THREE LEVELS OF MEANING IN GOD-LANGUAGE*

ARTHUR F. HOLMES

Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois 60187

My assignment is to discuss the philosophical side of the problem of theological language. I am not distinguishing theological from religious language, but use the term to refer simply to our language about God. It is to be an introductory overview rather than a piece of creative work or a detailed examination of one issue and I have tried to keep in mind that, as theologians, you are interested, not in philosophical technicalities, but in what the philosophy of language may contribute to theological understanding.

The overall problem concerns the *meaning* of theological language, that is to say, human language being what it is, how can we speak meaningfully of a unique and a transcendent deity? What a philosopher says about it depends in large measure on his philosophy of language, and more especially on what he means by *meaning.*

At the risk of oversimplification, I want to point out that language has three aspects or levels of meaning, all three of which are involved in religious and theological discourse, and that the problem of religious language assumes critical proportions when one or more of these levels is ignored, or else reduced to some other level.

I shall call the three levels of meaning extensional, intensional and personal. The first by itself makes theology as a conceptual undertaking impossible. The second by itself makes theology a conceptual undertaking without relation to objective fact. The first two without the third could produce a dead language about irrelevant religion. And the third without the first or second amounts to either a purely existential or a purely humanistic religion.

I. EXTENSIONAL MEANING

The first level of meaning is extensional or if you prefer, "referential." The word "extension" is of course drawn from logic and suggests that words refer to particular objects or experiences. Thus in the classic premise "all men are mortal" the subject term extends universally to all members of the class of men, while the predicate term "mortal" extends only to that particular subclass of mortals who are also men. This much is a matter of elementary logic.

An extensional level of meaning is evident in the following statements:

(1) "Jesus Christ was crucified under Pontius Pilate,"

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where the reference is to historical events, and

(2) "The third day he rose from the dead,"

and

(3) He shall come to judge the living and the dead."

In each of these cases we can identify events, past or future, to which reference is made.

Difficulties arise, however, with the empiricist who confines extensional meaning to empirical reference, that is, to actual or possible *experiences.* For while the cases I have already given can be taken to refer to empirically observable phenomena, the following cannot:

(4) "He was crucified for our sins,"

which introduces an interpretive concept, the redemptive purpose of Christ's death. Again,

(5) "God raised him from the dead"

introduces a casual explanation by referring to an immaterial and unobservable power. Finally,

(6) "God raised him for our justification"

commits both previous logical crimes, adding both purposive interpretation and reference to immaterial being.

Thus for a strict empiricist, these last three statements (4-6) are not fully meaningful. They can refer to nothing beyond the supposedly historical event itself.

This, in effect, was the conclusion proclaimed by logical positivists like A. J. Ayer on the basis of their empiricist criterion of meaning.[1] It makes less difference to religious than to other language whether that criterion is formulated in terms of empirical verifiability or of falsifiability. For falsifiability was introduced to accommodate empirical generalizations which are not verifiable by any finite set of observation statements, but are thereby falsifiable. Theological statements of the sort I have illustrated are not generalizations at all but causal and purposive interpretations of supposedly unique events.

The positivist criterion of meaning has had a brief but turbulent history. It has been formulated and reformulated in an endeavor to state it consistently and neither too broadly nor too narrowly, but in the process its effect has been weakened.[2] Some empiricists have broadened the range of experience to which empirical statements directly or indirectly may refer. Consequently we find shades of Schleiermacher locating the empirical reference of theological statements in religious experience; we find others

1. See A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (1935), Dover Publications, (1946), ch. VI, and "Theology and Falsification" in A. Flew and A. Macintyre, *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (SCM Press, 1955).
2. Some of the most important articles in this process are reproduced by Ernest Nagel and Richard B. Brandt in part 1 of *Meaning and Knowledge* (Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965).

(like Braithwaite) rehabilitating Kant's referral of theological language to moral experience.[3] But even granted this broader empiricism, theological language would still be about human experience rather than about a God who is the subject of that experience, a transcendent God who both is and is what he is independently of whether we have any experience of him or not, and whose purposes and creative powers are beyond human observation of any possible sort. Theological language, after all, is talk about God, not just about our religious and moral experience.

The problem (as Kierkegaard pointed out in regards to the incarnate Word) stems from the transcendence of God on the one hand and what we may call the "wordliness" of language on the other. We have observed the worldliness of empiricist language. Add to it the fact that God transcends the world of experience in which language is rooted. His transcendence is both numerical and qualitative. There is a numerical distinction between God and this created world of experience, a distinction which delineates Judeo-Christian theism from both pantheistic monism and Gnostic dualism. There is also a qualitative distinction, for God is non-spatial. Yet many of the terms we must use in speaking of him have spatial significance. He is an eternal being, yet our language develops in reference to historical things. He is a necessary being, yet language is geared to contingent particulars. Worldly language evidently must transcend its natural habitat if it is to speak of God.

To say that God is *infinite*, for example, does not mean that he has unlimited spatial extension, as Spinoza mistakenly assumed in arguing that since God and the universe are both infinite and two infinities cannot coexist, therefore God is numerically one with the universe. To say that God is *infinite in power* says nothing about either wattage or military hardware, although these connotations may evoke thought about what we do mean. And if *beauty* refers to certain aesthetic qualities of sense experience, then it cannot be ascribed to a God who neither has, nor is an object of, sense experience. How can the worldly language of empirical meanings speak of a transcendent God?

To Paul Van Buren the obvious conclusion is that God-talk is a dead language and in this sense, in a day of scientific empiricism, God is dead.[4]

There have, of course, been non-empiricist extensional theories of meaning. The classic case is Plato, who in the *Cratylus* attempted to give logical extension not only to universal terms (that was easy with his theory of real forms) but also to other parts of speech. His misadventures with Greek particles seem to me to show only that language has some other level of meaning than the extensional, a level that is related more to syntax and to the logical structure of thought than to things we name. More

3. These and other varieties are discussed in such books on the subject as F. Ferre, *Language, Logic and God* (Harper, 1961) and William Hordern, *Speaking of God* (Macmillan, 1964). Of special interest to evangelicals are Kenneth Hamilton, *Words and the Word* (Eerdmans, 1971) and Jerry Gill, *The Possibility of Religious Knowledge* (Eerdmans, 1971).
4. See *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* (Macmillan, 1963).

recently, Bertrand Russell tried to give extensional meaning to statements about fictitious and non-existent things like the present king of France, centaurs and golden mountains, only to find that he had to look rather at the logical intension of language than at its extensional meaning.[5]

II. Intensional Meaning

1. We must distinguish two radically different theories of intensional meaning, the empiricist and the metaphysical. First, the empiricist since David Hume has delineated two kinds of statements, the analytic and the synthetic. Synthetic statements have extensional meaning; they are statements of empirical fact. An analytic statement, on the other hand, is variously defined as a *logical truth* whose logical contradictory is self-contradictory (such as "A=A"), or as a proposition whose predicate is *analytically contained* in the subject term (such as "all men are mortal"), or as a *semantical rule* for a given language (such as the definition "a bachelor is an unmarried male").

If statements about a transcendent God have no empirical reference to qualify them as synthetic, could they qualify as analytic? Consider the statement "God necessarily exists." "Necessary existence" is not an impirical predicate. "Contingent existence" might stand a better chance of qualifying, if one can translate "contingency" into a set of observation statements; but part of what God's transcendence supposedly means is that he is not a contingent but a necessary being. The empiricist might argue that if contingency is an empirical predicate so is its contradictory, namely necessary being. But the contradictory of contingent being is not necessary being but "non-(contingent-being)" which is a form of non-being, not of being. So necessary being (which is a form of being not of non-being) is not on that basis an empirical predicate, and the statement "God necessarily exists" is not synthetic.

Is it then analytic, or is it neither and so without cognitive meaning? On the surface, it appears not to be analytic, for it is not apparently a logical contradiction to say that God does not exist. Yet, that indicates only that his existence is not logically necessary, that it is not a *logical* truth. What of *ontological* necessity? Is it the case that if we speak of God at all we speak of one who cannot not-be, that is, of a necessary rather than a contingent being? I think so. Granted the theistic conception of God as self-sufficient and transcendent creator, granted even the concept of God as uncreated being, then the concept of necessary being is analytically contained in the concept of God.[6]

The same could be said of other attributes essential to the concept of God and to his transcendence. That God is infinite in power is also analytically contained within a theistic conceptual scheme, although it is not

5. "On Denoting," *Mind*, LIX (1950).
6. A somewhat different but related approach to this topic by Alvin Plantinga appears in his essay, "Necessary Being," in *Faith and Philosophy* (ed. A. Plantinga, Eerdmans, 1964).

analytically contained in Manichean dualism. In a Manichean context, it looks more like a synthetic statement that is falsified by our experience of evil. But in a theistic context, experience of evil does not falsify the omnipotence of God, for analytic statements are not empirically verified or falsified.

This may seem to be a trivial finding, but it is a very important trivium. One important consequence is that the analytic-synthetic dichotomy seems to break down. A given statement taken by itself is not *either* analytic *or* synthetic. In fact, words being loaded as they are and contexts being the "loads" they are, no single statement can be fully "taken by itself." Contemporary epistemology has accordingly produced another alternative, namely that the analytic-synthetic distinction is at best a matter of degree, not of kind, so that both extensional and intensional meaning can be present in a single statement in different contexts, or even in the same context in virtue of different emphases or levels of meaning.[7]

Another consequence is that we can now say meaningfully that "God necessarily exists," that "God is infinitely powerful," and so forth, because of the logical place these statements hold within a larger conceptual scheme packed into the Judao-Christian use of the term "God." Such statements are part of an ideal system, a world of thought rather than a world of experience. To that extent, at least, to the extent that thought transcends experience, language transcends its worldly roots.

This line of argument underlies Ian Ramsey's attention to "logical mapwork" and "conceptual models," and his observation that the term "God" serves as an integrator word in religious language.[8]

There is an obvious problem which has not escaped attention, which also beset the old idealist theory of intensional meaning. Just as empirical extension never gets us beyond experience to God, so analytic or logical intension does not get us beyond our linguistic and conceptual schemes. Two observations are needed. First, theology *is* (among other things) a conceptual scheme; it is our *thought* about God; its terms find meaning within the scheme of thought of which they are part; and, as such a scheme, theology is essential to both the interpretation and the communication of God's word. So, we should not belittle the analytic approach. Second, Ramsey attempts to get outside the conceptual scheme by locating the empirical reference of key theological terms in "disclosure situations." What he describes under that rubric is a sort of existential religious experience with revelational value. The evangelical theologian, with a different view of revelation, will prefer to make the empirical contact elsewhere, not in subjective experiences but in Biblical history with its account of the redemptive and revelatory acts of God.

7. See the articles by Lewis, Quine, and Grice and Strawson in part 3 of Nagel and Brandt, *op. cit.*
8. See *Religious Language* (SCM, 1957), and "On the Possibility and Purpose of a Metaphysical Theology" in *Prospect for Metaphysics* (ed. Ian Ramsey, Philosophical Library, 1961).

When we say, to hark back to our previous examples,

(4) "He was crucified for our sins,"

we combine empirical reference to a historical event with a purposive interpretation that is part of the larger Biblical concept of Divine grace. When we say,

(5) "God raised him from the dead,"

we combine historical reference with a causal interpretation that is part of a larger conceptual scheme. And when we say,

(6) "God raised him for our justification,"

we combine historical reference with both a causal and a purposive interpretation drawn from the theological scheme.

Notice where this leaves us. By combining empirical extension with logical intension, we succeed in giving meaning to theological language which the positivist denied. But are we yet talking about a transcendent God, or just about historical experience plus a conceptual language? The conceptual scheme is, of course, rooted in Biblical teaching, and the historical experience is of events recorded in Scripture. By adding a postulate that Biblical history and teaching are revelational, we can claim to speak about the purported self-revelation of a transcendent God and thereby about God himself. This perhaps is all the theologian desires, but it still does not answer the question as to how Biblical language, let alone abstract theological language, can reveal what is transcendent. For this we must turn to the metaphysical use of intensional meaning.

2. A traditional non-empiricist treatment of intensional meaning is the medieval view that we use words either univocally or negatively or by way of analogy. Thus, "goodness" is predicated of two apples in one and the same sense, univocally, but of apples and dogs and men analogically. We cannot speak univocally of God, using words of him in the same sense as we do of others, because he is *sui generis*, that is to say, qualitatively transcendent. The neo-Platonic mystics therefore turned to the way of negation, saying what God is not, but the scholastics developed the way of analogy. We ascribe goodness to God and men on the basis of the analogy that actually exists between them.

Logical analogy therefore presupposes ontological analogy. As beings, apples and men and God all share certain qualities which transcend their differences of species. By virtue of this metaphysical analogy, language can transcend its worldly roots and we can speak of the trancendent God using words we learn first to use in speaking of his creatures. When we say "God is infinite in goodness" the *extension* of the predicate term is the actual quality of God thereby named. The *intension* of the term is however system-dependent, for the concept of goodness is drawn from its analogies in creation, and the adjective "infinite" (or as some Scholastics prefer "perfect") is understood in terms of God's place in relation to the order of being. It turns out to be one way of speaking of his qualitive transcendence.

Other metaphysicians attempt to speak meaningfully of God on the

basis of their own conceptions of metaphysical order. Augustine speaks of God as perfect Truth, a concept that comes to be understood in terms of the *rationes aeternae*. Leibniz speaks of God as Supreme Monad. Whitehead extends his process metaphysic to God when he speaks of him as the "principle of concretion." If Whitehead fails to qualify as a theist it is not because he used metaphysical categories drawn from the world of experience, (Aquinas and Leibniz, who are surely theists, did that), but because he extended them univocally to all things including God in accordance with his "ontological principle," thereby forfeiting the qualitative transcendence of the deity.

The introduction of metaphysical language into theology should not surprise us. In the first place, if in metaphysics, we speak about the nature of realities that transcend experience itself, then metaphysical language has what theological language needs. Or as we may put it to avoid separating the two, theological statements about a transcendent God and his creative activity in nature and grace are themselves incipiently metaphysical statements. In the second place, systematic theology has often in the past made metaphysical concepts and language its own. I say "made" them "its own" to emphasize that this has not always been a sell-out, but has sometimes meant a radical conversion of non-theistic metaphysical language to theistic purposes. The classic example is the Chalcedonian formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, in which Greek metaphysics provides the vehicle for tying together in coherent fashion various strands of Biblical teaching concerning the Godhead. Other examples include the Stoic influence in traducianism, the neo-Platonic influence in Augustinian theology, and so forth.

The problem is not that theologians can have no legitimate dealings with metaphysicians. It is rather threefold: first, that contemporary philosopy has only just started to recover from the positivist elimination of metaphysics and to offer creative metaphysical options. One new departure, the personalism of John Macmurray, has been captured by Robert Blaikie in his *Secular Christianity and the God Who Acts.*[9] Another, P. F. Strawson's *Individuals,* provided the framework for William Hasker's recent proposal about restating the doctrine of the Trinity.[10]

The second problem is that a metaphysical system is nowadays regarded less as a rationally demonstrated position to be universally accepted as the only logical basis for theological and other work, and more as a world-hypothesis with whatever degree it has of rational coherence and empirical adequacy.[11] There is no one metaphysical scheme on which contemporary theologians might draw. But this situation serves us well, if we are prepared to regard the developed structure of systematic theology also as provisional and hypothetical, rather than rationally conclusive, and if we

9. Eerdmans, 1970.
10. "Tri-Unity," *Journal of Religion,* L (1970).
11. See S. Pepper, *World Hypotheses* (Univ. of California Press, 1942); F. Dilley, *Metaphysics and Religious Language* (Columbia Univ. Press., 1964); A. F. Holmes, *Christian Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (Craig Press, 1969), ch. 5. Also on analogy, D. Emmet, *The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking* (Macmillan, 1945).

are therefore prepared to settle for a theological pluralism within evangelical thought. I see no objection to this, for it is *Scriptura sola* that is final in its authority, not systematic theology nor its cousin, metaphysics.

The third problem is that of accommodation. Philosophical language comes loaded, as we have seen, with connotations and connections which can get us into trouble as they did the idealist theologians and the process theologians and the existential theologians. Even evangelical writers sometimes draw uncritically on eighteenth century scientific rationalism, or on the existentialism of Buber or Heidegger. Bernard Ramm's comments in the December, 1972, *Eternity* on "Interpersonal Theology" are very much in order.

The intensional meaning of language transcends the world of experience then in two possible ways, by conceptualization that develops systematically within a specific language scheme, and by the use of metaphysical categories that apply analogously to God and at least some of his creatures. It is important to notice that the Bible draws analogies between God and *persons,* more specifically than between God and all of his creation.

If the extensional and intensional levels of theological language give it cognitive meaning, why is it that our theological language fails to communicate? Perhaps because it is a special language, the language of a religious community, unknown to the uninitiated. In that case, communication requires that we first teach the language, that is to say we must communicate specifics of the Christian faith within the overall conceptual structure of Biblical theism. This, I suspect, is the clue to Francis Schaeffer's enormous effectiveness: his pre-evangelism makes communication possible in a post-Christian era.

There may be another reason why theological language fails to communicate, which is that it seems sterile and has somehow lost its power to affect persons. This introduces a level of language other than the purely cognitive.

III. Personal Meaning

Language has other uses than the two kinds of cognitive meaning we have discussed, and these have been explored by philosophical analysts, existentialists and others. Among the analysts, J. L. Austin's *How to do Things with Words*[12] stands out and more recently John Searle's *Speech Acts.*[13] The latter (1970) is too recent to have been applied to theological language, but it is attracting a lot of philosophical attention and should be watched. The former (1962) has been applied to theological language by D. D. Evans in *The Logic of Self-involvement.*[14]

Austin focussed attention on illocutionary acts. These are sentences which report, announce, predict, accuse, promise, command, suggest, thank,

12. Oxford University Press, 1962.
13. Cambridge University Press, 1970.
14. Herder and Herder, 1963.

praise, exhort, etc., and in doing so produce more than cognitive effects. They produce action, secure agreement, rekindle hope, stir love, and elicit confidence. The assumption here is that man is not simply a thinking thing who refers to objects and thinks abstractly; he is more ultimately a person, an agent who acts, and who acts on other persons by the way he uses language. It is these language acts which must be considered if we are to understand how words come to mean what they do in a larger and more personal sense.

Illocutionary acts occur frequently in religious language. By saying that God is infinite in power we not only convey some cognitive conception, we may also elicit wonder, fear, awe, repentance, faith, and worship. By saying that God is love, we not only make references to his historical acts ("herein is love") and encapsule a wide range of Christian theology, we may also comfort a grieving widow, give hope to a cancer victim, and persuade the guilty to seek forgiveness.

The question of theological importance concerns the relationship between those effects on the one hand, and the extensional and intensional meaning of a statement on the other. The answer lies, I am sure, not just in the emotive force of our rhetoric (Paul spoke to that) nor just in correct cognition, but in the way we as persons interiorize our understanding of the intension of our language, and in the way the religious language community as a whole participates in that process. If a man is moved to action by something more than cognition alone, then effective illocutionary acts must convey something more than cognitive meaning alone.

We may observe a parallel in existentialism. Martin Heidegger develops the view that by means of language a man establishes his existence, in the sense of giving meaning to his life. While idle talk, hackneyed cliches and slogans destroy our true existence, authentic language has meaning-creating power.[15] The problem arises when language is said to function existentially in this way without reference to its cognitive significance, or even to whether it has cognitive significance at all. Then we run into Jasper's notion of the untranslatable cypher and Tillich's use of theological symbols to reveal our existential dependence on God rather to speak of him cognitively.

Martin Buber offers a parallel account in his disjunction between I-Thou and I-It language, such that when we turn from the language of personal address (I-Thou) to talking descriptively about persons (I-It) we falsify and forfeit their distinctively personal reality. This of course led Emil Brunner to the view that revelation comes not through descriptive language *about* God but through personal encounter. The language of personal encounter is not descriptive, and so cognitive or propositional revelation is a contradiction of terms.

As has often been pointed out, this disjunction is phenomenologically mistaken. I-Thou and I-It are more like ideal ends of a continuum than

15. *Being and Time* (Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 182-224.

mutually exclusive experiences. Even the scientist, who should epitomize the I-It extreme, is to some extent personally involved in his work and lacks complete objectivity. And the lover, who epitomizes the I-Thou extreme, tells the most revealing stories about his lady. The point is not only that I-Thou and I-It are not mutually exclusive, but that they also are not all-inclusive. I-he or I-she language reduces to neither type; it preserves the personal realism of I-Thou along with the descriptive intent of I-It. Biblical language is often I-he language; the language of Christian witness is I-he language; the language of worship is I-Thou, and the language of Christian theology is the language of reflection on the I-he and the I-Thou. The disjunction between personal and descriptive language breaks down.[16]

Similar arguments have been developed about other disjunctions between the existential and the cognitive. By the same token, the cognitive and non-cognitive functions of illocutionary utterances are distinguishable but not disjoined. What we have to see is that one and the same sentences can operate simultaneously at all three levels of meaning: "God is love" refers to historical events, it encapsules a much larger segment of Christian theology, and in appropriate personal contexts it can serve pastoral or evangelistic or even liturgical functions.

The positivist forgets this triune nature of language; so does the existentialist (who remains an empiricist—perhaps even a positivist—regarding cognitive meaning). We see him jump in theology from events denuded of theological intension to their existential impact, rather than moving from event to theological intension to personal confrontation, as is the case it seems to me in Scripture. Sometimes he jumps from the depths of existential despair into faith and hope without so much as historical events to trigger his leap. A theology that neither refers to historical events nor dwells on their theological intension can better be called "secular" than "Christian."

The underlying empiricist theory of cognitive meaning has had two tragic consequences: one we have noted is the anti-metaphysical stance that confined intensional meaning to logical and linguistic truths; the other is the imposition of scientific standards on all language, so that what is not scientifically descriptive or precisely analytic is non-cognitive and what is non-cognitive in the scientific sense is meaningless. Biblical language is, however, the language of literature not of science. God-language is about personal qualities and acts not about impersonal events; it is about a personal God acting in relation to human persons. What scientific language gains in precision it loses in personal meaning. In the humanities, language is often less precise than in science, but more adaptable to speaking of persons and of their acts in relation to others. William Alston speaks of this language as "vague," because it is suggestive rather than exhaustive; it evokes imaginative thought that transcends the world of experience; and it elicits personal involvement.

16. See William Hordern, *op. cit.* and A. F. Holmes, *Faith Seeks Understanding* (Eerdmans, 1971) ch. V and pp. 150-162.

One example of this vagueness is the symbol. As Philip Wheelwright points out, a symbol as distinct from a sign invites consideration and interpretation rather than observation alone.[17] It is like an exploratory probe; it opens up new vistas of thought; it is a novel use of words to reveal something fresh, an attempt to capture anew some elusive idea and introduce one to some new experience. It transcends the ordinary, excites the imagination, and captures interest.

A Biblical symbol like "Father" illustrates this point. God is not a biological father, nor does he work to provide for his family as earthly fathers do. But the symbol suggests that what an earthly father is immediately to his children, the heavenly father is ultimately to all his creatures. It is also an evocative term. He is a father-to-his children, to-me. By admitting the symbol, I include myself. By calling him "Father," I identify myself as his child.

"Father" serves here as a symbol, not strictly speaking a logical analogy, for fatherhood is not a characteristic analogically predicated of all beings. There is no logical movement along the order of being, no movement from the universal to a particular case. Rather, in understanding the symbol we think creatively from a particular kind of person to God. Persons with inadequate father-concepts end up with inadequate God-concepts.

Events, too, serve as symbols: the cross has come to symbolize suffering, sacrifice, forgiveness, love, atonement, the whole Christian faith—not just criminal disgrace or capital punishment. It stirs faith and devotion and self-sacrifice. It was not this way before Christ died. The personal drama as well as the theological significance of the crucifixion helped to vest the cross with its powerful symbolism.

Notice that we speak of symbols, not of verbal signs which only denote, as being powerful. The power of symbols to communicate effectively and to elicit response depends on their personal as well as their more purely cognitive meaning. All three levels of language are involved: extensional, intensional, and personal. But the personal requires some point of contact in experience that is itself humanly involving: Gilkey talks of contact with the life-world and its existential meanings. The life-world of the phenomenologist is distinguished from the more objective scientific world of the positivist and traditional empiricist. Lived time (as in Bergson's duration) is distinguished from scientific time, lived death (as in Heidegger's being-unto-death) from death as a biological phenomenon, etc. The life-world is the world-for-me, existentially loaded and personally involving. Provided the extensional is united with and not separated from the cognitive. I see every reason to suppose that this is indeed the point of contact in personal meaning.

17. *The Burning Fountain* (Univ. of Indiana Press, 1954). See also my essay "Language, Symbol and Truth" in *Imagination and the Spirit* (ed. C. Huttar, Eerdmans, 1971).

Because personal language requires more of both speaker and hearer than thought alone—it requires a degree of personal action—it follows that the extensional and the intensional meanings of theological language will be communicated most effectively in some kind of illocutionary act or existential use of language. Without personal meaning, true propositions may appear irrelevant and God-language may be dead. This suggests that the language of preaching and worship and pastoral counseling, being an illocutionary act, differs from the historical and theological language of the scholar. But without the cognitive, existential language cannot speak of God at all.[18]

18. See also my essay "Language, Logic and Faith" (especially pp. 434-438) in the Van Til Festschrift, *Jerusalem and Athens* (ed. E. R. Geehan, Presb. and Reformed Publ. Co., 1971).