

[From the Gordon-Conwell Lectures on Apologetics, 1981.]

Language, Truth, and Revelation, Part 3

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As the idea of a pointer presumably came from Brunner, and as smoothing out the paradox is equivalent to Brunner's rejection of logic, a paragraph on this background will emphasize the irrationalism of this school of theology.

Paul Jewett, who was a pupil of mine, a student under me, wrote a book, *Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation*. Jewett translates from *Die christliche Lehre von Gott* as follows: "The purely rational element of thought in logic has the tendency to proceed from any given point in a straight line. Faith, however, constantly bridles this straight line development. Theological thinking is a rational movement of thought. The logical consequences of which are constantly at every point, at every point, through faith turned back, curtailed, or destroyed. Only by constant breaking of systematic unity and logical consistency does thought arise which may be designated as believing thought."

Now, it might be polite to minimize, as hyperbole, the word *constantly*, which Brunner uses three times in this short quotation. And also the phrase, "at every point." Surely Brunner allows a few valid syllogisms. He cannot mean that faith permits no inference at any point. Then substituting the words "every once in awhile" and "occasionally," the polite critique could give his respectful objections. But the present critics believes Brunner really meant what he said, and that the hyperbole cannot reduce at every point to every other point.

How then can faith bridle, curtail, and perhaps destroy its own logical consequences? Suppose we believe, for *pistueo* mean believe, suppose we believe Christ rose from the dead leaving the tomb as empty as the women said. Suppose further that this implies, as it does when other Scriptural statements are added in the premises, suppose this implies we too shall rise. Is now our belief to curtail this inference and even to turn back and destroy the original premise? What sort of faith would this be? If anything, this faith or belief would be unbelief. Yet, this unbelief, this constant breaking of systematic unity and logical consistency, Brunner calls, "believing thought." It is not believing, and if it thought at all, the less the better."

Although unintelligibility leaves no message at all, Gilkey as well as Brunner will not retreat from this fundamental irrationalism. Let me point out that the word Gospel means good news. It means information. And of course these people say Revelation contains no information at all.

So Gilkey as well as Brunner will not retreat from this fundamental irrationalism. Religious language is without exception mythological. "Myth is a form of religious language which unites the three concepts of analogy, revelation, and paradox. Thus when Christians speak of God as creator, or when they say 'he send his son into the world,' he speaks through the prophets." This mythical language is analogical because it deliberately denies that the language is to be interpreted literally. So if you say God is the creator, you mustn't think that literally. That's mythological. If you say the son of God came into the world, you mustn't understand the words as they are written, they point to something else that is unintelligible. Further quote, "Like the symbol of the fall, creation has no inherent or original factual content." Neither the fall nor creation have any original factual content. If the myth of creation is taken to be literally and simply true, then it loses all its religious character.

Now they're verbatim quotations. On the next page, Gilkey twice repeats his contention that if creation is understood to be a literal fact, like an eclipse of the sun, it has no religious character. You remember the eclipse of the sun in 1955? Didn't you notice that? Why don't you take notice of things that happen?

Audience: I had a diaper rash ???

You know, there came a time in my life when I was dumbfounded that my students didn't remember World War 1. Now my students don't remember Word War 2. Oh my. Oh my. Such poor memories you people have.

"This eclipse of the sun, if you take the creation as literally as you take the eclipse of the sun, creation has no religious character. As an objective truth about the world's beginning, it has no deep reverberating bearing on our own existence and destiny."

To this one might reply that a literal creation has most certainly, if not an analogical and meaningless deep reverberation, a most important and immediate bearing on man's life and destiny. I don't know what a deep reverberation is, but they use flowery terms you know, indulging in flights of poetry as bad as or even worse than Keats.

It has as much bearing on our future hopes and present conduct as the literal truth of the bodily resurrection. But there is a more fundamental flaw, or at least omission in these pages. The quotations assume a knowledge of what religious characteristics are. Where, or how, did professor Gilkey get his concept of the religious? If he can clearly state his concept, by what argument can he maintain it? He gives no argument. He is of course at liberty to invent any sort of religious he likes. He is even at some liberty to misuse English and deny that people of other religions are religious. He may compose, as professor of psychology have sometimes done, a questionnaire by which to test the religiosity of a hundred students. In one class, it was a Lutheran minister who was determined to be the least religious, I mean the examination showed that he was the least religious person in the class. But that only meant he diverged the most

widely from the professor's notion of what religion should be. And this is all that Gilkey's language means. Orthodox Christians are not religious. Gilkey is not a Christian.

In fairness, for there's no profit in misrepresenting one's opponents, I don't see any reason for misrepresenting my opponents, they're all so bad they don't need to be misrepresented. If I misrepresented them, they'd appear better than they are. One must note that in the last four pages of his book, Gilkey himself seems to have an incipient qua. He asks, "If all our knowledge is terms of analogy, can we be said to possess any significant knowledge of God at all?" This is a good, a very good question, but the answer is pitiful. "The point where God is most directly known," he says, "is in historical revelation." Naturally, for Gilkey, historical revelation is not the historical event of God speaking intelligible sentences to Moses or Isaiah. Nor can it be literal statements describing the Exodus or the Babylonian Captivity. He must mean uninterpreted occurrences. We cannot accept Moses' explanation of the exodus. We can only know there was an exodus. Perhaps we do not know there was an exodus, for there is so much inaccuracy in mythology in the Old Testament.

But let us suppose somehow we know something, like an eclipse. Know something has happened. Now, somehow or other, in such events as these, and in particular he mentions the person of Jesus Christ, if only we could believe the things the early Christians imagined about him. And you remember, of course, that what's-his-name, not Heidegger, the other fellow. Not Brunner, but another.

Audience: Bultmann?

Bultmann. Bultmann says we do not know a single thing Jesus ever said or did. You must keep that in mind when you are studying neo-orthodoxy. And so I have this little phrase here, "if only we could believe anything the early Christians imagined about him." Now, somehow or other, under these conditions, we see the love of God. We learn that God is love, of course. We see that God is love. Of course he is also hate. And love is not symbolic. The personal recreative love of God in Christ is the one unsymbolic and direct idea of God that Christians possess.

Now, I'm characterizing this admission as a qualm that appears on the last four pages of his book. Now these seemingly beautiful words as found in the matrix of Gilkey's book are totally without meaning. The apostle John says, "Here in is love that he sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins." But son, sent, and especially propitiation are all mythological. What Gilkey means by love, if anything at all, is something else.

Now, if indeed, the love of God is the matrix of Gilkey's theory, if that phrase... if indeed the love of God in the matrix of Gilkey's theory conveys any modicum of meaning, that meaning could not have been ascertained by any inspection of uninterpreted historical occurrences.

Consider two points. First, observation of the historical process ever produces any ethical or theological ideas. I guess that is what I was trying to say in my sermon the other morning. World

history, far from showing that God is love, rather supports Bertrand Russell's conclusion that the world is unspeakably horrible. Not only did Hitler exterminate 5 million Jews, and a number of Mennonites too, Stalin starved 10 million Ukrainians to death. And the Chinese communists massacred 20 or 30 million Chinese plus nearly all the population of Tibet.

At this point someone will ask, "What about the person of Jesus Christ?" A good question, but the answer is not Gilkey's. If we have no verbal explanation of the person and work of Jesus Christ, he is but another instance of the universal reign of injustice. He was put to death, wasn't he? Unjustly. And that simply shows that the world is unjust. The point is that observation of the historical process does not come near proving that the love of God is the one unsymbolic and direct idea that Christians possess.

Therefore, second, this beautiful phrase has no meaning at all. Besides the impossibility of deriving this idea from history, and also besides the general rejection of the Scriptures literal message, there is another reason for saying that the love of God, as Gilkey explains it, is meaningless. The reason is, that the alleged idea leads us nowhere. It points to nothing.

Does the love of God imply that as Jesus rose from the dead, so shall we? How does one find out what faith or repentance or sanctification is from this vapid phrase.

Does the phrase "God is love" even tell us anything about God? Of course, if we accept the literal and propositional revelation of the Bible, we can have an extension philosophy. But on Gilkey's view, we have neither a concept of love nor any notion of why it is important. In the very same paragraph Gilkey had also said, "In Christ God is not known as he is in himself, hence nothing that Jesus is supposed to have done teaches us anything about God." Is this not sufficient to dispose of Gilkey's mythical language and irrational religion?

There are other authors whose theory of language is worked out in somewhat greater detail than Gilkey's. Before considering them, however, it seems proper to sample the great number of those who fall into the general category without originating notable improvements in the theory. The purpose is to take note of types of evidence by which they support their views. Many of these authors mention the first 11 chapters of Genesis. And in particular the first three. For example, Dooyeweerd rejects the first 11 chapters in toto. They're just mythology, they're not true.

When they say that chapter 1 is not a cosmological theory, they speak the truth if by the phrase they mean a very detailed description of the formation of the solar system. This however is an irrelevance just as much so as if one were to say the invasions of Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar in 2nd Kings are unhistorical because the books gives so little earlier and later Assyrian and Babylonian history. The mere fact that Genesis does not state the speed of light does not impune the statement that he made the stars also. That is a statement which Voltaire ridiculed as maybe you've heard about, but anyhow.

Another instance of poor logic relates to Cain. The author is interested in finding inconsistencies in the Bible. The author, that is these various authors who don't particularly advance the theory but give additional reasons or evidences for their position. One author or another. Many authors. The author is interested in finding inconsistencies in the Bible. So, he argues, Cain's expressed fear of being killed by anyone who finds him implies that there were inhabitants of the Earth who were not children of Adam and Eve. The gentleman should have taken an elementary course in logic.

His poor thinking ability is also evident from another angle. If there were people not descendants of Adam and Eve, especially if at all numerous, it is not likely that everyone would want to slay him. That is Cain. Most of them would not have known that Cain was a murder. But Cain's brother's knew. Accordingly, by the Biblical account, everyone would want to kill him because everyone had the same parents. Perhaps the modern author thought that Cain had no brothers at all. Or maybe only Enoch. He may have had none at that time. Vengeance might be delayed but it would come because Adam begat sons and daughters.

The account of the flood also stimulates a liberal to imagine a major inconsistency. As ordinarily read, the flood began on February the 17th in the year 600. It rained 24 hours a day for 40 days. After that, the waters prevailed for 150 days. On July 17, year 600, the ark rested. The waters began to recede. On October 1st the tops of the mountains could be seen. The Noah on three occasions let loose a bird. The third time the bird did not return. Things were fairly dry by January 1st, 601. And on February the 27th they all came out of the ark. So the account reads.

But somewhere between the lines, this imaginative author discovers an alternate version that limits the flood to 61 days. This sort of thing, if it were true, could legitimately be used as evidence for Wellhausen's documentary theory. But it is totally irrelevant to the thesis that Genesis and all religious literature is written in mythological language. The alleged contradictions in the Bible are more clearly contradictory if the language is literal. Then one can plainly say, "this statement is false" or even that when the two are different rather than contradictory. Maybe both be false. But inconsistencies never will prove that the language is mythological.

What then can prove that this or that book is mythology? We call, now this is sorta a definition of mythology. They talk about mythology, let's see if we can know what they are talking about. What then can prove this book to be mythology? We call Homer mythological because of a combination of two reasons. He talks about the Gods, that's the first part of it. And second, we do not believe what he says about them. Were we polytheistic believers, we would not dismiss his stories as myths. And when he writes on the Trojan War, we may doubt his accuracy, but we acknowledge that there was a Trojan War.

Now, it is possible to treat the Bible this way. Those who call the early chapters of Genesis mythological do so because they do not believe what Genesis says about God and His actions. To say a religious book is myth simply means "I don't believe it." In this sense, the books of

Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles can also be called mythological. But here some embarrassment arises. These books, that is Kings and Chronicles, these books are, or claim to be, history and they are as literal as any history books can be. From this it follows these books are both literal and mythological. And this is not what the language theologians want. For them, mythology is something like fable. It is an analogy of an inspirational character that produces a moral or otherwise desirable action. Now, the books of Samuel and Kings are clearly not fables like Aesop's, they are history written in literal language. Because literal, and because one believes them true, they are as inspirational as, indeed more stimulating than, a mere fanciful tale.

Now, fanciful tales do produce effects. How many of you have ever read *The Heart of Midlothian*? Ah, nobody? Sir Walter Scott didn't like the Covenanters one little bit. And he took a good many potshots at them. But he could avoid seeing that they were thoroughly honest. And *The Heart of Midlothian* is the story about two sisters one of whom was charged and convicted of murdering her child. And her sister was put on the witness stand and asked the question, and the question is based on Scottish law, "Did you your sister—who is now accused of child murder—ever tell you that she was pregnant?" And this girl, knowing very well, the older sister, knowing very well that her answer would condemn the girl to death, nevertheless said no, she never told me. And because the accused girl never told her sister that was enough to condemn her to death. That was according to Scottish law. And this is sorta the center part of the plot on which Sir Walter Scott founds his story. And it's a very... you ought to read these things. Read a little bit, you know. Don't, what was this fellow at breakfast telling me about? He was playing some crazy football game. I don't know, some game, you know. Don't play games, read Sir Walter Scott. And if you want to know how the movement which was initiated by Wycliffe gradually faded out and caused some good Christians a lot of trouble, read *The Fair Maid of Perth*. These are wonderful novels, and memorize your Hebrews forms then read these novels too. They're more interesting than the Hebrew forms.

The numerous unnamed authors referred to in this interlude differ among themselves in several details. Each one can be evaluated only on the basis of his own words. But a survey shows that there range of difference stretches from the easily understood assertion that the Bible is literal language and often false to the other extreme that the Bible is mythological throughout and always true. Always true in a mythological sense of true.

Those who represent this later extreme face two problems. First, their own religious writings are not literally true. And this makes their arguments unintelligible. They write religious language, don't they? That is what they claim to do. Well then all their writings are mythological and you can't believe them. And second, since history can be religious, and since mathematics was a religious and soteric activity for the Pythagoreans, these authors have a hard time finding anything literal in English, French, or symbolic logic.

Those in the middle who take Genesis as myth but Kings as literal face the problem of stating a criterion by which to maintain this distinction. If they say religious language alone is

mythological, they imply that Kings is not a religious book. As a matter of fact, they should also say that the first chapter of Genesis is not religious, for cosmology is as irreligious as history.

A particular example, slightly different in subject matter, though similar in its logic, may clarify the difficulty. In the recent past, several writers have said that the purpose of the Bible is to present salvation in Christ. But since Kings and Chronicles do not clearly do so, these books are not the word of God.

Now, I suppose in your theological classes you have come across the notion of kerygma, and the people who use that word mean by it to exclude most of what the Bible says and to pick out of the Bible something that they think particularly has to do with Christ and salvation, but of course Kings and Moses and Genesis haven't anything to do with salvation. And so you have this kerygma. Of course they never tell you precisely the extent of this kerygma. That's one of their difficulties. They have no criterion for distinguishing between kerygmatic statements and non-kerygmatic statements. But they all want to reduce the Christian message to a few little points, unlike Paul who claimed that he was guiltless of the blood of all men since he declared the whole counsel of God and didn't restrict himself to a kerygma. That in Acts, the what chapter in the 24th verse. No, the 24th chapter and the 27th verse. No, it's the 27th chapter... I don't know where it is. But it's there.

Where am I? King and Chronicles are not the word of God. No doubt most of John's Gospel is the word of God, but very little of Chronicles. It is right here that the pointed question must be put. What criterion is used to distinguish religious literature from non-religious? What criterion is used to determine that the purpose of the Bible precludes historical books from being the word of God. Most of these authors who make these distinctions offer no criterion at all. If they did, a Moslem or a Hindu would reply, "That may be your idea of religion, but it's not mine." And a Christian would reply, "That is your notion of what is excluded from salvation in Christ, but it's not mine."

There is indeed a way for these people to avoid logical difficulties, paradox, and analogy. To quote one of them, "It is possible to lead a religious life—now remember, it is a religious life—it is possible to lead a religious life without discussing it or verbalizing very much about it. If a person never says anything, he obviously does not flounder in fallacious applications. No one can refute him, for he says nothing to refute. What one can truly say of him, however, is that he's not a Christian. For Christ commanded his followers to make disciples, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Christians must verbalize, to use contemporary gobbledygook.

Hordern was a professor in Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. He is not an evangelical, he claims to be a Christian of some sort. We'll see what he has to say. *Speaking of God*, that's a clever title with a double meaning, *Speaking of God* is a most interesting attempt to expose the difficulties of some modern theories of language. Like his predecessors, Hordern is more successful, very successful, in refuting anti-religious views than in establishing a solid

base for Christian truth. The Christian can, however, learn much, both from his success and from his failure.

Hordern notes that there is a contemporary stress on communication both in advertising and politics. But with this there is also a debasement of the language in that words have become so elastic that no one understands anyone else. And for the 999th time, let me emphasize the necessity of definition. Definition is difficult, and a lot of writers avoid it like the plague with the result you don't know anything about what they mean. If you want to communicate, you have to define your terms. And it's awfully hard to get some people to do that.

Everybody favors peace, freedom, and democracy including the Democratic Republic of East Germany. But the words are used in contradictory senses. Someone said that poor people are denied psychiatric care not because of their poverty, but because a psychiatrist cannot understand what they say. One of the main causes of the debasement of languages, is the sin of wanting to control the actions of other people which can most easily be done by propaganda.

And I've been carrying on a controversy with Fuller seminary for some years, challenging them to define the word evangelical. I can't get them to do it. They like to use the word, you know. But they carefully refrain from telling you what they mean by it. And they certainly don't mean what the word has meant in the history from the time of Luther to the early part of this century, at any rate.

Now, Christianity has a message to be understood, hence Christians must be concerned about language. The question is, how can we use words to speak about God? If we have coined words to speak of earthly things, how can we use those words to apply to heavenly things? The creeds have an historic strength as a congregation repeats them. But the terminology is an offense to modern man. The language alienates him. Candidates for the ministry have a hard time subscribing to the denomination's creed, if they still have any scruples against perjury. Yet they want to take part in what they consider to be in harmony with the denominations *real* purpose. So they pledge their vows with their fingers crossed.

The fundamentalists resisted this claim to preserve what somebody supposed was the real purpose of the church to retain what is essential and disregard miracles in favor of modern science. The liberals won, but only to be eclipsed by neo-orthodoxy and its myths. But if all is myth and symbol, where is truth? If people in general found it difficult to discover what the liberals really believed, it is harder to find out what the neo-orthodox believe. They say they believe in creation, but that this tells us nothing about the universe. Words, of course, are symbols. But this is not what the neo-orthodox mean when they say the fall of man is a symbol. Ordinary symbolism and figures of speech can be put into literal language. But the neo-orthodox doctrines can not. And these theologians cannot tell us what the symbols symbolize.

For example, Tillich said that the only non-symbolic statement one can make about God is "God is being itself." Then someone replied, first, "This too is symbolic." Second, "Being itself is not

the Christian God.” Third, “The phrase is not a statement but a definition, and one that is at odds with 95% of religious tradition.” Tillich then amended his statement about God to “the only non-symbolic statement about God is that everything we say about God is symbolic.”

Theologians have perhaps been dilatory in recognizing language analysis. Formerly, Christians faced the charge that their theology was false or untrue. Now they must face the charge that it is meaningless.

On the other hand, the analysts who claim to examine language as it is commonly used, ought to be willing to consider ordinary theological language. For the most part they slight it or ignore it. Those who ignore it, in that they dismissed it with disparaging epithets, place themselves in a peculiar position. Their epithets are emotional. Certainly they are evaluative. But on their own showing such language is meaningless. They were talking nonsense. In addition, their verification principle was itself metaphysical and cannot be verified. Yet from this non-verifiable principle, they deduce their system.

After some stimulating analysis of the analytical philosophy, Hordern begins to prepare for the exposition of his own position. He does not minimize, rather he very clearly points out the difficulties in defending theological language. Predicates such as *angry* or verbs like *know* and *will* have strange meanings when God is the subject of the sentence.

If we say God made or created the world, the meaning is not the same as the statement Smith made a chair or a table. For we can point in distinction to something Smith did not make. But to nothing that God did not make. In fact, we cannot point to anything that God made all by himself. For everything now has been modified by natural processes. Our knowledge, says Hordern is temporally conditioned. And for this reason does not apply to the eternal God. See, you can't say that that tree was created immediately because that tree grew from some seed or acorn, or so on, that was produced by another tree and so on. So we cannot point to anything that God immediately created. And so our knowledge, and for other reasons also, our knowledge is temporally conditioned and hence we can't apply our knowledge, or our words, to God.

If theological language is not pure nonsense, one must give a clear answer to the question, “How can theological language communicate meaning?” The secular philosophers who have attempted to answer usually have little understanding of theology and as a result they present a caricature. The theologians, on the other hand, know very little philosophy and as a result they are incompetent.

Hordern's key to the solution is the concept of conviction. As opposed to emotion. Conviction describes the state of mind of a religious person better than emotion does. The theologian is convinced, but further, conviction presupposes a convictor, an irresistible power outside oneself. Convictional language points to a reality as much as empirical language does. Even in science there is conviction about objectivity and also conviction that science is good. The logical

positivist expressed his convictions by selecting his verification principle. He was convinced that nothing was important but the space-time world. Note on this convictional theory leaves the logical positivist breathless. He had argued that God and providence are meaningless because no experiment can invalidate them. When evil is used as an argument against God, the theist makes some unprovable assertions that this evil eventually produces greater good. But though the positivist scorns the theist on this account, he himself uses the same argument, for he argues nothing can falsify the scientific principle of order in the universe, for when a difficulty arises such as the perturbations of the moon which no scientist has ever been able to manage yet. Or the fickleness of the weather, and they're not doing too well with that either. But when such things are pointed out to the scientists, he claims that the present experiments are defective in one way or another. There was an error somewhere. And then he looks for new experiments until he finds one which he thinks fits. And that's just what the Christian does with the problem of evil. Yet the opposition wants to ridicule the Christian for having such a theodicy when he himself has to use exactly the same argument with the perturbations of the moon.

The later Wittgenstein had spoken of language games. Unfortunately, he did not define *game*. And he seems to have used the word in several senses. But at any rate, if the analytic philosophy makes use of some concept of games, it cannot, as Hordern emphasizes, rule out theological language game. See, Wittgenstein considers language as games. And there is a scientific language, that is the scientific game. And I suppose there is political language and that is political game. If you accept Wittgenstein, and he was a sort of logical positivist but not a very orthodox one, if you have these different language games, then if you allow some people to play the scientific language games, you cannot on principle prohibit a Christian from using the Christian language game. If the analytic philosophy makes use of some concept of games, it cannot, as Hordern emphasizes, rule out the theological language game.

Baseball has its rules. But this does not make football impossible. As there are different rules for different games, so too theology establishes its own rules. Science cannot establish them for it. Yet theology can prescribe some rules to science for the latter, as was shown earlier, cannot claim any value for itself. See if you have a scientific view, a modern scientific view, or the view of scientism, there are no evaluative statements that mean anything. And hence this precludes the scientist from saying that science is worth anything. The language of values is theological language. For this reason, though the theory of language games embarrasses the positivists, for this reason it does not fit theology. Theology not only evaluates science, it gives direction to all of life. It does not answer questions left over by science nor does it offer an explanation of the universe. Rather it is a means by which a man can give purpose and direction to his life.

Along with conviction and convictor, Hordern will build his theory of language on its use in a community. Analytic philosophy usually ignores the persons who speak and their community. But even scientific language becomes nonsense outside the scientific community. The Christian community is the church. Theology cannot be understood if its church background is ignored. Of course the gospel must be preached to those outside the church. Some Christians wish to lay a foundation for this preaching in the evidence of natural theology. Then when the evidence

becomes weak or exhausted, faith takes over. Faith is a sign of weakness. But, remarks Hordern, in the New Testament faith is something strong and powerful. It is neither emotive nor subjective. It is not a rational act of choosing the most probable hypothesis. On the contrary, "Here I stand." This is grace, not the will to believe.

Wittgenstein himself had admitted that the giving of reasons must come to an end somewhere. If a person is unwilling to play the scientific game, no further reasoning can force him to. On such grounds as these, Hordern can infer that faith is not belief on insufficient evidence, it is belief without any evidence.

How does one decide what evidence is? What evidence can one have to prove his evidence is evidence? The very acceptance of evidence is faith. Ayer admits the same thing in acknowledging that we cannot logically justify the principle of induction. Nor that the future will resemble the past. Induction itself, says Ayer, sets the standard of rationality.

Hordern's argument in this section of the book is not altogether clear. Or it is not altogether complete. He seems to say that one man's faith is as good as another's. This, to be sure, is enough to puncture the arrogance of the positivists. But the present writer would desire to go further and insist on the basis of the thousand and first crow that faith in induction is a very poor type of faith. But to embarrass the positivists, it is enough to say, as Hordern does, that Western society has advanced in science because most people believe it to be good and important. But the Hindus have a different concept of reality even though they presumably have similar sense organs. Therefore the Hindus will sleep on a bed of spikes to show that pain is unimportant.

Returning again to his constructive theory, Hordern reiterates theological language points to a convictor. This convictor is known to be a mystery. When a Christian theologian speaks of God as transcendent he uses the word as a symbol of the mystery of God. Resembling somewhat Schleiermacher's feeling of absolute dependence, this experience of mystery is the root of religion. A mystery is not a riddle to be solved, says Hordern, it is a secret. But even when revealed, it does not become transparent to men. One might say that a mystery is unknowable. Or better, that mystery is not a matter of knowledge at all.

I hope you see, of course, that Hordern is not in accordance with the New Testament because that is not what the New Testament says. The New Testament says exactly the opposite. He claims to be a Christian. He doesn't claim to be an evangelical at all. I don't know what church he belongs to. I don't know whether it is Greek Catholic or what. I just don't know. Does anybody know? I don't.

Audience: ???

Well he may have lectured there. He's a professor in Northwestern University, isn't he? In Evanston, Illinois.

Audience: ???

Such a defense of religion against scientism is popular in this last half of the twentieth century. But though a defense of religion, it is of little value to Christianity. For Christianity a mystery is indeed a secret. And when God tells us a secret, we know it. "Behold I tell you a mystery," Paul writes, "we shall not all sleep." No doubt most of the world's population believes that all must die. But the Christian on the basis of God's revelation know that at Christ's return some will not die. The sense of mystery is no proof of God. It is compatible with many views of God. And even the atheist may be aware of the mystery of the universe. But it, that is the sense of mystery, helps us to understand the use of theological language. At this point one may stand in awe of a mystery that supports Christianity and atheism equally well. If this aids us in understanding the use of theological language, have we not already accepted logical positivism?

Clearly Hordern thinks he is refuting his opponents. Actually his position is very much the same thing. The theologian must say the unsayable. In poetry, art, and liturgy we can sing what we cannot say. The *Te Deum* is not paying metaphysical compliments to deity. Language is conditioned by space and time. The words fail because they are finite. We say what we do not mean. We must use analogies and then erode them. Yet fatherhood is a better analogy than cousinhood. But we cannot find the line that divides the misleading part of analogy from the good part. Theology is paradoxical. College students reject theological language, but they are moved by the Lord's Supper.

But then, college students are often irrational. That happens to be my comment. Can't you tell the difference between what Hordern says and what I say? No maybe you can't sometimes.

Naturally, Hordern does not look with favor upon the objections here leveled against him. He tries to avoid them by the "personal language game." But some of it seems to contradict what he has already asserted. Dogmatic theology and skepticism are both bad. There is a base of knowledge from which faith can speak. Knowledge, he say. Skeptics say that until one has non-analogical knowledge one cannot even know that something is an analogy. But there is knowledge and there are analogies, he asserts with emphasis. Evading the skeptics' as well as the dogmaticians' point. Equally without support he asserts that there is a personal language game with its own logic, a game that points directly to God. God has revealed that personal language is the key to speaking about him. Science cannot speak of persons. Mind is only one part of a person. We want to know not only how someone's mind works, but what are his hopes, motivations, and ambitions. For personal language, we must listen to the existentialists rather than to the language analysts.

But if we listen to the existentialists, it is not likely that we should hear anything. Do they explain this personal logic so different from Aristotelian logic? Does personal logic have 24 valid syllogisms, or none at all? Does it have middle terms, contraries, subalterns? An assertion that personal language has its own logic requires an exposition of its rules. Horden speaks of it as a game. Games have rules. Or is this personal language nothing else than a different vocabulary?

Astronomy uses the words *star* and *planet*. Botany speaks about internal phloem. *Brown* is not a personal word, but *sympathetic* and *angry* are. Then one asks, which verbs are personal and which impersonal? A clock runs. A boy runs too. Without explaining any of this, Hordern says, "the normal subject-object division that occurs in our language about things is absent when we are speaking about ourselves. Or if used, must be recognized as having a different logic." To invent an example, *John is sympathetic*, take that as a sentence, *John is sympathetic* contains neither a subject nor a predicate. And, because personal, it implies by its own logic that Scotchmen are stingy. There are some 50 or 60 pages more on which Hordern extols personal language. Some of his remarks, especially in opposition to Tillich, are valuable. But their matrix is a language game that has no rules. Why should anyone want to play such a game?