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WORLDVIEW, April 1975, Volume 18, number 4, 39-40.

http://worldview.carnegiecouncil.org/archive/worldview/1975/04/2511.html/_res/id=sa_File1/v18_i004_a010.pdf PDF: 251.65 K

Eighteen theologians and religious thinkers from nine denominations gathered at the Hartford Seminary Foundation, Hartford, Connecticut, January 24-26, to draft a declaration in response to contemporary Christian Thought which they viewed as 'pervasive, false and debilitating.' The meeting, initiated by WORLDVIEW editors Peter L. Berger and Richard John Neuhaus, has already received widespread attention in the secular and religious press. It is suggested by many observers of American religion and culture that the "Hartford Appeal" will be the subject of discussion and debate for a long time to come. In this issue we publish the complete statement. Our May issue will carry a symposium of critical comment on the Appeal by a wide spectrum of Christian thinkers. - Eds.

An Appeal for Theological Affirmation

[The Hartford Statement or the Hartford Appeal]

The renewal of Christian witness and mission requires constant examination of the assumptions shaping the Church's life. Today an apparent loss of a sense of the transcendent is undermining the Church's ability to address with clarity and courage the urgent tasks to which God calls it in the world. This loss is manifest in a number of pervasive themes. Many are superficially attractive, but upon closer examination we find these themes false and debilitating to the Church's life and work. Among such themes are:

My comments (Pluralist, Adrian Worsfold) follow each theme in red.

Theme 1: Modern thought is superior to all past forms of understanding reality, and is therefore normative for Christian faith and life.

In repudiating this theme we are protesting the captivity to the prevailing thought structures not only of the twentieth century but of any historical period. We favour using any helpful means of understanding, ancient or modern, and insist that the Christian proclamation must be related to the idiom of the culture. At the same time, we affirm the need for Christian thought to confront and be confronted by other worldviews, all of which

are necessarily provisional.

I do not know if it is normative for Christian faith and life, but I do think that the sociology of knowledge - that is how we organise thinking in a practical and everyday sense - is crucial including for religion. If religion relies on forms of thinking different from all others, its future is sectarian and distant.

Theme 2: Religious statements are totally independent of reasonable discourse.

The capitulation to the alleged primacy of modern thought takes two forms: one is the subordination of religious statements to the canons of scientific rationality; the other, equating reason with scientific rationality, would remove religious statements from the realm of reasonable discourse altogether. A religion of pure subjectivity and nonrationality results in treating faith statements as being, at best, statements about the believer. We repudiate both forms of capitulation.

Reasonable discourse is available to religion, but I do not see how it becomes different from art of overcomes either postmodern narrative or (if objectivity exists) is any more subjective than is art. One might have a notion of high art against weak art, but there is no obvious basis of fixing this nor of preference.

Theme 3: Religious language refers to human experience and nothing else, God being humanity's noblest creation.

Religion is also a set of symbols and even of human projections. We repudiate the assumption that it is nothing but that. What is here at stake is nothing less than the realiv of God: We did not invent God; God invented us.

I do think we invented God. Intelligence is a later development of the universe, not early.

Theme 4: Jesus can only be understood in terms of contemporary models of humanity.

This theme suggests a reversal of "the imitation of Christ"; that is, the image of Jesus is made to reflect cultural and countercultural notions of human excellence. We do not deny that all aspects of humanity are illumined by Jesus. Indeed, it is necessary to the universality of the Christ that he be perceived in relation to the particularities of the believers' world. We do repudiate the captivity to such metaphors, which are necessarily inadequate, rela-

[39-40]

tive, transitory, and frequently idolatrous. Jesus, together with the

Scriptures and the whole of the Christian tradition, cannot be arbitrarily interpreted without reference to the history of which they are part. The danger is in the attempt to exploit the tradition without taking the tradition seriously.

Christ can mean all sorts of things. I don't know how else Jesus is to be understood. He presumably is the same product of evolution as the rest of us, otherwise he is not human. But he is human, and it should be beyond debate: the rest is mythology.

Theme 5. All religions are equally valid; the choice among them is not a matter of conviction about truth but only of personal preference or lifestyle.

We affirm our common humanity. We affirm the importance of exploring and confronting all manifestations of the religious quest and of learning from the riches of other religions. But we repudiate this theme because it flattens diversities and ignores contradictions. In doing so, it not only obscures the meaning of Christian faith, but also fails to respect the integrity of other faiths. Truth matters; therefore differences among religions are deeply significant.

The problem is that the truth of them can only be perceived from the inside of one perspective or another, or from humanism (religious or otherwise). Religions are not the same, but we learn them either through growing up in them or by choice. And some people acquire their own take on several religions and choose to use some and be within none of them.

Theme 6: To realise one's potential and to be true to oneself is the whole meaning of salvation.

Salvation contains a promise of human fulfillment, but to identify salvation with human fulfillment can trivialise the promise. We affirm that salvation cannot be found apart from God.

Buddhists find salvation without God. A humanist does not seek salvation as such, but human potential is the next best thing. But actually it is very difficult to know what human potential is, because being fully human is not the same as being busy.

Theme 7: Since what is human is good, evil can adequately be understood as failure to realise potential.

This theme invites false understanding of the ambivalence of human existence and underestimates the pervasiveness of sin. Paradoxically, by minimising the enormity of evil, it undermines serious and sustained attacks on particular social or individual evils.

Evil is about intention, and cannot be about sickness. Again, who knows what is human fulfillment?

Theme 8: The sole purpose of worship is to promote individual self-realisation and human community.

Worship promotes individual and communal values, but it is above all a response to the reality of God and arises out of the fundamental need and desire to know, love, and adore God. We worship God because God is to be worshipped.

The word 'is' is misplaced, as you can have either, or, or both. Worship is about worth-ship and need not be about God but simply the highest and best of aspiration.

Theme 9: Institutions and historical traditions are oppressive and inimical to our being truly human; liberation from them is required for authentic existence and authentic religion.

Institutions and traditions are often oppressive. For this reason they must be subjected to relentless criticism. But human community inescapably requires institutions and traditions. Without them life would degenerate into chaos and new forms of bondage. The modern pursuit of liberation from all social and historical restraints is finally dehumanising.

Humans are compelled to produce institutions because we are a collective animal that talks and maintains libraries.

Theme 10: The world must set the agenda for the Church. Social, political, and economic programmes to improve the quality of life are ultimately normative for the Church's mission in the world.

This theme cuts across the political and ideological spectrum. Its form remains the same, no matter whether the content is defined as upholding the values of the American way of life, promoting socialism, or raising human consciousness. The Church must denounce oppressors, help liberate the oppressed, and seek to heal human misery. Sometimes the Church's mission coincides with the world's programmes. But the norms for the Church's activity derive from its own perception of God's will for the world.

All organisations have an internal view of its purposes, but unless they relate to the real world they won't be relevant or useful.

Theme 11: An emphasis on God's transcendence is at least a hindrance to, and perhaps incompatible with, Christian social concern and action.

This supposition leads some to denigrate God's transcendence. Others, holding to a false transcendence, withdraw into religious privatism or individualism and neglect the personal and communal responsibility of Christians for the earthly city. From a biblical perspective, it is precisely because of confidence in God's reign over all aspects of life that Christians

must participate fully in the struggle against oppressive and dehumanising structures and their manifestations in racism, war, and economic exploitation.

It is not necessary to have a view of transcendence to have effective social outreach, but it is necessary to have some sort of driving ethic.

Theme 12: The struggle for a better humanity will bring about the Kingdom of God.

The struggle for a better humanity is essential to Christian faith and can be informed and inspired by the biblical promise of the Kingdom of God. But imperfect human beings cannot create a perfect society. The Kingdom of God surpasses any conceivable utopia. God has his own designs which confront ours, surprising us with judgment and redemption.

The Kingdom of God was believed in supernaturally by Jesus and Paul as a coming reality, with a messiah, but we do not believe in such and, whether now idealism or not, you can only make practical progress along the way.

13: The question of hope beyond death is irrelevant or at best marginal to the Christian understanding of human fulfilment.

This is the final capitulation to modern thought. If death is the last word, then Christianity has nothing to say to the final questions of life. We believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and are "...convinced that there is nothing in death or life, in the realm of spirits or superhuman powers, in the world as it is or in the world as it shall be, in the forces of the universe, in heights or depths - nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38 f.).

The purpose of religion, I suggest, is a change of outlook so that the fear of death - the desire for the necessity of continuance - is overcome. The above is sheer religious dogma.

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The Rev. William Sloane Coffin Jr.
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+ Signers who were involved in the preparation for the Hartford meeting but were not able to participate in the meeting itself.

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'The Hartford Appeal: A Symposium - 01/05/75'
WORLDVIEW, May 1975, Volume 18, number 5, 22-27.
Harvey Cox, John C. Bennett, Gabriel Moran, Gregory Baum
May 1975

http://worldview.carnegiecouncil.org/archive/worldview/1975/05/2524.html/_res/id=sa_File1/v18_i005_a008.pdf PDF: 655.13 K

The Hartford Appeal: A Symposium

In the April issue of *Worldview* we published the complete text of the Hartford "Appeal for Theological Affirmation" with the names of the religious thinkers and theologians who earlier this year drafted the statement on themes in contemporary Christian thought. The statement continues to generate much discussion, both critical and laudatory. The critiques published below will be followed by responses in the June issue by some of the drafters of the Appeal.
- Eds.

No Christological Center

Harvey Cox

Professor, Harvard Divinity School; author, most recently, of *The Seduction of the Spirit*

Shed a tear, fellow backsliders! What promised to be a good old raucous theological Scopes trial has already fiddled into a nonevent. The great Hartford heresy hunt has laboured mightily and brought forth nothing more than a limp list of thirteen "themes" no sane theologian would want to defend, plus an equal number of refutations, which (except for the closing quotation from St. Paul) sound nearly as flaccid as the themes themselves. The latter-day defenders of the Faith have succeeded where Torquemada failed; they have made even polemics dull. In the halcyon days of old the guardians of orthodoxy at least stuck live villains in the stocks and consigned real books to the Index. This group prefers a less gutsy approach; so it has conjured a list of thirteen caricatures, straw men so easily toppled that the genuinely troublesome issues of contemporary theology never appear. Those of us who had hoped for a real fight will now have to return to Billy Joe Hargis for our fun. These Hartford fellows don't seem to have their hearts in it.

The theology of the Appeal itself, instead of a vigorous assertion of orthodox or evangelical Christian truth, turns out to be a bland admixture of conventional theism, ecclesiastical triumphalism, two-kingdoms piety, and neoclericalism. Worst of all - and I believe this is the fatal weakness of the Appeal - it totally lacks any Christological centre. It is hard to believe that in a document, calling for "theological affirmation" the word "Christ" appears only in the quotation from St. Paul and in "imitation of...". "Jesus" is mentioned only at two marginal points. This lack of a Christological dimension takes its toll in the Appeal at several points. In dealing with the problem of "transcendence," for example, the writers desperately try to juggle the "loss of transcendence" with "false transcendence" in order to find some elusive golden mean. They fail, of course. And this is not surprising, for surely what we as Christians should be saying about this issue is simply the core Gospel message: that in Jesus Christ "that which was afar off has come nigh", that the transcendent God has chosen to be Emmanuel, God-in-the-midst-of-us.

Similarly, a clearer Christological focus might have saved the statement

from a bad case of ecclesiastical triumphalism. Take the ambitious list of the Church musts in [Theme 10](#). They cast the Church, not Christ, as judge, liberator, and healer! But if Christ is already hiddenly present, as He assures us He is, among the oppressed and the suffering, then Christians can see that churches are just as often found among the oppressors (whom the Appeal says the Church "must denounce") and that the nasty "world" (viewed with great contempt throughout the Appeal) is also a place

[22-23]

where God chooses to exercise his judgment and mercy, and where even the gifts of the Spirit (completely unmentioned in the Appeal) are sometimes found.

In their sealous denunciation of modern thought the Appeal writers seem blithely unaware of how much of it they fall into themselves. They lapse into the trendy sociological idea of "norms" to describe what should guide the Church. (What's the matter with the "mind of Christ" or the guidance of the Spirit?) They accept uncritically the reified idea of "religion," a category virtually unknown to biblical faith. This whole approach would have deeply puzzled the ancient Hebrews, who had no word for "religion" and whose God worked through slave revolts, military defeats, migrations, and other "secular" events to effect His purposes.

Stemming from its Christological vacuity, the Appeal suffers from a pervasive Church/ World dualism (see especially the answer to [Theme 10](#)). This is itself a modern heresy of grave import, and totally unsupported either from the Creation-Covenant theology of the Old Testament or the eschatological theology of the New Testament. In Christ, Christians know that God not only "reigns over" all aspects of life (as the Appeal suggests) but also suffers in, works through, and meets His people in all parts of life, the "non-religious" as well as the churchly.

Its underlying dualism inevitably produces a subtle clericalist bias in the Appeal. The strident distinction 'between the "Church's mission" and the "world's programmes" (two kingdoms redivivus !)' may look okay to clergy who serenely labour in "Church mission" all week, but what about that 99 per cent of the Church, the laity whose mission is to work in, with, and under worldly forms? Are they to be told again by their clerical betters that what they do must never be confused with the Church's mission, or that at best the two "sometimes coincide"?

A more faithful subjecting of the Church's ministry to the paradigm of Jesus' ministry might also have saved the Appeal from its uncharitable reading of the phrase about the world setting the agenda for the Church. Surely what this phrase means is that the God of history, not Christians themselves, chooses the time, the occasion, and the circumstances within which to preach, teach, and respond to suffering and sin. Jesus' own agenda was often set by the lepers, thieves, cripples, and riffraff who cast

themselves in his path. When "the Church" proudly sets its own agenda, it too often amounts to acquiring real estate, maintaining clerical privileges, and keeping its pension funds soundly invested. Surely God is more interested in the world's needs - its hunger, despair, and directionlessness - than He is in the Church's agenda, and our Christian mission is to participate in the *missio dei*.

I welcome the Appeal and the discussion it may stimulate. But I am sorry it is such a cliched and provincial document. Maybe that's the price one must pay today for achieving consensus among heresy hunters. At least in the past, Syllabi of Errors and condemnations of schism have usually accurately identified the ideas they were condemning. Not so this Appeal, which, unhappy with the actual heresies that flourish in the modern world, has invented its own list. I challenge the drafters of the Appeal to reassemble themselves and, this time with the majority of Christian laymen and women who strive to serve God in the so-called "secular" world, to pen an appeal centered not on a set of vague theological preferences but on the reality of Jesus Christ and the meaning of his present-and-coming Kingdom for all of us who need affirmation so badly today.

This was a bizarre reply from someone who has promoted the secular and later the interfaith, shifting around as the understanding of religion shifted. His was the Barth and Bonhoeffer approach to promote the invisible God and busy lifestyle of no existential questions, to be abandoned for interfaith questions of a religious pattern to the world. How religion fits into the world is important, and theology that is sociologically responsive is useful. That's the basis of the Appeal in thirteen themes.

Silence on Issues of High Priority

John C. Bennett

Former President of Union Theological Seminar), in New York, a member of the Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley

My attitude toward these thirteen themes is mixed. I heartily agree with the repudiation of most of them. I welcome all that is said about transcendence and about the tendency to deny or to be reluctant to affirm the objective reference of religious language. I have long been troubled by the tendency - flowing from a desire to avoid a false Christian triumphalism and to listen with openness to the adherents of other faiths - to assume that all religions are equally valid and indeed to be inhibited about making the distinctive Christian contribution with confidence to the dialogue. I am glad that these things have been said, and I could myself have signed a document that included all but three of the themes.

Much as I welcome most of what the Hartford group has affirmed, their statement as an event, coming at this moment in history, seems to me to call for a retreat from much of the best that the churches have recently been

doing to identify themselves with people around the world who are in greatest need of radical social change. Because of what the two signers who are said to be the originators of the statement have said elsewhere, I may have read into it an animus - more than is justified so far as most of the signers are concerned - against various forms of "liberation theology." My discussion of the three themes to which I believe justice is not done will give my reasons for my position. "Liberation theology," like most, if not all theologies, is a strategic theology, and it doubtless has its own one-sidedness, but as a word addressed to white Christians in the Northern Hemisphere it has not yet done its work. My criticism of the treatment of three of the themes may be chiefly a criticism of what is not said, or of what is said only grudgingly, but it refers to what the signers seem to leave out as urgent priorities for Christians and churches at this time. I shall discuss the responses to themes (in a different order from that of the document) 9, 10, and 7.

Theme 9: Institutions and historical traditions are oppressive and inimical to our being truly human; liberation from them is required for authentic existence and authentic religion. This whole statement is incredibly one-sided. All but a few theoretical anarchists and some inexperienced young people know that institutions are necessary, that there must be traditions and legal structures, and that governments must be able to prevent the bondage that is the result of chaos. To assume that the rejection of all such structures and controls is a suitable target for criticism is to set up a straw man. Why is there so little emphasis on the degree of injustice and oppression from which much of humanity suffers? Why is nothing said about the need at times to struggle to displace existing institutions and structures in order to establish new ones even 'though this may at times have to be done illegally, and even though it may involve revolutionary violence'? I am sure that most of the signers are not absolute pacifists. I realise that such revolutionary violence should be a last resort, that nonviolent methods should be used wherever possible, and that revolutionary movements generate many illusions. The supporters of the violent counterrevolutionary actions of our government on other continents also have many illusions. I believe that one of the most encouraging chapters in recent Church history is that Christians in many countries have put themselves beside the people who greatly need new institutions and structures whether these at the moment are possible or not. Often churches have been the strongest defenders of the human rights of dissenters who are the victims of official violence in such countries as Chile and Brazil, the Philippines and South Korea. As I read the comments on **Theme 9**, I see little more than a reaffirmation of the thirteenth chapter of Romans, understood without the qualifications found in it by many theologians that keep it from being a law against resistance to governing authorities in all situations. It is as though the signers thought that nothing on this subject had been learned since the first century.

Theme 10: The world must set the agenda for the Church. Social, political, and economic programmes to improve the quality of life are ultimately normative for the Church's mission in the world. I agree with the rejection of the slogan "The world must set the agenda for the Church." The world has many agendas, and the Church must choose the ones with which to cooperate on its own terms in the light of its own faith and understanding. Why is nothing said about the grain of truth that this slogan has contained for many people? It is often interaction with the world that has enabled the churches to gain new understanding of the meaning of their own faith. Take an illustration that is probably not controversial. Would the churches have come to accept the principle of religious liberty for all if there had been no pressure from the world with its pluralism and its secular movements for liberty? The pressure of the needs of neglected and oppressed humanity - now seen to be the majority of the human race - has shaken the churches so that they have new perceptions. Christians who had all of the correct convictions expressed in most of this document were able for many centuries to combine them with blind spots and had to be shaken into appropriate action by some of the world's agendas. And the shaking is not finished.

Theme 7: Since what is human is good, evil can adequately be understood as failure to realise potential. The way in which this theme is stated is a great distortion of what is meant by those who emphasise the human. It makes no distinction between the descriptively human and the normatively human. The latter is what is usually intended. Who thinks that everything human in the descriptive sense is good? Certainly not those who stress injustice and oppression. I do not deny that many who support movements for radical change acquire illusions about "the new man" to be produced by the external changes sought. The churches need to prepare people to avoid this kind of utopianism, and I agree with what is said about Theme 12, though even that statement is too undialectical and does not suggest that the Kingdom is served by the establishment of more just and humane forms of society. The emphasis on the human in normative terms in ecumenical discussion in both World Council statements and Papal encyclicals has been very creative. It has often been a substitute for the ecumenically divisive concept of natural law, and it is much richer than that concept. It has also been a point of contact for ethical discussion with people outside the Christian circle. Much of what is intended in the emphasis on the human is suggested by the words of Jesus, which are indeed words of liberation: "The sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath."

I am greatly puzzled that the persons who signed this Affirmation could have allowed so many one-sided criticisms of themes to appear over their names. I cannot understand their silence on issues of high priority, silence which gives the impression that, while they are saying very important things that have been neglected in "advanced theology," they have lost some perceptions of great importance for the mission of the Church.

The themes do have obvious weaknesses but are ways to get to some

main points about contemporary thought and religion.

On Not Asking the Right Questions

Gabriel Mom

Professor at the Graduate Institute of Religious Education, Boston College

If the purpose of an "Appeal to Theological Affirmation" was to provoke discussion and reaction, it seems to have been a success. It received more attention than the typical decisions and resolutions of official conferences. In trying to state an agreement or disagreement with it, one must first distinguish between the format of the document and its specific content.

News reports referred to thirteen "theses", but the document deals in "themes". The former would have been more helpful, but perhaps a consensus on theses is unrealistic. The result, in any case, is that an opposition to themes is necessarily diffuse and not very effective. What exactly has someone actually said that is false and what is a correct statement on the matter? The document aspires to ringing affirmations, but in opposing "pervasive themes" it can only issue in generalities and in language that begs for self-critique.

A thesis method has severe limitations - yet the restriction is also its power. One is forced to look at the words and to hone out precise alternative statements. An admirable example of this style can be found at the beginning of Peter Berger's *Pyramids of Sacrifice*. The key to this method is the recognition that what are taken to be the two opposing answers are both false (or inadequate). In that situation no one can state the right answer, but someone can begin inventing or rediscovering the language in which a right answer (or a more adequate answer) could eventually be formulated. The language of the Appeal does not strike me as inventive of the kinds of distinctions we need to advance intelligent debate.

I am sure that few, if any, of the signers thought of the document as reactionary, yet that is the way it came across in both the liberal and conservative press. The reason for that unintended effect, I suggest, lies in the decision to state and then oppose themes. Opposition to current themes is implicitly a reaction against the tentative, incomplete attempts of people who are trying to grapple with what does exist.

Space does not allow an examination of each theme or even detailed examination of a few of them. I can only raise two points of language. The document follows the standard procedure of Christian theologians in not distinguishing carefully between theological statements and religious statements and thereby making sweeping pronouncements about religion, religious language, and religious institutions. Many people who do not accept the premises of Christian theology make religious statements that may stem from Christian history. Whether their position can be maintained with intellectual integrity is debatable; the Appeal cannot even

ask the question.

Theme 1 - Modern thought is superior to all past forms of understanding reality, and is therefore nor-mative for Christian faith and life - applies to almost no one and nothing because it is formulated in language that makes its argument circular. If a Christian theologian were to say "modern thought is... normative for Christian faith and life," he/ she would be saying something ridiculous. Practically by definition, modern thought is not normative for "Christian faith." But suppose one were to examine the contemporary religious world without excluding the Christian elements, but also without accepting the premises of (Christian) theology. One would neither affirm nor deny that "modern thought is normative for Christian faith," because that is not the question at issue. While the pendulum swings within theology, the religious, questions being asked are outside theology.

Theme 5 is particularly revealing in its formulation: All religions are equally valid; the choice among them is not a maner of conviction about truth but only of personal preference or lifestyle. I think it would be preposterous to say that "all religions are equally valid" (unless it were held that they are equally and absolutely invalid). The question is whether there is some significant "validity" or worth or truth to a variety of religious positions. The statement under Theme 5 says, in passing, yes; but the whole document allows no room for stating another religious position. If (Christian) theology is to decide on what words are used, then the game of religious discussion is being played with a loaded deck.

My other point is closely related to the first. I see no careful distinction between the modern meaning of Church and other possible forms of religious institution. Theme 9 is certainly important: Institutions and historical traditions are oppressive and inimical to our being truly human; liberation from them is required for authentic existence and authentic religion. But the problem is not really addressed. Yes, institutions can be oppressive; no, institutions cannot be rejected because they are sometimes oppressive. But the issue is that many people think that the specific institutional form called Church is oppressive. I happen to think that there could be a radically different institution that might still be called Church. In any case, the present operative meaning of Church has to be distinguished

[25-26]

from other possible and actual forms of religious institution.

The failure to examine the word Church is a special weakness of Theme 10: The world must set the agenda for the Church. Social, political, and economic programmes to improve the quality of life are ultimately normative for the Church's mission in the world. Some people have actually said that "the world must set the agenda for the Church". The statement deserves rejection, not because the opposite is true, but

because the image and language are sloppy and arrogant. Unfortunately, the Appeal does not examine the meanings of Church and of world and whether to "set the agenda" is a helpful metaphor to relate the two terms. Instead, the statement goes on to assert that "the Church must denounce oppressors." I doubt that anyone wishes the Church to praise oppressors, but there are many of us who are suspicious of institutions that denounce. Denunciation is a good way for institutions to avoid facing the fact that they are part of the problem. I see little in this document to encourage hope of a change in the specific institutional form called Church so that its opposition to oppression would be credible.

There are more important substantive issues that I cannot comment upon because of my problem with the method and the language. While I would not defend any one of the thirteen themes as stated, something has to be done about the existence of such themes. Preaching the same churchy language that has been found wanting is not an adequate response. I am afraid that people who have an investment in theology and Church cannot produce the needed critique without a lot of outside help.

I would like to see a document of religious statements that allowed for Christian affirmations but did not assume that terms like mission, normative, proclamation, faith, and so forth were the primary religious categories. Both the majority of the world who are not in the Christian Church and the millions of people associated with the Christian Church in nonofficial ways might generate the language and imagery to reinvigorate religious institutions. I hope that the meeting that produced the Appeal is a beginning step to wider ecumenical discussion and religious affirmation.

Their answers to their own themes were from within Christianity, and that was the limitation.

On the Human Locus of the Divine

Gregory Baum

Department of Religious Studies, St. Michael's College of the University of Toronto

I cannot deny that I was surprised and confused when I first read the Hartford Appeal. It seemed to me that every Christian theologian would reject the theses proscribed in this document. But then, why was the affirmation made? And why was it made at this time? In this year, dedicated by Pope Paul VI to reconciliation, I would have expected Christian theologians in the USA to make an appeal for amnesty. This topic is of special interest to Canadians, since we are acquainted with many draft resisters who have come to live among us. I cannot imagine who the theologians indicated in the Hartford Appeal are. Who holds these views?

According to my experience in Canada and the United States, the conventional, pietistic, and individualistic Christianity we have inherited is firmly entrenched, so much so that the majority of Christians, including a

good number of theologians, seem to be unable to follow the more socially oriented Christian teaching offered today by the ecclesiastical leaders of the major churches. This is certainly true in the Catholic Church. Catholics have a hard time assimilating the new papal teaching, as well as statements of the Roman Synods and some national hierarchies that present a social understanding of the Christian message and insist that divine grace humanises and socialises human life. The new approach leads to some radical critiques of the prevailing individualism. A recent pastoral letter of the Canadian hierarchy, on sharing food resources, analysed the sins of the world that have led to world hunger, and accuses, as the principal factor, the free market system that distributes food, not according to need, but according to the ability to pay. Catholics are not likely to follow these modern trends. Against what novelty is the Appeal directed?

According to Time, the originators of the Appeal were Peter Berger and Richard Neuhaus. This helped. For the positions adopted in the Appeal do correspond to the neo-orthodox religious imagination found in Peter Berger's important writings and in Peter and Richard's recent attack on liberation theology. In his *The Sacred Canopy* Peter specifically repudiates his former neoorthodox presuppositions (of which his critics were more conscious than he); still, in the same book, he presents an understanding of Old and New Testaments, derived from a certain Protestant tradition, that presupposes a radical separation between God and the world. The Catholic doctrine of divine immanence was seen by him as a "retrogressive" step

[26-27]

in respect to the radical transcendence taught in the sources of revelation. Peter's criticism of modern theology in his *The Rumour of Angels* is based on the same view of divine transcendence unaccompanied by divine immanence, even though the beautiful constructive part of the book offers, in keeping with modern theology, a way of discovering this transcendence in the midst of life itself. This neo-orthodox trend goes well with the recent attacks on Latin American liberation theology, a theology based on the discernment of God's active presence in history.

This vehement disapproval of liberation theology even prompted Peter Berger, in a recent article, to reject, as invalid procedure, "conscientisation," or consciousness raising, an important element of liberation theology. Yet in his *Invitation to Sociology* Peter acknowledged the raising of consciousness as an important function of sociological imagination. "Sociological perspective," he wrote there, "can then be understood in terms of such phrases as 'seeing through', 'looking behind', very much as the phrases would be employed in common speech - 'seeing through his game', 'looking behind the scenes' - in other words, 'being up to all the tricks'." This is the sociological lesson I have learned from Peter.

Theologically the Hartford Appeal is, to my mind, quite unsatisfactory. The

curious, untraditional separation of transcendence and immanence makes the Appeal suspicious of the humanistic interpretation of the Gospel. In the Catholic tradition there has always been a strong sense that the destiny of humankind is one and divine (*finis ultimus unicus*), that therefore the direction of history is toward reconciliation, and that the hidden forces operative in people's quest for truth and justice are effects of God's redemptive presence to them. Catholics never had any difficulty in singing *Ubi caritas et mor, ibi Deus est*. The medieval tradition spoke of *gratia sanans et elevans*: Divine grace heals people and elevates them to a higher level of reconciliation and integration. The Council of Trent rejected an extrinsicist understanding of divine grace and insisted that grace "truly transforms" human life. The Appeal is unwilling to recognise the human as a locus of the divine, as if this would endanger divine transcendence.

The Appeal presupposes the radical separation of God and the world. There is no acknowledgment that present in the world are the divine summons and the divine spirit, whom it is our task to discern. The Appeal does not recognise the possibility that present in life itself and in history is God's redemptive action, which we must seek out with the help of the Gospel and with which we must identify ourselves. I personally feel more comfortable with the trend of modern Catholic and Protestant theology, in line with the tradition expressed in Karl Rahner's startling phrase "anthropocentricity equals theocentricity". This is good news. The search for greater humanisation of life is the locus of God's self-communication, and, conversely, the quest for the divine is our humanisation.

The Hartford Appeal was signed by some theologians who usually acknowledge incarnation and immanence. Why did they sign it? What important and legitimate concern does this Appeal express? I wish to reply to this question with the help of categories drawn from the sociology of religion.

In his book *Christ and Culture* Richard Niebuhr created useful "ideal types" to analyse the relation of Christian teaching to the sociocultural environment. Let me mention three of these ideal types. **Type 1** is called "**Christ of Culture**." It refers to an acculturated Christianity that has identified itself with the dominant cultural trends of its age and thus lost sight of any sense of divine transcendence. **Type 2**, called "**Christ in Paradox with Culture**", refers to an interior, individualistic Christianity which presupposes that Christians live in two distinct worlds, the personal world where God is present to them in faith and love, and the public world where they must do God's will but which remains ambiguous and thus can never be the place where God is found. For Niebuhr this was the implication of, Luther's teaching of "the two kingdoms". To this type belong neoorthodoxy as well as conservative religion in North America.

Type 3, called "**Christ, Transformer of Culture**," sees the Gospel as a call to personal and social transformation and recognises God's presence operative in the humanisation of the world. Niebuhr gave Frederick

Maurice as a typical example. Over the last decades the major Christian churches of the West have expressed their theological self-understanding in accordance with [Type 3](#). This is very pronounced in the official Catholic documents since Vatican II. And it is true of most Catholic and Protestant theology today.

What are the dangers to which [Type 3](#) is subject? It could easily collapse into [Type 1](#), weaken its sense of divine transcendence and thus lose its cutting edge that summons people to significant social change. How can we protect this sense of transcendence in [Type 3](#)? The Hartford Appeal seems to do this by calling Christians back to [Type 2](#), [Christ in Paradox with Culture](#). I regret this. I regard the development that moved the Christian churches to seek fidelity to [Christ, the Transformer of Culture](#), as the work of the Holy Spirit. It is indeed necessary to protect the sense of divine transcendence so that [Type 3](#) does not deteriorate into [Type 1](#), and here I agree with the signers of the Hartford Appeal. But to do this we need a language different from theirs, a language that confirms and clarifies our commitment to the Gospel as a source of critique, liberation, and new life.

[27]

All that about Christ and culture is probably right, that [Type 3](#) is preferred in much of redemptive Christianity (though others apply partially), but again it is the presupposition of 'Christ'. What of a Christianity (if possible) purely from the academic narratives outside theology including sciences and social sciences?

Carnegie Council: Voice for Ethics in International Policy

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The Hartford Appeal: A Symposium--Part II

John B. Cobb, Jr., Wolfhart Pannenberg, Robert Jewett, David Tracey, Peter L. Berger, Richard J. Mouw, George W. Forell, George H. Tavard, Richard John Neuhaus

WORLDVIEW, June 1975, Volume 18, number 6, 36-48.

PDF: 1.17 M

http://worldview.carnegiecouncil.org/archive/worldview/1975/06/2542.html/_res/id=sa_File1/v18_i006_a010.pdf

The Hartford Appeal: A Symposium - Part II

At the end of January eighteen theologians gathered in Hartford, Connecticut, and issued an 'Appeal for Theological Affirmation'. The Appeal received widespread attention in both the secular and religious press, and the full text was published in the April issue of WORLDVIEW. The May issue included

critiques of the Appeal by several prominent theologians (Harvey Cox, Gregory Baum, Gabriel Moran, John C. Bennett). In this issue we offer more criticisms, plus responses by five who participated in formulating the Hartford Appeal. The entire symposium will soon be available in pamphlet form from WORLDVIEW. - Eds.

For Another Transcendence

John B. Cobb, Jr.

Professor of Theology, Claremont College, California.

For any sizable group of theologians to agree on any statement is a sign of hope that we may be moving beyond the extreme fragmentation of the recent past. Further, the tone and intent of this agreement is clearly Christian and affirmative. Hence my initial reaction to "An Appeal for Theological Affirmation" was positive. Unfortunately, this initial reaction has been superseded by a more negative judgment, and my comments will reflect this phase of my reaction.

The chief weakness of "An Appeal for Theological Affirmation" is that it consists in a series of negations. The assumption is that if only positions that are opposed can be swept aside, powerful new affirmations will rise to take their place; but surely this is a dubious reading of our current situation. The weakness of the affirmations that are rejected is that they are too negative. Now to negate these negations is not to return to the healthier affirmations of some earlier period, but to plunge us further into our uncertainty and inability to speak. If the architects of this appeal have something positive to say, let them say it. In a time when so few speak both persuasively and affirmatively, many of us would listen with hope. But if the best they can do is to negate the weak affirmations of others, one wonders what is accomplished.

Consider the first theme: *Modern thought is superior to all past forms of understanding reality, and is therefore normative for Christian faith and life.* Certainly most Christians will agree that modern thought is not to be eulogised. It is as conditioned, relative, and limited as the thought of other periods. If it has an advantage it is that it is more conscious of its own limits. But what affirmation can we gather from this negation? Is there some other way of thinking as Christians that does not accept the modern way of understanding reality? Does Christianity have its own form of understanding reality that can be opposed to modern thought? If so, what is it? If it is available today, must it not be some form of modern thought even if not the dominant one? The affirmation that a distinctively Christian vision of reality can be defended and lived in our time would be moving if persuasively explained.

The attack on the second theme - *Religious statements are totally independent of reasonable discourse* - is no more helpful. In denying the obviously untenable view that religious statements could be totally independent of reasonable discourse, nothing of interest is being

asserted. The explanatory paragraph seems to be chiefly engaged in arguing, rightly, that rationality should not be identified with scientific rationality. Apparently it is still necessary to reject the Ayer of Language, Truth, and Logic. But having rejected that, all the serious options of our time remain.

Fortunately, in some of the subsequent explanations affirmations do appear. In the rejection of Theme 3 - [Religious language refers to human experience and nothing else, God being humanity's noblest creation](#) - we are told that "We did not invent God; God invented us." It is too bad that the opposition is caricatured; for there is a real issue dividing the

[36-37]

theological community on which the Appeal intends to take a stand. That issue is whether what the word "God" names has its own actuality and agency independently of human acknowledgment, or whether "God" is an idea or a symbol invested with efficacy only through its human use or its function in human imagination. My sympathies are with the Appeal, but our real opponents do not suppose that people "invent" our ideas or symbols. And we on our side must avoid the simplistic realism that supposes an immediate correspondence between language and objective reality.

There is no space to comment on the other items individually. In the form in which the themes are stated I share in the rejection of all. But the Appeal seems to mistake these themes for serious options. As formulated, most are not, although there are serious positions suggested by some of them. When I try to formulate these I find that in some cases I may indeed be on the side of the intended enemy, although I cannot be sure.

Consider [Theme 5: All religions are equally valid; the choice among them is not a matter of conviction about truth but only of personal preference or lifestyle](#). If it is directed against those who do not believe that truth about objective reality matters or that the great religions are bound up with beliefs about this reality, then I wholeheartedly share in the intent. But I fear that in attacking these it tends to support the continuation of Christian theology in isolation from the inward encounter with other traditions, whereas I believe that the future of Christian theology lies in the deepest possible assimilation of the spirit and findings of the history of religions. Precisely in faithfulness to Christ we Christians need to transcend our western and Christian parochialism.

This picky response to a document of this sort is probably unfair and inappropriate. Clearly the Appeal does not intend to be a serious theological statement in itself. It formulates what it rejects in extreme and yet vague ways in order to point to dangers in recent trends. It addresses the Church rather than professional theologians. It sets a direction and mood rather than a programme. Hence in closing I shall try to respond to the direction and mood rather than to additional specific formulations.

The direction and mood are that of recovering something that has been lost. This is identified as a sense of the transcendent, but is given specificity as a sense of the reality and objectivity of God, of God's action in the world, of evil, of the Church, and of salvation beyond death. I share the view of the importance of what we believe about the way reality actually is in its transcendence of our experience of it. I cannot live or think without this transcendence. Since there is a trend in modern theology and church life toward evading the issues raised by such transcendence through subjectivistic and idealistic procedures, in this respect I align myself with the Appeal.

But the note of "recovery" in the preamble is supported throughout by a suggestion of returning to some earlier stage of Christian history and proclamation. In this respect the Appeal is all too much a reflection of the contemporary mood. If it is addressed to theologically unsophisticated church people, its stress on transcendence could all too easily encourage trends to return to naive supernaturalism. More generally, it can suggest to conservative readers that the time of radical questioning is past.

Perhaps at the height of influence of radical theology a statement of aid and comfort to traditionalists would have been appropriate. But today, when the radical voices have left the Church or are muted within it, when the forces of reaction are on the rise, when transcendence is too easily associated with escapism, when anti-intellectualism is rampant, our need is for a bold call to go forward in the name of Christ rather than to return to something we once had and have lost. The transcendence that is most important for us is the transcendence of the future over the past, the transcendence of God-given possibility over actuality, the transcendence of God's call over our beliefs about it and our response to it, and the transcendence of grace over judgment. If we hold fast to Christ's transcendence in these ways we can responsibly avoid allowing the world to set the agenda for the Church.

Like languages, religions ought to benefit from critical engagement, showing differences and similarities. There is no future in pure, isolated, defensiveness, except a sectarian one that cannot communicate outwardly.

Unfortunately the following two articles are fragmented and not complete in the available .PDF scan. So it is not really possible to comment.

Breaking Ground for Renewed Faith
Wolfhart Pannenberg
Professor of Theology, University of Munich

In modern times Christian thought has veered toward two temptations. The first is to compromise with the intellectual fashions of the day in the hope of gaining at least temporary relief from the growing tensions between secular thought and the Christian tradition. The second, which

arises especially when the potential dangers of compromise are realised, is the temptation to throw the Christian fundamentals into the face, so to speak, of modern thought.

Both courses represent a surrender. Neither comes to terms with the requirements implicit in the fact that the affirmations of the Christian faith make a claim to truth. Spineless compromise with the conventional wisdom of modern thought deprives Christian faith of the particularity by which it can contribute to a contemporary understanding of reality. The sectarian seclusion of Christian claims from any intrusion of modern

[37-40] [38 & 39 pages are missing]

invigorating sense of movement. Whether such a sense can be gained for the culture as a whole without the challenge and coherence of transcendent righteousness is, for this biblical thinker at least, doubtful. But the perception of such a compelling vision, not just for individuals, but for the commonwealth of Planet Earth, is the task the Hartford Appeal now seems to lay before us.

To Be a Theologian

David Tracy

Associate Professor of Theology, University of Chicago Divinity School

An Appeal for Theological Affirmation has already proved to be an important statement in the contemporary context. Its historical and sociological significance seems assured. But whether the Appeal is theologically all that significant is still an open question. That the individual theological contributions of many of its distinguished signers will merit a secure place in the history of American theology seems sure. But to ask whether this statement itself is theologically accurate is to formulate a question that, for my part, must be answered negatively.

My basic difficulty with the document is that the understanding it conveys of the role of the theologian and thereby of the character of theological reflection seems a mistaken one. More exactly, I hold to the view that it remains the role of the churches, however constituted in terms of specific church orders, to proclaim theological affirmations and negations (ordinarily called "beliefs"). It is the role of the theologian qua theological affirmations and negations (ordinarily called "beliefs"). It is the role of the theologian qua conclusions, but as conclusions that do or do not follow from adequate theological argument.

Strictly as theologians, should we not in principle be opposed to announcements about any conclusions forbidden to theologians? The theologian's task is a concern with the evidence (presumably from the tradition and from contemporary experience), the mode of argumentation and warrants that any other theologian puts forward to back his or her specific conclusions. On that basis (surely not all that strange) the present "appeal" is theologically inadequate. Conclusions (themes and theses) it

surely has; argument and evidence, as far as I can see, it well-nigh completely lacks.

For example, from my own theological position (and, indeed, that of most theologians I read) a legitimate affirmation of "transcendence" (the central theme of the Appeal) can be both defined and defended theologically. But if any theologian wishes to argue for the "loss of a sense of the transcendent" (whatever that means exactly), then, in principle and in fact, every other theologian should pay attention not to the conclusion as such but to the evidence and arguments advanced to back that conclusion. Surely we would all agree that the theologian in question may not be simply presenting a strange and unwelcome conclusion, but providing theological evidence to challenge the conclusions formerly held. It seems to follow that any attempt at theological closure of any theological issue should be opposed by theologians strictly in their role as theologians.

To rephrase what remains for me the central difficulty here: Every theological disagreement on specific conclusions should, from the very nature of the discipline: as a reflective, second-order, properly critical one (like philosophy or literary criticism or political science), never disallow a conclusion prior to the theological discussion itself. Would any philosopher or sociologist simply announce that the following conclusions or themes are "false and debilitating" and thereby should not be advanced in the future by philosophers or sociologists? Would not he/ she immediately and legitimately be challenged by the rest of that particular community of inquiry as engaging in, at best, extracurricular activities? The theologian, like the philosopher of religion or the sociologist of religion, seems, if this is at all correct, to bear no intrinsic responsibility or right to claim to speak for the Church.

As a member of the Church, of course, he/ she has a sense of responsibility to, and within, that particular community of moral and religious commitment, just as the philosopher or sociologist is also, but not by profession, a citizen of the polis. But unless the roles of theologian and church member are kept clearly and systematically distinct, theologians may trap themselves into a mistaken selfimage with unfortunate if unforeseen consequences. For example, the present "appeal" seems to have encouraged - despite the authors' clear intentions and explicit statements to the contrary (cf. Theme 2) - certain factions in the Church itself that, as members of the community, they probably oppose. Is it merely the cunning of reason that has already led to the present curious situation wherein, as far as I can see, those in the churches probably most comforted by the Appeal are the already too comfortable members of the right?

My basic theological difficulty with the statement is, I hope, by now clear: Its prevalent concept of the role of the theologian and of theology seems, to me at least, mistaken. That difficulty, I fear, is increased rather than lessened by an examination of most of the specific "themes" chosen for

renunciation. The problem here seems to be that either the theme seems to mean very little substantively or it means too much. In the latter case it becomes "false"; in the prior case close to "debilitating."

[40-41]

Consider, for example, [Theme 13: The question of hope beyond death is irrelevant or at best marginal to the Christian understanding of human fulfillment](#). What, exactly, does it mean? Does it mean only that any serious Christian theologian will address the "question of hope beyond death," since that "question" (note) has been traditionally considered "relevant" to the Christian understanding of human fulfillment? If that is all the theme really means, it simply states a tautology. Any Christian theologian, by the very nature of his/ her task as critically studying the Christian tradition, should address this question, since it is clearly present in the central texts and traditions of Christianity. Yet the paragraph clarifying the theme seems to say much more than that. It states: "[This](#) [what exactly?] is the final capitulation to modern thought. If death is the last word, then Christianity has nothing to say to the final questions of life...." Now this is strong language, harnessed, curiously enough, to vague concepts. The theme speaks of "the question of hope beyond death": a "question" and a "hope". The clarifying paragraph seems to formulate an "answer that expresses something far more specific than a 'hope. '

If the latter is the correct reading, does it then follow that those process theologians, for example, who make strictly theological arguments against the traditional answer to this "question" are now to be informed that their arguments will not be heard because their conclusion is false and debilitating? A strange and, for me, nontheological response to theological arguments, especially in those cases when, as in this example, the theologians take care to formulate the "question" with the utmost seriousness and attempt to provide not only evidence of a strictly "modern" sort, but also evidence that appeals to a radically Christian theocentrism and to a specifically Christian ethical position. That seems enough to make one fear that this theme among others, is either sufficiently unclear in its meaning to prove intellectually "debilitating" or so clear in its specificity that the theme disallows not only any other theological conclusion but any further theological discussion.

To end on a more positive note, however; the Appeal, however unappealing it may be as a theological affirmation, has stirred up authentic theological discussion better than any document of recent years. For that remarkable achievement its sponsors and signers deserve every theologian's sincere and indeed unmitigated thanks.

The point is that theology should be able to engage, and that there are many theologies: there is a confusion with orthodoxy as one theology but the existence of as many theologies as can be generated by logical thought. Orthodoxy cannot be an excuse for absence of engagement with

the world. David Tracy went on to consider the motivating classics of human literature and the breadth of postmodern writing, all of which are of theological impact in the wider sense.

Barth and Debunking

Peter L. Berger, Professor of Sociology, Rutgers University;
Worldview Associate Editor

In commenting on the Hartford Appeal Gregory Baum made some very thoughtful observations on some of my own work. I shall limit myself here to replying to these observations, though, by implication, my reply touches on several points made by other commentators. I would also like to say that I am very grateful to Baum: Few things are as gratifying to an author as having a critic who understands him.

Baum very ably puts his finger on two persisting tensions in my work - the tension between transcendence and humanism on the one hand, and the tension between a radically debunking perspective on society and a distrust of revolutionary ideologies on the other. These tensions, I believe, are not just personal idiosyncracies of mine, but rather are inherent in the phenomena at issue. The same tensions are to be found in the Hartford Appeal. It is all the more important to understand that there is a big difference between tensions and contradictions.

Baum speaks of my "neo-orthodox religious imagination", and he suggests that I continue to be afflicted with this malady despite my repudiation of the neo-orthodox positions of my younger years. I think he is mistaken. It is hardly evidence of "neo-orthodoxy" if one insists on the transcendence of God. Rather, it is insisting on the very core of religious experience in general and of the biblical version of this experience in particular. There are, of course, quite different ways in which Christian thinkers have understood the relation between the transcendent God and the immanent sphere of human life, and I share with Baum the conviction that the understanding of the Barthian movement in Protestant theology is finally not acceptable. But the radical immanentism of much recent theology is equally unacceptable. God is the Totally Other; God has entered this world, suffers, and manifests Himself in it. Both these statements are central to Christian faith; a onesided emphasis on either is distortive. In recent years, it seems to me, it is the latter distortion that has gained ascendancy among Christian thinkers.

I believe that there are, indeed, "signals of transcendence" in the human world. It is this fact that makes for the wonder and the mystery of this world. The error at issue is the confusion of the signals with Him who is signaling, the reduction of the divine to the movements of human history or the human psyche. There is a curious side effect here: When this kind of reduction is undertaken, not only does the biblical God disappear but so does the wonder of the world. I think this accounts for the odd triviality, the "flatness," of so much immanentist theology.

Different things need to be said at different times and in different places. I can imagine that Baum, when he thinks about these issues, has in mind miscellaneous milieux of intact, inert orthodoxy, and I can appreciate his unwillingness to give any kind of comfort to those who continue to have their intellectual habitat in such milieux. But this, of course, is not my "reference group"; neither is it that of the Hartford Appeal. If Baum and I were jointly addressing a gathering of reactionary Curia officials - or, for that matter, of their Protestant spiritual cousins - we would, I think, say very similar things to them. Were I explaining the Hartford Appeal to them, they would not like it one bit. But this is not the situation out of which the Appeal came. Rather, it is the situation in which, with monotonous regularity, every fashion of the secular intelligentsia is quickly legitimated as a central Christian concern. To this, I firmly believe, one must say No! - even at the risk of sounding like a Barthian. And that, quite simply, is what the Hartford Appeal says, and why I was very happy to sign it, even though there are monumental theological differences between me and some of the other signers.

Then there is the other tension, that between a debunking vision of society and what Baum calls my "vehement disapproval" of various revolutionary doctrines. (Incidentally, the article cited by Baum does not deal with liberation theology, but since the concept of "conscientisation," with which it does deal, is quite central for that school, Baum is right in surmising that I am less than entranced by it.) The tension, in the end, is between an uncompromising intellectual posture and a political posture that, inevitably, must seek compromises. Once more, though, it must be stressed that this tension is not tantamount to a logical contradiction. On the contrary, my major intellectual objection to most of our current crop of liberationists is that they are not debunking enough. Their critical faculties are sharply exercised against whatever status quo they dislike; by the same token, they almost invariably become uncritically credulous when they deal with situations or movements with which they sympathise. That, Gregory, is definitely not "the sociological lesson" you have learned from me! I am enthusiastically in favour of "seeing through" the cant and the fictions of Western capitalism, but my enthusiasm does not come to a reverent halt at the gates of the various socialist utopias with which the contemporary world is blessed.

However, there is also a moral objection, and it is the more serious one. It is shameful when the same people who quiver with outrage at the atrocities of one political side are consistently silent about the atrocities of the other side. It is precisely this I "vehemently disapprove" of in the currently fashionable liberation-talk. I refuse to accord moral respect to people who condemn terror in Chile but accept it in Cuba, or who denounce South Korea or the Philippines while having nothing but praise for China. Such a posture is contemptible in anyone. When it is taken in the name of Christianity, it is blasphemous.

Now, I am not assuming that everyone who signed the Appeal shares my own "vehemence" on this point. Indeed, there were probably as many political differences as there were theological ones among the signers. But the Appeal does one thing very clearly: It takes a stand against the facile Christian legitimization of ideological and political causes. Baum should pause before he objects to that too strongly. Today, admittedly, this stance seems to cut principally against the "left". It might be a very different story tomorrow, especially in North America.

Let me sum up: As I understand it, the Hartford Appeal does not come out of an "unwillingness to recognise the human as a locus of the divine". It does manifest an unwillingness to identify the divine with its various human loci. In this, I believe, it is right, intellectually responsible, and very much needed today.

There is a clash of loyalties here. As a sociologist, Peter Berger can only speak of signals of transcendence (from below) but then as a theologian (or Church believer) goes on to assert the one who makes transcendence possible. This won't do. Great art, love, the simplicity of an equation leading to a fractal, simplicity in physics, the human body, evolution, are all examples of signals of transcendence and may only be that. How does one understand a chaotic system for example as a system - when it cannot be imposed from above and yet is systemic? Scientists deal with this: an open non-dogmatic theology should be able to examine all the options. But Berger is wedded to theological dogma as well as sociological enquiry, and this weakens theology. Also, the fact that liberation theology is explainable strongly in terms of political and educational theory and praxis does not stop it from being a theology. Tough, if it lacks orthodoxy.

Of Sanity and Judgment

Richard J. Mouw

Professor of Philosophy, Calvin College, Michigan

My comments focus primarily on Harvey Cox's criticisms of the Hartford document, since his comments touch on the major areas in which the document has been criticised. One area has to do with aesthetic concerns in relation to the style and tone of the affirmation. Cox is especially blunt on these matters, using such words as "flaccid", "dull", "bland", "clichid", and "provincial". There is little to say in response to such charges. Professor John Wisdom once suggested that all philosophical theses are either true and trivial or false and illuminating; perhaps some similar principle operates in theology. If so, Cox's descriptions need not be considered insulting:

A second area has to do with the motivations of the Hartford group in issuing the document. Cox's "heresy hunt" charge seems to fall into this category, as does Professor Moran's suggestion that the document is "reactionary". Here again there is little to say in response to Cox. If "false and debilitating themes" are not "heresies", they surely run a close second. As for Moran's charge, it would be a difficult one to establish from

a consideration of either the credentials of the signers or the content of the Appeal. One person's revolution may indeed be another's reaction, but as a signer of both this document and the 1973 Declaration of Evangelical Social Concerns, I see no

4243

inconsistency in calling for a radical activism and at the same time insisting that such activism be based on careful, even "orthodox," theological reflection. I was not alone in that conviction at Hartford.

Two further areas deserve more extensive consideration. One has to do with the "straw man" type charge. These were themes, says Cox, that "no sane theologian would want to defend." The Hartford group, one might observe, did not intend to limit its criticisms to the views of sane theologians. The question is: Were we correct in observing these themes have not only been expressed within the current religious scene, but that their influence is "pervasive"?

The Hartford document is surely a fallible one, and it is possible, if not likely, that some of the themes have never been stated in the precise formulations offered. Nonetheless, we were in unanimous agreement as a group that the themes generally expressed actually held positions. I find it difficult to believe that eighteen people, apparently conversant with contemporary religious thought, were misled in this sense, that none of the thirteen names accurately reflects a position that has wide acceptance. It is possible, of course, that this points to a critical communication problem in the contemporary Christian community. But much of the response to the Appeal indicates that the Hartford group is not alone in viewing these themes as pervasive.

Let us put the question in its most poignant form: Has Harvey Cox himself been a populariser of some of the themes condemned at Hartford? It is not difficult to find comments in his writings that indicate he has been. Compare, for example, [Theme 5 - All religious \[sic\] are equally valid; the choice among them is not a matter of conviction about truth but only of personal preference or lifestyle](#) - with his testimony in *The Seduction of the Spirit*:

We celebrate a Seder at Passover. We often attend Catholic Masses.... A straw Mexican Indian crucifix blesses our living room, and a Jewish mazuzah... stands watch at our doorway. A serene Buddha gazes from just over the inside windowsill of our front room. Nearby stands Ganesha, the elephant god.

Or consider this observation in his *[The] Secular City*:

Secularisation rolls on, and if we are to understand and communicate with our present age we (must learn to love it in its unremitting secularity. We must learn, as Bonhoeffer said, to speak of God in a secular fashion and

finds a non-religious interpretation of Biblical concepts. It will do no good to cling to our religious and metaphysical versions of Christianity in the hope that one day religion and metaphysics will once again regain their centrality. They will become even more peripheral and that means we can now let go and immerse ourselves in the new world of the secular city.

To be sure, Cox often qualifies statements of this sort - for instance, he tells us in *Feast of Fools* that an "alert theology" is necessary to guard against "the snares of uncritical presentism and futurism". But there can be no doubt that many of his readers have seized upon his calls to throw off the "outmoded" forms of past theology without attending to his qualifying remarks. And even when one so attends, it is often difficult to see what the "safeguards" amount to. If (to follow the argument of *On Not Leaving it to the Snake*) a "two-story dualism" has finally been "abolished", so that we must no longer view Jesus "as a visitor to earth from some supraterrrestrial heaven", what is to be our guide in discerning the divine will for the world? For many of us Jesus is an incarnate expression of the will of the eternal God who is distinct from the world he has created. If it is no longer possible to say of this God (again, *On Not Leaving it to the Snake*) that he "is" or "was", but only that he "will be", if "the 'death-of-God' syndrome... opens the future in a new and radical way", then it is difficult to see why [Themes 10-12](#) of the Hartford document would not constitute a close approximation to Cox's position.

Similar suspicions about parallels between the Hartford themes and Cox's theology are stimulated by his comments about the Appeal itself. It lacks, he insists, "a Christological dimension". Instead of "juggling" notions of "transcendence", we should have affirmed the simple "core Gospel message: that in Jesus Christ 'that which was afar off has come nigh', that the transcendent God has chosen to be Emmanuel, God-in-the-midst-of-us. " There are, of course, different ways of stating "the core of the Gospel", for example, Jesus's own formulation in John 17:3: 'And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent'. This way of putting it expresses what seems to be the issue between the perspective of the Hartford group and Cox's view of what it means for God to have "chosen to be Emmanuel, God-in-the-midst-of-us". Cox seems to think that the nature of that "choice" has been illuminated by "the 'God-is-dead' syndrome". If so, then his religious epistemology is perilously close to that of [Themes 3 and 4](#).

The final area of criticisms, those having to do with the positive theological statements put forth by the Hartford group, involves similar issues. The theology of the Appeal, Cox claims, is "a bland admixture or conventional theism, ecclesiastical triumphalism, two-kingdoms piety, and neoclericalism". I am not quite certain what "conventional theism" is, but I suspect that it is something to which I hold. (I agree with Archbishop Temple's "God-minus-the-universe-equals-God" formula.) However that may be, I think that many of us want to dissent from those current objections to traditional theism that assume there are

certain necessary links between traditional conceptions of God and specific social and political patterns. (See Frederick Hersog's charges, in *Christian Century*, that the Hartford group's conception of "transcendence" is "the transcendence of the rich and the powerful".) The necessity of these links has not been demonstrated. Take Cox's disparaging remarks about a "twostory dualism" and Jesus as a "supraterrestrial visitor." Can't one hold that God is ontologically distinct from the world and still believe that God loves the world? In order to love my wife, do I have to become her? Could not the "visit" of Jesus have been a profoundly liberating one, whereby he initiated, and continues to guide from "the right hand of the Father", a program of healing and reconciliation on behalf of the poor and oppressed? Was the writer of the Book of Revelation's salutation wrong in thinking that a God who "is and was and is to come" could offer "grace, mercy, and peace" that is adequate to the building up of full humanity?

As for clericalism, "Church/ World dualism," and the like, such views are not incompatible with serving a Christ who works and suffers in all areas of human life. As Jonah learned from the sailors who awakened him in the ship, the "world" often has legitimate messages to preach to the Church. Hartford is not pleading for a Church which "proudly sets its own agenda"; it asks the Church to recognise that it has been entrusted with an agenda from God, an agenda that cannot be decisively ascertained by sociological or political surveys, or by introspection. The Church must actively seek to serve a world it views in the light of categories revealed by God. God has chosen to work in and through a people who consciously confess his Lordship. A recognition of this fact should not stimulate pride but humility and a willingness to suffer with those who are oppressed. To hold that there is a distinct people whose identity consists in a conscious acceptance of that calling as the will of God may be a kind of "Church/ World dualism." If it is, so be it.

Cox asks: "What about that 99 per cent of the Church, the laity whose mission is to work in, with, and under worldly forms? Are they to be told again by their clerical betters that what they do must never be confused with the Church's mission, or that at best the two 'sometimes coincide'?" For that part of the Church I labour in, I would say that people do have to be told something of this sort. For businessmen who often identify financial success with Kingdom triumphs, self-styled "personal evangelists" who peddle "four spiritual laws" as the whole gospel, members of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes for whom clean tackles are the work of Christ, the "Hartford theology" speaks a necessary, prophetic word of judgment. No doubt the Hartford Appeal also has a word of judgment applicable to the part of the Church and of the world where Harvey Cox labours.

I rather agree about Harvey Cox in that Cox is a cake and eat it man but from a different perspective.

Attacking on Two Fronts

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Except for the diatribe by the panreligious secular citizen Harvey Cox, the critiques of the Hartford Appeal published in the May issue of *WORLDVIEW* seemed to me constructive and tended to move the discussion ahead. Unfortunately, Cox's response appeared simply to be a wild exaggeration. To recall Torquemada, the Index, and the Scopes trial because some people have taken a dim view of the theological mishmash hawked by the mod-theologians and so dramatically exemplified by Cox's *The Seduction of the Spirit* seems a little extreme. Even a mod-theologian should not expect constant adulation. But the other writers seemed to raise some important issues.

Moran's distinction of theological statements and religious statements is a return to the separation of Christianity from religiousa distinction once popular in Barthian circles but always a form of special pleading. Whatever else Christianity may be, it is also a religion and raises religious questions in a certain way. The Hartford Appeal welcomes an open and honest confrontation of the differences among religions. It did not want to avoid the issue by taking refuge in an alleged ontological difference between religion and theology. Moran's appeal for greater clarification is a response that in my judgment will be welcomed by the Hartford signers as the proper next step in a meaningful dialogue.

John Bennett's concern that the statement gives aid and comfort to the enemy I take as a warning by a man who has fought the enemy for a long time. Professor Bennett has been my teacher in the past, and I still consider him to be so. I did not see any retreat from Christian responsibility in the statement when I signed it, nor do I see it now. We called for relentless criticism of oppressive institutions, and it would be my judgment that a certain kind of enthusiastic anti-institutionalism is in fact counterrevolutionary and subverts the Christian obligation "to participate fully in the struggle against oppressive and dehumanising structures and their manifestations in racism, war, and economic exploitation" ([Theme 11](#)). I simply do not see the onesidedness Dr. Bennett perceives. But his criticism demands further clarification

Father Baum argues against the Christ and Culture perspective of the Hartford document. By compressing H. R. Niebuhr's options into three and forgetting "[Christ against Culture](#)" and "[Christ above Culture](#)", he makes it too easy for himself. While he sees the problem of Christ and Culture in paradox, namely, that it might deteriorate into Christ against Culture, he does

[44-45]

not face the problem of Christ as the transformer of Culture, which may

easily become what Niebuhr called [Christ above Culture](#), or even the Christ and Culture perspective the Hartford signers tried to oppose - namely, the [Christ of Culture](#), whether this is The Man Nobody Knows or "Comrade Jesus".

It seems strange that only Professor Pannenberg saw the Hartford Appeal as I saw it when I signed it, as directed against two fronts simultaneously, and therefore attacked quite rightly by Carl Henry (Christianity Today) and by Harvey Cox. Pannenberg observed that the Hartford Appeal is trying to build Christian social concern and action on a firmer foundation than naive optimism about human nature and enthusiastic utopianism. It is the transvaluation of all values brought about by the resurrection ([Theme 13](#)) that gives Christians hope and thus the alien power, a power not of their own, to stand against all the dehumanising forces that threaten the abolition of humanity. Revolutions may be necessary and unavoidable, but they will only rearrange human misery. Utopia is precisely what the word says - no place. Neither rhetoric nor revolution will produce it. We will be better servants of the women and men who are in need everywhere if we live in faith and obedience to the Christ who is the ultimate hope of the world.

But perhaps the most important result of the Hartford Appeal has been its reception by the non-theological world. Both believers and unbelievers have found that it clarifies and offers the possibility of discussing the Christian faith without having to choose between Christian fundamentalists and Christian secularists. A distinguished philosophy professor of my acquaintance suggested that he found the statement a contribution to a better understanding of Christianity and a step away from the religious miasma that threatens to suffocate us. A student writing in the Daily Iowan against what he called "the opiate of transcendental meditation" and a former meditator himself, observed: "In the Hartford statement, several theologians have taken the belief in God as a central reason for social action." It is also this kind of response by non-theologians that makes the continuing discussion so worthwhile.

[Well, it was defensive and by non-fundamentalists, but it still did not engage and positively from the themes that could engage.](#)

Locating the Divine

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An appeal for theological affirmation is precisely what the words indicate: It calls away from the negative trends of much recent religious and theological thought. (The distinction between religion and theology does not seem useful here, though the themes in question are found in both.) Such negations have been: the extreme negation of the death-of-God theology, the reactionary negation of the main insights of Vatican II by Catholic traditionalists, the unbalanced negation of institutional religion in

favor of the rights of conscience, the practical negation of Christian social commitments in the name of some vague Jesuistic or Pentecostal charism, the implicit negation of worship in the urge to celebrate life and nature.

That an appeal for affirmation has been couched in the negative language of thematic denunciations was a whimsical touch that has escaped most of its critics. But the theological community has never been known for its sense of humour. That a negative appeal for affirmation was a dialectical document requiring a dialectical approach could have been more obvious. It was not unexpected that, while the Appeal formulates a "no" to each theme, it is also possible in each case to formulate a "yes". The point should not be that the proper position is either "yes" or "no", but that "no" necessarily includes an affirmation and that "yes", if it is maintained as the dominant pole of the dialectic, must also be qualified with a "no". Thus classical theology worked out the process of knowing God through a *via affirmativa* qualified by a *via negativa* and leading to a *via eminentiae*.

My analysis of the text is confirmed by Gregory Baum. Gregory Baum begins with a resounding endorsement of the Appeal: "It seemed to me that every Christian theologian would reject the theses proscribed in this document." Then, after the somewhat hazardous exercise of tracing the origin of the Appeal to the "neo-orthodox religious imagination" (whatever this may be), he proceeds to explicate the "yes" contained within the "no". This was exactly the Hartford method. The difference appears, however, in that Gregory Baum's "yes" is not sufficiently dialectical and tends to eat away the substance of the "no".

The Hartford Appeal brings attention to three areas of concern where a loss of the sense of divine transcendence has been felt in recent Christian thought: faith and culture ([Themes 1-4](#)); faith and the individual ([Themes 5-9](#)); faith and eschatology ([Themes 10-13](#)). It does this, not by condemning theses, but by deploring themes. Theses are clear-cut positions that are believed, taught, professed. Themes are assumptions that are harboured, lived with, lived by. Since the problem of transcendence and immanence pervades the thirteen themes of the Appeal, I will, like Gregory Baum, focus my remarks upon it.

It is a truism that transcendence should be read together with its dialectical correlate, immanence. The problem raised by the Appeal is: How can one affirm immanence without denying transcendence? And, correlatively: How can one affirm transcendence without denying immanence? It is the former question that

[45-46]

dominates the Hartford Statement, because it seems at the moment - rightly, I think - that, of the two poles of the Christian kerygma about the Logos made flesh, it is the transcendence of the Logos rather than the flesh as the locus of his immanence that is in danger of being misunderstood in the current breakdown of metaphysical thinking, or

forgotten under the crowding pressures of secular concerns, or passed over lightly for fear of giving offence to anonymous Christians. Other times may need appeals for the affirmation of immanence and the flesh. But to each day its toil and to each time its problems.

It is not really a fruitful exercise to name names. But self-examination is a useful exercise. "Who holds these views?" I do, whenever I let my professorial sense of the comfortable overshadow my sense of the risk of faith in the world in which I live. I find comfort in my belief in "incarnation and immanence". Yet I do know the emptiness of such a belief and the delusion of this comfort if they do not stand in permanent confrontation with my being judged by the God who is incarnate, by the Absolute which is immanent in creation and grace.

"Who holds these views?" At least Gregory Baum shows that I am not alone in finding myself, in my worst moments, condemned by the Appeal I have signed. His response is very useful in that it points up the subtlety of the loss of transcendence in current thinking. Gregory Baum escalates immanentism in a significantly topical way. He blames the Appeal as being "unwilling to recognise the human as a locus of the divine" (*italics mine*). Then he states his conviction that, "The search for greater humanisation is the locus of God's self-communication." These two positions are not identical. The Appeal is not unwilling to recognise the human as a locus of the divine. There is even nothing particularly Christian about the human being as a locus of the divine. Any theodicy that takes "immensity" for one of the attributes of the Divinity affirms the human as a locus of the divine. But the specifically Christian thing is to trust that the man Jesus Christ, the Logos made flesh, is the locus of the divine in a sense that is true only of him. The Christian thing is to trust that the "body of Christ which is the Church" is associated by divine graciousness, without any merits or achievements on the part of its members, to the unique reconciling presence of God in Jesus the Christ. The debilitating temptation is to identify the human in general, or humankind, or the "come of age" men and women of today, or the current struggles for liberation, or "the search for greater humanisation" as the locus of the divine and of God's self-communication. God communicated himself to humankind in Jesus the Christ in a place and at a moment where no one - except perchance an eccentric Greek poet or philosopher - was searching for greater humanisation. The locus of God's self-communication was not and is not humanisation. It was, and is, the subhumanisation of the man Jesus in the tortures of the Crucifixion.

Indeed, Christ transforms culture. Indeed, the Catholic tradition holds that grace transforms nature. But such assertions make sense only if culture is not Christ and if nature is not grace. Culture, as well as nature, is a locus of the divine and of God's self-manifestation. But the false position is to declare these to be the locus. And the ultimate fallacy would be to confuse this locus with that which is manifested in it.

Whatever cultural loci there may be for God's self-communication, the

uniqueness of the locus that Jesus Christ stands in judgment over all achievements of man-made humanisation. In Jesus Christ alone the locus of manifestation and the God who manifests himself in this locus are identical. In him - and not in any evolutionary or revolutionary stage of humanisation, and not even in the highest experiences of divine grace or in the most devoted reception of the charisms of the Spirit - the immanence of God in the flesh is identical with the transcendence of God over the flesh. The Hartford Appeal is a protest against the loss of the sense of the transcendence of God because it is a protest for the Incarnation.

It does not really help to try to place the Appeal in relation to H. Richard Niebuhr's theoretical typification of the relationships between Christ and culture. For in the historical reality and complexity of Christian thought and praxis types are meshed together. Niebuhr's [type 3 \(Christ transforms culture\)](#) could not exist without [type 2 \(Christ in paradox with culture\)](#). For Christ transforms culture while he stands in judgment over it. That "anthropocentricity is theocentricity" is neither the Good News (the Gospel), nor even good news in the trivial sense of the term. It is bad theology, for it amounts to opting for a *via affirmativa* without the corrective of the *via negativa*, and thus it makes it impossible to discover the *via eminentiae*. It is also bad apologetics. Christians gain nothing from stealing Zarathustra's thunderbolts.

Yes, you have to negate in order to affirm on better grounds, and the Appealers did not. This is right too, surely, about H. R. Niebuhr's theologised sociology of ideal types.

Following Through

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WORLDVIEW

The response to the Hartford Appeal has far exceeded the expectations of those who initiated it and of those who participated in drafting the final document. Whatever its faults, it shows every sign of becoming a point of reference that can enliven

[46-47]

the kind of debate both its critics and admirers say they hoped for.

The two most frequent misunderstandings of the Appeal are: (1) that it is aimed mainly, if not exclusively, against the left; and (2) that it is supposed to be some new kind of ecumenical statement of faith. To the second misunderstanding it should be enough to note that the Hartford group had no intention of saying all we believe about God, nature, the Church, the Christ, and human history. We did intend to say some things we thought needed saying about the current state of theology and religion in America.

The first misunderstanding, that it is aimed too much at the left, does indeed present difficulties. The group anticipated this misinterpretation and tried hard to avoid it. When it is said that the repudiated themes are "pervasive", that is exactly what we meant. As a careful reading of the Appeal should reveal, and as some of the discussion in this symposium makes explicit, the debilitating assumptions are as evident in the preachments of Billy James Hargis as in the "liberation theology" of, for example, Juan Luis Segundo.

Yet it is true that these themes, or reasonable approximations of them, are probably stated more frequently by those who are viewed, and who view themselves, as liberal or progressivist. While the common sin - left, right, and centre, wherever the last may be - is putting Christianity in the service of goals that do not emerge from, and may indeed be hostile to, authentic Christian witness (whether the goal is political revolution or the attainment of peace of mind), the right is more inclined to disguise such goals in traditionalist language. Thus conservatives deceive others, and frequently deceive themselves. The very transcendence they so passionately affirm is itself taken captive in support of their own worldviews and is robbed of its power to bring their assumptions, or the world, under judgment. The left is more forthright in stating the critique of things as they are, but equally prone to packaging religious symbolism (transcendent or other) in support of their programs, albeit radically alternative programs. To bless the Great American Way of Life in the name of God is, theologically speaking, little different from blessing whatever revolution "in the name of Jesus the Liberator". Both would domesticate, and thus deny, the transcendence that would keep both the present and our projects for the future under judgment. The ills reflected in the themes repudiated are, well, pervasive.

In tactical terms, the misunderstanding may be inevitable. Most of the Hartford group are correctly viewed as being on the progressivist side of things, both theological and political. Their community of discourse is primarily to the left. In addition, they assume, perhaps wrongly, that professed reactionaries or conservatives are not likely to be moulding the new shape of American religion, at least not at the intellectual level where the metaphors are minted and marketed by which people understand themselves. It would have been pointless, for example, if such a group repudiated "a religion of pure subjectivity" by launching an assault on biblicistic or traditionalistic fideism. "Theologians say Fundamentalism is False and Debilitating." Such an announcement might have been cheered by "enlightened" friends, but would make little contribution to our thinking together in the Christian community. Equally important, it would not have claimed the attention of the professed conservatives, who, for the most part, have written off whatever might be said by the kind of people gathered at Hartford.

Any fundamentalist - Protestant or Roman Catholic - who takes comfort from the Appeal profoundly misunderstands the Appeal. The hope of the

Hartford group is that those on the right who initially hailed the repudiation of these themes might be engaged in a reflective process that would lead them to see how pervasive these themes are in their own circles. That hope has in part been vindicated by the discussion to date. Implicit in all this is the belief of the Hartford group that terms such as liberal, conservative, right, left are increasingly sterile and misleading. That might have been the subject of another theme, as might many other false and debilitating notions current in American religious thought. We stopped at thirteen because we had to stop somewhere, and it seemed clear to us at least that most of the other topics proposed were implicitly addressed by these thirteen.

Some - John Bennett, for example - wonder why the signers were "silent" on many other ideas and social injustices in need of protest. I do not think we were prepared for the frequency of this criticism. Most of us assumed that Hartford would be interpreted in the light of our other writings and public statements. Nobody had a conversion experience or "switched sides" at Hartford, at least not to my knowledge. It is perhaps a sign of how debilitatingly frivolous contemporary theological discourse has become that so many critics thought it possible (and apparently not morally objectionable) that these thinkers would act in such radical discontinuity with their own work. In short, I think we may have made a mistake in hoping the Appeal would be interpreted in light of our track record, so to speak, both theological and political.

It should not be necessary, but it apparently is, to say again that the Appeal is just that, an appeal. It is distressing that so many took their cue from a newsweekly's headline rather than from the document itself, which results in their reciting all the most conventional pieties against "heresy hunting". The document does appeal for further discussion of "the outside lines" of what can be called Christian theology, or what can be called theology at all. Here one must disagree with David Tracy. Such lines can be drawn, just as one could draw similar outside lines for what can meaningfully be called political science or literary criticism (Tracy's analogies). Many of the

[47-48]

themes deal with the question: Since God has become man, is not theology identical with anthropology? There is a sense in which that can be answered positively, but only in a revolutionary way that transforms anthropology into theology. Short of that revolution, it is best to keep the terms discrete, since, at present, the alternative results in anthropologising theology rather than theologising anthropology.

Richard Mouw has responded adequately to the various criticisms that fall into the category of "style". There is some amusement in watching all and sundry hasten to dissociate themselves from the repudiated themes. Everyone seems to agree that these were indeed fads at some time or another, but it now appears nobody espoused them. After the initial and

perhaps inevitable silliness about who is welcoming whom aboard whose bandwagon, one hopes the conversation will move toward more elevating and useful topics. Happily, there is every sign that is happening.

I agree most heartily with Bob Jewett's focus on the absence of "transcendent righteousness" in American religion. The revitalisation of the pilgrim and covenantal character of the American experiment is the core of my most recent book, *Time Toward Home*. The argument in that book is certainly not what everyone at Hartford had in mind about the connection between transcendence and social change, but it at least explains my intention in subscribing to the Appeal.

Finally, Pannenberg's "two front" thesis is precisely on target. The Hartford Appeal is a challenge to those who, in order to make the Christian message respectable, sell out the very distinctiveness for which they would presumably gain a hearing; and it is a challenge to those who, fearing the vulnerability of Christianity to modern thought, retreat into a self-authenticating religion that has no serious claim on the attention of reasonable human beings.

This symposium is but one part of an ongoing discussion. It will not end or come to absolutely definitive conclusions short of the Kingdom of God. No doubt five or ten or thirty years from now another appeal will be issued by another group, accenting the dimensions of Christian existence that will have been neglected by another time. For the immediate future, the Hartford group will be meeting again in the fall of 1975. It is hoped that a book of essays will be produced that will elaborate and clarify the original Appeal. The Hartford group is conscious of its responsibility to follow through. We believe we are dealing, in a very limited and modest way, with an enterprise that belongs to the whole of the Christian community and in which the final follow-through is contingent upon the promise-keeping of the Absolute Future who is God.

Five years after 1975 came the philosophical theology of Don Cupitt and on the lines of D. Z. Phillips. The non-realist position (that can flipside into conserved postmodernism) always comes from the stance of the dominant narratives in the world and as a language game religion becomes more like art. Modern theological people are intelligent and we know what they believe and don't believe and yet get very defensive when it comes to the orthodoxy that defies so much external supportive reason. No wonder some have used postmodernism to adopt a non-objective Christian Platonism. It's as if there is no argument left.

[Edited from three image and text scans regarding the *WORLDVIEW* journal, as in the online .PDF sources, and put into British English spelling and grammar, by Adrian Worsfold]