

RESPONSES TO PETER BERGER

In March of last year, *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* published an article by Professor Peter Berger entitled "Secular Theology and the Rejection of the Supernatural: Reflections on Recent Trends" (38 [1977] 39-56). In that article Berger criticized the theologies of Langdon Gilkey, Schubert Ogden, and David Tracy as "yet another variety of reduction," specifically, "the moderate (as against the radical) wing of American theological reductionism." Berger's analysis has provoked much discussion in theological circles since that time. Hence Professors Gilkey, Ogden, and Tracy requested space to reply. They are thankful to the editors of *TS* for that opportunity.

D.T.

I

I shall not here deal with Professor Berger's characterization of the thought of Schubert Ogden or David Tracy, although it bore little resemblance to the substance of their theology. Since, however, I could barely recognize his description of those works of mine that he has apparently read and from which he quoted (*Naming the Whirlwind* and *Catholicism Confronts Modernity*), a response is called for. My argument is not that he has maligned or been unfair to my theology. It is rather that he has not even begun to understand what I am about theologically and thus that his characterization fails to have either application or relevance to the theological position that my writings have represented and continue to represent. One consequence is that, with all the agreement on important points that obtains among the three of us here indicted, the particular common thread that Berger discerns fails to exist, since his understanding and so his description of us is so incompetent. There may be a "Chicago School" in theology, but it is certainly not the one Berger thinks he sees.

The characterization that Berger offers of our theologies is clear enough; its main elements, again discussed here in relation to my own theology, can be summed up in four points. (1) My theology is termed in intention and in fact a "secular theology," in the sense that it is "reductionist" (39). By reductionist, Berger means the effort to "translate in full" or exhaustively religious and theological concepts into the terms of the secular world, and presumably therefore into scientific and common-sense forms of language and into naturalistic modes of explanation. (2) Consequently, this theology denies any "cognitive dissonance with the secularized milieu" (39) and represents a "cognitive surrender [to the secular world] which is at the core of the reductionist procedure" (40).

“No cognitive dissonance” and “cognitive surrender” are vague phrases that are more emotive and polemical than precise. If they do have any precise meaning, they surely entail that the cognitive propositions of a theology so described would be solely founded on and judged by the modes of inquiry available to a secular culture: common experience, scientific judgments, philosophical argument. Clearly, any view (such as mine) holding that theology possesses a “queer” sort of language, that it is dependent on special types of experience, that it is grounded in revelation, and thus that it finds its sources, criteria, and ultimate verification “beyond” ordinary experience and reason, beyond philosophy, in revelation and in responding faith, would not—even for Berger—qualify as “reductionist.” (3) It follows that in Berger’s view “secularity is [for my thought] not only the starting point but the criterion of the [theological] enterprise” (44), the point certainly being that here theological criteria (from revelation, Scripture, tradition, special experiences, etc.), are *ipso facto* excluded from theological construction. In these works, so he continues, there is a “failure to offer a critique of this [the secular] consciousness” (55). (4) As a result, reference to the transcendent, the supernatural, the absolute, the unconditioned, the divine, the sacred (Berger seems to think that “supernatural,” or “another world,” represents the key term among these, and alone guarantees, so to speak, that the other terms really symbolize deity) is excluded from this theology, all theological terms being reduced to naturalistic concepts and language. As he says—apparently against us—the question is, *to what* do theological terms refer: to the transcendent within the finite, or merely to the finite, to the human condition (53)? And he cites Schleiermacher (as well as Otto and Eliade) as one who, in contrast to the three of us, had such a reference to a transcendent reality “in, with, and under the mundane referent” (53).¹

Lacking this reference to a transnatural reality, continues Berger, my theology—as a “modern edition of Feuerbach”—refers only to the con-

¹ Berger (52) describes Schleiermacher as, like himself, seeking in his theological propositions to refer to “that other realm” “*outside any conceivable realm of natural existence*” (emphasis in text). That Schleiermacher viewed theology as referent, *through* statements descriptive of our religious consciousness (and *only* through such statements), also to an Absolute Causality transcendent to both self and world, there is no doubt. But to describe this referent as “another realm,” or God as “outside” the realm of natural existence, is to give an incredibly misleading interpretation of Schleiermacher’s theological aims. It was precisely to “strip off” from theology speculative statements about “that other realm” that Schleiermacher introduced his rigid confinement of theological propositions to “descriptions of religious consciousness.” As was noted in *Naming*, my own view is actually very close to Schleiermacher’s (289, 328–29, 421, 427), and to that enunciated here by Berger in less clear language.

tingent, relative, transient world of "nature" and consequently represents a reduction of theology to the other "secular" disciplines. Theology here, so he states, has no sources, grounds, experiences, linguistic modes and rules, symbols, criteria, obligations and aims of its *own*; nor presumably does the religious discourse to which in reflection it is related. It has reduced itself to the world's speech about the world's familiar objects and relations.

Such a description of a theological position would represent a serious accusation indeed if it applied. It would be, and is, serious to me, since my intention in my work is to be a Christian theologian whose thought is inspired and is structured by, and remains faithful to, Christian revelation and tradition. Whatever the judgment of any reader may be about my works, I would not like her/him to be in any doubt about *that* intention—which, of course, Berger utterly rejects. It is clear, however, that this total accusation does not apply. In the corpus of my works as a whole and in the two cited here, each of these four "secular" positions ascribed to me is not only clearly and unequivocally rejected but firmly countered with long and sustained arguments. In fact, these works express frequently and with clarity a slightly more "orthodox" variant of the position so enthusiastically commended by Berger in this article. The problem, therefore, is not that Berger termed my theology "Feuerbachian," "reductionist," etc., but why he should have thought this to be the case, if, as seems evident enough, he actually read the works he cited.

Two explanations offer themselves for this puzzle. (1) Berger is not intelligent enough to understand theological writing. This does not, however, represent a serious possibility. Berger's sociological works are intellectually most impressive and have been of great help to many of us in feeling our way around a field in which we are not really competent. (2) He has had no specialized training in theology and thus in fact does not know how to read a theological work competently—especially if it is "sophisticated." This is much more plausible, since apparently he did read these books and yet so clearly misunderstood them. A training in theology makes one neither more pious nor more discerning nor more wise; but one thing it might well do is to develop the capacity to read with comprehension the theological works of others.

When one seeks to publish a criticism of writers in a discipline with which one is professionally unfamiliar, two rules are helpful if one is to avoid embarrassment. First, one should read all the works of the writer in question, not just a sampling, before one embarks on a major interpretation. For one unaccustomed to the "signals," "rumors," and "clues" of theology, a familiarity with an entire corpus will give an overview that may prevent a flatfooted and grievous misinterpretation of particular works. In this case, had Berger read any one of four previous works of

mine (from the position of which no substantial deviation has occurred), he could not possibly have misunderstood as he did the two he cited. These works present a studied and detailed critique on a number of varied themes of the secular, naturalistic world and its self-understanding; and each seeks to offer in its place a Christian interpretation of these same themes grounded in its own revelatory sources and pointing to a divine ground or reality quite beyond the natural world and the human condition.

My first work (*Maker of Heaven and Earth*) defended the Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* against its scientific and its naturalistic, i.e. "secular," critics (including Whitehead) and presented that doctrine as emphasizing the divine transcendence and aseity, as based on revelation and faith rather than on science or philosophy, and as itself requiring a paradoxical and "mythical" form of discourse quite different from secular speech, ordinary, scientific, or philosophical. The second work, on the Church (*How the Church . . .*) argued that the problem of the modern American Church was its loss of the transcendent and the holy as its ground and criterion, the dissolution therefore of word, sacrament, and community in its life, and its gradual absorption by the "secular" world into merely a repetition of that world's life. The third (*Shantung Compound*), based on an internment-camp experience, argued that liberal optimism about human rationality and goodness was a false and "unempirical" view and that only the traditional symbol of original sin could make sense out of our ordinary individual and communal behavior. The fourth (*Religion and the Scientific Future*), while recognizing effects that science has had on theology, countered (1) that science itself had a ground in our experience of the transcendent as truth (a modern interpretation of Augustine), and (2) that science and a scientific culture can only escape self-contradiction and become creative rather than destructive if they are comprehended, not by means of their own "myths" about themselves, but by means of the Christian symbols of man, his fallenness, his obligations, and God's purposes in history. My latest work on a theology of history (*Reaping the Whirlwind*)—which Berger could not yet have read but which is here cited to show the continuity of this position—returns to constructive theology (only the first three works and this last represent theology proper) and seeks to understand history, not in positivistic, naturalistic, or humanistic categories, all of which are radically criticized, but in terms of the Christian theological symbols of creation, fall, providence, incarnation, and eschatology—hardly a reductionist theology void of the transcendent.

A second helpful rule in reading materials with which we are not professionally familiar is not to read hastily and so to overlook or to skip stated positions antithetical to the view one wishes to find. If one does

read thus hastily and perceives only what one is looking for, one can fatally misunderstand a nuanced, complex argument presenting a dialectical and so complex position. What makes Berger's characterization so dreamlike and unreal is that explicit denials of the important elements of his critique appear on almost every page of both *Naming* and *Catholicism*. These denials of a "secular" or "reductionist" theology appear, however, in dialectical relation to a critique of an orthodox theology unrelated to common experience and so moribund (a dialectical criticism at once both of orthodoxy and of secularity which I modestly share with Schleiermacher, Barth, Tillich, the Niebuhrs, Rahner, and others). Berger, who is apparently most at home among simple arguments, misread the dialectic, as he did every nuance in either book, and fixed his gaze only on the criticism of an orthodoxy out of touch with modern experience. Thus he seems to have concluded that the common ("secular") experience to which, I argued, a meaningful transcendence must be *related* (as Schleiermacher, Tillich, and Niebuhr reiterate) provided for me the sole *source, referent, and criterion* for theology. He mistook an insistence, if we are to speak meaningfully of God, on the *relatedness* of the transcendent to our existence (a principle shared with both Luther and Calvin), for a *denial* of the transcendent, although a rejection of such an interpretation was endlessly repeated (*Naming* 288-89, 328-29, 421, 427-28, 467).²

The initial (and fatal) error of Berger's reading of *Naming the Whirlwind* was that, in mistakenly reading it as a "secular theology," he did not heed my reiterated warning that this book did not claim at all to be a work of Christian theology, an example of theological method; nor were its conclusions to be regarded as a part of a theological system proper. Thus this book is not, as Berger thinks it is, *itself* an illustration of any proposal of mine for "reconstruction in theology"; nor does *its* "secular" starting point represent what I have frequently stated there and elsewhere to be the proper starting point for Christian theology. The reasons for the sharp distinction of this work from Christian theological method and so from theology were carefully and clearly stated in the text. In seeking to deal with and to counter "secular theology," which was the stated aim of the volume, ordinary theological methods were found to be of no avail; the various starting points for present-day theology had been rendered problematic by our secular condition (Part 1, chap. 5); and yet to start

² Again my argument runs parallel to that of Schleiermacher. The third, or religious, level of consciousness, he said, always accompanies the second (ordinary, daily, "secular") level of consciousness and is never separated from it. In the same vein I argued that our primordial experience of the transcendent comes to us in association with our experience of "being in the world," our "secular experience," and so to be meaningful must be in continual touch with that experience.

theology with secularity as such (the effort of the radical theologies) was shown to be self-defeating and self-contradictory, (Part 1, chap. 5). Thus, in seeking to deal with that situation, this work named itself "prolegomenon," a beginning before the beginning, a preparation for theology, but not theology itself³ (cf. *Naming* 259-60, 268, 275-76, 285, 301). In fact, as I twice stated, it represents anthropology and not theology (ibid. 261-62, 412).⁴ More precisely, it represented a phenomenological analysis of *secular* experience to uncover the *religious* dimension (the dimension of ultimacy, of the transcendent, the unconditioned, and the sacred) in that experience and so to make legitimate and meaningful the use of religious language in general (and so in *Christian* theology of "God-language" in particular). But, as noted, such a prolegomenon is not theology: it can neither "uncover God" (260 ff.) nor establish and assert his reality (254), nor make assertions about the structures, ground, source, or ultimate character of being (275-76, 279-83).⁵ And since the argument of the book had already established that a Christian theology without God was self-contradictory, such a prolegomenon, unable by itself to speak of God, was manifestly unable to provide a sufficient basis for theology. On the contrary, the text stated repeatedly that positive theology, Christian theology, was based not alone on secular experience but precisely on a "break with prolegomenon," on new and special kinds of experiences, and ultimately on revelation and faith (416 ff., 425 ff.).

Even though in this way the book clearly did not claim to be theology, nevertheless it did (at least for those who agreed with its arguments) establish the meaningfulness and relevance of religious discourse, even in

³ "And secondly, we do not wish in our prolegomenon to assume or to establish, in fact to treat directly at all, the question of the existence or actual character of God, the question of the validity of particular religious propositions or claims. For reasons already explained . . . that is the task of systematic theology and not of prolegomenon. We wish only to show that a dimension of ultimacy does appear in our ordinary life and thus does give meaning to, and in fact provide the necessity for, religious symbols. . . . In sum, by making possible a relevant analysis of experience which will establish the meaningfulness of the symbolic discourse of religion, the epoché is fundamental to our prolegomenon and separates it definitely from the complementary but nevertheless quite different task of systematic theology" (*Naming* 283).

⁴ "A genuinely secular starting point is not, in other words, a sufficient ground for positive theological affirmations, a first part of a doctrinal system. Such an analysis can at best be only prolegomenon to systematic theology as a whole, establishing the meaningfulness of the general language of theology; it is, if you will, anthropology and not yet theology" (ibid. 261).

⁵ "Here we are concerned only with the dimension as it is generally experienced, as it appears in and to our experience, not as Christians believe it to be and to be appropriately described. Ours is a phenomenology of the religious in secular experience, and it asks about neither the *reality* nor the ontological *nature* of that which lies behind or appears within the phenomena" (ibid. 254, emphases in text).

a secular age whose main characteristic has been precisely the denial of the meaningfulness of such discourse. It accomplished this limited but clearly defined task because it showed that in "secular" experience (common, ordinary, daily experience, the experience of our "life-world") a transcendent, extrasecular, ultimate, and sacred dimension appeared as the most important element of that experience. The book illuminated not what Christian theology says in answer to our problems—its "doctrines"; rather it uncovered some of the human problems, questions, crises, and joys that doctrines are an answer to, namely, our contingency, our relativity, our transience, and our wayward autonomy. Doctrines are in that sense "about" those aspects of our ordinary, secular being because that being is—and this we sought also to show—intrinsically grounded in, related to, and permeated by a transcendent, ultimate, sacred dimension. Moreover, this dimension is precisely, as providing an answer, *transnatural*, i.e., not contingent, relative, and transient (cf. 447). As I reiterated, such a "secular" phenomenology of ordinary experience, uncovering a dimension of ultimacy in that experience, speaks only of religion in general, of man's religious dimension ("it is anthropology"). It provides the basis for a theory of the vindication of religion in general; it is not, and we said it was not, a presentation of a Christian view or interpretation of all of this, that is, a view of God, human being, experience, the world, and their culmination shaped by Christian symbols, a theology. Berger paid no attention to the continual restatement of this purpose, logic, and structure of the work and read it as a "theology" (and so as a "secular theology") because he had apparently figured that "theology" was what a book by a theologian must be.

It is also clearly stated in this book, and in the book on Catholicism, whenever theology proper is referred to, that no theology is possible if a reductionist mode of thinking is adopted or if no "cognitive dissonance" is manifest. This was the central point of the critique in *Naming* of the secular theologies: the secular world, viewing all of relevant being as exhaustively contingent, relative, and transient, has no place for what transcends this natural order and thus makes theology self-contradictory (Part 1, chaps. 4 and 5). Further, it was clearly argued that the "secular" interpretation of experience (as it was put, "the secular interpretation of secular experience") is *wrong*, a misinterpretation of the lineaments and characteristics of that experience (248–60; cf. also *Catholicism* 137 ff.).⁶

⁶ "We shall challenge the secular understanding of secular existence not on theological or metaphysical grounds, but on its failure to provide symbolic forms capable of thematizing the actual character of its life" (ibid. 250). "Secular autonomy taken as a total view of ourselves is neither a true answer to our intellectual question—What is man like?—nor a helpful answer to the existential and personal question—How am I to live as a human being, in fullness and creativity?" (ibid. 252).

Thus I argued that any interpretation of secular experience in secular terms alone is in error; our self-understanding requires another dimension if we are to interpret our experience correctly. (Berger apparently did not even read this long section in the book, for he said I “had offered no critique of the secular world view.”) This other dimension, transcendent to the secular but appearing within it, requires, we stated, in turn a special mode of discourse, of interpretation, and of explication if it is to be clarified. Language about it (religious language) is “queer” language, not reducible to the modes of discourse, the disciplines, of secular culture.⁷ It is language about the finite to be sure, but referent as well and *primarily* to the infinite or the transcendent that appears within and through the finite (289–90, 293); secularity in principle excludes this referent and so this type of language. Finally, positive discourse about this dimension as it manifests itself, i.e., theology, is consequently based not on general, “secular” experience at all, nor is it subject to the latter’s canons (though to be meaningful it must *relate* to that experience). On the contrary, valid theology is based on revelation, and on a special experience of revelation⁸ (*Naming* 302–3, 426 ff., 452; *Catholicism* 91–93); and it is related to by participation and commitment, i.e., by faith (*Naming* 464, *Catholicism* 168)—surely nonsecular modes of cognition with startling “dissonance” with a secular culture.

Thus was it clearly stated that theology, while necessarily related to and interpretative of secular (ordinary) experience, is neither in its sources in revelation nor in its modes of cognition secular in character. Its basis is special revelation, centered in Jesus Christ (*Naming* 457, *Catholicism* 93–150); its primary materials are the symbols derived from the Christian Scriptures and interpreted in tradition from this originating revelation (*Catholicism* 116); and its primary criterion is its fidelity, not at all to the secular self-understanding, but to revelation and tradition⁹ (*Naming* 460, *Catholicism* 93, 116, 121, 150). *Prolegomenon* (represented by *Naming*) has as its materials secular experience, and as its criterion fidelity to that experience. *Theology* (represented in my works by *Maker and Reaping*) has as its basic materials the correlation, the interaction, between experience on the one hand and Christian revelation enshrined

⁷ “First, it is essential to note that an intelligible religious use of language is an unusual and strange use of words. That is to say, it is not like any of the other kinds of usage in ordinary discourse . . .” (ibid. 286).

⁸ “Christian theology, then, as the positive explication of the faith of this community and so of the meaning for our day of the originating and traditional symbolic forms of its life, is based on those special experiences of God’s activity and presence which we have called ‘revelation’” (ibid. 454).

⁹ “The first criterion for a valid theology is that any theological statement be a consistent expression of the symbolic forms of the historical community within which the answers are received, experienced and comprehended through the media of the faith” (ibid. 460).

in Christian symbols on the other. In order to be Christian, theology must be faithful to these given symbols; in order to be meaningful and relevant, it must keep in continual touch with our "secular" (ordinary) experience, with, that is, our living and dying, our life meanings and our work, our political and moral decisions, our daily guilt and our daily search for forgiveness, acceptance, and new being. Thus here neither prolegomenon nor theology is "reductionist" in language or categories; both manifest "cognitive dissonance" with scientific, naturalistic modes of explication and thinking. And in theology especially the central criterion is extracultural and extrasecular. Berger could hardly have been more in error on his first three accusations.

The final point of Berger's criticism, namely, that here all categories referent to the genuinely transcendent are abrogated and reduced to statements about "nature" and/or the human condition, is just as clearly false. Berger has misread my by no means original insistence on our *experience* of the transcendent for relevant religious speech (e.g., Luther, Schleiermacher, S. K., Tillich, to name a few) as representing a *denial* of that transcendent reality. He has also erroneously concluded that the claim that the divine manifests itself *not only* in special "religious" experience but *as well* in ordinary, common, daily experiences (a theme shared with Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, Calvin, Schleiermacher, and Tillich) entails necessarily the confinement and interpretation of the divine in exhaustively secular categories. The point made in the prolegomenon vis-à-vis "secular" experience was that the secular interpretation of that experience was in serious error because *even there* a non-secular, transcendent, ultimate dimension manifested itself in and through the finite (*Naming* 253-54, 309-315). This transcendent dimension within ordinary experience, it is argued, is clearly *beyond* as well as within the finite; it appears only at the *limits* of secular experience; its main character is to provide the base, ground, or source of the finite; "its phenomenological character is *qualitatively different* from all we call the natural world."¹⁰ Thus, because it *founds* the human, it can threaten our humanity fundamentally as well as rescue and redeem it (*ibid.* 253-54, 296-97, 313-14). Consequently, as noted, language about this dimension is "queer" (286), assertive talk about the finite, to be sure, but "about it in relation to *the beyond that appears within it*" (*ibid.* 290, emphasis in text). Obviously, although this prolegomenon deals with "secular" experience, what it finds there, and speaks about, namely, the transcendent, the ultimate, the sacred, is neither confined to nor interpreted within

¹⁰ "Why do we not just call it the 'natural world' or the 'universe'? . . . At this stage in our discussion, the reason is that, as we shall subsequently seek to show, the phenomenological character of these experiences has a qualitatively different tone from our experience of the system of finite things we investigate and call the natural world or the universe" (*ibid.* 312).

secular categories and terms. Even more, when prolegomenon changes its method and form and becomes theology, that is, witness to the transcendent as it has manifested itself in special events, traditions, and experience (*Naming* 453 ff.), then, so to speak, the transcendence of the transcendent becomes even clearer, since we are no longer searching for it merely "within immanence." As based on special experiences, different from ordinary experience (446), and as providing an answer by definition not found in ordinary experience (ordinary experience being precisely the problem, 445-47), "an answer here, therefore, (which *answer* is the referent of theological witness) if one is found here at all, is one *from* transcendence *to* finitude, from that which not sharing in these dependencies of the creature is itself *more than* creaturely" (447, emphases in text).

The same theme is repeated in *Catholicism*. Reference to the transcendent, rightly defended, I said, by the conservative Catholic wing (45), is essential to theology and its language (59, 133-34, 165).¹¹ In this work, for reasons clearly stated as intrinsic to the particular present issues of Catholic theology (cf. 46 ff.), I questioned the "traditional" or "official" post-Tridentine and especially post-Vatican I interpretation of "supernature" and the "supernatural." Clearly such a critique does not imply, as Berger apparently thought it did, a rejection *in toto* of the transcendent, the ultimate, or the sacred as categories distinct from "secular" categories. Such eminently nonreductionist Catholic theologians as Rahner and Lonergan have also challenged that older "extrinsicist" interpretation of the natural and the supernatural. In their own way Luther and Lutheranism also challenged this distinction of nature and supernature (and set up a new and in many ways more ultimate dichotomy of law and

¹¹ In quoting only the first sentence of the following, Berger omitted the crucial explanatory statement of my meaning. Did he fail to *read* the remainder? "The task for twentieth century Catholicism calls for the reinterpretation of the transcendent, the sacred, and the divine—the presence of God to men—into the worldly or naturalistic forms of modern experience rather than in the supernaturalistic forms of Hellenic and medieval experience. [Here Berger stops.] By my use of the word 'naturalism' I do not mean to imply that the world, history, and men are all that there is, and that religion must understand itself exhaustively in their light alone. Rather, naturalism connotes that our experience manifests to us one world: of nature, history, others, and ourselves, a world of process and becoming, of history and change, of relativity and temporality, of autonomous, authentic selfhood, and creative community. And secondly, that the continuing and creative ground of that world, the basis of its order and so of our thought, the source of its meaning, healing, love and hope for its future, transcends that world while being continually in creative relation to it, bringing it to God's goal and its completion. This ground of all, this depth of all experience, this source of order, meaning, love, healing and hope is God" (*Catholicism* 59). Perhaps the word "naturalism" is here misleading; but the text makes clear that any claim that such a view is either reductionist to "secular disciplines" or seeks no reference beyond the natural order or the human condition is absurd.

gospel). Calvin more thoroughly challenged and transformed both distinctions; and every major Protestant theologian of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as recent Catholic theologians, have likewise questioned that “two-story universe” derived from the High Middle Ages. Berger has confounded, first, prolegomenon with systematic theology; secondly, an insistence on the *relatedness* of terms with the *denial* of the terms themselves; and now, thirdly, a critique of *one* view of transcendence (as a “supernatural world” or “realm”) with a rejection of transcendence itself.

The first rule of criticism is that the position criticized be understood and then fairly described. Berger has failed to abide by both aspects of that rule. Obviously there are many points at which the theological position here described can be criticized—and has been so criticized. (1) Its critique of the secular world view on the basis of “secular” (ordinary) experience may have been abortive. (2) Its attempt in the prolegomenon to uncover the genuinely transcendent within secular experience may well have failed. (3) Its attempts in theology to keep secular experience in touch with and shaped by classical Christian symbolism may have lacked coherence and unity. (4) Finally, its fidelity to scriptural and traditional categories in expressing them in contemporary forms may be questionable. Nevertheless, granted the texts specified above and quoted in the footnotes, it is false to assert, as Berger does, (1) that the secular world view was here never strongly criticized, (2) that no transcendent or “supernatural” reality beyond the natural and the human was referred to, and (3) that theology was regarded as reductionist or secularistic, a capitulation to the secular culture. Berger could say that I could not integrate successfully these seemingly diverse themes within the scope of my total view; he cannot, however, deny these affirmations on my part, or the presence of these diverse themes, in my works. Since the texts are there, no critical description possesses competence, integrity, or responsibility which does not recognize them and state their presence and so which fails to concede the presence of the theological affirmations and convictions which they represent. To say, in the face of such texts, either “He does not *mean* that; he has another (secularizing) program in mind,” or to fail to mention the texts at all, has neither meaning nor cogency and is not worthy of public intellectual debate.

I have suggested that lack of professional experience with theological literature may be one plausible explanation of this strange misinterpretation of texts that are otherwise quite clear. But this is adequate only in part. Berger is intelligent, and an intelligent person can absorb new and even difficult levels of discourse. May it be, therefore (as a final “guess”), that the reason for this woeful misreading of my theological texts—as of those of my two colleagues—is that Berger is “theologically unmusical”?

This is, to be sure, to enjoy a better status vis-à-vis eternity (which, incidentally, I do believe in and affirm unequivocally) than to be “religiously unmusical,” as Berger described the three of us in his article. Nevertheless, it is also true that when one seeks to enter the public and so worldly realm of theological criticism and debate, Berger’s “conceptual deafness” for the logic and nuances of theology is for the moment the greater liability.

LANGDON GILKEY

II

Peter Berger has advanced the same contention about my theological efforts as about those of my friends Langdon Gilkey and David Tracy, namely, that, “contrary to its own self-definition” and “despite its stated aims,” the theological procedure the three of us agree in proposing is “yet another variety of reduction,” specifically, “the moderate (as against the radical) wing of American theological reductionism.”¹ My reply to this contention is that it is groundless in the case of all three of us and that such grounds as Berger may appear to have provided for it are spurious. That this is so in my own case I take to be more than evident from the following considerations.

1) According to Berger, “the stated intention” of my book *The Reality of God*² is “to give a secular interpretation of the Christian faith without lapsing into the more extreme forms of secular theology” (41). Careful readers may wonder why, if this is “the *stated* intention” of my book, Berger provides nothing in the way of documentation for his claim. In any case, I would like to challenge him to document it by citing at least one of my own statements in which I state anything of the kind to be the intention of my book. Pending such documentation, I shall feel free to contend that Berger’s claim is exactly what it appears to be: *his* statement of my intention, not mine.

2) Although Berger verbally acknowledges that I distinguish between “secularity” and “secularism,” he so misrepresents what I say in explaining and using the distinction as to really ignore it. Thus his statement that “under this distinction, secularism is essentially scientism” (41) quite misleads about my own account, which maintains that secularism is no less essentially *humanism*, in the sense of an understanding of human action according to which “such action realizes no will to good beyond the merely human and neither requires nor admits of any transcendent

¹ Berger, “Secular Theology” 55–56. Subsequent references are made parenthetically in the text.

² *The Reality of God and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966; 2nd ed., 1977).

justification.”³ But it is just such humanism—on my account clearly represented as typical of secularism—that Berger then misrepresents as typical of secularity: “Secularity, on the other hand, is essentially the affirmation of the ultimate worthwhileness of human life in this world, as against any notion that the latter can only be vindicated by positing another world or another life” (41). Not only does this characterization of secularity as, in effect, the denial that human life in any way points beyond itself to a transcendent ground and end correspond to nothing I have ever written, but it is also expressly contradicted by the very sentence from my book that Berger immediately proceeds to quote: “‘Secularity as such, as distinct from secularism, is simply the emphatic affirmation that man and the world are themselves of ultimate significance’” (41). But any doubt about my view that secularity as such is entirely positive and so in no way denies the transcendent is removed by the following two sentences, which Berger simply ignores: “Hence, by the logic of the preceding argument, it [secularity] implies the equally emphatic affirmation of God as the ground of that significance. Far from being the great defection from God—at any rate, as ‘God’ has been defined here—secularity is actually an expression of profound faith in him.”⁴ Insofar as Berger is correct, then, that, on my view, “a secular interpretation of the Christian faith, while rejecting secularism, will also reject supernaturalistic theism” (41), this is not because, as he avers, secularity denies any notion that human life in this world necessarily points beyond itself. On the contrary, it is solely because the negations essential to what I mean by “supernaturalistic theism” are themselves the implicit denial of the wholly positive affirmation of secularity.

3) This indication that Berger also misrepresents what I mean by “supernaturalistic theism” is amply confirmed by his subsequent account of my alternative understanding of the concept “God.” Put schematically, the difficulty with his account is this: just as he misrepresents what I mean by “secularity” as including the denial that he, but not I, associates with the term, so he misrepresents my kind of theism as excluding the affirmation that he, but not I, takes to be distinctive of “supernaturalistic theism.” Clearly, as *he* uses the term, to reject “supernaturalism” is to reject any affirmation of God as, in his words, “a reality that lies outside the human condition” (53). But to infer, as he does, that the same must be true on *my* use of terms requires him to seriously distort what I actually say. And so he claims that, given “the postulate of secularity” with which I am alleged to begin, not only faith in God, but even “the very notion of God, is confidence in life’s ultimate worthwhileness” (42), as though I do not clearly and consistently distinguish between our own

³ Ibid. 11.

⁴ Ibid. 44–45.

confidence in life's worth, on the one hand, and God himself as the "transcendent ground" of such confidence, on the other.⁵ Or, again, Berger insinuates that "the God of process philosophy," on which I am held to rely, involves, in Schleiermacher's words, "the transference of the idea of God to [a] perceptible object" (52), as though I do not expressly assert that God is so "radically different" from all the other objects of our belief and knowledge that of him alone the inference of the ontological argument is warranted, so that "to be able to conceive *what* God is, is also to know *that* he is."⁶ Or, again, Berger quotes me to show that "most important" for the kind of God that emerges from my perspective is that God be conceived as genuinely related to our life in the world (42), as though I do not explain in that very context that God's being "supremely relative" is but one of "two essential characteristics," and hence could be neither more nor less important than his being "supremely absolute."⁷ Berger does allow, to be sure, that my kind of God "is supposed to be a 'dipolar' one" (42). But, aside from the fact that this way of putting things is evidently intended to suggest that they are really otherwise, Berger proceeds to imply that it is solely the "monopolar" God of supernaturalistic theism who "confronts the world in remote, unchanging majesty" (43), as though I do not explicitly state that for my neoclassical theism, too, "God is in a literal sense 'eternal,' 'immutable,' 'impassive,' 'immaterial'—in brief, the metaphysical Absolute."⁸ The evidence is abundant, then, that Berger as seriously misrepresents the supernaturalism I reject as the secularity I accept, thereby obscuring the whole point of my argument that what is wrong with supernaturalism, just as with the secularism that is its extreme contrary, is not what it positively affirms but solely what it gratuitously denies.

4) The most egregious distortion of my argument results from Berger's claim about its "axiomatic starting point," namely, that "secularity . . . is always criterion, never object of critique: we cannot accept supernaturalism *because* it is contrary to the secular understanding of reality, and we find it repugnant *because* it denies the secular valuation of human life" (42). What documentation does Berger offer for this claim? Significantly, he himself is compelled to note that the only passage he cites utterly fails to provide any such documentation, since it plainly takes secularity itself to be "a matter of decision" (43 n. 14). And yet, instead of admitting that *his* claim is groundless, he alleges that *my* statements

⁵ Ibid. 40; cf. also 37, where I contend that "the primary use or function of 'God' is to refer to the objective ground in reality itself of our ineradicable confidence in the final worth of our existence."

⁶ Ibid. 21–22.

⁸ Ibid. 61.

⁷ Ibid. 47–48 (my italics).

are entangled in "inconsistencies." Why? Because the secularity that is admittedly presented in the only passage cited as a matter of decision is "originally described as an inexorable fate" (43 n. 14). But now who has thus originally described secularity as an inexorable fate? If I myself have ever so described it, why hasn't Berger cited *that* passage instead of one that, by his own admission, clearly implies the contrary? The reason, of course, is that no such passage exists and that any "inconsistencies" there may be in this whole matter are entirely those between what I myself plainly say and what Berger falsely claims that I say. This is in no way to deny, naturally, that I do indeed assert "an irreconcilable opposition between the premises of . . . supernaturalistic theism and the whole direction of our experience and reflection as secular men."⁹ But, aside from the fact that Berger himself obviously agrees with this assertion, I also make quite clear that, if such an opposition undoubtedly constitutes a theological *problem*, it in no way indicates a theological *solution*, since one could as well reject secularity as supernaturalistic theism in order to solve it. Hence my consistent references to secularity as itself an option, which is as little, or as much, a matter of inexorable fate as the supernaturalistic theism to which it is so opposed. But for other reasons as well I am confident that any reasonably sympathetic critic of my argument will find Berger's claim about it as flagrantly false as I do; for so far from arguing from a secularity that is presupposed and remains unquestioned, I expressly repudiate the requirement that the theologian "conform his claims to the secular thought of his situation," and I specifically dismiss as "uncritical" any theological procedure that would involve "accepting the then current expressions of secular experience and reason as definitive norms."¹⁰ Moreover, my detailed discussion with Jean-Paul Sartre provides an extended application of just these principles of procedure, showing by actual example that the theologian properly has questions to ask as well as to answer in his dialogue with modern secular culture.¹¹

5) Beyond that, nothing, I venture to think, is more characteristic of my argument in this book, as well as of my theological efforts otherwise, than the insistence that there are two criteria of theological adequacy, not one. If I argue, as I do, that no theology can possibly be adequate unless, within a given situation, its claims are understandable in the general terms of reason and experience, I also argue that "no theology can possibly be adequate unless, within the limits of a given situation, it is an appropriate interpretation of the scriptural witness."¹² That in our situation today the first criterion of understandability requires that theological assertions be meaningful and true in terms of secular reason

⁹ Ibid. 17.

¹⁰ Ibid. 120-21; cf. also 15.

¹¹ Ibid. 120-43.

¹² Ibid. 122; cf. 6, 67, 190-92.

and experience I do indeed believe, and my whole book is, in effect, an argument for this belief. But there is nothing in that book or in anything else I have ever written to indicate that this, to my mind, *necessary* condition of theological adequacy today either is or even could be also a *sufficient* condition of such adequacy. Every bit as necessary, on my view, is that theological assertions today, just as in every other day, must also satisfy the second criterion of appropriateness, and thus conform to the normative witness of the apostles. But, then, to imply, as Berger does, that the *only* reason, on my argument, that supernaturalism is unacceptable is because it is contrary to the secular understanding of reality is to wholly mislead as to how I, in fact, argue. It is to ignore completely my express acknowledgement, after having argued for a new form of theism that is understandable to secular men, that "there remains the question, crucial for Protestant theology, whether this new view can also do justice to the faith in God's reality decisively re-presented in Jesus Christ."¹³ It is also to ignore completely the reasons I myself give for the unacceptability of supernaturalism when I argue that, "from the standpoint of theology's total concern and task, the objection to supernaturalism is not simply that it is an impossible conception for contemporary men, but that it also makes impossible an appropriate theological witness to the God of Jesus Christ."¹⁴

But Berger is just as misleading in what he says about the "anti-immortality note" on which my book is supposed to end (43). From his account, according to which "secularity has the last word, literally," one is given the impression that the reservations I express about the theological adequacy of the conventional belief in subjective immortality are warranted simply by an appeal to secularity. The truth, however, is that my argument in those concluding pages makes no appeal whatsoever to secularity but appeals solely to the witness of the New Testament, which literally has the last word. I am by no means unaware that my argument on this point is highly questionable. But the questions that are pertinent to it have entirely to do with whether the promise of faith attested by the New Testament may be appropriately understood by us today as not including subjective immortality—not, as Berger mistakenly says, "any kind of personal survival after death," since the objective immortality I insist is included in the promise of faith is itself a kind of "personal survival after death." Simply to assert, as Berger does, that, whatever may be meant by my interpretation of everlasting life, it does "*not* mean what Christians have hoped for in this department since the beginnings of the faith" (43) is not to answer these questions but to beg them; and it is as out of place in serious discussion today as it was a generation or

¹³ Ibid. 65.

¹⁴ Ibid. 66.

so ago to assert that the revisionary doctrine of creation then being put forward and now widely accepted as appropriate did not mean what Christians had believed in that department since the beginnings of the faith. In any event, if one is not to evade my challenge to this point in the conventional theological wisdom, my argument must be taken as the kind of argument it in fact is, not as the very different kind of argument that Berger's criticism makes it out to be.

SCHUBERT M. OGDEN

III

I have had the opportunity to read the responses of my friends and colleagues Langdon Gilkey and Schubert Ogden. It is perhaps helpful to state for the reader that I believe their responses to Peter Berger's charges, not only in relationship to their work but, indeed, to the general charge of reductionism leveled at all three of us, to be entirely accurate. I will attempt in my own response, therefore, to confine my remarks to Berger's interpretations of my own work in *Blessed Rage for Order*.

As I read his comments, there are six issues where he finds evidence for my presumed reductionism. I shall, therefore, first state his interpretation and the evidence he cites and comment on how, in no single case, does his interpretation hold. Although such piecemeal refutation is, I realize, less interesting to the reader, it seems the only recourse left, since another general statement of my theological purposes would hardly serve to persuade Berger, given his original interpretation (or, as I hope to show, misinterpretation) of the basic argument of the book itself.

1) The first textual evidence cited for my "reductionist" position is introduced by the description of the task of revisionist theology, which, Berger insists, shows "little ambiguity." I presume the latter phrase, itself somewhat ambiguous, means that there is no ambiguity in my text, not that there is some or a little ambiguity. My text as cited by Berger reads:

. . . the revisionist theologian is committed to what seems clearly to be the central task of contemporary Christian theology: the dramatic confrontation, the mutual illuminations and corrections, the possible basic reconciliation between the principal values, cognitive claims, and existential faiths of both a reinterpreted post-modern consciousness and a reinterpreted Christianity.¹

How this quotation shows with "little ambiguity" how my program is "reductionist" escapes me. It clearly states that there are to be "confrontations" on both sides, *mutual* illuminations and corrections, and a *possible* basic reconciliation between modernity and Christianity. In

¹ *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1975)

American theology the typology of H. Richard Niebuhr on the relationships of "Christ and culture" often has been cited. On that widely accepted typology (one acceptable, I believe, to Berger for his own work) my position is clearly transformationist. As my consistent use of the model of "self-transcendence" and the pairing of a "transformative" model with a "disclosive" one throughout the book, or even as a reading of the very quotation Berger cites show, his insistence that there is evidence for reductionism is not the case. His further failure to note for his reader the *material* arguments in the book against secularist interpretations of secularity by means of explicitly Christian theological understandings of God, sin, love, and faith in Christ is strange. His utter silence upon my consistent formal methodological insistence that the book is a work in fundamental and not systematic theology (analogous to his silence upon Langdon Gilkey's notion of "prolegomena" or Schubert Ogden's insistence upon criteria of "appropriateness to Scripture") is stranger still. Either Berger does not consider this distinction a real one (in which case he should argue why it fails to delineate two distinct theological tasks) or he is not familiar with the uses of the distinction in theology. In any case, he does not even inform his reader that I hold to the distinction. Rather, he proceeds on the basis of a single quotation—and one which in fact shows the opposite of his interpretation to be the case.

2) Berger's second textual citation to warrant his charge of reductionism is equally puzzling. After stating correctly that the centerpiece of my book is an analysis of the religious dimension of common human experience, he then interprets the notion of limit-experience. He refers implicitly to my distinction between stating a "limit-to" the ordinary and showing or disclosing and partly stating a religious "limit-of" "ground-to" those experiences. He finds the analyses of the "limit-to" experiences clear, whereas the "latter leaves something to be desired" (49). As evidence he then cites this passage from *Blessed Rage for Order*: "a dimension which, in my own belief and hazy glimpses, discloses a reality, however named and in whatever manner experienced, which functions as a final, now gracious, now frightening, now trustworthy, now absurd, always uncontrollable limit-of the very meaning of existence itself."²

I have no intention of claiming that either this passage or any other I have written does not "leave something to be desired." I do intend to deny that either this passage or any other in the book on the "limit-of" experience of religion is evidence for reductionism. Berger's own work on religion, including the interesting and suggestive article which he cites (54) entitled "Some Second Thoughts on Substantive versus Functional

² Ibid. 108.

Definitions of Religion,"³ is itself reflection on the difficult subject of a definition of religion which I find both incisive and constructive, even though, as I am sure Berger would agree, its necessarily tentative characterization of "religion" (like my own) leaves something to be desired. Yet how he can read the quotation he gives and not note the obvious influence in the very wording (gracious, frightening, trustworthy, absurd, uncontrollable) of his own favorite interpreters of religions, Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade, is indeed puzzling. In any event, the passage does not on any reading provide evidence of reductionism.

3) Berger's next and, I gather, most important evidence of my reductionist position is my antisupernaturalist stance as he interprets it. Here the evidence he adduces is a third (and final) quotation from *Blessed Rage for Order*:

Religious language does not present a new, a supernatural world wherein we may escape the only world we know or wish to know. Rather that language re-presents our always threatened basic confidence and trust in the very meaningfulness of even our most cherished and most noble enterprises, science, morality, and culture. That language discloses the reassurance needed that the final reality of our lives is in fact trustworthy.⁴

Given the fact that a major preoccupation of Berger in this article seems to be to defend a "nonauthoritarian" defense of the "supernatural" (54), I find it strange that he never cites my clear statement on what I do and do not mean in rejecting "supernaturalism."

The use of the concept "supernatural" here is the modern sense of religious studies where it is roughly equivalent to "fundamentalism," not in the more restricted medieval sense where it is a strictly theoretical concept for thematizing the Christian religion. For an example of the former use, cf. Yervant Krikorian (ed.), *Naturalism and the Human Spirit* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944); for the latter, more restricted use of the *theorem* of the supernatural, cf. Bernard Lonergan's discussion in *Grace and Freedom* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), p. 16.⁵

As this passage states, as all my written work prior to and subsequent upon *Blessed Rage for Order* makes clear, I am fully in agreement with Lonergan (or Rahner or de Lubac *et al.*) and the mainline Roman Catholic theological tradition on affirming the theorem of the supernatural as first articulated by Philip the Chancellor and as systematically developed by Thomas Aquinas as a theorem for understanding our concrete religious experience as Christians. Indeed, I agree with Rahner's insistence that the "natural," on this reading, is a "remainder concept"

³ *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, June 1974.

⁴ *Blessed Rage for Order* 135.

⁵ *Ibid.* 19 n. 40.

or, as I prefer to state it, a theorem for a useful abstraction, whereas the supernatural is theoretical-theological language for our concrete religious states. In that specific Catholic theological language sense I affirm the "supernatural." In the sense of "supernaturalism" as a synonym for "fundamentalism" (or, alternatively with Berger, "authoritarianism") or in the philosophical sense employed by the American philosophical tradition (hence the reference to Krikorian's well-known anthology), I do reject the concept "supernatural." Yet so does Berger, as his antifundamentalist and antiauthoritarian comments (55) make clear.

The dispute between us on this issue is, I believe, occasioned by two principal factors. First, my own comments in the passage referred to above do not with sufficient clarity spell out what I assumed any reader informed by the debate in Catholic theology would know from my fully positive (not negative, as Berger [49 n. 35] assumes) reference to Lonergan's work. Although I continue to find the statement of the text clear, I do regret that I did not spell it out at greater length to disallow the kind of misreading Berger gives. Second, Berger's somewhat patronizing remarks on the Roman Catholic theological tradition do not lead me to believe he is informed by this discussion in Catholic theology, nor with Lonergan's work on it, nor my own comments in other writings on it.⁶ His interpretation of Schleiermacher, as Langdon Gilkey observes in his comments, leads me to believe that his knowledge of Protestant theology may also be idiosyncratic.

How his own rejection of "authoritarianism" differs other than verbally from my rejection of "fundamentalism" (which is *not* synonymous with either "conservative evangelicalism" or conservative Catholic orthodoxy) I fail to see. That I think the word "supernatural" outside of the restricted theological context referred to above to be an exhausted word in the wider culture, precisely because of its widespread usage as synonymous with "fundamentalism" or even (as in bookstores) "the occult," is true. That Berger does not think this to be the case seems clear. The issue here, however, is verbal, not substantive, and once again provides no evidence for reductionism.

4) Berger's next evidence is that my book interprets the New Testament as "presenting some very specific limit experiences, which Tracy calls 'a possible mode-of-being-in-the-world.' Again, the validity of these accounts is established by their putative 'fit' with our own experience" (50). His citation to the text (131) is presumably to the title of the entire section. The analysis itself (131-36), which specifies these "specific limit-

⁶ *The Achievement of Bernard Lonergan* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970) 33-44; "St. Thomas Aquinas and the Religious Dimension of Experience: The Doctrine of Sin," in *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, 1974, pp. 167-70.

experiences" as radical Christian faith, trust, and agapic love, does not "fit" this curious interpretation, which cites a section title (without explaining it) and then ignores the analysis of the section itself.

The same kind of mistaken interpretation is made on my use of process categories for the doctrine of God, which, according to Berger (50), "supposedly is not only more consonant with the Christian texts but also (and this is decisive) intended 'to resonate more fully to the deepest sensitivities of our present multi-dimensional cultural situation.'"⁷ Again we find the now familiar fact that nowhere does the text claim that the second factor is "decisive" (indeed, as the text makes clear consistently, a process doctrine of God is employed because it fits *both* the Scriptures and our contemporary experience better than classical theism). In this instance there is a further implication: in the text the very next sentence after the one quoted by Berger gives my *criticism* of any exclusive use of process categories for symbolic purposes, a criticism again based on both scriptural and contemporary grounds.

On his interpretation of both my position on the New Testament parables and my position on the doctrine of God, therefore, Berger does not account for either the methodological argument of Part 1 or the material arguments of Part 2 in general or in their details (as above). In spite of my insistence throughout the book on the need for two sets of criteria (adequacy to experience and appropriateness to Scripture), he, not I, insists that only the first is "decisive" or gives "validity." The two specific cases he cites to support this claim can be seen not to fit by any reader of the pages which Berger himself claims as warrants for his charge. Once again his charge does not hold.

5) Berger ends his section on my book with the "impression that it is not enough to be modern and secular any more: one must also, it seems, be somewhere on the left politically" (51). This judgment he bases on a quotation which, in the context of my critical but basically affirmative brief analysis of liberation theologies, speaks of the Christian eschatological symbols as including negations of oppression and projections of a better future for our common humanity. It is true that I believe that the liberation and political theologians have made a sound hermeneutical case for the social justice, political implications of the New Testament eschatology.⁸ It is true that I am, in fact, "somewhere on the left politically." It is also true that my text includes a brief critical comment on Berger's own work of a political nature:

This resource [the Frankfurt School] seems more in harmony with the revisionist model than the more widely used (by American theologians) Berger-Luckmann model in Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of*

⁷ The reference to *Blessed Rage for Order* is to p. 189.

⁸ For that evidence, *ibid.* 240-58.

Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967). It is no disparagement of this important work to suggest that, however valuable its interpretation of the model of the social construction of reality clearly is, it seems to leave relatively unexamined the possibilities for a critical reflection upon any given social construction and thereby leaves the status-quo unchallenged. For a pointed critique of Berger-Luckmann here, cf. Trent Schroyer, *The Critique of Domination: The Origins and Development of Critical Theory* (New York: Braziller, 1974), pp. 267–8, n. 22.⁹

Now on this political question it may well be the case that Berger will prove to be correct and I wrong. But the theological issue is not that; it is rather whether the eschatological symbols include a political dimension against oppression and for a better humanity (no more—i.e., no specific political program—and no less). We both could agree to that much. That I find this eschatological symbolism more likely to be resonant with the program of Jürgen Habermas than that of Peter Berger is true. But my text no more *reduces* the eschatological symbols to a political program of the left than it reduces the earlier parable and doctrine of God discussions to only our common human experience. It is the case that I hold that Christian theological self-understanding needs reinterpretation and revision (so, in fact, does Berger in his own work). But these revisions must be *both* adequate to our contemporary human experience *and* appropriate to the Christian tradition. Moreover, the book argues throughout that secularity's most familiar self-interpretation (viz., secularism) must be negated on the basis of its inadequacy to our common experience. The program, to be sure, is revisionist but it is clearly transformationist, not reductionist. To reduce that program to reductionism, as Berger does, is simply wrong and will be so judged, I trust, by readers of the actual text.

6) In his general comments on the positions of Gilkey, Ogden, and myself, Berger insists (53): "Still, the question remains: *What is the finally intended referent of religious language?* If it is solely the human condition, then Feuerbach (not Schleiermacher) was right after all" (emphasis his). This is simply incredible as a charge against either Gilkey or Ogden or myself. Gilkey's entire book is on *The Renewal of God-Language*; Ogden's major essay is on *The Reality of God*; and I consistently refer to God, not the human situation, as the "referent" of religious language. That anyone can read any one of us and decide that the theology present is not theistic, indeed theocentric, through and through, is baffling. Berger's own constructive theological work is, in fact, revisionist and open to the same false charges based on the same misinterpretations as he accords the three of us. I hope he, at least, will be spared the duty of responding to such criticism.