

- **A New Direction in Christian Apologetics: An Exploration with Reference to Postmodernism**
- *Nouvelle orientation de l'apologétique chrétienne*
- *Eine Neue Richtung in der Christlichen Apologetik: Eine Untersuchung zum Post-Modernism*

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SUMMARY

This essay explores the implications of post-modernism for apologetics.

With reference to the work of Alasdair MacIntyre and George Lindbeck, the first section deals with one aspect of the criticism of modernity that seems to be particularly important for apologetics: the post modern stress on the need for indwelling an existing tradition as a necessary condition for all reasoning. This postmodern rediscovery of the historical character of all human reasoning challenges the Enlightenment-axiom that in all manifestations of human culture only those truths are acceptable as a foundation of human reasoning to which are directly accessible all sane humanity. Thus postmodern thought reveals a central lack in the main stream of apologetics after the Enlightenment.

The second section asks if this stress on the historical character of human reasoning entails, instead of absolute knowledge, absolute relativism. This is only so, however, if epistemological foundationalism is true, which says that truth should be found at the beginning, the foundation, of human reasoning. But this epistemological foundationalism cannot be true, because it cannot adequately describe the phenomena of communication and human knowledge. Therefore another account of

human knowledge is proposed which understands it on the analogy of the reading of a book. According to this analogy our opinions about the traditions of others and about reality itself are determined by our historical situation from the start, but can be corrected more and more in the process of 'reading' respectively the other tradition and reality itself.

The last section suggests guidelines for a Christian apologetic, which validates the historical character of reasoning, and will hold up against the criticisms made of liberal apologetics. Basically the apologist presents the Christian faith as the only possible hermeneutical perspective from which we can adequately understand and deal with reality. The apologist asks for a 'leap of faith' to the Christian perspective, and for conversion to overcome the sinful bias against it. But Christian anthropology, as presented, for example, by Blaise Pascal, shows that on the basis of creation we can expect to find many pointers to God in non-Christian traditions. The sinful estrangement of people in these traditions, furthermore, can be used to urge them to make this leap into the arms of Christ, because this estrangement leads them into aporias and inconsistencies in their lives and worldviews.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article examine les implications de la pensée post-moderniste pour l'apologétique. En rapport avec les écrits d'Alasdair MacIntyre et de George Lindbeck, la première partie traite d'un aspect de la critique du modernisme particulièrement important pour l'apologétique:

l'insistance des post-modernistes sur la nécessité d'être intégré à une tradition existante comme préalable à tout raisonnement. Cette redécouverte de l'enracinement historique de tout raisonnement remet en question l'axiome cher aux protagonistes de l'époque dite des

'lumières', selon lequel les seules vérités dignes de constituer la base d'un raisonnement sont celles qui s'imposent directement à toute pensée humaine normale. Cette approche post-moderniste révèle que le courant principal de l'apologétique à partir du siècle des lumières présente une lacune fondamentale.

Dans la deuxième partie, l'auteur se demande si cette insistance sur l'enracinement historique du raisonnement ne conduit pas à remplacer l'absolutisme par un relativisme absolu. Ce serait le cas si le foundationalisme épistémologique — selon lequel la vérité doit être posée dès le départ, comme fondement de tout raisonnement —, était juste. Mais cette théorie épistémologique n'explique pas de façon satisfaisante le phénomène de la communication et de la connaissance humaines. C'est pourquoi l'auteur propose une autre voie pour rendre compte de l'acquisition par l'homme de la connaissance, en se fondant sur une analogie avec la lecture d'un ouvrage. Selon cette analogie, nos opinions à l'égard d'autres traditions que la nôtre et de la réalité elle-même sont déterminées au départ par notre situation historique; mais elles peuvent être infléchies progressivement au cours de la lecture d'un

texte provenant d'une autre tradition, ou lorsque nous nous trouvons face à la réalité elle-même.

La dernière partie donne des lignes directrices pour une apologétique chrétienne qui, à la fois, tient compte de l'enracinement historique du raisonnement, et résiste aux critiques de l'apologétique libérale. L'apologète présente la foi chrétienne comme la seule perspective herméneutique qui permette de comprendre la réalité et d'y faire face d'une manière adéquate. Il invite son interlocuteur à faire le saut de la foi pour adopter l'optique chrétienne, et à se convertir pour vaincre les prédispositions pécheresses qu'il entretient à l'encontre de la foi chrétienne. L'anthropologie chrétienne, telle qu'elle est conçue par exemple chez Blaise Pascal, montre que, sur la base de la doctrine de la création, nous pouvons nous attendre à rencontrer, dans les traditions non chrétiennes, bien des éléments qui pointent vers Dieu. En outre, en mettant en lumière l'aliénation coupable de ceux qui ont adopté ces traditions, on peut les encourager à se jeter dans les bras de Jésus-Christ, parce que cette aliénation les amène à des apories et des inconséquences dans leur vie et leur conception de la réalité.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Aufsatz untersucht die Implikationen der Postmoderne für die Apologetik. Mit Bezug auf die Werke von Alasdair MacIntyre und George Lindbeck befasst sich der erste Teil mit einem Aspekt der Kritik an der Moderne, der für die Apologetik besonders wichtig zu sein scheint: nämlich mit der postmodernen Betonung der Notwendigkeit eine bestehende Tradition existentiell erfahren zu haben als Voraussetzung für alles logische Denken. Diese postmoderne Wiederentdeckung des geschichtlichen Charakters aller menschlichen Vernunft stellt das Axiom der Aufklärung in Frage, wonach in allen Formen der menschlichen Kultur nur jene Wahrheiten als Grundlage der menschlichen Vernunft gelten können, die allen rationalen Menschen direkt zugänglich sind. Damit offenbart das postmoderne Denken eine grundlegende Schwäche in den Hauptströmungen der Apologetik der Zeit nach der Aufklärung.

Im zweiten Teil wird die Frage gestellt, ob

diese Betonung des geschichtlichen Charakters der menschlichen Vernunft anstatt zu absoluter Erkenntnis zu einem absoluten Relativismus führte. Dies wäre nur der Fall, wenn der epistemologische Grundsatz stimmte, daß Wahrheit schon in der Voraussetzung der menschlichen Vernunftserkenntnis zu finden ist. Dieser epistemologische Grundsatz kann jedoch nicht stimmen, denn er ist nicht in der Lage, das Phänomen der Kommunikation und des menschlichen Wissens adäquat zu beschreiben. Also wird ein anderes Modell der menschlichen Erkenntnis vorgeschlagen, basierend auf der Analogie des Lesens eines Buches. Nach dieser Analogie wird unsere Meinung über die Traditionen anderer und die Wirklichkeit an sich zuallererst von unserem eigenen geschichtlichen Hintergrund bestimmt. Jedoch kann sich diese Meinung bei der 'Lektüre' durch die Auseinandersetzung mit der anderen Tradition und der Wirklichkeit selbst verändern.

Im dritten Teil werden Richtlinien für eine schichtlichen Charakter der Vernunft festhalten und der Kritik der liberalen Apologetik und der Kritik der liberalen Apologetik standhalten.

Im Grunde genommen stellt die Apologetik den christlichen Glauben als die einzig mögliche hermeneutische Perspektive dar, durch die wir die Wirklichkeit adäquat verstehen und bewältigen können. Der Apologet fordert einen 'Glaubensschritt' zu einer christlichen Perspektive und verlangt eine Bekehrung, um die sündige Neigung gegen

diese Perspektive zu überwinden. Die christliche Anthropologie, wie sie z.B. von Blaise Pascal vertreten wurde, zeigt, daß wir schöpfungsmäßige Hinweise auf Gott in vielen nichtchristlichen Traditionen finden können. Aber diese durch die Sünde bedingte Entfremdung der Menschen in diesen Traditionen gibt dazu Anlaß sie aufzufordern, diesen Glaubensschritt auf Christus hin zu machen, weil diese Entfremdung in Aporien und Widersprüche in ihrem Leben und in ihrer Weltanschauung führt.

We live in a post-modern world. This is now seen as almost an evident fact, a truism. Its theological and ethical consequences have begun to be explored. But what of its implications for apologetics? In what way can traditional apologetics, often grounded in assumptions which post-modernism has rendered questionable, respond to this new situation? What are the new opportunities? And what are the new problems?

An exploration of the apologetic implications of this cultural shift towards postmodernism is of central importance for the apologist.² First, this is because an apologist who speaks to her culture should reckon with the fact that large areas of this culture are exchanging their modern concepts and ideals for post-modern ones. Secondly, because modernism is still an important aspect of our culture, the post-modernists provide the apologist with valuable insights into the weaknesses of the Enlightenment ideology. Thirdly and most importantly, the critics of modernity can open the eyes of the apologist to aspects of the Enlightenment culture, which are not so much beyond discussion as was first thought and to which many apologists might have given in too soon.

The article will be divided into three main parts. First, I will sketch one aspect of the criticism of modernity that seems to be particularly important for apologetics: the post-modern stress on the need for indwelling an existing tradition as a necessary condition for all reasoning. This post-modern stress

stands over and against the Enlightenment ideal of providing absolute standards and methods for reasoning, which are free from all distorting influences from the relative world of historical traditions. Secondly, can this stress on the historical character of reasoning be taken seriously without a change from the Enlightenment evil of absolutism to the alternative evil of absolute relativism? An argument for combining the postmodern insight into the inescapability of the historical character of reasoning with a critical epistemological realism will form the foundation for the last section. There we will draw some guidelines for a Christian apologetic, which validates the concrete historical character of reasoning and will hold up against philosophical and theological criticisms of liberal apologetics.

The Historical Character of Human Reasoning

As the term *postmodernism* indicates post-modern thinking understands itself in opposition to modernity, the culture which roughly started with the Enlightenment. A broad cultural movement such as the Enlightenment can always be described in more than one way, because it can be viewed from more than one perspective. For our purpose it is particularly apt to describe the cultural programme of the Enlightenment in terms of universality and tradition: in science and philosophy, in all manifestations of human culture, only those truths are acceptable as a foundation for human reasoning which are

directly accessible to all sane humanity, without reference to any specific tradition or historical reality. The different Enlightenment philosophies, which could be as radically opposed as rationalism and empiricism, all shared this fundamental view as to what the basic structure of human knowledge should be. This new Enlightenment perception of human knowledge had enormous power, also in the area of religion and theology. First, it seemed to provide the only possible way of judging competing traditions. And after the sixteenth century religious wars between the Roman and Protestant traditions it became highly desirable to overcome those differences. Secondly, the adherence to the universal and necessary truths of reason seemed morally superior to the view that one's chance to know the truth was dependent on the arbitrary contingencies of history.³ Thirdly, there was a strong ideological bias against tradition in an age which strenuously tried to distinguish itself from its past.⁴

Liberal Enlightenment theology, as it developed in this context, sought to meet this situation by constructing a theology which would fit these general standards and methods of reason. We might call this liberal theology in essence 'apologetic' theology, because its aim was to be acceptable to 'the cultured among its despisers' (Schleiermacher). However, this apologetic method was not confined to liberal circles. Many more conservative theologians, who based *systematic theology* more on the authority of Scripture, essentially perceived *apologetics* in this liberal way: the only possible apologetic must start from a universally shared starting point.⁵ Some apologists think of this universal starting-point or method as metaphysical, others as historical, moral or psychological. This, however, does not make an essential difference to the overall pattern.⁶ This type of reasoning places you in an awkward dilemma. Either you water down Christianity to make it look like and reinforce the Enlightenment ideals (the typical liberal approach) or, if you are more conservative, you try to water down the prevailing standards of reasoning, but effectively lose your main link with your contemporary culture.

In this context it is clear why Barth's attack on apologetics had such a devastating lucidity and force: if the Christian faith is so alien to natural human standards and to our culture as Barth brought out, we would do better to give up apologetics and stop apologising for the difference.

But not only this type of apologetics came under attack. Its background in the cultural programme of the Enlightenment did too. As a very recent example of such postmodern criticism I want to use Alasdair MacIntyre's *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*⁷ MacIntyre is a postmodernist in a broader, mainly negative sense, which encompasses all sorts of fundamental criticisms of the Enlightenment project. The term can also be used in a narrower, positive, sense to indicate a group of philosophers with certain linked alternative ideas on rationality, language and so on. The names of Foucault and Derrida are clearly attached to this second group. MacIntyre clearly dissociates himself from this second group, especially because of its relativistic character (352f.). But his criticism of liberalism is both very acute and apt for our topic.

MacIntyre criticises the liberal search for rational standards and methods, which are themselves outside and above historical contingencies. He gives an historical overview of the rise, fall and interaction of some of the main traditions concerning rationality, particularly practical rationality, of our Western philosophical tradition: the Aristotelian, Augustinian, and Humean tradition. It appears that those different forms of practical rationality clearly arose in reaction to specific social circumstances and questions, and that the scope of their reasoning is determined by these concepts grown in a particular soil. Added to this phenomenological approach to rationality, which reveals it to be something different from the Enlightenment view, MacIntyre makes a great deal of the failure of Liberalism itself. The liberal ideal for rational standards and methods to be shared with all mankind proved a failure, 'so that there emerges no uncontested and incontestable account of what tradition-independent morality consists in and consequently no neutral set of criteria by means of which the claims of

rival and contending traditions could be adjudicated' (334). So 'in the course of that history liberalism, which began as an appeal to alleged principles of shared rationality against what was felt to be the tyranny of tradition, has itself been transformed into a tradition' (335). For as the liberal cannot fulfil his promise of adequately rising above traditions, the choice for liberalism is as much a matter of historical background as is the choice for other traditions.

Both preceding and following the general criticism of modernity, there is criticism of the same sort going on in theology. The general scene being as varied as in philosophy, here also one group can be labelled 'postmodernist' or 'postliberal' in a narrower, positive sense. 'Postliberal theology'⁸ only got its name in 1984 with the publication of George A. Lindbeck's *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*,⁹ of which the concluding chapter is entitled: 'Toward a Postliberal Theology'. Lindbeck distinguishes three basic theories of doctrine, theology, and religion. The first, the so-called 'cognitive-propositional' model views doctrinal and theological statements as propositional descriptions of an objective ('extratextual')¹⁰ reality. This model was generally accepted in pre-modern orthodoxy. According to Lindbeck it is wanting, because it is intellectualist and literalist. But his main concern is with the liberal approach, identified as 'experiential-expressivist'. According to this theory true religion, doctrine, and theology are symbolic expressions of universal religious experiences. Lindbeck's criticism of this theory follows the general lines of postliberal reactions to liberalism: there is no universal religious experience common to all humanity. Religion does not spring from some universal experience. The intratextual world of a particular religion forms the perspective which makes the experience of the believer possible. Therefore religious experience is, from its earliest stages, determined by a particular religious framework. For the third theory of doctrine, the 'cultural-linguistic' theory proposed by Lindbeck himself, he borrows the 'intratextual' approach to religion from recent students of religion in the social sciences. What both the cognitive-

propositionalists and the experiential-expressivists have in common is the search for the truth of religion in a primary reality outside the texts, institutions, and life of the religious community, be it in propositional correspondence with a metaphysical reality or as symbolic expression of some primary religious experience. According to Lindbeck's approach the meaning of doctrinal statements and religious practices is not derived from an extratextual reality, but is intratextual. They only have their meaning in the context of the sacred texts and institutions of the religion itself and of the life and experiences engendered by it. It is not the universal and neutral experience of the liberals, which provides the interpretative framework for religion and theology. We relate to the extratextual world in the opposite direction through a conceptual framework engendered by our tradition.¹¹

If Lindbeck and MacIntyre are right when they state that there are no neutral and universal methods, standards and experiences and no neutral rationality outside specific traditions,¹² as I believe they are, the implications for apologetics, shaped in a liberal culture, are vast. But first we should ask if from a postliberal perspective there is any place for apologetics at all. If all rationality and all experience are shaped by particular traditions, is there any real sense in which the Christian tradition can be said to be true in such a way that the apologist's pleading with non-believers makes sense? Among post-liberal theologians this should definitely stand at the top of the agenda.¹³ Opinions differ and Lindbeck seems quite ambiguous here. He asserts, that 'if we do justice to the actual speech and practice of religious people [...] we must allow for its possible propositional truth'.¹⁴ But in his stress on the intratextual character of truth he constantly distinguishes his position from the cognitive-propositionalist approach in its search for a relation with an extratextual reality. It is, however, this extratextual truth which features in 'the actual speech and practice of religious people'.

Traditions and Truth

To answer the question, whether apologetics

makes any sense, given that all reasoning is tradition-dependent, two different questions must be distinguished. First: if the methods and standards of a particular tradition are essential to reasoning in that tradition, is any reasonable communication and comparison *between* different traditions possible? Secondly: can such reasoning be in any sense related to, determined by, or guided towards an objective reality, which exists prior to and independent of human reasoning? The first question is concerned with the level of our communication, with intersubjectivity. The second question is concerned with objectivity.

i) Can there be communication between traditions?

First, does tradition-framed reasoning imply *incommunicability*? Terrence W. Tilley states: 'Intratextualist theorists like Lindbeck and Frei are open to charges of fideism because they do not clarify the relationship of intratextual to 'extratextual' meanings'.¹⁵ (In this context these are the meanings embodied in other traditions.) In the same article Tilley points out that this fideism is only a consequence of contextual reasoning, if this rationality is imprisoned in separate and homogeneous compartments of traditions without any interaction.¹⁶ This is, however, a theoretical construct. In reality we find traditions developing new shades or going through crises. Consequently one and the same person can 'indwell', or be part of, different phases of the same tradition and understand them both from within. So Luther could understand both late mediaeval Catholicism and his own reformation from within.¹⁷ In reality we can also inhabit two traditions at the same time. A Christian academic theologian can for example read the Bible both in the believing community and in a secular academic context, understanding both rationalities from within.¹⁸ Both Luther and the academic theologian are in some way able to compare both traditions and to answer the question as to which tradition is in general or in a specific situation the most adequate.

This reality of one person indwelling two traditions and understanding both in terms of *their own specific methods and standards*

of reasoning and subsequently evaluating both, makes clear that different rationalities do not necessarily result in incomparability of the respective traditions. For the evaluation of the debate as it goes on between different traditions we must, however, ask a further and more difficult question: are there other ways of understanding other traditions properly, without really 'indwelling' them, i.e. being part of them? Understanding is a gradual concept and we can always understand better, but how difficult is an understanding which makes comparison possible?

This depends on the distance between the investigated tradition and one's own, and on the sophistication of both traditions. But I suggest, that in general such understanding is not as difficult as it appears in the studies of many postmodern thinkers.¹⁹ First of all there is the simple fact of communication between people with different rationalities and the experience of understanding, when reading literature from other traditions. In a real conversation with somebody from another tradition it can happen that our own intellectual framework is challenged. It can even prove so inadequate that a 'conversion' to the other position takes place. The reality of this 'being challenged' presupposes the possibility of comparing different traditions.

Furthermore, in understanding another tradition we can be greatly helped by the work of others. MacIntyre for example provides an analysis of the distinctive character of practical reasoning in classical Athens.²⁰ He makes us feel the wide abyss between us and the Athenians of the fifth century B.C. But in working out this difference he provides us, in a fairly short time, with considerable insight into the specific rationality of that society without us ever having been part of it. This very insight into the distance between different tradition-embodied rationalities suggests that understanding is not as remote a concept as postmodernists, and even MacIntyre himself, generally suggest.

Hence, we can compare the different rationalities embodied in different traditions by indwelling one or more traditions or, less thoroughly, by trying to understand other traditions on their own terms, distinguishing

them carefully from our own presuppositions. But this comparability does not necessarily imply that a *rational evaluation* of both traditions is possible,²¹ as suggested in the examples of Luther and the academic theologian. For if all rationality is tradition-specific, and if these specific rationalities lead on their own terms to the rejection of other traditions, a comparison of two traditions may lead only to an understanding of why they themselves are in accordance with their own standards of truth and why the other tradition, according to that perspective, must be false. They may remain two irreconcilable perspectives, which need to be selected on pre-rational ('existential') grounds. This is the most common view in contemporary philosophy, ethics and society at large. However, this is again too simple a picture of two traditions meeting each other. Here the specific 'rationality of traditions' in their development and interaction as described by MacIntyre²² gives a more realistic, but at the same time more complicated, picture: when two traditions meet they are true according to their own rationalities, but not simply true overall. When a tradition is developing, certain antinomies in a tradition may appear, or difficulties in developing the enquiry beyond a certain point (166 f.). Some of these difficulties may be resolved by new thinkers in the same tradition. Others, however, may turn out to be insoluble in terms of the tradition itself. The intrinsic development of the tradition has thus brought the need for replacement or change of at least some of the fundamental features of the tradition to the fore, and the need for the development of new sources of thought. This can happen through a radical change within the old tradition, which in fact results in a new tradition, because the old can remain alongside it.

It can also happen through encounter with an alien tradition. If the other tradition has the same limitations, the adherents of the first tradition will simply go on with their own limited traditions, lacking an alternative. If the other tradition is in all respects superior in respect of these antinomies and limitations (in that it both avoids and explains the limitations of the first tradition), this might result in conversion to the other

tradition, where only minor aspects of the first background are incorporated into the new framework.²³

It should be noted, however, that we point here merely to the *possibility* of growth from a limited perspective towards a broader perspective, towards superior knowledge. Very often this possibility is not realised because of an ideological bias against the offered alternative. Generally we don't know an alternative as well from the inside as we know our own tradition. But this negative starting point is greatly enforced by a strong bias against a change towards another tradition, because this would imply a recognition of the superiority of another tradition over one's own. As Christians we should add to this a forceful bias in all humanity against the recognition of the basic structures of reality through sinful alienation from the Creator (Rom. 1:18 ff.). MacIntyre's analysis of a rationality embodied in traditions would be greatly strengthened and deepened if he had taken ideological factors into account alongside intellectual ones. This we could expect from a scholar with such a reputation in the study of Marxism.

ii) *Can a tradition lead to objective truth?*

Thus MacIntyre shows how different rationalities can be compared and evaluated, even when no common standards and methods are available. But what does this possible growth of intersubjectivity mean for our second question: in what sense can a tradition, which avoids the limitations and antinomies of an alternative, be said to be truer in an objective sense? Our knowledge still seems to be based on rational methods and standards which we gain from our tradition and not from reality itself. How can we ever reach reality itself, when building on such a foundation?²⁴

However, this is only a problem when a *foundational account* of knowledge is given. Foundationalism assumes that the only way to gain knowledge is to start a process of reasoning from certain or probable premisses and to derive new propositions by valid patterns of reasoning. Whether the starting point is thought of as rationalistic or empiricist and whether the valid patterns of reasoning are thought of as deductive

or inductive does not change the overall structure. According to a foundationalist, a noetic structure can only be rational if it contains an adequate basis, which contains truths that enable valid derivations to be made. This foundational account, which derives already from classical Greek philosophy, is characteristic of modern thought and is the hidden premiss of postmodern thought in its relativistic forms. The moderns sought for an universal basis of knowledge, which could overcome the conflict of traditions. And it is only because post-moderns share this foundationalist account of knowledge, that the denial of a universal starting-point necessarily leads to an overall relativistic attitude towards knowledge.

But this foundationalist account of doctrine has come under heavy criticism over recent decades, both from epistemologists and philosophers of science.²⁵ In a foundational epistemology the Cartesian distance between mind and matter and the postmodern gap between language and the reality beyond, can only be crossed when the *beginning* of the argument is firmly based on reality. The building can never be firmer than its foundations. Following a philosopher of science like Michael Polanyi²⁶ and theologians who interacted with the philosophy of science like Austin M. Farrer,²⁷ Thomas F. Torrance²⁸ and recently on a more popular level John Polkinghorne²⁹ and Lesslie Newbigin³⁰ the *reading of a book*³¹ seems a more appropriate analogy for our knowledge of reality than the building of a house. When we read a book the beliefs with which we start need not be right in order to be useful. We indeed start with some beliefs or presuppositions about the content and message of the book. But these presuppositions are not beyond criticism. When for example someone starts reading the New Testament with the presupposition that it deals only with the relation of the soul to God this is not like the premiss of a syllogism. The premiss of a syllogism and the basis of foundational reasoning are the same in that they should be accepted or not, before the process of reasoning itself. The reasoning rests on the premisses and does not validate them. However, in a reading process we come to the text with certain presuppositions

and the reading process itself shows these to be adequate or inadequate. And if they are inadequate the reading will suggest what sort of change is needed. This process can continue, because the newly-formed assumptions about the meaning of the text can again be partly validated and partly criticised. In this circular movement from presuppositions to text and back our thought forms become more and more appropriate for the interpretation of the text and thus more and more congruent with its content. This is in fact basically the process of getting to know a different tradition, a different 'intra-textual world', to which I have alluded above. The learning of the new language begins from the outside, and by constantly changing our preconceptions we move to the content which is more alien to us.³²

In the same way as our preconceptions about the content of books and other tradition are challenged in the confrontation, our tradition-given preconceptions about the reality are changed in our engagement with this reality itself. A famous example from the history of science clarifies this point. During the last turn of the century all physicists investigated the physical reality they encountered through the spectacles of the rational framework of their Newtonian tradition. But scientists like Niels Bohr and Albert Einstein found increasing evidence for the limitations of this theory, particularly where extremely high velocities and very small particles were involved. This eventually led to quantum mechanics and the theory of relativity. These theories were in fact able to explain the facts better than the Newtonian framework and can therefore be thought to be more congruent with objective reality itself. This example makes clear that through our language, we are indeed in touch with reality itself. If we were imprisoned in our language, if we could impose our thought structures on reality without ever getting any feed-back from an extra-linguistic reality, the Newtonian framework would never have been challenged: it would necessarily only be adequate to interpret a reality which it could completely form to its own image.

Let us return to the development and the interaction of traditions described by

MacIntyre, in which those rationalities which can avoid antinomies and limitations in coping with reality appear to be superior to alternatives. The criticism of the Newtonian framework suggests that this development of traditions is in fact a development in the direction of a greater congruence with reality. In this development 'between those older beliefs and the world as they now understand it there is a radical discrepancy to be perceived. It is this lack of correspondence, between what the mind then judged and believed and reality as now *perceived*, classified and understood, which is ascribed when those earlier judgements are called *false*. The original and most elementary version of the correspondence theory of truth is one in which it is applied retrospectively in form of a correspondence theory of falsity.'³³ What is very significant in this conclusion of MacIntyre's is that the truth or falsity of a tradition is perceived retrospectively, at the *end* of a process of reasoning. This is totally opposed to a foundational approach to knowledge in which truth necessarily lies at the beginning of an argument. But if a process of reasoning can lead to the correction of false premisses and preconceptions, foundationalism is invalid. Contrary to both modernists and relativistic postmodernists we can state that the start of a reasoning process in a particular historical tradition does not necessarily lead to relativism.

To summarise: I have argued for an epistemology, which is different from both modernism and relativistic postmodernism. Contrary to both traditions I take it that truth is not primarily to be found as the *foundation* of a process of reasoning, but that it is the *goal* of the process. So I perceive it to be the Christian position to hold with postmodernists and contrary to the 'modern' view, that all reasoning starts from an historically relative perspective, but with the moderns we hold, contrary to postmoderns, that the goal of reasoning should be universally valid and that this goal can be reached in principle.

It should be noted that this argument for realism can have two audiences.³⁴ To refute someone with sceptical presuppositions (sceptical concerning realism) a much more elaborate argument is needed than to help

those who begin with realist presuppositions, but are unable to refute the sceptical charge that a tradition-embodied rationality cannot be realist. The last section answered the problem of the 'realist in danger'. Man's natural tendency to live as if realism is true³⁵ need not be distrusted. The barriers post-modernism throws up against this can be removed.

However, in confrontation with the sceptic we are left with a stalemate. The realist cannot argue *a priori* that this method will help him to overcome the different starting points of different traditions and will overcome scepticism. An *a posteriori* argument is needed. As a Christian I believe that ultimately the only possible definitive *a posteriori* argument of this type begins with the revelation in Christ. For only from there are the main tensions between other world views and reality overcome. This assumes the need for revelation, for tradition and for conversion to overcome the strong ideological bias against Christianity. With an *a posteriori* argument it must be shown that Christianity can overcome the limitations and antinomies, to which different tradition-embodied rationalities lead. Here such an argument cannot be given. We can only point to the possibility. But at least the charge that it is *a priori* impossible to combine a tradition-embodied rationality with a critical realism is refuted.

iii) Can we know that a tradition entails the ultimate truth?

One important problem must still be discussed. An argument for the validity of a tradition in terms of a 'rationality of traditions' is necessarily a cumulative argument.³⁶ The validity of a tradition is confirmed and strengthened each time it survives the confrontation with an alternative. But how can we know that a tradition entails the ultimate truth, as Christianity claims? How can we know that at some point a radically new tradition will not arise, which better applies to life and reality than Christianity does? Ultimate truth is essentially an *eschatological* concept. Only from an eschatological perspective can it become clear which tradition dealt most

effectively with reality and with alternative approaches towards reality.³⁷

This is exactly what the Christian tradition claims: in the cross and resurrection of Christ we are confronted with God's definitive, eschatological self-revelation. This is not an arbitrary claim. The apostles supported their claim for the eschatological relevance of the revelation in Christ by pointing to His resurrection and the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, of which the most important aspect is the promise of the eschatological outpouring of the Holy Spirit.³⁸ But there is no need to argue for the *finality* of revelation in Christ, before the Christian framework of rationality is accepted on the basis of its *superiority*.

We should be careful here. An argument for the eschatological character of the message of the cross and resurrection of Christ does not imply that the rational framework which is now embodied in the Christian tradition (if there is only one) will survive all future confrontations with new aspects of life, with historical crises and with other traditions. This Christian rationality is itself changing and developing, as is evident from its history. What is eschatological is not the specific rational framework, but the central *narrative* of the event of the cross and the resurrection. The rationality built on it is of a second order³⁹ and partly limited by the same finiteness and ideological bias as other historical traditions. This historical rationality reveals the tension between the 'already and not yet' of the 'fulfilment without consummation'⁴⁰ of the eschatological Kingdom inaugurated by Christ.

Apologetics as Being Confronted with the Christian Tradition

The discovery of the historical character of all human reasoning in postmodern thought has important consequences for the *content* of Christian apologetics. The postmodern evaluation of the Enlightenment project gives the apologist important arguments for the debate with the still central liberal strands of our culture. The main aim of this section, however, is to explore some of the consequences of this change for the *character* and possibility of apologetics. At first sight

the result seems to be rather negative. Lindbeck warns in his concluding chapter: 'Postliberals are bound to be skeptical, not about missions, but about apologetics and foundations' (129) and 'Theology should therefore resist the clamor of the religiously interested public for what is currently fashionable and immediately intelligible' (134). In the same way the evangelical theologian Alister McGrath in *The Genesis of Doctrine*, a study of the historical character of doctrinal development, concludes: 'It is thus evangelism, rather than just apologetics, which commends itself as of strategic importance in the present situation within western culture' (199). Neither author, however, is totally negative towards apologetics, and for that reason I take this negative attitude to be directed primarily against apologetics in its liberal forms. This liberal apologetics is indeed found wanting, for it surrendered 'much that now appears vital to the distinctive identity of the Christian religion'⁴¹ for the sake of alleged universal values, which lead to a major loss of relevance of the specific Christian message. This refutation of liberal apologetics can easily lead to a refutation of apologetics altogether, for the commitment to the apologetic project, to make the Christian message intelligible for those outside its tradition, is the distinctive mark and strength of the liberal tradition. The rejection of liberal apologetics can further lead to the rejection of the apologetic enterprise as a whole, because this interpretation of apologetics was shared by the main apologetic streams of our post-Enlightenment culture, liberals and conservatives alike.

If, however, rational communication between traditions remains possible in a world without a universally shared rationality, as MacIntyre has shown, then there is no need to abandon all search for a rational 'account of the hope in us'. The aims of such a new apologetic should be more modest than the claim that often accompanies liberal apologetics, namely that the content of the Christian faith is fully accessible and acceptable according to standards shared with the non-believer. But if the Gospel is really good news for the non-believer, there must be some link with the existence of the

non-believer. These are the points of connection the apologist wants to use as pointers towards the Christian faith.

Such a postliberal apologetic could be properly called *ad hoc* apologetics, as William Werpehowski, following a suggestion of Lindbeck, does.⁴² For one of the strengths of this apologetic is that it does not presume to know where the hearer is on the basis of some presupposed universal human nature. If her mental 'make up' is essentially derived from her tradition and from her personal history in that tradition, the only way to know where to start a meaningful conversation is to listen to her within her particular history and context. Many Christians with experience in sharing their faith with non-Christians will endorse this conclusion: the easiest way to talk without really reaching each other, is to assume that you already know what your friend's convictions, ideals and problems are.

But what reason do we have to believe that there are points of contact with each non-Christian, however diverse these may be? The answer is given in the doctrine of creation, balanced by the doctrine of sin.⁴³ By looking to these doctrines I hope to give a theological basis and a content to the idea of an *ad hoc* apologetics. Christian anthropology reveals how human beings can develop in such diverse and contrary directions because of sin, which results in man being at war with himself.⁴⁴ Through his sin man denies his own being, in that he denies the Creator-creature relationship. In denying his fundamental dependence on his Creator he alienates himself from his own being, created *imago Dei*, resulting in the break up of the original unity of the different parts of his existence. Through this, polarities in his existence become paradoxes, as they evidently appear in the ongoing struggle of philosophical anthropology with well-known polarities like individuality-community and autonomy-heteronomy.

The following example will help us to work out what structure an apologetic has on the basis of this anthropology. Blaise Pascal pointed in his *Pensées* with deep perceptiveness and great lucidity, to the paradox in fallen man between his 'grandeur' and his 'misère' (misery). Man is on the one hand in a miserable situation, being just an

animal like those around him, bound to the limits of material and historical existence. On the other hand man is a great creature, able to investigate the universe with his mind. However, this mind at the same time makes him even more miserable, because now man knows his limitations and suffering, of which the other animals are unaware. Pascal perceived this paradoxical character of man as underlying not only the disturbing and alarming tensions in individuals, but also the deep divisions between the conflicting philosophical trends and 'ideologies' of his time. The rationalists in the tradition of Descartes, emphasised the 'grandeur' of man, his ability to know the universe and to subject the world to himself. But in order to rest confidently in their 'grandeur' they had to suppress the profusion of signs showing the limits and finiteness of human existence. On the other hand there were the sceptics, with Montaigne as central spokesman, who were very much aware of the limitations and 'misère' of human existence, but in order to be consistent in their scepticism, they needed to neglect all signs which pointed towards a higher dignity of man, including the fact that he could reflect about his own scepticism. Thus we find here a fundamental tension in human existence, resulting from sin, as the source of two different perspectives on life, of two historical traditions, each with their own 'rationalities'.

The same tension is apparent in the modernism-postmodernism debate. Modernists stress the human striving for absolute knowledge, values and ideals. But in this search they forget the other pole of human existence, the fact that man is a finite, historical creation. Relativistic postmodernists are very aware of the limitations of human existence. They stress the fact that all human knowledge is related to its specific cultural baggage and to the possibilities their specific language and conceptual framework entail. But with this perceptiveness about the limitations of human existence they combine a lack of attention to the philosophical consequences of these perceptions: the fact that they can understand and reflect on the limitations of their specific language and conceptuality implies that at the same time they start to break through those limits.

If the apologist were only to employ a rationality which is universally shared by all people, the possibilities would be severely limited. Only a few presuppositions are shared by modernists, relativistic postmodernists and Christians alike, and this amount of shared rationality will only diminish if more cultural groups are taken into account. However, the anthropological tensions revealed by this Christian anthropology suggest that in both traditions there is more that can be linked with the Christian message, but that these aspects are simply not shared by both traditions at the same time. On the basis of the 'fellowship of creation' it is possible to argue with modernists, starting from the common recognition of the high vocation of humanity. On the same basis it is possible to converse with postmodernists based on the shared perception of the limitations of a human existence lived in history. Both arguments are 'ad hoc' and cannot be universally used. But both arguments are also based on the reality of living in a shared world, a shared creation, living a shared humanity, so both arguments could in a way be called 'natural' without being universal.

From this example a picture appears of how MacIntyre's 'rationality of traditions' provides a framework for an apologetic conversation starting from an 'ad hoc' recognition of a shared body of assumptions, a body which may change from audience to audience. Then we move on to the difficulties in both traditions. Both modernism and relativistic postmodernism soon lead to central inconsistencies and inability to cope with reality: modernism, because it appears unable to provide the universal supra-historical standards it requires for sound rationality; postmodernism, because it professes a kind of scepticism concerning human knowledge, which is inconsistent with its own knowledge of the character of language and rationality. Both the inconsistencies and the necessity to neglect evidence which is available to them spring from the fact that their concepts of knowledge are at odds with reality—in this case the reality of knowing itself. It is of course possible, that one or both of these traditions will in the future be able to overcome these

inconsistencies and to include this other evidence on their own terms based on their own rational framework. For modernism, however, this seems very unlikely, as some of the cleverest Europeans have worked on it for two hundred years. For the time being it seems justifiable to propose the Christian tradition as an alternative, and to argue with both modernists and postmodernists 'that within this other tradition it is possible to construct from the concepts and theories peculiar to it what they were unable to provide from their own conceptual and theoretical resources, a cogent illuminating explanation—cogent and illuminating, that is by their own standards—of why their own intellectual tradition had been unable to solve its problems or to resolve coherence'.⁴⁵

The Christian anthropology of the human being as a creature provides the new perspective to overcome the inconsistencies and limits of both the modern and the postmodern tradition. As creature he retains his high vocation, for he has received the task to 'work and take care of' the earth (Gen. 2, 15 NIV), and is made to know his Creator. This is linked to those aspects of reality which the moderns recognise and the postmoderns are neglecting or even suppressing. On the other hand the created human being is finite and limited by his particular place in wider creation and in history. The high vocation is not something which lies in his autonomous grasp; it is something he can only fulfil in dependence on his Creator. This finiteness appears in those aspects of reality which the Christian apologist perceives together with the postmodernist, and with which he confronts the Enlightenment thinkers. The latter are biased enough to neglect this evidence and this results in the inconsistencies.

As presented here this is not really an argument. Much elaboration is needed, and other elements like community, sin, and eschaton should be brought into the picture. For it is not the aim of this article and it has been done elsewhere.⁴⁶ This is merely meant as a sketch of a possible line of argument to present Christianity as a superior tradition, being truer to reality, because it overcomes and explains the inconsistencies and limitations of rival traditions.⁴⁷

Hence, the apologist should determine 'ad

hoc' where a conversation with a particular partner or audience should start. A common ground should be searched for. And starting from this common ground the overall aim of the apologist is to argue that, where they differ, the Christian perspective provides the superior tradition. The Christian tradition is superior, because it makes possible a better interaction with reality, which indicates that its rationality conforms more to the structure of reality itself. This conformity is derived directly from the fact that we in Christ are confronted with the revelation of the Source, Centre, and Goal of reality. In such an apologetic argument both proclamation and reasoning will have their part. God's dealing with mankind in the cross and the resurrection of Christ should be announced and the resulting new perspective on nature, human existence and history expounded. Next to the essential proclamation there will be a good deal of dialogue and reasoning. The apologist needs to identify with her partner in conversation.⁴⁸ She needs to look to the world from this particular non-Christian perspective, bring out the inconsistencies and point to areas of reality which cannot be dealt with adequately from this perspective. The pointing out of these limitations will help her urge the other to imagine how the same reality would look from the Christian perspective. Full understanding will only be possible from a full and committed stand in the Christian tradition, but this procedure may provide enough pointers to the superiority of the Christian tradition to motivate a 'leap of faith'.⁴⁹ This obvious point should be stressed over and against a common misunderstanding of the apologetic endeavour: apologetics is not relevant only when a full and absolutely compelling rational defence of the Christian faith can be given. As Samuel Butler already pointed out: in life many reasonable choices are made on the basis of evidence which is persuasive because of the probability of the truth to which it points.⁵⁰

Even when the superiority of the Christian tradition can be clearly shown, conversion does not necessarily follow. It is always possible for the partner to retreat, instead of going forward; logically it is always possible to deny part of the initially shared common

ground, which is part of the argument, in order to avoid the conclusion,⁵¹ a retreat which can ultimately end up in the denial of the validity of all reasoning whatsoever.

Such a retreat need not be caused by reasonable argument, even if the retreat itself is logically consistent. It will often be caused by an ideological bias against the conclusion. In the description of anthropology we saw that the distortion of the original unity of the human being and the subsequent dispersion of the different perspectives on the world are caused by sin.⁵² If the particularity of the perspective is a result of sin, the turn to the Christian perspective must involve repentance. So in modernism, for example, the inattention to human finiteness results from a sinful striving for autonomy and self-determination; postmodernism, in some of its forms, is linked with 'the sin of despair'.⁵³ This need for repentance, to overcome a strong ideological bias in the process of conversion, forms one of the necessary limits of the apologetical endeavour, which should be taken into account in order to approach the other realistically, combining proclamation and argument with a plea for repentance, the latter plea itself being strongly enforced by both proclamation and reasoning. By now it becomes clear, why we may hope that this new direction in apologetics can be more faithful to the Creator and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ than many liberal apologies could be. In humility it understands that an absolute rational justification to those outside its tradition is not possible; realistically it combines reasoning with a call to repentance to overcome the sinful bias against the Gospel; it hopes to avoid the watering down of the relevance of this message that would result from subjecting it to alien standards; so it appears that the Lord and God of the Church is, in apologetics too, not subject to any reality or rationality outside Himself. Instead the apologist confidently tries to use and reveal all true rationality in other traditions as derived from the Creator and Judge of nature and history. Perhaps even Karl Barth would have been less harsh towards such an apologetic, for over and against the despised 'claiming of revelation by the world' in apologetics ('Apologetik'), he recognises the

legitimacy and necessity of what he calls polemics ('Polemik'): a 'claiming of the world by revelation',⁵⁴ which can even be compared with the Israelite conquest of Canaan, 'Had it not for a long time belonged to Yahweh?'.⁵⁵ And we should and can engage in such a discourse in the hope 'that the divine counter-witness will not be lacking to the human witness of faith'.⁵⁶

- 1 I am very grateful to Dr. Alister McGrath of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, who guided the research which led to this article, and to Hilary Schroeder and Paul Williams for correcting the manuscript.
- 2 There have been very few direct studies of this question. The only article explicitly dedicated to this question the author is acquainted with is William Werpehowski's 'Ad Hoc Apologetics', *The Journal of Religion* 66 (Chicago, 1984), 282–301.
- 3 Cf. Alister E. McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundations of Doctrinal Criticism* (Oxford, 1990) 90.
- 4 Cf. McGrath, *ibid.*, 132 ff.
- 5 Two recent examples can be found in: Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, 1976) and R. C. Sproul, John Gerstner, Arthur Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, 1984). Cf. for a criticism particularly of the last work: Kelly James Clark, *Return to Reason: A Critique of Enlightenment Evidentialism and a Defense of Reason and Belief in God* (Grand Rapids, 1990) 46–53.
- 6 I am not suggesting that all post-Enlightenment apologetics, both liberal and conservative, are equally influenced by this Enlightenment understanding of rationality. Some forms of apologetics are more deeply influenced than others. What I am mainly concerned about is that the philosophical roots and consequences of this account of rationality are generally unacknowledged.
- 7 London, 1988.
- 8 Cf. William C. Placher, 'Postliberal Theology', in: David F. Ford (ed.), *The Modern Theologians: Volume 2* (Oxford, 1989) 115–128.
- 9 London, 1984.
- 10 In the language of Lindbeck the 'intratextual' world of a religion is its complete linguistic structure of concepts and their relationships, derived from its canonical texts, in many ways comparable with the idea of 'discourse' in French postmodernism. The 'extratextual' world would be an objective reality separate from this language.

- 11 Lindbeck, *ibid.*, 113 ff.
- 12 There may be some very basic universal procedures of rational inquiry, like the law of non-contradiction and Euclidean mathematics, common to all humankind, but 'that upon which they agree is insufficient to resolve those disagreements' (MacIntyre, *op. cit.*, 351). Furthermore, there will be something which makes all different 'rationalities' worthy of the name 'rationality', but in this sense 'rationality' seems more the ability to handle the building stones, which tradition and experience provide, than that rationality itself provides us with building stones for truth (cf. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (London, 1989), 52–65).
- 13 Placher, *op. cit.*, 124.
- 14 Lindbeck, *op. cit.*, 63.
- 15 'Incommensurability, Intratextuality, and Fideism', *Modern Theology* 5 (1988/89), 95.
- 16 Cf. McGrath, *op. cit.*, 87.
- 17 Cf. MacIntyre's analysis of the possibility of learning 'a second first language' (*op. cit.*, 374) and Lesslie Newbigin's use of MacIntyre's idea in a missiological context (*op. cit.*, 55f., 65).
- 18 Tilley, *op. cit.*, 107.
- 19 Particularly in French structuralist strands of post-modernism.
- 20 MacIntyre, *op. cit.* 12 ff.
- 21 This is what Tilley seems to assume, for his rejection of the charge that contextuality of rationality implies fideism centres on the combination of contextuality with comparability (*op. cit.*, 90).
- 22 MacIntyre, *op. cit.*, particularly 'Overcoming a Conflict of Traditions' (164 ff.) and 'The Rationality of Traditions' (349 ff.).
- 23 MacIntyre gives most of his attention to a third possibility, of a stalemate between the two traditions, out of which through a very creative effort a new, third, tradition comes into being with a rationality superior to the former two traditions (cf. 83 f.). This third possibility, however, is less relevant to our present subject.
- 24 When evaluating the possibility of a realistic epistemology we should be clear what the actual problem is. Often realism is dismissed because it is thought to imply a rigid correspondence between language and reality. Most medieval theologians understood dogma in a much more dynamic way, as a *perceptio divina veritatis tendens in ipsam*, a 'perception of divine truth, tending towards this truth' (quoted in McGrath (*op. cit.*, 16) as part of a criticism of Lindbeck's dismissal of 'cognitive-propositional' approaches to doctrine).
- 25 Plantinga points to its basic inconsistency Alvin Plantinga, 'Reason and Belief in God', in

- Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds.), *Faith and rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (Notre Dame, 1983), 59 ff.. For Barth's relation to foundationalism see Colin Gunton, 'No Other Foundation: One Englishman's Reading of Church Dogmatics Chapter V', in Nigel Biggar (ed.), *Reckoning with Barth: Essays in Commemoration of the Centenary of Karl Barth's Birth* (Oxford, 1988), 61–79. For the relation of evangelical apologetics to foundationalism see Richard R. Topping, 'The Anti-Foundationalist Challenge to Evangelical Apologetics', *The Evangelical Quarterly* 63 (1991), 45–60.
- 26 E.g. his *Science, Faith and Society*, London 1946.
- 27 Austin M. Farrer, *Faith and Speculation* (London, 1967) particularly Chapter II.
- 28 E.g. his *Theological Science*, Oxford 1969.
- 29 E.g. in his *One World: The Interaction of Science and Theology* (London, 1986) 6–25.
- 30 Lesslie Newbigin, op. cit., 27–65.
- 31 This analogy is not drawn from the writers mentioned, but seems apt to express their ideas. The analogy goes back at least to the Middle Ages, when Franciscan theologians like Bonaventure sought after God both speaking in 'the book of Scripture' and in 'the book of Creation'. Cf. Theo H. Zweerman, O.F.M., 'Prolegomena zur Lektüre von Texten Bonaventuras über das Buch der Schöpfung', in *Franziskanische Studien*, 71 (1989), 29–41.
- 32 This circular process in reading and understanding a book is called the 'hermeneutical circle'. In fact 'hermeneutical spiral' would be a better term, for in this circle 'there is also an ongoing movement and progressive understanding' (Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with special reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer and Wittgenstein* (Exeter, 1980), 104.
- 33 MacIntyre, op. cit., 356.
- 34 For when all rationality is tradition-embodied the idea of a neutral or universal audience to argue with appears to be a myth too.
- 35 Cf. George Santayana's saying about idealism, which is also valid against relativistic forms of postmodernism: 'I should be ashamed to countenance opinions which, when not arguing, I did not believe'—quoted by John Macquarrie, *Twentieth Century Religious Thought* (London, 1988⁴) 237.
- 36 William Werpehowski, *ibid.*, 287.
- 37 Cf. the anti-Hegelian strand in MacIntyre (*ibid.*, 361), which is not, however, necessarily linked with his main thesis (*ibid.*, 81).
- 38 Dulles, op. cit., 19.
- 39 McGrath, op. cit., 52 ff.
- 40 George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1974), 60.
- 41 McGrath, op. cit., 198.
- 42 Werpehowski, op. cit. 42; Lindbeck, op. cit., 111. The problem with 'ad hoc apologetics' as a name seems to me, that it only says something about the starting-point of the apologetic reasoning, over and against the universal starting-point of liberalism. What is in a positive sense the specific character of this form of apologetics, is that very different aspects of life are all interpreted from one perspective. The adequacy and relevance of this Christian perspective validates it *a posteriori*. This could be called 'hermeneutical apologetics'. This is at least a positive term over and against the alternatives 'postliberal' or 'non-foundationalist apologetics' (cf. Richard R. Topping, op. cit.). Negative terms have the strength of appealing to negative feelings towards alternatives, but in the end a position cannot survive on the basis of criticism alone.
- 43 Cf. Werpehowski's (op. cit., 300) appeal to the 'fellowship of creation'. The appeal to specific Christian doctrines, as happens here, is not illegitimate in a study on apologetics, because at this stage the discussion is still an internal Christian enterprise.
- 44 I am drawing here on works like Emil Brunner's *Man in Revolt* (London, 1939), Reinhold Niebuhr's *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (London, 1941/43), and Wolfhart Pannenberg's *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (Edinburgh, 1985), but many of their thoughts express anthropological reflections, which reach back to the source of Christianity.
- 45 MacIntyre, op. cit., 364.
- 46 Cf. the works already mentioned of Brunner, Niebuhr and Pannenberg.
- 47 Many other oppositions could form the basis of the same type of argument, as for example the debate between economic liberalism and Marxism, resulting from the destruction of the original balance between the individual and the community through sin, or in the opposing views of rationalism and empiricism, resulting from the alienation between the subject and the object.
- 48 Cf. Newbigin, op. cit., 65.
- 49 A possible common recognition of the apologist and the non-Christian of the impossibility of full understanding of a tradition without standing in its community may help the non-Christian to step into the Christian tradition without full understanding, but with the promise of fuller knowledge. This recognition is certainly not restricted to the Christian community, as

- MacIntyre's description of Aristotle shows (op. cit., 143).
- 50 Dulles, op. cit., 142.
- 51 Cf. George I. Mavrodes, 'Jerusalem and Athens Revisited', in: Plantinga, Wolterstorff (eds.), op. cit., 201.
- 52 This is not to say that all particularity in traditions necessarily results from sin. It can also derive from the geographical, historical, and social limitations of the starting point of a tradition.
- 53 A phrase of Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (London, 1967), 22–26.
- 54 *Church Dogmatics I,1: The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Edinburgh, 1975²), 341.
- 55 *Church Dogmatics II,2: The Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh, 1957), 522.
- 56 *Church Dogmatics II,1: The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Edinburgh, 1958), 96.