall have as his own."

[From *Saddharmapundārika*, 4.101 ff]

Joy in all Things

Joy is one of the cardinal virtues of Buddhism, and the bodhisattva, who is the example which all Mahāyāna Buddhists are expected to follow as far as their powers allow, has so trained his mind that even in the most painful and unhappy situations it is still full of calm inner joy. The following passage is from the Compendium of Doctrine; the first paragraph is the work of the author, Shāntideva, while the second is quoted from a lost surra, the Meeting of Father and Son (Pitrputrasamāgama).

Indeed nothing is difficult after practice. Simple folk, such as porters, fishermen and plowmen, for instance, are not overcome by depression, for their minds are marked by the scars of the many pains with which they earn their humble livings, and which they have learned to bear. How much the more should one be cheerful in a task of which the purpose is to reach the incomparable state where all the joys of all beings, all the joys of the bodhisattvas are to be found.... Consciousness of sorrow and joy comes by habit; so, if whenever sorrow arises we make a habit of associating with it a feeling of joy, consciousness of joy will indeed arise. The fruit of this is a contemplative spirit full of joy in all things...

So the bodhisattva ... is happy even when subjected to the tortures of hell... When he is being beaten with canes or whips, when he is thrown into prison, he still feels happy.⁵ ... For ... this was the resolve of the Great Being, the bodhisattva: "may those who feed me win the joy of tranquillity and peace, with those who protect me, honour me, respect me, and revere me. And those who revile me, afflict me, beat me, cut me in pieces with their swords, or take my life – may they all obtain the joy of complete enlightenment, may they be awakened to perfect and sublime enlightenment." With such thoughts and actions and resolves he cultivates... and develops the consciousness of joy in his relations with all beings, and so he acquires a contemplative spirit filled with joy in all things ... and becomes imperturbable – not to be shaken by all the deeds of Māra.

[From *Sikasamuccaya*, 181 f.]

⁵ Here a long list of the most gruesome tortures is omitted.

The Good Deeds of the Bodhisattva

We have seen that the bodhisattva has ten "Perfections". A further list of good qualities is sometimes attributed to him. Notice that the emphasis is on the positive virtues of altruism, benevolence, and compassion.

There are ten ways by which a bodhisattva gains...strength...
He will give up his body and his life... but he will not give up the Law of Righteousness.
He bows humbly to all beings, and does not increase in pride.
He has compassion on the weak and does not dislike them.
He gives the best food to those who are hungry.
He protects those who are afraid.
He strives for the healing of those who are sick.
He delights the poor with his riches.
He repairs the shrines of the Buddha with plaster.
He speaks to all beings pleasingly.
He snares his riches with those afflicted by poverty.
He bears the burden of those who are tired and weary.

[From *Tathāgataguhyā Sūtra*, *Śikṣāmuccaya*, and p. 274]...

The Three Bodies of the Buddha

The following passage expounds the doctrine of the Three Bodies (Trikāya). It is taken from Asaṅga's Ornament of Mahāyāna Sūtras, a versified compendium of Mahāyāna doctrine, with a prose commentary. The latter is quoted where it throws light on the difficult and elliptical verses.

The Body of Essence, the Body of Bliss⁶ the Transformation Body – these are the bodies of the Buddhas.
The first is the basis of the two others.
The Body of Bliss varies in all the planes of the Universe, according to region,
In name, in form, and in experience of phenomena.
But the Body of Essence, uniform and subtle, is inherent in the Body of Bliss,
And through the one the other controls its experience when it manifests itself at will.

Commentary: The Body of essence is uniform for all the Buddhas, because there is no real difference between them...

⁶ *Sambhoga*, more literary "enjoyment"; in some contexts it implies little more than "experience".

The Transformation Body displays with skill birth, enlightenment, and Nirvāṇa,
For it possesses much magic power to lead men to enlightenment.
The Body of the Buddhas is wholly comprised in these three bodies...
In basis, tendency, and act they are uniform.
They are stable by nature, by persistence, and by connection.

Commentary: The Three Bodies are one and the same for all the Buddhas for three reasons: *basis*, for the basis of phenomena⁷ is indivisible; *tendency*, because there is no tendency particular to one Buddha and not to another; and *act*, because their actions are common to all. And the Three Bodies have a threefold stability: by *nature*, for the Body of Essence is essentially stable; by *persistence*, for the Body of Bliss experiences phenomena unceasingly; and by *connection*, for the Transformation Body, once it has passed away, shows it metamorphoses again and again.

[From Mahāyānasutrāṅkāra, 9.60-66]...

Magical Utterances

It would be wrong to depict Mahāyāna Buddhism as simply a system of idealist philosophy, with a pantheon of benevolent and compassionate deities and an exalted and altruistic ethical system. It contained many elements from a lower stratum of belief, as will be made clear from following extract from the Lankāvātara Sūtra, one of the most important sacred texts of Mahāyāna Buddhism, from which we have already given two quotations.

Belief in the magical efficacy of certain syllables, phrases, and verses is as old as the Rīg Veda. The Pali scriptures, however, pay little attention to this aspect of popular religion, and it would seem that the early Buddhists who were responsible for the compilation of these texts took a comparatively rationalistic view of the world. The criticism of vain and useless rituals contained in the Pali texts and in Ashoka's edicts was probably intended to cover the vain repetition of mantras or magical utterances. But from early in the Christian era onwards, such things became more and more closely associated with Buddhism, especially with the Mahāyāna sects. Hinduism and Buddhism alike developed schools which taught that the constant repetition of mantras was a sure means of salvation. The following passage is not strictly Tantric, for it does not attribute to the mantras it quotes any efficiency other than in the dispelling of evil spirits; but the importance given to the mantras, and the fact that they are attributed to the Buddha himself, show that Mahāyāna Buddhism was, by the fourth or fifth century A.D., permeated with the ideas which were to lead to fully developed Tantricism.

⁷ Dharmadhātu, the Absolute

Then the Lord addressed the Great Being, the Bodhisattva Mahāmati thus:

Mahāmati, hold to these magic syllables of the *Lankāvatara*, recited... by all the Buddhas, past, present, and future. Now I will repeat them, that those who proclaim the Law of Righteousness may keep them in mind:

*Tutte tutte vutte vutte patte patte katte katte amale amale vimale
viamale nime nime hime hime vame vame kale kale kale kale atte matte
vatte tutte jñette sputte katte katte latte patte dime dime cale cale pace
pace bandhe bandhe añce mance dutāre dutāre patāre patāre arkke arkke
sarkke cakre cakre dime dime hime hime du du du du du du du ru ru
ru ru phu phu phu phu svāhā...*

If men and women of good birth hold, retain, recite and realise these magical syllables, nothing harmful shall come upon them – whether a god, a goddess, a serpent-spirit, a fairy or a demon⁸.... If anyone should be in the grip of misfortune, let him recite these one hundred and eight times, and the evil spirits, weeping and wailing, will go off in another direction.

[From *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, pp.260–61]

⁸ The names of many other supernatural beings follow.

Extract 3: W Rahula, 'Bodhisattva Ideal in Buddhism' (1996)

Taken from: W. Rahula, *Gems of Buddhist Wisdom*, (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society 1996), Chapter 27, Bodhisattva Ideal in Buddhism, pp. 461-471

There is a wide-spread belief, particularly in the West, that the ideal of the Theravada, which they conveniently identify with Hinayana, is to become an Arahant while that of the Mahayana is to become a Bodhisattva and finally to attain the state of a Buddha. It must be categorically stated that this is incorrect. This idea was spread by some early Orientalists at a time when Buddhist studies were beginning in the West, and the others who followed them accepted it without taking the trouble to go into the problem by examining the texts and living traditions in Buddhist countries. But the fact is that both the Theravada and the Mahayana unanimously accept the Bodhisattva ideal as the highest.

The terms **Hinayana** (Small Vehicle) and **Mahayana** (Great Vehicle) are not known to the Theravāda Pali literature. They are not found in the Pali Canon (Tripitaka) or in the Commentaries on the Tripitaka. Not even in the Pali Chronicles of Ceylon, the *Dipavamsa* and the *Mahavamsa*. The *Dipavamsa* (about the 4th Century A.D.) and Pali Commentaries mention Vitandavadins, evidently a sect of dissenting Buddhists holding some unorthodox views regarding some points in the teaching of the Buddha. The Vitandavadin and the Theravadin both quote the same authorities and name the sutras of the Tripitaka in order to support their positions, the difference being only in the mode of their interpretations. The *Mahavamsa* (5th Century A.D.) and a Commentary on the *Abhidhamma* refer to Vetulla – or Vetulyavadins (Sanskrit: Vaitulyavadin) instead of Vitandavadin. From the evidence of the texts, it may not be wrong to consider that these two terms – Vitanda and Vetulya – represented the same school or sect.

We learn from the *Abhidhamma-Samuccaya*, an authoritative Mahayana philosophical text (4th Century A.D.) that the terms Vaitulya and Vaipulya are synonymous, and that Vaipulya is the *Bodhisattva-Pitaka*. Now, the *Bodhisattva-Pitaka* is definitely Mahayana. Hence Vaitulya undoubtedly denotes Mahayana.

So we can be certain that the terms Vitanda, and Vetulya used in the Pali Chronicles and Commentaries refer to Mahayana. But the terms Hinayana and Mahayana were not known to them, or ignored or unrecognised by them.

It is universally accepted by scholars that the terms Hinayana and Mahayana are later inventions. Historically speaking, the Theravada already existed long before these terms came into being. That Theravada, considered to be the original teaching of the Buddha, was introduced to Ceylon and established there in the 3rd Century B.C., during the time of Emperor Asoka of India. At that time there was nothing called Mahayana. Mahayana as such appeared much later, about the beginning of the Christian Era. Without Mahayana there could not be Hinayana. Buddhism that went to Sri Lanka, with its Tripitaka and Commentaries, in the 3rd Century B.C., remained there intact as Theravada, and did not come into the scene of the Hinayana-Mahayana dispute that developed later in India. It seems therefore not legitimate to include Theravāda in either of these two categories.

The Mahayana mainly deals with the Bodhisattva-yana or the Vehicle of the Bodhisattva. But it does not ignore the other two: Sravaka-yana and

Pratyekabuddha-yana. For example, Asanga, the founder of the Yogacara system, in his *Magnum Opus*, the *Yogacara Bhumisastra*, devotes two sections to Sravaka-bhumi and Pratyekabuddha-bhumi to Bodhisattva-bhumi, which shows that all three yanas are given due consideration in the Mahayana. But the state of a Sravaka or a Pratyekabuddha is inferior to that of a Bodhisattva. This is quite in keeping with the Theravada tradition which, too, holds that one may become a Bodhisattva and attain the state of a fully Enlightened Buddha; but if one cannot, one may attain the state of a Pratyekabuddha or of a Sravaka according to one's capacity. These three states may be considered as three attainments on the same Path. In fact, the *Sandhinirmocana-Sutra* (a Mahayana Sutra) clearly says that the Sravakayana and the Mahayana constitute one yana (ekayana) and that they are not two different and distinct 'vehicles'.

The Three Individuals

Now, who are these three individuals: Sravaka, Pratyekabuddha and Bodhisattva? Very briefly:

A **Sravaka** is a disciple of a Buddha. A disciple may be a monk or a nun, a layman or a laywoman. Bent on his or her liberation, a Sravaka follows and practises the teaching of the Buddha and finally attains Nirvana. He also serves others, but his capacity to do so is limited.

A **Pratyekabuddha** (Individual Buddha) is a person who realizes Nirvana alone by himself at a time when there is no Samyaksambuddha in the world. He also renders service to others, but in a limited way. He is not capable of revealing the Truth to others as a Samyaksambuddha, a fully Enlightened Buddha does.

A **Bodhisattva** is a person (monk or layman) who is in a position to attain Nirvana as a Sravaka or as a Pratyekabuddha, but out of great compassion (*maha karuna*) for the world, he renounces it and goes on suffering in samsara for the sake of others, perfects himself during an incalculable period of time and finally realizes Nirvana and becomes a Samyaksambuddha, a fully Enlightened Buddha. He discovers The Truth and declares it to the world. His capacity for service to others is unlimited.

The definition of the three *Yanikas* (followers of the three yanas) given by Asanga is very instructive and clarifies some points. According to him, a Sravakayanika (one who takes the vehicle of disciples) is a person who, living according to the law of the disciples. By nature having feeble faculties (qualities), bent on his own liberation through the cultivation of detachment, depending on the Canon of the Disciples (*Sravaka-pitaka*), practising major and minor qualities, gradually puts an end to suffering. A *Pratyeka-Buddha-Yanika* (one who takes the Vehicle of the Individual Buddha) is a person who, lives according to the law of the Individual Buddha, By nature having medium faculties, bent on his liberation through the cultivation of detachment, he has the intention of attaining Enlightenment exclusively through his own mental development, depending on the Sravaka-pitaka, practising major and minor qualities, born at a time when there is no Buddha in the world and gradually puts an end to suffering. A *Mahayanika* (one who takes the Great Vehicle) is a person who, living according to the law of the Bodhisattvas, by nature having sharp faculties, bent on the liberation of all beings, depending on the Canon of the Bodhisattvas, matures other beings, cultivates the pure Buddha-domain, receives predictions or declarations (*Vya-Karana*) from

Buddhas and finally realizes the perfect and complete Enlightenment (*Samyaksambodhi*).

From this we can see that anyone who aspires to become a Buddha is a Bodhisattva, a Mahayanist, though he may live in a country or in a community popularly and traditionally regarded as Theravada or Hinayana. Similarly, a person who aspires to attain Nirvana as a disciple is a Sravakayanika or Hinayanist though he may belong to a country or a community considered as Mahayana. Thus it is wrong to believe that there are no Bodhisattvas in Theravada countries or that all are Bodhisattvas in Mahayana countries. It is not conceivable that Sravakas and Bodhisattvas are concentrated in separate geographical areas.

Further, Asanga says that when a Bodhisattva finally attains Enlightenment (*Bodhi*) he becomes an Arahant, a Tathagata (i.e. Buddha). Here it must be clearly understood that not only a Sravaka (disciple) but also a Bodhisattva becomes an Arahant when finally he attains Buddhahood. The Theravada position is exactly the same: the Buddha is an Arahant – *Araham Samma-Sambuddha* – "Arahant, Fully and Perfectly Enlightened Buddha."

The Mahayana unequivocally says that a Buddha, a Pratyekabuddha and a Sravaka (disciple), all three are equal and alike with regard to their purification or liberation from defilements or impurities (*Klesavaranaśuddhi*).

This is also called *Vimukti-Kaya* (Liberation-body), and in it there is no difference between the three. That means that there are no three different Nirvanas or Vimuktis for three persons. Nirvana or Vimukti is the same for all. But only a Buddha achieves the complete liberation from all the obstructions to the knowable, i.e., obstructions to knowledge (*Jñeyavaranaśuddhi*), not the Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas. This also is called *Dharma-Kaya* (Dharma-body), and it is in this and many other innumerable qualities, capacities and abilities that the Buddha becomes incomparable and superior to Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas.

This Mahayana view is quite in keeping with the Theravada Pali Tripitaka. In the *Samyutta-Nikaya* the Buddha says that the Tathagata (i.e. Buddha) and a bhikkhu (i.e. sravaka, disciple) liberated through wisdom are equal with regard to their *Vimutta* (liberation), but the Tathagatha is different and distinguished from the liberated bhikkhus in that he (Tathagata) discovers and shows the Path (*Magga*) that was not known before.

These three states of the Sravaka, the Pratyekabuddha and the Buddha are mentioned in the *Nidhikanda Sutta* of the *Khuddakapatha*, the first book of the Khuddaka-nikaya, one of the five Collections of the Theravada Tripitaka. It says that by practising virtues such as charity, morality, self-restraint, etc., one may attain, among other things, "the Perfection of the Disciple" (*Savaka-Parami*), "Enlightenment of the Pratyekabuddha" (*Paccekaśodhi*) and "the Buddha-domain" (*Buddhabhumi*). They are not called *Yanas* (vehicles).

In the Theravada tradition these are known as *Bodhis*, but not *Yanas*. The *Upasaka-janalankara*, a Pali treatise dealing with the ethics for the lay Buddhist written in the 12th century by a Thera called Ananda in the Theravada tradition of the Mahavihara at Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, says that there are three Bodhis: *Savakabodhi* (Skt: *Śrāvakabodhi*), *Paccekabodhi* (Skt: *Pratyekabodhi*) and *Sammasambodhi* (Skt: *Samyaksambodhi*). A whole chapter of this book is devoted to the discussion of these three *Bodhis* in great detail. It says further that when a disciple attains the *Bodhi* (Enlightenment), he is called *Savaka-Buddha* (Skt: *Śrāvaka-Buddha*).

The Bodhisattvas

Just like the Mahayana, the Theravada holds the Bodhisattva in the highest position. The Commentary on the Jataka, in the tradition of the Mahavihara at Anuradhapura, provides a precise example: In the dim past, many incalculable aeons ago, Gotama the Buddha, during his career as Bodhisattva, was an ascetic named Sumedha. At that time there was a Buddha called Dipankara whom he met and at whose feet he had the capacity to realise Nirvana as a disciple (*Śrāvaka*). But Sumedha renounced it and resolved, out of great compassion for the world, to become a Buddha like Dipankara to save others. Then Dipankara Buddha declared and predicted that this great ascetic would one day become a Buddha and offered eight handfuls of flowers to Sumedha. Likewise, Dipankara Buddha's disciples who were with him and who were themselves Arahants offered flowers to the Bodhisattva. This story of Sumedha distinctly shows the position a Bodhisattva occupies in the Theravada.

Although the Theravada holds that anybody can be a Bodhisattva, it does not stipulate or insist that all must be Bodhisattva which is considered not practical. The decision is left to the individual whether to take the Path of the *Śrāvaka* or of the *Pratyekabuddha* or of the *Samyaksambuddha*. But it is always clearly explained that the state of a *Samyaksambuddha* is superior and that the other two are inferior. Yet they are not disregarded.

In the 12th Century AD., in Myanmar (a strictly Theravada country), King Alaungsithu of Pagan, after building Shwegugyi Temple, set up an inscription in Pali verse to record this act of piety in which he publicly declared his resolution to become a Buddha and not a *Śrāvaka*.

In Sri Lanka, in the 10th Century, King Mahinda IV (956–972 AD.) in an inscription proclaimed that "none but the Bodhisattvas would become kings of Sri Lanka (Ceylon)". Thus it was believed that kings of Sri Lanka were Bodhisattvas.

A Thera named Maha-Tipitaka Culabhaya who wrote the *Milinda-Tika* (about the 12th Century AD.) in the Theravada tradition of the Mahavihara at Anuradhapura, says at the end of the book in the colophon that he aspires to become a Buddha: *Buddho Bhaveyyam* "May I become a Buddha," which means that this author is a Bodhisattva.

We come across at the end of some palm leaf manuscripts of Buddhist texts in Sri Lanka the names of even a few copyists who have recorded their wish to become Buddhas, and they too are to be considered as Bodhisattvas. At the end of a religious ceremony or an act of piety, the bhikkhu who gives benedictions, usually admonishes the congregation to make a resolution to attain Nirvana by realising one of the three *Bodhis* – Sravakabodhi, Pratyekabodhi or Samyaksambodhi – as they wish according to their capacity.

There are many Buddhists, both bhikkhus and laymen, in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia which are regarded as Theravāda countries, who take the vow or resolution to become Buddhas to save others. They are indeed Bodhisattvas at different levels of development. Thus one may see that in Theravada countries all are not Sravakas. There are Bodhisattvas as well.

There is a significant difference between the Theravada and the Mahayana with regard to the Bodhisattva ideal. The Theravada, although it holds the Bodhisattva ideal as the highest and the noblest, does not provide a separate literature devoted to the subject. The teachings about the Bodhisattva ideal and the Bodhisattva career are to be found scattered in their due places in Pali literature. The Mahayana by definition is dedicated to the Bodhisattva ideal, and they have not only produced a remarkable literature on the subject but also created a fascinating class of mythical Bodhisattvas.

Extract 4: Yodhajiva Sutta: To Yodhajiva (The Warrior), SN 42.3

Taken from: 'Yodhajiva Sutta: To Yodhajiva (The Warrior)' ©1998 Thanissaro Bhikkhu

Then Yodhajiva,⁹ the headman went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: "Lord, I have heard that it has been passed down by the ancient teaching lineage of warriors that 'When a warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle.' What does the Blessed One have to say about that?"

"Enough, headman, put that aside. Don't ask me that."

A second time... A third time Yodhajiva the headman said: "Lord, I have heard that it has been passed down by the ancient teaching lineage of warriors that 'When a warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle.' What does the Blessed One have to say about that?"

"Apparently, headman, I haven't been able to get past you by saying, 'Enough, headman, put that aside. Don't ask me that.' So I will simply answer you. When a warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, his mind is already seized, debased, & misdirected by the thought: 'May these beings be struck down or slaughtered or annihilated or destroyed. May they not exist.' If others then strike him down & slay him while he is thus striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the hell called the realm of those slain in battle. But if he holds such a view as this: 'When a warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle,' that is his wrong view. Now, there are two destinations for a person with wrong view, I tell you: either hell or the animal womb."

When this was said, Yodhajiva the headman sobbed & burst into tears. [The Blessed One said:] "That is what I couldn't get past you by saying, 'Enough, headman, put that aside. Don't ask me that.'"

"I'm not crying, lord, because of what the Blessed One said to me, but simply because I have been deceived, cheated, & fooled for a long time by that ancient teaching lineage of warriors who said: 'When a warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle.'"

⁹ The warrior

"Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One — through many lines of reasoning — made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the Community of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge, from this day forward, for life."

Paper 4B: Christianity

Extract 1: Jurgen Moltman, 'The Suffering of God' (1995).

Taken from: *The Christian Theology Reader*, edited by Alister E McGrath (Blackwell, 2nd edition, 2001), Chapter 3.30, pp 218-221

The Council of Nicaea rightly declared, in opposition to Arius, that: God was not so changeable as his creature. This is not an absolute statement about God, but a comparative statement. God is not subject to compulsion by what is not divine. This does not mean, however, that God is not free to change himself or to be changed by something else. We cannot deduce from the relative statement of Nicaea that God is unchangeable – that he is absolutely unchangeable.

The early Fathers insisted on God's inability to suffer in opposition to the Syrian Monophysite heresy. An essential inability to suffer was the only contrast to passive suffering recognized in the early Church. There is, however, a third form of suffering – active suffering, the suffering of love, a voluntary openness to the possibility of being affected by outside influences. If God were really incapable of suffering, he would also be as incapable of loving as the God of Aristotle, who was loved by all, but could not love. Whoever is capable of love is also capable of suffering, because he is open to the suffering that love brings with it, although he is always able to surmount that suffering because of love. God does not suffer, like his creature, because his being is incomplete. He loves from the fullness of his being and suffers because of his full and free love.

The distinctions that have been made in theology between God's and man's being are externally important, but they tell us nothing about the inner relationship between God the Father and God the Son and therefore cannot be applied to the event of the cross which took place between God and God. Christian humanists also find this a profound *aporia*. In regarding Jesus as God's perfect man, and in taking his exemplary sinlessness as proof of his "permanently powerful consciousness of God," they interpret Jesus' death as the fulfilment of his obedience or faith, not as his being abandoned by God. God's incapacity, because of his divine nature, to suffer (*apatheia*) is replaced by the unshakeable steadfastness (*ataraxia*) of Jesus' consciousness of God. The ancient teaching that God is unchangeable is thus trans-consciousness of God. The ancient teaching that God is unchangeable is thus transferred to Jesus' "inner life", but the *aporia* is not overcome. Finally, atheistic humanists who are interested in Jesus but do not accept the existence of God find it impossible to think of Jesus as dying abandoned by God and therefore regard this cry to God from the cross of superfluous.

All Christian theologians of every period and inclination try to answer the question of Jesus' cry from the cross and to say, consciously or unconsciously, why God abandoned him. Atheists also attempt to answer this question in such a way that, by depriving it of its foundation, they can easily dismiss it. But Jesus' cry from the cross is greater than even the most convincing Christian answer. Theologians can only point to the coming of God, who is the only answer to this question.

Christians have to speak about God in the presence of Jesus' abandonment by God on the cross, which can provide the only complete justification of their theology. The cross is either the Christian end of all theology or it is the beginning of a specifically Christian theology. When theologians speak about God on the cross of Christ, this inevitably becomes a trinitarian debate about the "story of God"

which is quite distinct from all monotheism, polytheism or pantheism. The central position occupied by the crucified Christ is the specifically Christian element in the history of the world and the doctrine of the Trinity is the specifically Christian element of the doctrine of God. Both are very closely connected. It is not the bare trinitarian formulas in the New Testament, but the constant testimony of the cross which provides the basis for Christian faith in the Trinity. The most concise expression of the Trinity is God's action on the cross, in which God allowed the Son to sacrifice himself through the Spirit (B. Steffen).

It is informative to examine Paul's statements about Jesus' abandonment on the cross in this context. The Greek word for "abandon" (*paradidomi*) has a decidedly negative connotation in the gospel stories of the passion, meaning betray, deliver, give up and even kill. In Paul (Romans 1: 18–21), this negative meaning of *paredoken* is apparent in his presentation of God's abandonment of ungodly men. Guilt and punishment are closely connected and men who abandon God are abandoned by him and "given" up to the way they have chosen for themselves – Jews to their law, Gentiles to the worship of their idols and both to death.

Paul introduced a new meaning into the term *paredoken* when he presented Jesus' abandonment by God not in the historical context of his life, but in the eschatological context of faith. God "did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all; will he not also give us all things with him?" (Romans 8:32). In the historical abandonment of the crucified Christ by the Father, Paul perceived the eschatological abandonment or "giving up" of the Son by the Father for the sake of "ungodly" men who had abandoned and been abandoned by God. In stressing that God had given up "his own Son", Paul extended the abandonment of the Son to the Father, although not in the same way, as the Patripassian heretics had done, insisting that the Son's sufferings could be predicated on the Father. In the Pauline view, Jesus suffered death abandoned by God. The Father, on the other hand, suffered the death of his Son in the pain of his love. The Son was "given up" by the Father and the Father suffered his abandonment from the Son. Kazoh Kitamori has called this "the pain of God."

The death of the Son is different from this "pain of God" the Father, and for this reason it is not possible to speak, as the Theopaschites did, of the "death of God". If we are to understand the story of Jesus' death abandoned by God as an event taking place between the Father and the Son, we must speak in terms of the Trinity and leave the universal concept of God aside, at least to begin with. In Galatians 2:20, the word *paredoken* appears with Christ as the subject "...the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." According to this statement, then, it is not only the Father who gives the Son up, but the Son who gives himself up. This indicates that Jesus' will and that of the Father were the same at the point where Jesus was abandoned on the cross and they were completely separated. Paul himself interpreted Christ's being abandoned by God as love, and the same interpretation is found in John (John 3:16). The author of 1 John regarded this event of love on the cross as the very existence of God himself: "God is love" (1 John 4:16). This is why it was possible at a later period to speak, with reference to the cross, of *homoousia*, the Son and the Father being of one substance. In the cross, Jesus and his God are in the deepest sense separated by the Son's

abandonment by the Father, yet at the same time they are in the most intimate sense united in this abandonment or "giving up." This is because this "giving up" proceeds from the event of the cross that takes place between the Father who abandons and the Son who is abandoned, and this giving up is none other than the Holy Spirit.

Any attempt to interpret the event of Jesus' crucifixion according to the doctrine of the two natures would result in a paradox, because of the concept of the one God and the one nature of God. On the cross, God calls to God and dies to God. Only in this place is God "dead" and yet not dead. If all we have is the concept of one God, we are inevitably inclined to apply it to the Father and to relate the death exclusively to the human person of Jesus, so that the cross is "emptied" of its divinity. If, on the other hand, this concept of God is left aside, we have at once to speak of persons in the special relationship of this particular event, the Father as the one who abandons and "gives up" the Son, and the Son who is abandoned by the Father and who gives himself up. What proceeds from this event is the Spirit of abandonment and self-giving love who raises up abandoned men.

My interpretation of the death of Christ, then, is not as an event between God and man, but primarily as an event within the Trinity between Jesus and his Father, an event from which the Spirit proceeds. This interpretation opens up a number of perspectives. In the first place, it is possible to understand the crucifixion of Christ non-theistically. Secondly, the old dichotomy between the universal nature of God and the inner triune nature of God is overcome and, thirdly, the distinction between the immanent and the "economic" Trinity becomes superfluous. It makes it necessary to speak about the Trinity in the context of the cross, and re-establishes it as a traditional doctrine. Seen in this light, this doctrine no longer has to be regarded as a divine mystery which is better venerated with silent respect than investigate too closely. It can be seen as the tersest way of expressing the story of Christ's passion. It preserves faith from monotheism and from atheism, because it keeps it close to the crucified Christ. It reveals the cross in God's being and God's being in the cross. The material principle of the trinitarian doctrine is the cross; the formal principle of the theology of the cross is the trinitarian doctrine. The unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit can be designated as "God." If we are to speak as Christians about God, then, we have to tell the story of Jesus as the story of God and to proclaim it as the historical event which took place between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and which revealed who and what God is, not only for man, but in his very existence. This also means that God's being is historical and that he exists in history. The "story of God" then is the story of the history of man.

Extract 2: A. McGrath, 'Deluded about God? (2007)

Taken from: *The Dawkins Delusion* by A. McGrath (London: SPCK, 2007), Chapter 1, *Deluded About God?*, pp.1-13.

GOD IS A DELUSION – A 'PSYCHOTIC DELINQUENT' invented by mad, deluded people. That's the take-home message of *The God Delusion*. Although Dawkins does not offer a rigorous definition of a *delusion*, he clearly means a belief that is not grounded in evidence—or, worse, that flies in the face of the evidence. Faith is "blind trust, in the absence of evidence, even in the teeth of evidence." It is a "process of non-thinking." It is "evil precisely because it requires no justification, and brooks no argument." These core definitions of faith are hardwired into Dawkins's worldview and are obsessively repeated throughout his writings. It is not a Christian definition of faith but one that Dawkins has invented to suit his own polemical purposes. It immediately defines those who believe in God as people who have lost touch with reality—as those who are *deluded*.

Dawkins rightly notes how important faith is to people. What you believe has a very significant impact on life and thought. That makes it all the more important, we are told, to subject faith to critical, rigorous examination. Delusions need to be exposed—and then removed. I agree entirely. Since the publication of my book *Dawkins' God* in 2004, I am regularly asked to speak on its themes throughout the world. In these lectures, I set out Dawkins's views on religion and then give an evidence-based rebuttal, point by point.

After one such lecture, I was confronted by a very angry young man. The lecture had not been particularly remarkable. I had simply demonstrated, by rigorous use of scientific, historical and philosophical arguments that Dawkins's intellectual case against God didn't stand up to critical examination. But this man was angry—in fact, I would say he was furious. Why? Because, he told me, wagging his finger agitatedly at me, I had "destroyed his faith." His atheism rested on the authority of Richard Dawkins, and I had totally undermined his faith. He would have to go away and rethink everything. How *dare* I do such a thing!

As I reflected on this event while driving home afterward, I found myself in two minds about this. Part of me regretted the enormous inconvenience that I had clearly caused this person. I had thrown the settled assumptions of his life into turmoil. Yet I consoled myself with the thought that if he was unwise enough to base his life on the clearly inadequate worldview set out by Dawkins, then he would have to realize someday that it rested on decidedly shaky foundations. The dispelling of the delusion had to happen sometime. I just happened to be the historical accident that made it happen at that time and place.

Yet another part of me began to realize how deeply we hold our beliefs, and the impact that they make on everything. Dawkins is right—beliefs are critical. We base our lives on them; they shape our decisions about the most fundamental things. I can still remember the turbulence that I found myself experiencing on making the intellectually painful (yet rewarding) transition from atheism to Christianity. Every part of my mental furniture had to be rearranged. Dawkins is correct—unquestionably correct—when he demands that we should not base our lives on delusions. We all need to examine our beliefs—especially if we are naive enough to think that we don't have any in the first place. But who, I wonder, is really deluded about God?

Faith is infantile

As anyone familiar with antireligious polemics knows, a recurring atheist criticism of religious belief is that it is infantile—a childish delusion which ought to have disappeared as humanity reaches its maturity. Throughout his career Dawkins has developed a similar criticism, drawing on a longstanding atheist analogy. In earlier works he emphasized that belief in God is just like believing in the Tooth Fairy or Santa Claus. These are childish beliefs that are abandoned as soon as we are capable of evidence-based thinking. And so is God. It's obvious, isn't it? As Dawkins pointed out in his *Thought for the Day* on BBC Radio in 2003, humanity "can leave the crybaby phase, and finally come of age." This "infantile explanation" belongs to an earlier, superstitious era in the history of humanity. We've outgrown it.

Hmmm. Like many of Dawkins's analogies, this has been constructed with a specific agenda in mind—in this case, the ridiculing of religion. Yet the analogy is obviously flawed. How many people do you know who began to believe in Santa Claus in adulthood? Or who found belief in the Tooth Fairy consoling in old age? I believed in Santa Claus until I was about five (though, not unaware of the benefits it brought, I allowed my parents to think I took it seriously until rather later). I did not believe in God until I started going to university. Those who use this infantile argument have to explain why so many people discover God in later life and certainly do not regard this as representing any kind of regression, perversion or degeneration. A good recent example is provided by Anthony Flew (born 1923), the noted atheist philosopher who started to believe in God in his eighties.

Yet *The God Delusion* is surely right to express concern about the indoctrination of children by their parents. Innocent minds are corrupted by adults cramming their religious beliefs down their children's throats. Dawkins argues that the biological process of natural selection builds child brains with a tendency to believe whatever their parents or elders tell them. This, he suggests, makes them prone to trust whatever a parent says—like Santa Claus. This is seen as one of the most significant factors involved in sustaining religious belief in the world, when it ought to have been wiped out ages ago. Break the intergenerational cycle of the transmission of religious ideas, and that will put an end to this nonsense. Bringing up children within a religious tradition, he suggests, is a form of child abuse.

There is, of course, a reasonable point being made here. Yet somehow, it gets lost in the noise of the hyped-up rhetoric and a general failure to consider its implications. Having read the misrepresentations of religion that are such a depressing feature of *The God Delusion*, I very much fear that secularists would merely force their own dogmas down the throats of the same gullible children—who lack, as Dawkins rightly points out, the discriminatory capacities needed to evaluate the ideas. I do not wish to be unkind, but this whole approach sounds uncomfortably like the antireligious programs built into the education of Soviet children during the 1950s, based on mantras such as "Science has disproved religion!" "Religion is superstition!" and the like.

There is indeed a need for a society to reflect on how it educates its children. Yet no case can be made for them to be force-fed Dawkins's favored dogmas and distortions. They need to be told, fairly and accurately, what Christianity actually teaches—rather than be subjected to the derisory misrepresentations of Christian theology that litter this piece of propaganda. *The God Delusion*, more by its failings than its achievements, reinforces the need for high-quality religious education in

the public arena, countering the crude caricatures, prejudicial stereotypes and blatant misrepresentations now being aggressively peddled by atheist fundamentalism.

For many years I gave a series of lectures at Oxford University titled "An Introduction to Christian Theology." I cannot help but feel that these might have been of some use to Dawkins in writing his book. As the cultural and literary critic Terry Eagleton pointed out in his withering review of *The God Delusion*: "Imagine someone holding forth on biology whose only knowledge of the subject is the *Book of British Birds*, and you have a rough idea of what it feels like to read Richard Dawkins on theology."

Dawkins quotes with approval the views of his friend Nicholas Humphrey, who suggests that parents should no more be allowed to teach children about the "literal truth of the Bible" than "to knock their children's teeth out." If Humphrey is consistent here, he should be equally outraged about those who peddle misrepresentations of religion as if they were the truth. Might he argue, I wonder, that parents who read *The God Delusion* aloud to their children were also committing child abuse? Or are you only abusive if you impose religious, but not antireligious, dogmas and delusions?

Faith is irrational

There is, I suppose, a lunatic fringe to every movement. Having been involved in many public debates over whether science has disproved the existence of God, I have ample experience of what I think I must describe as somewhat weird people, often with decidedly exotic ideas, on both sides of the God-atheism debate. One of the most characteristic features of Dawkins's antireligious polemic is to present the pathological as if it were normal, the fringe as if it were the center, crackpots as if they were mainstream. It generally works well for his intended audience, who can be assumed to know little about religion and probably care for it even less. But it's not acceptable. And it's certainly not scientific.

Dawkins insists that Christian belief is "a persistently false belief held in the face of strong contradictory evidence." The problem is how to persuade "dyed-in-the wool faith-heads" that atheism is right, when they are so deluded by religion that they are immune to any form of rational argument. Faith is thus essentially and irredeemably irrational. In support of his case Dawkins has sought out Christian theologians who he believes will substantiate this fundamentally degenerate aspect of religious faith. In earlier writings he asserted that the third-century Christian writer Tertullian said some particularly stupid things, including "it is by all means to be believed because it is absurd." This is dismissed as typical religious nonsense. "That way madness lies."

He's stopped quoting this now, I am pleased to say, after I pointed out that Tertullian actually said no such thing. Dawkins had fallen into the trap of not checking his sources and merely repeating what older atheist writers had said. It's yet another wearisome example of the endless recycling of outdated arguments that has become so characteristic of atheism in recent years.

However, Dawkins now seems to have found a new example of the irrationalism of faith—well, new for him, at any rate. In *The God Delusion* he cites a few choice snippets from the sixteenth-century German Protestant writer Martin

Luther, culled from the Internet, demonstrating Luther's anxieties about reason in the life of faith. No attempt is made to clarify what Luther means by *reason* and how it differs from what Dawkins takes to be the self evident meaning of the word.

What Luther was actually pointing out was that human reason could never fully take in a central theme of the Christian faith—that God should give humanity the wonderful gift of salvation without demanding they do something for him first. Left to itself, human common sense would conclude that you need to do something to earn God's favor—an idea that Luther regarded as compromising the gospel of divine graciousness, making salvation something that you earned or merited.

Dawkins's inept engagement with Luther shows how Dawkins abandons even the pretence of rigorous evidence-based scholarship. Anecdote is substituted for evidence; selective Internet trawling for quotes displaces rigorous and comprehensive engagement with primary sources. In this book, Dawkins throws the conventions of academic scholarship to the winds; he wants to write a work of propaganda and consequently treats the accurate rendition of religion as an inconvenient impediment to his chief agenda, which is the intellectual and cultural destruction of religion. It's an unpleasant characteristic that he shares with other fundamentalists.

Arguments for God's existence?

Dawkins holds that the existence or nonexistence of God is a scientific hypothesis which is open to rational demonstration. In *The Blind Watchmaker*, he provided a sustained and effective critique of the arguments of the nineteenth-century writer William Paley for the existence of God on biological grounds. It is Dawkins's home territory, and he knows what he is talking about. This book remains the finest criticism of this argument in print. The only criticism I would direct against this aspect of *The Blind Watchmaker* is that Paley's ideas were typical of his age, not of Christianity as a whole, and that many Christian writers of the age were alarmed at his approach, seeing it as a surefire recipe for the triumph of atheism. There is no doubt in my mind that Paley saw himself as in some way "proving" the existence of God, and Dawkins's extended critique of Paley in that book is fair, gracious and accurate.

In *The God Delusion*, Dawkins turns his attention to such other "arguments" based on the philosophy of religion. I am not sure that this was entirely wise. He is clearly out of his depth, and achieves little by his brief and superficial engagement with these great perennial debates, which often simply cannot be resolved empirically. His attitude seems to be "here's how a scientist would sort out this philosophical nonsense."

For example, Dawkins takes issue with the approaches developed by Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century, traditionally known as the "Five Ways." The general consensus is that while such arguments cast interesting light on the questions, they settle nothing. Although traditionally referred to as "arguments for God's existence," this is not an accurate description. All they do is show the inner consistency of belief in God—in much the same way as the classic arguments for atheism (such as Ludwig Feuerbach's famous idea of the "projection" of God... demonstrate its inner consistency, but not its evidential foundations.

The basic line of thought guiding Thomas is that the world mirrors God, as its Creator. It is an assumption derived from faith, which Thomas argues to resonate with what we observe in the world. For example, its signs of ordering can be explained on the basis of the existence of God as its creator. This approach is still widely encountered in Christian writings which argue that an existing faith in God offers a better "empirical fit" with the world than its alternatives. As Dawkins himself uses this same approach to commend atheism elsewhere, I cannot really see that he has much to complain about here.

At no point does Thomas speak of these as being "proofs" for God's existence; rather they are to be seen as a demonstration of the inner coherence of belief in God. Thomas is interested in exploring the rational implications of faith in terms of our experience of beauty, causality and so forth. Belief in God is actually assumed; it is then shown that this belief makes sense of what may be observed within the world. The appearance of design can offer persuasion, not proof, concerning the role of divine creativity in the universe. Dawkins misunderstands an a posteriori demonstration of the coherence of faith and observation to be an a priori proof of faith—an entirely understandable mistake for those new to this field, but a serious error nonetheless.

Where Dawkins sees faith as intellectual nonsense, most of us are aware that we hold many beliefs that we cannot prove to be true but are nonetheless perfectly reasonable to entertain. To lapse into jargon for a moment: our beliefs may be shown to be justifiable, without thereby demonstrating that they are *proven*. This is not a particularly difficult or obscure point. Philosophers of science have long made the point that there are many scientific theories that are presently believed to be true but may have to be discarded in the future as additional evidence emerges or new theoretical interpretations develop. There is no difficulty, for example, in believing that Darwin's theory of evolution is presently the best explanation of the available evidence, but that doesn't mean it is correct.

The extreme improbability of God

Dawkins devotes an entire chapter to an argument—or, more accurately, a loosely collated series of assertions—to the general effect that "there almost certainly is no God." This rambling pastiche is poorly structured, making it quite difficult to follow its basic argument, which seems to be an expansion of the "who made God, then?" question. "Any God capable of designing anything would have to be complex enough to demand the same kind of explanation in his own right. God presents an infinite regress from which he cannot help us to escape."

Dawkins is particularly derisive about theologians who allow themselves "the dubious luxury of arbitrarily conjuring up a terminator to an infinite regress." Anything that explains something itself has to be explained—and *that* explanation in turn needs to be explained, and so on. There is no justifiable way of ending this infinite regression of explanations. What explains the explanation? Or, to change the metaphor slightly: Who designed the designer?

However, it needs to be pointed out here that the holy grail of the natural sciences is the quest for the "grand unified theory"—the "theory of everything." Why is such a theory regarded as being so important? Because it can explain

everything, without itself requiring or demanding an explanation. The explanatory buck stops right there. There is no infinite regress in the quest for explanation. If Dawkins's brash and simplistic arguments carried weight, this great scientific quest could be dismissed with a seemingly profound yet in fact trivial question: What explains the explainer?

Now maybe there is no such ultimate theory. Maybe the "theory of everything" will turn out to be a "theory of nothing." Yet there is no reason to suppose that this quest is a failure from the outset simply because it represents the termination of an explanatory process. Yet an analogous quest for an irreducible explanation lies at the heart of the scientific quest. There is no logical inconsistency, no conceptual flaw, no self-contradiction involved.

Dawkins then sets out an argument that makes little sense, either in the brief and hasty statement offered in *The God Delusion* or the more expanded versions he set out elsewhere. In a somewhat patchy and derisory account of the "anthropic principle," Dawkins points out the sheer improbability of our existence. Belief in God, he then argues, represents belief in a being whose existence must be even more complex—and therefore more improbable. Yet this leap from the recognition of complexity to the assertion of improbability is highly problematic. Why is something complex improbable? A "theory of everything" may well be more complex than the lesser theories that it explains—but what has that to do with its improbability?

But let's pause for a moment. The one inescapable and highly improbable fact about the world is that we, as reflective human beings, are in fact here. Now it is virtually impossible to quantify how improbable the existence of humanity is. Dawkins himself is clear, especially in *Climbing Mount Improbable*, that it is very, very improbable. *But we are here*. The very fact that we are puzzling about how we came to be here is dependent on the fact that we are here and are thus able to reflect on the likelihood of this actuality. Perhaps we need to appreciate that there are many things that seem improbable—but improbability does not, and never has, entailed nonexistence. *We may be highly improbable—yet we are here*. The issue, then, is not whether God is probable but whether God is *actual*.

The God of the gaps

In *The God Delusion* Dawkins criticizes "the worship of gaps." This is a reference to an approach to Christian apologetics that came to prominence during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—the so-called God of the gaps approach. In its simplest form it asserted that there were necessarily "gaps" in a naturalist or scientific understanding of reality. At certain points, William Paley's famous *Natural Theology* (1801) uses arguments along these lines. It was argued that God needs to be proposed in order to deal with these gaps in scientific understanding.

It was a foolish move and was increasingly abandoned in the twentieth century. Oxford's first professor of theoretical chemistry, the noted Methodist lay preacher Charles A. Coulson, damned it with the telling phrase "the God of the gaps." In its place he urged a comprehensive account of reality, which stressed the explanatory capacity of the Christian faith as a whole rather than a retreat into ever-diminishing gaps. Dawkins's criticism of those who "worship the gaps," despite

its overstatements, is clearly appropriate and valid. So we must thank him for helping us kill off this outdated false turn in the history of Christian apologetics. It is a good example of how a dialogue between science and Christian theology can lead to some useful outcomes.

Unfortunately, having made such a good point, Dawkins then weakens his argument by suggesting that all religious people try to stop scientists from exploring those gaps: "one of the truly bad effects of religion is that it teaches us that it is a virtue to be satisfied with not understanding." While that may be true of some more exotic forms of Christian theology, it is most emphatically not characteristic of its approaches. It's a crass generalization that ruins a perfectly interesting discussion.

After all, there is nothing wrong with admitting limits to our understanding, partly arising from the limits of science itself, and partly from the limited human capacity to comprehend. As Dawkins himself pointed out elsewhere:

Modern physics teaches us that there is more to truth than meets the eye; or than meets the all too limited human mind, evolved as it was to cope with medium-sized objects moving at medium speeds through medium distances in Africa.

It's hardly surprising that this "all too limited" human mind should encounter severe difficulties when dealing with anything beyond the world of everyday experience. The idea of "mystery" arises constantly as the human mind struggles to grasp some ideas. That's certainly true of science; it's also true of religion.

The real problem here, however, is the forced relocation of God by doubtless well-intentioned Christian apologists into the hidden recesses of the universe, beyond evaluation or investigation. Now that's a real concern. For this strategy is still used by the intelligent design movement—a movement, based primarily in North America, that argues for an "intelligent Designer" based on gaps in scientific explanation, such as the "irreducible complexity" of the world. It is not an approach which I accept, either on scientific or theological grounds. In my view, those who adopt this approach make Christianity deeply—and needlessly—vulnerable to scientific progress.

But the "God of the gaps" approach is only one of many Christian approaches to the question of how the God hypothesis makes sense of things. In my view it was misguided; it was a failed apologetic strategy from an earlier period in history that has now been rendered obsolete. This point has been taken on board by Christian theologians and philosophers of religion throughout the twentieth century who have now reverted to older, more appropriate ways of dealing with this question. For instance, the Oxford philosopher Richard Swinburne is one of many writers to argue that the capacity of science to explain itself requires explanation—and that the most economical and reliable account of this explanatory capacity lies in the notion of a Creator God.

Swinburne's argument asserts that the intelligibility of the universe itself needs explanation. It is therefore not the *gaps* in our understanding of the world which point to God but rather the very *comprehensibility* of scientific and other forms of understanding that requires an explanation. In brief, the argument is that *explicability itself requires explanation*. The more scientific advance is achieved, the

greater will be our understanding of the universe—and hence the greater need to explain this very success. It is an approach which commends and encourages scientific investigation, not seeks to inhibit it.

But what of the relationship of science and religion more generally? Dawkins has had much to say on this, and we must move on to consider it.

Extract 3: Karl Barth, 'Jesus Christ, the Lord as Servant'

Taken from: Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas Forsyth Torrance (A&C Black, 2004), Volume IV, Part 1, Chapter XIV, verses 157-357.

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CHAPTER XIV. JESUS CHRIST, THE LORD AS SERVANT

§ 59. THE OBEDIENCE OF THE SON OF GOD

IV.1, 157

That Jesus Christ is very God is shown in His way into the far country in which He the Lord became a servant. For in the majesty of the true God it happened that the eternal Son of the eternal Father became obedient by offering and humbling Himself to be the brother of man, to take His place with the transgressors, to judge him by judging Himself and dying in his place. But God the Father raised Him from the dead, and in so doing recognised and gave effect to His death and passion as a satisfaction made for us, as our conversion to God, and therefore as our redemption from death to life.

1. The Way of the Son of God into the Far Country

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The atonement (reconciliation) is history, the very special history of God with man and of man with God. It is the most basic thing of every person's history. Noetically it is history about Jesus Christ; ontically, Jesus Christ's own history. It is the basis of existence and the possibility of knowledge and decision. Jesus Christ is himself God and man; in him the two found each other again.

The first aspect of reconciliation is that condescension in which God interests Himself in man in Jesus Christ. The atonement is an act of grace, of God's free will, not of human deserving. God acknowledges man. God is not proud but humble. Therefore, "Jesus Christ, the Lord as Servant," and "The Obedience of the Son of God." Jesus Christ is very God in that as the Son he willed to be obedient to the Father. Jesus Christ was fully human, but qualitatively different. He is the Lord, Lawgiver, and Judge; He is the Christ, the *Kyrios*, the Son of Man, and the Son of God. These are not Christian concepts of Christ, but Christ himself in his revelation and being.

It is as the man Jesus that he is the Messiah, the *Kyrios*, the Son or the Word of God. This is a concealing of his being. Jesus is Lord, not as an earthly lord, but as the man who wills only to be obedient.

The true God is obedient. That is, he is the suffering servant of God, necessarily, essentially, and without meaning or purpose.

The Word became Jewish flesh. The history of redemption is essentially the history of the passion. Old Testament counters Docetism. That the grace and work and revelation of God has the character of election shows that God is already on his way into the far country. Old Testament tells of flesh: unfaithful, disobedient, fall, sin, enmity versus God. In Jesus, God himself made himself the object of this accusation and willed to confess himself a sinner. Moreover, the man who negates God is the man negated by God.

The Son of God was a man; he stands under the wrath and judgment of God, he is broken and destroyed on God; he concedes that the Father is right in the will and action which leads him to the cross. In him God did not merely affirm the divine sentence on man but allowed it to be fulfilled on himself. God bears the bitterness of the suffering. In short, in Jesus Christ the Lord is a servant, a slave. Therein can be learned the meaning of the deity of Jesus Christ. That he is God can be known in his becoming flesh.

Becoming and existing in the flesh include His obedience of suffering, i.e., (1) the obedience of the Son to the Father, shown (2) in his self-humiliation, his way into the far country, fulfilled in his death on the cross.

That "the Word was made flesh" is a free divine activity. God remains God in his humiliation. He went into a strange land, but he never became a stranger to Himself. (Obviously, if God were not truly in Christ, there would be no reconciliation.) Still, this is a bold claim. How is this not blasphemous?

(a) Utter paradox; God against God (Barth rejects this)

(b) No paradox in God. In Jesus Christ, God put into effect the freedom of his divine love. So this corresponds to his nature.

Obedience. The humility of Christ is proper, not alien, to him. It is also a matter of obedience and free choice. This obedience within God confronts us with the mystery of the deity of Christ.

(a) subordinationism

(b) economic modalism (both wrong)

Three presuppositions regarding this:

(a) The subject of reconciliation is Jesus Christ, the mediator, the one who takes upon himself the judgment of the world and bears it away. I.e., the true God is at work in him.

(b) The subject of the atonement as an event in the world. God takes the world to himself, enters its sphere.

(c) It is a matter of the one true God being himself the subject of the act of atonement in such a way that his presence and action as the Reconciler of the world coincide and are indeed identical with the existence of the humiliated and lowly and obedient man Jesus of Nazareth.

The cross shows the true humiliation of God. So, in Jesus Christ we speak of an obedience of the one true God himself in his proper being. He obeys and is obeyed. The third (Holy Spirit) holds these together.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, who as such is One with God the Father, equal to Him in deity, by the Holy Spirit, in whom the Father affirms and love Him and He the Father, in a mutual fellowship.

God is the one God in self-repetition, in three modes of being. He exists in their mutual interconnection and relationship. He is not threefold but triune.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God in that Jesus Christ is the one who humbles himself and is obedient in humility. In rendering obedience as he does, he does something only God can do.

Must emphasize that the Father and Son are one.

2. The Judge Judged in our Place

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Cur Deus homo? Why become a servant? What purpose, end, scope, meaning. It is an outward activation and revelation of the whole inward riches of his deity in all its height and depth; God hastens to the help of the world as its loyal Creator, taking up its cause. There is no necessity to this. God became man because the salvation of the world is included in the self-purposiveness of this divine action.

Deus pro nobis did not have to be, but is. How? God took it upon himself to share with Israel its place, status, and situation by making them his own. God has not abandoned the world and man in the unlimited need of his situation, but He willed to bear this need as his own, he took it upon himself, and he cries with man in this need.

Secondly, God exposed himself to, and withstood, temptation. But why? The Father sent the son to be the savior of the world. But we must say that he is the savior in so far as he is the Judge. He exercises the judgment of God. Serious situation. It is because of fault and evil that God encounters man in the flesh. Jesus Christ became man in order to judge the world; to judge it to show his grace, to save us by our destruction.

What took place? The Son of God fulfilled the righteous judgment on us men by Himself taking our place as man and in our place undergoing the judgment under which we had passed. In His doing this for us, there came to pass our reconciliation with God. God became man that he might do this and bring about our reconciliation and conversion. All this came to pass as the history of Jesus Christ.

"The Judge judged for us." This does not mean a general "with us"! "Jesus Christ for us" means this one true man Jesus Christ has taken the place of us men, of many, in all the authority and omnipotence of the one true God, in order to act in our name and therefore validly and effectively for us in all matters of reconciliation with God and therefore of our redemption and salvation, representing us without any cooperation on our part. He is our Representative and Substitute.

(1) Jesus Christ was and is "for us" in that He took our place as our Judge. Jesus Christ destroys our pretentious self-judgment.

(a) This means the abasement and jeopardizing of every man.

(b) It also means immeasurable liberation and joy.

(2) Jesus Christ was and is for us in that He took the place of us sinner. He does not come to sin, but to accept responsibility for what we do. As he does that, it ceases to be our sin. Jesus Christ is quite alone among us, the only One who is judged and condemned and rejected.

(a) Apart from this we do not know that we are sinful

(b) As our representative, Christ bears our sin. Our being in sin is now in his hands.

(c) Jesus Christ closes the door for the return to evil. We cannot ascribe to ourselves the freedom of sinners; nor can we see any future for ourselves in sin.

(3) Jesus Christ was and is for us in that He suffered and was crucified and died.

(a) In the passion of Jesus Christ we have to do with an action, a free self-offering.

(b) This act took place on earth, in a time and place, and is linked with the name of a certain man.

(c) This act of God was coincident with the free act of a man so that it was the passion of God himself, with a significance for all people.

(4) Jesus Christ was and is for us in that He has done this before God and has therefore done right.

(a) Jesus Christ was amongst us and lived and acted for us as the just or righteous man.

(b) Jesus Christ was obedient in that He willed to take our place as sinners and did, in fact, take our place.

Jesus Christ took our place as Judge; he took our place as the judged; he was judged in our place; he acted justly in our place. He was the Judge judged in our place. All theology depends upon this *theologia crucis*.

3. The Verdict of the Father

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Transition, questions: How do we build on this Christological basis? How can we talk about ourselves in terms of what Christ has done for us. This is all true, but how do we explain it? How are we to believe that we are those for whom He is and has acted? For there is a great gulf between "Christ for us" and ourselves.

(a) Special case of problem of time; of faith and history; also a spatial aspect.

(b) But this is not the main offense of the atonement, so do not become overly preoccupied with it! The real scandal is in the Christ occurrence, the atonement itself. The real distance is between God and man.

(1) God for man, order

(2) man against God, disorder

The temporal problem is a problem because it is a flight from this encounter! It is the need to hide ourselves.

The question is, how will it stand with us when we are alongside Jesus Christ and follow Him, when we are in his environment and time and space? It is not evident that it should not be answered in the negative. And a positive answer maintains the negative; that Christ had died for us does not mean that we do not have to die, but that we have died in and with him. The "for us" of the cross includes the terrible "against us." In Jesus Christ, judgment, death and end have come to us once for all.

Anything beyond judgment must meet the following:

- (1) It must be an act of the same God.
- (2) It must be actual and revealed in a distinct and new act of God
- (3) It must stand in a meaningful relation to the first act
- (4) It must take place in history
- (5) It must be in unity with the first event; i.e., it must be an event in the life of the same historical subject, Jesus Christ.

This event is, of course, the resurrection:

- (1) The raising of Christ is an act of God. It does not have any element of human willing. The resurrection was not just a miracle accrediting Christ, but the revelation of God in him.
- (2) It is an autonomous, new act of God. It came in the midst of real death and delivered him from death. The resurrection is the great verdict of God.
- (3) The connection of the crucifixion and resurrection is the Yes of the reconciling will of God, first in Christ's act of obedience in our place, and second as the first recipient of the grace of God the Father. Also, they are the two basic acts of God in his one history with a sinful and corrupt world. The one concerns our trespasses, the other our justification.

According to the resurrection, the death of Jesus Christ as the negative act of God took place with a positive intention. We need to consider the connection in time:

(a) The resurrection decided that what Jesus Christ was then he is for all time; he is the Mediator between God and man. There is a temporal togetherness of GoodFriday and Easter; the one who was crucified is risen. This togetherness is the basis of the alteration of the situation of people of all times. The two events are in a temporal sequence. There is a new life, seen in the forty days.

(b) The New Testament also differentiates its time from the time of Christ, not only by looking back, but by looking forward to it, expecting the coming of the Lord. Ours is a time of expectation and hope. So our time becomes a time in between times; as with Christ in the tomb between death and resurrection.

Jesus Christ is the absolute and final future of humanity. Obviously there is now a limitation of his being with us. We do not deny this, but pray hopefully, "Come, Lord Jesus!" I.e., hope specifically on Jesus Christ. We emphasize not the "not yet" but the "already."

The one crucified and risen Jesus Christ is the object of New Testament faith and the content of New Testament hope. The death of Jesus Christ is not an end but a beginning.

(4) The resurrection happened in the human sphere and time, as an actual event in the world with an objective content. He appeared to his disciples. There is no proof that this history took place.

Problem: the event is unique, but it is an event. It is the *telos* of Christ and the beginning of the community.

What happened? The awakening of the faith of the disciples in the living presence of Jesus Christ, and the formation of the community. At least, the presupposition of a story beginning with Pentecost. So it was the laying of a foundation, by a series of appearances, which fashioned an object of faith.

(5) These two acts (crucifixion and resurrection) are one act of one God, one Jesus Christ, and one goal of reconciliation. Grace and mercy were the goal of Golgotha. But it is a unity of sequence, irreversible. There is no way to go back behind Easter morning. There is a unity of the two in Jesus Christ.

He is the One Word of God that we must hear, that we must trust and obey, both in life and in death. (346) [cf. Heidelberg, Barmen] The Christian community hears and proclaims the divine will and act for reconciliation. It is God's Yes to man and the world.

Question: How can we arrive at the perception that Jesus Christ belongs to us and we to him? If in Christ's death we were delivered up to death, what more is there?

(5) The crucified and risen Christ is God's YES to man. Death is swallowed up in victory. (349)

(4) On the concrete objectivity of the Easter event depends Christ's concrete otherness. If he is not risen, our preaching and faith are futile. (351)

(3) The Christian community shows the fact that even after Easter God still has time for humanity. (353)

(2) In so far as this divine verdict has been passed, Jesus Christ lives and acts and speaks for all ages and in eternity. It is the ontic and noetic basis of our being. (354)

(1) The resurrection was a free act of the grace of God. It is of this act that when we say "Jesus lives" and can continue "and I with him." (355).

Extract 4: John Hick, 'Atonement by the Blood of Jesus?' (1993)

Taken from: John Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), Chapter 11, Atonement by the Blood of Jesus, pp.112-127.

The term 'atonement' is so deeply embedded in Christian discourse that almost every theologian feels obliged to have a doctrine of some kind under this heading. And yet the word is so variously used that some of these doctrines have little in common except the name. In its broad etymological meaning, at-one-ment signifies becoming one with God – not ontologically but in the sense of entering into a right relationship with our creator, this being the process or state of salvation. But in its narrower sense atonement refers to a specific method of receiving salvation, one presupposing that the barrier to this is guilt. It is in this context that we find the ideas of penalty, redemption, sacrifice, oblation, propitiation, expiation, satisfaction, substitution, forgiveness, acquittal, ransom, justification, remission of sins, forming a complex of ideas which has long been central to the Western or Latin development of Christianity.

In this narrower sense, Jesus' crucifixion was an act of atoning, or making up for, human sin. On the other hand, in the broader sense in which atonement simply means salvation, or entering into a right relationship with God, Jesus' death may or may not be separated off from his self-giving life as a whole as having a special significance of its own. As a rough approximation we can say that the broader sense has been more at home in the Eastern or Greek development of Christianity and the narrower in its Western or Latin development.

In my view it would be best, in the interests of clarity, to restrict the term 'atonement' to its narrower and more specific meaning. The basic notion is then that salvation requires God's forgiveness and that this in turn requires an adequate atonement to satisfy the divine righteousness and/or justice. This atoning act is a transaction, analogous to making a payment to wipe out a debt or cancel an impending punishment. In the background there is the idea of the moral order of the universe which requires that sin, as a disruption of that order, be restored either by just punishment of the offender or a substitute, or by some adequate satisfaction in lieu of punishment.

I am going to argue that in this narrower sense the idea of atonement is a mistake; although of course the broader sense, in which atonement simply means salvation, is vitally important.

In so arguing I am, I think, reflecting a widespread contemporary perception. Indeed were it not for its recent revival by some Christian philosophers who, unlike most contemporary theologians, tend to see church doctrine as a set of immutable truths, one could easily think that the notion of atonement, in its narrower sense, had largely died out among thoughtful Christians. For modern treatments of salvation seldom centre upon Anselm's doctrine of satisfaction to cancel the insult to God's majesty caused by creaturely disobedience, or the penal-substitutionary idea of an imputed justification won by Christ's taking upon himself the punishment due for human sin.

However, as with other traditional doctrines, it is important to try to go back in historical imagination to the original experience out of which it grew. It is evident that the profound and all-absorbing experience of the early post-Easter Christian community was of a living spirit, which they identified as the spirit of the risen Jesus, welling up within them, individually and corporately, and drawing them into a new, joyous and exhilarating form of life, full of positive meaning and free from the besetting fears of the ancient world – of demons, of fate, of sin, and of death. This new liberated life, overflowing with meaning and hope, was the religious reality that was to be expressed, first in what seem to us today a cluster of bizarre images, and later, within medieval Latin Christianity, in various sophisticated theories of a transactional atonement. However, we in the Western churches today, both Catholic and Reformed, may well feel that none of these inherited theories retains any real plausibility and that we should look again at the alternative development within Eastern Christianity of the idea of a gradual transformation of the human by the divine Spirit, called by the Orthodox theologians deification (*theosis*).

These two conceptions do not of course exclude each other. Latin theology has also held that the justification won by Jesus' death leads to sanctification, which is the gradual transformation of the sinner into a saint. And Orthodox theology also holds that Jesus' death was somehow crucial in bringing about human 'deification'. And since both traditions use the same stock of biblical images, one can find much the same language somewhere within each. Nevertheless, their basic tendencies move in different directions, one guided by a transactional-atonement conception and the other by a transformational conception of salvation.

We shall come back later to the Eastern tradition and its transformational conception, but in the meantime let us look more closely at the transactional model.

Before the division between the Eastern and Western churches the earliest attempt to conceptualize the Christian experience of liberation and new life fastened upon the Markan saying of Jesus, that 'the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom (*lutron*) for many' (Mark 10.45). Ransom had a poignant meaning in the ancient world, when a considerable proportion of the population lived in a state of slavery, and free citizens were liable to become slaves if their tribe, city or nation was defeated in a war. Being ransomed, and thus made free, was accordingly a vivid and powerful metaphor whose force most of us can only partially recapture today.

But, making the perennial theological mistake of taking metaphorical language literally, the early Christian theologians asked themselves to whom Jesus was, by his death, paying a ransom; and the inevitable answer was the devil – who else? In the words of Origen, 'To whom gave he his life "a ransom for many"? It cannot have been to God. Was it not then to the evil one? For he held us until the ransom for us, even the soul of Christ, was paid to him' (Grensted 1962, 38). And so for many centuries – indeed virtually until Anselm introduced his satisfaction theory in the eleventh century – it was generally accepted by Christian writers and preachers that the human race had fallen through sin under the jurisdiction of the devil and that the cross of Christ was part of a bargain with the devil to ransom us. Within

this literature there is also, as a sub-plot reminiscent of fairy-story themes, the idea that in this bargain God outwitted the devil, transforming a situation in which he had a just claim over humanity into one in which he had put himself in the wrong by taking a greater ransom, namely God the Son, than was his due. Thus Gregory of Nyssa said that 'in order to secure that the ransom in our behalf might be easily accepted by him who required it, the Deity was hidden under the veil of our nature, that so, as with ravenous fish, the hook of the Deity might be gulped down along with the bait of the flesh' (Gregory of Nyssa 1892b, 494). St Augustine even more picturesquely suggested in one of his sermons that 'As our price he [Christ] held out his cross to him like a mouse trap, and as a bait set on it his own blood' (Grensted 1962, 44). Such imagery is only embarrassing today. But whilst the ransom theory was never related to creedal authority, it was very widely used, occurring in the writings of Irenaeus, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, Rufinus, Gregory the Great, Augustine and Chrysostom. Nevertheless it is impossible today to make any good sense or use of it. As Anselm later asked, Why should we accept that the Devil has any valid legal rights over against the infinite Creator? (Anselm 1962, 187-9). The wonder is that such a notion lasted so long. As Grensted says, 'That such a theory could stand for nine hundred years as the ordinary exposition of the fact of the Atonement is itself a sufficient proof that the need for serious discussion of the doctrine had not yet been felt.'¹

When the need for serious discussion did begin to be felt, the theories that were produced were premised on the belief in original sin as an inherited guilt affecting the entire human race and requiring an adequate atonement to expunge it. To attack this idea is today, for most of us, to do battle with an extinct monster. Nevertheless the ecclesiastical reluctance to abandon traditional language is so strong that even today there is point in being clear why we should cease to think and speak in terms of original sin – except as a mythological way of referring to the fact of universal human imperfection. For the original sin idea presupposes the wilful fall from grace of the first humans and the genetic inheritance by the whole species of a guilty and sinful nature. This is something that only doctrinal fundamentalists can accept today. But prior to the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century it was a seriously entertained idea. Thus the Catholic Council of Trent (1545-63) pronounced that 'If anyone does not profess that the first man Adam immediately lost the justice and holiness in which he was constituted when he disobeyed the command of God in the Garden of Paradise; and that, through the offence of this sin, he incurred the wrath and the indignation of God, and consequently incurred the death with which God had previously threatened him...And if anyone asserts that Adam's sin was injurious only to Adam and not to his descendants...or that...he transmitted to the whole human race only death and punishment of the body but not sin itself which is the death of the soul: let him be anathema' (Abbott 1966, 158-9; Denzinger 788-9); whilst the Presbyterian Westminster Confession (1647) declared that 'Our first parents being seduced by

¹ L.W. Grensted 1962, 33. What Gustav Aulen called the 'classic' theory of atonement, according to which Christ was victor over the devil, seems to me to be a variation on the ransom model – a variation in which the ransomer is attacked and defeated instead of being paid off – rather than a radically alternative theory. 'Its central theme,' says Aulen, 'is the idea of the Atonement as a Divine conflict and victory; Christ – Christus Victor – fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the "tyrants" under which mankind is in bondage and suffering...' (Aulen 1953, 20).

the subtilty and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit... By this sin they fell from their original righteousness, and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of the soul and body. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation' (ch.6).

However, today the idea of an actual human fall resulting in a universal inherited depravity and guilt is totally unbelievable for educated Christians. Instead of the human race being descended from a single specially created pair, we see the species as having evolved out of lower forms of life over an immensely long period of time. Instead of the earliest humans living in perfect communion with the God of Judaeo-Christian monotheism, we see them as probably having a primitive animistic outlook. Instead of them living in harmony with nature and with one another we see them as engaged in a struggle to survive in competition with other animals and probably with other human groups within an often harsh environment. If out of piety towards the traditional language we wish to retain the term 'The Fall', we can say that the earliest humans were, metaphorically speaking, already 'fallen' in the sense of being morally and spiritually imperfect. That is to say, they can be said to be as though they had fallen from an ideal state. But since that state never existed, would it not be better to abandon the concept of the Fall altogether? For if we believe that there never was a human fall from an original paradisaal state, why risk confusing ourselves and others by speaking as if there were?

I take it that our endemic individual and corporate self-centredness, from which the many forms of moral evil flow, is an aspect of our nature as animals engaged in the universal struggle for survival; and that this self-centred propensity exists in tension with a deceptively human capacity for ego-transcendence in response to the felt claim upon us of moral values. In this tension we have a genuine, though limited, freedom and responsibility; and in so far as we are free we are guilty for our own wrong choices. There is thus a genuine problem of guilt. I shall return to this presently. But at the moment we are concerned with the ancient notion of original sin.

For it is this that has fed the traditional conceptions of atonement. In the light of a typical contemporary ethic the idea of an inherited guilt for being born as the kind of being that we are is a moral absurdity. We cannot be guilty in the sight of God for having been born, within God's providence, as animals biologically programmed for self-protection and survival within a tough environment. And even if we discount our modern awareness of the continuity between *homo sapiens* and the rest of animal life, the moral principle behind the traditional doctrine is still totally unacceptable. Although evidently believable in the age in which it was propounded, the idea of a universal inherited guilt was losing plausibility by the end of the eighteenth century and had entirely lost it, for many, by the end of the nineteenth.

We have already seen in the ransom idea the way in which theology has drawn its soteriological models from the structures of contemporary society – originally the pervasive fact of slavery and the life-giving possibility of being ransomed from

it. The next model to dominate the Christian imagination was proposed by St Anselm in his *Cur Deus Homo?* (completed in its present form in 1098), which together with his *Proslogion* was among the most influential theological books ever written. Anselm took over the concept of satisfaction which has long operated in both church and society. This was the idea that disobedience, whether to God or to one's feudal lord, was a slight upon his honour and dignity, and required for its cancellation an appropriate penance or gift in satisfaction. In the medieval penitential system a sinner's prescribed act of penance was believed to be accepted by God as restoring the moral balance and likewise, when one did something to undermine the dignity and authority of one's earthly overlord, one had either to be punished or to give some sufficient satisfaction to appease the lord's injured dignity. This notion, reflecting a strongly hierarchical and tightly-knit society, evidently made sense within the culture of medieval Europe.

Against this background Anselm defined sin as 'nothing else than not to render to God his due' (Anselm 1962, 202; Part I, chapter 11). What is due to God is absolute obedience: 'He who does not render this honour which is due to God, robs God of his own and dishonours him; and this is sin... So then, everyone who sins ought to pay back the honour of which he has robbed God; and this is the satisfaction which every sinner owes to God' (Part I, chapter 11). Further, 'Even God cannot raise to happiness any being bound at all by the debt of sin, because he ought not to' (Part I, chapter 21). However, it is impossible for humanity to make the necessary satisfaction; for even if we were perfectly obedient in the future, we would only be giving to God what is already due to him, and a satisfaction requires something extra that was not already due. Further, because God is the lord of the whole universe the adequate satisfaction for a slight upon the divine honour 'cannot be effected, except the price paid to God for the sin of man be something greater than all the universe besides God' (Part II, chapter 6). And, to add to the difficulty, since it is humanity who has offended God, it must be humanity that makes the restitution. Thus, since the needed satisfaction is one which 'none but God can make and none but man ought to make, it is necessary for the God-man to make it' (Part II, chapter 6). The God-man can give something that was not already owing to God, namely his own life: 'For God will not demand this of him as a debt; for, as no sin will be found, he ought not to die' (Part II, chapter 11). Accordingly, Christ's voluntary death on the cross constituted a full satisfaction for the sins of the world. This is the Anselmic theory.

However, in our own more democratic age it is virtually impossible to share Anselm's medieval sense of wrongdoing as a slight upon God's honour which requires a satisfaction to assuage the divine dignity before even the truly penitent can receive forgiveness. The entire conception, presupposing as it does a long-since vanished in social order, now makes little sense to us; and in my view it would be best to cease altogether to use it in our contemporary theologies and liturgies.

Yet another emphasis was introduced by the Reformers in the sixteenth century. They made the originally Pauline idea of justification central, understanding it in a legal sense, defined by Melancthon as follows: 'To justify, in accordance with forensic usage, here signifies to acquit the accused and to pronounce him righteous, but on account of the righteousness of another, namely of Christ, which righteousness of another is communicated to us by faith' (Grensted 1962, 193). The concept of justification, and hence of salvation as being counted

innocent in the eyes of God, emerged from the background of an understanding of law that had changed since Anselm's time. In the medieval world, law was an expression of the will of the ruler, and transgression was an act of personal disobedience and dishonour for which either punishment or satisfaction was required. But the concept of an objective justice, set over ruler and ruled alike, had been developing in Europe since the Renaissance. Law was now thought to have its own eternal validity, requiring a punishment from wrongdoing which could not be set aside even by the ruler. It was this new principle that the Reformers applied and extended in their doctrine that Christ took our place in bearing the inexorable penalty for human sin – a powerful imagery that has long gripped the Christian imagination:

He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good,
That we might go at last to heaven
Saved by his precious blood.

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven and let us in.

It is hardly necessary today to criticize this penal-substitutionary conception, so totally implausible has it become for most of us. The idea that guilt can be removed from a wrongdoer by someone else being punished instead is morally grotesque. And if we put it in what might at first sight seem a more favourable light by suggesting that God punished Godself, in the person of God the Son, in order to be able justly to forgive sinners, we are still dealing with the religious absurdity of a moral law which God can and must satisfy by punishing the innocent in place of the guilty. As Anselm pointed out long ago, through his interlocutor in *Cur Deus Homo?*, 'it is a strange thing if God delights in, or requires, the blood of the innocent, that he neither chooses, nor is able, to spare the guilty without the sacrifice of the innocent' (Anselm 1962, 200; Book I, chapter 10).

Richard Swinburne, in his *Responsibility and Atonement*, has recently made an impressive attempt to retrieve a transactional conception. His understanding of salvation can be summarized as follows:

(1) Guilt in relation to God is the great barrier to salvation, i.e. to receiving God's gift of eternal life. (This is assumed throughout Swinburne's discussion.)

(2) In the case of wrong doing by one human being to another, reconciliation requires four things: repentance, apology, whatever reparation (i.e. undoing of the harm done) is possible, and penance, i.e. some additional act – such as the giving of a costly gift – which is not part of the reparation but is an expression of the reality of one's regret and sorrow at having done the wrong (Chapter 5).

(3) God is a personal being – though absolutely unique in nature – with whom we exist in the same kind of moral relationship as to our fellow human beings, and the same general conditions for reconciliation apply. (This is assumed throughout Part II, though not explicitly stated.)

(4) All wrong-doing to fellow humans is also wrong-doing done to God. For 'Man's dependence on God is so total that he owes it to him to live a good life. Hence when a man fails in any objective or subjective duty of his fellows, he also fails in his duty towards God, his creator' (124).

(5) We can repent and apologize to God for our sins, but we cannot on our own offer adequate atonement, i.e. reparation and penance. For, 'Since what needs atonement to God is human sin, men living second-rate lives when they have been given such great opportunities by their creator, appropriate reparations and penance would be made by a perfect human life' (157).

(6) That 'perfect human life' is provided by Christ, who lived without sin and voluntarily endured a death which he openly intended as a sacrifice that we, accepting it from him, can offer to God as atonement for our sins, both individual and corporate. Christ's death is thus 'an offering made available to us men to offer as our reparation and penance'. 'There is no need,' Swinburne adds, 'to suppose that life and death [of Christ's] to be the equivalent of what men owe to God (or that plus appropriate penance), however that could be measured. It is simply a costly penance and reparation sufficient for a merciful God to let men off the rest' (154).

(7) To be sanctified and thus finally saved is only possible to those who (as well as repenting and apologizing) participate in the Christian worship of God and plead the atoning death of Christ, thereby throwing off their guilt. To be saved we must thus be joined – either in this life or hereafter – to the Christian church, which is the Body of Christ (173).

I think it must be granted that all this is possible; and indeed those of us who were once fundamentalist Christians, 'washed in the blood of the Lamb', are likely to feel an emotional tug towards this set of ideas. The question is not, however, whether such a schema is logically possible, but whether it is religiously plausible; and to many of us today it is likely to seem highly implausible, even though also with elements of truth within it. I shall comment from this point of view on the seven points listed above.

1. That the idea of salvation revolves around the issues of guilt and atonement is a central theme of the Latin theological tradition, launched above all by St Augustine. The Greek tradition, on the other hand, stemming from the early Hellenistic fathers of the church and preserved within Eastern Orthodoxy, thinks of salvation as deification or (perhaps better) transformation. Forgiveness is, of course, an element within this, but does not have the central place that the Latin tradition, followed by Swinburne at this point, gives to it. Swinburne prefers the Greek to the Latin development on a number of issues; nevertheless, he does not seem to have considered the radical alternative which the Eastern theological projector offers. If one sees salvation/liberation as the transformation of human existence from self-centredness to a new orientation centred in the ultimate divine Reality, the transaction theories of salvation then appear as implausible answers to a mistaken question.

2. Swinburne's analysis of guilt and reconciliation between human beings is excellent; this is one of the 'elements of truth', as it will seem to more liberal Christians, within his total theory.

3. That God is another person, with unique attributes but subject to the same moral requirements as ourselves, and thus with obligations and duties and

possibilities of supererogatory deeds; that God's probable procedures can be predicted by means of a human analogy; and that this leads to the belief that God's saving work is confined in its fullness to the Christian strand of history – this strikes me as anthropomorphic, parochial and unimaginative to a degree that renders it massively implausible. But I shall say more under point 5 about Swinburne's transfer of the conditions for reconciliation with a fellow human being to reconciliation with God.

4. That our relationship to fellow human beings involves our relationships to God, so that in all that we do we are also ultimately having to do with God, is from a more liberal point of view another 'element of truth' within Swinburne's theory.

5. When we do wrong the kind of reparation required is that we do what we can to nullify or reverse the consequences of our action. Thus when we contribute – as we do almost all the time – to the common evils of the world, we can do something to counter this by contributing to the common good of the world. When we wrong an individual we can usually do something to recompense the person wronged. And, as Swinburne points out, in such a case it is also appropriate to do something extra, which he calls penance, by offering some additional service or gift to express the reality of our regret and sorrow at having wronged that other person. But the question that has to be asked is whether this four-fold schema – repentance, apology, reparation and penance – can be carried over unchanged into our relationship with God. Swinburne's fundamental error, in my view, is in assuming that it can. Repentance, and apology as an expression of repentance, still apply; the sinner should truly and deeply repent and ask God's forgiveness. But is there also scope, specifically in relation to God, for reparation and the extra that Swinburne calls penance? I suggest that when we have offered reparation-plus-penance to the human beings whom we have injured, there is no further reparation-plus-penance to be made solely for God's benefit. In doing all we can to repair matters with our wronged neighbour we are doing what genuine repentance requires. For God cannot be benefitted, and thus recompensed and atoned to, by any human acts in addition to those that benefit God's creation. In relation to God the truly penitent person, genuinely resolving to do better in the future, can only accept forgiveness as a free gift of grace, undeserved and unearned. It may well be Jesus' life and teaching that prompt someone to do this. But it is not, in my view, appropriate to express that fact by depicting his death as an atoning sacrifice that benefits God and so enables God to forgive humanity.

Swinburne emphasizes that 'One man can help another to make the necessary atonement – can persuade him to repent, help him to formulate the words of apology, and give him the means by which to make reparation and penance' (149). True; and likewise the divine Spirit may prompt us to a true repentance which wants to make reparation to the human individual or community that we have wronged, and to offer any additional service or gift that may be appropriate. But what the Spirit will thus prompt us to do is some act in relation to those human neighbours. It is this that satisfies the principle, which Swinburne rightly stresses, that to take a wrongdoer and his or her wrongdoing seriously entails the need for whatever restitution, and whatever additional gift or service, may be appropriate. But the idea that something further, corresponding to this reparation-plus-penance towards our human neighbour, is required by God for Godself, seems to me groundless. It rests upon a category mistake in which God is treated as another individual within the same moral community as ourselves. For a moral relationship

with another person presupposes the possibility of actions that can benefit or injure that other person; but we cannot benefit or injure our creator over and above our actions in benefitting and injuring our fellow creatures.

Further, even if, despite this, a benefit solely to God were possible and required, Swinburne's unargued assumption that a perfect human life would constitute it is, surely, illogical. A perfect life, fulfilling every 'objective and subjective duty', is already, according to Swinburne, owed by all of us to God, and therefore could not constitute a reparation-plus-penance for not having lived a perfect life in the past. And yet again, even if *per impossible* it could, how would one single perfect life, namely that of Jesus, count as all human beings having led perfect lives? Swinburne's answer at this point is that God was free to accept whatever God wished as an atonement for human sin. 'God could,' he says, 'have chosen to accept one supererogatory act of an ordinary man as adequate for the sins of the world. Or he could have chosen to accept some angel's act for this purpose' (160). This is a deeply damaging admission, rendering it truly extraordinary that God should require the agonizing death of God's Son. For on Swinburne's view there was no necessity for the cross, such as was provided in their own way by the satisfaction and penal-substitutionary theories. Swinburne is abandoning the idea of a moral law that could only be satisfied by Jesus' death. For it was, according to him, entirely within God's free choice to establish the conditions for human salvation. But in that case God's insistence on the blood, sweat, pain and anguish involved in the crucifixion of God's innocent Son now seems even to cast doubt on the moral character of the deity.

6. Swinburne says several times that Jesus openly intended his death as 'an offering to God to make expiation in some way for the sins of men' (122). There is in fact no consensus among New Testament scholars as to how Jesus understood his own death. To what extent did he think of it as having religious significance? There is a range of possibilities. A theologically minimalist view is expressed by E.P. Sanders. He lists it as 'conceivable' (Sanders 1985, 326) or even 'possible' (332) – in distinction from 'probable' 'highly probable', or 'virtually certain' – that Jesus 'may have given his own death a martyrological significance' (326). Acknowledging, indeed emphasizing, the historical uncertainties, he notes that 'the idea that a martyr's death is beneficial for others and that his cause will be vindicated is attested in Judaism... It is not necessary to assume that Jesus indicated to his followers that they should think in this way. Once he died, it probably seems entirely natural to attribute benefit to his death and look for vindication' (324-5).

At the other end of the scale is the older view of Joachim Jeremias, developed in his influential treatment of the last supper. He recalls that a lamb was killed at the original passover and its blood smeared, at Jahweh's command, on the Israelites' doors: 'As a reward for the Israelites' obedience to the commandment to spread blood on their doors, God manifested himself and spared them, "passing over" their houses. For the sake of the passover blood God revoked the death sentence against Israel; he said: "I will see the blood of the passover and make atonement for you". In the same way the people of God of the End time will be redeemed by the merits of the passover blood. Jesus describes his death as this eschatological passover sacrifice: his vicarious death brings into operation the final deliverance, the new covenant of God' (Jeremias 1965, 226). And Jeremias

concludes, 'This is therefore what Jesus said at the Last Supper about the meaning of this death: his death is the vicarious death of the suffering servant, which atones for the sins of the "many", the peoples of the world, which ushers in the beginning of the final salvation and which effects the new covenant with God' (231).

On Jeremias' interpretation we have to suppose that Jesus, in E. P. Sanders' words, 'conceived in advance the doctrine of atonement' (Sanders, 1985, 332), a supposition which Saunders regards as historically highly improbable. 'Aspects of Jeremias' view, for example that Jesus identified himself with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, have,' he says, 'been disproved, but there are general objections to the whole line of thought that has Jesus intending to die for others, rather than just accepting his death and trusting that God would redeem the situation and vindicate him' (332). However, let us nevertheless suppose, for the sake of argument, that Jesus did understand his coming death as a sacrifice to God, analogous to the original passover sacrifice, and that he thought of this as required to inaugurate God's coming kingdom. Such a self-understanding could only occur within the context of Jesus' apocalyptic expectation, which was itself a variation on contemporary Jewish restoration eschatology. But Jesus' expectation, confidently taken up by the early church, was not fulfilled, and had faded out of the Christian consciousness before the end of the first century. The identification of Jesus as the eschatological prophet inaugurating God's kingdom went with it, being progressively superseded by his exaltation to a divine status. This in turn made possible the various atonement theories which presuppose his divinity, eventually seeing the cross as (in the words of the Anglican liturgy) 'a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world'. However, as we saw in Chapter 3, even conservative New Testament scholarship today does not suggest that Jesus thought of himself as God, or God the Son, second person of a divine Trinity, incarnate; and so we cannot reasonably suppose that he thought of his death in any way that presupposes that. It is much more believable, as a maximal possibility, that Jesus saw himself as the final prophet precipitating the coming of God's rule on earth, than that he saw it in anything like the terms developed by the church's later atonement theories.

It is incidentally noteworthy that Swinburne departs from the traditional view that the value of Jesus' death was equal to, or exceeded, the evil of human sin, so as to be able to balance it. Swinburne says that 'It is simply a costly penance and reparation sufficient for a merciful God to let men off the rest' (154). But if a merciful God can properly 'let men off the rest' without a full punishment having been inflicted or a full satisfaction exacted, why may not God freely forgive sinners who come in genuine penitence and a radically changed mind? The traditional atonement theories explained *why* God could not freely forgive penitent sinners. But what was intelligible – whether or not morally acceptable – on those theories becomes unintelligible, and doubly morally questionable, on Swinburne's view.

7. Swinburne also modifies the traditional exclusivist doctrine that salvation is confined to Christians, so that *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, by adding that non-Christians may have an opportunity to be converted beyond this life. This epicycle of theory, although departing from established teaching about the finality of death, is the only refuge left for one who is in general doctrinally fundamentalist but who does not wish to have to defend a manifestly morally repugnant position.

I thus do not find at all attractive or convincing this latest attempt to rehabilitate the conception of salvation as being brought about by Jesus' death as an atonement to God for human sin.

Paper 4C: Hinduism

Extract 1: P Bilimoria, 'Indian ethics' (2001)

Taken from: © A Companion to Ethics, Bilimoria P, John Wiley and Sons 1993
Singer P ed, Part II, Chapter 4, pp. 43–56.

Preamble

It is often asked: 'Has there ever been 'ethics' in India?' 'Can one meaningfully speak of 'Indian ethics'?' 'Isn't the idea of 'ethics' a Western invention — like anthropology?' Or, alternatively, does not the Indian mystical and 'life-denying' worldview rule out the use of ethics? There is no gainsaying that the Indian tradition did concern itself with a quest for the 'morally good life' and the attendant principles, laws, rules, etc that might help achieve this goal. And like their counterparts elsewhere, Indian thinkers did not shy away from enquiring into the nature of morality, of 'right' and 'wrong', 'good' and 'bad', even if they went no further than describing or codifying the prevailing 'ethos', mores, customs and habitual traditions — that is to say, giving expression to what in Sanskrit is termed dharma, meaning, very roughly, the moral and social order.

The questions we began with do, however, point to one difficulty, namely, that of locating in the Indian tradition the sort of ahistorical, abstract and formal theorizing in ethics that we have become accustomed to in the West. In India it was recognized that ethics is the 'soul' of the complex spiritual and moral aspirations of the people, co-mingled with social and political structures forged over a vast period of time. And this is a recurrent leitmotif in the culture's profuse wisdom literature, legends, epics, liturgical texts, legal and political treatises.

As with any other major civilization whose origins lie in antiquity, one can naturally expect there to be a variety of ethical systems within the Indian tradition. To cover all of these positions would be an impossible task. Also, to speak of 'Indian tradition' is to refer rather loosely to an incredibly diversified collection of social, cultural, religious and philosophical systems, which have also changed over time. The present discussion has to be selective and it will be confined to the Brahmanical—Hindu and Jaina traditions, concluding with a brief look at Gandhian ethics. (Buddhist ethics, whose Indian career would normally be part of such a chapter, is discussed in Article 5.) The use of Sanskrit terms is inevitable, in view of the lack of English equivalents (and vice versa), but they will be explained.

General remarks about early Indian ethics

To start with the most general remark, the early Indian people in their practical moral judgements, placed on the side of the 'good': happiness, health, survival, progeny, pleasure, calmness, friendship, knowledge and truth: and on the side of 'bad' more or less their opposites or disvalues: misery or suffering, sickness and injury, death, infertility, pain, anger, enmity, ignorance or error, untruth, etc. And these are universalized for all sentient beings, for it is thought that the highest good is possible when the whole world can enjoy the good things the cosmos has to offer. The highest good, however, is identified with the total harmony of the cosmic

or natural order, characterized as *rita*: this is the creative purpose that circumscribes human behaviour. The social and moral order is thus conceived 'as a correlate of the natural order. This is the ordered course of things, the truth of being or reality (*sat*) and hence the Law' (Rigveda 1.123: 5.8).

One therefore does that which is consistent with, or which promotes, the good so perceived, and desists from doing that which produces the bad things or effects, so that overall the order is not unduly disturbed. One may also attempt to prevent or overcome the untoward effects of certain actions. An act is therefore right if it conforms to this general principle, and an act is wrong if it contravenes it, and hence is *anrita* (disorder) (Rigveda 10.87.11). Since to do what is right safeguards the good of all *qua rita* (the factual order), it is assumed that it is more or less obligatory to do or perform the right acts (the 'ought' or moral order). This convergence of the cosmic and the moral orders is universally commended in the all-embracing category of *dharma*, which becomes more or less the Indian analogue for ethics.

'Right' or rightness is identified with 'rite', ie it is formalized as ritual, with varying content. In other words, the obligation derived from a value, say, survival of the race, becomes the value itself, eg sacrifice, regardless of what is offered in the act. Rite now comes to possess an intrinsic moral worth. But it also assumes a power all its own, and people are disposed to pursuing rites or rituals for egoistic ends. One group may claim entitlement and therefore advantage over others as to the prescribed rites, their content, correct performance, utility, and so on. This leads to the working out of differential duties and moral codes for the different groups in the larger social complex. Differentiation is superimposed on the organic unity of nature and individuals alike.

What counts as ethics, then, although in appearance naturalistic, is largely normative: the justification usually is that this is the 'divined' ordering of things, and hence there is a tendency also to absolutize the moral law.

That is not, however, to say that genuine issues, concerns and paradoxes of ethical relevance do not get raised, even if these appear to be couched in religious, mythical or mythological terms. To give an illustration: scriptures prescribe avoidance of flesh; but a priest would wrong the gods if he refuses to partake of a certain ritual offering involving an animal. With the gods wronged, order can't be maintained: which then should he do? (Kane, 1969, 1. 1.) Here we are led into an ethical discussion. What we have sketched above is, admittedly, a sweeping account that basically covers the very early period (c. 1500-800 BCE), during which time the Brahmanical tradition grew and flourished. This also outlines a broad framework for looking at how moral consciousness, various ethical concepts and often competing moral schemes develop and become articulated in later periods, which we may identify as the 'Hindu' ethical tradition.

i Brahmanical—Hindu ethics

First we shall make three concrete observations about the Brahmanical society.

1 The Vedas, the canonical collection of texts, is its ultimate authority. There is no one 'Supreme Revealer' who is the source of the scriptures. Their contents are simply 'seen' or heard' (*shruti*); and the principles invoked are embodied in the gods, who are models for human conduct.

2 A particular principle of social ordering is adopted (probably introduced in India by Aryans around 1500 BCE), according to which society is organized into a functional division of four 'classes', called *varna* (literally, 'colour'). These are, with their respective tasks:

<i>brahmana</i> (brahmin)	religious, instructional
<i>kshatriya</i>	sovereign, defence
<i>vaishya</i>	agriculture, economic
<i>shudra</i>	menial, labour

Ideally, the sources of power are distributed justly at different places; and also, differences in function need not entail differences in interests, rights and privileges. But the outcome in practice appears to be otherwise. A system of subdivisions or 'castes' (*jati*) further complicates the class functions, gradually turning them into a discriminatory institution based on birth. The brahmins profit most from the system and they hold the power-base. A life-affirming but rigidly authoritarian morality develops. Because of this, Max Weber judged that the Vedas 'do not contain a rational ethic' (Weber, 1958, pp. 261, 337).

3 Despite the overall ritualistic worldview, the Vedic hymns do praise certain humanistic virtues and moral ideals, such as truthfulness (*satya*), giving (*dana*), restraint (*dama*), austerities (*tapas*), affection and gratitude, fidelity, forgiveness, non-thieving, non-cheating, giving others their just desert, and avoiding injury or himsa to all creatures. (*Rigveda*, 10; vedas, *Atharvaveda*, 2.8. 18-24; cf. Kane, 1969, 1.1:4.)

Classical Hindu ethics

Vedic authority becomes normative in the later periods; the Vedas, which now extend beyond hymns and rituals, are invoked as the source or as symbols of ethics. Another important institution, ashrama, and two morally significant concepts, namely, dharma and karma emerge, and these culminate in the ethical concept of purusharthas (ends), which are all central to classical Hindu ethics, as we shall now describe.

Ashrama (life-cycle). Life is conceived as progressing through four relative stages in concentric circles, each with its own codes of conduct. Namely, studentship, requiring discipline, continence and dedication to the teacher; the householder stage, entailing marriage, family, and their obligations; the semi-retreat stage, entailing gradual withdrawal from worldly pursuits and pleasures; and renunciation,

leading to total withdrawal and contemplation. The last stage marks the preparation for final liberation and shedding of egoistic as well as altruistic tendencies, since the renunciant has to exercise extreme disinterestedness. It also involves breaking with the customary patterns of family and society and becoming an autonomous individual.

Dharma (duty). Dharma, as we said, is an all-embracing conception and is perhaps unique to Indian thought. But the term is also rather diffuse as it has many and varying meanings, beginning with 'fixed principles' in the Vedas and ranging from 'ordinance, usage, duty, right, justice, morality, virtue, religion, good works, function or characteristics' to 'norm', 'righteousness', 'truth' and much else (Kane, 1969, 1.1:1–8). The word is derived from the Sanskrit root *dhr*, meaning to form, uphold, support, sustain, or to hold together. It certainly connotes the idea of that which maintains, gives order and cohesion to any given reality, and ultimately to nature, society and the individual. As will be noticed, dharma takes over from the Vedic idea of organic unity (*a la rita*) and shifts more towards the human dimension. In this respect it parallels Hegel's idea of *Sittlichkeit* (the actual ethical order that regulates the conduct of the individual, family, civil life, and state) more than it does Kant's ideal conception of the Moral Law. Nevertheless, to a Hindu dharma suggests a 'form of life' whose sanction lies beyond individual and even group or collective preferences.

Law makers brought the notion of dharma more down to earth by devising a comprehensive system of social and moral regulations for each of the different groups, subgroups (caste, rulers. etc) within the Hindu social system, as well as specifying certain universal duties incumbent on all. Vocational niches, duties, norms, and even punishments are differently arranged for different groups, and the roles and requirements also vary in the different life-cycle stages for the different groups. Thus, while the wife of a 'twice-born' (the three higher classes) may take part in certain Vedic rites, a shudra (toiler) would be risking punishment if he or she so much as hears the Vedas recited — to say nothing of those who fall outside the class-caste order, and aliens like us! (Manu, 2.16, 67; 10.127.)

More often than not though, dharma is invoked as though it were an objective possibility, when in fact it merely gives an overall form to a system of positive law, mores and regulations which are cultural imperatives, the contents of which are determined by various factors, more particularly the voice of tradition, convention or custom, and the conscience of the learned. Dharma then provides a 'frame' for what is ethically proper or desirable at any one time. What gives coherence to the conception itself is perhaps its appeal to the need to preserve the organic unity of being, to 'make' justice where justice is due, and to minimize the burden of karma, if not also to free the individual from its encumbrances. But what do we understand by the concept of karma?

Karma (action–effect). The basic idea here is that every conscious and volitional action an individual engages in generates conditions for more than the visible effect, such that the net effect of an action X may manifest itself at a later time, or perhaps its traces remain in the 'unconscious' and get distributed over another time. X may combine the residual effect of Y to generate a compounded effect in some future moment. And this in turn becomes a determinant of another action, Z,

or a state of affairs pertaining to that particular individual (perhaps even a collective). The effect of Z might be pleasurable (sukha) or it might be painful and induce suffering (dukkha), but this is the retribution entailed in the causal network that is itself an inexorable manifestation of dharma.

Further, the idea of an infinite possibility of action-retribution suggests to the Indian mind the idea of rebirth, for merit or virtue appears to be in need of being rewarded, and demerit punished, according to the Law of Karma. Thus merit or demerit achieved in one lifetime could well continue to determine one's capacities, temperament and circumstances in another birth. Hindu thought generally espouses the idea of a more substantial theory of rebirth, meaning that something like the 'soul' carries with it the latent potential (karma) of all that constitutes the person. However, some Hindu philosophers, such as Shankara (eighth century CE) do away with the idea of a permanent self by asserting the identity of the individual self, atman, with the ultimate reality, Brahman; hence what really transmigrates is something nearer to an illusory self, which has lost sight of its true identity, namely its oneness with Brahman.

The linkage of dharma and karma (action-effect) has the following consequences: there are no 'accidents of births' determining social iniquities; mobility within one lifetime is excluded; one has one's dharma, both as endowment and as a social role (Creel, 1984, p. 4). One either accumulates an improvement in karma aiming towards a higher, re-birth, or one tries to cut the Gordian knot and opts to step off, once and for all, the wheel of cyclical existence (samsara). But this is not achieved as simply as it is willed. Indeed, this freedom is placed as the fourth and the most difficult of goals in the scheme of the fourfold deontological ends of purusharthas, literally, 'things sought by human beings'.

Purushartha (human ends). According to the Hindu view, there are four pursuits in life which are of intrinsic value, namely: artha, material interests; kama, pleasure and affective fulfilment; dharma, again, social and individual duties; and moksha, liberation. They may or may not be continuous with each other, though one goal might prove to be of instrumental value for achieving another; dharma is often thought to be of instrumental value in connection with liberation. Thus an ascending scale might be admitted, and the fixing of the relative status of each could lead to vigorous debate, as it has in Indian philosophy.

What is significant is that the above conception of human ends provides the context and criteria for determining the rules, conduct and guidelines in respect of the institutes of class and life-cycle stages. For an individual will want to strive towards achieving the best in terms of these ends within the limits of his or her temperament, circumstances, status and so on. Sometimes it is a question of balance; at other times it is a question of which interests get priority.

For example, a brahmin in the semi-retreat stage might consider that he has discharged all his family and social obligations, so that his remaining interest is to edge towards liberation, by becoming a full-time renunciant. What he should do and what he should not do in pursuit of this end is left entirely to his own determination, for which he relies on his meditative and cognitive insights. His particular dharma is the correlate of his innate constitution, of which he alone is the master: thus an inward attentive praxis is the source of the principles for his ethic. Here, it may be observed, the gap between intuition and ethics is very nearly closed over. This is another salient feature of Indian ethics.

Upanishadic ethics

The Upanishads (post 500 BCE), perhaps the key philosophical texts of the Hindus, presuppose in principle the authority of the earlier Vedas (while being cynical regarding Vedic ritualism with its promises for utilitarian returns, such as cows and progeny), however, develop this alternative scheme with much finesse for a more universal application. Here metaphysical knowledge is placed above worldly pursuits. But this scheme also allows for the possibility of, indeed encourages, a detached and asocial pursuit of spiritual ends removed from the challenges of the world.

That this tendency develops in the hands of yogis and ascetics, and that it influences Indian ethical thinking cannot be denied. It appears almost as though dharma could be dispensed with. As the virtuoso Yajnavalkya, justifying his hasty decision to leave behind his wealth, home and two wives, puts it: It is not for the sake of the husband, wife, sons, wealth, gods, Vedas, brahminhood, kshatriyahood, etc, that these are dear, but for the sake of the Self, all these are the Self, one knows all in the Self... Work cannot increase nor diminish the greatness of this knowledge (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 5.5.6–7; 4.4.24). Virtue is deemed necessary for knowledge, and the Socratic dictum, 'knowledge is virtue' rings through here also. The ideal Upanishadic person is expected to overcome emotions, feelings, inclinations and sentiments in pursuit of a higher, nonetheless self-centred, 'calling'. But there are few rules.

It is, however, just for these sorts of reason that there have been charges, from within and without the tradition, that all we have here is an ethically bankrupt, quietistic and mystically-grounded morality (Danto, 1972, p. 99). At least this is what is said of the Vedanta and Yoga systems.

True as this charge might be, there is a list of three comprehensive virtues extolled in the Upanishads (and familiar to readers of T. S. Eliot) which is worthy of mention, namely, 'damyata, datta, dayadhvam', signifying, self-restraint, giving or self-sacrifice, and compassion. But again, there are no rules other than exemplars, and no virtues to worry about after attaining liberation. Still, one moral ramification of the Upanishadic worldview is that all life, as indeed the whole world, is to be looked upon as a whole, where the ego sets aside its own narrow self-interests and even effaces itself.

Smarta ethics

There occur parallel and subsequent developments among the more doctrinaire and legalistic advocates of the rule of dharma, in what we shall call smarta (derivative) ethics. The school of Mimamsa champions a rigidly categorical reading of the scriptural imperatives. The implication is that all duties— religious as well as secular — could be divided into those that are optional or prudential and those that are obligatory, and that all ensuing actions are instrumental towards some result or end (even if not indicated). But if there is a mandate one does it out of a sense of obligation. The Mimamsa developed the thorough going hermeneutic of dharma for which the school is best known, and which proved instructive for later ethical and legal discourses.

The more populist texts known as Dharmashastras, of which the most relevant are Manu's 'Law Books' and Kautilya's treatise on politics, overstress the legalistic side (Manu 1975; Kane, 1969). Thus Kautilya (c. 200 CE) justifies the rigid reign of the 'rod' (danda) wielded by the king on the grounds that unless there are calculated controls the (natural) law of the small fish being swallowed by the big fish would prevail. Jurisprudence, ordinances for regulating civil life, and the governance and security of the state are his chief objectives. But he also highlights the use of reasoning (anvikshiki) in the study and deliberation on these matters (Kane, 1969, 1.1:225). Both he and Manu make it mandatory for the king to attend first to the welfare of the citizens, and they seek to protect the rights and interests of the individual within a group framework, although not in the most egalitarian manner. Manu even admits that there are different dharmas in different epochs, which is suggestive of relativity in ethics (Manu, 1975, 1, 81–86). Manu decrees some ten virtues, namely contentment, forgiveness, self-restraint, non-anger, non-appropriating, purity, sensual-control, wisdom, self-knowledge, and truth. Again, these are common to Indian ethics.

The Epics and the Gita

The popular epics of the Ramayana and Mahabharata, through their moving narratives and anecdotes, explore the struggles, paradoxes and difficulties of coming to grips with the evolving idea of dharma. The Ramayana, which presents the heroic Rama and his chaste wife Sita as the paragons of virtue, is somewhat dogmatic on its stance of 'righteousness', while the voluminous Mahabharata is less sanguine about exactness in matters of duty, as it turns over every conceivable ethical stance the culture has hitherto known. For instance, the sage Kaushika, who in the Mahabharata courts censure for his insistence on telling the truth to a bandit — because it leads to the killing of an innocent man — might well be acclaimed in the Ramayana for his uncompromising adherence to principle — as Rama indeed is for giving priority to his father's promise over his royal and family obligations.

The Bhagavad Gita, however, which is part of the Mahabharata, appears to be more decisive in its ethical pronouncements and perhaps for that reason has had an extraordinary impact on the modern Hindu—Indian mind. The Gita locates itself in the middle of two opposing traditions: Nivritti (abstinent), the austere path of anti-action (echoing non-Vedic asceticism), and Pravritti (performative), the doing of social and moral duties. Each had ethical ramifications for its time and their respective codes and rules were in competition and conflict.

While the Gita is recognized for the ingenuity with which it raises a host of ethical issues (eg, should I kill my own kin for the sake of regaining my rightful sovereignty?), its judgements have not satisfied all and sundry. The deep conflict of traditions is resolved through a synthesis of asceticism and duty in the unique concept of nishkama karma or disinterested action. What this implies is that one does not forsake one's apportioned duties but performs them in complete disregard of their fruits or consequences. Action is a universal necessity, and the individual has a 'right' (adhikara) only to the performance of the action and not to its fruit (2.47). The argument is that it is not acting that enslaves, but rather the thought that one is the cause, the agent and enjoyer of the act; stripped of this linear causal thinking no action can be binding on the self, which is free to start with.

This disinterested action ethics might look somewhat like Kant's ethic of 'duty for duty's sake', or acting from respect for the Law (hence the Categorical Imperative), but the precise rational-universalizable formulation of Kant is absent here. The Gita's motivation is not so much to make the 'Good Will' the determinant of moral actions but to conserve the Brahmanical cultural base (its performative ideal) while integrating the threatening asocial ethic of ascetic renunciation, and also accommodating the influence of a nascent devotionism, with its theistic orientation. The Gita's ethics is both formal and material: one must do one's duty according to one's 'nature': but this duty is determined by virtue of the individual's place in the larger social whole, ie by dint of the class he or she finds himself belonging to. Thus the maxim: better one's duty (though) imperfect, than another's duty well-performed (3.35). As to the specific content of the duty and the criterion by which its validity is to be judged, the text remains largely obscure. Nonetheless, the promise of liberation lies in disinterestedly pursued action, and a crude 'work ethic' (karmayoga), rid of egoism, is suggested, which might appear to justify prescribed ritual activity (sacrifice, austerities and giving) (18.5) and killing alike (18.8).

But the Gita does not overlook the significant role that a quasi-rational discerning faculty plays in such a process. For this it develops the yogas (paths) of buddhi or intelligent-willing and jnana or knowledge ('gnosis'). That the 'will' could at once be intelligent and practical (ie socially-attuned), making for its moral autonomy, is itself an interesting idea canvassed here. Apart from these teachings, truth, continence and non-violence (ahimsa), (16.2; 17.14) as well as 'welfare of all' (lokasamgraha) and 'desiring the good of every living creature' are underscored in the Gita (3.20; 5.25). The Gita's model of an ethical person, in Krishna's words, is one who is:

without hatred of any creature, friendly and compassionate without possessiveness and self-pride, equable in happiness and unhappiness... who is dependent on nothing, disinterested, unworried... and who neither hates nor rejoices, does not mourn or hanker, and relinquishes both good and evil. (12.13-17)

But as to why one should follow these principles, and what one should do if the consequences of one's action or duty are detrimental to the interests of another, the Gita seems to have little to say. (Cf. Rama Rao Pappu, 1988.) Also, if good and evil are transcended and the distinction obliterated can there any longer be an ethic to speak of? (Can we each be like Nietzsche's Superman?) Modern Indian reformers, such as Gandhi, have tried to fill in some of the lacunae in the traditional ethical teachings, symbolized in the Gita. But before that we'll look at another, contrasting, Indian ethical system.

...

Concluding remarks

What our enquiry shows is that the Indian culture, like any civilization, strives for ethically right conduct as well as a theoretical understanding of ethics. It may not succeed in achieving the goal, or it may lose sight of its goal, or even fail to reach a stage of clarity in its ethical discourse. But there are some important ideas and a few principles that emerge; these helped the society to survive, and to develop, even aesthetically. For us in the modern era, edging towards the twenty-first century, they may seem inadequate; but they might at least provide some useful metaphors, or *analogues*, to engage with our own notions, ideas, theories and analysis.

Dharma, with its roots in *rita* or 'natural order', can open up a more holistic, organic and ecologically enlightened perspective as a contrast to the more individualistic, competitive, nature-subjugating, and technocratic environment in which we try and think ethics. Karma or 'action-effect', and even the Indian ideas of concentric life-cycles and human ends, may suggest other possibilities of integrating the disparate and finite features of human life into this organic whole. And last but not least, the principle of disinterested non-violent action may prove effective in the continuing struggles towards justice and peace in the world.

Extract 2: Whitfield Foy, 'Hindu Dharma, M. K. Gandhi' (1977) P Bilimoria, 'Indian ethics' (2001)

Taken from: *Man's Religious Quest* edited by Whitfield Foy, (Croom Helm, 1977), chapter 2.8, pp. 142-154.

2.8.1 Gandhi on his Mission

I do not consider myself worthy to be mentioned in the same breath with the race of prophets. I am a humble seeker after truth. I am impatient to realise myself, to attain moksha in this very existence. My national service is part of my training for freeing my soul from the bondage of flesh. Thus considered, my service may be regarded as purely selfish. I have no desire for the perishable kingdom of earth. I am striving for the Kingdom of Heaven which is moksha. To attain my end it is not necessary for me to seek the shelter of a cave. I carry one about me, if I would know it. A cave-dweller can build castles in the air whereas a dweller in a palace like Janak has no castles to build. The cave-dweller who hovers round the world on the wings of thought has no peace. A Janak though living in the midst of 'pomp and circumstance' may have peace that passeth understanding. For me the road to salvation lies through incessant toil in the service of my country and therethrough of humanity. I want to identify myself with everything that lives. In the language of the Gītā I want to live at peace with both friend and foe. Though therefore a Musselman or a Christian or a Hindu may despise me and hate me, I want to love him and serve him even as I would love my wife or son though they hate me. So my patriotism is for me a stage in my journey to the land of eternal freedom and peace. Thus it will be seen that for me there are no politics devoid of religion. They subserve religion. Politics bereft of religion are a death-trap because they kill the soul.

2.8.2 Gandhi on Gandhism

There is no such thing as 'Gandhism', and I do not want to leave any sect after me. I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems. There is, therefore, no question of my leaving any code like the *Code of Manu*. There can be no comparison between that great lawgiver and me. The opinions I have formed and the conclusions I have arrived at are not final. I may change them tomorrow. I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both on as vast a scale as I could do. In doing so I have sometimes erred and learnt by my errors. Life and its problems have thus become to me so many experiments in the practice of truth and non-violence. By instinct I have been truthful, but not non-violent. As a Jain *muni* once rightly said I was not so much a votary of *ahimsa* as I was of truth, and I put the latter in the first place and the former in the second. For, as he put it, I was capable of sacrificing non-violence for the sake of truth. In fact it was in the course of my pursuit of truth that I discovered non-violence. Our scriptures have declared that there is no *dharma* (law) higher than Truth. But non-violence they say is the highest duty. The word *dharma* in my opinion has different connotations as used in two aphorisms.

Well, all my philosophy, if it may be called by that pretentious name, is contained in what I have said. You will not call it 'Gandhism'; there is no *ism* about it. And no elaborate literature or propaganda is needed about it.

2.8.3 Gandhi on the Gītā

Questioner: I am told you recite the Bhagavadgita daily?

Gandhi: Yes, we finish the entire Gītā reading once every week.

Questioner: But at the end of the Gītā Krishna recommends violence.

Gandhi: I do not think so. I am also fighting. I should not be fighting effectively if I were fighting violently. The message of the Gītā is to be found in the second chapter of the Gītā where Krishna speaks of the balanced state of mind, of mental equipoise. In nineteen verses at the close of the second chapter of the Gītā, Krishna explains how this state can be achieved. It can be achieved, he tells us, after killing all your passions. It is not possible to kill you brother after having killed all your passions. I should like to see that man dealing death – who has no passions, who is indifferent to pleasure and pain, who is undisturbed by the storms that trouble mortal man. The whole thing is described in language of beauty that is unsurpassed. These verses show that the fight Krishna speaks of is a spiritual fight.

Questioner: To the common mind it sounds as though it was actual fighting.

Gandhi: You must read the whole thing dispassionately in its true context. After the first mention of fighting, there is no mention of fighting at all. The rest is a spiritual discourse.

Questioner: Has anybody interpreted it like you?

Gandhi: Yes. The fight is there, but the fight as it is going on within. The Pandavas and Kauravas are the forces of good and evil within. The war is the war between Jekyll and Hyde, God and Satan, going on in the human breast. The internal evidence in support of this interpretation is there in the work itself and in the Mahabharata of which the Gītā is a minute part. It is not history of war between two families, but the history of man – the history of the spiritual struggle of man.

Questioner: Is the central teaching of the Gītā selfless action of non-violence?

Gandhi: I have no doubt that it is *anasakti* – the selfless action. Indeed I have called my little translation of the Gītā *Anasaktiyoga*. And *anasakti* transcends *ahimsa*. He who would be *anasakta* (selfless) has necessarily to practise non-violence in order to attain the state of selflessness. *Ahimsa* is, therefore, a necessary preliminary, it is included in *anasakti*, it does not go beyond it.

Questioner: Then does the Gītā teach *himsa* and *ahimsa* both?

Gandhi: I do not read that meaning in the Gītā. It is quite likely that the author did not write it to inculcate *ahimsa*, but as a commentator draws innumerable interpretations from a poetic text, even so I interpret the Gītā to mean that if its central theme is *anasakti*, it also teaches *ahimsa*. Whilst we are in the flesh and tread the solid earth, we have to practise *ahimsa*. In the life beyond there is no *himsa* or *ahimsa*.

Questioner: But Lord Krishna actually counters the doctrine of ahimsa. For Arjuna utters this pacifist resolve:

Better I deem it, if my kinsmen strike,
To face them weaponless, and bear my breast
To shaft and spear, than answer blow with blow.

And Lord Krishna teaches him to 'answer blow with blow'.

Gandhi: There I join issue with you. Those words of Arjuna were words of pretentious wisdom. 'Until yesterday', says Krishna to him, 'you fought your kinsmen with deadly weapons without the slightest compunction. Even today you would strike if the enemy was a stranger and not your kith and kin!'. The question before him was not of non-violence, but whether he should slay his nearest and dearest.

2.8.4 Ashram Vows

[Gandhi sent during 1930 a series of weekly discourses from Yeravda Jail (which he called *mandir* or temple) to members of his Ashram at Sabarmati. Four of these, dealing with the Ashram vows of Truth, Non-violence, Chastity and Non-possession are given here. The remaining seven vows of the Ashram are: Control of the Palate, Non-stealing, Fearlessness, Removal of Untouchability, Bread Labour, Equality of Religions and Swadeshi. Gandhi's discourses on these also will be found in the booklet *From Yeravda Mandir* (published by the Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad).]

Importance of Vows

Taking vows is not a sign of weakness, but of strength. To do at any cost something that one ought to do constitutes a vow. It becomes a bulwark of strength. One, who says that he will do something 'as far as possible', betrays either his pride or his weakness. I have noticed in my own case, as well as in the case of others, that the limitation 'as far as possible' provides a fatal loophole. To do something is to succumb to the very first temptation. There is no sense in saying that one would observe truth 'as far as possible'. Even as no businessman will look at a note in which a man promises to pay a certain amount on a certain date 'as far as possible', so will God refuse to accept a promissory note drawn by one, who would observe truth 'as far as possible'.

God is the very image of the vow. God would cease to be God if He swerved from His own laws even by a hair's breadth. The sun is a great keeper of observances; hence the possibility of measuring time and publishing almanacs. All business depends upon men fulfilling their promises. Are such promises less necessary in character-building or self-realisation? We should therefore never doubt the necessity of vows for the purpose of self-purification and self-realisation.

Truth

I deal with Truth first of all, as the Satyagraha Ashram owes its very existence to the pursuit and the attempted practice of Truth.

The word *Satya* (Truth) is derived from *Sat*, which means 'being'. Nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why *Sat* or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God. In fact it is more correct to say that Truth is God, than to say that God is Truth. But as we cannot do without a ruler or a general, names of God such as 'King of Kings' or 'the Almighty' are and will remain generally current. On deeper thinking, however, it will be realised, that *Sat* or *Satya* is the only correct and fully significant name for God.

And where there is a truth, there also is knowledge which is true. Where there is no Truth, there can be no true knowledge. That is why the word *Chit* or knowledge is associated with the name of God. And where there is true knowledge, there is always bliss (*Ananda*). There sorrow has no place. And even as Truth is eternal, so is the bliss derived from it. Hence we know God as *Sat-chit-ananda*, One who combines in Himself Truth, Knowledge and Bliss.

Devotion to this Truth is the sole justification for our existence. All our activities should be centred in Truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life. When once this stage in the pilgrim's progress is reached, all other rules of correct living will come without effort, and obedience to them will be instinctive. But without Truth it would be impossible to observe any principles or rules in life.

Generally speaking, observation of the law of Truth is understood merely to mean that we must speak the truth. But we in the Ashram should understand the word *Satya* or Truth in a much wider sense. There should be Truth in thought, Truth in speech, and Truth in action. To the man who has realised this Truth in its fulness, nothing else remains to be known, because all knowledge is necessarily included in it. What is not included in it is not Truth, and so not true knowledge; and there can be no inward peace without true knowledge. If we once learn how to apply this never-failing test of Truth, we will at once be able to find out what is worth doing, what is worth seeing, what is worth reading.

But how is one to realise this Truth, which may be likened to the philosopher's stone or the cow of plenty? By single-minded devotion (*abhyasa*) and indifference to all other interests in life (*vairagya*) – replies the *Bhagavadgita*. In spite, however, of such devotion, what may appear as truth to one person will often appear as untruth to another person. But that need not worry the seeker. Where there is honest effort, it will be realised that what appear to be different truths are like the countless and apparently different leaves of the same tree. Does not God Himself appear to different individuals in different aspects? Yet we know that He is one. But Truth is the right designation of God. Hence there is nothing wrong in every man following Truth according to his lights. Indeed it is his duty to do so. Then if there is a mistake on the part of any one so following Truth, it will automatically set right. For the quest of Truth involves *tapas* – self-suffering, sometimes even unto death. There can be no place in it for even a trace of self-interest. In such selfless search for Truth nobody can lose his bearings for long.

Directly he takes to the wrong path he stumbles, and is thus redirected to the right path. Therefore the pursuit of Truth is true *bhakti* (devotion). It is the path that leads to God. There is no place in it for cowardice, no place for defeat. It is the talisman by which death itself becomes the portal to life eternal.

Ahimsa or Love.

We saw last week how the path of Truth is as narrow as it is straight. Even so is that of *ahimsa*. It is like balancing oneself on the edge of a sword. By concentration an acrobat can walk on a rope. But the concentration required to tread the path of Truth and *ahimsa* is far greater. The slightest inattention brings one tumbling to the ground. One can realise Truth and *ahimsa* only by ceaseless striving.

But it is impossible for us to realise perfect Truth so long as we are imprisoned in this mortal frame. We can only visualise it in our imagination. We cannot, through the instrumentality of this ephemeral body, see face to face Truth which is eternal. That is why in the last resort we must depend on faith.

It appears that the impossibility of full realisation of Truth in this mortal body led some ancient seeker after Truth to the appreciation of *ahimsa*. The question which confronted him was: 'Shall I bear with those who create difficulties for me, or shall I destroy them?' The seeker realised that he who went on destroying others did not make headway but simply stayed where he was, while the man who suffered those who created difficulties marched ahead, and at time even took the others with him. The first act of destruction taught him that the Truth which was the object of his quest was not outside himself but within. Hence the more he took to violence, the more he receded from Truth. For in fighting the imagined enemy without, he neglected the enemy within.

We punish thieves, because we think they harass us. They may leave us alone; but they only transfer their attentions to another victim. This other victim however is also a human being, ourselves in a different form, and so we are caught in a vicious circle. The trouble from thieves continues to increase, as they think it is their business to steal. In the end we see that it is better to endure the thieves than to punish them. The forbearance may even bring them to their sense. By enduring them we realise that thieves are not different from ourselves, they are our brethren, our friends, and may not be punished. But whilst we may bear with the thieves, we may not endure the infliction. That would only induce cowardice. So we realise a further duty. Since we regard the thieves as our kith and kin, they must be made to realise the kinship. And so we must take pains to devise ways and means of winning them over. This is the path of *ahimsa*. It may entail continuous suffering and the cultivating of endless patience. Given these two conditions, the thief is bound in the end to turn away from his evil ways. Thus step by step we learn how to make friends with all the world; we realise the greatness of God – of Truth. Our peace of mind increases in spite of suffering; we become braver and more enterprising; we understand more clearly the difference between what is everlasting and what is not: we learn how to distinguish between what is our duty and what is not. Our pride melts away, and we become humble. Our wordly attachments diminish, and the evil within us diminishes from day to day.

Ahimsa is not the crude thing it has been made to appear. Not to hurt any living thing is no doubt a part of *ahimsa*. But it is its least expression. The principle of *ahimsa* is hurt by every evil thought, by undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill to anybody. It is also violated by our holding on to what the world needs. But the world needs even what we eat day by day. In the place where we stand there are millions of micro-organisms to whom the place belongs, and who are hurt by our presence there. What should we do then? Should we commit suicide? Even that is no solution if we believe, as we do, that so long as the spirit is attached to the flesh, on every destruction of the body it weaves for itself another. The body will cease to be only when we give up all attachment to it. This freedom from all attachment is the realisation of God as Truth. Such realisation cannot be attained in a hurry. The body does not belong to us. While it lasts, we must use it as a trust handed over to our charge. Treating in this way the things of the flesh, we may one day expect to become free from the burden of the body. Realising the limitations of the flesh, we must strive day by day towards the ideal with what strength we have in us.

It is perhaps clear from the foregoing, that without *ahimsa* it is not possible to seek and find Truth. *Ahimsa* and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say, which is the obverse, and which is the reverse? Nevertheless *ahimsa* is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so *ahimsa* is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later. When once we have grasped this point, final victory is beyond question. Whatever difficulties we encounter, whatever apparent reverses we sustain, we may not give up the quest for Truth which alone is, being God Himself.

Brahmacharya or Chastity

The third among our observances is *brahmacharya*. As a matter of fact all observances are deducible from Truth, and are meant to subserve it. The man, who is wedded to Truth and worships Truth alone, proves unfaithful to her, if he applies his talents to anything else. How then can he minister to the senses? A man, whose activities are wholly consecrated to the realisation of Truth, which requires utter selflessness, can have no time for the selfish purpose of begetting children and running a household. Realisation of Truth through self-gratification should, after what has been said before, appear a contradiction in terms.

If we look at it from the standpoint of *ahimsa* (non-violence), we find that the fulfilment of *ahimsa* is impossible without utter selflessness. *Ahimsa* means Universal Love. If a man gives his love to one woman, or a woman to one man, what is there left for all the world besides? It simply means, 'We two first, and the devil take all the rest of them.' As a faithful wife must be prepared to sacrifice her all for the sake of her husband, and a faithful husband for the sake of his wife, it is clear that such persons cannot rise to the height of Universal Love, or look upon all mankind as kith and kin. For they have created a boundary wall round their love. The larger their family, the farther are they from Universal Love. Hence one who would obey the law of *ahimsa* cannot marry, not to speak of gratification outside the marital bond.

Then what about people who are already married? Will they never be able to realise Truth? Can they never offer up their all at the altar of humanity? There is a way out for them. They can behave as if they were not married. Those who have enjoyed this happy condition will be able to bear me out. Many have to my knowledge successfully tried the experiment. If the married couple can think of each other as brother and sister, they are freed for universal service. The very thought that all the women in the world are his sisters, mothers or daughters will at once ennoble a man and snap his chains. The husband and wife do not lose anything here, but only add to their resources and even to their family. Their love becomes free from the impurity of lust and so grows stronger. With the disappearance of this impurity, they can serve each other better, and the occasions for quarrel become fewer. There are more occasions for quarrelling where the love is selfish and bounded.

If the foregoing argument is appreciated, a consideration of the physical benefits of chastity becomes a matter of secondary importance. How foolish it is intentionally to dissipate vital energy in sensual enjoyment? It is a grave misuse to fritter away for physical gratification that which is given to man and woman for the full development of their bodily and mental powers. Such misuse is the root cause of many a disease.

Brahmacharya, like all other observances, must be observed in thought, word and deed. We are told in the *Gītā*, and experience will corroborate the statement, that the foolish man, who appears to control his body, but is nursing evil thoughts in his mind, makes a vain effort. It may be harmful to suppress the body, if the mind is at the same time allowed to go astray. Where the mind wanders, the body must follow sooner or later.

It is necessary here to appreciate a distinction. It is one thing to allow the mind to harbour impure thoughts; it is a different thing altogether if it strays among them in spite of ourselves. Victory will be ours in the end, if we non-cooperate with the mind in its evil wanderings.

Non-possession or Poverty

Possession implies provision for the future. A seeker after Truth, a follower of the law of Love, cannot hold anything against tomorrow. God never stores for the morrow; He never creates more than what is strictly needed for the moment. If therefore we repose faith in His providence, we should rest assured, that He will give us every day our daily bread, meaning everything that we require. Saints and devotees, who have lived in such faith, have always derived a justification for it from their experience. Our ignorance or negligence of the Divine Law, which gives to man from day to day his daily bread and no more, has given rise to inequalities with all the miseries attendant upon them. The rich have a superfluous store of things which they do not need, and which are therefore neglected and wasted; while millions are starved to death for want of sustenance. If each retained possession only of what he needed, not one would be in want, and all would live in contentment. As it is, the rich are discontented no less than the poor. The poor man would fain become a millionaire and the millionaire, a multi-millionaire. The rich should take the initiative in dispossession with a view to a universal diffusion of

the spirit of contentment. If only they keep their own property within moderate limits, the starving will be easily fed, and will learn the lesson of contentment along with the rich. Perfect fulfilment of the idea of Non-possession requires, that man should, like the birds, have no roof over his head, no clothing and no stock of food for the morrow. He will indeed need his daily bread, but it will be God's business, and not his, to provide it. Only the fewest possible, if any at all, can reach this ideal. We ordinary seekers may be repelled by the seeming impossibility. But we must keep the ideal constantly in view, and in the light thereof, critically examine our possessions, and try to reduce them. Civilisation, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service. Judging by this criterion, we find that in the Ashram we possess many things, the necessity for which cannot be proved, and we thus tempt our neighbours to thieve.

From the standpoint of pure Truth, the body too is a possession. It has been truly said, that desire for enjoyment creates bodies for the soul. When this desire vanishes, there remains no further need for the body, and man is free from the vicious cycle of births and deaths. The soul is omnipotent; why should she care to be confined within the cagelike body, or do evil and even kill for the sake of that cage? We thus arrive at the ideal of total renunciation, and learn to use the body for the purpose of service so long as it exists, so much so that service, and not bread, becomes with us the staff of life.

2.8.5 Sanatana Dharma

I have asserted my claim to being a *Sanatani* Hindu, and yet there are things which are commonly done in the name of Hinduism, which I disregard. I have no desire to be called a *Sanatani* Hindu or any other if I am not such. It is therefore necessary for me once for all distinctly to give my meaning of *Sanatana* Hinduism. The word *Sanatana* I use in its natural sense.

I call myself a *Sanatani* Hindu, because,

- (1) I believe in the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Puranas* and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures, and therefore in *avatars* and rebirth:
- (2) I believe in the *varnashrama dharma* in a sense, in my opinion, strictly *Vedic* but not in its present popular and crude sense:
- (3) I believe in the protection of the cow in its much larger sense than the popular;
- (4) I do not disbelieve in idol-worship.

The reader will note that I have purposely refrained from using the word divine origin in reference to the *Vedas* or any other scriptures. For I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of the *Vedas*. I believe the Bible, the Quran, and the Zend Avesta to be as much divinely inspired as the *Vedas*. My belief in the Hindu scriptures does not require me to accept every word and every verse as divinely inspired. Not do I claim to have any first-hand knowledge of these wonderful books. But I do claim to know and feel the truths of the essential teaching of the scriptures. I decline to be bound by any interpretation, however learned it may be, if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense. I do most emphatically repudiate the claim (if they advance any such) of the present *Shankaracharyas* and *shastris* to give a corrupt interpretation

of the Hindu scriptures. On the contrary, I believe that our present knowledge of these books is in a most chaotic state. I believe implicitly in the Hindu aphorism, that no one truly knows the *shastras* who has not attained perfection in Innocence (*ahimsa*), Truth (*satya*) and Self-control (*brachmacharya*) and who has not renounced all acquisition or possession of wealth. I believe in the institution of *gurus*, but in this age millions must go without a *guru*, because it is a rare thing to find a combination of perfect purity and perfect learning. But one need not despair of ever knowing the truth of one's religion, because the fundamentals of Hinduism, as of every great religion, are unchangeable, and easily understood. Every Hindu believes in God and His oneness, in rebirth and salvation.

I can no more describe my feeling in Hinduism than for my own wife. She moves me as no other woman in the world can. Not that she has no faults. I dare say she has many more than I see myself. But the feeling of an indissoluble bond is there. Even so I feel for and about Hinduism with all its faults and limitations. Nothing elates me so much as the music of the *Gītā* or the *Ramayana* by Tulsides, the only two books in Hinduism I may be said to know. When I fancied I was taking my last breath the *Gītā* was my solace. I know the vice that is going on today in all the great Hindu shrines, but I love them in spite of their unspeakable failings. There is an interest which I take in them and which I take in no other. I am a reformer through and through. But my real zeal never takes me to the rejection of any of the essential things of Hinduism. I have said I do not disbelieve in idol-worship. An idol does not excite any feeling of veneration in me. But I think that idol-worship is part of human nature. We hanker after symbolism. Why should one be more composed in a church than elsewhere? Images are an aid to worship. No Hindu considers an image to be God. I do not consider idol-worship a sin.

It is clear from the foregoing, that Hinduism is not an exclusive religion. In it there is room for the worship of all the prophets of the world. It is not a missionary religion in the ordinary sense of the world. It is not a missionary religion in the ordinary sense of the term. It has no doubt absorbed many tribes in its fold, but this absorption has been of an evolutionary imperceptible character. Hinduism tells every one to worship God according to his own faith or *dharma*, and so it lives at peace with all the religions.

That being my conception of Hinduism, I have never been able to reconcile myself to untouchability. I have always regarded it as an excrescence. It is true that it has been handed down to us from generations, but so are many evil practices even to this day. I should be ashamed to think that dedication of girls to virtual prostitution was a part of Hinduism. Yet it is practised by Hindus in many parts of India. I consider it positive irreligion to sacrifice goats to Kali and do not consider it a part of Hinduism. Hinduism is a growth of ages. The very name, Hinduism, was given to the religion of the people of Hindustan by foreigners. There is no doubt at one time sacrifice of animals offered in the name of religion. But it is not religion, much less is it Hindu religion. And so also it seems to me, that when cow-protection became an article of faith with our ancestors, those who persisted in eating beef were excommunicated. The civil strife must have been fierce. Social boycott was applied not only to the recalcitrants, but their sins were visited upon their children also. The practice which had probably its origins in good intentions hardened into usage, and even verses crept into our sacred books giving the practice a permanence wholly undeserved and still less justified.

Whether my theory is correct or not, untouchability is repugnant to reason and to the instinct of mercy, pity or love. A religion that establishes the worship of the cow cannot possibly countenance or warrant a cruel and inhuman boycott of human beings. And I should be content to be torn to pieces rather than disown the suppressed classes. Hindus will certainly never deserve freedom, nor get it, if they allow their noble religion to be disgraced by the retention of the taint of untouchability. And as I love Hinduism dearer than life itself, the taint has become for me an intolerable burden. Let us not deny God by denying to a fifth of our race the right of association on an equal footing.

Extract 3: N. Smart, 'Hinduism'

Taken from: *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, edited by P. Quinn, C. Taliaferro and P. Draper, (Blackwell, 2010), Part I, Chapter 1 Hinduism, pp. 7-14

The Hindu tradition is important for the philosophy of religion from a number of angles. First, there is the intrinsic interest of a non-Western tradition, given that the philosophy of religion is often treated in such a Western way. I shall therefore begin with a general introduction to the intellectual history of Hinduism. Second, there are interesting notions of God as refracted through so many gods and goddesses in Hindu mythology, ritual, and piety. Third, there are various notions such as karma and reincarnation, and concepts of the self, which differ from Western ones, together with the difference in epistemology, which can create interesting and fruitful areas of discussion. Fourth, there are debates with other schools, mainly the Buddhists, which are suggestive for Western scholars. Fifth, the modern Hindu philosophical revival, especially through Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan, and in its claim that all religions point to the same goal, meets with certain recent philosophers of religion, notably John Hick.

First, then, a brief history and description of the Hindu tradition. Hinduism is so to speak a tradition (or collection of them) by induction. It does not, like Islam, emanate from a single source, the Qur'an.... Though it has admittedly ancient roots, such as the Indus Valley civilization, the Vedic hymns, ancient tribal myths, and so forth, it was only about the third century CE that it came together into anything like the shape which we identify as Hindu. For example there are key ideas and sources, and institutions, which come together thus relatively late: belief in reincarnation, karma, the great epics (the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*), the vast expanse of the cosmos and its periodic sleep and recovery, devotion to such great gods as Siva and Vishnu, the emerging class and caste system, the aphoristic summaries or sutras relating to the beginnings of philosophical schools, temple worship, statues incarnating the gods, the worship of the Goddess, gurus, yoga, austerity, the practice of pilgrimage, sacred cows, the dominance of brahmins, and so on. This wonderful amalgam came to characterize Hinduism as a loosely knit system — mainly by contrast with contemporary Buddhism.... From the eleventh century onwards the contrast was chiefly with Islam, with its relatively austere theism, while Buddhism, partly under pressure from Islam (for its monasteries were vulnerable to alien rule), faded away. Meanwhile various important philosophies or theologies were formulated, above all those of Sankara (8–9th century), Ramanuja (11th century) and Madhva (13th century). These were systems known as Vedanta (the End or Purport of the Vedas or Sacred Revelation). Other Hindu schools (as opposed to Buddhist, Jain, Materialist, etc) included Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaishesika, and Mimamsa, and various Saiva schools (dedicated, that is, to the god Siva).

The oldest Hindu texts are the Vedic hymns. They center on various deities, such as Indra, Agni, Varuna, Dyauspitṛ, and so on. There is in the hymns a tendency to think of them essentially as the same — a theme also found in modern Hinduism. Also, a degree of henotheism is in evidence, namely, treating a god addressed in a given hymn as *the god*: this has its analogue in the later Hindu motif of treating Vishnu and Siva as alternative representations of the One. In the period of the main Upanisads, dating from about the fifth to the second century BCE, two main trends emerge. One is the search for the esoteric or true meaning of

the Brahminical sacrifice. The second is a degree of influence from contemporary sramanic thinking, that is, the thinking of those like the Buddhists, Jains, and others who practiced a degree of austerity and withdrawal from the world in order to gain release from the round of rebirth. In connection with the first, the texts identify the one Reality as Brahman, a non-personal power on the whole, but sometimes seen as personal Lord and creator. The Reality is also identified with the atman or inner self. Later Vedanta discussed whether this means strict identity (so there is only one Self) or merely some kind of union or communion. The doctrine is expressed in a number of great sayings, notably in Chandogya Upanisad, VI.viii. 7, *tat tvam asi* or 'that art thou.'

In the somewhat later Bhagavadgita (but note: early Indian dating is highly speculative), a more personal picture of God is presented, in the context of the warrior hero Arjuna's dilemma before battle of having his duty to fight, though in conflict with relatives. The notion is presented of the need to carry on with one's duty or dharma, despite its consequences: one will not reap the bad fruits of karma if one carries it out without selfishness and for the love of God. This more theistic picture came to be vital in later Vedanta. Meanwhile the six schools of orthodox Indian philosophy were forming. In some ways the most basic was Samkhya.

It saw the world as consisting on the one hand of *prakrti* or nature and innumerable souls or *purusas* which were, as it were, embedded in nature. Since the nature of reincarnated existence is basically painful, the aim of a soul is to attain liberation from rebirth and the world. The Samkhya system came to be conjoined to that of Yoga, and it is by practicing contemplation through various techniques that the individual soul comes to see that its essence is different from that of the subtle and gross matter that makes up the world and the psychophysical organism (often in Indian philosophy consciousness is thought of as transcending the biological and psychological factors which make up an individual human being). While the Samkhya and Yoga cosmologies are very similar, Yoga does posit a Lord or God, who is actually not so much creator as the one soul who has never been immersed in the round of rebirth, and so serves as an inspiration to the contemplative individual who is seeking liberation. The basic Samkhya cosmology was used by Vaishnava forms of theism for explicating the way God evolves the world. The system posits three *gunas* or ingredients in matter which in differing blends help to explain the nature of things and of individuals.

In Samkhya and Yoga, as with virtually all Indian systems of thought, the cosmos pulsates, that is, it evolves from a quiescent state before ultimately lapsing back into sleep. But the Mimamsa viewpoint holds rigidly to the idea that revelation is uncreated and eternal, and so denies both God and the pulsation of the universe. Its attention is fixed on ritual: and so the Vedic hymns are treated simply as a set of injunctions. Even the gods turn out to be mere mentions. Mimamsa is paired with Vedanta, though its presuppositions are so very different. We shall return to Vedanta later. Meanwhile the Logic School (Nyaya) is usually grouped with Vaisesika or atomism. Nyaya sets forth ancient Indian logic (later logic is known as Navya-Nyaya or new logic). Vaisesika exhibits an atomistic cosmology, with a presiding God. Nyaya was host to the most famous work on the proof of God's existence (the *Kusumanali* of Udayana, 10th century CE).

The schools known as Vedanta are in principle based on the *Brahmasutras* or Aphorisms on the Holy Power, assembled in the first or second century CE. These somewhat enigmatic utterances attracted major commentaries from the main figures of the Vedanta school, notably Sankara (8th century), Ramanuja (12th century), and Madhva (13th century). Sankara's rather rigorous Advaita Vedanta or Non-Dualistic Vedanta was influenced by the Buddhist Madhyamaka theory or viewpoint, which saw supposed reality at two levels: as it is, empty, at the 'higher level,' and at the empirical level. Sankara makes use of this differentiation, so that Brahman (divine reality) is truly non-personal, with no properties, though it is constituted by being, bliss and consciousness. At the lower level of illusion Brahman is the Lord (or personal God). It is by knowledge of the higher truth that a person is liberated, so that she or he is no longer reborn. This monism of Sankara's arose from his strong interpretation of 'that art thou.' All separate individuality is an illusion. At a lower level, however, a person can worship God and express devotion. Sankara thus accommodated the 'ordinary' religious believer. But in the end God herself is an illusion, caught up in the very illusion she creates. Modern thinkers made use of an adaptation of this schema in formulating modern Hinduism and modern Hindu nationalism. Though Sankara has become highly influential in the modern formulation of the Indian tradition, his reinvigoration of the tradition in the latter part of the first millennium stirred resistance from those who took the personal side of theism more seriously, especially because in that era and after Buddhism faded from view, partly under Muslim onslaughts, Hindu controversy had its own traditions to turn against.

Ramanuja objected to Sankara both on religious and philosophical grounds. He considered that Sankara's non-personalism made nonsense of the very idea of race, intrinsic to Ramanuja's strongly held theism. Ramanuja believed that the cosmos is God's body... by analogy with the way the soul controls the human or animal body. Ramanuja also objected to Sankara's theory of illusion or *maya*. He held to a realist theory of perception. Moreover, he thought that the notion that not only the cosmos can be God's body, but also souls, created a sufficiently intimate union between God and souls for the 'that art thou' saying to be true. In his commentary on the Bhagavadgita, it would seem that Ramanuja was nearer to the original intent of the text than was Sankara. Madhva, on the other hand, went far in the other direction.

He argued, by a gerrymandering of language, that theoretically the great text read (with an inserted 'non-' so to speak), 'that thou art not.' His position is known as Dvaita or Dualism, as against both Sankara's Non-Dualism and Ramanuja's Qualified Non-Dualism. Madhva emphasized the particularity of substances and souls, and affirmed God's difference from both. Later Vedantins tended toward forms of theism, as did the followers of Siva. Thus, in a way, Vedanta had as its core variations on theism and devotional religion.

However, during the British period new factors entered into Indian philosophical self-understanding. While some veered toward simplifying Hindu belief and reforming practice, others preferred a way of harnessing the classical tradition to the preservation and formulation of a new Hinduism intertwined with Indian nationalism. British institutions had unified India as never before, while English-speaking higher education gave Indian intellectuals a new entrée on to the world. It

was above all the work of Sankara that some of the most influential drew upon to express the new outlook. This was a new pluralism, building on Sankara's notion of levels of truth and his idea of an ultimate reality (which all religions point to). We shall return to these developments later on.

Our next section concerns the sense in which (on the whole) Hinduism is theistic. At first sight (for the Westerner) there is a certain degree of bafflement: each goddess has a god, and vice versa. There are children, mythic beasts, lots of equivalents of the main god or goddess. Christian missionaries in nineteenth century India tended to look on the system as idolatrous. There were also features such as non-personal representations of the deity, above all the lingam. Hindus denied that they worshiped idols or that the lingam was a phallic symbol. I think that the best model of God (or Goddess) as conceived in modern Hinduism (and to some extent the ancient Hindu traditions) is as refracted. What Hindus tend to believe is a refracted theism. This is the thought that God and gods and goddesses are one, but, unlike the Semitic religions... Hinduism tends to see the gods and goddesses as offshoots of the one Great God (Siva, Vishnu, Devi). The deities are allowed a bit of individuality, for they figure in stories of various kinds. On the other hand, if you worship Ganesa too intensely you can fail to see the Divine Spirit behind his symbolic visage. This attitude to the gods lies behind the modern Hindu penchant both for tolerance and for philosophical pluralism.... Another feature of Indian theism is Ramanuja's view that the cosmos is God's body. In our case the body is only imperfectly under our control: whereas in God's case the universe is wholly under her or his control. This analogy is haunting, because it means that we get a vivid sense of God's presence everywhere in his universe, as we are present in our fingertips, etc. Though Ramanuja did not think that the cosmos looks like a body, it is so. He also analogized the universe to an organic body: in other words here we are dealing with the relevant Sanskrit term standing for human or other animal body, as distinct from a physical body, such as a stone dropped from a height by Galileo. Another point worth mentioning is that through large parts of India God is the Goddess, Devi or Kali or Durga, and so on. Moreover every God has his consort, such as Vishnu and Laksmi, and Siva and Minaksi in Madurai, etc. Hinduism does not emphasize the male in the way the Abrahamic religions do. Anyway, on these various issues there are grounds for debate with customary Western philosophical thinking. Finally it may be noted that Hindu theism has a place for the non-personal side of God: there is no unrelenting anthropomorphism or personalism..... This is in part because the very notion of God is also a neuter noun, that of *brahman*.

Next, Hinduism inherits from the sramanic movements such as Jainism and Buddhism the prevalent belief in reincarnation or rebirth, though the Mimamsa school is an exception, since early Vedic hymns did not incorporate the belief, but rather forms of ancestor ritual. Generally, reincarnation exhibits various features: first, a human can be reborn in a variety of forms, whether in heaven as a god, in a hellish purgatory, as a ghost, or as another life form, from insect to elephant. At the end of the day, she might achieve *moksha* or liberation from the round of rebirth. In this case there are varying possibilities: it might be an isolated, suffering-less existence; or it might be in some degree of intimate closeness to God, in a heavenly realm. A person who is liberated may have done it on her own, as in Samkhya-Yoga (though in this case she will have gained help from God); or it

may be due entirely to God's grace, especially in the Qualified Non-Dualistic school known as the Cat School, since God transports the soul to salvation as a cat transports her kitten from A to B, by the scruff of the neck. In the sramanic schools and in Samkhya, salvation is as it were dictated by the state of one's karma; while the theistic traditions treat karma as administered (so to speak) by God, and indeed it becomes itself an expression of God's grace. In Madhva's system karma is intrinsic to the life of the individual: God simply works out his destiny. This has an analogy to Calvinist predestination... In some traditions 'living liberation' is possible, in which a saint reaches a kind of perfection and complete serenity. Mostly theistic liberation is post mortem...

The typical assumption in the Hindu tradition is that every living body is matched by a soul (sometimes called *atman* and sometimes *purusa*, or else *cit* or consciousness). However, in Advaita Vedanta the identity between the Divine Being and the Self is taken strictly. Consequently we all, so to speak, share the same Self. It is our limited view or projection which causes us to see separate selves. It is like a light seen through a colander. It looks like many lights when it is in fact only one. Advaita in this way shows an affinity to Buddhism, in that the latter has many individual consciousnesses but none are permanent; so at the lower or empirical level of truth we have a host of transmigrating individuals, lacking permanence.

Apart from the karmic linkage between lives, it is assumed that yogis can by the process of purifying their consciousness remember previous lives. Spiritual leaders are held also to have other paranormal powers, such as telepathy and the ability to read others' minds. In regard to rebirth, arguments other than appeal to putative memory are used, mostly empirical — notably the occurrence of child geniuses, apparently paranormal recognitions, and so on.

The most important ontological divide in the Indian tradition is between the permanent and the impermanent. Advaitins interestingly define the illusory as that which is impermanent. But even the rest of the tradition which takes the impermanent to be real, sees the distinction to be vital. This introduces a difference from Western distinctions. It means that in the Hindu schools the consciousness or self, which is permanent, is sharply distinguished from the psychophysical organism. Consequently such entities as *buddhi* and the *ahamkara* or individuating factor, literally the 'I-maker,' are composed of subtle matter. In short, the mind—body distinction is drawn rather differently in the Hindu tradition. Moreover, the psychic geography differs: there is nothing corresponding to the will or to reason. (There is of course such a notion as reasoning or *tarka*.)

Indian epistemology plays a role in philosophy of religion, of course. The various systems have lists of *pramanas* or sources of knowledge, such as perception and inference. Though inference is conceived differently in relation to styles of syllogism used compared with the West, the basic notion of inference is similar. But perception is often taken to include yogic perception or (roughly) religious experience, or perhaps more narrowly contemplative or mystical experience... A third source is acknowledged in most Hindu schools, namely testimony or *śabda*. This refers not just to empirical testimony but also transcendental testimony, ie revelation... Hindu schools are technically known as *astika*. Literally this means 'there is—ish': this refers to the existence of revelation (conceived as a Brahminical oral tradition). The notion of testimony as a source of knowledge is an interesting one, little treated in the West.

Since Mimamsa wished to rest its case wholly upon testimony with regard to its injunctive view of revelation, and did not wish its authority to rest upon an omniscient God... it rejected both the existence of, and arguments for, God. Oddly, Ramanuja, the most fervent philosophical theologian, also rejected the arguments, because he wanted salvation to depend solely upon God and not at all upon reasoning (we can compare Karl Barth on this point). Ramanuja's subtle critique of traditional Indian versions of the teleological argument (comparing the cosmos to a thing made of parts and to an organism, needing a soul to keep it alive) anticipate some of David Hume's... Among his points: there might have been many creators, not one; they might recur at differing emerging world periods; the stronger the argument the more anthropomorphic its conclusion; and the cosmos does not resemble an organism. Among other arguments used on behalf of God's existence was a version of the ontological... and the thought that the moral effects of karma need an intelligent director to organize them...

Through much of Indian history Hinduism had an important rival in Buddhism, and to a lesser extent in Jainism, and Indian philosophy continuously nourished arguments between the main traditions. Generally, Indian theism made use of Samkhya categories in framing its cosmology, and an area of contention came to center on causation. The Buddhist schools had a non-identity theory, detaching events from one another somewhat in the manner of Hume. The Samkhya favored an identity or transformation theory in which substances change themselves (as milk into curds). Because Buddhism attacked the very notion of substance, breaking the world into short-lived events, the Samkhya thinkers were critical of the notion of an underlying Divine Being or *brahman*. This proved a major difference between Mahayana metaphysics and that of Sankara, despite the influence of Buddhism on him. The 'absolute' in Buddhism is emptiness, not a Being. The Buddhists also criticized the Hindu reliance on testimony, and indeed their theory of the Sanskrit language as primordial with a natural fit to reality. The Buddhists were conventionalists. Among Jain critiques of Hindu thinking was the view that religious experience derives from prior belief and not vice versa.

The modern period saw the unification of the subcontinent under British rule, and with it the foundation of English-speaking colleges and universities. The new English-speaking elite were challenged by Christian and British criticisms of Hindu religion and society, as being idolatrous and backward. They acquired a new pan-Indian nationalism in the face of British imperialism. But it was in a new key, because they tended to draw on both traditions. We can pick out four movements in the modern period. One was the Brahmo Samaj founded by Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833). It was strongly modernist in presenting the Upanisads as being unitarian, and in dismissing a great deal of actual Hinduism. Another was the Arja Samaj, created by Dayananda Sarasvati (1824–83) who reverted to the Veda as the true source of faith, but like Ram Mohan Roy dismissed, indeed strongly attacked, image worship. As a movement it has had good success overseas, among Hindus in Fiji, South Africa, and elsewhere. But these movements were too critical of the main, warm tradition of Hindu worship. It was left to Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) — drawing on the inspiration of his charismatic teacher Ramakrishna (1834–86), a person of wide sympathies, intense spirituality, but ignorance of the English speaking world — to formulate a position which was powerful in rolling back intellectual and Christian criticisms of the Hindu world, and in mobilizing Indian

national sentiment. His position was based on an updated version of Sankara. It exploited the idea of levels of truth as well as the general idealism of the British philosophical tradition at the end of the nineteenth century. He was pluralist: all religions point to the same Reality. Hinduism has always had such a tolerant attitude. People are on differing stages of the upward spiritual path. His philosophy could underpin a pan-Indian patriotism: Muslims, Christians, and others could all take part, for they all had a view of the truth. Vivekananda was also a social reformer. Following indirectly in his footsteps was Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948), whose pluralist attitude and conveniently vague appeal to Truth helped to cement Indian nationalism. Also important (though often despised by Western philosophers, who did not see the wider meaning of his ideology) was Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975), later president of India. Naturally, the idealism which had underpinned much of the Indian renaissance died in World War I, and Indian philosophy of religion came to be largely neglected in the period after World War II. However, the pluralist tradition was very important in the thinking behind the Indian constitution and the idea of India as a secular state (that is, pluralistic, not 'secular' in the sense of non-religious). Naturally, the main consumption of Indian philosophy in relation to religion was in the business of worldview-reconstruction. In this it was successful, but in the early 1990s there is a turn away from the old pluralism, and among philosophers a more technical methodology.

Extract 4: J.L. Brockington 'Bhakti in the South' and 'The Orthodox Synthesis' (1996)

Taken from: J.L. Brockington, *The Sacred Thread: Hinduism in Continuity and Diversity*, (Edinburgh University Press, 1996), Chapter 6 Sectarian developments and Chapter Bhakti in the south 7, pp. 109–112, 134–40.

Sankara, traditionally said to have been a Nambudiri Brahmin from Kerala in south India, is regarded as the founder of the Advaita (non-dual) school of Vedanta which insists on Brahman as the sole reality, denying any duality. In an apparently short lifetime (traditionally 788–820 A.D.), he achieved not only an impressive output of philosophical works but also a remarkable amount of propagation of his views directly and by the institution of an organisational framework. His major work is a commentary on the *Brahmasutra* (thereby by later standards establishing his status as the founder of a sub-school – innovation validated by tradition), but he also wrote commentaries on the *Bhagavadgita* and on several Upanishads, as well as an independent work the *Upadesasahasri*. It is not certain whether various minor works on Vedanta ascribed to him are really his, but there is no justification for the attribution to him of various Sakta works praising the goddess.

As an orthodox Brahmin, Sankara subscribes to the authority of the Vedas but uses verbal testimony almost exclusively to establish his central doctrine of the identity of *atman* and Brahman, gleefully quoting scripture (BAU 4.3.22: 'Then [i.e. in liberation]... the Vedas are not Vedas') to prove that scripture ceases to be valid with the arising of knowledge and convicting his opponents of the absence of true knowledge with his customary flair in debate. However, in order to reconcile the contradictions of the Vedas, he adopts an exegetical device already used in Buddhism, the concept of the two levels of truth. On the lower level of conventional reality, the world exists and evolves according to the Samkhya pattern under the creative guidance of Isvara, the personal deity propounded in some Upanisadic texts, but on the higher level of absolute reality the whole world is unreal, an illusion (*maya*) associated with ignorance (*avidya*), and Brahman alone really exists.

The multiple and finite entities of the phenomenal world are essentially identical therefore with Brahman, the Absolute. Their multiplicity and individuality lie in their separate identities which *avidya* superimposes on the absolute. But, just as in ordinary life a man might see a piece of rope coiled up and in poor light mistake it for a cobra coiled ready to strike, thus superimposing an illusory snake on a real rope, so all perception and experience is of something and does not refer to nothing. Whenever we perceive something, it is because there is something. When we perceive the world around us, we do perceive something but our mistake, our *avidya*, consists in taking it as something other than Brahman. Sankara is here at pains to avoid the negativism of the Madhyamika school of Buddhism, which declares that everything is a void with no reality underlying it. Sankara also largely avoids defining the nature of *avidya* or its substratum, unlike some of his followers; but Sankara no doubt was aware of the logical problem involved, whereas his pupil Suresvara declares that *avidya* resorts to and belongs to the *atman*, and the question divides the two sub-schools of Advaita which subsequently emerge. For Sankara himself the nature of *avidya* was indescribable, since if it were unreal we should not be entrapped by it but if it were real then Brahman would not be the sole reality. Sankara also applies this concept of indescribability or inexplicability to

the question of causation, for the effects into which we suppose that causes are transformed are actually superimposed and so neither real nor unreal.

Phenomena are only illusorily independent of Brahman and so the essential unity of Brahman is unaffected by the multiplicity of individual phenomena, just as the waves appear multiple as they rise from the surface of the ocean, into which they subside, and in no way affect its unity. The image of the ocean also illustrates the point that Sankara's thought is not just negative. He denies the absolute reality of the world in order to affirm the sole reality of Brahman, with which in its essential nature *atman* is identical. However, the individual self, the *jiva*, is a combination of reality and appearance – real in so far as it is *atman* or Brahman, but illusory in so far as it is limited and finite. In this context Sankara makes use of the Upanisadic utterance 'you are that' (*tat tvam asi*), demonstrating that their identity is reached by removing the incompatible elements of individuality and transcendence to reveal the pure consciousness which is the ground of the *atman* as of Brahman. Sankara is more guarded in his approach to other characterisations of Brahman and is very reluctant to make any positive statements about it which might be regarded as limiting its absoluteness. In his major works at least he avoids using the well-known formulation of later Advaita that Brahman is being, consciousness and bliss (*sat, cit, ananda*), even when commenting on the Upanisadic definition of Brahman as truth, knowledge, and infinity (Tait. Up.2.1) on which the formula is based; instead he there elaborates a theory of indication whereby such statements point to Brahman rather than define it. Indeed, he is obviously in sympathy with the declaration that Brahman is 'not like this nor like that' (BAU 2.3.6). The unqualified Brahman is precisely that transcendent state of being about which nothing can be affirmed. However, Brahman is not just an abstract concept but the goal of spiritual quest, *moksa*. Release is achieved with the arrival of true knowledge, the intuition that oneself and Brahman are in truth identical. This saving knowledge destroys the *karma* of past lives and a state of embodied release is attained.

Admired as Sankara is as a philosopher, philosopher was not in fact his prime concern but the tool with which to achieve *moksa*, for himself and others. His treatment of the problem of where *avidya* resides illustrates this, for it is philosophically incomplete and psychologically effective. All Sankara's exposition is aimed not so much at logical consistency as at persuasion, although Advaita is indeed consistent, since all relations and contradictions disappear in *moksa*. However, his overall religious purpose is most clearly seen in his organisation of an order of *samnyasin* and foundation of teaching institutions (*mathas*) at the four corners of India to propagate his doctrine. The order, which may well again reflect Buddhist influence, is now represented by ten groups, three reserved for Brahmins and the rest open to the four *varnas*, although Sankara himself affirms that only Brahmins can become *samnyasins*. These orders are Saiva in affiliation and Sankara himself is often considered a Saiva, which seems implausible in view of his low estimate of Isvara; more probably it is in implicit contrast with the devout Vaisnavism of his later antagonist Ramanuja. But of his essentially religious stance there can be no doubt.

...

The most important of the Srivaishnavas is Ramanuja, like the previous two the *acarya*, the authoritative teacher, of the community, and involved in the administration of the Srirangam temple. He is traditionally said to have lived from 1017 to 1137 A.D., but his birth has probably been artificially brought forward to connect directly with Yamuna, who is said to have died in 1038, for the tradition is that Ramanuja succeeded Yamuna as a young man to the headship of Srirangam. The undoubted intellectual link between the two is thus popularly turned into a direct link by succession. Ramanuja is held to have travelled throughout India to disseminate his system and according to tradition had to retreat from Srirangam because of the hostility of the ruler and went to Melkote in Karnataka, where he organised a strong centre of Vaisnava learning.

Ramanuja wrote nine works, all in Sanskrit (a move away from the Alvars' use of Tamil in the interests of a wider and more traditional audience); these consist of three major philosophical works, two briefer commentaries, three devotional works on the theme of surrender to the deity and a manual of daily worship. The first of Ramanuja's three philosophical works is designed to show that the Upanishads do not teach the strict monism propounded by Sankara and strives to integrate a Vedanta position with devotion to a personal deity. Ramanuja's standpoint is essentially different from both Sankara's and Bhaskara's in assigning a definite and ultimately valid reality to the world and its two components of matter (*prakṛti*) and souls (*ātman*). This is most fully expressed in his doctrine that the deity stands to the world of *ātman* and *prakṛti* in the relation of a soul to the body which forms its attribute. Ramanuja develops this theme and others in his other two major philosophical works, commentaries on the *Bhagavadgita* and the *Brahmasutra*.

Ramanuja concentrates on the relation of the world to the deity, arguing that the deity is real and independent but that souls are also real but totally dependent on the deity. As the body of god, the world is his instrument and also part of his self-expression, while, just as the soul controls its body, so the deity is the inner controller of individual souls; Ramanuja necessarily adopts a broad definition of a body as anything which can be controlled by and is subordinate to a conscious *ātman*. The self-body analogy also serves to distinguish the deity, who for Ramanuja is the fullest expression of the impersonal Absolute, Brahman, from his dependent bodily parts or attributes, and the dependence of an attribute on its substance is compared to the relation of an adjective to the noun it qualifies; Ramanuja's system as a philosophy is therefore known as the 'qualified Advaita', Viśiṣṭadvaita. Since *ātman* and *prakṛti* constitute the body of the deity, their functioning to further the realisation of Brahman or the deity is easily explicable on this analogy. Similarly Ramanuja interprets for example the Upanisadic saying *tat tvam asi* by declaring that since all spiritual and material entities constitute the body of Brahman, Brahman thus embodied is denoted by all words and so both pronouns refer to Brahman, *tat* 'that' as the absolute, the first cause, and *tvam* 'you' as the inner controller modified by the embodied soul.

The self-body analogy also emphasises the inseparable and organic relationship between Visnu, or Narayana as Ramanuja more frequently calls him, and the world, as well as indicating the total and eternal dependence of the world on the will of the deity. Ramanuja also uses it to bring out the all-inclusive nature of the supreme self suggested in the *Bhagavadgita*. He thus simultaneously affirms the reality of the world and therefore of individual selves and its subservience to the divine purpose, which Ramanuja explains in terms of *līla*, literally the deity's

'sport' but better understood as his self-expression, for he is free from any constraint apart from his own spontaneously creative nature. The accessibility of the deity to the world and especially individual souls is also indicated by the analogy, for, as the inner self of everything Narayana, the supreme embodiment of all perfection, leads the soul which realises its dependence on him to himself; Ramanuja even implies that in some sense the deity needs the soul.

This dependence on god was realised through *bhakti*, the intense devotion and submission to Narayana in which the devotee realised his total dependence on him. The act of surrender (*prapatti*) is for Ramanuja both the start and the continuing attitude of devotion to the deity and presupposed acceptance of the soul's subservience: it involves putting oneself completely in the deity's hands, trusting in his will and awaiting his grace (*prasada*). For Narayana, though inaccessible to men in the fullness of his divinity, is full of grace and love for his creation. He has therefore made himself accessible to his worshippers by descending into the world in a form similar to theirs, and has the power to override the workings of *karma*, for he is not in any way subject to *karma*; indeed Ramanuja vigorously denies any connection of the deity with evil or suffering, which only affect the divine body not the highest self. So too Narayana's six beautiful qualities of knowledge, strength, sovereignty, firmness, power and splendour – a grouping taken through Yamuna from the Pancaratras and reflecting the lordship or transcendence of the deity – are balanced by a second group of auspicious qualities, consisting of compassion, graciousness, forgiveness and generosity and indicating his approachability by his worshippers.

Ramanuja stresses the continued individual existence of souls after liberation: the individual *atman* at release returns to Narayana to dwell in full communion with him, and yet distinct. Everything forms a part of the deity as his body, subservient to him, and so is indissolubly connected to him in a perfect unity. Nevertheless, the *atman*, always conscious of itself, is both one with Narayana and yet separate as the one subject to his commands and call to action in the moral sphere. By contrast with god and selves, *prakrti* is sometimes termed *avidya*, in the sense that being unconscious it is naturally opposed to knowledge. But, though called *avidya* in this sense, *prakrti* is the material cause of the world, real and eternal but dependent on the deity, in support of which Ramanuja cites various Upanisadic texts. Against Sankara, Ramanuja argues that it is contrary to the evidence of our senses that there is a cessation of distinction and that, even if some scriptural texts claim that Brahman is one only without a second, there are others which depend on the notion of plurality; Ramanuja asserts that we have to start with the evidence of our senses as the most basic data that we are given, a distinctly realist and common-sense position in comparison with Sankara's.

Whereas for Sankara the writing of a commentary on the *Bhagavadgita* was an uncongenial task undertaken as a concession to the work's popularity, for Ramanuja it was a welcome opportunity to develop his views more fully, after acknowledging his indebtedness to Yamuna's analysis. It is on the authority of the *Bhagavadgita* that Ramanuja propounds the need for ritual action as a first stage in the path of devotion. Though technically not scriptural and thus only valid to support and clarify Vedic statements, in practice the *Bhagavadgita* is authoritative and often the meaning of scriptural texts is made to agree with it. Ramanuja's commentary on it is less polemical than his commentary on the *Brahmasutra* and more devotional. He endeavours to show that its three methods of approach to the

deity by action, knowledge and devotion are not separate but successive stages of the same way. In this context Ramanuja sees surrender (*prapatti*) as a part of the path of *bhakti* and whenever the grace of Narayana is mentioned, the efforts of the worshipper are also stressed.

More of Ramanuja's understanding of *prapatti* is found in the three devotional works, which are the most popular of his works with modern Srivaishnavas. The first, in the form of a dialogue between Ramanuja and Narayana with Sri, his consort, is seen as the record of Ramanuja's own taking refuge at the feet of the deity in surrender to his mercy: the second is a briefer prayer of surrender addressed to Ramanuja (the form of Visnu worshipped at Srirangam), asking for acceptance as the perpetual servant of the Lord; the third consists mainly of detailed description of Visnu's heaven, to be regularly meditated on in connection with one's surrender to the deity. Whether or not these more devotional works are by Ramanuja himself, they present an understanding of the practice of *bhakti* by repeated meditation on the deity's perfections which is in close agreement with his views more concisely expressed elsewhere and which are in fact an echo of the wording used in his other works.

Together with the manual of daily worship, based on the Pancaratra tradition, the three devotional works serve to emphasise the devotional element of Ramanuja's religion; his philosophical views are clearly dictated by his personal faith. Even more than Sankara, he endeavoured to give an organisational expression to his beliefs and traditionally also engaged in the same lengthy tours to propagate his ideas. His position as not only the *acarya* of the Srivaishnava community but also the superintendent or general manager of the Srirangam temple gave him unrivalled influence; indeed the temple chronicles, supported by general Vaishnava tradition, declare that Ramanuja was the first great organiser of the temple administration. He replaced the Vaikhanasa pattern of worship with the more liberal Pancaratra pattern, and expanded the fivefold division of temple servants, which had existed from the time of Tirumankai Alvar or before, into a tenfold one, with in addition ten groups of *sudra* servants: an important ritual role was assigned to a group of *sudra* ascetics. This code for the ritual and management of the temple was in force until the temple was desecrated by the Muslims in A.D. 1323 and thus the important ritual roles of *sudras* were maintained throughout that period. The increased participation of worshippers from all social levels with the establishment of the more liberal Pancaratra tradition spread from Srirangam to other Vaishnava centres and is one of Ramanuja's main legacies to the Vaishnava faith as a whole, giving ritualised expression to the Alvars' disregard of and even opposition to caste restriction, arising from the equality of all men before the deity.

Ramanuja's ritual handbook lays down the daily routine for an orthodox Srivaishnava in the five daily acts of the Pancaratra tradition, while the five sacraments of the sect begin with the branding of Visnu's symbols or weapons and also include the application of the sectarian mark on the forehead, the taking of a religious name, receiving a *mantra* and presenting an image for worship; among the *mantras* of the sect is one drawn from the conclusion of the *Bhagavadgita*. The images of the deity are important in the cult, although Ramanuja places more stress on the inner aspect, making it clear that the worshipper must continue to keep in mind a mental picture of the deity and his activities.

By the fourteenth century the Srivaishnava sect had split into two subsects, each tracing a different line of teachers back to Ramanuja. The schism centred on a difference in interpretation of *prapatti*, with both schools appealing to Ramanuja's writings in support of their view; the dispute was over the question of human effort versus divine grace in achieving salvation, a controversy often and not unreasonably compared to the Arminian and Calvinist standpoints within Protestantism. The Northern school held that the worshipper had to make some effort to win the grace of the Lord and emphasised the performance of *karma*, a position commonly summed up as being 'on the analogy of the monkey and its young', for as the monkey carries her young which cling to her body so Visnu saves the worshipper who himself makes an effort. The Southern school held that the Lord's grace itself conferred salvation, a position 'on the analogy of the cat and its kittens', for just as the cat picks up her kittens in her mouth and carries them off willy-nilly, so Visnu saves whom he wills, without effort on their part.

There are in fact other issues which are probably just as basic as this doctrinal point. In general the Southern school is more liberal than the Northern, having a definite preference for the use of Tamil (whereas the Northern school reverted to the more traditional Sanskrit) and teaching the same *mantra* to all castes (whereas the Northern school distinguished between Brahmans and others). In addition the Northern school believes that Laksmi, as well as Visnu, is capable of granting liberation, a somewhat tantric view owed to the Pancaratra tradition; in contrast the Southern school considered her to be always subordinate to Visnu, the first of dependent beings but nevertheless dependent. The more traditional attitudes of the Northern school are apparent in the writings of Vedantadesika (traditionally 1268–1367), with their many references to caste and caste duty; there is obvious concern that the egalitarianism of the Alvars, reinforced by Ramanuja's introduction of the Pancaratra ritual, was undermining the social order. Both he and the contemporary leader of the Southern school were forced to flee by the Muslim sack of the temple and the commemorated by shrines in the eventually restored temple (although Ramanuja's reforms were abandoned after its restoration).

Paper 4D: Islam

Extract 1: Surah 1 and Surah 2

Taken from: *The Holy Qur'an (Classics of World Literature)* by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (Translator); (Wordsworth, 2000), Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, pp. 3, 5–8

Surah 1. The Opening

1. In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.
2. Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds;
3. Most Gracious, Most Merciful;
4. Master of the Day of Judgment.
5. Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek.
6. Show us the straight way,
7. The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, those whose (portion) is not wrath, and who go not astray.

Surah 2: 21-47

21. O ye people! Adore your Guardian-Lord, Who created you and those who came before you, that ye may have the chance to learn righteousness;
22. Who has made the earth your couch, and the heavens your canopy; and sent down rain from the heavens; and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance; then set not up rivals unto Allah when ye know (the truth).
23. And if ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a *sūrah* like thereunto; and call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides Allah, if your (doubts) are true.
24. But if ye cannot – and of a surety ye cannot – then fear the Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones, – which is prepared for those who reject Faith.
25. But give glad tidings to those who believe and work righteousness, that their portion is Gardens, beneath which rivers flow. Every time they are fed with fruits therefrom, they say: 'Why, this is what we were fed with before,' for they are given things in similitude; and they have therein companions pure (and holy); and they abide therein (for ever).
26. Allah disdains not to use the similitude of things, lowest as well as highest. Those who believe know that it is truth from their Lord; but those who reject Faith say: 'What means Allah by this similitude?' By it He causes many to stray, and many He leads into the right path; but He causes not to stray, except those who forsake (the path) –
27. Those who break Allah's Covenant after it is ratified, and who sunder what Allah Has ordered to be joined, and do mischief on earth: these cause loss (only) to themselves.
28. How can ye reject the faith in Allah? – seeing that ye were without life, and He gave you life; then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will ye return.

29. It is He Who hath created for you all things that are on earth; Moreover His design comprehended the heavens, for He gave order and perfection to the seven firmaments; and of all things He hath perfect knowledge.
30. Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a vicegerent on earth.' They said: 'Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? – whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?' He said: 'I know what ye know not.'
31. And He taught Adam the nature of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said: 'Tell me the nature of these if ye are right.'
32. They said: 'Glory to Thee, of knowledge we have none, save what Thou hast taught us: In truth it is Thou who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom.'
33. He said: 'O Adam! Tell them their natures.' When he had told them, Allah said: 'Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and I know what ye reveal and what ye conceal?'"
34. And behold, We said to the angels: 'Bow down to Adam' and they bowed down. Not so Iblis: he refused and was haughty: he was of those who reject Faith.
35. We said: 'O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden; and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will; but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression.'
36. Then did Satan make them slip from the (Garden), and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been. We said: 'Get ye down, all (ye people), with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood – for a time.'
37. Then learnt Adam from his Lord words of inspiration, and his Lord turned towards him; for He is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.
38. We said: 'Get ye down all from here; and if, as is sure, there comes to you guidance from Me, whosoever follows My guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.
39. 'But those who reject Faith and belie Our Signs, they shall be Companions of the Fire; they shall abide therein.'
40. O Children of Israel! Call to mind the (special) favour which I bestowed upon you, and fulfil your Covenant with Me as I fulfil My Covenant with you, and fear none but Me.
41. And believe in what I reveal, confirming the revelation which is with you, and be not the first to reject Faith therein, nor sell My Signs for a small price; and fear Me, and Me alone.
42. And cover not Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth when ye know (what it is).
43. And be steadfast in prayer; practise regular charity; and bow down your heads with those who bow down (in worship).

44. Do ye enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget (to practise it) yourselves, and yet ye study the Scripture? Will ye not understand?

45. Nay, seek ((Allah)'s) help with patient perseverance and prayer: it is indeed hard, except to those who bring a lowly spirit –

46. Who bear in mind the certainty that they are to meet their Lord, and that they are to return to Him.

47. Children of Israel! Call to mind the (special) favour which I bestowed upon you, and that I preferred you to all others (for My Message).

Extract 2: Tariq Ramadan 'The Call to *Jihād*' (2001)

Taken from: *Islam, The West and the Challenges of Modernity*, Tariq Ramadan (Kube publishing, 2001), Part Two, Chapter 1.6, pp. 59-69.

How often has one heard apropos the expressions "the holy war", the fanatic mobilisation of "God's madmen" and this "new flow of rampant fundamentalism". The world of Islam, which is lately haunted by the gangrene of *jihād*, scares and terrorises minds.

How is it, then, that one of the most fundamental notions of Islam has itself come to express one of the most somber traits? How can a concept, which is loaded with the most intense spirituality, become the most negative symbol of religious expression? The reading of events of recent history certainly has its share of the blame, but the distortion goes back to an advanced date of the Middle Ages. The understanding of certain Islamic notions was from very early on confined to an exercise of pure comparison. There were the crusades as there were also Muslim expansions; there were holy crusades and, thus, there were also "holy wars", the famous *jihād*. Even if the West has happily gone beyond initial stage of religious war and crusade, the spectator is indeed forced to notice that the Muslim world is still today lagging behind. This because we see everywhere groups, movements, parties and governments that call for *jihad*, armed struggle and political violence. The symbolical arsenal seems medieval and obscurantist, to say the least. Here also then the question arises, will Islam evolve?

This question seems legitimate and its expression brings up, nonetheless, another misunderstanding which is nowadays undoubtedly upheld voluntarily. But, one must go back to the source of this notion and try to better understand its spiritual and dynamic scope. *Jihād* is the most fulfilled expression of a faith, which seeks to express balance and harmony. One must say a word here about its individual scope and it's literally "international" dimension, and finally, since it is the subject which interests us here, about its social actualisation.

a. Peace of heart

Can any human being assert, from the depth of his heart, that he has never been subject to violence, aggression, hatred, anger and even the excitement of a destructive instinct? Mastery over self, serenity, respect of others and gentleness are not natural, but are acquired by means of a permanent, personal effort. Such is the lot of men. They board the shores of their humanity by means of a long, thoughtful and measured work on the self. Everyone knows this and each heart feels it.

All the world's literature, from the dawn of time, is plain in its representation of this tension. A tension which is sometimes appeased, sometimes agitated and at other times tears apart men's inward focus. From the Baghavad Gita to the Torah

and Gospel, from Dostoevsky to Baudelaire, the human horizon remains. The Qur'ān, too, confirms the most daily of experiences:

By the soul, and That which shaped it and inspired it to lewdness and godfearing! Prosperous is he who purifies it, and failed has he who seduces it.

(Qur'ān, 91:7-10)

The two paths are explicit, at one and the same time, apprehended in the most vivid and moral fashion coupled with remembrance of the life to come. Life is this test of balance for men who are capable of inducing both the best and the worst from themselves.

Here, we are in proximity of the notion of *jihād* which cannot be understood except in regard to the conception of man which implies it. Tension is natural and the conflict of the inward is properly *human*. Moreover, man proceeds and realises himself in and by the effort that he furnishes in order to give force and presence to the inclination of his least violent, irascible and aggressive being. He struggles daily against the most negative forces of his being, as he knows that his humanity will be the price of their mastery. This inward effort and this struggle against the "postulations" of interiority is the most appropriate (literal and figurative) translation of the word "*jihād*".

It is not a question here of reducing *jihād* to a personal dimension (*jihād'l-nafs*), but rather returning to its most immediate reality. *Jihād* is to man's humanity what instinct is to an animal's behaviour. To be, for man, is to be responsible and such responsibility is linked to a choice, which always seeks to express goodness and respect of oneself and others. Choosing, in the reality of inward conflict, is to have a resolve for peace of heart.

We know the words of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a *hadīth* whose chain of transmission is acknowledged as weak (*da'īf*) but from which we can draw an instruction, since its meaning and scope are confirmed by other traditions. Coming back from an expedition against the Muslims' enemies, the Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have described war as "a lesser *jihād*" in comparison to "the greater *jihād*" which is the effort of inward purification and of a human being's spiritualisation before his Creator. More than the simple comparison, what should be retained here is the association of faith with the experience of effort in order to attain harmony and serenity. Life consists of this trial, as spiritual force is signified by the choice of good as well as good action as also oneself and for others.

... [He] who created death and life, that He might try you which of you is fairest in works. (Qur'ān, 67:2)

The real meaning of Islamic spirituality lies in reforming the space of one's interiority, appeasing one's heart at the level of acknowledgement of the Creator and within a generous human action; it is loving in transparency and living in the light. This spirituality joins the horizons of all other spiritualities, which require man to be equipped with a force of being rather than being subjected to the despotic fierceness of a life which is reduced to instinct. This tension towards the mastery of

the self is conveyed in Arabic by the word *jihād*. Understanding this dimension is a necessary part of a larger discussion on the meaning of armed conflict. What needs to be retained in the first instance, on the individual plane as well as on the international plane, is that God has willed this tension. He made it by His management of one of the conditions of access to faith and to humanity.

"The Prophet (pbuh) exclaimed one day: 'Who is the strongest among men?' The Companions responded: 'It is him who overcomes his enemy', and the Prophet (pbuh) responded: 'No, the strongest is him who keeps his anger in check.'"¹¹

b. The reality of conflict

We have recalled above that Revelations present diversity as the Creator's choice:

If God had willed, He would have made you one nation; but that He may try you in what has come to you. So be you forward in good works ... (Qur'ān, 5:48).

Thus, while it is a fact of a choice, diversity nonetheless turns out to be a trial for men. Management of differences is presented as a challenge that must be addressed in the same way as inward tensions must be addressed. The greatness of men is in the function of their choice, and the Qur'ān orientates the latter, by aspiration, to a rivalry about good (one finds in another verse the idea that the finality of the diversity of nations and tribes finds its meaning in the fact of seeking to understand one another). Diversity and pluralism may be the means to an elevation of man – it ought to be. However, it would be naïve not to take account of the reality of conflict. The latter exists, and Revelation informs us, that they are necessary for the preservation of harmony and justice among men:

Had God not driven back the people, some by the means of others, the earth had surely been corrupted; but God is bounteous unto all beings. (Qur'ān, 2:251).

Thus, diversity and the conflicts, which ensue, are inherent to Creation. Man addresses the challenge of his humanity not in his rejection of pluralism and differences, but rather their management. It is man's conscience, nourished by principles of justice and ethics, which must guide him to defend the rights of every community as that of every individual. It is indeed this that the following verse adds to the meaning of the preceding one:

Had God not driven back the people, some by the means of others, there had been destroyed cloisters and churches, oratories and mosques, wherein God's name is much mentioned. (Qur'ān, 22:40)

¹¹ Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim

Here, we note that monasteries, synagogues and oratories are mentioned before mosques. It is clearly a question of the expression of their inviolability and, at the same time, of the respect due to the adherents of different religions. The formulation cannot be more explicit:

And if thy Lord had willed, whoever is in the earth would have believed, all of them, all together. Wouldst thou then constrain the people, until they are believers? (Qur'ān, 10:99)

Difference of belief, as of colour and language, are facts which we must live with. Although we have already expressed this, it is appropriate to forcefully repeat it here. The first principle of coexistence in diversity is that of respect and justice. Once again, the Qur'ān is clear:

O believers, be you securers of justice, witness for God. Let not detestation for a people move you not to be equitable; be equitable that is nearer to godfearing. (Qur'ān, 5:8)

In the face of inevitable conflicts of interest and power, true testimony of faith lies in respect for the rights of each individual. If the latter is suppressed and if injustice is widespread, then it is the responsibility of men to oppose such a state of affairs. It is exactly in these conditions that the first verse calling for *jihād* and armed resistance was revealed:

Leave is given to those who fight because they were wronged – surely God is able to help them – who were expelled from their habitations without right, except that they say 'Our Lord is God.' (Qur'ān, 22:39-40)

After 13 years of living in Makka, after almost an equivalent period of violent persecution and after being exiled to Madina, this verse allowed the Muslims to defend themselves in the name of justice and in respect of their faith. Abū Bakr understood straightaway the scope of this message and maintained that with the revelation of this verse: "We understood that it was going to be about armed struggle." One finds here an explicit expression of what *jihād* covers on the inter-community or inter-national planes. As we have pointed out with regard to the inward plane, where it is a question of struggling against the forces of aggression and violence which are inherent in all human beings, it is similarly appropriate to oppose every aggressor, power and exploitation which are naturally manifest in all human communities, and which snap at our fundamental rights.

Everything, in the message of Islam, calls for peace and coexistence between men and nations. In all circumstances, dialogue must be preferred over silence and peace over war. That is to the exception of one situation, which makes of struggle a duty, and of opposition a testimony of faithfulness to the meaning of faith. *Jihād* is the expression of a rejection of all injustice, as also the necessary assertion of balance and harmony in equity. One hopes for a non-violent struggle, far removed from the horrors of armed conflict. One loves that men will have this maturity of spirit, which allows for a less bloody management of world affairs. However, history has proven that the human being is bellicose by nature and that war is but one means by which he expresses himself. Resisting the very violent expression of this

tendency and trying to implement the necessary balance of forces seem to be the conditions for an order that looks human. The latter being the only situation whereby violence is given legitimacy; situations whereby violence is sustained, repression imposed or rights denied, to the extent that, if one succumbs, one loses one's dignity:

Surely God bids to justice ... (Qur'ān, 16:90)

This verse clearly expresses the sense of men's actions. This lies in fighting for good and rejecting injustice with all the force one's being. To have faith is tantamount to carrying the testimony of this dignity by resistance. The latter is for the community what mastery over anger is to the inward of each person.

One may notice nowadays an effervescence in the Muslim world, and many condemn the violence which accompanies the awakening of a "fanatical, radical and fundamentalist Islam". One must understand this worry, as one must denounce political violence which finds its expression in the assassination of tourists, priests, women, children and in blind bombings and bloody slaughters. Such actions are indefensible, nor do they respect, in the least, the Qur'ānic message. Again, one must also condemn the violence which expresses itself prior to such actions. Such violence is perpetuated by dictatorial powers that are often supported by superpowers. Every day that passes, entire peoples sustain repression, abuse of power, and the most inhumane - violations of rights. Until when will these peoples remain silent or see themselves deemed "dangerous", by the West, whenever they dare to express their rejection? Here, it is not a question of defending violence but rather of understanding the circumstances wherein it takes shape... As the end of the twentieth century draws close, can we call all men to mobilise themselves towards more social, political and economic justice, for it seems to us that this is the only, way to give back to men the rights that will silence arms? Such an effort would be the literal translation of the word *Jihād*. The latter is the testimony of a heart that illuminates faith and the witness of a conscience which fashions responsibility.

b. Towards a social jihād

This brief clarification about the central notions of the Muslim religion allows us to shed new light on the question of social action. All Muslims know and repeat that the practice of Islam does not stop at the exercise of prayer, *zakāt*, fasting and pilgrimage. Every act of daily life which is fulfilled with remembrance of the Divine Presence is, in itself, an act of gratitude and worship. Moreover, we know the close link, which is established in the Qur'ān, between believing and acting through the oft-repeated expression "Those who believe and do good deeds." Thus, to have faith is tantamount to believing and acting, and action here is of a multiple nature. It is the honesty that one imposes on oneself, goodness and generosity towards one's relatives, just as it is the determined engagement in social reform, or even mobilisation against injustice. All these efforts which are deployed in action are part of *jihād* in the sense whereby they are oriented towards that which is more just and more respectful of the revealed principles. The following verse clarifies the same:

The believers are those who believe in God and His Messenger, then have not doubted, and have struggled with their possessions¹² and their selves in the way of God; those – they are the truthful ones. (Qur'ān, 49:15)

One may read this formulation in the strict sense and in that it only addresses the question of armed struggle, and that this armed struggle imposes itself whenever there exists aggression. However, it would be reductionist to draw just that instruction. In a broader sense, a sense which is confirmed by the entire Qur'ānic message and that of the traditions, "fighting in the path of God" means mobilising all our human forces, directing all our efforts and giving of our properties and of our own persons in order to overcome all adversities whether they be injustices, poverty, illiteracy, delinquency or exclusion.

The Qur'ān offers such latitude in the interpretation of the word *jihād*, and this in its first revelation:

So obey not the unbelievers, but struggle with them thereby mightily. (Qur'ān, 25:52)¹³

There is here mention of a struggle (*jāhid* and *jihādan*), which is of a learned and scientific nature, one that relies on dialogue, discussion and debate. The Qur'ān, in its content and form, appears as an arm in the hands of Muslims. On another level, it is the Prophet (peace be upon him) who presents an extensive interpretation of the word when he asserts, for example, "Pilgrimage is a *jihād*"¹⁴. One realises that the troubles, efforts and suffering endured by the faithful during a few days in Makka, in order to give strength to their faith and answer the call of the Creator, are a *jihād* in the path of God...

We will not deny that there are struggles wherein circumstances lead us to direct confrontation, in order to oppose a purge here, a military occupation there, or another type of aggression such as the one we have witnessed in Bosnia and Chechnia. However, it cannot simply be a question of focusing our attention on these events alone and forgetting the broader type of fight which occurs daily and is, therefore, so much more urgent. Nowadays, our enemies, in the path of God, are hunger, unemployment, exploitation, delinquency and drug addiction. They require intense efforts, a continuous fight and a complete *jihād* which needs each and everyone's participation.

How many are those Muslims who want to fight beyond their own doorsteps, who want to offer, in the most sincere fashion their own persons for the cause of Islam. But, filled with this intention, they forget and remain blind to the fight that must be carried out here in their own locality, to the cause that ought to be defended in their own neighbourhoods, cities and in every country. To those who sought to assist Palestine in its fight against Zionist colonisation in the 1940s, and who perceived this expedition as representing the fulfilment of their ideal, Hasan al-Banna said: "Dying in the way of God is difficult, but living in the way of God is still more difficult." This *jihād* is a *jihād* for life, in order that every human being is given the rights which are his. The entire message of Islam carries this requirement as well as its necessary achievement...

¹² From the verbal form *Jahada*, the same root as the *masdar* (verbal noun) *jihad*.

¹³ The pronoun "*hi*" of "*bhi*" refers here, according to the majority of commentators, to the Qur'an (cf., *inter alia*, Tabari, Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir).

¹⁴ There exists a great number of traditions which point to the broader sense of this term.

The jihād of Muslims is, of course, part of this engagement in the West, but it is equally so in all the countries of the South. It is a wholehearted *jihād* along the line of South American communities who express it in the form of liberation theology, or as it is manifested in the popular and trade unionist forces in the Near East and Asia. Future inter-religious dialogue will undoubtedly find its fulfilment in such strategy and actions. However, we cannot think of the future in terms of political and economic reform without working for the reconstitution of a social tissue which is nowadays torn apart the world over.

Extract 3: M. Khadduri, 'The Doctrine of Jihād' (1955).

Taken from: *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* by Majid Khadduri (John Baltimore Press, 1955), Chapter 5, The Doctrine of Jihād, Chapter 6, Types of Jihād, pp.55-82.

THE DOCTRINE OF JIHĀD

The Meaning of Jihād

The term jihād is derived from the verb jāhada (abstract noun, juhūd) which means "exerted";¹⁵ its juridical-theological meaning is exertion of one's power in Allah's path, that is, the spread of the belief in Allah and in making His word supreme over this world. The individual's recompense would be the achievement of salvation, since the jihād is Allah's direct way to paradise. This definition is based on a Qur'ānic injunction which runs as follows:

O ye who believe! Shall I guide you to a gainful trade which will save you from painful punishment? Believe in Allah and His Apostle and carry on warfare (jihād) in the path of Allah with your possessions and your persons. That is better for you. If ye have knowledge, He will forgive your sins, and will place you in the Gardens beneath which the streams flow, and in fine houses in the Gardens of Eden: that is the great gain.¹⁶

The jihād, in the broad sense of exertion, does not necessarily mean war or fighting, since exertion in Allah's path may be achieved by peaceful as well as violent means. The jihād may be regarded as a form of religious propaganda that can be carried on by persuasion or by the sword. In the early Makkan revelations, the emphasis was in the main on persuasion. Muhammad, in the discharge of his prophetic functions, seemed to have been satisfied by warning his people against idolatry and inviting them to worship Allah. This is evidenced by such a verse as the following: "He who exerts himself (jāhada), exerts only for his own soul",¹⁷ which expresses the jihād in terms of the salvation of the soul rather than a struggle for proselytization. In the Madīnan revelations, the jihād is often expressed in terms of strife, and there is no doubt that in certain verses the conception of jihād is synonymous with the words war and fighting.¹⁸

The jurists, however, have distinguished four different ways in which the believer may fulfill his jihād obligation: by his heart; his tongue; his hands; and by the sword.¹⁹ The first is 'concerned with combatting the devil and in the attempt to escape his persuasion to evil. This type of jihād, so significant in the eyes of the Prophet Muhammad, was regarded as the greater jihād,²⁰ the second and third are mainly fulfilled in supporting the right and correcting the wrong. The fourth is precisely equivalent to the meaning of war, and is concerned with fighting the

¹⁵ For the literal meaning of jihād, see Fayrūzabādī, *Qāmūs al-Muhīt* (Cairo, 1933), Vol. I, p. 286. For the Qur'ānic use of jihād in the sense of exertion see Q. VI, 108; XXII, 77.

¹⁶ Q. LXI, 10-13. See also Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāl*, ed. Gustavus Flügel (Leipzig, 1845), p. 84

¹⁷ Q. XXIX, 5.

¹⁸ See Q. II, 215; IX, 41: XLIX, 15; LXI, 11; LXVI, 9.

¹⁹ See Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa'l-Ahwā wa'l-Nihal* (Cairo, A.H. 1321), Vol. IV, p. 135; Ibn Rushd, *Kitāb al-Muqaddimāt al-Mumah-hidāt* (Cairo, A.H. 1325), Vol. I, p. 259; Būhutī, *Kashshāf al-Qinā 'An Matn al-Iqnā'* (Cairo, A.H. 1366), Vol. III, p. 28

²⁰ Ibn al-Humām, *Sharh Fath al-Qadir* (Cairo, A.H. 1316), Vol IV, p. 277.

unbelievers and the enemies of the faith.²¹ The believers are under the obligation of sacrificing their "wealth and lives" (Q. LXII.II) in the prosecution of war.

The Jihād as Bellum Justum

War is considered as just whether commenced and prosecuted in accordance with the necessary formalities required under a certain system of law, or waged for justifiable reasons in accordance with the tenets of the religion or the mores of a certain society. In Islam, as in ancient Rome, both of these concepts were included in their doctrine of the *bellum justum* since a justifiable reason as well as the formalities for prosecuting the war were necessary. In both Islam and ancient Rome, not only was war to be *justum*, but also to be *pium*, that is, in accordance with the sanction of religion and the implied commands of gods.

The idea that wars, when institutionalized as part of the mores of society, are just may be traced back to antiquity. It was implied in the concept of vendetta as an act of retaliation by one group against another...

Recurring as a pattern in the development of the concept of war from antiquity, it assumed in Islam a special position in its jural order because law and religion formed a unity; the law prescribed the way to achieve religious (or divine) purposes, and religion provided a sanction for the law.

In Muslim legal theory, Islam and shirk (associating other gods with Allah) cannot exist together in this world; it is the duty of the imām as well as every believer not only to see that God's word shall be supreme, but also that no infidel shall deny God or be ungrateful for His favors (ni'am).²² This world would ultimately be reserved for believers;²³ as to unbelievers, "their abode is hell, and evil is the destination."²⁴ The jihād, in other words, is a sanction against polytheism and must be suffered by all non-Muslims who reject Islam, or, in the case of the dhimmīs (Scripturaries), refuse to pay the poll tax. The jihād, therefore, may be defined as the litigation between Islam and polytheism; it is also a form of punishment to be inflicted upon Islam's enemies and the renegades from the faith. Thus in Islam, as in Western Christendom, the jihād is the *bellum justum*.

In Islam, however, the jihād is no less employed for punishing polytheists than for *raison d'état*. For inherent in the state's action in waging a jihād is the establishment of Muslim sovereignty, since the supremacy of God's word carries necessarily with it God's political authority. This seems to be the reason why the jihād, important as it is, is not included – except in the Khārijī legal theory – among the five pillars of Islam. The reason is that the five pillars are not necessarily to be

²¹ Ibn Hazm distinguishes between the jihād by the tongue and the jihād by ra'y and tadbīr (i.e., reason) and he maintains that the Prophet Muhammad showed preference for reason over the sword. Ibn Hazm, Vol. IV, p. 135.

²² The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: "I am ordered to fight polytheists until they say: 'there is no god but Allah.'" The validity of the rule of fighting polytheists is also based on a Qur'ānic injunction, in which Allah said to His Apostle, as follows: "slay the polytheists wherever you may find them" (Q. IX, 5). See also Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Kitāb Mu'īd al-Ni'am wa Mubid al-Niqam*, ed. David W. Myhrman (London, 1908), p. 27.

²³ The idea that Islam would ultimately replace other religions (except perhaps the tolerated religions) is not stated in the Qur'ān, but it is implied in the objective of the jihād and expressed in the hadith. See note 11, above.

²⁴ Q. IX, 74.

enforced by the state; they must be observed by the individuals regardless of the sanction of authority. The jihād, in order to achieve *raison d'etat*, must, however, be enforced by the state. In the technical language the five pillars – the basic articles of the faith – are regarded as individual duties (fard 'ayn), like prayer, or fasting, which each believer must individually perform and each is held liable to punishment if he failed to perform the duty. The jihād, on the other hand – unless the Muslim community is subjected to a sudden attack and therefore all believers, including women and children, are under the obligation to fight – is regarded by all jurists, with almost no exception, as a collective obligation of the whole Muslim community.²⁵ It is regarded as fard al-kifāya, binding on the Muslims as a collective group, not individually. If the duty is fulfilled by a part of the community it ceases to be obligatory on others; the whole community, however, falls into error if the duty is not performed at all.

The imposition of the jihād duty on the community rather than on the individual is very significant and involved at least two important implications. In the first place, it meant that the duty need not necessarily be fulfilled by all the believers. For the recruitment of all the believers as warriors was neither possible nor advisable.²⁶ Some of the believers were needed to prepare food and weapons, while the crippled, blind, and sick would not qualify as fighters.²⁷ Women and children were as a rule excused from actual fighting, although many a woman contributed indirectly to the war effort.

In the second place, the imposition of the obligation on the community rather than on the individual made possible the employment of the jihād as a community and, consequently, a state instrument; its control accordingly, is a state, not an individual, responsibility. Thus the head of the state can in a more effective way serve the common interest of the community than if the matter is left entirely to the discretion of the individual believer. Compensation for the fulfillment of such an important public duty has been amply emphasized in both the authoritative sources of the creed²⁸ and in formal utterances of public men.²⁹ All of them give lavish promises of martyrdom and eternal life in paradise immediately and without trial on resurrection and judgment day for those who die in Allah's path. Such martyrs are not washed but are buried where they fall on the battlefield, not in the usual type of grave, after washing in a mosque. It is true that a promise of paradise is given to

²⁵ Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib said that the jihād duty is fard 'ayn. Awzā'ī and Thawri, however, advocated a defensive jihād (Shaybānī, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 125) and an extremely pacifist sect, known as the Māziyāriyya, dropped both the jihād against polytheists and fasting from the articles of faith. See 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *Mukhtasar Kitāb al-Farq Bayn al-Firaq*, summarized by al-Ras'anī and edited by Hitti (Cairo, 1924), p. 163

²⁶ Q. IX, 123: "The believers must not march forth all to war."

²⁷ Q.: XXIV, 60: "There is no blame on the blind man, nor on the lame, nor on the sick..."

²⁸ Q. III, 163: "Count not those who are killed in the path of Allah as dead; they are alive with their Lord." A woman complained to Muhammad about the death of her son in the battle of Badr, and then she asked whether her son went to hell or paradise, Muhammad replied: "Your son is in the higher Paradise!" (Bukhārī, Vol. II, p. 202.) Another hadith runs as follows: "There are one hundred stages in Paradise that are provided by Allah for those who fight in His path" (Bukhārī, II, p. 200). See also Ibn Hudhayl, *Tuhfat al-Anfus wa Shi'ar Sukkān al-Andalus*, ed. Louis Mercier (Paris, 1936), chaps. 10 and 20.

²⁹ See a speech given by Caliph Abū Bakr to Syrian expedition in Tabarī, *Ta'rikh*, ed. de Goeje (Leiden, 1890), Series I, Vol. IV, and p. 1850.

every believer who performs the five basic duties, but none of them would enable him to gain paradise as surely as participation in the jihād. ³⁰

The Jihād as Permanent War

War, however, was not introduced into Arabia by Islam. It was already in existence among the Arabs; but it was essentially a tribal war. Its nature was peculiar to the existing social order and its rules and procedure were thoroughly integrated as part of the sunna. Since the tribe (in certain instances the clan) was the basic political unit, wars took the form of raids; mainly for robbery or vendetta (tha'r). This state of affairs had, as observed by Ibn Khaldūn, developed among the Arabs a spirit of self-reliance, courage, and co-operation among the members of the single tribe. But these very traits intensified the character of warfare and rivalry among the tribes and created a state of instability and unrest.

The importance of the jihād in Islam lay in shifting the focus of attention of the tribes from their intertribal warfare to the outside world; Islam outlawed all forms of war except the jihād, that is, the war in Allah's path. It would, indeed, have been very difficult for the Islamic state to survive had it not been for the doctrine of the jihād, replacing tribal raids, and directing that enormous energy of the tribes from an inevitable internal conflict to unite and fight against the outside world in the name of the new faith.

The jihād as such was not a casual phenomenon of violence; it was rather a product of complex factors while Islam worked out its jural-doctrinal character. Some writers have emphasized the economic changes within Arabia which produced dissatisfaction and unrest and inevitably led the Arabs to seek more fertile lands outside Arabia. Yet this theory – plausible as it is in explaining the outburst of the Arabs from within their peninsula – is not enough to interpret the character of a war permanently declared against the unbelievers even after the Muslims had established themselves outside Arabia. There were other factors which created in the minds of the Muslims a politico-religious mission and conditioned their attitude as a conquering nation.

To begin with, there is the universal element in Islam, which made it the duty of every able-bodied Muslim to contribute to its spread. In this Islam combined elements from Judaism and Christianity to create something which was not in either: a divine nomocratic state on an imperialistic basis. Judaism was not a missionary religion, for the Jews were God's chosen people; a holy war was, accordingly, for the defense of their religion, not for its spread. Christianity on the other hand was a redemptive and, at the outset, a non-state religion. Even when it was associated with politics, the Church and state remained apart. Islam was radically different from both. It combined the dualism of a universal religion and a universal state. It resorted to peaceful as well as violent means for achieving that ultimate objective. The universality of Islam provided a unifying element for all believers, within the world of Islam and its defensive-offensive character produced a state of warfare permanently declared against the outside world, the world of war.

³⁰ Shaybānī, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 20; and Herman Theodorus Obbink, *De Heilige Oorlog Volgen den Koran* (Leiden, 1901), pp. 110-1

Thus the jihād may be regarded as Islam's instrument for carrying out its ultimate objective by turning all people into believers, if not in the prophethood of Muhammad (as in the case of the dhimmis), at least in the belief in God. The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have declared "some of my people will continue to fight victoriously for the sake of the *truth* until the last one of them will combat the anti-Christ." Until that moment is reached the jihād, in one form or another, will remain as a permanent obligation upon the entire Muslim community. It follows that the existence of a dār al-harb is ultimately outlawed under the Islamic jural order; that the dār al-Islām is permanently under jihād obligation until the dār al-harb is reduced to nonexistence; and that any community which prefers to remain non-Islamic – in the status of a tolerated religious community accepting certain disabilities – must submit to Islamic rule and reside in the dār al-Islām or be bound as clients to the Muslim community. The universalism of Islam, in its all-embracing creed, is imposed on the believers as a continuous process of warfare, psychological and political if not strictly military.

Although the jihād was regarded as the permanent basis of Islam's relations with its neighbors, it did not at all mean continuous fighting. Not only could the obligation be performed by nonviolent means, but relations with the enemy did not necessarily mean an endless or constant violent conflict with him. The jihād, accordingly, may be stated as a doctrine of a permanent state of war, not a continuous fighting. Thus some of the jurists argued that the mere preparation for the jihād is a fulfillment of its obligation. The state, however, must be prepared militarily not only to repel a sudden attack on Islam, but also to use its forces for offensive purposes when the caliph deems it necessary to do so.

In practice, however, the jihād underwent certain changes in its meaning to suit the changing circumstances of life. Islam often made peace with the enemy, not always on its own terms. Thus the jurists began to reinterpret the law with a view to justifying suspension of the jihād, even though temporarily. They seem to have agreed about the necessity of peace and the length of its duration. When Muslim power began to decline, Muslim publicists seem to have tacitly admitted that in principle the jihād as a permanent war had become obsolete; it was no longer compatible with Muslim interests. The concept of the jihād as a state of war underwent certain changes. This change, as a matter of fact, did not imply abandonment of the jihād duty; it only meant the entry of the obligation into a period of suspension – it assumed a dormant status, from which the imām may revive it at any time he deems necessary. In practice, however, the Muslims came to think of this as more of a normal condition of life than an active jihād.

The shift in the conception of the jihād from active to dormant war reflects a reaction on the part of the Muslims from further expansion. This coincided with the intellectual and philosophical revival of Islam at the turn of the fourth century of the Muslim era (tenth century A.D.), when the Muslims were probably more stirred by the controversy between orthodoxy and rationalism than by fighting Byzantine encroachments on the frontiers. To certain Muslim thinkers, like Ibn Khaldūn (d.1406), the relaxation of the jihād marked the change in the character of the nation from the warlike to the civilized stage. Thus the change in the concept of the jihād was not merely an apologia for weakness and failure to live up to a doctrine, but a process of evolution dictated by Islam's interests and social conditions.

The Shī'ī and Kharijī Doctrines of the Jihād

Generally speaking, the Shī'ī law of the jihād is not different from the Sunnī; but in linking the special duty of prosecuting the jihād with the doctrine of wālaya (allegiance to the imām), the concept of jihād assumed in Shī'ism a special doctrinal significance. In Shī'ī legal theory, not only would the failure of a non-Muslim to believe in Allah justify waging a jihād, but also the failure of a Muslim to obey the imām would make him liable for punishment by a jihād. While to a Sunnī the jihād is the sure way to Heaven, a jihād without an allegiance to the imām would not constitute an imān (a necessary requirement for salvation) in the Shī'ī creed.

The jihād is regarded as one of the chief functions of the imāmate, the performance of which would fulfill one of the requirements for the best (afdāl) qualified person for this position. If the imām fails to fulfill the jihād obligation, he disqualifies his claim as the best candidate, according to the Zaydī creed. The imām, as an infallible ruler, is the only one who can judge when the jihād should be declared and under what circumstances it would be advisable not to go to war with the enemy. If the imām finds it necessary to come to terms with the enemy, he may do so; he may even deem it necessary to seek the support of non-Muslims (including polytheists) in order to avoid risking defeat by the enemy. Under no circumstances, however, should the imām risk a jihād if he considers the enemy too powerful for him to win a victory, namely, if the enemy is at least twice as powerful as the Muslims.

The disappearance of the imām, however, has left the duty of declaring the jihād unfulfilled.³¹ Opinion differed as to the capacity of the mujtahids to act in the name of the imām in fulfilling the jihād obligation; but since the duty of calling the believers to battle is a matter in which an infallible judgment is necessary – since the interest of the entire community would be at stake – only an imām is capable of fulfilling such a duty. Further, it is deemed impossible to combat evil during the absence of the imām; the jihād, accordingly, is regarded unconsequential. Thus in the Shī'ī legal theory, the jihād has entered into a dormant stage—it is in a state of suspension. In contrast to the Sunnī doctrine which requires the revival of the dormant jihād when Muslim power is regained, the resumption of the jihād in the Shī'ī doctrine would be dependent on the return of the imām from his ghayba (absence), in the capacity of a Mahdī, who will triumphantly combat evil and re-establish justice and righteousness.

In contrast to the Shī'ī doctrine of the jihād, the Khārijīs maintain that the jihād is a fundamental article of the faith which could not possibly be abandoned or relaxed. To them the jihād is a sixth pillar of the faith, binding individually on every believer and on the community as a whole.³² They also go as far as to enforce imān on all who do not accept their version of Islam, Muslims as well as non-Muslims, by the jihād; for, they argue, that since the Prophet Muhammad had spent almost all his life in war, all true believers must also do so. Their strict belief in their religion and their fanaticism made them uncompromising in the fulfillment of their jihād duty. Thus their conception of the state was that of a garrison state; an ever-ready

³¹ This situation has not arisen among the Zaydis, since technically they elect their imāms.

³² The Khārijīs do not actually add a sixth pillar to the already recognized five pillars of the Sunnīs, because they substitute jihād for imān (which to them is synonymous with Islam) and thus the number of the pillars is not increased.

community, led by its imām, to wage war on the enemies of the faith. Even if the imām does not lead in war, the jihād is incumbent on each believer to fulfill by himself, for he falls in error if he fails to do so.

The Khārijī conception of the jihād, in contrast to the Sunnī doctrine is that of violence rather than strife or religious propaganda. To them true belief is a matter of conviction which should be imposed on reluctant individuals, not a subject of debate and argumentation; for, if evil is to be exterminated and justice re-established, obstinate heretics must be either forced to believe or be killed by the sword. This is based on a hadīth in which the Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: "My fate is under the shadow of my spear."³³

Strict and fanatical, the Khārijīs were as fierce and brutal in war as their desert life was austere and puritanical. The humane and moral aspect of religion made little impact on their tribal character. In war they killed women and children and condemned to death prisoners of war. Although these rules were not always followed, the extremist Khārijīs, such as the followers of Nāfi' ibn al-Azraq (A.H. 686), insisted that they should always be enforced...³⁴

"Allah gave the Prophet Muhammad four swords (for fighting the unbelievers): the first against polytheists, which Muhammad himself fought with; the second against apostates, which Caliph Abū Bakr fought with; the third against the People of the Book, which Caliph 'Umar fought with; and the fourth against dissenters, which Caliph 'Alī fought with."

Shaybānī, Kitāb al-Siyar al-Kabīr, I, 14-5.

³³ Bukhārī, Vol. II, p. 227.

³⁴ Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-Milal wa'l-Nihal*, ed. Cureton (London, 1840), pp. 90, 93; and Ras'anī's *Mukhtasar*, pp. 73, 80, 97.

CHAPTER VI

TYPES OF JIHĀD

Muslim jurists distinguished between the jihād against non-believers and the jihād against believers who either renegaded from the faith or, professing dissenting views, renounced the authority of the imām or his lieutenants. While the jurists agreed that war was just when waged against such people, they disagreed on its conduct and termination. Al-Māwardī subdivided the jihād against believers into three categories: first, the jihād against apostasy, (al-ridda); second, the jihād against dissension (al-baghī); and third, the jihād against secession (al-muhāribūn).³⁵ Other jurists added a category known as al-ribāt, or the safeguarding of frontiers. There may be added still another type, the jihād against the People of the Book or the Scripturaries.

The Jihād Against Polytheists

No compromise is permitted with those who fail to believe in God, they have either to accept Islam or fight. In several Qur'anic injunctions, the Muslims are under the obligation to "fight the polytheists wherever ye may find them;"³⁶ to "fight those who are near to you of the polytheists, and let them find in you sternness";³⁷ and "when you meet those who misbelieve, strike off their heads until you have massacred them. _." ³⁸ In the hadīth the Prophet Muhammad is reported to have declared: "I am ordered to fight polytheists until they say: 'there is no god but Allah.' "All the jurists, perhaps without exception, assert that polytheism and Islam cannot exist together; the polytheists, who enjoin other gods with Allah, must choose between war or Islam. The definition of a polytheist, however, has not been precisely given by any jurist. They exclude not only Scripturaries (who believe in Allah though not in His Apostle) but also the Magians (Zoroastrains) whose belief in Allah is obscure, but they had some sort of a book. Polytheism seems to have been confined narrowly to paganism, with no implied concept of a supreme deity.

In the Hijāz the principle was carried out to the letter, but in certain parts of Arabia, like al-Yaman, Jews were permitted to reside. No one was permitted to reside within Arabia, save those who either adopted Islam or remained Scripturaries. After Muhammad's death, however, the Christians of Najrān, who were given a pledge of security, were required by the Caliph 'Umar to leave for settlement in the Fertile Crescent. Later, the rule was relaxed and at the present Scripturaries are forbidden from residing only in Makka.³⁹ Outside the Arabian peninsula polytheists were rarely to be found, except perhaps Zoroastrains in Persia and pagan elements in the distant provinces of the borders of Islam in Asia and Africa.

³⁵ Māwardī, *Kitāb al-Ahkām al-Sultāniyya*, ed. Enger (Bonn, 1853), p. 89

³⁶ Q. IX, 5.

³⁷ Q. IX, 124.

³⁸ Q. XLVII.4

³⁹ The Hanbalī jurist Ibn Qudāma permits Scripturaries to pass through the Hijāz including Makka, provided they do not intend to reside (Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, ed. Rashid Rida [Cairo, A.H. 1367], Vol. VIII, p. 530-31). Present practice forbids Scripturaries from entering Makka alone, allowing non-Muslims to travel elsewhere and even to reside in Jidda.

The Jihād Against Apostasy

Apostasy may take place in one of two forms: (a) either the believer reverted from (irtadda, literally turned his back against) Islam with no intention of joining the dar al-harb, (b) or a group of believers, having renounced Islam, joined the dar al-harb or separated themselves in a territory constituting their own dār. The latter situation is relevant to our discussion on the jihād; the former, which relates to the law of peace, will be discussed later under jurisdiction.

If the apostates were numerous and powerful enough to defy authority, the imām was under obligation to invoke the jihād against them. The jurists, however, advise negotiation before fighting begins, since this may succeed in persuading them to return to Islam. Neither peace nor tribute nor poll tax is acceptable, since the law tolerates no secession from Islam. The apostates must either return to Islam or accept the challenge of jihād. As in the case of unbelievers, they should be notified (in the course of negotiations) that fighting will follow. This satisfies the rule of a declaration of war.

Should the apostates refuse and fighting begin, the rules governing the conduct of war would be the same as those governing a war with the people of dār al-harb. Neither their property nor themselves become subject to the general rule of submission of unbelievers, namely, they and their wives are not liable to be condemned into slavery, nor their property confiscated or divided as spoil. The property of those killed in battle is taken over by the state as fay'. Some jurists, such as the Hanafīs, maintain that the apostate wife should become a sabī, that is, condemned to be a slave-woman and taken as spoil or sold. So are the children born after apostasy, but the majority of jurists do not think that is necessary.

The outstanding case of apostasy was the secession of the tribes of Arabia after the death of Muhammad. Abū Bakr, the first caliph, warned them first to return to Islam, and those who did not return were severely fought, especially by Khālīd ibn al-Walīd, who burned a great number of them in spite of objections raised regarding the penalty of burning. The leaders of the apostate tribes were severely punished and most of them were slain. An eminent chronicler, al-Balādhurī, reports that nobody escaped death save those who returned to Islam.

The Jihād Against Baghī

Baghī is an attempt at dissension. If the dissenters did not renounce the authority of the imām, they were not fought and were allowed to reside peacefully in the dār al-Islām. The imām, however, should persuade them to abandon their dissenting ideas and to conform to orthodoxy; if they refused and failed to conform to the law, then they were fought against. If dissension were the result of certain grievances which did not touch the creed, such as against their own governor, an attempt should be made to reconcile them. If there were very few so that they could be controlled without difficulty, there was no need for a jihād. The Khārijīs were a case in point. When they disagreed with the Caliph 'Alī, they were offered three propositions; they were permitted to say their prayers in the mosques, they were not attacked by the caliph, and were allowed to live in the dār al-Islām. But once they opposed the caliph, 'Alī marched against them and crushed their power in the battle of al-Nahruwān (A.D. 658).

While, in early Islam, Muslim public opinion was not inclined to support an imām who himself seemed to have departed from the law, the jurist-theologians seem to have gradually tended to support the authority of the imām against any element revolting against him. They upheld the theory that the imām, even if he committed an error, must be obeyed. The Ash'arīs and almost all the later Sunnī jurists supported authority against dissension and argued that rebellion is worse than tyranny. To them once the bay'a (homage or fealty) was given to the new imām there was no legal way of taking it back. For, according to a Qur'ānic injunction, the believers must "obey Allah and the Apostle and those in authority among you"; if the Muslims differ from the imām on an issue, "bring it before Allah and the Apostle, if you believe in Allah and in the last day." But when Allah's Apostle has died then the imām takes his place. Thus in practice the imām has the ultimate authority in the state, and he can invoke the jihād to enforce his commands. It follows that baghī, in the sense of dissension, would constitute the negation of the imām's authority; hence both imām and his subject must oppose the dissenters in order to re-establish the unity of the imāmate.

The rules governing the conduct of war against dissenters are somewhat different from those of fighting the unbelievers; the main differences being that the dissenter prisoners are not liable for killing nor their property for confiscation as spoils. Their arms and armaments should be returned to them after their submission to the imām. Such destructive measures as burning the cattle or an attack by the mangonels and fire should not be resorted to unless deemed absolutely necessary.

The Jihād Against Deserters and Highway Robbers

Acts committed by deserters from the community of believers and highway robbers are called the great theft. The law concerning their treatment is provided in the Qur'ān as follows:

The punishment of those who combat Allah and His Apostle, and go about to commit disorders on the earth, they should be slain or crucified or have their hands and their feet cut off or be banished from the land; this shall be as a disgrace for them in this world, and in the next they shall have a great torment.⁴⁰

The jurists agree, on the basis of the foregoing Qur'ānic verse, that deserters and highway robbers should be punished by the imām; but they disagreed on the degree of punishment. Some ordered slaying and crucification; others cutting off their hands and feet; still others were satisfied with banishment. The punishment depended on the character of the criminal as well as the seriousness of his act. There was also a difference of opinion regarding banishment. Mālik contended that the criminal should be banished to the dār al-harb; other jurists insisted that he should be kept in the dār al-Islām, but banished from his own town (according to the Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz) or thrown into prison (according to Abū Hanīfa).

In fighting such groups, the imām has the choice of treating them on the same footing as the bughāt (singular, baghī) or being more lenient to them, depending on the degree of the seriousness of their conduct.

⁴⁰ Q. v. 37.

The Jihād Against Scripturaries

The People of the Book or Scripturaries (Ahl al-Kitāb) are the Jews, Sabians, and Christians who believed in Allah but according to the Muslim creed, who distorted their Scriptures and fell into Allah's disfavor. When Allah sent the last of His Prophets to call them to the truth, they accepted belief in Allah but not in His Prophet or the Qur'ān. Hence, the Scripturaries, like the polytheists must be punished; but since they believe in Allah, they are only partially liable to punishment. The jihād, accordingly, is invoked but not in the same degree of effectiveness as against polytheists.

The polytheists have the limited choice between Islam or the jihād; the Scripturaries can choose one of three propositions: Islam, the poll tax, or the jihād. If they accept Islam, they are entitled under the law to full citizenship as other believers; if they prefer to remain Scripturaries at the sacrifice of paying the poll tax, they suffer certain disabilities which reduce them to second-class citizens; if they fight they are to be treated in war on the same footing as polytheists.

The Ribāt

The ribāt is the safeguarding of the frontiers of the dār al-Islām by stationing forces in the harbors and frontier-towns (thughūr) for defense purposes. This type of jihād, although based on a Qur'ānic injunction, developed at a time when the Islamic state was on the defensive. The Qur'ānic rule, making no distinction between defensive or offensive purposes, states: "Prepare ye against them what force and companies of horse ye can, to make the enemies of God, and your enemies, and others beside them, in dread thereof."⁴¹ But the jurists, especially the Mālikī jurists of Spain and North Africa (whose frontiers had become constantly the targets of attack from European forces), emphasized the defensive purpose of the ribāt. In the hadīth, the defensive character of the ribāt is emphasized, probably because these hadīths were circulated at the time the ribāt was fulfilling defensive purposes. Thus one hadīth runs as follows: "'Abd-Allah ibn 'Umar stated that the jihād is for combatting the unbelievers, and the ribāt for safe-guarding the believers." In Spain the ribāt assumed in the eyes of the Muslims more significance than the jihād since their frontiers were constantly under attack by Christian forces. It was for this reason that Ibn Hudhayl, writing his treatise on the jihād in the twelfth century of the Christian era (when Islamic rule in Spain had been reduced to the southern part), devoted the second chapter to ribāt and stressed the defense of Spain against the unbelievers, from land and sea, as the most essential obligation upon the believers. Hadīths, ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad, with references to Andalus as the Western frontier of Islam, are cited to stress the significance of ribāt for the protection of Spain from European attack. The Prophet Muhammad is also reported to have said that the ribāt is given preference over the jihād, and that spending one night in a ribāt is worth more than a thousand in prayer.⁴²

⁴¹ Q.VIII, 62

⁴² Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Jāmi' al-Sahīh*, Ed. Krehl (Leiden, 1864), Vol. II p. 222; Shaybānī, *al-Siyar al-Kabīr*, with Sarakhsi's Commentary (Hyderabad, A.H. 1335), Vol. I, pp. 6, 7, 9, 31.

Extract 4: Leila Ahmed, 'Conclusion' (1992).

Taken from: *Women and Gender in Islam* by Leila Ahmed (Yale University Press, 1992), Conclusion, pp.235-248.

In the discourses of geopolitics the reemergent veil is an emblem of many things, prominent among which is its meaning as the rejection of the West. But when one considers why the veil has this meaning in the late twentieth century, it becomes obvious that, ironically, it was the discourses of the West, and specifically the discourse of colonial domination, that in the first place determined the meaning of the veil in geopolitical discourses and thereby set the terms for its emergence as a symbol of resistance. In other words, the reemergent veil attests, by virtue of its very power as a symbol of resistance, to the uncontested hegemonic diffusion of the discourses of the West in our age. And it attests to the fact that, at least as regards the Islamic world, the discourses of resistance and rejection are inextricably informed by the languages and ideas developed and disseminated by the West to no less a degree than are the languages of those openly advocating emulation of the West or those who, like Frantz Fanon or Nawal El-Saadawi, are critical of the West but nonetheless ground themselves in intellectual assumptions and political ideas, including a belief in the rights of the individual, formulated by Western bourgeois capitalism and spread over the globe as a result of Western hegemony.

Islamic reformers such as al-Afghani and 'Abdu and the militant Islamists of today; intellectuals radically critical of the West, including Marxists such as Fanon, Samir Amin, and El-Saadawi; and liberal intellectuals wholeheartedly embracing the colonial thesis of Western superiority and advocating the importance of emulating the West all differ fundamentally in their political stance, but they do not differ in the extent to which, whether they acknowledge it or not, they draw on Western thought and Western political and intellectual languages. The revitalized, reimagined Islam put forward by the Islamic militants or by 'Abdu and his contemporaries is an Islam redefining itself against the assaults of the West but also an Islam revitalized and reimagined as a result of its fertilization by and its appropriation of the languages and ideas given currency by the discourses of the West. In the discourses of the Arab world comprehensively, then, whether they are discourses of collaboration or resistance, the goals and ideals they articulate and even the rejection of and often-legitimate anger at the West that they give voice to are formulated in terms of the dominant discourse – Western in origin – of our global society.

This is of particular relevance to Islamist positions. Marxists, secularists, and feminists generally concede, tacitly if not overtly, their grounding in Western thought, but Islamists, arguing for what they claim to be a restoration of an "original" Islam and an "authentic" indigenous culture, make their case, and conduct the assault on secularism, Marxism, or feminism on the grounds that these represent alien Western importations whereas Islamism intends the restoration of an indigenous tradition. But today, willy-nilly, as the Indian psychologist and critic Ashis Nandy has remarked, the West is everywhere, "in structures and in minds," and Western political ideas, technologies, and intellectual systems comprehensively permeate all societies. There is no extricating them, no return to a past of unadulterated cultural purity – even if in this ancient and anciently multi-cultural part of the world such a project had ever been other than chimerical.

The Islamist position regarding women is also problematic in that, essentially reactive in nature, it traps the issue of women with the struggle over culture – just as the initiating colonial discourse had done. Typically, women – and the reaffirmation of indigenous customs relating to women and the restoration of the customs and laws of past Islamic societies with respect to women – are the centerpiece of the agenda of political Islamists. They are the centerpiece of the Islamist agenda at least in part because they were posed as central in the colonial discursive assault on Islam and Arab culture. I described in an earlier chapter how in the late nineteenth century the discourses of colonial domination coopted the language of feminism in attacking Muslim societies. Male imperialists known in their home societies for their intransigent opposition to feminism led the attack abroad against the "degradation" of women in Muslim societies and were the foremost champions of unveiling. The custom of veiling and the position of women in Muslim societies became, in their rhetoric, the proof of the inferiority of Islam and the justification of their efforts to undermine Muslim religion and society. This thesis and the societal goal of unveiling were, in addition, adopted and promoted (as I also described earlier) by the upper classes in Arab societies whose interests lay with the colonial powers; and they were opposed and the terms of the thesis inverted (and the importance of veiling and other indigenous practices insisted on) in the discourse of resistance.

The notion of returning to or holding on to an "original" Islam and an "authentic" indigenous culture is itself, then, a response to the discourses of colonialism and the colonial attempt to undermine Islam and Arab culture and replace them with Western practices and beliefs. But what is needed now is not a response to the colonial and postcolonial assault on non-Western cultures, which merely inverts the terms of the colonial thesis to affirm the opposite, but a move beyond confinement within those terms altogether and a rejection or incorporation of Western, non-Western, and indigenous inventions, ideas, and institutions on the basis of their merit, not their tribe of origin. After all and in sober truth, what thriving civilization or cultural heritage today, Western or non-Western, is not critically indebted to the inventions or traditions of thought of other peoples in other lands? And why should any human being be asked to do without some useful invention, political, technological, or of any kind, because it originated among some other tribe or, conversely, be compelled to practice a custom that has nothing to recommend it or even much against it for no better reason than that it is indigenous?

Rejection of things Western and rage at the Western world – an attitude that noticeably does not include the refusal of military equipment or technology – is understandable. Arabs have suffered and continue to suffer injustices and exploitation at the hands of colonial and postcolonial Western governments. But neither rage as a politics nor the self-deception and doublethink involved in relying on Western technologies – and indeed drawing on the intellectual and technical paraphernalia of the Western world in all aspects of contemporary life while claiming to be intent on returning to a culturally pure heritage – and in selectively choosing which aspects of the past will be preserved (for example, the laws controlling 'women') are persuasive as policies capable of leading the Arab world from entrapment in powerlessness and economic dependence.

Similarly, with respect to the more distant past and the proclaimed intention of restoring "original," "authentic" Islamic ways for women, the Islamist position is again problematic. It assumes, first, that the meaning of gender inhering in the initiatory Islamic society and in Muhammad's acts and sayings is essentially unambiguous and ascertainable in some precise and absolute sense and that the understanding of gender articulated in the written corpus of establishment Islam represents the only possible and, uncontested understanding of the meaning of gender in Islam. The evidence reviewed in the preceding pages lends support to neither assumption, however. The meaning and social articulation of gender informing the first Islamic society in Arabia differed significantly from those informing the immediately succeeding Muslim societies, including most particularly those of the society that contributed centrally to the articulation of the founding institutional, legal, and scriptural discourses of dominant Islam – Abbasid Iraq. The meanings of gender specific to Abbasid society and the distinctive meaning that the notion "woman" acquired in that society (a society in which the traditions of a number of religions and cultures, including the Judaic, Christian, and Iranian, blended inextricably and were absorbed into Islamic thought) were inscribed into the literary, legal, and institutional productions of the age – productions that today constitute the founding and authoritative corpus of establishment Muslim thought. The androcentric and misogynist biases of this society affected in particular the different weight given to the two divergent tendencies within the Islamic message. As I argued earlier, even as Islam instituted, in the initiatory society, a hierarchical structure as the basis of relations between men and women, it also preached, in its ethical voice (and this is the case with Christianity and Judaism as well), the moral and spiritual equality of all human beings. Arguably, therefore, even as it instituted a sexual hierarchy, it laid the ground, in its ethical voice, for the subversion of the hierarchy. In the Abbasid context, the regulations instituting a sexual hierarchy were given central emphasis while the ethical message stressing the equality of all human beings and the importance of justice went largely unheeded and remained, with respect to women, essentially unarticulated in the laws and institutions that were now formulated.

Unheeded by the dominant classes and by the creators of establishment Islam, that ethical voice was, in contrast, emphasized by some often-marginal or lower-class groups who challenged the dominant political order and its interpretation of Islam, including its conception of the meaning of gender and the arrangements regarding women. From the start, the interpretation of the meaning of gender in the dominant society and other key issues, such as the proper political and social organization of Muslim societies, were contested. Establishment Islam's version of the Islamic message survived as the sole legitimate interpretation not because it was the only possible interpretation but because it was the interpretation of the politically dominant – those who had the power to outlaw and eradicate other readings as "heretical."

It is this technical, legalistic establishment version of Islam, a version that largely bypasses the ethical elements in the Islamic message that continues to be politically powerful today. But for the lay Muslim it is not this legalistic voice but rather the ethical, egalitarian voice of Islam that speaks most clearly and insistently. It is because Muslim women hear this egalitarian voice that they often declare (generally to the astonishment of non-Muslims) that Islam is nonsexist.

Only within the politically powerful version of Islam (and in its reflection in Western Orientalist literature) – a version with no greater claim to being regarded as the only possible interpretation of Islam than Papal Christianity has to being regarded as the only possible interpretation of Christianity – is women's position immutably fixed as subordinate. Just as with other monotheistic (and indeed non-monotheistic) religions, what the import of Islam was and what its significance for human societies might be are subjects that yielded varieties of interpretations in past societies and that again today are open to a range of interpretations, including feminist interpretations.

Thus, the Islamist position with respect to the distant past is flawed in assuming that the meaning of gender informing the first Islamic society is reducible to a single, simple, unconflicted meaning that is ascertainable in some precise and absolute sense, as well as in assuming that the legacy was open to only one interpretation on matters of gender and that the correct interpretation was the one captured and preserved in the corpus of Muslim thought and writing and constituting the heritage of establishment Islam, created decades and indeed centuries after Muhammad, in the societies of the Middle East. In making these assumptions Islamists overlook the complexity of a gender system diversely and comprehensively articulated in social mores, verbal prescriptions, and the interplay between these, on the one hand, and the critical role of interpretation, on the other. Underlying the above assumptions – and in particular the belief that the laws developed in Abbasid and other societies of early Islam merely preserved and precisely elaborated the pristine originary meaning of Islam – is the notion that ideas, systems of meaning, and conceptions of gender traveled to and were transmitted by other societies without being blurred or colored by the mores, culture, and gender systems of the societies through which they passed. In a similarly literalist approach, Islamists assume that identifying the rulings regarding gender current in the first Muslim society – rulings presumed to be ascertainable in some categorical fashion – and transposing and applying them to modern Muslim societies would result in the reconstitution of the meaning of gender inhering and articulated in that first society. Such an assumption fails to recognize that a society's rulings in matters of gender form part of a comprehensive and integral system, part of a society's variously articulated (socially, legally, psychically) discourse on gender, and thus that the transposition of a segment of the Arabian Muslim society's discourse (even if this were absolutely ascertainable) to the fundamentally different Muslim societies of the modern world is likely to result not in the reconstitution of the first Arabian Muslim understanding of gender but rather in its travesty.

The meaning of gender as elaborated by establishment Islam remained the controlling discourse in the Muslim Middle East until about the beginning of the nineteenth century. Unambiguously and on all levels – cultural, legal, social, and institutional – the social system it devised and informed was one that controlled and subordinated women, marginalized them economically, and, arguably, conceptualized them as human beings inferior to men. So negatively were women viewed within this system that even women of the spiritual stature of Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya still could be deemed inferior to the least spiritually developed man in the eyes of an establishment spokesman like the theologian al-Ghazali. Evidently, dissent from this dominant view existed and found formal expression in the thought of such groups as the Sufis and the Qarmatians and in the thought of a rare philosopher, like Ibn al-'Arabi. Evidently, too, informal resistance to the dominant

culture was to be found within families and among individuals. That families economically in a position to contractually impose monogamy on their daughter's spouse or otherwise protect her interests in marriage sometimes did impose such terms is one indication of familial and personal resistance to the view of the dominant culture on the place and rights of women. Similarly, that some families educated their daughters despite the lack of any formal avenue for the education of women not merely to the point of literacy but to the point where they could become distinguished scholars and eminent women of learning is another kind of evidence of resistance among people to the prescriptions and dicta of the dominant view of women.

The unraveling of this system began to occur with European economic encroachment in about the early nineteenth century. From that point forward, the consonance that had hitherto pertained in the Muslim Middle East between the discourse on gender espoused by establishment Islam and the social and institutional articulation of that discourse began to be steadily eroded. That erosion, leading to the gradual foundering of the old order and institutions, continues into our own day.

Muslim women have no cause to regret the passing of the customs and formulas of earlier Muslim societies or the foundering of the old order and its controlling and excluding institutions. In the course of the last century or so women in a significant number of Arab countries have attained civil and political rights and virtually equal access to education, at least insofar as public policies are concerned; cultural prejudices, however (as in other parts of the world, Western and non-Western), and inadequate resources continue to hold back women's education in some areas. Again, in a significant number of Arab countries women have gained or are gaining entry into virtually all the professions, from teaching and nursing to medicine, law, and engineering. Developments in these matters have occurred at slightly different rates in different countries, but broadly speaking, most Middle Eastern nations have moved or are moving toward adopting the Western political language of human and political rights and toward according these rights to women as well as to men.

There are two kinds of exceptions to this tendency. One is an exception with regard to a geographic region. The societies in the Arabian Peninsula, the area in the Middle East least subject to European economic, cultural, or political domination and least open generally to other cultures and ideas, continue to resist the current of change. Moreover, in response to increasing exposure to global influences in recent decades, the societies in the region, particularly Saudi Arabia, have attempted to erect yet-more impregnable cultural and ideological walls. Although the peninsular countries have opened up education to women, in most other ways the old strictures remain firmly in place, and modern ideas about rights such as the right to vote, constituting part of contemporary political thought, have made no inroads. (Kuwait, however, prior to its invasion by Iraq, was beginning to move toward important changes for women.)

The other exception to the trend toward amelioration and extension of rights to women in Middle Eastern countries other than those of the Arabian Peninsula is with respect to Islamic family law – the laws governing men's and women's rights in marriage, divorce, and child custody. These laws have remained profoundly resistant to change. Even though for a good part of this century liberals and

feminists in many Muslim societies have persistently mounted attempts to introduce reforms, the laws developed in highly misogynist societies in the first three or four centuries of Islam continue to govern the relations between men and women. Only a few countries – Iraq, Syria, and Tunisia – have introduced modifications in their laws that improve on the laws of establishment Islam in varying degrees.

Family law is the cornerstone of the system of male privilege set up by establishment Islam. That it is still preserved almost intact signals the existence of enormously powerful forces within Middle Eastern societies determined to uphold male privilege and male control over women. Among political Islamist movements such forces are gaining ground. Where Islamist movements have led to the institution of "Islam" as the formal basis of political power – Iran, Pakistan under Zia ul-Huq – the governments have proceeded to transform the countries, as well as women's homes, into prison houses for women, where the confinement of women, their exclusion from many fields of work, and their unjust and inhumane treatment are the proclaimed laws of the land. In addition, the misogynist rhetoric they let loose into the social system implicitly sanctions male violence toward women and sets up women – rather than the corruptions and bankruptcies of the government – as targets of male frustration at poverty and powerlessness. Besides the costs to women themselves, limiting their access to remunerative work deprives their societies of the creativity and productivity that women throughout the world have proven themselves to be capable of.

Clearly, the Islam such governments set up bears no relation to an Islam reinterpreted to give precedence to the ethical voice of Islam. With respect at any rate to women, it is the technical, legalistic legacy of establishment Islam that political Islamism institutes once it gains power. There is one difference between these modern enforcers of technical Islam and their predecessors who developed the laws being reinstituted today. The encoders of the earlier Islamic period, hostage to societies in which misogyny and androcentrism were the uncontested and invisible norms, strove to the best of their abilities to render Islamic precepts into laws that expressed justice according to the available measures of their times. In contrast, their descendants, today reinstituting the laws devised in other ages and other societies, are choosing to eschew, when it comes to women, contemporary understandings of the meanings of justice and human rights, even as they adopt modern technologies and languages in every other domain of life.

Deferring justice to women until rights and prosperity have been won for all men, perpetuating and reinstituting systems immoral by contemporary standards in order to pander to male frustrations – these are sterile and destructive to no less an extent than the politics of rage and the disingenuous rhetoric of rejecting the West in favor of a return to indigenous culture while allowing the mental and technological appurtenances of the West to permeate society without barrier...

It was in this discourse of colonial "feminism" that the notion that an intrinsic connection existed between the issues of culture and the status of women, and in particular that progress for women could be achieved only through abandoning the native culture, first made its appearance. The idea was the product of a particular historical moment and was constructed by the discourses of patriarchal colonialism in the service of particular political ends. As the history of Western women makes clear, there is no validity to the notion that progress for women can be achieved

only by abandoning the ways of a native androcentric culture in favor of those of another culture. It was never argued, for instance, even by the most ardent nineteenth-century feminists, that European women could liberate themselves from the oppressiveness of Victorian dress (designed to compel the female figure to the ideal of frailty and helplessness by means of suffocating, rib-cracking stays, it must surely rank among the more constrictive fashions of relatively recent times) only by adopting the dress of some other culture. Nor has it ever been argued, whether in Mary Wollstonecraft's day, when European women had no rights, or in our own day and even by the most radical feminists, that because male domination and injustice to women have existed throughout the West's recorded history, the only recourse for Western women is to abandon Western culture and find themselves some other culture. The idea seems absurd, and yet this is routinely how the matter of improving the status of women is posed with respect to women in Arab and other non-Western societies. Whether those societies did or did not, will or will not, abandon the ways of one culture in favor of those of another is commonly presented in Western-based literature as the crux of the matter of progress for women. To this day, the struggle against the veil and toward westernization and the abandoning of backward and oppressive Arab Muslim ways (the agenda propounded by Cromer and his like as the agenda to be pursued for Muslim women) is still commonly the framestory within which Western-based studies of Arab women, including feminist studies, are presented.

The presumption underlying these ideas is that Western women may pursue feminist goals by engaging critically with and challenging and redefining their cultural heritage, but Muslim women can pursue such goals only by setting aside the ways of their culture for the nonandrocentric, non-misogynist ways (such is the implication) of the West. And the presumption is, too, that Islamic cultures and religion are fundamentally inimical to women in a way that Western cultures and religions are not, whereas (as I have argued) Islam and Arabic cultures, no less than the religions and cultures of the West, are open to reinterpretation and change. Moreover, the different histories of feminism in the Western world and in the Middle East suggest that the significant factors in Western societies that permitted the emergence of feminist voices and political action in those societies somewhat before their emergence in the Middle East were not that Western cultures were necessarily less androcentric or less misogynist than other societies but that women in Western societies were able to draw on the political vocabularies and systems generated by ideas of democracy and the rights of the individual, vocabularies and political systems developed by white male middle classes to safeguard their interests and not intended to be applicable to women. That women in Western societies are the beneficiaries of the political languages and institutions of democracy and the rights of the individual is commonly assumed to be proof that Western cultures are less androcentric or misogynist than other cultures, but political vocabularies and political and civil rights are quite distinct from the cultural and psychological messages, and the structures of psychological control, permeating a society. The notion that non-Western women will improve their status by adopting the culture, ways of dress, and so on of the West is based on a confusion between these different spheres. Of course, Arab Muslim women need to reject, just as Western women are trying to reject, the androcentrism of whatever culture or tradition in which they find themselves, but that is quite different from saying they need to adopt Western customs, goals, and life-styles.

...

There can be few people of Arab or Muslim background (including, and perhaps even particularly, the feminists among them) who have not noticed and been disheartened by the way in which Arab and Muslim "oppression" of women is invoked in Western media and sometimes in scholarship in order to justify and even insidiously promote hostility toward Arabs and Muslims. It is disheartening, too, that some feminist scholarly work continues to uncritically reinscribe the old story. Whole books are unfortunately still being published in which the history of Arab women is told within the framework of the paradigm that Cromer put forward—that the measure of whether Muslim women were liberated or not lay in whether they veiled and whether the particular society had become "progressive" and westernized or insisted on clinging to Arab and Islamic ways. In its contemporary version this essentially still-colonial (or colonial and classist) feminism is only slightly more subtle than the old version. It may be cast, for example, in the form of praising heroic Arab feminist women for resisting the appalling oppressions of Arab culture and Islam. Whereas this is its stated message, the unstated message when the inherited constructs of Western discourse are reproduced unexamined is often, just as in colonial days, that Arab men, Arab culture, and Islam are incurably backward and that Arab and Islamic societies indeed deserve to be dominated, undermined, or worse.

In the context of the contemporary structure of global power, then, we need a feminism that is vigilantly self-critical and aware of its historical and political situatedness if we are to avoid becoming unwitting collaborators in racist ideologies whose costs to humanity have been no less brutal than those of sexism. It may be, moreover, that in the context of Western global domination, the posture of some kinds of feminism – poised to identify, deplore, and denounce oppression – must unavoidably lend support to Western domination when it looks steadfastly past the injustice to which women are subject in Western societies and the exploitation of women perpetrated abroad by Western capitalism only to fix upon the oppressions of women perpetrated by Other men in Other societies...

Research on Arab women is a much younger field. Analysis of this complexity is rare in work on Arab women, in which it is often assumed that modernity and "progress" and westernization are incontestably good and that the values of individualism are always unambiguously beneficial. The sum of what is currently known about women and gender in Arab societies – the many and different Arab societies and cultures that there are – is minuscule. The areas of women's lives and the informal structures they inhabit that are still unexplored are vast. And perhaps the posture of studying other cultures in order to identify their worst practices is not after all likely to be the best way to further our understanding of human societies. The noted Indian anthropologist T.N. Madan, reflecting on the ambiguous legacy of anthropology and the contribution the discipline might nevertheless make to a common human enterprise, rather than serving Western interests, suggests that a productive starting point could be looking to other cultures in an attitude of respect and in acknowledgment of their affording opportunities for critiquing and enhancing awareness of the investigator's culture. The study of anthropology "should not merely tell us how others live their lives: it should rather tell us how we may live our lives better," and ideally it should be grounded in the affirmation "that every culture needs others as critics so that the best in it may be highlighted and held out as being cross-culturally desirable." Perhaps feminism could formulate

some such set of criteria for exploring issues of women in other cultures, including Islamic societies – criteria that would undercut even inadvertent complicity in serving Western interests but that, at the same time, would neither set limits on the freedom to question and explore nor in any way compromise feminism's passionate commitment to the realization of societies that enable women to pursue without impediment the full development of their capacities and to contribute to their societies in all domains.

Paper 4E: Judaism

Extract 1: M Kellner 'Jewish Ethics'

Taken from: *A Companion to Ethics*; edited by Peter Singer (Blackwell, 2001), Chapter 7, pp. 82-90

The very concept 'Jewish ethics' raises a number of problems, some of them inherent in the notion of any parochial ethic (be it Christian ethics, Navajo ethics, Marxist ethics, or whatever) and some of them unique to Jewish ethics. But, these problems aside, there exists a substantial body of literature which by common consensus is called 'Jewish ethics'. A separate essay in this volume is devoted to an analysis of the relation between religion and ethics; the general problems raised, therefore, by the notion of Jewish ethics as an example of a religious ethic will not be addressed here. There remain, however, a number of problems unique to Jewish ethics. This essay, then, will be divided into two parts. In the first I will describe some of the problems raised by the notion of Jewish ethics while in the second I will describe that body of literature ordinarily denoted by the term.

What is Jewish ethics? Answering this question presupposes being able to answer the antecedent question, 'What is Judaism?' This is not so simple a task. As the old saw has it, 'Two Jews, three views'. The well-known propensity of Jews to disagree on matters theological while not definitively excluding each other from the faith or from the community may reflect the typical Jewish concentration on matters concrete and practical. This concentration elevates matters of behaviour (including most emphatically ethical issues) to a centrality of importance which may be unique among Western monotheistic faiths. Thus, for example, we find the Talmud quoting God as saying, 'Would that they [the Jewish people] had abandoned Me but kept my Torah!' (T.J. *Hagigah*, 1.7). This emphasis on how to behave as opposed to what to believe makes it difficult to define 'Judaism' as a system of beliefs in a simple fashion.

In the contemporary world, for example, Judaism can be defined in both secular and religious terms. The secular definition can itself be either nationalist or cultural. The secular nationalist definition can either be Zionist (calling for the resettlement of the Jews in their ancient homeland) or non-Zionist. The Zionist definition of Judaism is itself defined in a plethora of ways. Defining Judaism in religious terms is no simpler today. Four different major movements (Orthodoxy, Conservatism, Reconstructionism and Reform) each claim to be the normative interpretation of Judaism. Many of the approaches mentioned here can also be combined (as, for example, in forms of religious Zionism).

It is immediately evident, then, that no one definition of Jewish ethics is possible, since there are so many varieties of Judaism. Since, however, we cannot possibly hope to settle this issue here we will simply ignore it henceforth. But, even assuming that we know what the term 'Jewish' means in the expression 'Jewish ethics', there are still fundamental problems which need clarification.

Judaism is very much a religion oriented towards practical perfection in this world (a 'religion of pots and pans' in the words of its nineteenth-century Protestant derogators). This practical orientation finds its concrete expression in the codified norms of Torah-based behaviour called *Halakhah* or Jewish law. While much of Halakhah is given over to what we would today call religious or ritual law, it

encompasses civil, criminal and moral law as well. The moral component, however, is not distinguished in any way from the other components of Halakhah and, at least from within the system, is seen as drawing its authority, as does the rest of the Torah, from God's command. Since Halakhah contains an ethical component it must be asked whether 'the Jewish tradition recognizes an ethic independent of Halakhah' (see Aharon Lichtenstein's article by this name in Kellner, 1978). Can there be, that is, significantly Jewish ethical norms not included in Halakhah?

This is a thorny problem. If Judaism recognizes the existence of two authentically Jewish yet independent realms, one of Halakhah and one of ethics, how do they interrelate? Can Halakhah be corrected on the basis of Jewish ethical considerations? This possibility is abhorrent to those Jews who maintain that Halakhah is the unchanging expression of God's will on earth. Can ethics be corrected on the basis of halakhic considerations? This possibility would probably be unacceptable to those Jews who see Halakhah as an expression of an early stage of God's dynamic and ongoing revelation. This issue may be rephrased as follows: if Halakhah and Jewish ethics are both authentically Jewish, is one superior to the other? If not, what do we do when they conflict? If they never conflict, in what sense are they different?

And there are yet further problems: if there exists a supra-halakhic Jewish ethic, what is its relationship to non-Jewish civil law? What is the obligation of the Jew with respect to imposing that ethic upon or offering it to non-Jews?

More questions arise: if morality must be universally recognizable, then not only must Jewish ethics apply to all human beings, but it must be available to them as well. If a supra-halakhic Jewish ethic exists, is it really universally available, and, if it is, what is specifically *Jewish* about it?

So much for the problems raised by the notion of Jewish ethics generally. If, as is often maintained, Jews are like everybody else, only more so, it is appropriate that the notion of Jewish ethics be as problematic as the notion of religious ethics, only more so. But since, as the Yiddish expression has it, no-one has ever died from having an unsolved philosophical problem, we can turn to the second part of our discussion and describe what in fact has been passing as Jewish ethics all these many years.

Following the lead of Isaiah Tishby and Joseph Dan we may divide the literature of what is ordinarily called Jewish ethics into four main categories: biblical, rabbinic, medieval and modern. Certain recent scholars (such as Israel Efros and Shubert Spero) have maintained that the (Hebrew) Bible is self-consciously aware of a distinct area of human activity parallel to what we call ethics. I do not agree: while the Bible is surely permeated with ethical concern, it does not see the laws mandating ethical behaviour as being in any significant sense distinct from its laws governing civil, criminal, and ritual matters: they all 'are given from one Shepherd' (Eccl. 12: 11). Biblical Hebrew does not even have a word for 'ethics' in our sense of the term. The Bible, then, teaches ethics, but not self-consciously and as such: it is a *source* of Jewish ethics while not seeing itself, so to speak, as an ethical text...

This said, the question remains, what are the ethical teachings of the Bible? The question presupposes that the Bible is, at least in moral and theological terms, a single unit. While that assumption may be rejected by historians of the Bible, it reflects the traditional Jewish approach to the text and will be adopted here.

Perhaps the best-known of the ethical teachings of the Bible is the so-called 'Ten Commandments' ('so-called' because there are many more than ten specific commandments in this passage), found in Exodus 20. Of the ten discrete statements in this text, at least six have direct ethical import: (a) honour thy father and thy mother; (b) thou shalt not murder; (c) thou shalt not commit adultery; (d) thou shalt not steal; (e) thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour; and (f) thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's possessions (which include thy neighbour's wife, which indicates that the Decalogue is not exactly a monument to feminist sensibilities). The remaining four ('I am the Lord thy God...', that God alone may be worshipped, that God's name must not be taken in vain, and the observance of the Sabbath) relate to matters of theological and ritual importance. This division of subject matter reflects a division which later rabbis read out of (or into) the Bible: that between obligations between human individuals and obligations between human individuals and God.

Much of biblical legislation involves this first group and herein may lie one of the basic contributions of Judaism to the Western religious tradition: that one worships God through decent, humane, and moral relations with one's fellows. (As the later rabbis were to put it, God is ideally worshipped in three ways: study of Torah, sacrifice and prayer, and acts of lovingkindness.) In other words, whatever morality might be, its basis is in God's will. God can be no more irrelevant to morality than he can be for religion. The basis for this demand that God makes upon his creatures to treat each other properly is the biblical teaching that man is created in the image of God (Gen. 1: 27).

Since human beings are created in the image of God, it is obvious that one achieves the highest possible level of perfection or self-realization by becoming as similar to God as humanly possible. This is the basis for what may be the single most important ethical doctrine of the Hebrew Bible, that of *imitatio Dei*, the imitation of God (on which, see the essays by Shapiro and Buber in Kellner, 1978).

The biblical doctrine of *imitatio Dei* finds expression in verses such as the following: 'Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy' (Lev. 19:2); 'And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul' (Deut. 10: 12); and 'The Lord will establish thee for a holy people unto Himself, as He hath sworn unto thee: if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in His ways' (Deut. 28: 9). For our purposes here, these verses involve two explicit commandments: to be holy, because God is holy, and to walk in the ways of God. How does one make oneself holy and thus God-like? The Bible couldn't be clearer. Leviticus 19: 2 is an introduction to a list of commandments combining matters moral (honour of parents, charity, justice, honesty, kindness to the disadvantaged, etc), ritual (Sabbath observance, sacrifices, etc), and theological (not taking the name of the Lord in vain). One achieves holiness, that is, by obeying God's commandments, or, in the words quoted above from Deuteronomy, by walking in his ways.

It should come as no surprise that when Judaism, which so clearly emphasizes the practical over the metaphysical, introduces a doctrine which seems so clearly to beg for a metaphysical interpretation, it immediately insists on interpreting it in practical terms. The imitation of God, that is, is not a metaphysical issue in Judaism but a practical, moral one. Jews are not commanded (and it must not be forgotten that the imitation of God, as the verses adduced above clearly show, is a *commandment* of the Torah and was so construed by most later authorities) literally and actually to transcend their normal selves and become in some sense like God: rather, they are commanded to act in certain ways. It is through the achievement of practical, moral perfection, that Jews imitate God and thus fulfil their destiny as individuals created in the image of God.

This point can be made sharper if we contrast the Jewish approach to the imitation of God to two others, that of Plato and that of Christianity. In the *Theaetetus* (176) we find Socrates saying, 'We ought to fly away from earth to heaven as quickly as we can: and to fly away is to become like God, as far as this is possible: and to become like him is to become holy, just, and wise.' Far from flying away from earth, the Torah calls upon Jews to imitate God here on earth, through the fulfilment of his commandments. One does not then become *like* God; one walks in his ways, i.e. acts in a God-like manner so far as this is possible for a human being. In Christianity we find an even clearer emphasis on the actual, literal, and therefore metaphysical interpretation of the imitation of God. The God of Christianity is so eager to allow human beings to become like him that he actually performs an act of *imitatio humani* and incarnates himself in the body of an actual living breathing human being. The imitation of God is then performed through an intermediary and becomes *imitatio Christi*, which finds its expression, not in the fulfilment of the six hundred and thirteen commandments of the Torah, but in attitudes of faith and trust, and, before its self-destructiveness became evident, through the imitation of Christ's passion. (For a Jewish view of this, see Buber in Kellner.)

The moral implication of humanity's having been created in the image of God underlies both specific laws (such as 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (Lev. 19: 18) — because your neighbour is no less created in the image of God than you are) and the general universalistic thrust of the Hebrew Bible, something particularly evident in the classical literary prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel). It also lies at the basis of rabbinic discussions of what we would call moral issues.

I wrote above that the Hebrew Bible is not self-consciously aware of morality as a distinct religious or intellectual category. This is also true, I would maintain, of the corpus of rabbinic writings which centres on the Mishnah and those texts which developed around it. Here, too, we have no separate, distinct text dealing with ethics in an explicit fashion, and no apparent recognition of ethics as a department of thought which must be treated independently of other concerns. This is even true of the well-known Mishnaic tractate *Avot*, a compilation of maxims and homilies, many of which embody what we call ethical teachings. The point of this treatise, as Herford suggests, is to describe the ideal personality of the Mishnah: it is therefore much more concerned with piety than with ethics.

Even more than the Bible, the vast corpus of rabbinic writings is basically concerned with one issue: how we ought to live our lives so as to fulfil the command to make ourselves holy by walking in God's ways. The rabbinic response to this was the delineation of a body of detailed law designed to govern every aspect of our behaviour. That body of law is called 'Halakhah' (homiletically if not etymologically derived from the Hebrew word for 'the way' — compare the Chinese concept *dao*... — and thus taken as the specification of how one walks in God's ways) and includes, but by no means is limited to, moral concerns.

Fully aware, however, that no specification of legal obligations can cover every moral dilemma, the rabbis of the Mishnah and Talmud rely on a number of broad spectrum biblical commands such as 'Righteousness, righteousness, shalt thou pursue' (Deut. 17: 20) and 'Thou shalt do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord' (Deut. 6: 18) — and on one of their own devising, the *obligation* to go beyond the letter of the law in the fulfilment of God's will — to demand supererogatory behaviour from the Jews. Such a demand may be justified on the grounds that one never fully satisfies the obligation to imitate God.

The centrality of the doctrine that human beings are created in the image of God (the basis, as noted above, for the commandment to imitate God) is emphasized in the well-known debate between two mishnaic rabbis: Akiba and Ben Azzai. Their debate centred on the question, 'What is the great[est] maxim of the Torah?' Rabbi Akiba's nominee was 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (Lev. 19: 18) while Ben Azzai insisted on 'This is the book of the generations of man, in the image of God created He him' (Gen. 5: 1). (*Sifra*, VII.4. On this debate, see the article by Chaim Reines in Kellner, 1982.) The important point for our purposes here is that there is no actual debate. Both Rabbi Akiba and Ben Azzai agree that the doctrine of humanity's having been created in the image of God is the central teaching of the Torah. Ben Azzai cites the doctrine itself, Akiba, its clearest moral implication. Given the Jewish tradition's preference for practice over preaching, it is no surprise that in the popular Jewish mind, at least, Rabbi Akiba is thought to have won the argument.

This emphasis on the respect for others based on their having been created in the image of God also finds expression in what may be the best-known rabbinic moral teaching, Hillel's so-called 'Golden Rule'. When a non-Jew asked Hillel to teach him the entire Torah while he (the non-Jew) stood on one foot, Hillel replied, 'What you dislike don't do to others; that is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary. Go and learn.' (B.T. Shabbat 31a). It is perhaps only a personal idiosyncrasy (I don't like to be nagged) but I like to think that Hillel's formulation of this principle is superior to that of a well-known contemporary of his who phrased the same idea in positive terms ('Do unto others as you would have them do unto you') since I think that one can show no higher respect to one's fellows than to leave them alone if their behaviour harms no-one.

In sum, despite the importance of moral teachings in the Bible and Talmud, these texts know of no self-consciously worked-out moral system: they are not even aware of ethics as a distinct religious, intellectual, or human category. It is only in the Middle Ages, under the apparent impress of Greek categories of thought as mediated through Islam, that we first find a distinct corpus of Jewish literature

self-consciously and explicitly devoted to ethics. The form may have been essentially Greek; the concern with right behaviour is obviously not new. What is new is the composition of texts which deal with moral behaviour outside of the strict context of Torah and Halakhah.

The literature of this period has been divided by Tishby and Dan into four categories: philosophic, rabbinic, pietistic, and kabbalistic. In terms of literary genre we find ethics being taught in philosophical or mystical texts, sermons, homilies, wills and letters, stories and fables, poetry, commentaries on Bible and Mishnah, and in manuals of ethical behaviour.

Turning to the first of the four categories of medieval Jewish ethical literature, it would seem that the basic issue which underlay discussions of ethics among medieval Jewish philosophers had to do with the nature of God: the importance one attaches to ethical behaviour (the *vita activa* as over against the *vita contemplativa*) depends upon one's assessment of human nature. Since Judaism teaches that human beings are created in the image of God and reach their most perfect self-realization through the imitation of God, it follows that our estimation of human nature depends to a great extent upon our estimation of divine nature. If God is construed as essentially active, then we should find our perfection in activity and ethics becomes a very important department of human endeavour; if, on the other hand, God is essentially contemplative, then we should find our perfection in contemplation and ethics plays a correspondingly less important role in our lives, often being seen as a propaedeutic to intellectual (contemplative) perfection.

The issue is highlighted in the work of the most important of the medieval Jewish philosophers, Moses Maimonides (1138–1204). In a semi-popular work, 'Laws of Character Traits'. Maimonides presented a slightly modified version of Aristotle's doctrine of the 'Golden Mean' as the ethical teaching of Judaism. In his philosophic work, *Guide for the Perplexed*, however, he seems to advance a purely intellectualist interpretation of Judaism, reducing ethical (and, concomitantly, halakhic) perfection to the level of a necessary propaedeutic for the achievement of intellectual perfection. At the very end of the book, however, the moral, practical orientation of Judaism wins out and Maimonides informs his reader that the truest perfection involves the imitation of God's loving kindness, justice, and righteousness after having achieved the highest achievable level of intellectual perfection. Maimonides the philosopher, one might say, urges us to imitate God through metaphysical speculation; Maimonides the rabbi cannot leave it at that and insists that such imitation have practical impact on our lives in the community.

Perhaps in response to the ethical writings of medieval Jewish philosophers (on which see the Introduction to Kellner, 1978) writers rooted deeply and often exclusively in the rabbinic tradition began writing ethical treatises based entirely on mishnaic and talmudic texts, in an attempt to prove that these texts provided all that one needed in order to produce a complete ethical system. Accepting the rabbinic injunction to turn and turn in the Torah 'because everything is included in it' (*Avot*, V. 25), they felt that there was no need to turn to Aristotle for instruction in either the form or content of ethics. Rather, all one need do is search through the Torah and the rabbinic compilations. Rabbinic ethics is not a uniquely medieval phenomenon and works continue to be written to this day in this framework. A

whole movement, which started in the last century and which has about it remarkable elements of modernity, the so-called 'Mussar Movement' (on which see Hillel Goldberg) is perhaps best understood as a version of medieval rabbinic ethics.

Pietistic ethical literature is associated with a circle of Jewish mystics and pietists called Hasidei Ashkenaz, who were active in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Germany. This literature, by and large, is concerned with specific problems and actual situations, rather than with the search for general principles. It is marked by deep piety, by superstitious elements typical of Jewish folk as opposed to elite religion, and by an emphasis on the effort involved in the performance of a moral or religious action: the greater the difficulty in performing an action, the more praiseworthy it is. This idea, and the parallel notion that the pietist (*hasid*) is marked by his adherence to the 'law of Heaven', which is stricter and more demanding than the 'law of the Torah' to which all others must adhere, may not have been totally unprecedented in Judaism, but were surely given new emphasis by the Hasidei Ashkenaz. This call for supererogatory ethical behaviour had great influence on subsequent developments in European Jewry.

One of the most striking intellectual developments in the history of medieval Judaism was the rise and spread of a Jewish mystical movement called Kabbalah (on which see Scholem, 1946, and Moshe Idel, 1988). A Kabbalistic idea which had important influence on Jewish ethics was the notion that religious actions can have a profound impact on the very structure of the universe. This, of course, makes sense in the context of a world-view which sees the physical and the spiritual in a constant state of active interpenetration. On this understanding there is no problem with maintaining that a definite interdependence can exist between the deeds of human beings and developments in the world.

Not until 1789 in Europe and much later in the Muslim world were Jews allowed, to all intents and purposes, fully to take part in the cultures of the societies around them. When such participation was made possible, the Jews dove in enthusiastically. This openness to and involvement in the broader culture is one of the crucial distinguishing marks of modern as opposed to medieval Judaism. A second distinguishing mark of modern Judaism is the way in which it has become fractured into many competing movements, trends, and even, perhaps, denominations. Judaism today, therefore, is distinguished from medieval Judaism by virtue of its being open to the entire problematic of modernity, and in that it no longer speaks with one voice (or with many different but still essentially harmonious voices, for those who insist that Judaism was always marked by pluralism) in its attempt to answer that complex of problems.

This situation is particularly clear in the case of ethics. One can find Jewish thinkers who maintain that Jewish ethics is essentially autonomous in the Kantian sense and others who glory in the fact that it is, was, and should be absolutely heteronomous... Every possible position on the question of the relation between ethics and Halakhah is forcefully maintained by different thinkers as being the authoritative position of the Jewish tradition. On a more concrete level, you have rabbis who can boast of impressive credentials as experts in the fields of Jewish law and ethics testifying before congressional committees studying the question of abortion and presenting diametrically opposed positions on the Jewish attitude towards abortion. (On all these matters see the essays in Kellner, 1978, and S. Daniel Breslauer's important annotated bibliographies.)

Jews and Judaism are not, of course, unique in this respect. They are like everyone else, only more so. The fractured Jewish response to the problems posed by the modern world is as much a reflection of the nature of modernity as it is a reflection of the nature of Judaism.

Extract 2: Elie Wiesel, *Night*

Taken from: Elie Wiesel, *Night* (Penguin, 2008), pp. 41, 59, 66-69

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FIRST IMPRESSION: better than Birkenau. Cement buildings with two stories rather than wooden barracks. Little gardens here and there. We were led toward one of those "blocks." Seated on the ground by the entrance, we began to wait again. From time to time somebody was allowed to go in. These were the showers, a compulsory routine. Going from one camp to the other, several times a day, we had, each time, to go through them.

After the hot shower, we stood shivering in the darkness. Our clothes had been left behind; we had been promised other clothes.

Around midnight, we were told to run.

"Faster!" yelled our guards. "The faster you run, the faster you'll get to go to sleep."

After a few minutes of racing madly, we came to a new block. The man in charge was waiting. He was a young Pole, who was smiling at us. He began to talk to us and, despite our weariness, we listened attentively.

"Comrades, you are now in the concentration camp Auschwitz. Ahead of you lies a long road paved with suffering. Don't lose hope. You have already eluded the worst danger: the selection. Therefore, muster your strength and keep your faith. We shall all see the day of liberation. Have faith in life, a thousand times faith. By driving out despair, you will move away from death. Hell does not last forever...And now, here is a prayer, or rather a piece of advice: let there be camaraderie among you. We are all brothers and share the same fate. The same smoke hovers over all our heads. Help each other. That is the only way to survive. And now, enough said, you are tired. Listen: you are in Block 17; I am responsible for keeping order here. Anyone with a complaint may come to see me. That is all. Go to sleep. Two people to a bunk. Good night."

Those were the first human words.

Page 64-65

The *Oberkapo* was arrested on the spot. He was tortured for weeks on end, in vain. He gave no names. He was transferred to Auschwitz. And never heard from again.

But his young *pipel* remained behind, in solitary confinement. He too was tortured, but he too remained silent. The SS then condemned him to death, him and two other inmates who had been found to possess arms.

One day, as we returned from work, we saw three gallows, three black ravens, erected on the *Appelplatz*. Roll call. The SS surrounding us, machine guns aimed at us: the usual ritual. Three prisoners in chains—and, among them, the little *pipel*, the sad-eyed angel.

The SS seemed more preoccupied, more worried, than usual. To hang a child in front of thousands of onlookers was not a small matter. The head of the camp read the verdict. All eyes were on the child. He was pale, almost calm, but he was biting his lips as he stood in the shadow of the gallows.

This time, the *Lagerkapo* refused to act as executioner. Three SS took his place.

The three condemned prisoners together stepped onto the chairs. In unison, the nooses were placed around their necks.

"Long live liberty!" shouted the two men.

But the boy was silent.

"Where is merciful God, where is He?" someone behind me was asking.

At the signal, the three chairs were tipped over.

Total silence in the camp. On the horizon, the sun was setting.

"Caps off!" screamed the *Lagerälteste*. His voice quivered. As for the rest of us, we were weeping.

"Cover your heads!"

Then came the march past the victims. The two men were no longer alive. Their tongues were hanging out, swollen and bluish. But the third rope was still moving: the child, too light, was still breathing...

And so he remained for more than half an hour, lingering between life and death, writhing before our eyes. And we were forced to look at him at close range. He was still alive when I passed him. His tongue was still red, his eyes not yet extinguished.

Behind me, I heard the same man asking:

"For God's sake, where is God?"

And from within me, I heard a voice answer:

"Where He is? This is where—hanging here from this gallows..."

That night, the soup tasted of corpses.

Page 66-68

THE SUMMER was coming to an end. The Jewish year was almost over. On the eve of Rosh Hashanah, the last day of that cursed year, the entire camp was agitated and every one of us felt the tension. After all, this was a day unlike all others. The last day of the year. The word "last" had an odd ring to it. What if it really were the last day?

The evening meal was distributed, an especially thick soup, but nobody touched it. We wanted to wait until after prayer. On the *Appelplatz*, surrounded by electrified barbed wire, thousands of Jews, anguish on their faces, gathered in silence.

Night was falling rapidly. And more and more prisoners kept coming, from every block, suddenly able to overcome time and space, to will both into submission.

What are You, my God? I thought angrily. How do You compare to this stricken mass gathered to affirm to You their faith, their anger, their defiance? What does Your grandeur mean, Master of the Universe, in the face of all this cowardice, this decay, and this misery? Why do you go on troubling these poor people's wounded minds, their ailing bodies?

SOME TEN THOUSAND MEN had come to participate in a solemn service, including the *Blockälteste*, the Kapos, all bureaucrats in the service of Death.

"Blessed be the Almighty..."

The voice of the officiating inmate had just become audible. At first I thought it was the wind.

"Blessed be God's name... "

Thousands of lips repeated the benediction, bent over like trees in a storm.

Blessed be God's name?

Why, but why would I bless Him? Every fiber in me rebelled. Because He caused thousands of children to burn in His mass graves? Because He kept six crematoria working day and night, including Sabbath and the Holy Days? Because in His great might, He had created Auschwitz, Birkenau, Buna, and so many other factories of death? How could I say to Him: Blessed be Thou, Almighty, Master of the Universe, who chose us among all nations to be tortured day and night, to watch as our fathers, our mothers, our brothers end up in the furnaces? Praised be Thy Holy Name, for having chosen us to be slaughtered on Thine altar?

I listened as the inmate's voice rose; it was powerful yet broken, amid the weeping, the sobbing, the sighing of the entire "congregation":

"All the earth and universe are God's!"

He kept pausing, as though he lacked the strength to uncover the meaning beneath the text. The melody was stifled in his throat.

And I, the former mystic, was thinking: Yes, man is stronger, greater than God. When Adam and Eve deceived You, You chased them from paradise. When You were displeased by Noah's generation, You brought down the Flood. When Sodom lost Your favor, You caused the heavens to rain down fire and damnation. But look at these men whom You have betrayed, allowing them to be tortured, slaughtered, gassed, and burned, what do they do? They pray before You! They praise Your name!

"All of creation bears witness to the Greatness of God!"

In days gone by, Rosh Hashanah had dominated my life. I knew that my sins grieved the Almighty and so I pleaded for forgiveness. In those days, I fully believed that the salvation of the world depended on every one of my deeds, on every one of my prayers.

But now, I no longer pleaded for anything. I was no longer able to lament. On the contrary, I felt very strong. I was the accuser, God the accused. My eyes had opened and I was alone, terribly alone in a world without God, without man. Without love or mercy. I was nothing but ashes now, but I felt myself to be stronger than this Almighty to whom my life had been bound for so long. In the midst of these men assembled for prayer, I felt like an observer, a stranger.

The service ended with Kaddish. Each of us recited Kaddish for his parents, for his children, and for himself.

We remained standing in the *Appelplatz* for a long time, unable to detach ourselves from this surreal moment. Then came the time to go to sleep, and slowly the inmates returned to their blocks. I thought I heard them wishing each other a Happy New Year!

I ran to look for my father. At the same time I was afraid of having to wish him a happy year in which I no longer believed. He was leaning against the wall, bent shoulders sagging as if under a heavy load. I went up to him, took his hand and kissed it. I felt a tear on my hand. Whose was it? Mine? His? I said nothing. Nor did he. Never before had we understood each other so clearly.

The sound of the bell brought us back to reality. We had to go to bed. We came back from very far away, I looked up at my father's face, trying to glimpse a smile or something like it on his stricken face. But there was nothing. Not the shadow of an expression. Defeat.

Extract 3: G. Robinson, 'The Philosophers: The Continuing Evolution of Jewish Thought' (2008)

Taken from: *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Custom & Rituals* (Simon and Schuster, 2008), Chapter 8, The Philosophers: The continuing evolution of Jewish Thought, pp.415-421 and 428-433.

Maimonides (c. 1135 C.E. – 1204 C.E.)

He is one of the giants of Jewish thought, either inside or outside the circle of faith. He wrote the definitive study of the 613 *mitzvot*, some of the most incisive commentaries on Talmud and Torah, and the most distinguished work on explicitly Jewish philosophy until this century. And he was an important and highly regarded physician and Jewish communal leader.

Moses ben Maimon, called Maimonides (the Greek equivalent of ben Maimon, meaning "son of Maimon" in both languages), is a towering figure in Judaism, indeed in medieval philosophy. More than just a philosopher, though, he is revered in the Orthodox world as one of the greatest arbiters of *halakhah*, author of the voluminous legal code, the *Mishneh Torah*.

Maimonides (who is also often called Rambam, an acronym for Rabbi Moses ben Maimon) was born in Cordoba, Spain, the son of that city's *dayan/rabbinical judge*. His was a well-to-do family of scholars, and the boy was educated by his father until he reached the age of a *bar mitzvah*. Although relations between the Jewish community and Spain's Muslim rulers were fairly cordial, in 1148 the family was forced to flee Cordoba, one step ahead of the rise to power of the fanatical Almohade Dynasty. For the next eight or nine years, they wandered through Spain, probably undergoing a false conversion to Islam as a safeguard against further persecution. Maimonides settled in Fez, Morocco, in 1160. It was there that he received his training in medicine. Eventually settling in Cairo, Maimonides became the court physician of the great Muslim leader, Saladin, and a highly respected leader of the Jewish community there. It was in Cairo that he would die, holding both these honoured positions up to the time of his death. Most of his important writing was done while he lived in Cairo. He is buried in Israel in Tiberias, and pilgrims still go to his grave every day. Maimonides' writings fall essentially into two groups, the *halakhic* and the philosophical. The writings on *halakhah* including his *Commentary to the Mishnah*, written when he was still a young man and including his famous "13 Principles of the Jewish Faith" (see sidebar below); numerous pastoral letters and *responsa*, written in answer to queries from Jewish communities throughout the Mediterranean at a time when these communities were under a variety of pressures ranging from forced conversions to false messiahs; the *Sefer Ha-Mitzvot/Book of the Commandments*, enumerating and explaining the 613 commandments; and the *Mishneh Torah* (also known as *Yad Ha-Khazakah/the Mighty Hand*), a monumental, comprehensive, and systematic code of Jewish law, organized and written in a clear, lucid style.

13 PRINCIPLES OF THE JEWISH FAITH

1. I believe with perfect faith that God is the Creator and Ruler of all things. He alone has made, does make, and will make all things.
2. I believe with perfect faith that God is One. There is no unity that is in any way like His. He alone is our God – He was, He is, and He will be.
3. I believe with perfect faith that God does not have a body. Physical concepts do not apply to Him. There is nothing whatsoever that resembles Him at all.
4. I believe with perfect faith that God is first and last.
5. I believe with perfect faith that it is only proper to pray to God. One may not pray to anyone or anything else.
6. I believe with perfect faith that all the words of the prophets are true.
7. I believe with perfect faith that all the prophecy of Moses is absolutely true. He was the chief of all prophets, both before and after him.
8. I believe with perfect faith that the entire Torah that we now have is that which was given to Moses.
9. I believe with perfect faith that this Torah will not be changed, and that there will never be another given by God.
10. I believe with perfect faith that God knows all of man's deeds and thoughts. It is thus written (Psalm 33:15), "He has molded every heart together, He understands what each one does".
11. I believe with perfect faith that God rewards those who keep His commandments, and punishes those who transgress Him.
12. I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah. No matter how long it takes, I will await his coming every day.
13. I believe with perfect faith that the dead will be brought back to life when God wills it to happen.

Within the context of the *halakhic* writings, Maimonides often discusses philosophy, but these books are clearly written for a different audience from that at which the philosophical writings were aimed. Written in a pellucid Hebrew, the *halakhic* works are designed for a readership of practicing Jews – not necessarily learned but deeply committed to Judaism. These readers are not troubled by the apparent contradictions between *halakhah* and Aristotelian rationalism. By contrast, the potential readers of Maimonides' major philosophical work, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, were severely vexed by that contradiction.

Written in Arabic, the *Guide* is addressed to non-Jews and Jews who find themselves in an intellectual dilemma brought on by attacks on Judaism by the neo-Aristotelian Arab philosophers of the period. A key purpose of this work is to allow its Jewish readers to reconcile Aristotle and Torah, to adhere to the faith of their ancestors while still embracing the rationalism that a man of science, like Maimonides, embraced willingly.

Maimonides was, indeed, a man of science. Young men of Sephardic origins were encouraged to balance Torah study with the sciences in this age, and, as a trained physician, he was typical in that respect. Undoubtedly, it was his background in the natural sciences that led to his affinity for Aristotle, the great naturalist of classical philosophy, the cataloguer and taxonomist of nature, the apostle of close observation. (It should be pointed out, however, that his knowledge of Aristotle was heavily influenced by the Muslim Aristotelians Avicenna and al-Farabi.) In the *Guide*, Maimonides attempts to apply a rationalism that has its roots firmly in the real world to matters of metaphysics and religion. The result is work written in the language of philosophy rather than Torah, one that assumes a knowledge both of the Aristotelian vocabulary and the vocabulary of Torah and Talmud. At the heart of the *Guide* is Maimonides' conception of God. When we say that "God is one" every day, what do we mean by that statement? For many Jewish philosophers – Maimonides chief among them – this is the central question of Jewish philosophy. He argues that God is a perfect unity, not admitting of any plurality. God does not have parts, either literally or figuratively – no arms or legs, no back or front, no end or beginning. (One of the alternate names for God in Jewish discourse is *Ein Sof/Without End*.)

That also means that, in Aristotelian terms, one cannot actually say "God is..." and proceed to enumerate God's attributes. To describe the Eternal One in such a sentence is to admit of a division between subject and predicate, in other words, a plurality. (Maimonides writes in Chapter 50 of the *Guide*, "Those who believe that God is One and that He has many attributes declare the Unity with their lips and assume the plurality of their thoughts".) Therefore, he concludes, one cannot discuss God in terms of positive attributes. On the other hand, one *can* describe what God is *not*. God is not corporeal, does not occupy space, experiences neither generation nor corruptions (in their Aristotelian sense of birth, decay, and death). For obvious reasons, Maimonides' conception of the Supreme Being is usually characterised as "negative theology" that is, defining by the accumulation of negatives. Maimonides writes, "All we understand is the fact that [God] exists, that [God] is a being to whom none of Adonai's creatures is similar, who has nothing in common with them, who does not include plurality, who is never too feeble to produce other beings and whose relation to the universe is that of a steersman to a boat; and even this is not a real relation, a real simile, but serves only to convey to us the idea that God rules the universe, that it is [God] that gives it duration and preserves its necessary arrangement."

But what of all the anthropomorphic terms that we encounter in Jewish sacred texts? What of "Adonai's rod and staff..." or the Creator who "reaches out a hand..."? There are thousands of passages like this in the Torah, in the Talmud, in Midrash, in our liturgy. Maimonides' response is that these are allegorical passages, designed to ease the transition of the Jewish people from idolatry to monotheism. Even the famous description of man's creation *b'tselem Elohim/in the image of God* is meant metaphorically; God created out of free will and we are granted the ability to reason and a free will of our own. But there is no "family resemblance."

The way that we come to know God and the world is through a combination of revelation and reason. Prophecy, for example, is not merely a gift from God processed through human imagination. According to Maimonides, prophecy also requires perfection of wisdom and morality as well as a developed imagination. And that gift from God is passed through the mediation of the Active Intellect (a “rational emanation” of the presence of the Almighty in the world), so reason must always play a part.

Indeed, a reason must play a role in the love of God, Maimonides holds. It is in large part through the intellect that we attain religious and spiritual goals. By the same token, he says, the sacred writings of Judaism are truthful and do not require us to accept anything that can not be proven by reason. Where they appear otherwise, we are to read them as allegory. For this reason, study of Torah is one way of achieving greater knowledge of God, engaging the intellect in the search. Faith and reason are not enemies but, in Maimonides’ thought, essential to each other if we are to understand God.

But, above all else, the purpose of Mosaic law is to lead the Jewish people away from the practice of idolatry, from paganism. The ritual sacrifices prescribed in the Torah represent a stopgap, a way station between the paganism that the people Israel had left behind, and a truly ethical and rational monotheism.

As much as he prizes reason, Maimonides believes that a Jewish life must combine the intellect with moral action, a synthesis of this Aristotelian life of the mind and the Jewish daily phenomenon of the act. That was the life Maimonides himself led; he did charity work among the poor as physician, was a dedicated leader of the Jewish community, and wrote on both Jewish law and philosophy. This practice is echoed later in the medieval period by Christian writers like Thomas Aquinas.

Jewish thinkers of this time were divided on Maimonides. His detractors, who could be quite violent on their denunciations, were infuriated by his apparent rejection of the resurrection of the dead in the Messianic Age, his insistence on the intellect as a component of prophecy, his reliance on Aristotelian concepts and vocabulary. To many he was a heretic, despite his erudition in Mishnah and seeming commitment to traditional Judaism in practice.

In 1230, twenty-six years after his death, some authorities tried to place a ban on the study of *The Guide for the Perplexed* and on sections of Maimonides’ legal writings. The battle raged with particular ferocity in France for several more years until both pro-and anti-Maimonideans were shocked into a common position by a group of Dominican inquisitors who burned copies of Maimonides’ writings. This was too much for either side to bear and for a time the battle subsided. At the end of the thirteenth century, it began to heat up again when a group of anti-Maimonidean rabbis issued an edict prohibiting anyone under the age of twenty-five from studying Greek philosophy. But the worst of the conflict came to an abrupt end when most of France’s Jews were expelled in 1306 CE, giving the community something much more pressing to worry about.

Today, Maimonides is the one exponent of medieval Jewish philosophers whose works are widely taught outside the Jewish world; his attempts to unite Aristotle and Torah had a profound influence on his Christian contemporaries. Within the Jewish world, Maimonides is still among the most frequently cited authorities on *halakhic* matters, even by those who would never consider reading *The Guide for the Perplexed*, and his ethical writings inform Jewish thought to this day.

(N.B.: The quotations that follow are taken from *The Ethical Writings of Maimonides*.)

FROM THE WRITINGS OF MAIMONIDES

The numerous evils to which an individual person is exposed are due to the defects existing in the person themselves. We complain and seek relief in our own faults; we suffer from the evils which we, by our own free will, inflict on ourselves. Why then ascribe them to God, who has no part in them?

It is improper to consider personal danger when the public welfare is at stake.

If you build a synagogue, let it be more beautiful than your house. When you feel hungry, clothe the naked, or devote anything to a holy purpose, it must be from your finest.

Free will is granted to every man. If he wishes to direct himself toward the good way and become righteous, the will to do so is in his hand; and if he wishes to direct himself toward the bad way and become wicked, the will to do so is likewise in his hand. Thus it is written in the Torah, "Behold, the man is become as one of us, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3.22) – that is to say, the human species has become unique in the world in that it can know of itself, by its own wit and reflection, what is good and what is evil, and in that it can do whatever it wishes.

MOSES MENDELSSOHN (1729 C.E. – 1786 C.E.)

If we accept the rule of science, as Spinoza urged, what happens to Revelation? Moses Mendelssohn is a pivotal figure in the history of Jewish thought because he was the first to face that and related questions. He is also the first significant post-Spinoza Jewish philosopher, an Orthodox Jew who extolled the *Haskalah/Jewish Enlightenment*, a friend of Christians who remained an observant traditional Jew, yet whose thought undermined the foundations of Orthodoxy as surely as Kant would undermine the foundations of Mendelssohn's thought. He was also the first Jewish thinker of note to emerge from Germany, the culture that played a significant role in the thought of virtually every subsequent Jewish philosopher of importance.

Moses Mendelssohn was born in Dessau, the son of a Torah scribe. He received a traditional Orthodox upbringing and education, studying with Rabbi David Frankel. When Frankel was named chief rabbi of Berlin in 1743, his star pupil followed him to the capital. There, the fourteen-year-old boy eked out a meagre living working as a copyist and private tutor. The boy's physical limitations were numerous. He suffered from a nervous disorder, was a stutterer, and had a severe curvature of the spine that resulted in a hunched back. He was exceedingly short, and to be

frank, homely. But he was possessed of a lightning intellect, a personal warmth and charm, modesty and integrity that overcame any shortcomings his body might have imposed.

In Berlin, Mendelssohn studies secular subjects under the tutelage of several excellent Jewish scholars. He quickly mastered High German, Italian, French, Latin, Greek, English, mathematics, and philosophy. It was also in this period that he met the German playwright and poet Gotthold Lessing. Thus began a lifelong friendship between the two dissimilar men, one Jewish, the other Christian, brought together by a passion for the life of the mind and a deep respect and affection for one another.

With Lessing's encouragement and assistance, he published his first writings. Mendelssohn would not need Lessing to help for very long. He quickly established himself as a writer and literary critic; in 1763 he was awarded the first prize of the Prussian Royal Academy for his treatise, "On Evidence in the Metaphysical Sciences." That same year he received an even rarer honour, being granted the "right of residence" in Berlin by Frederick the Great. Although the Prussian ruler was notably liberal for this era, even toward his Jewish subjects, it was highly unusual for such a residency permit to be given.

Mendelssohn clearly enjoyed a privileged status granted to very few European Jews in the eighteenth century. That status, bestowed on a man who continued to comport himself as an Orthodox Jew, pointed up the uncomfortable duality that faced him in Frederick's Prussia (and anywhere else in Europe, for that matter), a duality that has characterized the position of Diaspora Jews throughout the modern era, albeit with the lines drawn less sharply today. On the one hand, Mendelssohn was permitted to practice his faith, to maintain his Jewish identity, and to enjoy a degree of acceptance in the salons and even some public acclaim. But he was never allowed to forget who and what he was, or that all the success could be swept away with the stroke of a monarch's pen, that he was, as Mendelssohn himself ruefully noted, "a member of an oppressed race."

This painful contradiction was brought home to Mendelssohn forcefully in 1769 by a turn of events that would cause him to shift the focus of his philosophical endeavours for the rest of his life.

Ironically, it began with another seeming honour. An acquaintance named Johann Caspar Lavater, a young Calvinist clergyman, so admired Mendelssohn that he dedicated his German translation of a religious tract to the older man. Unfortunately, he also included in its introduction a public challenge to Mendelssohn: read the treatise and refute it publicly or convert to Christianity. Whatever motivated the young pastor, Mendelssohn would not be drawn into a public quarrel; he published a quietly dignified reply, restating his commitment to Judaism and his pride in his Jewish identity.

But the incident reminded Mendelssohn of the metaphorical tightrope he walked. From this point on, the focus of his life's work shifted to questions of Jewish identity, emancipation, and belief. Emil Fackenheim writes that despite the sensation caused by the Lavater affair, "it would be a tempest in a teapot were it not from one important result: it occasioned the first work in modern Jewish philosophy." (Of course, Spinoza's adherents would disagree with that last statement.)

That work, *Jerusalem*, was completed and published in 1783. It presents Mendelssohn's major statement on Jewish identity and Christian-Jewish relations. It is an elegantly written and compassion-stirring argument for tolerance of religious differences on all sides.

Putting Judaism in the context of the European Enlightenment, Mendelssohn breaks sharply with Maimonides and other medieval Jewish thinkers, arguing that if religion is based on reason (as the neo-Aristotelians believed) then it serves no purpose, for revelation cannot disclose any truths not already available to the rational, questing mind. Judaism is not "revealed religion" but "revealed law," the product of doctrines of religious reason that require no proof or revelation to be intelligible. What distinguishes the Jew from the non-Jew is not a revelation of reason but a unique body of Mosaic law, an historical fact that is attested to by the six hundred thousand men, women and children of the Hebrew people present at Sinai. Therefore, Jews can only achieve fulfilment by adhering to the laws of Moses. The God of reason and the God of Sinai are unified in the observance of *halakhah* (an interesting forerunner to the ideas of Rabbi Soloveithchik). It is the sheer *daily-ness* of these observances that brings Jews closer to eternal truths.

Jerusalem is also a plea for religious tolerance. The knowledge of Truth is an indispensable part of human happiness, Mendelssohn says, so truth must be accessible to all, regardless of creed or nation. No religion, not even Judaism, can be the only path to God's truths. Therefore, freedom of thought and tolerance for other systems of thought are a prerequisite to happiness. As he observes, "According to the tenets of Judaism, all inhabitants of the earth have a claim to salvation, and the means to attain it are as widespread as mankind itself, as liberally dispensed as the means of satisfying one's hunger and other natural assets."

At the same time, Mendelssohn argues in both this work and his later writings, Diaspora Jews must integrate themselves into the cultures that host them:

Even now, no better advice than this can be given to the House of Jacob:
Adopt the mores and constitution of the country in which you find
yourself, but be steadfast in upholding the religion of your fathers, too.
Bear both burdens as well as you can.

After all, isn't that the task Moses Mendelssohn had taken on himself?

Mendelssohn would spend the remainder of his life trying to reconcile the two sides of his existence. He became a dedicated and public battler for the rights of German Jews, an activist within the community itself. At the same time, he worked for the modernization of German Jewish culture, translating the Bible into High German, thereby providing the Jews with a lesson in High German and the Germans with an introduction to Jewish belief.

His writings do not constitute an original system of thought: they are a reflection of the rationalist liberalism of the Enlightenment salons in which he was an honoured guest. But he triggered the Jewish Enlightenment, the *Haskalah*, with his passionate double emphasis on the modernization of Jewish culture paired with the emancipation of Diaspora Jewry. As such the *Haskalah* became something Mendelssohn never intended, a most formidable assault on the edifice of Rabbinic Judaism. Combined with the beginnings of emancipation for Europe's Jews and the concomitant temptations of assimilation, that assault was more devastating for

traditional Judaism than Mendelssohn could have dreamed, resulting in the rise of the Reform movement and its eventual offspring, the advent of secular Judaism and, in our time, a splintering of *Am Yisroel/the Jewish people* into several different cultures.

The most spectacular sign of what Mendelssohn – who remained a practicing Orthodox Jew up to his death at the age of fifty-seven – had triggered occurred in his own family. His grandson, Felix, the composer, whose fame would outstrip his own, was baptized a Christian.

(N.B.: the quotations that follow are taken from *Jerusalem*.)

FROM THE WRITINGS OF MOSES MENDELSSOHN

Each conception of spiritual beauty is a glimpse at God.

God punishes the sinner not according to His own infinity but according to the sinner's frailty.

If you take mankind as a whole, you will not find that there is constant progress in its development that brings it ever nearer to perfection. On the contrary, we see constant fluctuations; mankind as a whole has never yet taken any step forward without soon and with redoubled speed sliding back to its previous position.

All commandments of the divine law are addressed to man's will, to his capacity to act. In fact, the original Hebrew term [*emunah*] that is usually translated as "faith" means, in most cases, merely "trust", confidence or firm reliance on pledge and promise... Whenever the text refers to eternal verities, it does not use the term "believe" but "understand" and "know"....

As I see it, Judaism has from its inception consisted of both doctrines and laws, convictions and actions. The doctrines of Judaism were never tied to phrases or formulations which had to remain unchanged for all men and times, throughout all revolutions of language, morality, ways of life and circumstance.

The ultimate purpose of the written and the unwritten laws prescribing actions as well as rules of life is public and private salvation.

Extract 4: L Goodman, 'Judaism'

Taken from: *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, edited by C Taliaferro, P Draper and P Quinn (John Wiley and sons, 1999), Chapter 5, pp. 43-55.

In the heyday of positivism philosophy was often a kind of metadiscourse. There were philosophy of science, philosophy of law, philosophy of language, and, of course, philosophy of religion. These metadisciplines sought to clarify the various modes of discourse and untangle the conceptual confusions that might arise within them. Sometimes the function was propaedeutic, sometimes apologetic, but the bracketing of the object language was decisive: philosophers of science were not doing science when they put on their philosophical hats, but clarifying conceptual foundations, justifying, sometimes, almost, acting as cheerleaders. Philosophy of law or ethics did not indulge in normative discourse but explained it, or exposed its pretensions. Philosophy of religion was not about the sacred but about the modes of speech and judgment that religious persons might use... Users of the "object language" were thought of as somewhat unselfconscious naifs or naturals. Philosophy might awaken them to the inner problems of the language they were using, and then, it was assumed, they would no longer speak or act in the same way. Philosophy would make them cautious or skeptical or tolerant. Perhaps it would teach them the deep inner truth of relativism, symbolism, or positivism itself. Certainly their thinking would never be the same. Philosophy of Judaism was about the problems of being Jewish – just as philosophy of religion was about the problems of being religious, or metaethics was about the problems of speaking or thinking ethically.

Today, happily, the tide has come in, or the catwalk has collapsed, and philosophers now find themselves swimming in the same water as those other human beings whose thoughts they seek to understand. We have religious and ethical philosophy, rather than just philosophy of...; normative ethics has resumed with gusto, and religious philosophy can speak of God, or ritual, or the nexus between divinity and obligation, and not just about the problems of religious discourse. The quest for a peculiar mode of religious speech or thought has all but ended, except in so rather projectively romantic forms of armchair anthropology. We can speak of Jewish philosophy rather than just philosophy of Judaism. The change is liberating, not least because it returns this ancient discipline to its roots and broadens its scope to match its widest historical range. Jewish philosophy will include a universe of problems that have exercised thoughtful exponents of the Jewish tradition – problems of cosmology and theology, social history, hermeneutics, philosophical anthropology, jurisprudence, and indeed aesthetics.

If philosophy is an open inquiry that seeks critical scrutiny of its own assumptions, Jewish philosophy will involve the informing of that inquiry by the resources of the Jewish tradition. Jewish philosophy so defined subsumes the narrower question, "what does it mean to be a Jew?" in the larger universe of Jewish concerns – from the problem of evil to divine transcendence, immortality, human freedom, justice, history and destiny, nature and economy, the value and meaning of life, and of human life in particular.

What unites practitioners of Jewish philosophy is not some exotic logic that we can label chauvinistically or patronizingly as "Talmudic," nor a common store of doctrines, but a chain of discourse and problematics, an ongoing conversation that is jarred but not halted by shifts of language, external culture, or epistemic

background. What makes this conversation distinctive is no unique flavor or accent, no values or concerns that are unshared by others, but a respect for prior Jewish efforts found worthy as points of reference or departure as the conversation continues.

The unity and distinctiveness of Jewish philosophy, then, are both conceptual and historical. There is a historical continuity from one participant to the next – as there is in general philosophy. And there is a critical reappropriation and redefinition of the elements of the tradition in each generation – as there must be in any religious or cultural transmission.

The first major Jewish philosopher was Philo (ca. 20 BCE–ca. CE 50), a cultured Alexandrian whose commitments to his people were evident in his embassy to Caligula in their behalf, but also in his creative synthesis of Platonic, Stoic, and Biblical ideas.... Adapting the Stoic technique of allegory, Philo presented the Torah as a paradigm of the rational legislation Plato had called for, a law that grounds its commands in reasons, not sheer sanctions or obscure mysteries. Underlying the Law's authority was God's role as the Creator, not as arbitrary lord but as source of the wisdom manifest in nature and echoed in the Mosaic norms pursuing human harmony, creativity, and charity. It was by wisdom that God made his love manifest. For the plan of nature, the Logos (a concept appropriated by Jewish, Christian, and Muslim thinkers) was at once nature's immanent archetype and God's transcendent attribute. In nature and in the Law we grasp, as it were, God's idea.

Philo spoke of philosophy as the handmaiden of theology. But it was to philosophy, not astrology or textual stratigraphy, that he entrusted theology. Through his eyes we see the Torah as a philosophical text – Genesis, not just as a creation myth but as a self-conscious effort to fathom the natural world, by reference to the act of an utterly transcendent – yet not inscrutable – God.... Just as modern Bible scholars assay the poetic chastity of Genesis against the theomachies and theogonies of ancient Near Eastern myths, Philo assays Mosaic naturalism and rationalism against the Hellenistic mystery cults. He finds in Moses the philosophical lawgiver for whom Plato had hoped. But reliance on a single individual's discretion is gone, displaced by a calm confidence in the norms of the Law; and philosophy guides the reading of those norms. For human wisdom reflects the wisdom that founded the Law.

The first systematic Jewish philosopher was Saadiah Gaon (882–942), a pioneer exegete, grammarian, liturgist, and lexicographer. Born in Egypt, Saadiah studied in Tiberias and led the ancient Talmudic academy of Pumpedita, by now located in Baghdad. His *Book of Critically Selected Beliefs and Convictions* surveys the views on major issues and defends those judged best-founded in reason and scripture – creation, providence, and accountability, but also moral and epistemic objectivism.. Saadiah rebuts skepticism and moral/aesthetic monism, favoring a humanizing pluralism over the Neoplatonic, mystical, or ascetic appetite for simplicity or austerity. Maimonides speaks of Saadiah as a practitioner of *kalam*, an apologetic, dialectical theology rooted in authority. But Saadiah's Biblical hermeneutics are as informed by philosophy as his philosophical views are by scripture. Convinced of the Torah's veracity, he insists that Biblical expressions be taken as familiarly understood only if logic and science, sound tradition and other

texts permit. Otherwise we must read figuratively, forestalling capricious readings by citing textual parallels to warrant each departure from familiar Hebrew usage.

The Hebrew poet Ibn Gabirol, as discovered only in 1845, was the philosopher Avicenna, author of the *Fons Vitae* ("The Fountain of Life"), which survives intact only in Latin, although passages quoted in Hebrew point us toward the lost Arabic original. Written as a dialogue between teacher and disciple, it addresses the ontology of the One and the many, relying on "intellectual matter," and a primal Will to mediate divine simplicity... Among its most endearing exchanges: "*Disciple*: 'The resolution of all things to these two (universal matter and form), is this fact or opinion?' *Master*: 'It is not a fact but an opinion.'"

Ibn Gabirol's *On the Improvement of the Moral Qualities* examines moral psychology in a physiological vein. While upholding the soul's immortality... and the mind's affinity with the divine Intellect, Ibn Gabirol links human emotions with the bodily senses – hauteur, humility, shame, and shamelessness with seeing; love, hate, pity, and hardheartedness with hearing; ire, complaisance, jealousy, and spunk with smelling; joy, anxiety, serenity, and regret with tasting; free-spending, tightfistedness, boldness, and timidity with touching. The virtues, of course, are means between extremes. But, since each disposition represents a specific "temperament," or blending of the bodily humors, Ibn Gabirol can discuss and "treat" the dispositions by reference not only to social norms but also to our embodiment, laying the groundwork for Maimonides' treatment of virtues and vices as habits which our choices overlay upon our inborn propensities.

Judah Halevi (before 1075–1141), perhaps the greatest post-Biblical Hebrew poet, was another medically-minded thinker who grounded a theology in nature and looked to nature as the realm in which understanding would bear fruit. His philosophical dialogue the *Kuzari* imagines the encounter with Judaism of the King of the Khazars, a people of the far off Volga, who had adopted Judaism in the eighth century. As Halevi sets the scene, the king has dreamed that his intentions please God, but not his actions. He summons a spokesman of the "despised religion" only after hearing from a Neoplatonist, a Christian, and a Muslim. The philosopher's ideas are attractive. But, as the king explains, it is his way of life, not his mind that needs improvement. He worries that sectarians who share the philosopher's ideas all seem sincerely bent on one another's murder. The problem is no mere abstraction. Halevi's poems reflect the mayhem he had seen in Spain, the Bosnia or Guernica of his time, where Jews were caught between the hammer and anvil of Reconquista and *jihad*. The philosopher's attempt to set the life of the mind above such conflicts vividly reveals the poverty of the prevailing intellectualism that passed for philosophy. Halevi's own response is to pursue a way of life and thought firmly rooted in practice and community with his people, in the past and future as well as the present.

Because Halevi places culture (including material culture), imagination, and history where more conventional philosophers had placed logic, reason, and cosmology, moderns of romantic bent see in him an adversary of philosophy. But closer study shows him as a skilled philosopher committed to a profound critique of established philosophical notions. His ontology is deeply rooted in Ibn Gabirol, as Marx is in Hegel. But Halevi banishes the stream of emanating celestial intellects that had entranced earlier thinkers. Seizing on Ibn Gabirol's idea of a union of will and wisdom and brilliantly transforming his spiritual matter, Halevi returns to the

divine word, now called 'Amr, Arabic for God's word of command, embodying the imperative force of archetypal and normative wisdom. Like Philo and the prophets in their way, he finds God's word immanent and accessible, in nature and the Law.

Halevi's Khazar responds thoughtfully to the Christian and Muslim spokespersons: not having been reared among them, he does not long to make sense of Christian mysteries or warmly resonate to the Arabic of the Qur'an. Naturalists always try to rationalize what they observe. But without direct experience or the heart's consent that is won in early childhood, Christian and Muslim traditions do not compel. The roots of commitment, Halevi finds, lie not in the momentary ecstasies of an isolated anchorite or the abstract ruminations of intellectualist philosophers but in the transgenerational life of a people.

Touched by the yearnings of the Hebrew liturgy (to which he, like Ibn Gabirol, contributed), Halevi demands to know how one can weep for Zion and not go there, where God's Presence is clearest and the life God commanded is most fully lived. Acting on this yearning, Halevi left Spain and journeyed to his people's ancient home, where he died, as legend has it, kissing the soil of Zion, run through by an Arab horseman's spear. But, even had he lived, his yearnings would not have ended with arrival in the holy city. For his famous lines, 'My heart is in the East, but I am in the utmost West,' voice spiritual as well as earthly longing, not to be sated by mere presence in the Land.

In the *Book of Guidance to the Duties of the Heart* Bahya Ibn Pakuda (mid-11th to mid-12th century) made philosophic understanding a spiritual obligation, involving study of nature, probing of God's Law, and internalization of its commands. Following the ancient pietist tradition, Bahya finds a kernel of self-serving in typical worries about free will, which neither reason nor texts can resolve. Wisdom urges us to accept maximal responsibility for our own acts and to accept all that befalls us as God's work... Humanism, we note, often does just the opposite, blaming fate, or God (as in the Epicurean dilemma) over what we do not control, even in ourselves, but indulging in self-congratulation, anxiety, or remorse over what we deem our own domain. Bahya's approach, like that of the Stoics, is rhetorical, a tactic for coping, not a metaphysical solution. But in voicing an outlook we can never wholly share, he offers us a kind of reality check: our own excuses and castigations are equally rhetorical, as we notice when they assign credit or blame, shoulder or shirk responsibility, otherwise than Bahya does.

Maimonides, called the Rambam, an acronym of the Hebrew, Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (1135?-1204), was born in Cordova but exiled with his family in 1148, when the Almohad invaders imposed conversion on non-Muslims. Living first in North Africa, then briefly in Palestine, he settled in Cairo and took up medicine to support his family after his brother's death in a shipwreck. His medical service to Saladin's *wazir* was complemented by a busy private practice, and he authored ten medical treatises.

Maimonides wrote three major juridical works: (1) *The Book of the Commandments* schematized the traditional 613 *mitzvot* or divine commands of the Pentateuch, notably including "I am the Lord thy God..." and "Thou shalt have no other gods before me..." as the first of the positive and negative commandments, arguing, with rabbinic precedent (*Makkot*, near the end) that these two precepts, addressed directly by God to human understanding, are the axioms grounding all the rest. (2) His Arabic commentary on the Mishnah, the ancient legal code that

forms the backbone of the Talmud, interprets the 'oral law' by which the Rabbis elaborated Biblical legislation as containing the rational principles of that law. Maimonides structures the commandments in terms of Aristotelian VIRTUE ETHICS... arguing that they seek human moral and intellectual perfection, the virtues that enable us to know God and realize our likeness to Him. Commenting on the promise to all Israel of "a portion in the world to come," Maimonides lays out thirteen credal articles that assure even non-philosophers a share in immortality, since beliefs are practical surrogates for the ideas that render the intellect immortal. (3) His major and still authoritative 14-volume codification of Talmudic law, the *Mishneh Torah*, or Law in Review, was written in Mishnaic Hebrew. Familiarly cited as the *Yad Hazakah*, "The Strong Hand," because the word *Yad*, hand, has the numerical value of 14, it takes as its motto the verse "Then shall I be unabashed to scrutinize all Thy commandments" (Psalm 119:6). It systematizes all of Talmudic law, omitting rabbinic citations (although faithfully respecting rabbinic authority and precedent) and cutting clear of the often digressive Talmudic discussions, organizing the laws according to their purposes: a few brief commandments ground a moral code, the laws of torts and the penal code pursue peace and justice, those of the Sabbath or the elaborate Temple ritual draw the mind to the idea of a transcendent God and wean it from all that is even reminiscent of pagan beliefs and practices. Strikingly, Maimonides elaborates a rabbinic political ideal, with the Torah as its constitution, a strong central ruler, "to fight the battles of the Lord," but under the authority of the Law and the wisdom of its interpreters...

Maimonides' crowning philosophical achievement was the *Guide to the Perplexed*, which examines theological problems under the rabbinic rubrics of "the act of creation" and "the act of the chariot" – the Biblical accounts of Genesis and the vision of Ezekiel... The Rabbis permitted explication of these passages only one-on-one and only for the best-prepared students, who need no more than hints to provoke their understanding. The problems, as Maimonides understood them, were those of cosmology and metaphysics, centered on the accommodation of the infinitely transcendent God to the finitude of creation. For Ezekiel seems to suggest, with much periphrasis, that he saw God in human form; and Genesis clearly proposes a causal relation between God's timeless perfection... and our changeable world.

To keep faith with the Talmudic injunction, lest unprepared readers face problems they cannot resolve, Maimonides couches his *Guide* as a letter to a single disciple with specific capabilities and needs. He never calls the *Guide* a book: and, more tellingly, does not state the problems it addresses, leaving readers in the dark about its subject matter, unless they have grappled with these problems. So effective is this approach that even careful readers often imagine the *Guide* opens by refuting anthropomorphism, when in fact its first 70 chapters assume that all ordinary predicates and relations are inapplicable to God and address the question how it is possible for us to speak of God at all, a problematic voiced in the Midrashic remark: "How great is the boldness of the prophets, who liken the creature to its Creator!" Maimonides deconstructs prophetic anthropomorphism, carefully avoiding the "onion peeling" that was the bugbear of his predecessor al-Ghazali (1058–1111), who feared that de-anthropomorphizing, carried too far, might leave one with nothing... Maimonides shows how all Biblical anthropomorphisms aim to communicate some (human) idea of perfection, while excluding the limitations that human ideas typically entail. The God that emerges from this analysis is no

ordinary being (Maimonides urges that even little children should be taught that God is not a person) but a being of sheer perfection whose absolute and necessary existence... is made explicit when God reveals Himself to Moses as "I AM THAT I AM," an All-sufficiency encapsulated in the Tetragrammaton, whose letters are those of the verb to be...

Maimonides, like Saadiah, defends creation, but he warns against assuming that either creation or eternity can be proved. Aristotle, who taught us the difference between apodictic and dialectical arguments, reveals by his resort to persuasive language that he knew his own arguments for the eternity of the natural order were not rigorous proofs. They were in fact projections of an eternalism already implicit in the Aristotelian analysis of time and change, matter and potentiality. But the defenses of creation proposed in the *kalam* proved too much, making continuous creation a necessity by dissolving the continuities of nature, splintering time, and making science impossible, freedom inconceivable, and the idea of creation itself incoherent.

In place of the certitude sought by the polemical exponents and adversaries of creation, Maimonides proposes only that creation is more probable conceptually and preferable theologically to eternalism. For the eternalist scheme of emanation without volition cannot explain how complexity emerged (by some automatism) from divine simplicity. And the Aristotelian claim that nature has always been as it is does not leave room for God's determination to have made a difference – as the voluntarism of Ibn Gabirol, Halevi, and al-Ghazali, suggested that it should. Indeed, if Aristotelian essentialism and Neoplatonic emanationism are taken strictly, change would not seem possible at all.

Pondering the problems of evil, of providence, and of revelation – all questions which involve the limits in God's creative manifestation – Maimonides finds precious hints in the book of Job (1:6), where Satan, the adversary, is said to have come "along with" the children of God... Satan, according to one rabbinic gloss, is simply sin, or death. But the book of Job (which Maimonides reads as a fictional allegory of the problem of evil) tells us that Job was innocent. Satan, whom he identifies with metaphysical "otherness," alienation from God's absolute perfection, is matter; and Maimonides chides the Neoplatonists for not recognizing in their own idea of matter a solution to the problem of evil. For matter is a concomitant of creation. It is not a positive reality, a principle like the divine ideas, the forms and forces that give reality to natural beings, but it "comes along with them," in the sense that there will be no gift of existence without alienation, no creation without separation. Matter is thus the basis of evil, including human differences and vulnerabilities. It is not evil in itself, and indeed is not real, as the Neoplatonic forms are. At once the heroic wife of Proverbs 31 and the married harlot of Proverbs 7, never content with just one form, matter in our own body is a receptivity that can be turned upward or downward, since the soul has her own power to govern it.

We are, then, neither as abandoned to circumstance as, say, Alexander of Aphrodisias suggests, nor as smothered by attentiveness as the *kalam* might have it in assigning God to superintend the fall of every leaf. Providence comes to nature through the forms, perfection scaled to the capacities of finitude; but providence does reach individuals and is not confined to species... For Aristotle himself taught us that universals exist only in their particulars. And the human form is not just a pattern of life but a substantial entity, a rational soul, whose guidance is the

providence of the wise and whose fulfillment, in knowledge of God, is immortality. This ultimate goal of the philosopher is visited on others by prophets, those rare philosophers who are graced with clarity of imagination to translate pure concepts into images and institutions, laws and symbols, beliefs and practices that allow all humanity to share in the fruits of philosophy....

Among the modern exponents of Jewish philosophy, few rank with those already mentioned. Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86), grandfather of the composer, is one. He was called the German Socrates, in part for his original arguments for immortality in his *Phaedo* or *Phaidon*. Academic entrée was out of the question for a Jew in Mendelssohn's time, and his outpouring of important publications was produced while he earned his living as managing director of a silk factory. Imbued with traditional and philosophical Jewish learning, he mastered independently Wolff and Leibniz, the culture and literary language of modern Europe, and won fame by taking the prize in the Berlin Academy competition of 1763, in which Kant won honourable mention... Mendelssohn was the first Jew to be accepted among modern European intellectuals, he inspired his friend Gotthold Lessing's play *Nathan the Wise*, and his idea of immortality as unending moral progress became that of Kant. Pressed by critics to justify his loyalty to his ancient faith, Mendelssohn responded in *Jerusalem* with a comprehensive philosophy of Judaism, arguing that it was not their religious beliefs that Israel had acquired at Sinai, since these were simply the natural religion they had already discovered by reason. What was revealed, and eternally valid, was a system of practices designed to sustain Israel's loyalty to that faith, making them "a light unto the nations." Enforcement of these ceremonial symbols had passed, with the destruction of the ancient Hebrew commonwealth, from that state to the hearts of individuals, where providence decreed it should forever abide. Mendelssohn thus blunted accusations of illiberality and the somewhat inconsistent charges of dual loyalties that were already becoming clichés of anti-Semitic modernism, but only by forswearing the social authority of Judaic institutions and forestalling the first modern glimmerings of Zionism. A founder of the Jewish Enlightenment, the *Haskalah*, he worked to elevate his fellow Jews by championing German-Jewish education, translating the Pentateuch, Psalms, and Song of Songs, and effectively combating such civil disabilities as the infamous oath *more Judaico*.

Hermann Cohen (1842–1918) was the son of a cantor and son-in-law of the splendid Hebrew liturgical composer Lewandowski. He became a major Kantian, an early critic of the *Ding an sich* and supplemented Kantian ethics with Aristotelian and Biblical ideas of virtue and justice. Cohen championed the loyalty and authentic Germanness of German Jews against attacks from the anti-Semitic historian Heinrich von Treitschke, by marking the affinities of Jewish values with Kantian ethics. In *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism*, he made God the moral standard and guarantor of justice and charity that seek to create a community of free individuals, a kingdom of ends that philosophy cannot prove to be inevitable but that personal conviction must somehow uphold...

Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929) nearly abandoned Judaism but discovered its inner spirituality at the Yom Kippur services he attended in 1913, out of a desire to enter Christianity not as a pagan but as a Jew. An important Hegel scholar, Rosenzweig uncovered a more liberal, less Machiavellian Hegel than was familiar in his time. His *Star of Redemption*, written largely in postcards home from the German trenches during World War I is a manifesto of spiritual existentialism that

breaks with the classic primacy of the (intellectualist) Logos and foregrounds the immediacy of creation, encountered, rather than understood, more mythic than rational. We escape mythic atemporality, Cohen urges, not through reason but through revelation, which speaks to us, primordially, in a command, to love God; and, therefore, our fellow humans... Revelation creates community, and community creates the individual, capable of dialogue with God. Thus the birth of the I–Thou relationship, crucial to several philosophers of the day, including Buber.

The star of David, signified in Rosenzweig's title, is his emblem of the dynamic relations of creation, revelation, and redemption that link God, man, and the universe. Like Mendelssohn, Rosenzweig translated much of the Bible into German, collaborating with Buber, who completed the work on his death. He helped found the Free Jewish House of Learning in Frankfurt and translated Halevi's liturgical poetry. But, unlike Halevi, Rosenzweig saw Israel's intimacy with God as a contact with eternity that somehow draws Jews out of history, living redemption while the world prepares for it in more material ways. He thus opposed Zionism, and, perhaps as tellingly, told an inquirer who asked whether he prayed with *tefillin*, "Not yet."

Martin Buber (1878–1965) was raised in the home of his grandfather Solomon Buber, a well-known scholar of Midrash. He studied with Dilthey and Simmel, became a youthful Zionist leader, and was drawn to the tales of the Hasidic Master Nahman of Bratslav, which he adapted into German. His novels gave modern Jews friendly access to the Hasidic world, and his Zionism proposed a Jewish–Arab community in Palestine, where he settled in 1938. His *I and Thou* (1922) foregrounds the relationality of human with human or of human with God. We constitute both self and other in radically different ways when we use an *it* or confront a *thou*. Authenticity, freedom, even genuine presentness depend on the I–Thou relation. God is the eternal Thou, never made an *it* by spiritual fatigue, but glimpsed through human encounters with others, and with art. When we speak to God, not about Him, we encounter the living presence. Revelation is humanity's continuing response to that presence, epitomized in Israel's covenant with God.

Emil Fackenheim is best known perhaps (although his career began with studies of Avicenna's doctrine of love and Hegel's religious dimensions) for the prominence he gives the Holocaust. His conclusions are not intellectual but existential. Their core, like the determination of the protagonist in Bernard Malamud's *The Fixer*, is a determination "not to give Hitler a posthumous victory" – to find some mode of action or expression that will affirm Jewish vitality and strengthen the commitment of Jews.

Emmanuel Levinas is a Midrashic thinker, a master of aspects, and thus a phenomenologist, much admired by postmodernists, perhaps in part because he shuns sustained argument and system with the same discomfort that post-Holocaust musicians may show for melody, harmony, or symmetry. But Levinas is an avowedly ethical and indeed a constructive thinker. In speaking of the claims made upon us by the face of the other, he speaks, in his own way, of the same person whose cloak and millstone the Torah commands us not to take in pledge, the stranger whom we are commanded to love and told that God loves, the same thou that Buber and Rosenzweig find at the roots of our humanity and God's commanding word – although Levinas quarrels with Buber's somewhat romantic, non-intellectual construal of the I–Thou relation. In the dialectic of rabbinic thought

Levinas finds a very Hebrew awareness of the ever-present face of the other. But he admires Rosenzweig for refusing to subjectivize nature in the post-Kantian mode, and thus for respecting the inalienable otherness of the other. Cautious of the mere posit of God as the parent who authorizes or commands our respect for one another, Levinas sees a trace of divine transcendence in the sheer alterity of the other, a trace that he connects with the Biblical dictum that one cannot see God's face and with the Maimonidean gloss that when Moses was allowed to see God's "back," it was a "trace" of God – here understood as the ethical demand of alterity – that he was vouchsafed to know, and thus to enshrine in the Law.

Pausing now to sum up what it is that the philosophers we have considered have in common – since I think it best to ask the question empirically here, rather than to beg it prescriptively – we find that the exponents of Jewish philosophy in every period share the prophetic concern. That is, they continue to interpret the ethical socially and the social ethically. They share the Mosaic interest in cosmology and in the metaphysics of divinity, even when they fight shy (as Moses did) of efforts to bring God to terms in fanciful narratives or bring him to his knees in the graven images of theory. They, remain sensitive to the absoluteness of the Mosaic I AM, which contrasts vividly against the ground of Parmenides' sheer affirmation of being (*esti*). For in the I AM, which will become the one item of the Decalogue that all Israel must hear for themselves, God speaks to us in the first person and in a language that does not negate appearances but invites our humanity, our acceptance of creation and of one another. Objectivity does not exclude but presupposes subjecthood, and subjecthood does not entail but excludes the mere subjectivity of self or other.

All of the philosophers we have considered are in touch with their surroundings. None speaks a language too remote to be translated or uses an idiom that the others cannot catch, or trusts in categories incommensurate with those of humanity at large. Their philosophies are neither the symptoms of a *Zeitgeist* nor apologetics for a *Volksgeist* but products of reflection, enlivened by a tradition of critical thought and discourse. That reflection is made critical in part by its openness to the larger philosophical world, the world of Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics and Epicureans, the Neoplatonists and Muslim philosophers and theologians, the work of Thomas or the Renaissance humanists, of Leibniz, Kant and Hegel, the phenomenologists, existentialists, and postmodernists. Among these voices, the exponents of Jewish philosophy have been prominent and original participants, just as Josephus is among historians, or Saul Bellow among novelists. Their stance is creative, not merely (as Hitler thought) "parasitic" or reactive. Their creativity is fostered by the wealth of their own traditions and by the crosstalk of their philosophical milieu.

In every period there are certain Jewish thinkers, or thinkers of Jewish origin, whose work cannot be classed as a contribution to Jewish philosophy. One thinks of those who succumbed to conversionary pressures in the medieval or the modern age and of those who internalized the anti-Jewish hostilities they felt. More broadly, certain major thinkers, whose ideas are inspired by Jewish sources, are not participants in the conversation of Jewish philosophy. Marx and Freud must be numbered among these. They paid a price for their cosmopolitanism, in terms of the free or forced abandonment of orientation toward their Jewish roots when they entered the mainstream of Western culture. Spinoza is a crucial case. His philosophy is deeply immersed in the great problematics of the Western tradition

but also in the specific issues by which Jewish philosophers sought to address those problematics. What makes it hard to count Spinoza as a contributor to Jewish philosophy is not that he did not confine himself to a philosophy of Judaism – for no major Jewish philosopher did that – but that the circumstances of his life and epoch turned him decisively away from the methods of accommodation and critical appropriation that other Jewish philosophers had found. The result, as with Marx or Freud, was a rupture that led to greater radicalism – both creativity and hostility – than is found in those who were able, or enabled, to keep faith with the generations of their Jewish predecessors and contemporaries.

The outcome of such radicalism is striking: for such thinkers, in their moment, like any alienated person, become isolated both from some of the constraints and from some of the resources of a human community that might have been of help to them. Later Jewish thinkers can still profit from what Spinoza, Marx, or Freud achieved. Parts of their thought become dated and provincialized by the very topicality that once made them the matter of the moment or the century. Other elements are reabsorbed into the continuing conversation of philosophy at large or the particular foci of Jewish philosophical conversation. One cannot say, moralistically, that such thinkers, who are alienated to one degree or another, by choice or exclusion or force of circumstance, have thereby lost more than they have gained. For there is a deep potential for conceptual value to be gleaned in radicalism. But radicalism, like heresy, limits catholicity, blunts synthesis, focuses attention sharply on a single issue or nexus, and may overstress it or press it to the breaking point. Just as there is balance in community and value in synthesis, there is philosophical and not just practical wisdom in an irenic posture towards the philosophical past. Thus, when the prophets reflect on the future of human thinking, they envision all nations turning to a purer language (Zephaniah 3:9), and part of the means by which they expect this to be achieved is the reconciling of the fathers to the sons (Malachi 3:24).

Paper 4F: Sikhism

Extract 1: Owen Cole and Piara Singh Sambhi, 'Sikh Religious Thought' (1998)

Taken from: Owen Cole and Piara Singh Sambhi, *The Sikhs* (Sussex Academic, 1998), Chapter 5, Sikh religious thought, pp.67-76.

Sikhism is strictly monotheistic. So firmly is the oneness of God affirmed that it is arguably monistic. Ultimate reality is a unity, God is one without a second. Parmeshur/Parmeshwara (God) is essentially without qualities (nirguna). Consequently, sat (truth) or akal (beyond time) or other negative terms, such as ajuni (not becoming), are among the least inadequate descriptions. However, Parmeshur or Sat is also personal, manifest and possesses qualities (saguna), though God's attributes are never physical, even though anthropomorphisms are used in the Adi Granth's poetry. In manifest form the qualities, Shabad (word), Nam (personality or character), and Guru (enlightener) are communicative and creative. God is the creator, from whom the universe emanates; its existence and its continuing survival depend upon God's will (hukam) which is all powerful.

Human beings are unique in this creation since they alone possess the ability to discriminate and enter into a voluntary relationship of love with God. In the natural state humans see themselves as creations of the Lord and disregard evidence of their own finiteness which mortality and nature's independence of provide. They are characterized by self-reliance (haumai) and at best see the world including themselves — erroneously — as distinct from God. This duality leads to attachment to temporal values, which is maya. The consequence is rebirth (samsara) on the basis of previous actions (karma). There is only one way of achieving liberation (mukti) — by conquering haumai, ceasing to be worldly-minded (man mukh) and becoming God-conscious and God-filled (gurmukh). This can only be done by being aware of the inner presence of God as Shabad, Guru and Nam and by coming completely under their influence. This in turn is only possible because God looks benignly and graciously (prasad, nadar) upon their efforts and as Shabad, Guru and Nam, is self revealing and enlightens and liberates the believer. Because God is within, rituals are unnecessary but right conduct is essential. The mark of the gurmukh is the life of service (seva) in the world as a householder (grihasthi), not a sannyasin (renouncer), because in the state of jivan mukti (liberation whilst still in this corporeal existence) they perceive themselves and the world as part of the one reality to which they are now consciously attached and in which, at death, they will be completely merged.

...

The concept of God

'God is the one, the only one', 'the one without a second'. These are the recurrent observations of the six Gurus whose hymns are contained in the Adi Granth, and of Guru Gobind Singh. As a result there has been some discussion among scholars whether Sikhism is to be described as monistic or monotheistic. It is certainly monistic in the sense that the types of quotation referred to above emphasize an ultimate unity of such a kind that the world derives from God into whom it will be reabsorbed.

When the Creator became manifest all creatures of the earth assumed various shapes. But when you draw creation within yourself, all embodied beings are absorbed in you. (Guru Gobind Singh)

It is certainly true to say that Guru Nanak believed in a personal God who could be worshipped and loved. This understanding of God was derived from experience. When he was taken to God's court, as he put it, he became aware of God as one, as personal and as pervading the universe. He was given a cup of the nectar of God's name to drink and was commanded to go into the world to preach the divine name, but from then on he not only found him within himself, he perceived God as 'pervading all forms, all castes and all hearts' (AG 223).

God as male/female

In recent years the feminist movement has become active in the religions. One concern it has turned its attention to is the use of sexist language to describe God. It asserts that for as long as God is addressed as 'Father', 'Lord' or 'he' attitudes to women will continue to be of the kind which lack respect for their spirituality and consider them to be inferior members of God's creation and the church as well as society at large. Their views are eminently justified. God, according to Sikh teaching, is beyond the categories of male and female. They are attributes of the creation, not the creator:

The wise and beautiful Being (purukh) is neither a man or a woman or a bird. (Guru Nanak, AG 1010)

Like wealth they are *maya* in the sense that they have their place. God chose to decide that human beings and other creatures should reproduce through the union of male and female and gave them to one another for support and companionship, but lust or excessive attachment can separate the devotee from God to whom, ultimately, the only true attachment should be:

God, the one, dwells within all but is revealed only to those who receive grace. (AG 931)

The emphasis on the one and on the divine presence within every human being would be seen as preventing the conclusion being drawn that God is seen to possess characteristics of gender. Sikhs will frequently utter the words:

You are my mother and father, we are your children (AG 268),

as they occur in a verse by Guru Arjan used at the close of congregational worship, and:

You are my father, you are my mother,
You are my kinsman, you are my brother. (AG 103)

In these passages it is the love, care and protection of God which is being referred to, not gender. In the same way when devotees are described as God's brides (AG 763), or brides whom God enjoys (AG 21), we are invited to think of spiritual union, not sexual.

When the Guru Granth Sahib is translated into English, or other languages, there is a temptation and a need to amplify its terse poetical verses. So, where the personal pronoun may be missing in the gurmukhi original 'he' or 'him' is often inserted. (Women might point out that the existing translations are all made by men!) This custom, together with the inclination of the Gurus to use such names as Hari, Gobind, and others taken from Hindu mythology and relating to male forms of deity, can easily lead writers into presenting a male concept of God as being Sikh.

The Mul Mantra, which is said to have been the Guru's first poetic utterance, made soon after the Sultanpur experience, is a summary of Sikh beliefs. It reads:

This Being (God) is One; the truth; immanent in all things;
Sustainer of all things; Creator of all things. Immanent in creation.
Without fear and without hatred. Not subject to time, formless.
Beyond birth and death. Self-revealing. Known by the Guru's grace.

The symbol representing 'Ik oankar', there is one God, is found on the canopy above the Adi Granth in the gurdwara. It is an immediate reminder of the symbol 'Om' which may be seen in a similar position in Hindu temples, though here the canopy is placed over pictures or statues of the deities. The coincidence is intentional. Ik oankar like Om stands for the one primal reality. Of Om the Katha Upanishad states:

That which the Vedas declare, that which all austerities utter, that in
desire of which men become students, that word I tell you briefly is Om.
That word is even Brahman, the Supreme. (2:15)

In the words of Guru Nanak:

The One [oankar] created Brahma, The One fashioned the human mind,
From the One came mountains and ages. The One created the Vedas.
(AG 929)

This Being may be experienced but cannot be known by the mind, and is beyond comprehension. The Guru can only lament his inadequacy when confronted with the ultimate reality of the all-pervading Being:

O mother, the attributes of God cannot be comprehended, and without
actually seeing one cannot say anything about God. How is the One to be
described, O mother? (AG 1256)

Strictly speaking God is pure being, without qualities (nirguna) and therefore Guru Nanak uses Sat (truth), 'Eternal truth is his name', as some translations of the Mul Mantra read:

Only your functional names have I been able to describe. Your oldest
name is Eternal Reality. (AG 1083)

'Sat' is itself a functional name significant for theology, personal belief and ethics, for life must be based on trust in God and truthfulness. Sikhs regard Sat as safer than other names given to God, although these are also found in the Adi Granth. Ram, Mohan (beautiful), Gobind (World Lord), Hari, even Allah or Khuda (Creator), taken from Hinduism and Islam, occur in the scriptures. For example,

'He is Allah, Alakh, Agam, Kadur, Karanhar, Karim' (AG 64). Manmohan Singh's translation reads, 'He is the unseen, inscrutable, inaccessible, omnipotent and bounteous creator', which hides the point that Guru Nanak was using Muslim names of God in such a way as to imply that all were acceptable but to be interpreted only as attributes of the One who is beyond names. However, each evokes some preconception, each can provide a stopping place which is short of the ultimate, therefore the abstract term 'Sat' is preferred by Guru Nanak though occasionally God is addressed as 'Anami' (without a name). Because functional names can be applied, e.g. Sat Nam (name) and Sat Guru (True Guru), it may be said that God is saguna with attributes as well as nirguna, but Sikhism rejects the view that God ever assumes any physical form, either animal or human.

The rest of the Mul Mantra is concerned with the functions of deity. First, God is creator, immanent in the universe. There are no creation stories, only the expression of a belief that the universe is an emanation of God who willed its existence. The situation before time was as follows:

For millions of years there was nothing but darkness over the void. There was neither earth nor sky, only the Infinite Will. There was neither night nor day, sun nor moon and God was in a state of trance [samadhi]. The sources of creation did not exist, there was no speech, no air, no water, no birth, no death, no coming or going, no regions, no seven seas, no worlds above or below. The trimurti of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva did not exist. There was no other only the One. There was neither male or female, jati or birth, pain or pleasure. There was no caste or religious garb, no brahmin or khatri. No Vedas or Muslim kitab existed, smirits or shastras. No reading of Puranas. No sunrise or sunset. (AG 1035/6)

This is a paraphrase of a lengthy statement which denies the existence of duality of anything until God called it into being. For reasons known only to God the decision was made to bring the universe into being. It was experience not metaphysics which concerned the Guru:

The Infinite One's might became enshrined within all but God is detached and without limit or equal. In creation nature and inanimate nature came from the existing void. From God's Being [sunte] came air, water and the world, bodies and the divine spirit with them. Your light is within fire, water and living beings and in your Absolute Self lies the power of creation.

From the Absolute emanated Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva: from God came all the ages...

All that springs from God merges with God again. By God's play the nature has been created and by the shabad the wonder has become manifest.

From God's own Being has come day and night, creation and destruction, pleasure and pain.

The godly-minded remain stable and detached from the effect of good or ill and find their home in God. (AG 1057)

Sikhism has no difficulty in coming to terms with scientific theories of evolution, in fact they find them congenial to the belief in an expanding universe derived from the mind of God. Their opposition is not to evolution but to a materialism which regards the universe as self-explanatory and self-existent. Those who hold such views are the victims of deception: 'The world without the True One is merely a dream' (AG 1274); they will waken to disillusionment, for:

God who is eternal, wise and omniscient is the master of destiny. The world, on the other hand, is fickle and inconstant. (AG 1109)

The world is even described as God's pastime (lila), but not in such a way that God is to be seen as fickle. Belief in God as Truth sees God as moral and the basis for morality, in the sense that everything depends upon God for existence: 'Seated in the creation God looks on the intended pastime with delight' (AG 463).

The Lord is also described as fearless and without hatred. Man lives in constant dread of hunger, sickness or death; in Hindu mythology the gods are often afraid and frequently engage in vindictive wars, plots and deceitful tricks as they struggle for power. In the view of Guru Nanak a man should possess only awe in God's presence, not fear:

To be possessed by any fear but God's is vain; all other fears are but phantoms of the mind. (AG 151)

Sikhs should find their anxieties banished as they experience union with God.

The Guru's servants are pleasing to God who forgives them and they no longer fear death's courier. God dispels the doubt of devotees, enjoying union with them. Free from fear, limitless and infinite the creator is pleased with truth. (AG 1190)

The terms 'timeless, formless, beyond birth and death' must be considered together and one of them, 'beyond birth' (ajuni), has been given a section to itself, such is its importance. These words are to be understood by reference to their popular Hindu context. In the life of village India and its festivals Krishna, one of the principal deities, was born at Vrindavan, and his birthday is celebrated in late July or early August. In some myths the gods and goddesses die. It must be acknowledged that in the story of the Bhagavad Gita a much different view of incarnation is presented. It was not the profundities of this concept which the Guru had in mind, but the much more earthy anthropomorphic stories which led to what he regarded as futile superstition. An anthology of such stories is available in *Hindu Myths* (O'Flaherty, 1975). God is personal but not anthropomorphic; God does not grow old or become wearied by effort or human supplications.

Time is God's servant not master; as the cause of change, God is not affected by change. Sometimes one Hindu god is enlightened by another. This is a way of arguing sectarian superiority, but in the teachings of Guru Nanak, God is self-enlightened and the one source of enlightenment.

Finally, we come to that phrase of the Mul Mantra which states that God is known to man by the Guru's grace.... The immediate difficulty is the word 'Guru'... [which term] may refer to a human preceptor or to God manifest as the word (shabad). There is no agreement among scholars as to which interpretation is correct here. It is suggested that the Guru is God for the following reasons. First, it would be uncharacteristic of Guru Nanak to assert his importance to the extent of suggesting that only through him or at his pleasure is God made known. Second, the Sikh view of revelation is one which insists that God is always active in the process of revelation, that this preceded the human Gurus and also takes place beyond the teaching of the Gurus, through other inspired beings. Finally, the subject of the rest of the Mul Mantra is God and it seems logical to suppose that this is also the subject of the phrase being discussed here. The assertion would seem to be that just as God is self-enlightened so God is the enlightener who cannot be discovered by philosophical study; austerities will not compel appearance and incantations, sacrifices or hymns of devotion cannot induce divine manifestation:

God does what God pleases. No one can tell God what to do. (AG 2)

The initiative is always God's.

Guru Nanak's concept of God apparently leaves little place for free will because there is no room for dualism. Everything that happens has been predetermined and occurs because of the divine will. By this command (hukam) both good and evil happen: 'God drives all according to the hukam, God's pen writes our deeds' (AG 1241):

Through the Divine Will greatness is won, some become high and some low; some get joy and some pain; some are lost in transmigration and some are blessed. (AG 1)

However, this is not the complete story. Right living cannot achieve release but it can lead to a better life in the next round of existence:

Good actions may procure a better form of life, but release comes only through grace. (AG 2)

Humanity is always free to accept the Guru's word or reject it even if the opportunity to hear it in the first place is given by God. In keeping with the view that God is the only reality, and self revealing is the belief that only divine revelation occurs, people discover the immanent presence of God. Like Kabir, Lalla and many other saints, the idea of God residing 'at home' is very strong in the teaching of the Gurus. Consequently Guru Nanak recommended the householder stage of life as the one in which his followers should attain God-realization and explore its meaning. Guru Tegh Bahadur expressed this view most forcibly:

Why do you go to the forest to find God who lives in all and yet remains distinct? The Divine Being dwells in you as well, as fragrance resides in a flower or the reflection in a mirror. God abides in everything. See God, therefore, in your own heart. (AG 684)

However, unlike some of the other mystics the Sikh asserts that a distinction between God and humankind does remain even after God-realization. Guru Arjan wrote:

God lives in everything, and dwells in every heart, yet is not blended with anything; God is a separate entity. (AG 700)

Despite this stress upon immanence God is also transcendent. The passage quoted above insists on separateness and frequently God is described as the Transcendent One. In the Japji, Guru Nanak says

God is great and enthroned highly with a name is higher than the highest. (AG 2)

Ultimately, although a person discovers the One who is within him they recognize that it is more correct to regard themselves as existing within God. There is no place for pantheism in Sikh thought. The term panentheism is much more appropriate, for everything owes its meaning to God in whom it exists.

O wise and all knowing God, you are the river. How can I, the fish within you measure your limits. Wherever I look I find no one but you and if ever I were to leave you I would perish. (AG 25)

The enlightened, God-filled person experiences everything as existing within God and is also aware of God as immanent, but in the natural state humanity is like a fish who is oblivious of the water in which it swims.

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Extract 2: Nicky-Guninder Kaur-Singh, 'Guru Nanak and the Origins of Sikhism (2011)

Taken from: Nicky-Guninder Kaur-Singh, *Sikhism: An Introduction* (I.B. Taurus, 2011), Chapter 1, Guru Nanak and the Origins of Sikhism, pp.1-12.

Chapter 1: Guru Nanak and the Origins of Sikhism

Sikhism began with the birth of Guru Nanak in 1469 at Talwandi, a village in North India, which is now in Pakistan. There is not much factual documentation on the founder Guru, but in spite of the lack of this, Guru Nanak's biography is strongly imprinted in the collective memory of Sikhs. ... For the more than 23 million Sikhs across the globe, Guru Nanak is the starting point of their heritage, as most begin their day by reciting his sublime poetry. Sikh homes and places of business display his images. Guru Nanak is typically represented as a haloed, white bearded person wearing an outfit combining Hindu and Islamic styles; his eyes are rapt in divine contemplation, and his right palm is imprinted with the symbol of the singular Divine, *Ikk Oan Kar*...

Janamsakhi Literature

Shortly after he passed away, Guru Nanak's followers wrote accounts of his birth and life. These are the first prose works in the Punjabi language, using the Gurmukhi script. They are called the Janamsakhi, from the Punjabi words *janam*, which means 'birth', and *sakhi*, which means 'story'. Through the years, they have been passed down in a variety of renditions such as the Bala, Miharban, Adi and Puratan. The dominant motif of the Janamsakhis is not chronological or geographical accuracy. As an eminent Sikh historian explains: 'These accounts were written by men of faith. They wrote for the faithful – of a theme, which had grown into their lives through the years as a real, vivid truth. Straightforward history was not their concern, nor was their description objective and conceptual.'...

Despite the personal loyalties and proclivities of their various authors, the Janamsakhis invariably underscore the importance and uniqueness of Guru Nanak's birth and life. In the language of myth and allegory, they depict the divine dispensation of Nanak, his concern for kindness, social cohesiveness, and his stress on divine unity and the consequent unity of humanity. Some of the stories incorporate verses from Guru Nanak's works to illuminate his theological and ethical teachings in a biographical framework. The quick and vigorous style of the Janamsakhis lent itself easily to oral circulation, and they became very popular. They continue to be read and told by both the young and the old. At night in many Sikh households, parents and grandparents read them as bedtime stories to young children... The Janamsakhis provide Sikhs with their first literary and visual introduction to their heritage, and continue to nurture them for the rest of their lives.

They begin with the illustrious event of Nanak's birth to a Hindu Khatri couple. His father, Kalyan Chand, worked as an accountant for a local Muslim landlord; his mother Tripta was a pious woman. In their central concern and luminous descriptions, Nanak's birth narratives have a great deal in common with those of Christ, Buddha and Krishna (collected by Otto Rank in his study, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*). The prophets told Buddha's father, King Suddhodhana, that his

child would be a great king or a great ascetic. The three Wise Men followed a bright star to honour the baby Jesus, born in a stable in Bethlehem. And just as that stable was marked by the bright Star of Bethlehem, the humble mud hut in which Nanak was born was flooded with light at the moment of this birth. The gifted and wise in both the celestial and terrestrial regions rejoiced at the momentous event and bowed to the exalted spirit, which had adopted bodily form in fulfillment of the Divine Will. But unlike the 'virgin' births of Sakyamuni and Jesus, Nanak had a normal birth. The midwife Daultan attests to Mother Tripta's regular pregnancy and birth. That Tripta's body is entrusted to a Muslim Daultan symbolizes yet another significant fact: the respect and the close connection Nanak's family had with the adherents of Islam. The Janamsakhis show Tripta happily holding the baby in her arms, while Daultan proudly and excitedly reports that there were many children born under her care, but none so extraordinary as baby Nanak. Affirmation of the natural powers of conception, gestation and birth underlie their rejoicing...

When he grows up, Nanak become discontented with the existing norms. He is in conflict with his father, who want his only son to succeed both financially and socially. The young Nanak does not like formal schooling. He has a contemplative personality and spends most of his time outside, tending the family's herd of cattle, conversing with wayfaring saints and Sufis, and devoting this time to solitude and inward communion. Nanak is close to his sister, Nanaki. When he grew up, he went to live with Nanaki and her husband Jairam in Sultanpur, and worked at a local grocery shop. Later, his marriage was arranged with Sulakhni, and they had two sons, Sri Chand (b.1494) and Lakhmi Das (b.1497).

It was at Sultanpur that Nanak had a revelatory experience into the oneness of Reality (analyzed below). As the Janamsakhis recount, with his proclamation 'There is no Hindu, there is no Musalman', Nanak launched his religion mission. Thereafter he traveled extensively throughout India and beyond – spreading his message of Divine unity, which transcended the stereotypical 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' divisions of the time. During most of his travels, his Muslim companion Mardana played the *rabab* while Guru Nanak sang songs of intense love addressing the ultimate One in spoken Punjabi. The direct and simple style of Guru Nanak's teaching drew people from different religious and social backgrounds. Those who accepted him as their 'guru' and followed his teachings came to be known as Sikhs, a Punjabi word which means 'disciple' or 'seeker' (Sanskrit *shishya*; Pali *sekha*).

Guru Nanak eventually settled in Kartarpur, a village he founded on the banks of the River Ravi. A community of disciples grew around him there. Engaged in the ordinary occupations of life, they denied ascetic practices and affirmed a new sense of family. Their pattern of *seva* (voluntary service), *langar* (cooking and eating irrespective of caste, religion or sex) and *sangat* (congregation) created the blueprint for Sikh doctrine and practice. In his own lifetime, Nanak appointed his disciple Lahina as his successor, renaming him Angad ('my limb'). Guru Nanak died in Kartarpur in 1539.

This biographical framework is drawn up in miraculous detail. The Janamsakhis depict scenes in which dreadful and dangerous elements of nature either protect Nanak (such as the cobra offering his shade to a sleeping Nanak) or are controlled by him (with his outstretched palm, Nanak stops a huge rock that was hurled at him). They depict his divine configuration: at his death, the shroud is left without the body; flowers are found instead of Guru Nanak's body; and both Hindus and

Muslims carry away the fragrant flowers – to cremate or bury according to their respective customs.

They repeatedly portray Guru Nanak denouncing formal ritual, often with great wit and irony. During his travels, Nanak visits Hardwar, the ancient site of pilgrimage on the River Ganges. When he saw some priests sprinkling water to the rising sun in the East, Nanak started sprinkling water to the West. The priests found his actions sacrilegious. So when they asked him who would benefit from his splashing water to the West, he questioned them in return. The priests responded that they were offering oblations to the spirits of their dead ancestors. Nanak then continues his procedure with even greater vigor. Through this dramatic sequence he makes the point that, if water sprinkled by priests could reach their dead ancestors, surely his would reach the fields down the road and help his crops.

This pedagogical pattern recurs frequently in the Janamsakhi narratives. Nanak twists and overturns the established ritual coded in a way that challenges people's innate assumptions, and orients them toward a new reality. The numerous miracles associated with him are not a means of amplifying his grandeur, but rather, they serve as lenses through which his audience can interrogate the inner workings of their own minds. When Nanak goes to Mecca, for example, he falls asleep, with his feet towards the Ka'ba. The Qazi in charge gets upset because of the irreverence shown by the visitor. However, Nanak does not get ruffled. Rather than contradict him, he politely asks the Qazi to turn his feet in a direction he deemed proper. But as Nanak's feet are turned, so does the sacred Ka'ba. There is no need for readers to consider it a historical fact; the motion of circularity simply shatters rigid mental formulas. That the Divine exists in every direction and that internal religiosity cannot be expressed externally are effectively communicated. Narratives such as this dislocate conventional habits and linear structures of the readers, and whirl them into a vast interior horizon.

In an oft-quoted account, Nanak refuses to participate in the *upanyana* initiation – the important thread (*janeu*) ceremony reserved for 'twice born' Hindu boys (from the upper three classes). The Janamsakhis point to a young Nanak disrupting this crucial rite of passage that had prevailed for centuries. His denial is framed within an elaborate setting arranged by his parents. A large number of relatives and friends are invited to their house. Pandit Hardyal, the revered family priest, officiates at the ceremonies. Pandit Hardyal is seated on a specially built platform purified by cow-dung plaster and the boy Nanak is seated across, facing him. Pandit Hardyal lights lamps, lights fragrant incense, draws beautiful designs in flour-chalk and recites melodious mantras. When the priest proceeds to invest the initiate with the sacred thread (*janeu*), Nanak interrupts the ceremonies, questions him as to what he is doing with the yarn, and refuses to wear it. At this point, the narrative juxtaposed Nanak's criticism of the handspun thread with his ardent proposal for one that is emotionally and spiritually 'woven by the cotton of compassion, spun into the yarn of contentment, knotted by virtue, and twisted by truth'. Rather than being draped externally; the *janeu* becomes an internal process. 'Such a thread', continues Nanak, 'will neither snap nor soil: neither get burnt nor lost'. Nanak's biography and poetry are thus blended together by the Janamsakhi author to illustrate his rejection of an exclusive rite of passage. A young Nanak interrupts a smooth ceremony in front of a large gathering in his father's house so

that his contemporaries could envision a different type of 'thread', a different ritual, a whole different ideal. There are many such vignettes in which Nanak vividly dismantles the prevailing societal hegemonies of caste and class and reinforces an egalitarian human dimension.

The Janamsakhis are particularly significant in introducing the earliest women mentioned in Sikhism. They may not fully develop their individual characters, and reveal them only in so far as they are related to the Guru. Yet even in their rudimentary presentations, the authors highlight the subtle awareness that the women possess. Mata Tripta is a wise woman who understands her son and can see into his unique personality – much more so than his father. The midwife Daultan is struck by the extraordinary qualities of the child she delivers. Like Mary Magdalene, who was the first woman to have witnessed the resurrection of Christ, sister Nanaki is the first person to recognize Nanak's enlightenment. Only Sulakhni's role is ambiguous, as if the authors did not quite know how to deal with her. As the wife of the founder of the Sikh religion, where was she? What was her relationship with her husband? How did she feel when he left her with their two sons and went on his long journeys?

.... The Janamsakhi literature depicts a pluralistic Nanak, who engages meaningfully with people of different faiths. Full of respect and with no acrimony, he discusses and discourses with them. There is the urge in him to know and get closer to 'others', so with his Muslim companion, he travels extensively. Nanak is seen in Hardwar, he is seen in Mecca, he is seen in the upper ranges of the Himalayas. He visits temples, mosques, viharas and khanaqahs; he attends a multitude of fairs and festivals. The basic commonness of humanity is what he carries to people of every faith. He invites all to be authentically themselves, and thus creates space for real and different religious commitments. When he meets Muslims, he adjures them to be faithful to the teaching of their faith; and when he meets Hindus, he urges them to abide by the tenets of their own tradition. With their practical sensibility and inherent wit, the Janamsakhi authors relay the pluralistic dynamism with which Nanak engages with the religious and cultural diversity of his times, and succeeds in establishing his own distinct faith.

Guru Nanak's Revelation

A profoundly simple yet highly nuanced narrative from the Puratan Janamsakhi celebrates Guru Nanak's revelatory experience of the singular Divine, configured as *Ikk Oan Kar*. On a closer analysis it highlights some unique aspects of Sikh origins, as well as the universal structures found in myths across cultures. This major event in Guru Nanak's life takes place in Sultanpur, where he was employed in a store owned by a local Muslim landlord. One day, Nanak did not return home after his usual morning bath in the River Bein. A wide search was made but there was no sign of him. His clothes were found by the river. Everyone thought he had drowned. The town was plunged into gloom. But Nanak reappeared on the third day. During this interval, the Janamsakhi recounts his direct communion with the Divine. This was his personal rite of passage, a symbolic birth that redefined Guru Nanak's social and spiritual identity. Having rejected the *Upanayana*, he goes through an entirely different rite of passage – conforming to the archetypal tripartite pattern of separation, liminality and reincorporation.

Separation

As Nanak goes to bathe in the river, he leaves behind his clothes – indicative of his previous set of codes and signs; he leaves behind his attendant – indicative of his home, family and society at large. He now possesses nothing. Nanak has stripped off his cultural conditions and divested himself of society's structures. He disappears in the Bein for three days. His Muslim employer summons the fishermen, has nets thrown into the river, and has his men search everywhere, but in vain. Nanak is nowhere to be found and Nanak's employer leaves dejected, thinking how good a minister Nanak was.

Betwixt and Between

In this 'interstructural situation', Nanak 'is at once no longer classified and not yet classified; he is no longer the store employee, nor is he yet the Guru who will attract millions to a new world religion. Nanak has reached a dynamic threshold where the past borders are gone and future possibilities are yet to come. During the three days he is believed drowned, Nanak goes through a series of numinous events.

In the multilayered mythic account, Nanak is ushered into the divine presence and receives a cup of *amrit*: '*ehu amritu mere nam ka piala hai* – this *amrit* is the cup of my Name'. Enclosed in the waters of the River Bein, Nanak receives the drink of immortality – *amrit* (literal meanings: *a* = not + *mrit* = death). He does not see; he only hears. The postmodern philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer, regards the phenomenon of hearing as being crucial to the building up of tradition: 'hearing takes in language and thus everything, not just the visible'. The voice Nanak hears does not come from some high mountaintop; it comes from inside the river. To drink is a basic and primal function and need, and so the account validates as basic human process. The Divine command '*pio*' (drink) substantiates the human body with its capacity to drink, taste, grow and be nourished.

What Nanak received was *nam ka piala* – the cup of Name. *Nam* (the cognate of the English word 'name') is the identity of the transcendent One. This elemental process constitutes Nanak's introduction to the Divine: by sipping the universal drink. Nanak gets to *know* the Ultimate Reality. The immortal drink that Nanak receives is the sapiential experience of the transcendent One.

After being given the cup of *amrit*, Nanak is asked to go and instruct others. But there is also the implication in the Janamsakhi narrative that he is put through a test. Before he departs, Nanak is ordered to illustrate his method and technique: 'How does one praise my name? Recite!' Guru Nanak responds with a hymn that was his song – and proof – of praise. We find here a striking affinity between '*kahu*' ('recite' in Punjabi), the command that Nanak receives, and '*kun*' ('recite' in Arabic), the order given to by God to the Prophet Muhammad through the Archangel Gabriel. While the Prophet Muhammad the Word in the caves of Mount Hira, Guru Nanak hears it in the River Bein. Neither was previously known for his poetic genius, but after passing through the spaces, both of them become the matrix for a voluminous and momentous and most artistic text – the holy Qu'ran and the Guru Granth, respectively.

Guru Nanak passes the test through poetic syntax and is accepted by the Divine. He recites a hymn, which demonstrates his psychic and spiritual power, as well as his artistic talent. Its final verse is:

If I had a supply of bottomless ink, and could write with the
speed of the wind; I would still not be able to measure your greatness,
nor signify the glory of Your Name! [GG:13].

Nanak becomes a poet. He explodes human language. He uses poignant similes, analogies and metaphors to describe that which is utterly ineffable. After Nanak's response the Voice spoke: 'Nanak, you discern My will.' The Janamsakhi thus attests to Nanak's success. Nanak then recites the Jap. Although the Janamsakhi does not produce the entire text of Nanak's hymn, it specifies that Nanak 'concluded the Jap – *japu sampuran kita*'. Recited at this particular point in his spiritual encounter, the Jap acknowledges Nanak's acceptance and gratitude. The Jap constitutes the core of Guru Nanak's metaphysics. It forms the opening hymn of Sikh scripture, and is recited daily by devout Sikhs.

In the third phase of his sacred liminality, Guru Nanak is given the dress of honour (the *sirpao*, more commonly known as *saropa*). As the Janamsakhi narrative continues:

the Voice was heard again 'Who is just in your eyes, Nanak, shall be so in mine. Whoever receives your grace shall abide in mine. My name is the supreme One; your name is the divine Guru'. Guru Nanak then bowed in gratitude and was given the dress of honour from the divine court. A sonorous melody in the Raga Dhanasari rang forth ... Arati...

Nanak is initiated as the Guru. He is endowed with a new status and identity. The sacrum or the physical object that marks his special dispensation is the *sirpao*, a piece of material that goes from head (*sir*) to foot (*pao*). Since it is not tailored, it does not carry any male or female codifications, and could be worn by both sexes. On his conferral, the Guru rapturously recites Arati, a hymn in which he celebrates the transcendent light permeating every being. In the fecund waters of the river, Nanak recognizes the ontological basis of the universe, and is called on to share what has been revealed to him.

Reincorporation

After his radical experience, the protagonist returns to society as the Guru. In his new status and role, he has gained a new self-awareness. Nanak's initiation does not establish his sexual status, and if at all, his rite of passage shatters the construction of a male identity. Though it was a son, brothers and husband who entered the river, the mythical initiation endows him with his fundamental humanity. Located in the amniotic waters, he does through the process of physical drinking, which gives him the metaphysical insight into the Divine. He responds in a sensuous, poetic outpouring, and is honoured with gender-inclusive clothing from the Divine court. Unlike other initiation rites, there are no additions to or subtractions from the body: no tattoos, circumcision or scarring marked his transition. In Guru Nanak's case, his new identity is marked by the unity of *bana* (the material cloth) and *bani* (poetry); *sirpao* (dress) and *nam* (word).

As he reincorporates into society, 'antistructure' becomes the mode of existence. The first Sikh community that developed with Guru Nanak at Kartarpur fits in with the cultural anthropologist Victor Turner's description of 'antistructure', because the neat horizontal divisions and vertical hierarchies of society were broken down. The ancient fourfold class system with its rigid hierarchical codes, or the male-female gender divisions had no place in Nanak's new community. Three important institutions of Sikhism – *seva* (voluntary service), *langar* (community meal) and *sangat* (congregation) – evolved, in which men and women formerly from different castes, classes and religions played an equal part. Together they listened to and recited the sacred hymns, together they cooked and ate the *langar*, and together they formed a democratic congregation without priests or ordained ministers.

These institutions established in the first Sikh community at Kartarpur were a practical and existential consequence of Guru Nanak's epiphany recorded in the Janamsakhi. The mystic account may not have been factually true, but it has been essential to the historical development of the Sikh religion. The Tenth Sikh Guru's inauguration of the *amrit* initiation on Baisakhi Day 1699 is in fact a return to this primal moment of Sikhism. Years later, the 'beginning' of Sikhism embodied in the private, individual and mystical experience of the First Guru was transcreated by the Tenth as a public, social and institutional ritual in Anandpur. By initiating his Five Beloved with Amrit, the Tenth Guru extended the vigor of Nanak's *amrit* into perpetuity: he made the metahistoric drink an essential part of the psyche and practice of the Sikh community.

Guru Nanak brought to life a 'Sikh' consciousness, which has continued to sustain the faith for the past five and a half centuries. His legacy is an enduring and integral part of daily life. Indeed, these Janamsakhis have enormous force as they continue to feed the individual and collective identity of the community. As Mircea Eliade rightly said, myths constitute sacred history, and hence are a 'true history', because they always deal with *realities*.

Extract 3: Nicky-Guninder Kaur-Singh, 'Feminist Text in a Patriarchal Context' (2011)

Taken from: Nicky-Guninder Kaur-Singh, *Sikhism: An Introduction* (I.B. Taurus, 2011), Chapter 6, Feminist Text in a Patriarchal Context, pp.101–119.

Though the voice is that of male Gurus, Sikh scripture is a remarkably 'feminist' text. Living in a 'doubly' patriarchal medieval Indian society, the Sikh Gurus witnessed the subordinate role of women. From time immemorial, the patriarchal society of northern India has been obsessed with sons: the region resounds with the blessing 'may you be the mother of a hundred sons!' The great Rig Veda, one of the earliest textual pieces produced in India, begins with a prayer to Agni (Fire) to grant many 'heroic sons' to his worshippers. Later, the Brahmin elites, in their popular Code of Manu, restricted women's legal independence, and made them subservient to their fathers, husbands and sons. Total devotion to the husband (*pativrata*) was the sanctioned norm. With the socio-political rule of the Mughal Empire, another patriarchal layer with West Asian values such as *purdah* and multiple wives, relegated Indian women even further. The Gurus empathized with their situation, and tried to create a window of opportunity through which women could achieve liberty, equality and sorority.

But the followers have been unable to grasp the broadmindedness of their Gurus. Instead of the liberating message of the Gurus, ancient oppressive feudal values have dominated Sikh society. Ironically, just a few decades after Guru Gobind Singh created the democratic and inclusive family of the Khalsa through his *amrit* initiation in 1699, women were barred from joining it! We hear Chaupa Singh, a tutor and aide of the Tenth Guru, overturn the radical implications of Guru Gobind Singh's Baisakhi and revert to the norms of *stridharma*, spelled out in traditional *Dharmashastras*. His ethical manual (*The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*) dictates a Sikh woman's primary mode of religiosity as the worship of her husband: she is to 'know her husband as god' (*apne bharte nu karta janai*; 556); she is to 'keep fasts for the sake of her husband' (*patibratu rakhe*; 567).

The ideals and practices of the first Sikh community established by Guru Nanak in Kartarpur, where men and women recited sacred verse, cooked and ate together, are reversed by Chaupa Singh. Instead, he stipulates segregation and discrimination: women may listen to but are prohibited from reading the Guru Granth in public (CS: 538). And among many other *dos* and *don'ts*, Chaupa Singh categorically outlaws men from administering *amrit* to women: '*sikhani nu khande di pahul deve so tankhaia* – he is an offender who gives Sikhni *amrit* prepared by the sword' (506)! The waves of wonder, joy and equality generated by the Gurus quickly found their way back to a stagnant pond of discriminating and androcentric norms that were definitely outside of the Sikh practices instituted by Guru Nanak and his successor Gurus. The voices and views of early patriarchs such as Chaupa Singh have been very harmful to the community as a whole.

The glamorous regime of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1799–1839) brought great splendour to the Sikh religion in many ways; but unfortunately, the situation for women deteriorated even more. With the elaboration of pomp and ceremony at his royal court, formal rituals and ceremonies discarded by the Gurus entered into the Sikh way of life. The customs of *purdah* and *sati* undergone by women from elite Muslim and Hindu families, respectively, began to be emulated by the upper

echelons of Sikh society. At Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death, several queens underwent *sati*.

British colonialism made matters worse. The Punjab was annexed by the British in 1849, and the imperial masters, who greatly admired the 'martial' character and strong physique of Sikh men, produced a 'hyper-masculine' culture. That drive continues. With the Green Revolution and the enterprising spirit of its people, post-colonial Punjab became the breadbasket of India. Today, it is in the ferment of globalization. Contemporary economic and technological priorities have made the patriarchal imperative for sons even stronger. Parents regard sons as their social security, financial insurance, and as religious functionaries who will eventually perform their funeral rites. Sons are deemed to be essential to carry on the family name, property and land. When a son marries, he brings his wife into the family home, and she takes care of her in-laws into their old age. With *his* wife comes *her* dowry which adds to the economic resources of his family. Simple marriage ceremonies have become extremely opulent, dowries extravagant, and gifts to the daughter and her in-laws for every rite, ritual and festival, exorbitant. Both in India and in Sikh diasporas, marriages are transformed into elaborate affairs, and the quantity and quality of what is hosted for or given to the daughter reinforces the power and prestige of her father. Daughters have no rights over their natal homes; they are viewed as beautiful commodities and investments in their father's status and honour. The not-so-wealthy feel extreme pressure to squeeze out their hard-earned money to keep up with the cultural norms. While a son is desired for the accretion of his father's assets, a daughter is rejected because she represents its depletion. The economic and social demands of contemporary Sikh culture are extremely challenging.

With the combination of ancient patriarchal values and new globalization, gender disparity is deteriorating at an alarming rate. The proportion of baby girls is beginning to decline rapidly. In India's population of 1.027 billion, the last census showed only 927 girls for every 1,000 boys – down from 945 ten years earlier. Prenatal sex identification using ultrasound have made gender selective abortions increasingly easy. Female foetuses are being aborted to preserve the legacy, business, property and status of fathers and sons. With technological and economic advances, Punjab, the home of the Sikhs, is ironically facing a terrible situation. Newspaper articles have focused on the tragedy of female feticide in the affluent agrarian area of the Punjab. A 'diabolic link' exists between sex-selection technologies and the abortion of female foetuses, with the result that there is an increasing imbalance in the ratio of males to females in the population of the Punjab. The selective abortion of females reinforces this devaluation of girls and further entrenches gender prejudices.

...

Theological

By designating the Divine as the numeral 'One' at the very outset, Sikh scripture breaks centuries-old images of male dominance, and opens the way to experiencing the One in a female modality. The unique configuration of *Ikk Oan Kar* has the potential of the radical 'meta-patriarchal journey' proposed by the feminist philosopher Mary Daly – to exorcise an internalized father-God in his various manifestation and incarnations. As the powerful Nanakian numeral shatters the dominance of male imagery, it creates a space for the Divine to be experienced in other new and important ways. Logically, it does not matter how the Divine is understood in human terms; the One is totally transcendent and beyond all categories. But in the poetry of the Gurus, both female and male dimensions run in parallel. The Divine is identified as *both* male and female: '*ape purakh ape hi nar* – itself make, itself is female' (GG: 1020), Thus we receive a balanced perspective, which is crucial for mental and spiritual health.

Scriptural verses unleash multiple relationships with the Infinite. Guru Arjan says ecstatically: 'You are my father, you are my mother; you are my brother, you are my friend...' (GG: 103). Thus the One is passionately embraced in numerous relationships. This sense of plenitude strips off patriarchal stratifications and blots out masculine identity as the norm for imaging the Divine. It stretched the imagination. We feel new emotions. We see new vistas. We experience joy in so many different ways.

Rather than orient us to a distant 'heavenly' future, the Guru Granth regularly turns attention to our primal home – the mother's body, the ontological base of every person. It offers multivalent womb imagery. Conceived by different poets with different emphases and in different contexts, we find here an extremely fertile ground inspiring a wide range of responses. The womb is celebrated as the matrix for all life and living. However, it also serves as an eschatological expression for the return of the self into this world. According to Sikh scripture, birth is rare and precious, like a diamond, but it can be frittered away for naught. An immoral life generates a negative rebirth, and the mother's womb in that instance is pictured as a scorching and painful mode of being – empty of the Divine. Under positive circumstances, however, the womb is a vital space permeated with the Divine, and the fetus functions as a symbol for cultivating Sikh morality, spirituality and aesthetics.

The womb (*garbh* or *udar*) is affirmed as the source of life: 'in the first stage of life, O friend, you by the Divine will, lodged in the womb...says Nanak, in the first stage of life, the creature by the Divine is lodged in the womb' (GG:74). The reader is directed away from death and the otherworld to the very source of life. In contrast with the 'necrophilic imagery' of patriarchal theology, the pervasive womb imagery in Sikh scripture affirms life and living in diverse forms. The womb is the space (*thanu*) where we become the self, both body and spirit. Even the pervasive usage of *rahim* ('compassionate' – an expression for the Divine) draws attention to her maternal space. In the speculations of the Muslim philosopher, Ibn Arabi, the root of the word '*rahimat*' is womb, and the meaning of compassion or mercy is derived from it. Similarly, feminist scholars relate the Hebrew word *rachum* ('compassion') with *racham*, the word for womb. Sikh scripture continues to resonate with many positive memories of our lodging in the womb, the mother's creative organ: 'in the mother's womb are we taken care of' (GG: 1086); 'in the

womb you worked to preserve us' (GG: 177); and 'in the mother's womb you nurture us' (GG: 132).

We hear the Guru Granth honouring the maternal space as social utopia in which the fetus is free from patriarchal designations of class, caste and name: 'in the dwelling of the womb, there is neither name nor caste' (GG: 324). The scriptural verses transparently reveal that the placental waters of the mother – primal and nourishing – are free from distinctions and hierarchies. The Sikh Gurus were acutely aware of their oppressive patrilineal and patricentered north Indian society in which the family name, caste and profession came down through birth. So the mother's pregnant body is envisioned as free from all sorts of 'isms' and social hegemonies. Her fetus is nurtured by *her* life-giving uterus; it is not suffocated by the father's name, class or professional ties.

The Tenth Guru absorbed these ideals and brought about a change in the patriarchal framework. In the Khalsa family he created, people from different castes, classes and regions sipped *amrit* from the same bowl and received a new identity. As noted earlier, in parallel with the surname 'Singh', for men, Sikh women have the surname 'Kaur' (meaning princess). Women are thus free from the lineage of fathers and husbands. As 'Kaur', a woman retains her own identity for her whole life. She does not have to adopt the name of her father at birth nor that of her husband at marriage. Sons and daughters, husbands and wives retain their selfhood equally throughout their lives. This transformation in the patrilineal structure, traced to the Gurus, has radical implications for the identity and autonomy of women.

The Guru Granth takes women's genealogy seriously and acknowledges Mother's milk full of biological and spiritual nutrients. Even the recitation of the Divine name is succulently experienced as milk in the mouth. The language of the Gurus is echoed by the words of contemporary French feminist scholar, Hélène Cixous: 'Voice: milk that could go on forever. Found again. The lost mother/bitter-lost. Eternity: its voice mixed with milk. Her milk is a biological necessity, keeping us from dying. So is *bani*, the Divine Word. By pouring the two together, the Sikh Gurus make knowledge essential for everybody. The textuality of the Guru Granth lies in its physical sensuality – drinking the words as though they were the mother's life-giving milk.

The Gurus compare the intensity of saintly devotion to that of an infant's love for the mother's milk (GG: 613). In an unforgettable juxtaposition of analogies, the Divine is like a 'cane for the blind' and 'like mother's milk for the child' (GG: 679). In a tender passage: 'says Nanak, the child, you are my father and my mother, and your name is like milk in my mouth' (GG: 713). Throughout the Guru Granth, the Sikh Gurus unabashedly express their attachment to the Divine through an infant's attachment to the mother's breast: 'my mind loves the Divine, O my life, like a child loves suckling milk' (GG: 538).

However, the maternal imaginary in the Guru Granth is not a matter of religious deification, because 'she' is not idolized into some distant goddess – an object of worship. It is when the Divine is genuinely imagined as Mother that her positive characteristics begin to filter into our mind, and ignite respect for our mothers, sisters, daughters and wives. We regard them as life-and-blood individuals who take on the qualities and powers of the Divine One. We thank them for creating and nurturing us. We remember real women, and our lips utter the

Granthian exaltation '*dhan janedi mau* – blessed are the mothers!' Our respect goes to all the mothers from all the species, and so the scriptural imaginary fills us with pride in our own bodies, and charges us all, men and women, to relish our Divine in the daily rhythms of life...

There is yet another strong feminist current in their poetry: a vocative for the Mother – '*meri mai*' – flows vibrantly in the Sikh textual body. For example, the daily hymn Anand begins with '*anand bhaia meri mai* – oh Mother of mind, I am in bliss!' The Third Guru experiences unicity, and in his ecstasy, he lyrically and polymorphously addresses his Mother, '*meri mai* – my Mother!' Coming from the lips of male poets, it is a verbal embrace gushing from the point closest to their unconscious. *She* is the bedrock of their identity, and so they ask of her passionate questions: 'How can I live without the Name, O my Mother?' (GG: 226); 'How could I forget That, O my Mother?' (GG: 349); 'How do I unite with truth, O my Mother?' (GG: 661) and 'What virtues will unite me with my life, O my Mother?' (GG: 204). While they seek her knowledge, they also share passionate moments with her: 'I am in love O my Mother!' Each time, the Mother carries their language forward, making their experience come alive. This is not a dualistic opposition between *the male Gurus* versus *her*, but a healthy 'dialogic' relationship, which is rooted in openness and leads to a deeper self-awareness, a deeper communion.

Clearly, it is not in opposition to, but rather pulling towards, the Mother that the Sikh Gurus establish their identity.

...

Psychological

Psychologically, the Gurus connect with the female at a very deep level. Throughout the Guru Granth, they identify themselves with *her* in their search for the Divine. Woman is regarded as physically and spiritually refined, so it is in her tone, her mood, her image and her mode of dress that the Gurus express their yearning. They envision The One as the handsome Groom, and take on the personality of a bride, totally merging with her feminine feelings and thoughts in their desire for spiritual union. The male-female duality which violates the wholeness of human nature and deprives each person of the other half is overcome, establishing, in turn, the significance of being human. Men and women are united, and share their human angst and human hopes.

The pervasive bridal symbol establishes a sensuous and palpable union with the Infinite One. The Groom (*sahu*) is known as *agam* (infinite), *agocarū* (unfathomable) and *ajoni* (unborn); He is utterly metaphysical and beyond all perception through the senses. It is 'the Wholly Other', as Rudolph Otto, the eminent German theologian, said. The bride perceives and proclaims the infiniteness of her Groom: 'O my Beloved, your limits I cannot fathom.' She is perplexed and wonders how she is going to 'see' her True Groom when 'He has no color, no garb, no form' (GG: 945). How is she going to know the unknowable? She imagines Him to be 'a deep and unfathomable ocean full of precious jewels' and 'she dedicates herself entirely to Him – *avar nahi an puja*' (GG: 1233). The bride understands the Singularity of her Groom and declares fervently that she would attach herself to none other: 'Without the One, I know no other.'

Ultimately, it is the bride who succeeds in creating proximity to this distant Groom. She is the one to chart the way that will make the Transcendent accessible to human experience. She addresses the 'Wholly Other' in most personal terms: '*mere sundar gahir gambhir lal* – O my handsome, unfathomable Beloved': 'my Beloved is the most delicious inebriation'. The Wholly Other is perceived so intimately that the bride announces: 'My loved Groom isn't far at all' (GG: 1197). She praises him lavishly:

My Beloved is utterly glorious, brilliantly crimson,
Compassionate, beneficent, beloved, enticer of the hearts,
overflowing with *rasa*, like the *lala* flower. (GG: 1331)

The backdrop to this scenario is nuptial union. The red colour, the *lala* flower, the enticing of hearts, the latent joy – all point to this consummation. The bride in this phenomenal world sees her transcendental Groom directly and physically. In her eyes, He is like the *lala* flower. He is dyed deep in glorious beauty; He is mind-bedazzling. He is overflowing with *rasa*. The senses of sight (crimson, brilliant), smell (like the fragrance of the flower) and taste (*rasa* – the juice, the essence) all unite to convey to the reader the bride's complete and thoroughly sensuous unity with her divine Lover. The female is the model to be emulated for spiritual union.

The Guru's expression of unity points in the direction of a more egalitarian and open-ended social structure than the 'Lord' and 'Father' symbolism dominant in many religions. As Jewish and Christian feminist scholars have analyzed, the Lord-Father symbol basically upholds a hierarchical, patriarchal frame of reference from which the female experience is excluded. In contrast, the bride symbol in Sikh scripture exalts feminine love. Here, equality is the basis of the relationship. The bride, simply by loving, not by fearing or remaining in awe, or being totally dependent, senses the proximity of her Infinite Groom and is then able to share that feeling with her sisters and friends. Through her intense love, she is able to establish a free and non-authoritarian relationship with the Divine. Her experience has much to offer women who are struggling to free themselves from a Father-Lord symbol that they find oppressive. Moreover, she does not need any mediators such as priest or theologians. The Sikh bridal symbol suggests a freedom from patriarchal media; with no one standing in between, the bride directly and passionately seeks to embrace the Wholly Other.

But the bridal symbol has to be fully understood and not read simplistically as though women must be dependent on their husbands. Not at all. The Granthian bride is dependent only on the Divine One, and men, women and the entire cosmos share this dependence. The Sikh scripture message is not the subjugation of the female to the male, for her Groom is beyond gender; rather, it is rising of the individual spirit towards the Absolute. The rich variety of Granthian images reveals the complexity and dignity of the female experience, and loosens the grip of masculine symbols on the contemporary imagination. She is spiritually refined. Her emotions are strong. Her body is regarded positively. She is the model to be emulated. The lingering effect of such passages produces an emotional strength that helps to confront sexist attitudes and practices.

Social

Devotees and scholars cite the Guru Granth widely for its rejection of caste and class; however, its bold rejection of sexism is barely noted. The Sikh text dramatically affirms women's creative and natural processes in the social fabric. Not only are there images celebrating *her* gestation, birthing and lactation processes, but also a condemnation of taboos surrounding menstruation and post-partum pollution. The Gurus also criticise the institutions of *purdah* (confinement of women) and *sati* (the self-immolation of women on the funeral pyres of their husbands). Their passionate poetry relays their empathy, and discloses their intention that society should discard oppressive androcentric codes.

Even now, society in general is horrified at the sight of women's blood – whether it is her monthly period or the blood that accompanies every birth. Considered a private, shameful process, menstruation is equated with being ill or weak. Because of their menstrual periods, women are barred from religious services. As feminist scholars have been reminding us, disdain for this natural feminine phenomenon has contributed to the low status of women. The Sikh Gurus were aware of the sexism prevalent in their society and denounced taboos against women. The fear of the gaze, touch and speech of a menstruating woman had been internalized by Indian society for centuries. These deeply-rooted negative attitudes to women have seeped into all of India's religious traditions. The Guru Granth dramatically dispels conventional taboos against female pollution, menstruation and sexuality. Menstrual bleeding is regarded as an essential, natural process. Life itself begins with it. The first Guru reprimands those who stigmatize the garment stained with menstrual blood as polluted (GG: 140). Many scriptural verses celebrate the female body, and affirm the centrality of menstrual blood in the creative process: 'from mother's blood, and father's semen' is created the human form (GG: 1022). Here, priority is given to *ma ki raktu* (mother's blood). Another scriptural passage confirms it: 'from blood and semen is one created' (GG: 706).

Like menstrual blood, blood of parturition is also stereotyped by society as impure and dangerous and ritually avoided. The mother giving birth is a biologically natural and organic mode of creation. Yet birth, *every* mother's most fantastic miracle, is deemed to be dirty, with all sorts of lingering fears of pollution attached to it. In medieval India, any home with a new birth was considered to be toxic for 40 days, and only the performance of elaborate rituals could bring it back to normality. It is quite remarkable how publicly the Sikh Gurus condemned such notions of pollution:

If pollution attaches to birth, then pollution is everywhere (for birth is universal)
Cow dung [used as fuel] and firewood breed maggots;
Not one grain of corn is without life;
Water itself is a living substance, imparting life to all vegetation.
How can we then believe in pollution, when pollution inheres within staples?
Says Nanak, pollution is not washed away by purification rituals;
Pollution is removed by true knowledge alone. (GG: 472)

From the Sikh scriptural perspective, pollution is an inner reality, a state of mind, and not the product of any natural birth. Female inferiority is dismissed: 'How can we call her inferior from whom kings are born?' asks Guru Nanak poignantly (GG: 473). The Sikh Guru strongly questioned the legitimacy and purpose of devaluing women on the basis of their reproductive energy. Set upon Guru Nanak's egalitarian vision, Sikh scripture continually erases negative connotations associated with women's bodies.

It also draws attention to the exploitative customs of *purdah* and *sati*. Guru Nanak's passages depicting Babur's invasion carry profound empathy for Indian women. Muslim and Hindu women from different sectors of society are graphically depicted as victims of patriarchal institutions:

Hindu, Turk, Bhatt and Thakur women –
Some have their veils from head to toe,
Others make the crematorium their abode. (GG: 418)

The Sikh Guru's compassion extends to both Hindu and Muslim women – equally for those who practice *purdah* (Muslim) and for those who practice *sati* (Hindu). The straight horizontal sequence of his verse bridges any chasms that may segregate women – 'Turks, Hindus, Bhatt and Thakurs'. They are all victims, irrespective of religious or societal hierarchies. With a radically feminist sensibility, Guru Nanak tells us how the veils of Muslim women are ripped from head to toe by the invaders.

...

Engage Directly with the Text

Everybody needs to read and understand the text from their individual perspective. There has been no disclosure of feminist possibilities because it has only been the male elites who have served as intermediaries. Their one-sided, androcentric approach has dominated interpretation and commentaries. In Gurdwaras, congregations hear interpretations of the Guru Granth from *gyanijis* (Sikh intellectuals), who speak in a male voice and from a male point of view. It is their voice that is broadcast around the world through radio and television. Similarly, Sikh scholarship has been dominated by males, with the result that female images are neglected, sometimes even misinterpreted, and their feminist import is invariably lost. The Book was hailed as the Guru (by the Tenth Guru in 1708 (precisely to promote a personal relationship. It is imperative that men and women access their scriptural Guru on their own, without relying on male theologian, exegetes and scholars.

...

Women Must Have an Equal Role in Public Worship

In Sikh places of worship, male *granthis* (readers) or *bhaijis* (custodians of Gurdwaras) are the ones in closest touch with the Guru Granth. Their hands dress the venerated book, their hand open the holy book, and their voices read out the sacred verses from the book. They lead the liturgical prayers. Even the sweet sacrament (*karah-prashad*) is disturbed by men and boys. Sikhism has no priesthood, and nowhere in the Scripture are men delegated to be the sole custodians of their sacred text and leaders in worship, and yet women are tacitly discouraged from conducting public ceremonies. Women are in the vicinity – praying, cleaning the sacred precincts, cooking, doing the dishes – but they rarely lead services. There are many Gurdwaras, but are there any female Granthis? The Sikh egalitarian practices in private worship must be extended outside the home. Otherwise, Sikh men and women will continue to internalize the predominant role played by men in public, which has only legitimized women's deference and subordination to their fathers, brothers, uncles and husbands.

Follow the Sikh Ethical Code

In its attempt to formalize the message of the scripture, the SGPC developed several rules in the *Sikh Rahit Maryada* (the Sikh Ethical Code, published in 1950... that would combat female oppression. This standard authoritative statement of Sikh conduct categorically states that neither a girl nor a boy should be married for money. The giving of a dowry is specifically forbidden. Twice the Code makes the point that Sikh women should not veil their faces (12, 18). It prohibits infanticide, especially female infanticide, and even prohibits association with people who would practice it. The *Sikh Rahit Maryada* allows for the remarriage of widows, and it underscores that such a ceremony must be the same as that for the first marriage – a marked difference from the old Punjabi custom, when a widow was shamefully wrapped in a sheet and carried away to a brother of her dead husband. The *Sikh Rahit Maryada* denounces this custom, which treats a daughter like an object or a piece of property passed to her husband and his family. In traditional Indian families, there is also a superstitious custom that people should not eat at the home of their married daughter – forgetting that Nanak himself lived with his married sister, Nanaki, and her husband!

The community needs to propagate and follow such clearly articulated rules. Sikh families should feel empowered by their Ethical Code and not be put under social pressure to provide a dowry for their daughter and gifts for her and her in-laws throughout their lives – or aborting her even before she enters this world.

Extract 4: Doris R. Jakobsh 'Sikhism, Interfaith Dialogue, and Women: Transformation and Identity'

Taken from: Doris R. Jakobsh (2006) Sikhism, Interfaith Dialogue, and Women: Transformation and Identity, *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 21:2, 183–199, DOI: 10.1080/13537900600655860.

Sikhs ... pointed both to Hindu and Muslim influences having corrupted the superior position of women as evident in the Guru period of Sikh history. Each vied with the another to protect their communal interests through close collaboration with their colonial masters. What became increasingly vital for these groups, particularly for minority populations such as Muslims and Sikhs, was the creation of religious distinctions, separate identities, and distance between themselves and the wider Hindu population.

For Singh Sabha reformers, great pains were taken to present Sikh women as having a distinctly superior position *vis-à-vis* their Hindu and Muslim counterparts. Given the Sikh minority position amidst the Hindu and Muslim milieu that surrounded them, it was important to present Sikhism as offering Punjab's womenfolk more than the larger traditions that surrounded them. Bhai Vir Singh's writings offer evidence in this regard. In his famous novel *Sundri*, the protagonist's message to her fellow sisters and to Bhai Vir Singh's larger audience stresses the unparalleled position of Sikh women: women within Sikhism confined to the harem and are also not women who are not treated as *Shudras*.

If one turns to contemporary writings on women and Sikhism, little has changed in this regard. While women writers are increasingly addressing the issue of gender and women in Sikhism, this task has until recently been fulfilled by men (Kohli). .1 The need to present Sikhism as superior to other religious traditions with regard to the position of women has also continued. This is particularly the case on the Internet: a search on Sikhism and women displays a great deal of information on the subject. What becomes quickly evident in perusing the various web sites is a continued need to present Sikhism as strikingly different in the wider spectrum of religions *vis-à-vis* the status of women. Other traditions are largely presented as oppressive in this respect, while Sikhism stands unique in its message of liberation for women.

Writings by Sikhs pertaining to women and Sikhism have largely remained in the realm of apologetics. This appears to stem from a seemingly fearful minority mentality, one that is needful of protection and therefore in need of fortification. A concrete recent example has been a concern that Sikh women in the diaspora, particularly in the UK, are converting to Islam *en masse* through their romantic liaisons with Muslim men. This issue is being addressed through extensive dialogue on discussion boards and essays on the subject, warning young women to be aware of the ever encroaching threat (J. Singh).

Women in the World Religions: An Overview

While it has long been said that Sikhism is the "forgotten tradition" (Juergensmeyer 190–201) in the study of religion, an overview of the commonly used and recently published introductory texts in World Religions will attest to a change. Most university textbooks on the subject will either give a brief overview or devote a chapter to the study of Sikhism. The situation is markedly different when

one attempts to find introductory texts on women and religion that include Sikhism. An overview indicates an almost complete lack of this topic in important texts published within a 30-year span. Simply put, there is a dearth of scholars of Sikhism and women and an apparent lack of interest in the study of Sikhism and women.

...

Contextualizing the Interfaith Movement

The Sikh Case

...By and large, writings on women in Sikhism have tended to remain in the realm of apologetics, scripture, and history. The 'golden age' of Sikh women during the Guru period is iterated and reiterated and scriptural passages highlighting women's equal access to liberation along with injunctions against women's impurity are consistently upheld. When the issue of inequality is raised, the *raison d'être* for such inequalities is quickly deflected to the religious milieu surrounding Sikhism. Upinder Jit Kaur notes that the discrepancies between the Sikh ideal and lived reality have everything to do with the detrimental influence of Hinduism: "The right of Sikh woman to equality with man was foreclosed by the Hindu society... She is still a lesser person... though her lot is comparatively better than that of women belonging to other major Indian religions" (314–5). Others continue this approach in noting that "the overwhelming Hindu and Islamic presence has over the centuries reinforced and even today continues to reinforce the patriarchal values which are difficult to break" (Kaur Singh, *Feminine Principle* 51).

These examples serve to show that there is an understanding of Sikhism as ultimately liberating, that equality is generally understood as being the root experience of the religion through the teachings of the Sikh Gurus,¹² but that the fault of the tradition's decline into patriarchy lies with other traditions. Thus it is 'the other' that is the oppressor. From the perspective of interfaith dialogue, this approach is problematic. O'Neill notes that at interfaith gatherings, when the attitude of 'blaming the other' comes into play, dialogue has tended to break down into accusation and reproach, with participants who are and represent 'the other' being denigrated (80–3). It would appear then that a move from apologetics and blaming other traditions for misogynistic attitudes towards dialogical approaches has not yet taken place among Sikh scholars and writers. This attitude is also abundantly represented on the Internet. A common approach is to show the Sikh tradition as unique in the history of religions with regard to the position of women. According to one popular Sikh site,

A Sikh woman has equal rights to a Sikh man. Unlike Christianity, no post in Sikhism is reserved solely for men. Unlike Islam, a woman is not considered subordinate to a man. Sikh baptism (Amrit ceremony) is open to both sexes. The Khalsa nation is made up equally of men and women. A Sikh woman has the right to become a Granthi, Ragi, one of the Panj Pyare (5 beloved) ... Christian women must change their names after marriage. The concept of maiden and married names is alien to Sikh philosophy. (Institute of Sikh Studies)

While the article makes clear its intent to present the position of women in Sikhism as superior to other traditions—in this case, Christianity, another important and equally common approach becomes evident. The article notes unequivocally that women have the *right* to become *granthis* (custodians of *gurdwaras* who also act as caretakers of the Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred scripture of the Sikhs), *ragis* (professional musicians of kirtan), and *panj piores* (the five beloved who administer the initiation rite), but there is no mention of the fact that women rarely, if ever, become *granthis* or *panj piores*. Moreover, in many *gurdwaras*, a married Sikh woman is not allowed to partake in the *Amrit* (initiation) ceremony, unless she is accompanied by her husband. Further, while women are encouraged to cook, clean, and wash dishes for the Sikh communal meal (*langar*), in many cases they are not permitted to enter the sanctorum of the temple, the special chambers where the copies of the Guru Granth Sahib are placed, known as the *Sach Khand* (G. Kaur). While the occasional woman may break cultural barriers and become one of the 'beloved five' in the local Sikh *gurdwara*, she will generally do so only in the company of an all-woman *panj piare* within the confines of the *istri sabha* or all-women's gathering. However, there are sects *outside* mainstream Sikhism that regularly permit women to perform the duties of the *panj piare* and assume the role of *granthi*, particularly the Akhand Kirtani Jatha and the 3HO, also known as the Sikh Dharma. Perhaps more significantly, at the most sacred of Sikh shrines, the Harimandir Sahib, otherwise known as the Golden Temple, women are not included when *prasad* (sanctified pudding) is distributed to the *panj piare*, the first five individuals who are given *prasad* before it is distributed to the remaining participants.

The 'Sikh Women's Awareness Network' (SWAN) in the UK also enthusiastically portrays the position of Sikh women as superior to that of their co-religionists, but with an interesting twist. It notes that "no area is made exempt [for any woman]. She is an integral part of the Sadh Sangat and is capable of joining anyone in praising God, whether it be in Gurbani recitation, Naam Simran, or Kirtan (devotional singing)." (J. Singh) With regard to menstruation and notions of pollution, the author states: "Meditating on God's name is of importance. Whether your clothes are blood stained or not (including clothes stained from menstrual blood) is not of spiritual importance. Thus, there are no restrictions placed on women during her menstruation. She is free to visit the Gurdwara, take part in prayers and do Seva" (ibid).

What is fascinating about this perspective is that recently, a highly contentious and public debate is taking place, both on-line and through the worldwide circulation of petitions, which is dealing precisely with the lack of women's access to service in that most revered of Sikh holy space, the Harimandir Sahib (the Golden Temple). One of the issues raised by those opposed to women's *seva* is women's impurity during her menses (M. Kaur, "Remembered"). Contrary to scriptural assertions, impurities associated with menstruating women are not considered justifiable, but the lived realities of women tell them otherwise (*Adi Granth* 140). Yet, by and large, this is not acknowledged in writings on women and Sikhism. Instead, assertions are made that in Sikhism, as opposed to other religious traditions, menstruation is in no way tied to a lower status for women (Kaur Singh, "Refeminization" 73).

The issue of service at the Darbar Sahib in Amritsar is highly significant and is in my estimation a turning point in the history of women's roles and status in Sikhism. A brief summary of the events is presented here. On 13th February 2003, two British *amritdhari* (initiated) Sikh women, law student Mejjindarpal Kaur and Lakhbir Kaur, were refused the right to participate in the Sukhasan procession (the laying to rest of the Guru Granth for the night) at the Harimandir Sahib in Amritsar. They were forcefully prevented from participating by two employees of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC). Mejjinderpal later noted that "I had always taken my equality for granted, because my religion promised me that ..." (Pushkarna). The two women immediately lodged a complaint with the Akal Takht Jathedar and the SGPC (the institution responsible for the management of most *gurdwaras* in Punjab) insisting that it was their right to be part of all aspects of worship and service (*seva*) at the holy shrine.

On 16th February 2003, two other Sikh women, Tersem Kaur from the UK and Dr Harjit Hothi from Canada, were forcibly refused participation in the Sukhasan procession at the Harimandir Sahib. At this point, two women employees of the SGPC pushed the Sikh women visitors out of the line which was awaiting the Palki (palanquin upon which the Guru Granth is carried, covered by a canopy), thus also preventing them from participating in the Sukhasan procession. By July 2003, a new development had occurred in that women were not allowed anywhere near the Palki; instead, they were made to stand away from the walkway. While a Sikh woman watched the Palki from afar, she noted that non-Sikh men were allowed to carry the Palki, while she was barred from even coming near the palanquin ("Women's Seva Sinks Lower").

What has taken place in the meantime is truly remarkable. Sponsored by a number of groups, including the Sikh Dharma of the Western Hemisphere and the American Gurdwara Parbhandak Committee (AGPC) as well as 'Voices for Freedom', a Sikh human rights organization based in Baltimore, a far-reaching mobilization effort was gaining momentum. A petition was circulated, requesting the Jathedar of the Akal Takhat, the highest seat of authority in Sikhism, to allow women's untrammelled access to all forms of *seva* at the Darbar Sahib ("Please Support"). 'Voices for Freedom' also sponsored a seminar on Sikh women's roles and rights and many of the Sikh organizations which attended it supported the idea of forming an 'International Sikh Women's Forum' to deal with the discriminatory challenges facing Sikh women ("Sikh Organizations Worldwide"). The topic has spurred an intense debate, position papers, rebuttals, and on-going discussions, largely on the Internet. In response, a committee was created by the Shiromani Parbandhak Gurdwara Committee (SGPC) to attend to this issue; this committee, which is mainly composed of men, could not reach a consensus on the controversial issue (Bahia). What many consider the most crucial decision-making body of the Sikhs, the Akal Takhat led by Jathedar Vedanti, remained silent on the issue of women's *seva* at the Darbar Sahib. Vedanti then referred the complaint to the SGPC, which—he claimed—had the authority to decide on the issue (Dhaliwal; Dutt).

The issue of women's full participation at the Golden Temple is complex. For many Sikhs in India and the diaspora, the fight for equality must be contextualized within those most central of Punjabi Sikh values: modesty and honour. Lawyer Kartar Singh Goshti stated in his representation to the SGPC that "it would be immodest for a girl and disparaging for her father, brother, or husband if she subjects herself to being pushed by men in a crowd; even if it is to shoulder the

palanquin at the Golden Temple..." (Dutt) He added that "although there is no stricture for women to sit separately in the sanctum sanctorum of the Golden Temple, the women do so out of modesty" (ibid). The contentious issue which was initiated by Mejjinderpal Kaur and Lakhbir Kaur "presents an arrogant fight for a right and expresses motivated desire to become a pioneer of a movement by playing the media" (ibid). This view is not confined to Sikh men. Paramjit Kaur Tiwana, the principal of Guru Gobind Singh Khalsa College for Women in Amritsar, echoed Goshti's views when she made her deposition to the SGPC:

To ask for seva rights inside the Sri Darbar Sahib is just an attempt to create chaos internationally... Even at home, for maintaining a healthy atmosphere, we maintain a respectable distance between father and daughter, brother and sister, mother and son, and the human instinct, known as libido in Freudian terms, is kept under control. So, when we maintain it at home, how can we violate it at a religious place? (Chandra)

Certainly, the perspectives of Goshti and Tiwana are not representative of all Sikh views in India. In a press release, the Sikh Women's Association (SWA), an organization based in Delhi, gave its full support to the two women at the forefront of the contentious debate and promised to mobilize women to undertake seva at the Golden Temple ("SWA Press Release"). Others, however, even in the diaspora, have taken completely opposite stances to the designs of the petition, insisting that even the consideration of women joining the *panj piare*, a traditionally male institution, can only be understood as an absurdity, given that the original five beloveds had been men:

Do people wish to dishonour the memories of the panj piare, who heeded the call of the Guru Gobind Singh Ji? Are these people prepared to change Bhai Sahib Daya Singh's name to Bibi Daya Kaur?... I have no problem with Sikh women performing seva at the Darbar Sahib. But don't ask us to change our religion to satisfy all your desires. Recognize what's right and wrong. Do not make absurd demands. Will the next step be to demand that the Gurus were all women? (M. Kaur, "Myths")

The *Times of India* also reported that respected Sikh scholars were presenting the issue as a conspiracy of non-Sikhs and political parties attempting to gain momentum and dividing the Sikh community through the heated issue. By way of proof they argued that "no local Sikh woman or organisation of Sikh women has raised the issue in recent times. In fact, they had favoured not allowing women to perform sewa due to certain considerations" (Rana).

Interestingly, Mejjinderpal Kaur, Lakhbir Kaur, Tersem Kaur, and Dr Harjit Hothi were not the first women to raise the apparent inequalities within the central rituals at the Harmandir Sahib. In 1996, a group of mostly women converts from the US, including Inderjit Kaur, the wife of Yogi Bhajan, arrived at the Darbar Sahib to take part in seva during *Amrit Vela* (pre-dawn). Although the women faced an angry mob under the watchful eye of the then *Jathedar*, Manjit Singh, they were allowed to wash the floors in the Golden Temple; women have traditionally been allowed to perform seva in the Temple complex, but not within the Harimandir Sahib itself (Kaur Khalsa). An edict or *hukamnama* was apparently issued, which included the signatures of the Jathedars of Damdama Takhat and Akal Takhat ("Original Copy"). Yet according to the SGPC's manager at the time, the SGPC had never received a *hukamnama* directing women's seva at the Darbar Sahib (Walia,

“Bhai Manjit”). If a *hukamnama* was issued, it has been ignored. Since that incident in 1996, women have never again been allowed to partake in the early morning *seva* within the Harimandir Sahib. Again, it must be pointed out that those women raising the issue were largely American converts to Sikhism or at least part of the leadership of the Sikh Dharma or 3HO.

Another, separate, but in my view closely related issue was raised by Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh: Sikh women’s participation in life-cycle rituals. In a moving account, Kaur Singh (“Refeminization”) recalls the events following the death of her mother: the son of the family, to whom the honour of lighting the pyre is traditionally accorded, was not present. The task was instead conferred to a man who was not a family member. Kaur Singh questions both the lack of assertion on her part in allowing a distant male to usurp the right to light the fire and the very presence of a “male-defined and male-controlled web of actions”. She points out (64–70) that the rituals that exist now are rituals of patriarchy, which have created a false consciousness. Sikh women have come to lean on male figures in their communication with the divine and to depend on father figures for their strength, instead of searching within. They do not publicly question women’s omission from Sikh rites of passage, nor do they celebrate women’s affirmation in their sacred literature.

These issues are central to the question of women’s religious rights, particularly given the apparent divide between Sikhs, especially Sikh women of the diaspora and Sikhs in the Punjab. Such questions are largely raised by women in the West and have been given impetus by Western Sikhs, both by the variety of converts and by those whose families originated in India. This adds considerable complexity to what appears, to advocates of Sikh religious reform in the diaspora, to be a straightforward issue of human and women’s rights. However, these and other issues about women’s rights in Sikhism clearly do not seem nearly as important to Sikh women in India (Walia, “Women’s Jatha”).

As is so often the case within the women’s movement at large, organization tends to be an issue for educated, Western-oriented, urban women. It is significant that millions of Sikh women who are not deemed worthy of *seva* in the Darbar Sahib have not raised their voices in protest. However, a handful of Sikh women in the West have raised this issue as unjust treatment; the fact that they are converts to Sikhism adds considerable ambiguity to the debate. There is also the question whether cultural hegemony, an issue raised earlier, may also play a role in this situation. The influences of the ‘West’ are often maligned, particularly by diaspora Sikhs attempting to uphold Punjabi Sikh values, practices, and customs in raising their children. Yet it would appear that it is precisely the Western values of equality, feminism, and postmodern responses to authority, combined with a distinctly minority-based interpretation of Sikh egalitarianism, that are driving the momentum in creating a new resistance movement and ethos within Sikhism—at least within Sikhism in the diaspora.

Moreover, it is women, although a small minority of educated, urban, Western or Westernized women, who are representing, mobilizing, and leading the movement; this is momentous, given that any attempts at reform in Sikh history were initiated and sustained by Sikh males.²⁴ It does, however, raise the question of who speaks for Sikh women. While Sikh men have been the spokespersons for Sikh women in the past, is this right now being usurped by Western Sikhs who are

suffused by ideologies, training, education, a mindset, and rights, which are radically different from their Sikh sisters in India? Certainly, some members of the Sikh Dharma are convinced that their increasingly close ties with Punjabi Sikhs will lead to raising the status of women among Sikhs (Singh Khalsa). Further, Gurdev Kaur, founder of the Sikh Nari Manch in the UK, insists that "today Sikhi is not limited to Punjab only but the Sikhs live in all corners of the world and it is an international Qaum. When the women of Punjab have not done anything about these rights, no wonder that the women from western countries had to do something." This development may well present a cause for concern for the millions of Sikh women who either are indifferent or reject outright the demands which this small, but powerful and highly vocal minority of Sikhs makes.

...Instead of simply invoking the exalted position of Sikh women in society, as recorded in scripture and theological doctrines, these incidents attest to the strength and persistence of misogynistic attitudes towards Sikh women, especially within the most sacred place for Sikhs, the Harimandir Sahib. As a result of these occurrences, women appear to have become emboldened to question and question other instances of patriarchal attitude and practice. The low birth rate for girls in Punjab, translated by a Sikh woman writer as blatant evidence for males being more highly valued than females and "hatred against women", has become a central issue, as has the fact that no female *granthis* are employed at major Sikh shrines; further, no females are to be seen offering *seva* through kirtan at the Harimandir Sahib (Kaar Kaur Khalsa²⁵). According to Carol Christ, this progression is very natural. Most criticisms "originated in an often inarticulate sense of exclusion from traditional religious practice of theology" Once awakened to these injustices, women "turn private pain into a systematic feminist critique of religion"(ibid). Women can then begin to examine the arguments which are given for their subordination and reject teachings that deny their full personhood.

At least a small minority of women within the Sikh community appear to have found a voice through the debilitating events at the Darbar Sahib, which for many translate far beyond the specific incident to a much larger indication of oppression within Sikh institutions. If the amount of publicity surrounding this issue is anything to go by, the movement for egalitarianism in all facets of Sikh ritual life is growing. As the realization of women's oppression in Sikh institutions and the community at large continues to grow, Sikh women may turn to their counterparts in other religious traditions and thus acknowledge their bond with those who face similar inequalities in their respective religions. From the perspective of interfaith dialogue, this process can take place while women are fully rooted and engaged in their traditions.

...Women are then enabled to criticize these repressive structures, for religions, dogmas, and ideologies cannot only be explanations of the meaning of life, but also ways... to live according to that explanation" (ibid). The goal and purpose of dialogue with other religions are, according to Leonard Swidler, "joint action on... concrete problems" (16-7). These 'problems' must include any aspect of religion and its practices that are oppressive to women...

Post-script: The 'Seva, Panj Piare, Sukhasan Ceremony' Controversy

Since the submission of this article, fascinating developments have occurred: on 8th August 2005, following the decision of the SGPC's advisory committee (the Dharma Parchar Committee), SGPC's President Jagir Kaur announced that women would now be permitted to do Kirtan and Sukhasan seva at the Darbar Sahib ("SGPC Permits"). A report notes that "unofficial reports say that the SGPC rules and regulations for women hazuri ragis may be finalized as early as next month. Arrangements are also in the works for women's Sukhasan seva" (Byala). Opinions and reactions to the announcement were swift. Perhaps most indicative of the arising difficulties in implementing these changes was the protest which erupted from the Damdami Takhsal, by both its current and former Jathedars, particularly with regard to women becoming *panj piare*s at the Darbar Sahib. Bhai Ranjit Singh, the former Jathedar of Damdami Takhsal, vowed that "Panthic organizations would physically remove" Joginder Singh Vedanti from his position of Jathedar of the Akal Takhat, if these changes were carried out. Further, Ranjit Singh insisted that "the decision to allow Sikh women to perform 'kirtan' from the sanctum sanctorum of Harmandir Sahib should be taken only after taking entire Sikh Panth into confidence". Another former Jathedar of the Akal Takhat insisted that there was no historical precedence of women performing *kirtan* from the Darbar Sahib (Walia, "SGPC Move"). In light of the controversy it would appear that the Jathedar of the Akal Takhat is also back-peddling on the issue. Jathedar Vedanti recently insisted that more discussions were needed before a final decision could be made (ibid).

The controversy is thus far from being resolved. The current debate has as much to say about deeply held beliefs, practices, and ritual development surrounding Sikh women as it has about the notion of authority in Sikhism. This issue revolves around a contest for authority between representatives of the Akal Takhat, the SGPC, and the Damdami Takhsal. Clearly, the debate warrants a good deal of analysis as it continues to unfold.

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