

# QUESTIONS FOR B.L.

I.

Once it is decided (1) that theology mediates between a religion and a culture and (2) that religion and culture are historical and therefore changing, the conclusion seems to be that theology — and indeed all the sciences — is concerned with "the best available hypothesis" and as such is subject to ongoing revision.

(a) Is this statement an accurate reflection of the position of Method?

(b) If so, is it a further conclusion that the existence of God is "the best available explanation" of certain religious phenomena, such as the dynamic state of being in love in an unrestricted way?

Is the assumption of God's existence, accordingly, open to revision, like the existence of "aether" as an explanation of certain physical phenomena?

II.

In Chapter 2 of Method it is suggested that "a religion that promotes self-transcendence... will have a redemptive role in human society." (p. 55) It is, to put it crudely, "a good thing."

Now there have been various philosophical critiques of religion grounded in the judgment that it is false or that it is bad. But Nietzsche, for example, criticizes religion because it is good;

that is, because it is comforting or fulfilling. What answer does the theologian who is attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible give to such a critique? Does it represent an epistemological counterposition? A metaphysical counterposition (Nietzsche has hard words for metaphysics — "God is dead")? A moral counterposition? Or some combination thereof?

From:

Jonathan Parsons

To: Fr. Bernard Lonergan

1. Theology mediates between a religion and a culture

(a) Culture is historical and therefore changes

Theology is historical and therefore changes

Religion is historical and therefore changes

a "Historical" what in fact happened

"Historical" ongoing individual or social development/decline

"Historical" what can be known by way of scientific history

b What is historical changes

If it is in process of development/decline: this does happen

(Toynbee the rise and fall of 21 civilizations)

But there are cultures that remain unchanged for ages

(greater development blocked by circ's; decline by extinction)

c A change in culture involves a change in the expression of  
a religion

Culture is the expression of the ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~  
of the political, social, artistic, intellectual, moral,  
religious ideals of a people

Ie., religious expression is part of and solidary with  
cultural expression.

d A change in the expression of a religion involves a change  
in the religion

This is the whole question of the development of doctrine.  
We have to be content with an instance, The Way to Nicea, the  
introductory hundred pages to the doctrinal~~x~~ side of my text  
on the Trinity.

What is unchanging: Christian tradition held a middle  
way between the polytheism of the pagans and the solitary  
monotheism of the Hebrews.~~x~~

What precisely was that middle way? Three centuries of  
fumbling until about 362 after the death of Constantius and  
the decrees of the Synod of Alexandria (362).

(b) The existence of God is a convincing explanation ~~if~~ to  
those that (1) are in the dynamic state of being in love in  
an unrestricted fashion, (2) are fully aware of the fact,  
(3) and are convinced that it is not an illusion or delusion,  
eg Feuerbach's contention that God is a projection of human  
ideal excellences~~x~~, an alienation of what is good in man to  
an unknown "other."

The existence of God admits philosophic or philosophic theological proof, but differently in different intellectual climates

In the pre-scientific era, the argument for G's existence was from 'causality'

But modern science has popularized and through the ~~xxxxx~~ media imposed a exclusively scientific notion of causality: the cause is the antecedent set of events of a regularly consequent set (eg previous situation in the universe x causes next situation in the universe)a

Philosophical proof then takes the form: the existence of God is the condition of the possibility of the universe being (1) intelligible, (2) moral, (3) ultimately a field of personal relations.

2 Notions of progress and decline in human affairs are worked out in chapter VII of Insight

The notion of moral impotence is set forth in chapter XVIII

The possibility of getting beyond moral impotence is the selftranscendence of faith hope and charity of chapter XX.

Nietzsche held that religion is bad.

He held that the Übermensch is the ideal goal of humanity.

He does not seem opposed to self-transcendence (a) because of his devotion to the ideal of the Übermensch and (b) because of his critique of Christianity as the religion of slaves, accepting as did Christ suffering and humiliation, which was not his idea of transcendence

Some have suggested that Nietzsche's idea of human self-transcendence was not unconnected with the fact that the last decade of his life was spent in a mental home.

Nietzsche's views on the human good are not recommended by the fact that he spent the last decade of his life in a mental home.

The interpretation of Nietzsche is a large and complex question

Did his sister meddle with his unpublished writings?

He changed twice in his estimate of Socrates (Dannhauser)

One insists (makes the leap from being to being one's true self) through being attentive without reasonable response & in love