

Church of the 'full gospel'. The results have always been the same (see already St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians). Somehow, it is only in the Church, in the tiresome medley of mediocre people who normally make up the Church, that true Christian love is found. We are not to say 'I am Paul's man' or 'I am for Apollos' or 'I am for Christ' (perhaps the worst schismatic cry of all). Nor should we say 'I am a Marxist' or 'I am a Pentecostal'. There is something profoundly realistic about the Church; in taking the Church just as it is, not starting movements, not starting campaigns, but simply loving and waiting upon God in prayer and service, 'preserving the unity of the Spirit', our fruits may be much less impressive, our experience much less exciting; but we shall be all the more truly rooted and grounded in love, and our works, some of them, at least, may survive, because they are secure on the one foundation that has been laid.

Incarnation as Translation by Frank O'Hara

There has been a remarkable convergence in recent years between Catholic and Protestant theology in the field of christology. The old pattern was that Catholic theologians offered scholastic interpretations of the incarnation, centring on such conciliar and scholastic concepts as person, nature, subsistence and existence, while Protestants followed some form of kenoticism. Kenotic theories of the incarnation, ostensibly based on the ancient hymn in Philippians 2, 5–11, affirmed some sort of change of the Logos or Word of God into human form, and ran into insuperable difficulties concerning the immutability of God as taught by the Bible (cf. Wisdom 7, 27, James 1, 17, and especially Psalm 102, 25–27 and Ecclesiasticus 42, 20–21).

Instead of this dichotomy, there is now emerging a new type of christology, which I classify as 'translation christology'. Among its supporters I would list J.-J. Latour, Christian Duquoc, Edouard Schillebeeckx, Christopher Butler and Charles Davis among the Catholics, and John McIntyre and Wolfhart Pannenberg among the Protestants. Many other modern authors can be quoted in support of the view, although few if any have explicitly made the concept of translation the heart and centre of their christology.

But pride of place must go to Eustace of Antioch, that staunch supporter of St Athanasius who was deposed from his bishopric by the Arians. 'As God the Son, he says, is the image of the Father, so is the man whom He wore the image of the divine Son, though in a

different material.¹ A modern Catholic theologian would want to phrase this differently, and to speak of the manhood which Jesus assumed rather than of the man whom Jesus wore. But the essential point of translation christology is present in Eustace: the manhood of Jesus is the translation of the invisible, inaudible, intangible and impalpable Word of God into visible, audible, tangible and palpable human form (cf. I John 1, 1–4; Colossians 1, 15; Leo the Great, *Serm.* 30, 6: P.L. 54, 233 ff.) Jesus is the Word translated into human form.

This simple but profound insight gives immediate meaning to the classic New Testament statements of the incarnation at John 1, 14 ('The Word *was made* flesh') and Philippians 2, 6–11 (Christ *took the form* of a slave, he *was made* in the likeness of men). Traditional 'assumption christology' cannot cope with these passages, except by diluting them and tending to explain them away. The concept of 'translation' is scripturally based, since we read at John 1, 18 that Jesus, as the only Son, has become our interpreter, 'exegete', or translator of the Father; the Greek word is *exegesato*.² But it is I John 1, 1–4 that most clearly shows Jesus as the Word translated into human form:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete. (R.S.V.)

The development of translation christology must naturally be an extended meditation on I John 1, 1–4. Each facet of the translation process is rich in biblical meaning and imagery, which I can only briefly outline here. That the invisible becomes visible in Jesus is affirmed at Colossians 1, 15 and at II Corinthians 4, 4–6 as well as at I John 1, 1–4. This concept takes us back to the beginning of creation, when God created light and separated it from darkness, as the Priestly writer tells us at Genesis 1, 3. It is also echoed by St Thomas Aquinas, who starts his treatise on the incarnation in the *Summa Theologiae* with his pertinent passage: 'It would seem most fitting that by visible things the invisible things of God should be made known; for to this end was the whole world made, as is clear from the word of the Apostle (Romans 1, 20).'³ (cf. *Summa Theologiae*, III, 1, 1.) The same idea is clearly stated in the liturgy, in the Preface of the Nativity.

In Jesus the inaudible becomes audible; he expounds things hidden

¹Cf. G. L. Prestige. *Fathers and Heretics*. S.P.C.K., London, 1958, p. 135.

²Cf. B. C. Butler. *Why Christ*. Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1960, p. 95, note 2.

since the foundation of the world (Matt. 13, 35; Psalm 78, 2). As Johannes Willemse has said, Jesus is God's first and last Word. Indeed the title Word or Logos is definitive for St John and for all subsequent Catholic christology. Catholics might consider that Bible Protestants stressed the audible aspect of the incarnation almost to the exclusion of the visual aspect, leading to an impoverishment of Christian worship. But the title Word shows Jesus as the revealer of God *par excellence*. For Catholics, the title is not merely functional, but describes the eternal personality of Jesus as God the Son. But the development of this point would take me out of christology proper and into trinitarian theory.

Extremely significant for a balanced christology is the fact that in Jesus the intangible becomes tangible. This is the real justification of the Johannine tradition, since it is the beloved disciple who leaned on the breast of Jesus at the Last Supper and who mediated this tradition to us. Also, physical contact with Jesus is, from first to last, the means of coming to know him closely, of getting into intimate personal contact with him. We have only to think of Simeon (Luke 2, 30–32), of the little children (Mark 10, 13–16 and parallels); of the cures of the deaf man and the blind man in Mark (7, 13–37; 8, 22–26); especially of the woman with the haemorrhage (Mark 5, 25–34) and the woman who was a sinner (Luke 7, 36–50). This last passage is rich in implications concerning the meaning of the celibacy of Jesus and the significance of the incarnation for the whole sphere of human relations, including the sexual and the erotic. Finally, both Mary of Magdala and Thomas the Twin seek to touch the risen Christ, but do not appear to do so; and the flesh (and blood) of Jesus becomes, in the eucharist, our point of contact with the divine.

But the real climax of translation christology consists in the fact that in Jesus the impalpable becomes palpable; *it is by beating Christ up that we get to know Who and What he is*. Here translation christology opens out into redemptive christology or soteriology and so avoids the charge of seeming to reduce Christianity to a mere gnosis or enlightenment. Once again, this theme takes us back to the beginning of creation, where God is driving out evil as light drives out darkness. When Christ appears, Satan, the strong man of Jesus' parable, is bound and the Kingdom of God begins to break in (Mark 3, 27 and parallels; Matt. 12, 28; Luke 11, 20). But in Christ, God himself grapples with evil and gets terribly hurt in the process (cf. John 3, 16; II Corinthians 5, 19). The point is that evil does not always go away when you say 'Please don't!' Too often, 'Please don't!' is the prelude to a murder or a rape. So in Jesus, God's invincible Truth and Love is translated into the weakness of human flesh (cf. Matt. 26, 50; Luke 23, 34). Evil is vanquished in principle; but the working out of the salvific process may take centuries or even millennia.

Rejection of Christianity arises largely from superstition or from despair. There is the superstitious belief that God, if he existed,

would have to be magic, and that all magical possibilities (square circles, painless worlds?) would have to be open to his omnipotence. Thus, creation would have to be instantaneously perfect, and could never require great struggle and effort to bring it to perfection. Then, there is despair that the effort can ever prove worthwhile. Where, we are asked, is the redemption? How is the world different since Jesus came?

I believe that the difference is apparent to living faith, but that only a slender thread of evidence can be pointed out to the unbeliever. It seems that the monstrous evil done by the Nazis under Hitler and the Communists under Stalin was greater in extent than anything the pagans ever did. There are two points to make here. First, the fact that Christ has struck a decisive blow against evil does not mean that the struggle is over; the polarization which follows his victory is in some ways more extreme than anything which went before. Secondly, and this is a very subtle point indeed, the post-Christian evil of the Nazis and the Communists was, in its own macabre and perverted way, aimed at creating some sort of perfect society or world order. Under this mask there flourished all sorts of sadism and brutality. But the whole thing never had the mindlessness of the Roman gladiatorial displays, where people were killed for amusement, literally butchered to make a Roman holiday.

The full philosophical and theological development of translation christology requires a consideration of this central fact: the human heart of Jesus Christ is the heart of the incarnate Word, because it is the incarnate heart of the Word. This involves consideration of the Word-consciousness of Jesus (cf. especially Matthew 5: 28, 32, 34, 39, 44) and also of his Son-consciousness, which is closely connected with it. It involves consideration of the creative role of consciousness, and some attempt to enter into the mind of Christ (cf. Ephesians 3, 18–19). Finally, it can be linked with traditional formulae, like those of Chalcedon, by considering the Aristotelian categories of substance and accident from a modern, post-Kantian perspective instead of from the perspectives of sixteenth-century scholasticism. Here I shall simply quote from the hymn ‘Cor, arca legem continens’:

‘Te vulneratum caritas
Ictu patenti voluit,
Amoris invisibilis
Ut veneremur vulnera.’¹

The *technical* aspects of translation christology can be developed by considering the nature of linguistic translation. Briefly, translation consists in the communication of meaning. God’s purpose in creation is his self-communication in love: the communication of meaning, truth and beauty, of light and life and love. The Word of God, being

¹Love willed that You [the heart of Jesus, here personified] be wounded with a blow that disclosed its secrets, in order that we might revere the wounds of the love we cannot see.’ (Roman Breviary, Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.)

personal, requires a personal translation; its translation cannot be a mere word, but must be a human filial consciousness. Many features of linguistic translation throw light on what was happening in the incarnation, especially those features which arise in poetic and religious translation, in particular in translation from a richer into a poorer language. The logical problems of *radical* translation, the 'translation of the language of a hitherto untouched people',¹ give us some insight into the objective difficulty, even for God, of translating his Word into human form. *Poetic* translation shows us the difference between an authoritative translation on the one hand, and a version or a paraphrase on the other hand. A translation is definitive and has total authority, like the authority (*exousia*) of Jesus, who is not a version of God; he is God in the flesh. Nor is he a paraphrase of the deity: such an opinion would correspond to the Docetist heresy, for which Jesus was not truly man, but simply God masquerading as a man.

The most interesting application of translation theory to the incarnation arises from *religious* translation, especially from the translation of the Hebrew Bible into the Greek of the Septuagint, one of the earliest works of literary translation. The Greek is much richer in syntax and in the complexity of its parts of speech, which reflect the analytic intelligence proper to logic and philosophy. But this very richness was a defect when it came to translating the simple but pregnant concepts of the Hebrew religion. 'Thanks to the structure of the semitic languages, derived parts of speech remain attached to their parent stems and grouped into families; each word continues to call forth the lowly concrete sense from which it drew its origin.'² So the ancient translations mostly followed the Hebrew with a blind literalism, and shaped a new Greek in the process.

In a similar way, a new man is shaped when God translates his Word into human form. Jesus, as God the Son in human form, was the most mature human personality the world has ever seen. As Thomas E. Clarke, S.J., has written, referring to Gogarten's work: 'Friedrich Gogarten's "mature sonship" beautifully expresses the touching paradox contained in the Gospel Christ: the most creative and adult personality the world has ever seen, the man who has most decisively influenced human history, going about with the word "Father" constantly on his lips, and looking continually to that Other as source of his very creativity.'³

The translation of the Bible from Hebrew into Greek was a translation from a richer into a poor language, in religious terms. But it could be said that Greek was a richer language than Hebrew in human terms. Similarly, in the translation of divinity into human

¹Cf. Willard V. Quine, 'Meaning and Translation', in *On Translation*, edited by Reuben A. Brower. Oxford University Press, New York, 1966, p. 148.

²Cf. Dom Jean Gribomont and Dom André Thibaut, *Richesses et Deficiences des Anciens Psautiers Latins*. Libreria Vaticana, Rome, 1959, p. 54.

³Cf. Thomas E. Clarke, S.J., 'The Humanity of Jesus', in *Commonweal*, Vol. LXXXVII, No. 8, 24th November, 1967. *Jesus*: Commonweal papers, 2, p. 241.

form, infinite richness is expressed within the limitations of humanity. But humanity is richer in meaning *to us* than divinity, because of our experience of man and our ignorance of God. The 'poverty' of God consists in his simplicity, which is mysterious to us, but infinitely rich in meaning and intelligibility.

Finally, the process of religious translation can throw light on the process of *understanding* the incarnation. Just as the process of divine revelation takes its origin in a primitive Jewish tribe, whose language has to be translated into the great humanist languages of the world, so too God became man at an epoch of relative simplicity, when the clear-cut ideas needed to translate divinity into human form were common tender. But every age needs to grasp the incarnation for itself; in any age the terms are not lacking to make the simple but profound truth of God in the flesh come alive in the language and culture of the time. Perhaps 'translation christology' will have a part to play in this process.

'New and Non-New' by Ian Gregor and Patricia Marshall

Any Number Can Play

'Speak that I may see thee'—a line from one of Ben Jonson's plays serves to remind us that in language we reveal ourselves in a quite distinctive way. And perhaps nowhere is language more sharply revelatory than in those phrases which fall almost automatically from our lips, routine verbal gestures scarcely attended to.

I suppose, for the average layman, the most sustained theological discourse that he hears exists in the weekly sermon. Even with that general kind of context in mind, there would seem to have grown up in the last few years two kinds of vocabularies which stand in an interesting relationship to each other. As we look at the lists vertically we can see two quite distinct theological profiles—some features of more consequence than others, but taken together, an interesting whole.