# CHRISTIAN AND HUMAN

## By RICHARD ROACH

THE TOPIC of this article is, in the minds of many, an irresolvable question: Are there specifically christian values as opposed to humanist values? If we agree with the many, as in one sense we do, then it seems fitting first to consider briefly a prior and more general question. Is there any point in dealing with the unanswerable question: in this case, where the specific characteristic is that of value – a characteristic certainly familiar to those formed by christian scholasticism?

The wisdom of that scholasticism so long nurtured in roman catholic circles often expresses itself in pithy sayings. One which is very much to our point is *Verum est in mente, sed bonum est in re* (truth is in the mind, but the good is in the reality).

Recently, Bernard Lonergan has brought the scholastic adage up to date. He begins the second chapter of his new book as follows: 'What is good, always is concrete. But definitions are abstract. Hence, if one attempts to define the good, one runs the risk of misleading one's readers'.[1] The greater precision in this contemporary version of the wise old scholastic saying has a special significance for our discussion. Our question, taken at face value, is abstract; and any answer to the question must be in the form of abstractions. At their very best, the abstractions contained in an answer may have the denotative power to lead the one who hears or reads to think of concrete things or situations immediately and accurately: but the terms remain abstract.

Our point is so simple that it admits of a banal example. If I ask the question, 'Is your family pet a cat or a dog?', one may answer, 'Our family pet is a dog'. In both the question and the answer, the terms 'dog' and 'cat' are abstract. The conversation, question and answer, may take place in such a situation that almost immediately the abstract term 'dog' comes to refer to or denote a living, visible animal. But the terms contained in the simple question and its equally simple answer, taken as such, just as question and answer, are abstract. Values, as we write about them or discuss them, are

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[1] *Method in Theology* (London, 1972), p 27.

like 'cats' and 'dogs'. They are abstract.

If I put the question to someone, 'Do you consider truth-telling a value?' they may answer, 'Yes, I consider truth-telling a value'. If the context for the question and the answer is a theoretical discussion, we may well go on to discuss why we hold that truth-telling is a value. As a christian, I may advance reasons that appeal to the example of Jesus Christ, or to specific propositions in the christian scriptures; or I may appeal to lessons learned from christian theology. I may appeal to God as a law-giver; I may appeal to a purpose found in the universe and in human behaviour as a part of the universe: a purpose which finds its ground in God as creator of human nature or as redeemer of human nature. But the person to whom I am speaking may not consider 'God-talk' a worthwhile project. He may find it impossible to invoke God as a reason for human behaviour. He may not be able to conceive of God as a law-giver or as creator and redeemer of human nature. He may, therefore, in lieu of God-talk, speak of an intuitive sense of what it means to be truly human; or he may appeal to the needs of the human race as a community, and to his felt loyalty to that community, outside of which his life makes no sense. In this theoretical discussion, both of us will embrace the value of truth-telling, at least as that value is abstractly shared; but we will give different reasons for regarding truth-telling in the abstract as a value.

If we stopped our theoretical discussion at this point, we would have to say that there is no difference between the christian and the humanist as regards our conclusion. We both agree that truth-telling is a value, but we advance different reasons. One or both of us (or a third) will likely conclude that, as far as values are concerned, there is no difference between the christian and the humanistic description of the value. There exist differences only at a more removed level of the discussion: differences in justification, in motivation, in reasoning. They may even further conclude that the differences are irrelevant to the question. A third party, listening to the discussion as it unfolds, might try to point out that what makes both christian and humanist agree that truth-telling is a value, is a set of reasons they have in common, and that their 'theoretical' differences are not really relevant to the choice or rejection of truth-telling as a value. This observation could lead to a further conclusion, that values are determined on the basis of what we hold in common. Further, the differences, or those specific orientations that give rise to the labels 'christian' or 'humanist', rest

merely on subjective dispositions, feelings and beliefs, not relevant enough to the discussion of real or objective values to make any difference. The development of such a line of thought would run something like this: no matter what people say, the real reasons they regard some things – for example, truth-telling – as valuable, and other things, such as lying, as anti-values, are not found in the cosmologies, mythologies, theologies that separate them, but in the common humanity and common reason that unites them. At the level of values, then, there are no real differences between christians and humanists.[2]

The argument is very forceful, and we might be too readily inclined simply to agree with it. But we must first recall that the argument, like the discussion as a whole, is abstract. We must therefore return to our example, and ask the question about truth-telling in a different context.

If I ask the question, 'Do you think truth-telling is a value?', and the other replies, 'Yes, I think truth-telling is a value', in a situation in which we both have in mind a specific truth to be told, the question takes on a different character: it is one in which the term 'truth-telling' denotes a specific truth to be told to some specific individual. Furthermore, such a situation, far from being theoretical, would be one in which I am asking a friend about what he or she intends to do. Undoubtedly, the question here would take on a different form, such as: 'Do you intend to tell your mother that her cancer is terminal?' or, 'Are you going to allow her to believe that her present illness is passing even if you must lie to her?' Here, the 'truth-telling' is very specific and concrete. And yet, we are still asking the previous question, though with a specific point of reference in mind, 'Do you think truth-telling is a value?'

In the real situation, my friend may be philosophically inclined; more specifically, he may be kantian. He may have read and pondered Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, and have been persuaded that one ought to tell the truth in all circumstances: that this is a

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[2] In a recent article, Gerard Hughes, S.J., of the Heythrop faculty, presents a version of the argument we have tried to typify here. He there defends the position that our moral knowledge, e.g. the interior by which we distinguish between value and anti-value, is not affected in its substance by our christian faith. Therefore, christians and humanists have the same grounds for knowing the difference between right and wrong; faith adds only 'a stimulus, a context and a motivation'. For the most part we agree with Fr Hughes *in abstracto*, but not *in concreto* – a distinction to which we feel he did not sufficiently attend. See 'A Christian Basis for Ethics', in *The Heythrop Journal*, vol XIII, no 1 (January, 1972).

duty and that one does not waver in carrying out one's duties from any consideration of the consequences.[3] In this case, I would anticipate that my friend, if directly asked, would tell his mother the truth. He would certainly remain true to his principles if he did not volunteer this information; but to whatever was directly asked, his answer would be truthful. Or I can imagine another friend, one of general humanist persuasion, perhaps a friend who has recently read Kübler-Ross's book, who from this work and other considerations may have developed the conviction that dying is something we humans ought to do consciously.[4] This friend, too, could also have determined to tell his mother the truth.

By setting up the example in this way, we have returned to the same dilemma which we faced when we considered values in the abstract. We have two different persons, in what is substantially the same situation, each choosing the same value – in this case, to tell the truth – but for different reasons. We suggested that, because the 'theoretical' differences separating christians and humanists did not produce different conclusions about the value of truth-telling in the abstract, the differences were merely irrelevant. It now appears that the same is true in the concrete as in the abstract. But, if we examine our case carefully, we will find that the differences function differently in the abstract discussion from the way in which they function in the concrete situation.

In the abstract discussion, we suggested that there was good reason to hold that the differences between the christian and the humanist do not logically affect the conclusion that truth-telling is a value. The fact that people separated by theological, metaphysical, cosmological or other differences could and do agree that truth-telling is a value, pointed at least to the possibility that the real reasons for holding to truth-telling as a value are not to be found in the areas of difference. The real reasons are those which are 'logic-

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[3] Later we will modify our characterization of the kantian philosopher in order to improve the force of our example and to avoid dealing with a weakness in Kant's ethical thought. E.g., Kant says: 'Has not every even fairly honest man sometimes found that he desists from an otherwise harmless lie which would extricate him from a vexing affair or which would even be useful to a beloved and deserving friend simply in order not to have to condemn himself secretly in his own eyes?' (*Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. L. W. Beck, Liberal Arts Press, 1956, nos 87–8, p 90). Such a preoccupation with duty diverts the moral agent's attention completely away from the other. A christian faith today, it seems to me, would at least modify this orientation to ideal duty in favour of a loving consideration of real persons.
[4] *On Death and Dying* (London, 1969), esp. pp 99–121.

ally' inseparable from the conclusion, and are at least implicitly agreed upon by all who agree that truth-telling is a value. Therefore, in principle, an abstract argument can be constructed to justify truth-telling as a value; but this argument does not record the theological, metaphysical or cosmological differences that separate people who hold that truth-telling is a value. In the abstract, it is at least probable that, in justifying truth-telling as a value, we can prescind from the differences that make the labels 'christian' and 'humanist' usable. The mere possibility of such a separation of truth-telling from various systems claiming to justify or motivate truth-telling, does lead one to conclude that there is no distinction between the christian and the humanist in the abstract: at least no difference that cannot be reduced to some common agreement.

But, in the concrete case, the differences are linked to the actual decision to tell the truth in a very different way. In the concrete, the decision to tell the truth embodies all the reasons, including the differences, for telling the truth. I would say, therefore, that all the reasons in the concrete for telling the truth are linked by psychological necessity to the act of telling the truth. In the abstract argument, however, the reasons over which there is disagreement are logically separable from the conclusion to tell the truth. The separation allows for the advancement of other reasons not psychologically linked to the choice, but with regard to which there is agreement. Or again, the proffered reasons can be so separated from the conclusion or choice that the disagreement can then be reduced to a common and minimal ground, thought to be necessarily entailed in the conclusion or choice as such. Hence the conclusion to tell the truth in the abstract floats free of some or all of the reasons over which there is disagreement.

However, because of the psychological link in the concrete, there can be nos uch separation of the actual telling of the truth from all the reasons for doing so, without falsifying the real process. No one can argue, without falsifying, that the real reasons why the kantian, as distinct from the humanist, tells his mother the truth, are not the reasons advanced by the persons actually telling the truth. It would be an unproven, I would say an unprovable, assertion to claim that the reasons which motivate us consciously, and about which we can in some limited way speak, are not the real reasons for our behaviour. Such a position is at very best a metaphysical conclusion, and certainly one that does not widely persuade. Setting such a mechanistic or deterministic position aside, we are left, phenomenologically

speaking, with concrete situations, in which reasons or motives are so linked to acts that they are inseparable from them. And even when acts are identical on the outside, the reasons for them may differ widely. Nevertheless, one is left with the question as to whether or not the same acts performed by the two different persons with different reasons embody any significant difference. It is because this second question cannot be finally or conclusively answered to the satisfaction of all that our original question is irresolvable. But, once again, the irresolvable character of the question ought not to lead us to the simplistic conclusion, that it is of little or no account if the difference between the kantian and the humanist telling their mothers the truth is virtually imperceptible. Admittedly, the difference seems to exist primarily in a psychological order known to us only if the participants testify to it. Yet we might show prejudice if we conclude too readily that such differences have no 'real' effects. To conclude thus would be to assume that we are able to express the concretely real in abstract discourse and words, in such a way that we can believe, reasonably, that where differences do not admit of logical expression, they are not sufficiently real to be taken into account. I would hold that such a conclusion is false, not on logical, but on experiential grounds.

Let us turn to another example to clarify the point. As I write this article in Canada, I am for many reasons aware that there are a number of american 'draft-resisters' living here. Some of these men have abandoned their country of birth for reasons which we might loosely but accurately describe as humanistic; others for reasons that, at least in some measure, are specifically christian. At present it is impossible for ordinary language, and even scientific or philosophical discourse, so to lay bare the difference between a humanistic draft-resister and a christian draft-resister as to enable us to feel, at the level of words, that we have captured and expressed that difference, thereby placing the form and even the existence of the difference beyond question. But this inability does not force us to the conclusion that there is no significant difference between the christian and humanist draft-resister. Nevertheless, it takes cautious attention not to slide into such a conclusion. The language that makes up american law, for example, would not even concern itself with the difference. If the christian and humanist resisters should return to the United States, in all probability they would be found equally criminal. In one sense, this is not as it should be. For if the reader agrees with me that the ambiguities and the injustices of the

vietnamese war justify a general amnesty for all who refused, even through desertion, to fight, then the draft-resisters should not be found guilty. But, and this is to our point, in another sense this is as it should be. For the christian should receive no special consideration which judges his reasons or motives superior to the humanist's; and the reverse is equally true. Yet the fact that the language of law need not and ought not to attend to the difference weakens our sense of the difference.

Other levels of human discourse also find the difference of no moment or are baffled by it. But the suspicion remains that the difference is real: that the act of the christian draft-resister is in some way different from the act of the humanist draft-resister. We insist again that to recognize a difference is not to judge in terms of inferiority and superiority. The claim that there is a difference rests on the human insistence in seeing a link between reasons for behaviour and the behaviour itself. If that link is not to be dismissed as illusory or merely accidental, then it remains a reality for which we must account.

Let us return to the example of the kantian and the humanist who both have mothers dying of cancer. We all know that there are many kantians who do not follow Immanuel Kant even as far as his rationalistic theism, others who are expressly christian. We shall assume that our kantian is a christian, and that only the follower of Kübler-Ross is theologically or metaphysically speaking a humanist: one who does not believe in God or invoke him when discerning values. (When we first presented this example, we did not stipulate that the kantian philosopher was also a christian, because it was easier and clearer to cite precise and well-known reasons for the act of truth-telling. Unfortunately, the example in that form is not sufficiently rich in allusion and in the sort of reasons which escape specification by abstract terms, to make our point sufficiently clearly. So now we suppose that our kantian is also and primarily a christian, fully aware that most christians are not kantians. Thus we hope to shift the reader's mind to reasons for telling the mother the truth that differ from the kantian duty, such as a desire to help her prepare in prayer to meet her heavenly Father.)

By supposing that our philosopher is a christian, it is possible further to specify that christian reasons for telling his mother that she is dying of cancer would co-exist with, or take precedence over, the mere obligation in duty to do so, if she directly asks for the truth. We would then like to know if the christian reasons, psychologically

linked to the act, would qualify the very performance of the act. In the abstract, what is significant is the fact that the mother receives from the son the information that her disease is terminal: 'in the abstract', because it is a complement of the action which is a dialogue between two persons; because it is a component that can be isolated and expressed readily in abstract sentences and propositions. The reality of the dialogue will have many configurations which are not even alluded to in the statement, 'he told his mother the truth about her disease'. These other configurations might well require a poet or an artist to give them expression. How, even in ordinary language, are we going to capture what is non-verbally expressed when he tells his mother that she is dying of cancer? Does he offer her hope by the tone of his voice, by the look in his eyes; or does he imply, in these ineffable and non-verbal dimensions of the dialogue, that her death is some sort of absurd and final tragedy? Will his truth-telling be a way of affirming that he loves her? Will it strengthen her conviction that her life has been rich and meaningful, or will it be experienced as a condemning judgment on her life? Will she sense that her son is thankful to be rid of her because she is old and diseased? We can spell out this sort of question endlessly because the written word is abstract; yet even the endless listing of possibilities will never adequately focus us on the richness of the actual dialogue that could take place between a son and his mother who is dying of cancer. In fairness, we ought to suggest an equal number of such configurations in the relationship between the humanist son and his dying mother. He may well be convinced, in his deep love for her, that dying ought to be fully human and fully conscious, although he has no theological or metaphysical affirmation which can spell out why this is worthwhile. It may still be for him and for her something worthwhile in a sense that is filled with hope and with love. Hence to dwell on the christian side of the example should not lead us to the assumption that the relationship between the christian son and mother is necessarily better, or kinder, or more loving than the relationship between humanist son and mother. We wish only to be aware of differences.

Reasons why you or I may prefer one orientation to another can be given with reasonable fairness only after we are acutely aware of the subtlety of the differences. But we may have to conclude that, in a certain sense and because of their nature, the reasons for preferring one orientation to another can never be given, but can only be suggested. For we are more than merely suggesting that the differ-

ences between the christian and the humanist exist in the concrete
in such a way that they never admit of adequate objectification.
They can never be adequately resolved at the level of abstract
reasoning, talk and discourse.

The position we are taking on the difference between the christian
and the humanist is really a very traditional position. With St
Thomas, one distinguishes between 'natural' knowledge and what
today we might call belief, in terms of an assistance given to the
intellect to reach conclusions or form assents beyond those possible
for the natural, unaided intellect. In the area of love, St Thomas
distinguishes between what we may love naturally and in virtue of
our common humanity, and what we may love with the aid of
God's grace. These distinctions are a familiar part of our patrimony.
However, the traditional way of viewing the distinctions gave rise
to a dual image which is objectivistic in character. One half of the
image consisted in this world, which was mistakenly thought to be
immediately available in feeling, knowing and willing; whereas the
other half consisted in another world beyond our horizons. This
traditional way of viewing the distinction is widely disputed today;
and our original question is one of the consequences of that dispute:
whether there is any real difference between the christian and the
humanist, with regard to their real as opposed to theoretical values.
Traditionally, the difference between the christian and the humanist
was that the christian held to two objective worlds, one of which was
unverifiable, whereas the humanist contented himself with the one
verifiable world. Since truth-telling took place in the one verifiable
world, the reduction to common agreement of differences between
christians and humanists in the justification of truth-telling tended
towards the secular or 'this-worldly' reasons favoured by the
humanist in the first place. In the light of what we have said about
experience, our response to the contemporary problematic would
be to turn to the subject's real experience.

There is a sense in which experience is simultaneously immediate
and remote for both the christian and the humanist. Until recently,
almost all christian theology tended to symbolize this experienced
dichotomy between the immediate and the remote in terms of the
two objective worlds. Humanists tended not to emphasize the
dichotomy, perhaps in reaction to abuse of the christian symbols;
but nonetheless they took it into account, often in terms of a distinc-
tion between facts and values, realities and ideals. Whether we are
humanists or christians, or whatever label applies, such as hindu,

moslem, buddhist and the like, we all face the common task of
distinguishing between values and anti-values, of choosing the
former and rejecting the latter. When we do so, we must resolve
problems, and we tend by our nature to resolve those problems, not
exclusively in terms of rational argumentation, but in terms of an
appeal to our experience. If it is phenomenologically valid, as I
think it is, to say that our experience is simultaneously most imme-
diate and most remote, then we can see why a christian faith, a set of
humanist ideals, a buddhist orientation, or any other symbolic
system, is relevant and practical: it is an intrinsic part of our value-
judgments and of that release of energy which enables us to carry
out our values in concrete choices. For the symbolic system (and
we are here prescinding from its validity) mediates between what
is immediate in our experience and what is remote.

The reasons for truth-telling, whether in the abstract or the
concrete, are more remote, as experienced, than the determination
to be truthful in general or the concrete choice to tell this specific
truth. Christian faith or humanist ideals, or the like, mediate be-
tween the remote reaches of our experience and the immediate
determinations and choices. In so doing, since each finds something
different in his remote experience, the immediate is coloured and
qualified, if ever so subtly. So it is with our experience of the ap-
proach of death, our own and the deaths of our loved ones. In one
sense this is an immediate experience and, in another, very remote,
because we do not know *immediately* whether we are experiencing
the approach of our death hopefully or in despair. We do not know
immediately whether or not the death of our loved ones is a loss to be
borne in hope or a loss merely to be borne. To experience our death
or the death of our loved ones is never a complete experience with-
out some dimension which reflects or embodies either the hope or the
despair.

Albert Camus, in a well-known essay, concludes a brief chapter
on Sisyphus, the mythological greek character condemned for ever
to roll a large stone up a hill without ever reaching the summit: 'The
struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One
must imagine Sisyphus happy'.[5] Camus's conclusion here is not like
the conclusion, 'truth-telling is a value', in our example of abstract
discourse. Rather, it is like the conclusion worked out in the con-
crete. It is like the christian's conclusion to tell his dying mother the

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[5]    *The Myth of Sisyphus* (trans. Justin O'Brien, New York, 1955), p 91.

truth. It is not the conclusion of a rigorously logical argument; it is the statement of a phenomenology that mediates between the immediate in experience and what is remote in experience. Perhaps one must also say that it is not fully a christian conclusion, because of the reasoning or phenomenology that goes into the conclusion. However, our point is not to show that Camus is or is not a crypto-christian, but rather that the discernment of values in the concrete is mediated by the symbolic system which gives rise to the labels 'christian' or 'humanist'.

Furthermore, our conclusion insists that the symbolic system becomes embodied in the actual choice, the concrete action that proceeds from the discernment of a value or the rejection of an anti-value. We are saying, therefore, that there are specifically christian values as opposed to humanist values; but not that this distinction can be adequately laid out and clarified in abstract discourse. We are not, therefore, resolving the original question to which this article addresses itself. For we feel confident that if the question seeks a difference in the objective description of values, as found in moral determinations or laws or as embodied in concrete choices, then the component that would make the values specifically christian and distinct from humanistic values would remain concealed. We are saying, instead, that the distinction actually exists in christians and humanists and the values they choose. But since it is always somewhat concealed, it can be talked about only indirectly; and yet this indirect discourse strives to uncover what is happening as persons attempt to cope with, shape and form their experience. For the remote reaches of our experience, as mediated by our symbol, affect the quality with which objective values are imbued. The christian draft-resister really differs from his humanist brother; but the difference is not one we can either discern fully or evaluate comparatively in the abstract. The difference exists in the different experiences. The reasons why the christian finds injustice in the conduct of war intolerable may overlap on many points with the reasons of a humanist. The christian and the humanist may even have very similar experiences; but differences remain in the quality of the total experience of the one and of the other: differences which situate and colour the value chosen in draft-resistance. The closest we may come, I believe, to expounding the difference is through the recognition that each has employed a different symbolic system with which to come into contact with the wider reaches of his own experience as a living, free, human subject.

Verbally, the christian may attempt to claim that he needs a symbolic system that refers to God, Father, Son and Spirit, because his immediate experience leads him to search and find in both his immediate and remote experience what is not merely human. He therefore feels impelled to speak of what is beyond man and men, even beyond this life, if its boundaries are thought to be drawn by death. He finds it necessary to speak of the divine. The validity of his God-talk has no pragmatic proof; but it does find warrant in the success with which his symbolic system makes available to him what is already given: that is, his experience.

If we may project ourselves back to the dawn of the christian faith, we can make this point sharply. We tend to forget, I fear, that persons had different experiences of Jesus, his life and his words, his passion and his death. One person in his experience of Jesus found that what was elusive, remote, in his life and words, his passion and death, became readily accessible, clear and overwhelming when he 'remembered'[6] Jesus as the Christ in the light of the resurrection. This person became a christian. He is one who has christian faith; and he speaks readily of God the Father, of new life and the like. The other person is also one who experienced Jesus, his life and words, his passion and death, but found in that experience something so baffling as to conclude that there was nothing beyond the human and the humanly tragic, except perhaps his own will to seek for greater justice and to strive to be compassionate. One is thus a christian, the other is a humanist. The validity of the symbol-systems of either can never be placed objectively in abstract discourse before any one of us who have come after, in such a way that, with a disinterested and detached rational mind, we can investigate the difference, compare and decide. We are rather invited by the difference so to examine our own experience that we choose to follow one or the other or neither. The values we will then embrace may well be common values, insofar as we articulate them and label them. We may consider truth-telling a value, but nevertheless the values we then embrace, no matter how common, will remain different: although the difference will be hidden in part in the symbol-system which arises in our experience, makes sense of our experience, and finds its authenticity in that experience.

At this point we must entertain a possibility which we have scrupulously avoided thus far. It is not just possible, it is probable,

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6 'Do this in memory of me' specifies the sense in which we use the word 'remember'.

and it has occurred in the past that, because of the formative
character of our symbol-systems, disagreements over what are or are
not values arise: disagreements which cannot be resolved without
some adjustment of our symbol-system. Perhaps the whole of the
seventeenth-century Enlightenment was little more than an effort
to move away from symbol-systems of a religious character just in
order to avoid this problem. But we have long since learned that
reason alone has not led to utopian agreement and, I would say,
never will. Why then did we not start our discussion by showing the
difference between christians and humanists? We can only answer
this question by facing the possibility of real disagreement because
of differing symbol-systems in our present world.

Today we recognize that symbol-systems have an irreducibly
personal dimension.[7] There are not only american christians who
are draft-resisters; there are far more who are military hawks. There
are humanists of a marxist persuasion who did not support soviet
policy in Hungary or Czechoslovakia; and there are others who did.
Although it may now seem a trivial matter to us, it is on record that
once there were christians who would not eat meat offered to idols
and condemned their brethren who did.[8] Our approach then,
has not been from the possibility or actuality of different convictions
concerning the values inherent in different symbol-systems; for the
reason that the differences do not logically follow from those systems
with such regularity as to show that, in fact, one system always and
everywhere leads to one set of values and another to another. This is
especially true in the case of humanists and christians. We might
more often than not find a christian today in warm agreement with
a humanist about a specific value as objectively described, and in
hot disagreement with a fellow-christian. Nor do we know of any
final authority that can successfully descend to the specific in order
to settle our disagreements. We are forced to hope in the power of
love to prevent or overcome disaster.

In the last analysis, a conversion, or even the resolution of a deep
disagreement between any two of us, always results from some shift
in our experience (even if it is merely the shift in mental experience
of a new thought) which forces us to alter our symbol-system. It

[7]   W. C. Smith, in his book, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (London, 1962), forcefully
draws our attention to the 'irreducible personal dimension' with his exposition of 'personal
faith' and its difference from 'religion'.
[8]   Acts 15, 20 (cf note in *The Oxford Annotated Bible*, R. S. V.); 1 Cor 8,1 – 11,1; Apoc
2, 14.

would seem unnecessary by now, but it is not, to say that we cannot afford to raise our symbol-systems as battle-flags, and use them as justification for the destruction of our opponents. Our sad century should have taught us this minimal lesson. But it does seem to remain the case that the resolution of differences is beyond the appeal and power of the merely rational or intellectual system, beyond our technology, beyond what we humans can manipulate. Therefore, if we are to have hope, as opposed to wishful thinking, that hope must rest on the existence of what we christians call sanctifying grace: a dimension in the experience of us all, no matter how named, no matter how symbolized in discourse, which seeks, even more powerfully than our common humanity, to draw us towards that agreement in loved value and human behaviour which will make not merely the survival of the human race possible but the hope of human community attainable.