

AUTHORITARIAN LANGUAGE:

SOME CURRENTS OF THOUGHT

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In the presentation of any blueprint or plan for stating the authority situations in Roman Catholicism and in the Anglican communion a variety of approaches is necessary and inevitable. This paper proposes to consider but one aspect of the background to authority questions, an aspect which at first sight would appear perhaps to be rather absurd and removed from the practical problems which so bitinglly face us. We might consider this philosophical aspect to fall into two basic lines of thought and approach. It is important that the last two terms of the previous sentence be taken very seriously because one method uses thought and the other method uses a pragmatic and more volitional set of devices. This second method we should term precisely an approach because it does not pretend to give any final answer and as in any real approaching of a thing it works with the small details of the practical living situation. First of all then, in looking at the philosophical background which we have inherited twards authority and looking at the first method, a way which involved an emphasis on knowledge, an emphasis

on analysis, an emphasis on calculation, we can trace this rather precisely back to the philosophy of the last century which finds its prime spokesman in Immanuel Kant. In the Critique of Pure Reason Kant mapped out in fulsome detail the workings of the thought processes of the human mind. First of all in Germany this critique was absolutized so that all reality was considered in some way to be thought. The main spokesman for this point of view was Hegel but Hegelianism had a very strong influence in the English speaking world--this for sometimes rather unusual reasons. For instance, when in the United States a group of philosophers decided that there should be some American philosophising they founded an American Hegelian Society mainly because Hegel was the leading European light. This had extreme consequences for American thought in that the kind of pragmatism which we encounter in Pierce and Dewey is linked, if not rooted, in the Hegelian intellectualism of a thesis, antithesis and synthesis. In England the influence of Hegel is also very wide spread, its main spokesman probably being Bradley.

The importance for the question of authority is that any question in the Hegelian absolutistic system must be answered by an intellectual analysis of a more than slightly abstract nature; hence authority is not something to be experienced and struggled with but to be analysed. This analysis suffered from a lack of rigid logical tools but at the turn of the century, Bertrand Russell under the influence of Frege developed logic to

such a fine-tuned edge that analysis, including analysis of authority, can be possible only in terms of a most remote manipulation of mathematical logic. The consequences for questions of authority and the inexpressible logic questions of morality were that these highly important practical concerns were left aside. The advantage of this approach is that problems which are in fact pseudo-problems tend to be eliminated from discussion by the application of rigid logic.¹ The disadvantage

¹ C. G. Hempel, "The Logical Analysis of Psychology" in Readings in Philosophical Analysis, ed. by H. Feigl and W. Sellars (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1949) p. 383

The subject matter of this philosophy is limited to the form of scientific statements, and the deductive relationships obtaining between them. It is led by its analyses to the thesis of physicalism, and establishes on purely logical grounds that a certain class of venerable philosophical "problems" consists of pseudo-problems. It is certainly to the advantage of the progress of scientific knowledge that these imitation jewels in the coffer of scientific problems be known for what they are, and that the intellectual powers which have till now been devoted to a class of senseless questions which are by their very nature insoluble, become available for the formulation and study of new and fruitful problems. That the method of logical analysis stimulates research along these lines is shown by the numerous publications of the Vienna Circle and those who sympathize with its general point of view (H. Reichenbach, W. Dubislav, and others).

with this approach is that in the more practical areas of investigation, areas such as psychology or sociology, areas of practical human living where authority and morality are worked out, new rigid quasi-logical methodology is imposed. In the area of psychology the main technique arising from this logical view is behaviourism.¹ Behaviourism treats human activities, including the activity of exercising authority as a measurable quality which once it is measured can and should be manipulated. The very mention of a measurable quality highlights the difficulty of this approach. A main spokesman for behaviourism is the American philosopher-psychologist, B. F. Skinner. He maintains that when human needs are

¹ C. G. Hempel, "The Logical Analysis of Psychology" in Readings in Philosophical Analysis, ed. by H. Feigl and W. Sellars (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1949) p. 375

As far as psychology is concerned, one of the principal counter theses is that formulated by Behaviorism, a theory born in America shortly before the war. (In Russia, Pavlov has developed similar ideas.) Its principal methodological postulate is that a scientific psychology should limit itself to the study of the bodily behavior with which man and the animals respond to changes in their physical environment, every descriptive or explanatory step which makes use of such terms from introspective or "understanding" psychology as 'feeling', 'lived experience', 'idea', 'will', 'intention', 'goal', 'disposition', 'repression', being proscribed as non-scientific.

fully calculated then it is the function of authority to provide the ideal living situation until the people under authority will be so content that they do not even think to question that authority.¹ This, when seen in a certain

1 B. F. Skinner, Walden Two, (New York: The Macmillan Company New York, 1948) pp. 232 - 233

"The people have all the voice they have any need for. They can accept or protest - and much more effectively than in a democracy, let me add. And we all share equally in the common wealth, which is the intention but not the achievement of the democratic program. Anyone born into Walden Two has a right to any place among us for which he can demonstrate the necessary talent or ability. There are no hereditary preferments of any sort. What you are complaining about is our undemocratic procedure outside the community, and I agree with you that it's despicable. I wish it were possible to act toward the world as we act toward each other. But the world insists that things be done in a different way."

"What about your elite? Isn't that a fascist device?" said Castle. "Isn't it true that your Planners and Managers exercise a sort of control which is denied to the common member?"

"But only because that control is necessary for the proper functioning of the community. Certainly our elite do not command a disproportionate share of the wealth of the community; on the contrary, they work rather harder, I should say, for what they get. 'A Manager's lot is not a happy one.' And in the end the Planner or Manager is demoted to simple citizenship. Temporarily, they have power, in the sense that they run things - but it's limited. They can't compel anyone to obey, for example. A Manager must make a job desirable. He has no slave labor at his command, for our members choose their own work. His power is scarcely worthy of the name. What he has, instead, is a job to be done. Scarcely a privileged class, to my way of thinking."

clarity, appears to be an astonishing form of dictatorship and yet here in fact is a very strong way that we in fact do sometimes personally experience or exercise authority. The job of those in authority is to produce the most ideal and practical system which their followers must see as good.

The language that is used in formulating this kind of view of authority is prescriptive and manipulative. Perhaps a good deal of the difficulty which the agreed statements have been experiencing is that they are being read by prescriptive language minded groups whereas in fact they were and are being written by working groups which see the language of the statements much more in terms of the second method to be studied in this paper, a functional pragmatic use of language.

In summarising then this first analytical approach to authority we can note that analysis of a situation is the dominant theme. In terms of authority, however, this analysis perforce would have to be undertaken by a relatively small group of qualified intellectual experts and the role of the vast majority of those who are to follow their counsel is primarily, if not exclusively, to follow.

The question of a "hierarchy of truths" in the light of this approach is seen as an investigation of the logic of hierarchy. Whereas in the second approach, which we will consider shortly, the "hierarchy of truths" will be concerned much more with the problems of questions

as to how these truths are lived out by a church community.¹

The second approach by Nicholas Lash, in his terms a "theological approach", finds its roots in the second critique, the Critique of Practical Reason by Immanuel Kant. This critique is a study of man's will or emotions. Morality and authority are termed by Kant to reside primarily there. Just as Hegel absolutized the first critique and so talked about absolute analytic thought or spirit, Schopenhauer absolutized the second critique and talked of absolute will. The difficulty with the approach of Schopenhauer is that will is precisely an irrational, inexpressible, unorganised force. Authority and morality then have something about them of rank madness, a madness tragically advocated and experienced by such a genius as Nietzsche. This sort of highly abstract

¹ Nicholas Lash, Change in Focus, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1973) p. 124

The strength of 'logical' theories of development is their preoccupation with that element of rationality which must form part of any convincing claim that doctrine articulated at one period of christian history is a 'development' of earlier doctrine. The strength of the 'theological' theories, on the other hand, lies in their emphasis on the unpredictability of historical process, and on the fact that, theologically, the ultimate ground of doctrinal development is the Spirit of God, and not merely the mind of man.

German idealism would probably have not much affected us unless there came a startling connection with the development of psychological theories. Sigmund Freud was not a philosopher and produced his writings on psychology and sociology rather strictly on the basis of methodology and empirical investigation but when he came to philosophize and theorize about what he had done it was in the context of the idealism of the Austrian-German world in which he lived and worked so that, as he tells us in his autobiography, when he had finally come to read Schopenhauer he agreed entirely with what Schopenhauer said. This means that we very well may see the Freudian id or libido or thanatos as a psychological expression of Schopenhauerian voluntaristic pessimism. The consequences for our own ways of thinking about authority are momentous, for authority and morality situations would be considered primarily as emotional, irrational situations which can be dealt with only via some form of sublimation.

The world of the turn of the century in Vienna, the world of Schopenhauer and Freud is also the world of perhaps the most influential English philosopher of the century and in order to understand the movement of language analysis which has so dominated that philosophic thought we must recognise that in Ludwig Wittgenstein the element of irrational voluntarism remains evidently strong and at times dominant. Hence the English school of emotive ethics which has been influenced in some form of other

by the Wittgensteinian type study of questions must treat authority and morality as in some way not organisable or logical but albeit in a mitigated English way, irrational.

This means that in matters of ethics, morality and authority we are to trace not our intellectual thoughts but our ethical intuitions. However, these intuitions are not totally rational and we must organise them and understand them in more pragmatic working ways.^{1,2}

1 C. L. Stevenson, "The Nature of Ethical Disagreement" in Readings in Philosophical Analysis, ed. by H. Feigl and W. Sellars, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1949) p.592

There is no occasion for saying that the meaning of ethical terms is purely emotive, like that of "alas" or "hurrah". We have seen that ethical arguments include many expressions of belief; and the rough rules of ordinary language permit us to say that some of these beliefs are expressed by an ethical judgement itself. But the beliefs so expressed are by no means always the same. Ethical terms are notable for their ambiguity, and opponents in an argument may use them in different senses. Sometimes this leads to artificial issues; but it usually does not. So long as one person says "This is good" with emotive praise, and another says "No, it is bad", with emotive condemnation, a disagreement in attitude is manifest. Whether or not the beliefs that these statements express are logically incompatible may not be discovered until later in the argument; but even if they are actually compatible, disagreement in attitude will be preserved by emotive meaning; and this disagreement, so central to ethics, may lead to an argument that is certainly not artificial in its issues, so long as it is taken for what it is.

The workings of this sort of pragmatic approach are much dealt with by Wittgenstein and his followers in terms of the practical situations or forms of life in which the language of authority and morality can be intuited. Intuition remains the important factor because this approach holds that while thought and reasoning are integral parts of the human situation and experience, ideally it is the deeper feelings and emotions and traits of man which must be listened to and obeyed. This approach puts then a strong stress not on authoritarian vehicles but on the use and psychological situations where questions of authority and morality dwell. The outstanding spokesman for this view in matters of sociology is Peter Winch who notes very clearly the interrelationship between reason, thought and authoritative understanding which is the origin of a sociological situation.¹

2 G. R. Dunstan, "The Making, Commending and Enforcement of Moral Judgments within The Church", a paper for the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission, September 1970. p. 17 printed in The Artifice of Ethics, SPCK 1974

The moral reasoning of which so much has been written has, of course, a strongly rational element in it; otherwise it could not be called "reasoning". But the term does not always imply a process of logical deduction from a stated principle to a particular application. Sometimes it begins with what, for want of a better term, is called "insight", or with what Hooker, in a phrase quoted above, called "plain aspect and intuitive beholding".

1 Peter Winch, The Idea of A Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958)

Those rules, like all others, rest on a social context of common activity. So to understand the activities of

In summarizing then this second volitional approach to authority we find roots in the second

an individual scientific investigator we must take account of two sets of relations: first, his relation to the phenomena which he investigates; second, his relation to his fellow-scientists. Both of these are essential to the sense of saying that he is 'detecting regularities' or 'discovering uniformities'; but writers on scientific 'methodology' too often concentrate on the first and overlook the importance of the second. That they must belong to different types is evident from the following considerations. - The phenomena being investigated present themselves to the scientist as an object of study; he observes them and notices certain facts about them. But to say of a man that he does this presupposes that he already has a mode of communication in the use of which rules are already being observed. For to notice something is to identify relevant characteristics, which means that the noticer must have some concept of such characteristics; this is possible only if he is able to use some symbol according to a rule which makes it refer to those characteristics. So we come back to his relation to his fellow-scientists, in which context alone he can be spoken of as following such a rule. Hence the relation between N and his fellows, in virtue of which we say that N is following the same rule as they, cannot be simply a relation of observation: it cannot consist in the fact that N has noticed how his fellows behave and has decided to take that as a norm for his own behaviour. For this would presuppose that we could give some account of the notion of 'noticing how his fellows behave' apart from the relation between N and his fellows which we are trying to specify; and that, as has been shown, is untrue. To quote Rush Rhees: 'We see that we understand one

critique of Kant, roots which stress the irrational

another, without noticing whether our reactions tally or not. Because we agree in our reactions, it is possible for me to tell you something, and it is possible for you to teach me something'.

In the course of his investigation the scientist applies and develops the concepts germane to his particular field of study. This application and modification are 'influenced' both by the phenomena to which they are applied and also by the fellow-workers in participation with whom they are applied. But the two kinds of 'influence' are different. Whereas it is on the basis of his observation of the phenomena (in the course of his experiments) that he develops his concepts as he does, he is able to do this only in virtue of his participation in an established form of activity with his fellow-scientists. When I speak of 'participation' here I do not necessarily imply any direct physical conjunction or even any direct communication between fellow-participants. What is important is that they are all taking part in the same general kind of activity, which they have all learned in similar ways; that they are, therefore, capable of communicating with each other about what they are doing; that what any one of them is doing is in principle intelligible to the others.

philosophising elements of human experience.¹ But these irrational and volitional elements are not considered to be radically unworkable but are integrated into an analysis of living situations where reasonable and indeed highly intellectual factors can be seen to work in harmony and in union with the more irrational human traits. Language in this second method is very highly integrated with experience and is concerned to be the expression of the experience, indeed in some way, it is that experience itself. The language of agreed statements can thus grow and develop because the experience of the situation is growing, developing and producing new situations in ways of which abstract analysis does not dream.

1 It is interesting to note that very clearly in the Anglican experience as seen, for instance, in the writings of Richard Hooker, especially in his book, The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, this role of the importance and sovereignty of will is also very clearly noted.

G. R. Dunstan, "The Making, Commending and Enforcement of Moral Judgements within The Church", a paper for the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission, September 1970. p.7 printed in The Artifice of Ethics, SPCK 1974

In a discussion of choice, as compounded of knowledge, informed by reason, and will,

Where understanding therefore needeth, in those things Reason is the director of man's Will by discovering in action what is good. For the Laws of well-doing are the dictates of right Reason. (I.vii.4).

Perhaps with this approach when we consider questions of authority we shall be able to note and to employ human felt needs and trends more favourably and clearly. It is possible that many of the younger people of to-day, influenced as they are by contemporary psychology and sociology consider questions of authority primarily in this way.

In this new experience, we are providentially in a traditional situation in that one of the religious movements which we are experiencing to-day is what we call a movement of the spirit. This has been clearly operative in various ecumenical gatherings such as the various forums and meetings of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Ecumenical Council. In all of these there is much talk and more importantly much experience of God's spirit. This spirit is experienced as a force which does not adhere necessarily to the analysis of human intellectual patterns. It is a tendency which has more to do with emotions and will, but it is a trend which makes use of, and incorporates, analytical, intellectual strivings. In order to understand this spirit we might go back to St. Paul who talked about it in terms of the freedom and the liberation of man by the Spirit of God. The more analytical, intellectual approach could be considered to be what Paul termed law for he was always concerned that an over-rigid and an over-analytical approach

to law and authority ought to be done away with. We must recognise our own situation as being a situation where we feel radically dependent upon God, where we recognise our own situation as a felt need for salvation.¹

¹ Günther Bornkamm, Paul, trans. by D.M.G. Stalker, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971) pp. 120 - 122

What does the gospel mean by the revelation of "the righteousness of God from faith to faith" (Rom. 1:17)? Paul can give an answer only by way of introducing and expounding the subject of mankind's and the world's lost state in the sight of God. According to Romans, this is manifested in the fact that all whom God summons to life, that is, all who are subject to God's law, are "without excuse" and objects of his wrath (1:18-21). For Paul this drastic verdict is no general, timeless truth wrested from the Law itself as he reflected upon it and pondered over it in despair. Instead, it was possible and attainable only on the basis of the Christian salvation. When the gospel light shines forth, man's existence under the Law is shown as lostness before God. Using a metaphor from the Old Testament, Paul says that through Christ the veil of the Law is removed (2 Cor. 3:14).

This in itself reveals a significant characteristic of Paul's concept of the Law, one which differentiates him from other representatives of primitive Christianity. To say what is perfectly correct historically, that the meaning of Christ's coming was deducible from the Law, was, in his view, not enough. Put in such general terms, the statement was true for all the first Christian converts from Judaism. For Paul, however - and for him alone - it also held true when put the other way round: only in the light of Christ could one deduce the status of the Law. The Law was the basis of, and the limitation put upon, the unredeemed existence of all men, both Jew and Gentile.

However, this need for salvation is not a totally irrational need but a need which God's spirit feeds in us

Wherever Paul discusses the problem of Law, it is always in this perspective of gospel. The priority is important to keep in mind. It is to be seen right at the beginning of Romans: the long passage dealing with the revelation of God's wrath is preceded by 1:17, the keynote of the epistle, with its reference to the gospel. The tidings of salvation proclaim the eschatological world-transforming "Now" (Rom. 3:21, etc.) toward which God has been moving and which signifies the standpoint that alone gives meaning to all the apostle's statements about Law. Never are Law and man's, particularly the devout man's, experience themselves made the source of his knowledge of that lost state from which the Law is powerless to deliver him.

Paul's thoughts and preaching do not therefore follow the logic of the preaching and practice of repentance as seen especially in pietism. There, in disregard of the gospel, men are shown the depth of their sin, and every effort is made to bring them to despair of themselves; or to put it in present-day terms, the pietist does not begin his theology with a chapter of existentialist philosophy and then go on to speak of gospel and faith. With him there is no proclamation of the gospel until a person realizes that his own resources are at an end and that the Law is of no avail to set him free. When Paul expounds the saving good news, it is generally in statements summarily characterizing man's state as lost; and this is not an evolutionary stage now left behind, on which he can look back with a sigh of relief (cf. Rom. 3:23, 6:15 ff.; 7:7 ff.; 8:5 ff.; 2 Cor. 3:7 ff., etc.).

by enabling us to understand the deep human experience, the deep human need for organisation, law and authority. Hence in St. Paul the importance in this discussion as to whether he was really against the law or more so trying to make use of the law. The second must be what was his intention but in order to understand that intention we must take our stand not primarily on an

Paul was at one with all the devout of the Old Testament in believing that, in its original intention, the Law was God's call to and sign of salvation and life (Rom. 2:6 ff.; 7:10): it was there to be obeyed. Applying to all, not just to Jews, it was summarized in the Decalogue and the command to love one's neighbor as oneself (Rom. 7:7; 13:9; Gal. 5:14). While Paul never abandoned this basic conviction, he was led to see what became all-important to himself personally what he expressed in a more profound and radical way than did any Jew or Greek before him, and what no other theologian of primitive Christianity repeated after him, namely, that this same holy, righteous, and good Law (Rom. 7:12, 16) was in fact powerless to give salvation and life. This brought him to an entirely new understanding of the Law's universality. By this term he meant more than - as was meant, for example, in Hellenistic Judaism long before his own day - the applicability of the Law to all; he meant its all-embracing effects: it declared that all men, Jew and Gentile alike, are guilty in God's sight. This inextricable solidarity of all men under the Law as lost is the truly revolutionary aspect of his gospel.

analytic analysis but much more on a higher and deeper experience of what life means to our particular situations. Here is where all of this philosophical background may come to a very practical working use. To understand what we mean by authority in our various communions we must work with the smallest, most everyday, most practical situations of authority, but we should work with these situations taking our stand with the spirit and trying to experience the parts, motives and practices which are so real in these situations. When we do this practically we can come to use a number of sociologists, psychologists and philosophers who employ a slightly more abstract way of providing for us frameworks and methods of working with these situations. Hence the working with the situations need not be a blind groping and thrashing about but will have the elements of knowledge, of intellect and of analysis integrated with the basic beliefs which we all experience.

To turn again to St. Paul we see that as he tried to understand and analyse God's dealings with men he constantly spoke and acted in terms of what may appear to us to be rather minute questions of community experience. In these terms he spoke of the most highly significant and most important feeling of his purposes and hence some of the most vital questions of authority and morality are radically based on such apparently trivial questions as

to whether or not women should have hats on in church or the eating or not eating of certain foods. They are not trivial questions because here the basic faith of the spirit is most clearly seen and experienced.

When we talk today about authority in the church we must also be talking about those who find authority odious, difficult or impossible because in their basic needs, in their basic experience the whole language of authority appears remote. Authority does not exist apart in an unethical world of its own. Even when we carefully analyse all of the aspects of authority we are only trying to live out in our own highly specialized way the demands and needs which people more pragmatically put to us. This means then when we try to solve our ecumenical problems of authority it is radically necessary that this solution be a solution which works at the grass roots level and this, not because of any slogan or general insistence that the grass roots are somehow always right but because in the recent history of our culture we can trace elements which demand that truth and the spirit of truth be found there.

Not only in Western cultures but also increasingly in the thought of Africa and Asia which is now influencing us more and more strongly there is this recognition of the

validity of the deep inner community experience. Again pragmatically we can now use our intellectual analysis as a vehicle for the spirit, as a place in which the spirit can live and work.¹

1 John V. Taylor, The Go-Between God, (London: SCM Press, 1972) pp. 184 - 185

For the most intractable disagreements between the faiths of mankind are philosophical rather than religious. One culture has been built on a different view of existence from another. Here people are satisfied by one kind of explanation, there they need a different kind because the terms which seem to them to be ultimate and incapable of further analysis are different. It is not that one people's explanation contains more truth than that of another, but that a different kind of truth is demanded in different cultures and at different times.

We may well ask whether what we call 'scientific' truth is as much at home in an Indian or Japanese world-view as it is in the setting of European philosophy, or whether it is peculiarly the kind of explanation that satisfies the western tradition. Will the western 'mind' and the Confucianist 'mind' and the Hindu 'mind' adapt themselves to technology and absorb it in exactly the same way? Or may it be hoped that while western philosophy has given birth to a more successful technology of physics and chemistry than of the human sciences, the heirs of Confucius and Mencius may more naturally develop a technology of social relations, and India a technology of man's unrealized extra-sensory and 'spiritual' capacities?

And if the universal validity of scientific truth needs thus to be incorporated into different systems of explanation before its full potential can be realized,

Finally the approach which has been outlined which tries on questions of authority to bring into

what of that totally universal truth which is Christ? That way of putting the question throws some light on the meaning of dialogue between people of different faiths, on the nature of their agreements and disagreements, and on the processes by which, if at all, Christ is to make himself at home in other households of thoughts once he made himself at home in the Graeco-Roman world.

The human agents through whom this at-homeness of Christ was made actual in that seemingly alien world of ideas were those who had first allowed themselves to become men of two worlds. Having learned to move freely to and fro across the frontier between the mind of the Jewish law and the mind of the Greek stoa, they could see the miraculous relevance of their Messiah both to the shining ideals and the dark failures of the Gentiles.

But - and I think this point is too often ignored - their understanding of the two worlds and interpretation of one to the other was not a simple interchange of cultures. Paul and Apollos and John were not merely members of the Jewish dispersion engaged in a Hebrew-Greek dialogue. In their experience of the living Christ they were freed from cultural bondage, either to the Jewish or to the Gentile world-view. Christian faith did not offer them a third culture, since Christendom was unborn by three centuries or more. But it afforded a detached viewpoint from which to see both the heritage from which they had emerged, and the heritage to which they spoke. And what they saw was that both were being judged and fulfilled by the Lord of all worlds.

play as many possible elements of the human situation as can be seen and experienced presents to us a way of organising these elements in the spirit of deep co-operation because what is our prime concern is not the intellectual, analytical things which divide authoritarian systems from each other but the newer human needs which drive us to each other, which compel us in spite of all of our intellectual misgivings to carry on in the Spirit of God. This means that in any authoritative situation our overwhelming tendency should be constantly to say "yes" to every possible element and this saying of "yes" backs authority in any situation as the crying of the needs of man. One of the most striking elements in the character of Jesus Christ is his frequent use of the word "Amen", a use which is rather peculiar to his

The same theological dimension should be a factor in the Christian's participation in inter-faith dialogue today. Though the terms of the encounter must be an equal commitment and an equal openness, the Christian cannot deny the strange detachment from all the religious systems and vocabularies, including his own, which his faltering attachment to the Lord imparts to him. For this Lord insists that his disciples be free, culturally and intellectually, as well as morally. And it is precisely this detachment which releases the Christian to become 'all things to all men' and discover common ground with men of other faiths and ideologies in those experiences of awakening and disclosure which the Spirit gives to all men without discrimination.

particular way of talking. He is concerned to be saying "yes" as much as possible to the myriad elements of the society and people that he finds around him. The more we can find in ourselves the ability to say "yes" to authority in the terms in which authority has been proposed in this paper, the more we will assimilate ourselves as Christians to the character of Jesus Christ and hence partake of something of his Spirit.¹

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1 John V. Taylor, The Go-Between God, (London: SCM Press, 1972), p. 166

I have earlier drawn attention to Jesus' unique use of the word 'Yes, Amen'. With him it is always 'Yes'. Possessed by the Spirit of life he saw every eventuality in its positive aspect. He met every temptation by saying 'Yes' to a more vivid alternative. In the wilderness his 'No' to the devil's three false salvations was in fact a resounding 'Yes' to the true salvation. 'Yes' to man's wholeness - 'not bread alone'; 'Yes' to man's freedom - no mind-blowing arrival from the skies; 'Yes' to man's sonship towards God - 'him only shalt thou serve'. Even the agony in the garden was less a 'No' to his own will than a triumphant 'Yes' to the cup his Father had given him to drink. 'Abba' and 'Amen' were the characteristic words of the second Adam. The first Adam, by contrast, thought he was saying 'Yes' to selfhood, and found he had in fact said 'No'. He had been deceived concerning both the situation and the true nature of God. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, opens our eyes to the truth of the situation and the truth of the God who is within and beyond it. When that happens it becomes possible to dispense with the book of rules.