Being and Hāyāh

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CHRISTIANITY AND WESTERN CULTURE

In discussions of the historical relationship between Christianity and Western culture, comparisons of Hebraism and Hellenism are often utilized—Christianity being identified with Hebraism and general Western culture being seen as a cross-current between Hebraic and Hellenistic thought. But this is an oversimplified approach to the question of the contrast and conflict between Hebraism and Hellenism and quickly falls into error.

First of all, it is simply inaccurate to view Christianity solely as an extension of the development of Hebraism, for Christianity was also formed from a concurrence of other Greek and Latin cultural and ideological factors. Secondly, although one may speak of an interchange between Hebraism and Hellenism, it is a mistake to regard them as inseparable. This is proved by the failed attempts to eliminate Christianity from Western civilization (entchristianisieren), a trend not uncommon to the West, nor to Japan. A consideration of the breadth of their interrelationship should obviate this misunderstanding. For example, even the establishment of the anti-Christian, atheistic ideology of Marxism is indebted in large degree to Judeo-Christian eschatological theories (via the forms they took in a Schwaben-like pietism).[1]

There have been repeated attempts to clarify this

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historical question by going beyond the usual historical comparison between Hebraism and Hellenism to a more basic and fundamental dilemma: the theological confrontation of "revelation and reason." In this case, the problem is not limited to the issue of Christianity and its relationship to Western culture, but also encompasses Christianity's relationship to culture as such. The contrast is made between Christianity as a revealed religion based on supernatural revelation and culture as the product of human reason. The differences between Catholic and Protestant thinkers do not affect this comparison, for those differences are related to the question of the area in which that revelation is located, and not to the reality of the revelation itself. Although these differences are presently being re-examined in the current ecumenical atmosphere, the basic Catholic position has been that the locus of supernatural revelation is found in the Church with its ecclesiastical hierarchy, while orthodox Protestant theology holds that that locus lies in the Bible. The important point for our present discussion, however, is that the action of accepting revelation is understood to be one of faith rather than knowing. Knowing is a function of reason and cannot make supernatural revelation its object of understanding. Furthermore, this contrariety between faith and reason is maintained even if one admits the presence of a deep wisdom based upon that faith. In other words, reason and revelation, knowing and faith, are seen as discrete and discontinuous.

Theological accuracy is indeed crucial in treating this question of the relationship between Christianity and culture, but the desire for such accuracy has frequently issued in an inappropriate simplification that reduces the question to a matter of the locus or object of revelation. Then the argumentation often devolves toward such unfortunate results as the following:

(1) Theologians take stands upon their own particular "domain" of revelation, devote themselves exclusively to building a stronghold around it, and totally neglect the

problems of human society and culture.

(2) The two "spheres" of the natural and the super-natural are understood as external one to the other and in need of some formal harmonization to bring them into compatibility. But, even though brought together in such fashion, they remain essentially in opposition, for their true, internal relationship is overlooked. In this case also, theologians can be self-righteous and aloof from the problems of human culture.

(3) It is not at all rare to find that such a detached attitude on the part of theologians serves to drive the advocates of human reason to harbor resentment against, indifference, and disregard for Christianity.

When such critics assert that Christianity holds no meaning for (at least the future of) human culture, their criticism cannot be attributed simply to their own arro-gance. One can easily make a case that they are only reversing the same segregation between revelation and reason already taught by the theologians. Since the theolo-gians themselves have already stated that there is no real connection between revelation and reason, how can they possibly censure secularists who employ the same argument to negate Christianity? If they were to face the facts, theologians would realize that at least half of the responsi-bility for bringing about this state of affairs rests squarely upon their own shoulders, for human arrogance must always be condemned, no matter where it occurs.

REVELATION AND REASON

The foregoing remarks might give the impression that somehow I reject all notion of any discrimination or contrast that might apply to the question under consid-eration. This is, of course, not the case. Although the ideas inherent in Western culture have been historically inter-woven with the basic principles of Christianity, it cannot be denied that they are, in fact, quite distinct. It is still a rather common assumption that Christianity is the religion of Western culture, but this is really no more than the

legacy of nineteenth-century cultural philosophy (*Kultur-philosophie*), and any impartial investigator will find that the two cannot be equated so easily. Western culture cannot be identified with Christian culture. If such a description is made, it must be qualified. There is no doubt that Christianity played a formative role in the historical processes of Western civilization, but, as it exists within established Western culture itself, it is placed in opposition to that culture. Our question is whether or not this confrontation can be explained adequately either through an historical comparison between Hebraism and Hellenism, or through a theological comparison between revelation and reason. It is my opinion that it cannot.

However, although these comparisons are not adequate to the task, there is truth in each. As the need arises, these comparative constructs of Hebraism-Hellenism and revelation-reason will be employed in the following discussion. There is no need to hesitate in stating that Christianity is rooted in Hebraic faith and it cannot be denied that Western philosophy and science are deeply indebted to the Greek concept of "logos." But these facts do not preclude us from going further in our consideration of the question. To distinguish clearly the main causes of Christianity and culture does not clarify the internal relationships of those causes. To declare the one side to be only revelation stresses its discontinuity with the other side of reason. What we are looking for is a method that, while contrasting the two, will treat their internal relationship accurately.

Before we embark upon this endeavor, we must first stress that revelation is itself beyond discussion, for, of its very nature, it transcends reason. If Christianity did not contain such a dimension, it would not have become Christianity. But, based though it be on this faith in revelation, it is possible to examine the thought structure of Christianity, for to do so does not imply the abandonment of its "revelation-faith" dimension. Instead, by clarifying its ideological structure, we may be led to a deepening of our understanding of this revelation-faith dimension. If we term

the Hebraism-Hellenism comparison "historical," and the revelation-reason comparison "theological," then we can designate this third model of comparison as "philosophical" (or religio-philosophical).

However, even though this be termed a philosophical model, there will be no attempt to dispose of the question simply by setting up a philosophical theory and arguing conceptually upon the terms of that theory. The subsequent investigation will be based on historical analysis, upon which foundation the essential structure of the issue will be delineated. The question remains whether this model will really serve to clarify the essence of revelation-faith. Reason can, of course, criticize itself, but does it not overstep its competence in trying critically to examine faith? Is this not in fact venturing the impossible?

There is no doubt that in itself revelation does not allow for rational criticism, for if it could be made the object of such thinking, then either it would cease to be revelation, or would from the beginning not have been revelation. Yet we must question whether a revelation that denies all critical discussion is truly revelation. If it really is a revelation, it must be beyond all controversy and therefore have no need to obstruct the proper exercise of reason. Actually, a rejection of rational criticism comes from the fact that material that cannot withstand criticism lies hidden under the name of revelation. The modern awakening of reason that led to critical research on Christianity was, for a time, accompanied by a rationalism that did threaten to exterminate the revelation-faith dimension. But, looking back on this today, by distinguishing that which was not revelation within that which was called revelation, this research has served to clarify the nature of revelation. In this sense, revelation itself demands rational criticism, for such is the self-criticism of revelation.

GOD AND BEING
Critical research into Christianity has shown tremendous

progress, but there are elements that have not yet been fully studied. The point I would like to focus upon is most fundamental to Christianity: its theory of God. The propositions, "God is the highest being," and "God is being itself" are, apart from the different nuances between them, generally taken for granted. But it is precisely these propositions I would like to call into question. No doubt these themes have been discussed before, but generally the argument has centered upon the question of the possibility of proving the validity of these theses, i.e., debating whether to affirm or deny their truth. There is little concern about the establishment of the propositions themselves. Atheists deny the existence of God as being, while theists recognize the existence of such a God, or at least affirm the truth of these propositions in some manner. When Buddhists criticize Christianity, they often raise the problem of Christians adopting a theory on the existence of God. From this perspective, Christianity as a religion of "Being" is contrasted with Buddhism as a religion of "Non-Being." But, if Christianity does not affirm both God and Being in parallel, then this argument becomes untenable, for such a critique presupposes the proposition (in Christianity) that God is Being.

If is precisely here that the questions we must ask become obvious: Are these propositions (leaving aside their truth claims) really something that can be put forward in propositional form? Can the God of Christianity truly be called Being (*ipsum esse*)? What is the base meaning ascribed to the God of Christian faith? What is the meaning of Being (*esse*)?

In searching for the original meaning of God in Christian faith, we have no other path to follow than the Bible. One need hardly mention that the Bible contains an extremely large number of passages concerning God in both Testaments. But where exactly can one find the words that say "God is Being"? The usual answer is that these words can be found in Exodus 3:14. The King James translation has: "I am that I am," while the New English Bible (Oxford

and Cambridge) has: "I am, that is who I am." From these passages, it is argued, it is possible to derive the proposition that God is Being. Although this instance is the only one in the Bible to record such an expression, it can be argued that it is significant, even if mentioned only once, for the meaning of this name of God, revealed to Moses, is certainly decisive for the faith of the Hebrew people.

However, the question remains. Does this single, one occurrence of this phrase in the Bible (hapax legomenon) really mean that God is Being? There are, of course, those who deny that "I am that I am" is identical with the statement, God is Being. Neither do I immediately identify the one with the other. In the phrase, "I am," the verb "to be" does not indicate an abstract concept like being. Rather, here, it would appear to be expressing the state of being a subject. However, when this state of being subject is further determined by the expression "that I am," further problems arise. Rather than a philosophical or a theological dilemma, those problems are in the first place a matter of linguistics. The question is whether a particular interpretation actually transmits correctly the original meaning of the Hebrew.

The Latin Vulgate translation is "Ego sum qui sum," which can be understood to present a meaning quite close to the original Hebrew. However, in the next sentence the words, "qui est," replace the previous "qui sum." It is this that prompted Thomas Aquinas to theoretize that this "qui est" is the most basic name for God (*Summa Theologica*, q.13, a.11). In the German translation of the **Summa Theologica** this becomes "der Seiende" (*Deutsch-lateinische Ausgabe*, B.1, s. 301). This interpretation of God as Being can be traced further back beyond Aquinas to the Septuagint itself, for there it becomes "Egō eimi ho ōn," and in the next sentence the "Ho ōn" is again repeated. Here God calls himself "Ho ōn," the one who is. The Japanese translation of Exodus 3:14 actually strengthens this tendency of the Greek rendition: "Watakushi wa atte-aru mono," which can be rendered into English as either "I am one who is

being," or as "I am that which is." The Hebrew original
reads "'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh," and in the next sentence
"'ehyeh" is again repeated. We must ascertain the exact
meaning of "'ehyeh."

"'Ehyeh" is the first person singular imperfect form of
the verb "hāyāh," and means "I hāyāh," which is neither
simply present nor simply future. Always incomplete, it is
an open "hāyāh." In this sentence "'ehyeh" is repeated
twice with the indeclinable particle "'asher" inserted
between. This particle can be taken either as a relative
pronoun or as a conjunction. The former case would yield:
"I hāyāh that I hāyāh," while the latter would mean: "I
hāyāh because I hāyāh." In either case, it is difficult to
regard the term, "hāyāh," as a copula, and thus
inappropriate to interpret the phrase as meaning: "I am who
"hāyāhs" or "I am what I am." However, in the Greek
translation, this does become a possibility. It was a quite
normal procedure to replace the Hebrew word "'ehyeh" with
"eimi" in Greek, and there can be no criticism on this
point. Nevertheless, the Greek word "eimi" does differ from
the Hebrew "'ehyeh" inasmuch as it does have the function
of a copulative. This is not solely a matter of linguistic
convention, for the differences in the Greek and Hebrew
ways of thinking are reflected herein. What remains now to
be examined is how these differences can be clarified
through philological investigation.

HAYATOLOGY

I have given the name "hayatology" to the Hebraic way of
thinking, meaning of course the "logos" of "hāyāh." In
contrast to this attitude, the Greek way of thinking may be
called "ontology." Ontology expresses the "logos" of the
Greek concept of "to on." It should be stressed that today
it is of central importance that we recognize the differ-
ences between these two. From the age of Hellenistic
Judaism to the present day, Judaic thought has been trans-
lated and interpreted through the Greek language (or a
language of a related group), and therefore through the

Greek manner of conceptualizing. Christian thought and ontology are so tightly linked together that no one would question the statement that Christian thought is one form of ontology. However, if we historically trace back this closely linked unity, it becomes clear that the union of Judeo-Christian thinking and the Greek ontological approach came about through the combining of two theological attitudes that were originally different.

The most enlightening work on the subject is Thorleif Boman's **Das hebräische Denken im Vergleich mit dem Griechischen**,[2] which is a most useful aid in the study of the Hebrew language. One feature of that language is the nature of movement in its verbs. Although it is natural for verbs to contain a sense of movement, we should also pay attention to those stationary situations, such as "sitting" or "lying down," whose static meaning can only be conceived in relationship to the action leading up to the settled state. For example, the Hebrew word, "yāshabh" means "to sit down" (sich setzen), as well as "to be seated" or "to reside." Likewise, "skākhabh" means "to lay oneself down" or "to be lying down"; and the word "qûm" can mean both "to stand up" and "to be standing up." Such examples can be multiplied indefinitely from Borman's book, but the point here is what is signified by this type of verb. And that significance lies in the fact that in the Hebraic mind, movement and stillness (or motionlessness) are not seen in contrast one to the other. Rather they are conceived as one fundamental unity, for, by tracing movement back to its origin, one arrives at stillness, while a stationary situation is thought to be the end result of movement. In this manner, stillness refers to the point where movement ceases, as well as its point of departure. This is also explained by saying that stillness is thought of as a potential movement. Thus, in Hebrew, whether it be "yāshabh" or "shākhan," words that mean reside are linked to people residing. In German, however, "to reside" (*das*

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2. Boman 1952. Especially Volume II, Parts I-III.

Wohnen) is thought to be related to static concepts like "residence" (*die Wohnung*). Even in Greek, "oikeō" is correlative with "oikia" and "oikos." The relationship in English between "dwell" and "dwelling" (or, like the German, "residence") is also quite similar. Nevertheless, words like "reside" in Hebrew are thought of subjectively and actively.

This observation can be further illustrated through a look at verbs which indicate a situation or quality. For example, "'ôr" can mean either "to become bright," or "to be bright." "Gābhar" is "to become strong," as well as "to be strong." The word "gādhal" can mean "to become large," and "to be large." There are said to be as many as 209 examples of this type of verb in Hebrew, and significantly they are all thought to embody a unity of "to become" and "to be."

However, even more important to the understanding of Hebraic thought is the nature of so-called noun sentences (*Nominalsatz*). For example, meanings expressed in Greek by the use of copulas or verbs indicating stationary situations are expressed in Hebrew without them. In other words, the finite verb that would normally link subject and predicate in such sentences is absent. In contrast to such noun sentences are the verb sentences (*Verbalsatz*), which do employ finite verbs as predicates. Interestingly, fixed situations in Hebrew are expressed not with the latter, but with the former, that is, they employ the Nominalsatz, and it is vital that we recognize the relevance of this special charᵃcteristic in the problem confronting us and incorporate it into any elucidation of that problem. Normally, when we encounter sentences where finite verbs are missing, we find it easy to think that they have been omitted, but such a conclusion would be erroneous in the case of Hebrew. In the Book of Ezekiel 41:22 we find the phrase "hammizbēah 'êc," composed of the words "altar" and "wood," but without the use of a copula. It does not say "the altar is wood," but only "the altar . . . wood" without any copula. The following phrase in the text is, similarly, "then, the

walls . . . wood." Taking a look at the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, we find: "The altar was of wood, . . . and the walls thereof were of wood." But in the original the words, "was," "were," and even the "of" in "of wood" are not found. They were added to the translation simply for the sake of good English. There is no question that the altar was indeed constructed of wooden materials, but for the Hebraic person this was expressed as "The altar, viz. wood."

Taking yet another example from Psalms 25:10 we have "kol-'ārhôth Yahweh hesedh w^e '^{e}meth," or "all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth." However, the subject, "all the paths of the Lord" and the predicate, "mercy and truth," are in Hebrew not joined together by the intervening copula "to be." Rather the underlying concept is that the contents and function of "all the paths of the Lord" are none other than mercy and truth themselves. Just as in the previous example, an agreement of essence or content establishes an identification between subject and predicate. This way of thinking puts weight on essence as opposed to the Greek attitude which clearly discriminates between form and matter, often seeming to emphasize the former over the latter.[3]

THE BEING OF YAHWEH

In this manner the subject and predicate of a Hebrew sentence can be joined without an intervening copula. Although one cannot say that the word "hāyāh" is not usable as a copula, even when it is so employed, its

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3. On this account we could also offer an explanation of why a word that appears to be a copula, "hāy^{e}thāh", is inserted in Genesis 1:2. For the P chronicler, the "earth" (hā'āreç) as it is, is not "chaos," rather the earth means cosmos. In order to express the fact that this cosmos used to be (in) chaos, the word "hāy^{e}thāh" is needed. This is rendered into English simply as "was," which appears to be no different from the "was" of Ezekiel 1:22. But in the Hebrew the latter example does not require a copula. This is also the explanation of Boman, but his further explanations of "hāyāh" and its conjugations in Genesis 3:1, 29:17 and 39:6b do cause some difficulty. Nevertheless, Boman concludes that even in these instances, "hāyāh" has the meaning of "to bring about a result" (so wirkte).

originally active meaning is not lost. Generally speaking, "hāyāh" must be thought of as embodying full verbal effect. It carries the meaning of becoming, being, working, etc., but, significantly, all these meanings function together in a fundamental unity and hence are not considered separately. This point can be illustrated by the fact that "hāyāh" is often used in apposition with other verbs. For example, both in Isaiah 7:7 and in 14:24, "hāyāh" is placed in apposition to "qûm" (to originate), and consequently carries the same meaning. In this case, "hāyāh" means "to come to pass" or "to occur." This meaning of the term can often be found, especially in sentences that begin with "w^{a}y^{e}hî."

Thus in Hebrew, "to be" is never thought of apart from "to become" or "to arise." It is true that what has become or what has arisen is none other than something that exists, that which is, but this is not an existence that has discarded and lost its meaning of becoming or occurring. A noteworthy passage dealing with this point is Ecclesiastes 7:24. Boman does not make reference to this passage, but it should not be overlooked. According to the Revised Standard Version, the passage reads: "That which is, is far off, and deep, very deep." The Japanese translation of "The reason for things is far away, etc. . . ." presents no problems, but the English translation, containing the phrase, "that which is," can lead to confusion. The original has: "rāhôq mah-sh^{e}hāyāh w^e'āmôq 'āmôq"; in other words, "mah-sh^{e}hāyāh" (that which has "hāyāh"-ed) has been translated into English as "that which is." If this were translated literally, it would come out as "that which has come into being." The German translation of "Alles, was da ist," although adroit, does not fully reveal the meaning of the original either. This is because the word "hāyāh" in this case is fully endowed with the results, as expressed here in the perfect tense, of the working inherent in the concept of "hāyāh." The sentence really says, "Generated things—all phenomena—are far things, deepening and deep." Therefore, even if "mah-sh^{e}hāyāh" is translated as "that

which is," it would be a mistake to think that this implies being that transcends phenomena, for in fact it indicates all phenomenal affairs.

The words from Exodus where God has the name "I "hāyāh" ('ehyeh), when viewed in light of the above discussion, have their meaning clarified. As phenomena are past things, in the sense that they have already occurred, in their case, "hāyāh" is appropriately used in the perfect tense. However, as God is something always active, it is natural that the imperfect form, "'ehyeh," be used, and, moreover, in the first person, because God is active as the absolute subject. Another point worthy of our attention is that the subject, i.e., God, is hidden within the verb, "'ehyeh," notably in that the pronoun "I," "'ānôkhî" is not used. The situation is not conceived of as one in which first the subject exists and then is active, etc. Rather it is that within his activity the subject reveals himself. One might say that the subject is none other than the activity and that the activity is none other than the subject. However, one must not take this to mean simply that God exists within phenomenal processes. It is instead that divine work means something entirely different than the past-like activity of phenomena. Such work is forever oriented toward future creativity and always maintains the sense of the imperfect form of "'ehyeh."[4]

Although the usual way of presenting the relationship between creator and creature in the Old Testament is either representational or symbolic, it should be clear from the above that this is not the only way it is presented. It was to translate these symbols and representational expressions into theory that many considered the adoption of the Greek "logos" necessary. Now, however, we can recognize that Hebraic thought itself has its own logic, the reasoning of "hāyāh," i.e., "hayatology." And this Hebraic logic is not

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4   Of course, Hebrew verb conjugations do not fall into the three time categories of past, present, and future, but with respect to time have only the two forms of perfect and imperfect.

to be replaced by an ontology. Yet one must not take this to mean that these two models of logic are always and necessarily exclusive one of the other. They have become linked in history and they could become so linked again, for it is advantageous for both that they should be correctly conjoined. Yet we wonder if the manner of their previous conjunction has been truly suitable. It has been this concern that has necessitated the examination of the process of their interrelationship and the clarification of the differences between the two models, Hebraic and Hellenistic.

Here it is imperative that we include a consideration of the relationship between "'ehyeh" and "Yahweh." Let us begin speculatively by saying that the word Yahweh is a transformation of "hāyāh." Should this interpretation be correct (and it is highly probable that it is), then Yahweh is synomyous with "yahyeh," a form of "hāyāh" which is causative (*hif'il*), imperfect, third person, and masculine, and which means "he makes (someone or something) "hāyāh." "'Ehyeh" is first person, but Yahweh is in the third person. This loss of orientation to the subject involved in the change from the first to the third person is compensated for by a shift to the causative construction. The absolute subject, who is creative, through his own "hāyāh-ing," is, at the same time, thought of as the subject that makes all "hāyāh" perform "hāyāh." Moreover, because the imperfect form is also used, it implies that this primal work is always in the present and future, rather than something completed in the past. The name "'ehyeh" and the name "Yahweh" are thus not merely given an etymological relationship, but can be understood as having some intrinsic correlation. Thereby the purest form of hayatology comes to life.

HAYA-ONTOLOGY

"'Ehyeh-Yahweh" cannot be expressed in English simply as "one who exists." Still less is it sufficient to render it as "one who is" or "to be." Even if one attempted to render

"hāyāh" as "to be," it would not be the same as the copula
"to be," presupposed in "there is" or "is." This point can be
elucidated further by studying what is meant when God is
negated in Hebraic thought. For example, in Psalms 10:4 we
find: "In the pride of his countenance, the wicked does not
seek him (God); all his thoughts are, 'There is no God'"
(Revised Standard Version). The phrase, "There is no God"
('ên 'elôhîm) does not really deny the existence of God, nor
does it deny the being of God. Rather it disregards one's
existential relationship to God.[5] The fact that this "denial
of God" is not a denial of the existence or being of God
shows by contrast that the affirmation of God is not an
affirmation of his existence or being, for this is not an
affirmation of some kind of intellectual knowledge, but an
existential affirmation of faith. The affirmation of God is
an affirmation of creative and revelatory "work," as the
denial of God is a denial of the same.

This point is directly related to the fact that, instead
of the issue of "existence and non-existence," "being and
non-being," the problematic occupying Hebraic thought in
general is rather that of "truth and falsehood," or "power
and powerlessness." In Hebrew, that which is truly (or
actually) active is called "dābhār," and that which is not
truly active is called "lô-dābhār." Linguistic expression of
this active "thing" is, of course, in words, but it so happens
that in Hebrew "words" are also called "dābhār." For
example, lies or insincere words (what we colloquially call
lip service) are expressed by using the special phrase
"dābhār" of the lips" (debhar shephāthaim) (II Kings 18:20;
Psalms 14:23). In Psalms 52:3, "lies or falsehood" (sheqer) is
set in opposition to "words of truth" (debhar cedheq). In
the same vein, "the glory of Israel" i.e., Yahweh, is said to
be one who "does not lie" (lo' yeshaqqêr) (I Samuel 15:29).

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5   See also Psalms 14:1 and 53:1. [Translator's note: Interestingly, the
     Authorized Version renders this passage as "God is not in all his
     thoughts."]

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The antithesis of this is an idol or image, which is a "lie" (sheqer) (Jeremiah 10:15). Concerning idols, words used to express the idea of "vanity" are "shāw^e'" (Psalms 31:6; 89:47), "'āwen" (Hosea 4:15; 10:5; 12:12), "hebhel" (II Kings 17:15; Psalms 31:6; 62:10; Jeremiah 2:5; and Ecclesiastes 1:1) and "tôhû" (Isaiah 49:4; 59:4). The "word" of Yahweh (d^{e}bhar Yahweh) is without any of the above vanities and is therefore what is known as a true "thing." Precisely because of this, it is the power of creativity (as in Psalms 33:6).

Although the above distinction owes a great deal to Boman's research, in his own work Boman does not always stress the opposition between Greek and Hebraic thought. Despite many inherent points of difference, he instead focuses upon the essential commonality of thought between the two. Yet, when we consider the central importance of Hellenist-Judaic thought to the Church Fathers, the presence of areas of basic difference is forced upon our attention, for by the time Greek ontology had entered into Hebraic and Christian thought, it had already undergone a transformation from the original Greek ontology. To wit, it had now become an ontology that included hayatology at its foundational level. The result was neither pure ontology nor pure hayatology and it might best be termed "haya-ontology." In other words, our analysis will never completely grasp the specific characteristics of this system of thought unless we clearly and analytically comprehend that two different ways of thinking are at work here.

BEING AND NON-BEING IN THE FATHERS

A splendid example of the interrelation of hayatology and ontology is found in Justin Martyr. A convert from Platonism to the Christian faith, in his Dialogus cum Tryphone he speaks of what he had considered the purpose of philosophy to be during his Platonic days: "Philosophy is the knowledge of "to on" (that which is), a clear grasp of truth" (Dialogus, 3). He goes on to say that this "to on" is none other than God, for "to on" is the source of everything

ideal. It has no color, shape, or size and cannot be seen as anything. It transcends all essences (*ousia*), and accordingly transcends all linguistic expression. It alone is beautiful and good (*Dialogus*, 4). This is clearly a Platonic notion. But, upon his conversion to Christianity, Justin's God was no longer an impersonal "to on," but instead clearly became a personal God, indicated by the personal pronoun "autos." Attributed to God were such virtues as "moderation, righteousness, and a love of man" (*sōphrosunē, dikaiosunē, philanthropia*) (*Apologia* I, 10). Indeed this is a God who cannot be named (ibid.), and anthropomorphic representations cannot be applied to him in their original meaning (*Dialogus*, 114 and 127). Nevertheless, this is a personal God from the beginning. The namelessness of God, according to Justin, is because God is the "unborn one" (*agennētos*) and can therefore have no christener. After all, it is natural that the christener must be born before he who is to be christened (*Apologia*, II, 6). Furthermore, this "unborn" God has given birth to "logos": "in the beginning, even earlier than the creatures, God gave birth from within himself to a reasoning power (*dunamin tina logikēn*)" (*Dialogus*, 61).

Justin then tries to demonstrate dialectically the case for Christian faith to the world of Greek thought by borrowing anew the help of Platonic and Philonic speculation. He is herein typical of the ideological inclination of those Church Fathers who have converted from Greek philosophy. Yet not all the Church Fathers are as clear as Justin in expressing their move to the Christian faith. For example, in Athenagoras, Greek ontology is preserved almost intact. For Athenagoras God is still "to on," just as was the case before his conversion. "To on" knows no becoming, for only "to mei on" (that which is not) becomes (*Supplicatio pro Christianis*, 4). In this conception, God is also called the "eternal nous (mind)." This nous-God contains "logos" within himself and that "logos," as issued forth (*proelthōn*) from the "eternal nous," is the Son (*Supplicatio*, 10). In such manner, because Athenagoras

translates Christian faith almost entirely into Platonism, the hayatological element becomes almost unrecognizable. However, despite his line of reasoning, we cannot call Athenagoras a mere Platonist. We should not forget that his Platonism is permeated with the intention to provide a dialectic proof of Christian faith. Yet it is exactly on this point that we are made to appreciate the problematic inherent in apology. It was through just such apologetic activity that ontology deeply entered Christian thought. For, although God in Christian thought may be conceived as equivalent to "to on," the original starting point is not "to on," but rather faith in a "'ehyeh"-like God (who is both creator and savior).

This fact is also understood by looking into the context in which the concept of "to mei on" has been presented in Christian thought. The equivalence of God and "to on" is already suggested by the time of the Septuagint (Exodus 3:14) and in The Wisdom of Solomon it is written that God is "ho ōn" (*Sapientia* 13:1). In addition, according to Pl.'s God is precisely "to on." However, in both The Wisdom of Solomon and in Philo, this same God is also the Creator—the cause of existence for all things (*eis to einai*) (*Sapientia*, 1:14; Philo, *Vita Mosis*, II, 20, 100). In this regard Philo then speaks of "ta mei onta." According to him, creation takes "what is not" and "makes it to be" (Philo, ibid., cf. *De opificio mundi*, 26, 81). This means that all things are formed "out of those things which are not" (*ek mē ontōn*). (Philo, *Legum allegoriae*, III, 3) It is well known that this same idea had already been expressed in The Second Book of Maccabees 7:28, except that there it appears in the form of "ouk ex ontōn."

The words "ta mei onta" are found in the New Testament in Romans 4:17 and I Corinthians 1:28, but nowhere is the concept of "creation out of non-being" explicitly stated. A passage from Christian writings that clearly calls for faith in a "creation out of non-being" is the first "Mandate" in The Shepherd of Hermas. Here it is said of God that "(He) made everything (pass) from non-being to

being" (*kai poiēsas ek tou mē ontos eis to einai ta panta*).
The words used in this sentence to express this "non-being"
are "to mei ōn." What is the relationship between this "ta
mei ōn" and "ouk on" or "ouk onta?" Was a distinction
drawn between the two? If not, and if they indeed mean
the same thing, then what exactly is that meaning? In both
The Wisdom of Solomon and in Justin, the world is created
from "formless matter," (*Sapientia* 11:17; *Apologia* I, 10; cf.
59) and it is not impossible to take "to mei on" to mean
something like this type of "hulē." However, since
according to Judeo-Christian faith there is nothing not
created by God, the idea that any "hulē" could possibly
exist prior to creation is problematic. In fact, we find that
Irenaeus, Theophilos and Tertullian all strenuously reject
the concept of the eternal nature of matter. Therefore
when Theophilos speaks of creation "from those which are
not," (*ex ouk ontōn*), this "ouk onta" is tantamount to total
non-being (*Ad Autolycum* I, 4; II, 4). Also, in Tertullian's
explanation of "creatio de nihilo," the meaning of "nihilum"
is again total non-being. (*Adversos Hermogenem*)

Following this line of thought, one could presumably
affirm that the authors of The Second Book of Maccabees
and The Shepherd, and even Philo, all believed in creation
from non-being.[6] Since this non-being concept is only
expressed with the words "ouk-on" or "mei on," instead of
with the exact Greek word for "non-being," we can only
assume "that which is not" to mean non-being as the nega-
tion of being.

Nevertheless, Hebraic thought is originally that of
hayatology, not ontology, and thus the fundamental issue of
being vis-a-vis the negation of being does not arise and is
simply not relevant. Therefore, only after God was first
Hellenized as "to on" did the negative of "to on" in the
forms of "ouk onta" and "to mei on" then come under

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6   Within this group, Philo's theory of creation admits of two inter-
    pretations. Professor Wolfson, *Philo*, I, p. 300ff, attributes the
    theory of the creation of matter to Philo.

consideration. Thus when attempts were made to prove and clarify the pre-existent belief in a hayatological creation by means of an ontological construct, concepts like "ktisis ek ouk ontōn" (creation from non-being) and "creatio ex nihilo" had to be advocated. There seems no other way to explain why, although the Christian creation belief is said to mean "creation from non-being," nowhere within either the Old or the New Testament can this expression be found. Of course, as mentioned above, the New Testament does contain the words "ta mei onta" in Romans 4:17, but here the degree of Abraham's faith is said to be a God who "gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist." Despite some suggestion of "creatio ex nihilo," the basic theme here is the contrast of life and death. The central core of creation thought here lies clearly in the fact that the living God creates life. In the Gospel according to John it is written that there was "life" in the "logos" of creation (1:4).[7]

It is extremely important that one grasp this relationship correctly. The initial problem in Christian thought is not that of "to on" and "to mei on," or "to ouk on." When something relating to nothingness or non-being is raised as an issue, it is, properly speaking, as **Nichtigkeit** rather than **Nichts**. This is actually a problem of nihility, not of non-being, and as such, it is precisely what is indicated by the term "hebhel=mataiotès" (vanity). And, as stated above, nihility corresponds to falsehood.

HAYATOLOGY AS BASIC TO CHRISTIAN THINKING

I hope that the above essay has made clear that hayatology constitutes the basis of Christian thinking. I have also attempted to demonstrate the significance of the permeation of Christianity by ontology from ancient Hellenist-Judaic thought through the early eras of Christianity,

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7   This passage can also be understood as "in the created things 'logos' was life." Or as, "the created things were life in the 'logos.'"

particularly in the thought of the Church Fathers. Inevitably the influence of ontology arose together with the use of the Greek language and it was consciously adopted because of the need generated by apology, dispute, and debate. Moreover, historically it was the borrowing of Greek thought that rendered possible the formation of a doctrinal system. Not only in the ideas about "ex ouk ontōn," but also in the "homoousios" of the Nicene creed, we find concepts that were in origin ontological. And yet, the content of what was "proved" by these (ontological) ideas is hayatological. For this reason Harnack's assertion that dogma was shaped by means of Greek minds working upon the ground of the Gospel must be said to be correct as long as it is limited to pointing out the large role played by Greek ways of thinking in doctrinal formation. But the problem arises when he gives the impression that this is the whole story (Harnack, p. 20). In response to his critics, Harnack showed that he stressed equally the element of "upon the ground of the Gospel" (*auf dem Boden des Evangeliums*). But there still remains a problem in the use of his metaphor, "ground" in regard to the Gospel (Harnack, p. 24f), for as indicated here that ground, indeed the Gospel itself, is a Hebraic ground, upon which Hebraic ways of thinking were at work. Indeed, the formative process of doctrine as doctrine began precisely when it was attempted to prove hayatological concepts by means of ontological ways of thinking, but this does not mean that the hayatological way of thinking ceased to work thereby.

Even when it seems that all hayatological dimensions of Christian thought have been entirely replaced by ontology, as long as it remains Christian thought, some measure of hayatological thinking should yet be working at its base. In other words, if we affirm the possible existence of a Christian ontology, it is only possible in the form of a "haya"-ontology. Accordingly, one must be wary of the attempt to realize ontology everywhere in Christian theology, for this risks de-Christianizing that theology. In my opinion, fully grasping this two-tiered structure of Christian thought and

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recognizing the priority and original nature of that which is hayatological within it will give us the correct starting point for our theological thinking.[8]

8　Further grammatical research is necessary both to investigate the participle and infinitive forms of "hāyāh" and the meaning and usage of "yēsh," "'ain" ('ên), but I do not think such efforts would bring about a major revision of the main points of this paper.

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