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School's recent history, he was able to correlate these two developments. He was part of each, and through each he was part of the other. It is fitting that special attention be devoted to the retirement of this distinguished professor and deeply loyal son of the Divinity School.

It is interesting to note that one article in this issue grows out of one of the central, perhaps the central, concerns of the Divinity School—theology and culture. Just as this has been basic for the School, so it has always been for Paul Tillich. This is one reason, among many, why Tillich always fit so well into the Divinity School. His selection as one of the keynote speakers at the official reopening of the Museum of Modern Art in New York attests to the impact this theologian has made on contemporary cultural life. He does not simply speak about it, he helps to shape and to interpret it. Some of his insights, as stated in this article, may well be prophetic as to the direction of modern visual arts.

The coming issues of *Criterion* should be equally exciting. Big plans are under way to celebrate properly the centennial of the Divinity School—1865-1965. *Criterion* will participate in and report on these proceedings. Special conferences will be held by each of the seven academic fields of the faculty, at which outstanding scholars, all graduates of the Divinity School and present faculty, will read papers before and engage in discussion with fellow alumni. These will include many of the most distinguished scholars working in these fields. Thus *Criterion* hopes to keep reporting on the new developments in the theological world today.

Dean JERALD C. BRAUER

en" occur as variations on a leitmotif in Meland's writings. Of course they indicate the sense of loss in the present life of Protestantism. The story of modern religion, as Meland tells it, is the tragedy of a supreme insight and guiding heritage dissipated, abandoned, or trivialized. Theology must undertake the task, at the intellectual level, of seeking to "repossess the primal meanings of the Christian ethos."²

I THE MEANING OF CULTURE

Since the term culture plays such a large role in the context of Meland's theology it will be well at the outset to get his definition of the word and to see how he uses it. In doing this we will come upon some of the most important themes in Meland's view of man.

The key to Meland's thought here is that he thinks of culture not only as an objective structure, but as a stream of life which bears certain valuations and sensitivities and which becomes therefore a dynamic, formative power in all human living. He defines culture thus:

It is the human flowering of existing structures and facilities, becoming manifest as an ordered way of life in the imaginative activities and creations of a people, their arts and crafts, their architecture, their furniture and furnishings, their costumes and designs, their literature and their public and private ceremonies, both religious and political.³

And he comments:

Each new generation comes into an organic inheritance greater in depth and range than the perceptions of any living person who is a member of it. Thus people live in a context of feeling and awareness that is always beyond their grasp emotionally or cognitively.⁴

Notice moreover the emphasis on the dynamic in culture:

The culture is always an exemplification of the structures of consciousness which are available within the region to initiate psychical responses as well as to express and to assimilate meanings.⁵

The meaning of spirit in relation to culture must be clearly understood. Spirit for Meland is the result of the creative process at the human level. He speaks at times of spirit as the realm of meanings, values, responses and sensitivities in which man's creativity participates. The realm of spirit is therefore empirically accessible as the created structure of meanings. Meland rejects tendencies such as those in Berdyaev's theology to

oppose spirit to culture. At the same time neither culture nor spirit should be used as an honorific term. Culture can be degraded, narrow and stultifying; and spirit can be demonic. Christian theology works within specific cultures and must seek to discover the issues which concern the spiritual life in every cultural context.

II THE DEVELOPMENT OF MELAND'S THOUGHT

Meland stands, I have said, in the liberal stream of American theology. He reacted against the emotionalism and anti-intellectualism of a type of evangelical pietism and he began his theological work as a liberal interpreter of Christianity. But there were three elements in the intellectual foundations upon which Meland built which had for him an especial significance beyond that which is usually characteristic of liberalism. Understanding of these foundations is essential to the grasp of the distinctive character of Meland's theology.

First, there was the assertion of knowledge of God through religious experience, and a formulation of this knowledge through a critical method which can be broadly interpreted as scientific method. This religious empiricism Meland found in the thought of Henry Nelson Wieman, and it has remained a fundamental element in his theological method. Much liberal theology never accepted a radical commitment to empirical method, but Wieman and Meland made this the key to the validation of theological assertions by reason and experience.

Second, there was the metaphysics of emergent evolution as developed by S. Alexander, Henri Bergson, and especially Alfred North Whitehead. Wieman's first metaphysical formulations were put in Whiteheadian terms. Here again there was affinity with the main currents of liberal thought; but with a difference. The theology of divine immanence and the acceptance of the pattern of cosmic evolution as the context for the Christian understanding of God were characteristic of American liberalism; but the Bergsonian-Whiteheadian strand was more radically naturalistic. A metaphysical doctrine of God and the world was proposed as an alternative both to idealism and to materialistic naturalism. I have heard Dr. Meland describe the force of this new metaphysical perspective as an earthquake breaking through the crust of traditional patterns of thought and offering a new conception of the being of God and the nature of the world, along with a functional empirical doctrine of knowledge.

Evolutionary concepts led to the new theism with its doctrine of God as involved in time and

² *The Realities of Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 56.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

⁵ *Faith and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 85.

of religion."⁹ And it is noteworthy that in this earliest book the theme of the appreciative consciousness is stressed. The pervading buoyancy which results from the appreciative spirit "helps to protect aspiration and thus unifies the personality."¹⁰

The quest for the recovery of the depth of religious experience in which man finds the meanings and empowerment for the creation of significant cultural structures continues through Meland's writing through *Seeds of Redemption* (1947) and *America's Spiritual Culture* (1948). There is more emphasis on explicit appropriation of the Christian tradition as embodying the elemental religious power in symbolic form increases, and this is the theme of *Seeds of Redemption*. In this work Meland wants to blend the biblical mythical insight with modern metaphysics.¹¹ He says:

The ancient tales communicate this relationship in the imaginative vivid language of myth and poetry; modern metaphysics employs its modern myths to articulate on a vaster scale than the descriptive word affords the scope of human destiny.¹²

The stress on mythical expression is emphatic. The literal-minded cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.¹³

Meland develops the theme of the gentle working of God and the contrast of that power which the religious discernment finds in the divine with the ruthlessness and brutality of the expression of power of much human culture. We need the higher sensibilities which will enable us to use rightly the vast technical powers now in our hands.

Meland writes with prophetic insight against the crass and ruthless tendencies in culture, and he is no superficial optimist. The working of the gentle might of God involves destruction and suffering. Man the triumphant sufferer is man made in the image of God.¹⁴ And there is this Christological passage:

I look upon this figure of the Christ as pre-eminently a sensitive and solitary embodiment of those creative capacities that enabled Him to live beyond the mediocrities of His time.¹⁵

So far it is fair to say, I think, that Meland remains within the framework of the liberal expectation that the discovery and adoption of the right religious attitude will lead to adequate knowledge of God and point a clear way to cultural fulfillment.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 292-293.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

¹¹ *Seeds of Redemption* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), pp. 40-41.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

There is a sense in which this position remains through the later period; yet there is a decisive shift of emphasis on the content of the religious affirmation.

IV

THE LATER PERIOD

There are signs in *Seeds of Redemption* that a new perspective is being born in the midst of the old. I have noted that Meland here brings the theme of suffering into his description of the religious life. Faced with the mystery of the unfulfilled life Meland even asserts skepticism about Whitehead's solution in his doctrine of the consequent nature of God, and Meland takes the position that the only answer to life's evil is the practical one of commitment to creative goodness. He does speak, however, of this commitment as something which can be achieved with ever more sureness.

The decisive shift to the new perspective comes, I suggest, in the brief but trenchant essay *The Reawakening of Christian Faith* in 1949. (It may be observed that the word "faith" appears in the titles of Meland's last three books.)

Take the opening words of this book as indicative of the way the problem of faith is now viewed:

The conviction has grown upon me in recent years that the human mind struggles against almost undefeatable odds to understand its existence. . . .

Reason and observation give only truncated accounts of existence. . . . The great epics in poetry and in music become as a new source of sight and insight. Their affirmations of faith as well as their tragic laments take on more sobering appeal, and one realizes that all these are the heightened, and sometimes desperate, utterances of men confronting the edge of their being.¹⁶

The prophetic note sharpens in Meland's appraisal of the crisis of culture. "Our society is hell-bent in this accumulative devotion to mass and brute power."¹⁷ Now the source of hope is much more explicitly identified with that which can be recovered through the appropriation of the Christian Gospel. It is Christianity which has borne within its own deepest intuitions the knowledge of God's tender working. And now Meland lays more stress on faith as the mode of appropriation of the Christian heritage. This outlook on life and this conception of God's gentle yet transforming power "must ultimately be embraced on faith . . . but it is congruous with a conception of life in which tenderness . . . is sovereign over force."¹⁸

¹⁶ *The Reawakening of Christian Faith* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), pp. vii-viii.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

of the world as experienced, and as accessible to our direct awareness? Meland now declares for both an immanent and transcendent dimension of faith. The first is the aspect of faith as primordial trust. This is given in the structure of man. It is given in creation.²⁴ But there is also faith as an ultimate assurance which comes to man as a movement of transcendent grace. This is the redemptive act of God, and is "a dimension of spirit which transcends both experience and culture."²⁵ Meland sees the insufficiency of humanistic idealism where it fails to find in man any need to recognize the creative ground of his being and to be open to that which comes to him from beyond the horizon of his own insight. Faith appears at the point of man's discovery of his insufficiency, and it perhaps always has the aspect of the venture of trust answering the threat of despair.²⁶

Yet Meland does not believe that the transcendent dimension of faith allows the theologian to avoid the ontological problem. Assertions of faith say something about the relation of man to God and God to the world. The explication of that which is implied is the ontological task and Meland makes in this latest book some important progress toward what he describes as an ontology of spirit, or of spiritual encounter. He speaks now of the "transcendent life of spirit" which is interpreted as the life of man when he is aware of and grasped by the reality of grace. This is encounter with the depths of being, for man's life is never something by itself, but arises from a "communal ground," that is from the ultimate reality which gives rise to and holds together the diversity of creatures. Meland says he arrives at this ontological outlook through a doctrine of internal relations. I take this to mean that he holds to the logic of organic relatedness as alone adequate to describe the being of man and his relation to the creative ground. As does Whitehead, Meland wants to keep a place for freedom and diversity in external relatedness among the creatures. It is in the higher ranges of the spirit that we become more clearly aware of the kind of internal relatedness which spirit implies and requires.

This doctrine implies that faith witnesses to a good which transcends all human forms and images, even though it works immanently within all human good. The witness of religion, Meland says, "transcends all cultural goods," though to live with faith as Christianity understands it is to accept responsibility for the culture. We must see that

It is the best that we do in response to the act of faith which bears at once the transparency of a faithful witness and the marks of our own ambiguities as creatures under God. It is in this sense that religion must always stand in the "crisis" of faith.²⁷

What then of the diversity of faiths, and in what ways can there be dialogue across the boundaries of the faiths? Meland deals with this question in what is surely one of the most sensitive, thoughtful, and constructive analyses yet given of this problem. He does not blink at the difficulties. Each faith has its own structure of meaning woven through the cultural ethos in which its witness is carried. Yet "men have access to one another as human beings in ways that transcend all cultural and historical barriers."²⁸

V

CONCLUSION

Looking back over this theological pilgrimage we see that Meland has moved within the liberal stream of theology, but that he represents in his own way a development characteristic of the major theological tendency of our time. He has come to assert that the Christian message of divine grace and forgiveness affords the real foundation of meaningful existence. The good news of the new power which leads to a new order of human existence is the redemptive theme which offers the real hope to our distraught world.

What is most characteristic of Meland's thought, however, is that while he has more and more brought the distinctive aspect of Christian faith to the fore and made it determinative over all rational and experiential search for religious truth, he has never lost his sense of responsibility for understanding, interpreting and relating the Christian faith to the context of man's total cultural life and his search for the understanding of nature.

The Christian faith points to the ultimate ground of all life, not just Christian life. It affirms that God works in his grace and redemptive power everywhere. We are not to sit in simple judgment upon other faiths, but rather to acknowledge a judgment which rests upon all things in human existence, and try to point to that reality out of the perspective of our life in faith. Thus the end of the pilgrimage for Meland is neither nature nor culture, but faith created by and expressed in a transcendent disclosure of meaning to man. It is the task of theology to interpret the meaning of faith, not only in such terms as may have been given in the history of the Christian

²⁴ *Realities of Faith*, p. 217.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 217-218.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 303-304.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

How Is Culture a Source for Theology?

Bernard E. Meland

*The realities of faith are vital energies
in the immediacies of experience.*

On first hearing the question put this way I recoiled from recognizing in it any suggestion of my own theology; for at best it seemed a wrong-headed way of expressing whatever truth might be implicit in it. Yet the fact remains that it was my theology in part that evoked the question. And this must mean that what I say and what I do in theology conveys the impression or the judgment that there is some substantive relation between theology and culture. I am not sure that, by adding one more paper to what I have already written, I will be able to make my position any clearer with regard to this issue. However, seeing this issue in the context of my method as a whole, and thus in relation to other aspects of my thought, should help toward bringing forth an answer to the question.

In any case, I take it that the Council's purpose in asking me to present this paper is more tactical than theological. It is, no doubt, to present to our distinguished friends and colleagues, Williams and Spiegler, a specific target at which to aim. I can just hear the members of the Divinity Student Council reasoning among themselves and saying, "Meland is diffuse enough even when he is precise. Let us then narrow the range of this diffusion." So be it! I shall try to provide you with such a target; but I warn you, the target may turn out to be a flying saucer.

I

My theological method presupposes that all human existence takes place within a particularized orbit of meaning. An orbit of meaning is determined by the cultural history of a specific people. Interchange with alien and rival orbits occur from time to time; hence syncretization and secularization are intermittently present. Yet, historically speaking, primordial drives within a culture achieve sufficient focus in the form of sensibilities, modes of awareness, and reflection to generate both a characteristic mind-set and a persistent thrust of the psyche. One has only to look around, or to move around, among the various well-defined culture-groups of East and West to get some intimations of these contrasts in historical development. The human response, therefore, is hedged about by two kinds of limitations: 1) the limitation of finitude or creatureliness which applies to all men; and 2) the limitation of the cultural orbit of meaning which prepares the human mind and psyche within a given area of human association to receive and to react to occurrences in specific and characteristic ways.

The tendency of every people is to employ the terms of their orbit of meaning universally; i.e., to speak for every man. The effect of this tendency has been to impel each cultural faith to conceive of itself and its perspective as being

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out of events in history, as a serious estimate of the character of events that are daily encountered, one's judgments can be said to be empirically anchored in the realities of existence. Such apprehensions may be taken seriously as interpreting experience to some degree, however vaguely or ambiguously they may have been gleaned. One may thereupon seek further intelligibility by extending the vision of the mind, cautiously moving out from these basic apprehensions imaginatively and speculatively; but always with a restraint consonant with empirical demands and with the limitations of our human powers of inquiry. On this basis I have ventured to enlarge upon this empirical persuasion by projecting it into a metaphysical vision, albeit a modest one. It is understandable, perhaps, that I should have availed myself of the stimulating imagination of Alfred North Whitehead in this undertaking since he took it upon himself, as he said, to complete the task begun in *Radical Empiricism* by William James and Henri Bergson. But my response to Whitehead with regard to this crucial empirical datum has been qualified by preferences of my own. For example, Whitehead, in considering where one might begin in one's metaphysical explication of the creative act of God, pondered the primal alternatives which Western history offered, namely the Hebraic and the Platonic myths. Whitehead decided that the Hebraic myth of creation was too primitive for modern metaphysical speculation and thus chose to build upon the Platonic myth. I have chosen otherwise, not on philosophical grounds, but on grounds indicated by hints from cultural anthropology. The Hebraic myth, I would hold, is not only more basic to Western forms of thought and sensibility than the Greek myths, but it has been more pervasive in its influence in shaping the human psyche of the West as well as its religious institutions. The Platonic myth has been influential at the level of philosophical reflection, but in other areas of cultural expression its influence has been marginal and intermittent. It is true that Christian theologians have assimilated Platonic imagery in certain areas of their thought, but in dealing with what might be called the basic theological formula, the *imago dei*, by which the Christian understanding of man and of his relation to God have been explicated, they have resorted to imagery that roots in the metaphor of the Covenant and in the biblical story of creation.

In any case, you may find it helpful to know that *Faith and Culture* and *The Realities of Faith*, as well as the earlier efforts of mine in *Seeds of Redemption* and *The Reawakening of Christian Faith*, represent a concern to bring emergent and

organismic insights to bear upon our religious history as this cultural and religious history takes its rise out of the Judaic-Christian myth of primal beginnings. It would be accurate to say that my efforts parallel Whitehead's metaphysical vision and, at certain crucial points, partake of it; but they do not stem directly from it, as you can see from the qualifications I have just cited.

Within the Creative Passage there occurs the passage of history, not as a single stream, but as diverse cultural currents, each of which has its own dynamic structure, integrating through memory, precedent, custom and much more, the sequence of events and actualities that have constituted its living stream. The dynamic passage of events within each culture has given form to a *Structure of Experience* which can be said to be the enduring structural residue of the cultural history within its particular orbit of meaning, as seen from within the perspective of every present moment of that history. The Structure of Experience is thus the present immediacy within the total and inclusive Creative Passage. The distinction between these terms is somewhat comparable to the distinction implied in the contrast between "Essence" and "Existence," though the context here is the culture, rather than individual man.

Within each Structure of Experience there is to be found a persisting, elemental myth, giving shape to its cultural *mythos*, expressive of the hard-earned, endurable modes of response, subliminal for the most part, which have formed within that orbit of meaning. A third step, then, is to come to an adequate understanding of this phenomenon of myth in the culture, and of the *mythos* that continues to shape its orbit of meaning. Myth is the elemental response of a people to what is ever present as an ultimate demand and measure upon human existence. It reaches to the level of the creaturely stance which a people will assume in speaking of their existence. It affects and shapes not only language, the mode of thinking and speaking, but sensibilities of thought, psychological orientation, and thus psychological expectations. In our more sophisticated and technical theological speech, this cultural *élan* is often expressed in universal terms as the response of the individual: e.g., *sensus numinous*, "sense of destiny," "idea of the holy," "ultimate concern," etc. In using such terms one may intend to transcend the cultural myth, or he may simply mean to point to a quality of response implied in all myths which can be legitimately assimilated by modern man and correlated with his use of reason. As a way of evoking general acceptance of this elemental response within the modern ethos, these terms serve a

the human flowering of existing structures and facilities, becoming manifest as an ordered way of life in the imaginative activities and creations of a people, their arts and crafts, their architecture, their furniture and furnishings, their costumes and designs, their literature, their public and private ceremonies, both religious and political. It is in their formative ideas, giving direction to their educational efforts and customs, as well as to their religious notions and practices, their social graces and manners; in their habits of eating and body care; in their modes of livelihood and the social organization that follows from them.¹

Culture, then, is any society seen in terms of its total human expression, wherein the accumulative qualities of *lived history and experience* are made vivid and distinctive. To be sure, spatial demarcations in the history of peoples are by no means fixed or enduring; yet there has been sufficient durability of large and small blocks of human society throughout the world's history to enable one to say that there have existed "clearly defined orbits of human association" in which distinctive and pervading qualities of experience have developed. Mobile and unstable as these demarcations have been, they suffice for speaking in a general way of varying human cultures, distinctive clusters of human growth evincing a particular structure of experience. Thus, in speaking of man or men, of people or the human community, we deal in abstractions until we conceive of these men or communities within historical orbits of association that have yielded distinctive cultures.

The cult, or the cultus, is generally defined as a particular system of worship, including its body of belief, its organization, as well as its ceremonial. Often the cult exists as a culture within culture. That is to say, the cult becomes so effective in redefining an orbit of spatial existence for its devotees within the culture as to exclude much that is expressive of human growth outside its restrictive orbit, thereby rendering it nonexistent for its own defined purposes. Yet this exclusion is never totally effective; for even under the tightest controls, certain minimum lines of communication between cult and culture are made necessary, even if they have to be underground and clandestine.

The history of our Western experience presents considerable variety in the relations between cult and culture, ranging from the secretive encounters of the catacombs to the quasi-secularized religious societies of recent liberal vintage. To whatever extent religious organizations and culture may have coalesced, however, each of them has nevertheless continued to be in some sense a particular focus of religious witness and practice.

Now in Western society there has emerged a

third distinctive focus of the religious witness, namely the individual, or the individual experience. In the earliest stages of Near-Eastern and Western experience, individuality was virtually nonexistent. Personality, insofar as the term existed, was understood to mean corporate personality, expressing the mentality or spirit of a people through individual representatives. Even throughout early Christian history this sense of conformity to the corporate image persisted, both within religious and political societies. Individuality appears to have been an outcome of the rise of the city states in Greece and Rome and the consequent dissipation of corporate control or even of corporate ties. Nonconformity in religious and political spheres was by no means an innovation peculiar to that period of our history, but nonconformity as an expression of individual experience, rivaling both cult and culture, was.

In subsequent years, say from the eleventh century on, this particular form of religious witness, rising from and resting upon the authenticity of individual experience, was to become increasingly formidable in challenging, and at times radically altering, the religious witness of both cult and culture.

Now I mean to argue that the Christian witness, rather than being contained, as it were, within the community of believers commonly identified with the formal organization of the church, has been exercised, with varying degrees of definitiveness, throughout Western history, acquiring a distinctive focus, with varying degrees of intensity, in these three areas or vortices of experience.

This way of looking at the witness of faith presupposes, as I have said, the concreteness of God's working at the level of the Creative Passage in each moment of historical time and a symbolical (or cognitive) participation in the *mythos* arising from the witness to the living Christ. In some instances, the former may be vividly known as concrete experience, with little or no knowledge of its symbolic reference. In other instances, the symbolic level of its meaning may be readily acknowledged and verbalized without experiencing a vivid sense of the empirical realities of Spirit as these are concretely encountered. I am trying to be attentive to both levels, to the empirical as well as to the symbolical. I am concerned to say that responding to the revelatory event in Jesus Christ is not just a matter of perpetuating the recollection and psychical shaping of an historical event through memory and tradition, but of experiencing a work of judgment and grace concretely in the depth of present events and relationships. Participation in the *mythos*

¹ *The Realities of Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 212.

III

Now that I have made the point that the source for theology, substantively speaking, is the dimension of ultimacy within history and within present immediacies, and that this Ultimate Efficacy of Spirit is received within our structured experience, I can be free to point up the way in which culture plays a role in shaping our encounter with its realities, and in giving verbal or symbolic response to such encounters.

In the first place there is simply the matter of language itself, forms of speech, characteristic modes of thought, facilities for inquiry and the imagery of thought that is employed in any given period of history in carrying the verbal and intellectual business of theology. This was a major emphasis of the early Chicago School under Shailer Mathews, who argued that the social mind of every age was formative both of the problems that arose, precipitating theological discussions, and of the analogies and social patterns by which solutions to problems were sought and found. I have added my weight to this effort, pointing out in addition that the imagery of thought in any period of history within a culture tends simultaneously to offer new opportunities, not only for seeing into problems and issues, but for seeing realities afresh, even for repossessing what has been lost to previous generations by reason of restrictions which its imagery of thought imposed; and to enclose the new generation within the frames of meaning that are particularly appealing and illumining to it. I have pressed this point sufficiently, perhaps, in my later writings, so I shall not burden you with it further. What I should like to do instead is to argue that the culture makes a concrete contribution to theological understanding and thus, in a way, to tantalize you with the suggestion that the culture may be more substantive as a source for theology than I have acknowledged.

I shall begin by pointing out what has been lost to theological understanding because of the tendency to conceive of the witness of faith too narrowly and exclusively. The formal accounting of Christian theological history, say between the fourth and the seventeenth centuries, has adhered rather rigidly to the doctrinal history of the cultus. Our theological history, therefore, in large measure is the story of the Christian consensus. It records the line of Christian thinking emanating from the victory of the majority or the party in power in church councils over competing views and viewpoints, with some marginal reference to minority groups or individuals who provided some opposition to this Christian consensus. As a history of dogma, i.e., as a history of Christian belief that

became controlling and mandatory, this accounting is fairly reliable. As a history of the Christian witness, however, it is highly selective, consciously biased, and apologetically inadequate. Except for isolated instances of this Christian witness beyond the firm line of conformity within the church, much of the non-conformist expression of the Christian witness has probably been permanently lost. Thus we have come to know the Christian story and the Christian witness within this vast ancient and medieval period largely through the authoritative, doctrinal deliverances of the established church. One large exception to this statement can be made; and this exception points up one important bit of evidence for the thesis for which I have implicitly pled in my writings on Christian theology, namely that the culture provides an important supplement to the church's formal witness to the faith. The exception is that intermittent shafts of reflected light from the environing culture filter through these cultic discussions sufficiently to give hint of divergent views and voices. For an accounting of this cultural witness we have been largely indebted to church historians. Incidentally, I should like to say that one of the important reasons for having rich offerings in church history, in addition to historical theology, is that church historians are more likely to do justice to this witness of faith within the culture beyond that of the formal cultus than historians of theology. Church historians are the true secularists of theological seminaries. They mingle with literary and political historians, with architects, dramatists, and art collectors. They even visit bawdy houses, dives, and beer cellars, looking for artifacts that will fill in their story. I have evidence of this if anyone is interested.

The church historian, when he has been imaginative, resourceful, and enterprising, has provided us with our best accounts of this witness of faith issuing from the culture; though often he has done so with a sense of guilt inasmuch as he conceived himself to be a *church* historian, and as such, so he thought, should confine himself to more recognizable church activity and functions. But I would argue otherwise. What has been expressive through the culture, say within the medieval period, and captured in church history, is not just a pale reflection of that found in the formal cultus, nor a spillover from it; rather it is the gospel story re-enacted and communicated with the subtlety and sensitivity of the creative talent within art forms: in the medieval miracle plays, in the cantos of a *Divine Comedy*, in wood carvings, in painting, or even in the floor plan of a cathedral. It is this story amplified or exemplified in the

this more explicit form of secular knowledge and activity within Western culture, the sense of its continuity with the Christian *mythos* has become difficult to sustain. Roman Catholic scholars and churchmen have forthrightly declared the modern period of the West to be a post-Christian era in culture. And the implication of their characterization has been that only in the authoritative institution of the Roman Catholic Church is the witness of faith to be found and acknowledged. The orthodox line among Protestants has simulated this ecclesiastical judgment; thus theology in this context has meant specifically *church theology*. The Free Church tradition in Protestantism, and later Liberal Protestantism, has, in general, veered from this orthodox line only in insisting upon an appeal to the right of private judgment, which in Liberalism became an appeal to religious experience or to a judgment of fact. Out of this Free-church and Liberal heritage has come a form of theologizing which has often eschewed the formal traditions of church doctrine, combining in its stead a selected body of Scripture with present-day claims based upon individual experience and judgment. Among non-liberal Protestants of the Free churches, the culture has tended to be more and more excluded from their concerns, leading finally to a dissociation of theology and culture as explicit and as decisive as in orthodox traditions. These non-liberal Protestant free churches have adopted a policy of "Christ against culture" which has implied even more disavowal of any cultural influence in theology than in orthodoxy.

Liberal Protestantism has taken a different stand on this issue. Along with its concern to give credence to the witness of individual experience, liberal Protestantism has sought to avail itself of the guidance and control of the cultural disciplines in the interest not only of achieving relevance in its interpretation of Christian faith but of bringing integrity and intelligibility to its formulations within the modern idiom.

Now my efforts must be seen in relation to these several established procedures. I have argued that theology cannot adequately convey the witness of Christian faith by conceiving of its task within the bounds of the institutional church. I have argued further that it cannot do so by undertaking to express it simply in terms of individual experience or judgment, as clarified and tested by contemporary cultural disciplines. What I seek to add to these, even within the modern period, is the data which comes from the witness of the culture within which both church and individual have achieved their historical experience.

Now you will readily see that to argue that the

culture in our modern Western experience is or can be the bearer of the Judaic-Christian witness, despite all that has happened in Western history, takes a bit of doing. Neither orthodox nor liberal theologians are ready to concur with such an argument; which means that neither the approach to Christian history within traditional categories nor the understanding of the Christian experience within historical liberal categories can provide the structural basis for enlarging the scope of the Christian witness to include culture as its third vortex. In this respect, I find myself moving into a post-liberal methodology.

My method, I am inclined to believe, rests precariously upon the assumption that our culture cannot extricate itself from the Judaic-Christian *mythos*, any more than any existent event can relinquish its past as it lives on in the shaping of its present structure and dynamics; or, to speak of human events, as one lives on in the present shaping of one's individuated psyche and structure of experience. One can modify and discipline the emotions attending these past valuations, one can summon them, insofar as they are articulate within one's conscious experience, to confront the demands of new occurrences and new knowledge. Thus, in part, this primordial shaping can be altered; but, in part, it cannot be altered. To the extent that its shaping goes deeper than man's conscious awareness, it tends to elude the conscious efforts modern men may employ to advance their sophistication, with indifference to elemental demands. And in this I mean to take issue with modernism as such, as we have come to know it in the West.

But I seek to rest my case not simply upon the persistence of this elemental shaping of our structure of experience, but on the soundness of what is implied in this elemental dimension of existence, however much its historical working out in Western culture may have proven offensive to sophisticated and disciplined minds of the modern period. By the elemental dimension of existence I mean simply living with an awareness of the fact of birth and death, confronting man's existence, its range of opportunity for human fulfilment, not only within these acknowledged limits defined by birth and death, but with creaturely feelings appropriate to them. Simply living within these limits on a sophisticated level, shunting off emotions, anxieties and inquiries evoked by an appropriate elemental depth of our nature, is the usual commonplace pose of sophisticated modernity. It is a pose that was given intellectual credence a generation ago by the pseudo-scientific dictum, "all beginnings and endings are lost in mystery," thus seeming to release

idiom, but faith in the reality of a New Creation that meets us in every event of betrayal or blessedness, in every experience of sin and forgiveness, in every encounter with defeat and despair, and in the joys of the resurrected life that follows again and again upon this experience of judgment and grace as we mingle with our fellows, of whatever confession, or of no confession, and as we stumble into or out of the stark, tragedy-laden events of these harrowing experiences of present-day history.

I have done my best in these pages to declare a truth about the Christian faith that will not let me go, and which motivates my every word in formulating a Christian theology. That truth is that the realities of this faith are living, vital energies in the immediacies of experience. As such they are no respecters of persons or situations, or forms or institutions; though they exist and transpire through forms and institutions. But the forms we provide will not contain them — neither intellectual, aesthetic, moral, or institutional forms. I have said elsewhere that “the Christian gospel leaps beyond the sanctuary into common places, like a fire that is no respecter of structures, particularly of those that would enclose or contain its flames.” So, too, with these energies of grace and judgment of which the Gospel speaks. This does not imply, I would argue, that the forms, institutions, and structures which we create in order to express, convey, or clarify this life of the Spirit are of no avail. They are of the utmost importance when we are dealing with the problem of our own understanding of these realities, or with our own efforts at disciplining our capacities to receive and to respond to them. Every conscientious concern to achieve intelligibility in apprehending the Christian faith speaks out of an integrity of mind that carries its own justification. Every caution to preserve a sense of dignity and restraint in our approach to what is holy attests to the depth of our witness of faith, and to a humility that is proportionate to it. Every intimation of sensitivity in act or expression in bearing witness to our faith gives evidence of the disciplining to which we have submitted in restraining egoistic passions and feelings, thus summoning them to a more discerning level of wonder in worship. In each of these ways, let us confess, we do go astray, making idols of our human forms of sensibilities, our categories, our codes of conduct; yet through each of them we open ourselves to the chastening effects of a human grace that is akin to the sensitivity that is in God. We do not become divine by becoming more human; but neither do we attain spirituality by denying our humanity! Yet, when we pursue these hu-

man capacities and sensitivities under the judgment of grace, which is a good not our own, they can become the disciplined instrument of devotion and inquiry despite the fact that, as human forms, they present a possible threat as barriers to what is real and good beyond our human measure.

I must add a footnote to these concluding remarks. I am confident that some of you will feel that I have exaggerated the role of culture in theology, even falsifying its relation to the church. You may wish to criticize what I have presented, saying, “But don’t you recognize that Christians themselves are people of the culture? The culture is in the churches, even as the churches are within culture. The distinctions you make here are arbitrary and misleading.”

I am glad you asked that question. In reply I must say: to be sure, Christians are people of the culture, and to that extent the culture is in the churches, even as the churches are within culture. In our modern society the lines of cleavage or demarcation are not sharply drawn. Nevertheless, they exist because there are distinctions between the people of culture who are within the church, and the people of culture who are without it. In this respect, Christians, who are also people of the culture, do not fully embrace or express the culture in all its dimensions of human goodness and evil. Let me put the matter bluntly and boldly: I mean to express a conviction that neither the glory of the human spirit, nor its degradation in major key, appears within the community of the committed. You can qualify that in whatever way you wish. It does require qualification in order to be reasonably accurate. But face the extreme assertion of this conviction first: there is something about Church Christianity that depresses the creativities of men, that foreshortens their imaginative and critical powers and impels them to suspect concern with qualitative attainment, thus lulling them into or even summoning them to a preference for mediocrity. We should now qualify the assertion by saying that neither the glory of the human spirit, nor its degradation in major key, appears *readily* within the churches. By this I mean to acknowledge that there are to be found within the churches those for whom these human creativities mean much, and who in themselves express this qualitative outreach of the human spirit. But they are lone voices, crying in a wilderness. It is true that they who speak in this way are lone voices crying in the wilderness of modern culture as well; but the fact remains that when they appear, they appear as a more formidable expression of this dimension of our humanity. And thus, simply on the pragmatic basis of turning to

The Spring C





KATHRYN WEST

Kathryn West came to the Divinity School of the University of Chicago as Assistant to the Dean on October 15, 1963. A native of Oklahoma, Miss West received her B.A. degree from Southeastern State College, Durant, Oklahoma, in 1957. She has been a reporter and photographer for the *Dennison Herald* of Dennison, Texas and the Assistant to the President of Austin College, Sherman, Texas. Recently, she was Coordinator of the Third Quadrennial Convocation of Christian Colleges and Universities and the Administrative Assistant to the National Student Christian Federation of the National Council of Churches.

"The Road to Realism" A Report on the Spring Conference

by Clark M. Williamson

This year's Spring Conference was a festive occasion, in which the career and thought of Prof. Bernard E. Meland were celebrated, appraised, discussed and for which gratitude and appreciation were expressed. Despite its festivity, however, there was a bittersweet air hanging over this assembly, for the conference was a tribute to Professor Meland upon the occasion of his retirement. And for all those to whom, in his career here, Bernard Meland has embodied the spirit of penetrating theological inquiry and to whom he has been one of the mainstays of the Divinity School and of the theological field, the occasion was tinged by the sorrow of a parting.

Professor Williams' opening paper, which is reprinted in this issue of *Criterion* along with the papers of Professor Meland and Professor Spiegler, traced the course of Meland's theological career, which I have ventured to call "the road to realism," and set the tone for the whole conference. Williams defined "culture" in Meland's thought as the exemplification of structures of consciousness available within a region to initiate psychical response and to appropriate meaning. Hence, culture is the matrix within which the individual life is lived. And "spirit" was defined by Williams as a new emergent within the process of nature and life, i.e., a result of creative processes within life or a realm of special meaning arising from distinctively human ways of living. In this way of putting the two definitions, culture and the realm of the spirit are not two separate, individually distinct and discontinuous realities; rather, culture is the manifestation of spirit, it is the concrete weft of human life through which God's grace is channeled. These definitions of "culture" and "spirit" are maintained throughout Meland's work—particularly his latter works—and they are never dropped.

What we see, however, is the gradual transformation of this theological presupposition in such a way as to make it serviceable in the interpretation of a more realistic approach to the human situation.

Williams characterized this transformation in four ways: the progressive optimism of Meland's early Liberal period was sobered by the progressive accommodation to the tragic view of life; the early stress on mystical experience such as is found, e.g., in *Modern Man's Worship*, gave way to the stress on faith, which seems to place a greater distance between man and God than does mystical experience; the early understanding of Christianity as expressive of the universal development of spirit was replaced by the stress on the gospel as the judge of man; and all along there was an increasing criticism of rationalism and scientism and a preference for poetry and symbolic modes of expression for giving voice to the needs and aspirations of human beings.

In *Modern Man's Worship*, Rudolf Otto, who was the first to define God as "totally other" ("totaliter aliter") and Karl Barth are criticized for driving the gulf between God and man so deep that an experiential awareness of God is impossible for man, and the possibility of the occurrence of religious knowledge of God within the full depths of life is dismissed. Meland's confidence and optimism are seen in their fullest ebullience and exhilaration in this book, where he defines American religion as "at-homeness in the universe." The next book, *Seeds of Redemption*, while still confident in man's religious experience, bears more marks of a bent in the direction of realism. Destruction and suffering as well as fulfillment are taken into account and we have the significant statement that "man the triumphant sufferer is

CLARK M. WILLIAMSON is a Ph.D. candidate in the field of Christian Theology and holds the B.D. and M.A. degrees from the University of Chicago. He served as editor of the third volume of Paul Tillich's *Systematic Theology* and is Assistant to the Dean of Disciples Divinity House.

Divinity School News

theologizing had been pitted over against this in the name of empiricism, an aspect of Meland's career which, for purposes of sharpening his criticism, Spiegler overlooked.

In his summary statement, Professor Loomer made several remarks on the subjects discussed in the conference. He said that Mr. Meland's theology is elusive because of his conception of the object of theology—"the more." Since we cannot possess the more, we always approach it indirectly and have only a "margin of intelligibility" with regard to it. In this connection, Mr. Loomer also commented that the term "faith" helps Meland to maintain the distance between us and the object of faith, to emphasize its transcendence. This is an interesting comment upon Meland's theological career, especially when one considers Meland's strictures on Barth and Otto in *Modern Man's Worship*. Perhaps Mr. Loomer's most intriguing

remark came when he said that atheism had never been a real alternative for Meland and that, therefore, Meland had never suffered from the personal pressure to develop an ontological understanding of God. In this sense, Loomer added, even he himself *could* dispense with the whole ontological business although, of course, he does not propose to do so, nor is this the only reason for the importance of ontology. Loomer went on to add that, nevertheless, empirical theology has never given an adequate account of the ontological being of God and stated his feeling that for this reason Hartshorne must be listened to more seriously.

The last and climactic remark came from Professor Long, who again picked up Spiegler's emphasis only to turn it around and say that Meland's theology is a religious theology—in which it is understood that religious realities must be appropriated religiously and talked about religiously.

DEGREES CONFERRED, 1963-64

BACHELOR OF DIVINITY

CONSTANTINO, LEO M.
Th. B., Union Theological Seminary, Manila, P.I.
A.B., Philippine Christian College, Manila, P.I.
CRAWFORD, LEE, A.
A.B., University of Kansas
EBERSOLE, MYRON E.
A.B., Goshen College
A.M., University of Chicago
ELIFSON, DONALD C.
HOSS, FRANK L.
A.B., Wabash College
LEE, RICHARD W.
A.B., Valparaiso University
MANDIC, VUKODSAVA
S.B., George Williams College
A.M., University of Chicago
MAXFIELD, DAVID D.
A.B., Colgate University
MILLER, GILBERT E.
A.B., Albion College
A.M., University of Chicago
PFILE, ROLLAND G.
A.B., Bethany College
SIMPSON, WILLIAM A.
A.B., St. Olaf College
STARKEY, RICHARD E.
A.B., Drake University
VILLWOCK, ARTHUR E.
WALMSEY, WALTER T.
A.B., Drake University

MASTER OF ARTS

ADELMAN, JUDITH A.
A.B., Antioch College
D.B., Episcopal Theological Seminary
BATES, ROBERT S.
A.B., Hiram College
D.B., University of Chicago
BOSLEY, PAUL S.
S.B., Northwestern University
D.B., Union Theological Seminary, New York
BOUWMAN, GRACIA F.
A.B., Calvin College
CARPE, WILLIAM D.
A.B., State University of Iowa
D.B., University of Chicago
DENHAM, ROBERT D.
A.B., Davidson College
DROEGE, THOMAS A.
A.B., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
D.B., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
FRANKEN, DARRELL
A.B., Central College, Pella, Iowa
GOLDSMITH, DALE C.
A.B., Princeton University
GUNN, GILES B.
A.B., Amherst College
HUNTER, M. EDWARD
A.B., Indiana University
D.B., University of Chicago
JOHNSON, RICHARD N.
A.B., Transylvania College
KREIDER, EUGENE C.
A.B., Muhlenberg College
D.B., Chicago Lutheran Seminary
S.T.M., Union Theological Seminary

Divinity School News

FACULTY NEWS

Three members of the faculty of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago have been made full professors as of July 1, 1964. JOSEPH M. KITAGAWA is Professor of the History of Religions; NATHAN A. SCOTT, JR. is Professor of Theology and Literature; GIBSON WINTER is Professor of Ethics and Society.

ALUMNI NEWS

ROBERT W. BERTRAM (Ph.D. '64) has completed his first year as Associate Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis, Missouri, after having taught for fifteen years at Valparaiso University.

HILDA A. DAVIS ('33) became Research Investigator for the Mental Hygiene Clinics of Delaware in March 1964.

GEORGE WEST DIEHL (1930-31) was honorably retired after a 48-years' ministry with the Presbyterian Church in the United States by the Presbytery of Lexington, Synod of Virginia, on July 1, 1964. In May 1964 he was granted the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws by Concord College, Athens, West Virginia; he had been its president from 1925-1929.

EMMETT E. EKLUND (M.A. '58) has been appointed associate professor and acting chairman of the department of religion at Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Washington.

ARTHUR FOSTER (Ph.D. '64) has been appointed Dean of the Faculty at Berkeley Baptist Divinity School, Berkeley, California. He was formerly Associate Professor of Pastoral Care at the Methodist Theological School in Delaware, Ohio.

GEORGE GORDH (Ph.D. '41) was appointed Chairman of the Division of the Humanities at Hollins College, Virginia in 1963. Professor Gordh's book, *Christian Faith and Its Cultural Expression*, was published in 1962 by Prentice-Hall, Inc.

DONALD T. GREY (Ph.B. '11, M.A. '12, B.D. '13) celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination on May 10, 1964.

EDWARD A. HENRY (B.D. 1907) retired on May 31, 1964 after almost 58 years of service as a library administrator. Mr. Henry began his career as Librarian of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago (1906-1928); he has since served at the University of Cincinnati, at George Peabody College, and at the University of Miami. During a year's leave of absence in Jerusalem, he organized the library of the American School of Oriental Research. Mr. Henry also taught Biblical Literature at the University of Cincinnati for many years.

PETER HOMANS (M.A. '62, Ph.D. '64) has been appointed Associate Professor of Theology and Psychology at the Hartford Seminary Foundation in Hartford, Connecticut.

SIDNEY E. MEAD (M.A. '38, Ph.D. '40) has received a joint appointment as professor in the departments of history and religion at the State University of Iowa in Iowa City. Dr. Meade had been Professor of American Church History at the Southern California School of Theology in Claremont, California.

JAMES D. MOSTELLER (1944-46), who is presently Dean and Professor of Church History at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Oak Brook, Illinois, has been granted a Lilly Post-Doctoral Fellowship Award for study in England from March through September, 1965. He will be appointed an Honorary Fellow of Regent's Park College, Oxford and plans to do research in seventeenth-century Puritanism.

PAUL C. NYHOLM (Ph.D. '52), Professor of Church History at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, has published *A Study in Immigrant History: The Americanization of the Danish Lutheran Churches in America* (1963).

RICHARD POPE (B.D. '42, Ph.D. '55), Professor of Church History at the College of the Bible, has been appointed visiting scholar at Harvard Divinity School. Professor Pope has received a fellowship from the American Association of Theological Schools for research on "The Impact of Scientific Historiography on the Study and Teaching of Church History in America."

LUELLA SMITH REGIER (M.A. '38) and her husband, Hans E. Regier, received their master's degrees in Social Work from the University of Missouri on June 5, 1963. They are now employed as psychiatric social workers at the Marshall State School and Hospital for the Retarded at Marshall, Missouri.

MAC LINSOTT RICKETTS (M.A. '61) has been appointed Instructor in Religion at Millikin University, Decatur, Illinois.

HUSTON SMITH (Ph.D. '45), Professor of Philosophy at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has received a Danforth Associate Award for 1964-65 "in recognition of outstanding scholarly work combined with excellence in teaching."

GERHARD E. SPIEGLER (B.D. '56, M.A. '59, Ph.D. '61) has been appointed Professor of Contemporary Theology at Berkeley Baptist Divinity School, Berkeley, California. Dr. Spiegler was formerly Assistant Professor of Religion at Haverford College in Pennsylvania.

WALLACE H. TERRY has been named Washington correspondent for *Time* magazine. His appointment makes Mr. Terry the first Negro correspondent for a

Some Queries to Professor Meland on His Paper

How Is Culture a Source of Theology?

Daniel Day Williams

Hebraic mythos; Platonic mythos; modern mythos

This paper has interested me, moved me to an even deeper appreciation of Mr. Meland's capacity to go to the heart of the theological problem, and it has raised some questions in my mind. In spite of the many years I have been associated with Professor Meland and learned from him, I had not quite grasped the direction of his thought as it appears in this paper. Or perhaps what is here represents a further movement in a direction which caught me somewhat unprepared. If I exaggerate to the point of misrepresentation what he says it is for the purpose of grasping some important tendencies in his present thought.

I do not need to dwell on the fact that my understanding of the theological task as it appears to us who stand in the liberal tradition with Dr. Meland is very close to his. Through the years I have been aware of his ever deeper insistence on two things: first, that the theology adequate for our situation cannot be confined to the strictly scientific modes of expression, fundamentally important though those are. And second, his insistence upon the radical character of the Christian revelation of the situation of man, the reality of estrangement, and the central need of the grace of forgiveness which the Christian faith brings.

And I have shared with the overall theme of this present paper that theological method cannot be restricted to an explication of any one source in the tradition, even the Scripture; but that it must somehow relate or correlate the biblical perspective with secular modes of understanding and with the concrete experience of us who live in this century, facing these kinds of problems, having to

find our humanity or lose it in our kind of world.

I found especially pertinent to our present situation his remarks toward the end about the difficulty of realizing the heights and depths of the life of faith within the established religious institutions. This fact that in some way our very life in this kind of community relieves us of the necessity of examining first hand some parts of "the tough world" haunts me continually. The great respectabilities and economic securities which lend a certain necessary peace and serenity to our lives tend to remove us one step from the ruthlessness and pathos of life as it is for most people.

I do not know what we can do about this and remain theologians; but I know we had better acknowledge the fact and make it a subject of continual personal reflection, self-discipline and prayer.

I must add that we should resist the tendency to adopt only a negative attitude toward the church's cultural sensitivity and power. I believe Vaughan Williams' music will endure as long as anything being produced in the world of secular art today. And we can be grateful for the honesty, originality, and power of much contemporary church architecture, to mention only these examples.

Now to the paper and Dr. Meland's interpretation of his theological method. I come directly to the point which has given me the shock of surprise and a new look at his movement of thought. It is the very strong emphasis on cultural relativism as determining the ultimate context

Now I must pause to meditate, reflect, and ask some cautious questions. We are seeking a metaphysical explication of the creative act of God. But we are confronted with an alternative between the Hebraic and Platonic myths. Evidently there is more than one myth in our culture, and we are given a choice.

But I am puzzled about the nature of this choice. What are we choosing about? Of course it might be said that the point here is a rather peripheral one in theology; it is only a matter of some special problems concerning the nature of creativity. But I cannot dismiss the problem so easily. Whitehead did not, and I don't believe that Mr. Meland regards the matter as peripheral. It makes a great difference how we think of the creativity of God as it is related to the world, how God acts, and what this means for human action.

I have several comments to make and some of them involve the interpretation of Whitehead on points where I must admit there are rather difficult problems both of what he intends to say and of some aspects of his doctrine of God. But on one point Whitehead is quite clear. It is not simply that he regards the Hebraic deity as "too primitive" for modern metaphysics; but that he regards at least one major strand in the Hebraic conception as presenting us with an imperious tyrant, overriding ethical considerations and in the end repudiating human freedom. The church gave to God the attributes which belong to Caesar, Whitehead says. Further, he argues that the Semitic monarch was united in Christian theology with the sophisticated notion of the Unmoved Mover in Aristotelian metaphysics. What has to be criticized here, according to Whitehead, is not something merely primitive, but something far more effective, contemporary, and dangerous than any strictly primitive notion could be.

I am aware that Mr. Meland makes much the same criticism of certain strands in the tradition which override freedom. Indeed I have always thought of Meland as having drawn out Whitehead's theme of the divine tenderness to its uttermost limit and affirming it with an absolutism which presents some genuine ethical difficulties. Whitehead says that the heart of the Christian revelation is what Plato discerned intellectually, the victory of persuasion over force, and I find this a major motif in Meland's work. I am therefore genuinely puzzled by Meland's statement that the Platonic myth has been only "marginally and intermittently effective" in our culture and then only at the intellectual level. Are we talking about the same thing? If the Platonic myth is that of the divine persuasion then it surely underlies Me-

land's interpretation even of the Hebraic myth.

I am, I admit, betraying a bias if not a theological prejudice. But I think the attempt to solve the theological problem by repristinating something called the Hebraic myth or world view, or the "biblical way of thinking" over against the philosophical way, has led us into some blind alleys in contemporary theology. It has split the mind of our culture, and it has led to some fantastically wrong-headed, if not just plain wrong interpretations of the first centuries of Christian thought. One only needs to read James Barr's discerning analysis in *The Semantics of Biblical Language* to see how parochial and mistaken the attempt to bypass the complex issues of the cultural background of the biblical view has been.

I am aware that Mr. Wieman has made a similar argument against Whitehead in *The Source of Human Good*. And I understand this in Wieman for he does not like the structure in Whitehead's doctrine and he tends to be skeptical of any metaphysical order or *logos*, and so he chooses what he calls the Hebraic view over against Whitehead. But Meland does not renounce metaphysics, he projects a metaphysical vision, he has a doctrine of God which he claims allows for precisely the kind of freedom for the creatures that Whitehead was concerned about. What then is involved in this choice of the Hebraic over against the Platonic myth? I would like to understand this.

We can pass more quickly over a second point because it has to do with Whitehead more than with Meland, but while I grant that Whitehead is not too clear on how God acts in the world other than through the primordial nature with its Platonic and Aristotelian offer of a lure to the *eros* of existence, surely when we consider the consequent nature of God, the tender care that nothing be lost, the work of the cosmic artist and poet, the love which floods into the world, the notion that God as an actual entity is the supreme exemplification of efficacious creativity, I cannot see that his doctrine is just to be *opposed* to the Hebraic myth of creation. Indeed Whitehead himself is far more Hebraic without surrendering his Platonism than his formal statements make clear.

But I stay further with this passage of Meland's and raise now a methodological question. Meland says a choice must be made between Hebraism and Platonism. And he chooses other than Whitehead, not on philosophical grounds but on grounds indicated by "hints from cultural anthropology."

I find this statement truly fascinating, especially from the standpoint of theological method. A decisive choice in the grasp of our underlying *mythos* is hinted at by, of all things, cultural

odology, but presenting a query as to whether he is really representing to us the full dimensions of what is involved in carrying it through.

There is first the metaphysical question which I have already been discussing. But now it appears with even greater insistence. For Meland claims not only immediacy but ultimacy for the content of the faith. How is this ultimacy discovered, asserted and explicated?

The statement about "creative passage" here leads to some queries. God assumes "a new degree of concreteness in human history."

Does this mean that the creative passage is less than "concrete" in itself? This seems to suggest an ontological pattern. And what is meant by degrees of concreteness? If the pattern is that of an ultimate abstractness or potentiality which becomes concrete in history by degrees, then the pattern seems not Hebraic but indeed Platonic and Hegelian.

What I see here is that the relation of the Creative Passage to the actualities of history is an ontological problem. It is the question of the power of God, the nature of God's action, the question of the right categories for God, including person, spirit, structure, form, being and non-being. If we are going to use the pattern of emergence in this way we cannot recoil from the ontological task. It must be carried through. We must make it clear how and where this dimension of ultimacy is disclosed and what it means for the creatures. In what sense is there an ultimate in creative passage, *ultimate* in power, in value, in the order of explanation? Or in what?

The phrase "degrees of concreteness" leads to a second question — this one about Christology. We can remark that Meland has shown himself much more adept and profound than a good deal of contemporary theology. He was demythologizing before Bultmann, and yet without that tendency to the reduction of mythological language which seems to leave Bultmann sometimes rather arid.

Meland seems quite untroubled by questions about the historical Jesus, and in rereading his books I have been struck by how little interest he shows in the internal problems of biblical theology and especially of biblical Christology. But I am left uneasy here. It is good to extract the essential matter and say that energies of judgment and grace are released in history through the good which was in Christ. Meland is a profound interpreter of these energies. But I keep wanting to ask, "Just how are they released, what is it in the New Testament story that happens both to judgment and to grace?" What are the aspects of the

concrete history (we say we are empiricists) which have this decisive significance in the preaching, the healing, the Cross, and the Resurrection? It is not enough to be impressionistic about this. Our problem is "culture as a source of theology." We need to know what it is that is given to us by way of grace and judgment in this decisive event which gives us a *criterion* with which to move through our culture. And we need to know how this disclosure in Christ is related "by degrees of concreteness" to the histories of grace and judgment before and after Christ.

It is here that the problem of biblical theology seems to me crucial for the theological task, and whatever our resources for dealing with it we cannot finally meet it without trying to penetrate the *mythos* at the focal point of its expression. And this seems to me, the more I meditate about it, a profoundly challenging, difficult, and as yet unresolved task. How much is history, and how much metahistory? What do we do with the extraordinary symbols, the special vocation of the Christ, the healing, the cry of dereliction, the resurrection?

And does our Christology in the end force us to choose between the Synoptics and John, or does it become Pauline, and if it does, then what is our doctrine of atonement, of the church in history, and of *last things*?

I realize I am laying about with large questions which no theology can neatly answer; but I am asking Dr. Meland for two things: for more insight into the methodology of dealing with the Scripture and the tradition, and for a more explicit offering of *doctrine*. Christian theology is the search for the doctrines of God, of Christ, of salvation, of history, of eschatology. And granting the supreme importance of the openness and dialectic and freedom which Meland gives to theology, I ask for a clearer delineation of the structure of the faith.

I come to the third aspect of my queries. It is the question about the place of ethics in theology, and of the implications of Meland's perspective for ethics. This is surely a crucial issue for any relating of theology and culture. It is with this that the church has struggled from the beginning. How is the new energy of grace and judgment related to the answer to the question, "What ought we to do?" We have to move from *ethos* to *ethics*.

Here it has always seemed to me that Meland not only appropriated Whitehead but absolutized one very important strand in Whitehead's thought, namely the opposition of persuasion to brute force as the key to the Gospel. Whitehead seemed to find here an ethical criterion for the

Ground — Task — End of Theology in the Thought of Bernard E. Meland

Gerhard Spiegler

Let us sin bravely in theologizing.

In inviting me to the annual Spring Conference, the representative of the Divinity School Association indicated that it was the purpose of this year's conference to honor Professor Meland. He hastened, however, to add that "to honor" did not mean to simply "praise Caesar," but rather meant to constructively criticize him. For anyone raised in the friendly "constructively critical" atmosphere of the Divinity School this indicated that the Divinity Student Council was plotting to set up conditions for a constructive battle. I am willing and ready to do battle in honor of my revered teacher, Bernard Meland. I only hope that three years' residency in the peaceful Quaker community of Haverford has not dulled my weapons.

It was with pleasure and relief but no surprise that I noted Professor Meland's willingness to be the target in the theological arena. Given a large area of agreement between Professor Meland and myself, it would be easy for me to lose myself in a critique of the minutiae of his theology. But if I have learned anything as a student of Professor Meland, I have learned that criticism to be constructive cannot lose itself in the jungle of minutiae of the position under scrutiny. Such criticism can be but petty criticism and is therefore not a suitable way to honor Bernard E. Meland.

Constructive criticism must focus upon general but crucial morphological features of the position under critique. It is my intention to do just that in spite of Meland's warning that the target which

he has provided "may turn out to be a flying saucer." Constructive criticism requires the acceptance of two conditions: willingness to fail to do justice to the complex and rich detail of the criticized position; willingness to expose oneself as a target for attack. It is only petty criticism which permits one to be cautious and therefore protected. In constructive criticism one must risk abandon to and movement with the creative force of thought. It requires exposure to threatening possibilities and movement away from the safely established regions of thought. With these thoughts in mind, I am ready to pay homage to Professor Meland by way of constructive criticism. As you all know, Friedrich Schleiermacher refused to be the founder of a theological school, demanding not faithfulness to his thought from his pupils but alertness to the suggestive power of his ideas; Bernard E. Meland demands no less of his pupils.

Bernard Meland's thought is rich in suggestive power and frustrating in its conceptual-theological elusiveness. It is indeed one of the major temptations for a student of Meland's theology to abandon himself to the lure of Meland's suggestive imagery. Meland is the theologian of appreciative awareness, calling forth in those that encounter him a mood of appreciative awareness. This makes critical detachment, necessary in theological conceptualization, difficult. Yet Meland's worshipful approach to the wonder, mystery, goodness, and grace operative within the Creative Passage must

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should probably modify it as follows: Meland is a mystical cultural naturalist. I think Meland's "empirical realism" should be understood in the light of the modified description. The movement of thought from simple mystical naturalism to empirical realism reflects Meland's increasing recognition of the fundamental unity of cultural and natural processes. The movement in the direction of what he calls "empirical realism" represents an effort on his part to make his naturalism more inclusive by way of naturalizing culture. Man as a natural and cultural entity is part of the Creative Passage and within it he is necessarily subject to the energetic force of natural and cultural inheritance. Man cannot escape from his natural and cultural specificity. Man as a natural and cultural being responds elementally, though specifically, "to what is everpresent as an ultimate demand and measure upon human existence." The elemental response of man to the Holy is specific and its specificity is inherited naturally or necessarily. Man confronts primordial and ultimate demands, he responds to them not generally or abstractly but specifically or concretely. These primordial and ultimate demands are never absent; in the immediacy of the stream of events there is always an ultimate dimension. The present response to the ultimacy in immediacy is in part defined by past responses and past responses are interpreted out of the living present response. This response is the response of man as a natural and cultural being in his wholeness. Hence, there is no part of man's natural-cultural world devoid of the sacred. The Ultimate Efficacy "can be discerned in every event of creativity, sensitivity and negotiability." Man responds to universal demands but his response is not universal. The Christian response is a particular response to the creative presence of God; as such it is at least partially novel by reference to other or previous responses. This novel response is made possible "by the emergence of a sensitivity . . . within the human structure, enabling God to assume a new degree of concreteness in human history." But Meland insists that "Nothing ontologically new occurred in this New Creation; that is nothing new ontologically occurred in God's character. But something quite new as a social energy was released into history."

Meland's complex methodological utterances express in a more intricate way his naturalistic faith that the "reality of God" is of "a piece with the Creative Passage," that man lives within the givenness of a creative matrix which is not of his own making. Within this matrix man encounters Grace. Nature and culture testify "to goodness

that is not of our own willing or defining." The end of theology, just as of worship, is this goodness which Meland says we do not create "but which creates and saves us." It is the end of theology "to attend" to this "datum." Meland's theology is sustained by the simple faith and trust that man in his "natural home" is supported and challenged by "a primordial and provident goodness, the efficacy of which can be discerned in every event of creativity, sensitivity and negotiability." To attend to this goodness, operative within the stream of natural-cultural actuality, is the end of the theological task. But as the ground of theology it is also its abyss. The theological task is to penetrate nature-culture in a worshipful quest for that "Ultimate Efficacy" which is the transcendent or ultimate depth within "Man's Natural Home." This goodness to which we must attend is the Really Real or the Holy. And the theologian is a theologian-poet who in his constant effort to name the Holy, seeks it in its awesome purity. Meland called this quest in the subtitle to *Modern Man's Worship* "A Search for Reality in Religion," and today he might well call it the search for the "realities of faith." His naturalistic faith is most beautifully expressed in a succinct confessional statement,

I have done my best in these pages to declare a truth about the Christian faith that will not let me go, and which motivates my every word in formulating a Christian theology. That truth is that the realities of this faith are living, vital energies in the immediacies of experience.

I have no disagreement with Meland on this confessional point, I have no disagreement with Meland's naturalism as such, but I do part company with him on his mystical concern with the ground of theology. I support Meland in his contention that we must be attentive to the Holy as the ground of theology but I think this attention becomes theologically fruitless when the search for the ground of theology turns us away from the task of theology. Such an attentive quest for the Holy leads to a self-defeating struggle of theology to attain a purity appropriate to its ground. The treatment of the ground of theology as its end exhausts theology in a perennial quest for a theological-philosophical methodology which will permit it to preserve the awesome purity of the *Numen*. At least for the Christian theologian operating within the framework of the Christ myth, this quest for purity or theological humility seems mistaken. Why should the Christian theologian constantly quest for theological purity when his God chose to show himself in "impurity"? Why must the Christian theologian constantly work for humility by keeping his theology free of the world,

"Creative Passage," we must as theologians spell out what Meland calls "the energies of grace and judgment" in their concrete operation within nature-culture. With Meland I am tired of having the question put in the way in which it was done at this occasion. But I am tired for different reasons, for theology and culture are of course substantively related, just as God and the world are substantively related. The theological task is precisely posed by this substantive relation. The aim of theology is to explicate that relationship specifically and not to establish it, except by way of explicating it. I am willing to share in Meland's faith abstractly formulated in the notion of the "Creative Passage." I am willing to accept the abstract formulation of the reality of man's stance within this "Creative Passage" as an "elemental response." But as Meland recognizes, the elemental response is concrete only in what he calls myth. With Meland, I am dubious of the theological usefulness of de-mythologizing as a process to immerse oneself in the emptiness of universal terms, particularly if one assumes that it is possible to escape "mythology" altogether. Let us accept the specific nature of the religious response; let us explore it in rational and imaginative terms; but let us cease trying to establish the response itself or its universal depth component apart from its substantive concreteness. The spirit arising within the creative passage is a specific spirit; the theologian witnesses to this concrete spirit as a constitutive ingredient in nature-culture. Witness to the ultimate depth as such is empty; only witness to concrete shapes of spirit has fiber. The issue is not: does the church, does culture or the individual witness to the substantive involvement of God in the world; the issue is: "What is the theological task?" The theologian stipulates as the ground of the theological task the substantive relation of God and world; he works at interpreting the concrete actuality of that substantive relation.

His task must justify his ground; apart from that justification speculative concern for the ground can be recognized as part of the theological prolegomena. In his work the theologian must stipulate that he takes a particular stance; he interprets this stance critically in its actual past and present participation in the processes of concretion of nature-culture. Let us grant Meland's assumption that the religious response is concrete and "that our culture cannot extricate itself from the Judaic-Christian *mythos*" and proceed from there to an interpretative penetration of nature-culture, building upon our particular stance while shaping it. Only when nature-culture becomes the substantive content of theology can theology have substance. This is the reason why church historians are frequently the best theologians; the best constructive theology is a theology which is deliberately also historical theology or cultural theology. We must escape from the theological stalemate produced by a narcissistic or masochistic reiteration of the question whether theology is substantively related to nature-culture. Of course it is — let us leave theological prolegomena behind and begin to theologize by explicating in finite, conceptually precise terms that substantive relationship between God and the world. Never fear that your theological statements will attain absoluteness; just worry that they be definite so that they may offer themselves up to God for judgment. Let us sin bravely in theologizing. We must proceed on the presupposition of a substantive relation of God and world. Neither God nor the world as such can be the end of theology unless we wish to lead theology into the abyss. Let us not attempt to name the Holy — perhaps we may worship it — but let us name the world as that which is hallowed. The Holy if sought itself apart from its holied presence vanishes into the emptiness of nothingness. Better to fail in a theology of definiteness than to fail in a theology of emptiness.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 1964-1965*

	Autumn	Winter	Spring
B.D. students	116	101	102
M.A. students	71	65	65
Ph.D. students	142	131	131
Students-at-large	5	3	4
Total	334	300	302

* These totals include students from Chicago Theological Seminary, Meadville Theological Seminary, and Disciples' Divinity House who were registered for courses in the Divinity School.

building has been renewed.

If the works of art open up and reveal what was closed and hidden, a breakthrough must occur in every artistic encounter with reality, a breakthrough through the familiar surface of our world and our own self. Only if the things as they are ordinarily seen and heard and touched and felt are left behind, can art reveal something out of another dimension of the universe. Without breaking our natural adherence to the familiar, the power of art cannot grasp us. Therefore new ways of disclosing the world have always aroused the resistance of those who wanted to stay securely with the familiar. This is not the fate of a particular style, for instance the expressionistic; it is the fate of every unfamiliar way of looking at the world. It was the glory of this museum and of the artists whose works it chose, that they fought for the unfamiliar and for the insecure. Many creative breakthroughs from the familiar to the unfamiliar, from the surface to the depth, have been shown on these walls. And we who are here today as grateful friends of the old Museum hope that this will remain so in the renewed house. There is a rule in the life of the spirit, unfortunate but inescapable, "the rule of the forgotten breakthrough." The original creative breakthrough is the result of great tensions, inner struggles, victories and defeats, oscillations between hope and despair, overcoming of external resistance, and a final feeling of inner certainty, liberation and elation. But when it has happened and its creative power is visible, the unfamiliar slowly becomes a part of the familiar, things from the depth become pieces of the surface; the new way, once opening up and revealing, has lost its power. What was breakthrough has become repetition. The toil and the glory of the first experience is forgotten. Certainly artists can always appear who, within a given form, reveal unseen possibilities, creating the unfamiliar within the boundaries of the familiar. They are rare and equal to those through whom the first breakthrough occurred. And their works, like those of the others, retain their revealing power to the spectators for all later generations. They are the lasting harvest of a breakthrough, because they have embodied the surprise, the genuineness, the revealing power of the breakthrough in their mature creation. This justifies the museums of classical art, and certainly a museum of modern art must try to grow in parts into a museum of classical art. But in order to become classical tomorrow, a work of art must have been revolutionary today.

The past history of the Museum happened in a period of continuous artistic rebellions and many

breakthroughs in a short time. There is, however, a common characteristic in the whole period since the turn of the century: the predominance of the expressionistic element over against the realistic and idealistic. A consequence of this was a more radical disruption of the surface of things, a more intensive piercing into their elements, a more sensitive vision of their demonic depth than has happened for centuries. And as a theologian I want to say that this period, in spite of its poverty of religious paintings and sculptures in the traditional sense of the word, is a period in which the religious dimension has appeared with astonishing power in non-religious works. The collections of this museum and many of its exhibitions are one of the most important witnesses to this situation.

When we look from the past to the future, we discern a radical movement which really goes to the roots. Let me call it "the art of non-art" or, in a more threatening way, the death of the concept of art. It is not an isolated event: one speaks today of the religion of non-religion, of a theology without God-language, of the language of being without being. In the art of non-art one attempts to combine pieces of trivial reality which show, through a magic, uncanny composition, the triviality of our present existence. But they show it in an untrivial way. This dying of traditional concepts may be a genuine breakthrough; for these concepts are often an impediment for a fresh encounter with reality. And if they are this, they should be removed, or at least a "non" should be put before them as in "religion of non-religion" and "art of non-art."

How is all this related to our daily life, in which we ordinarily live? The breakthrough is a precondition for bringing the deeper things of life into our life. But it is not the end; the way into the depth must be followed by a return to the surface. The images of our daily encounter, figures and faces, must be transformed with the help of the elements out of which reality is constituted. Such returns have started. We do not know what their development will be. But one thing we know: it is not those who have remained with the familiar and have resisted the changes in the last period who will determine this development, but those who went into the depth, who dared to show the radically unfamiliar, and then returned. We hope that, while the past history of the museum was mostly a descending below the surface, the future history will also be a transforming ascendance to the surface on which we live. But what is decisive is that the works of art which will find a home in this museum retain the revealing power they had in the first period of its history.