

BECOMING FUNDAMENTALLY SCRIPTURAL WITHOUT BEING FUNDAMENTALISTIC

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To teach Scripture to children is to live in an educational paradox. The teacher is to teach the closed canon of Scripture without closing off the present experience of the Creator. In social terms this paradox is to live with the commitment to, and respect for, Scripture associated with the fundamentalistic community but also to live with the awareness and openness to modern experience and language associated with liberal Christianity. What is needed is a new frame of reference for being conservative that conserves the best of both points of view.

There is an ancient map for this process of teaching Scripture that conserves both the language of Zion and modern language. It is the map that shows the deep channel one must steer between the dangerous rocks of blasphemy and idolatry. It is this channel that leads the way into the open sea of relationship with the Creator where all things are made new by living in that perspective on life and death.

As the centuries have shown, holding the map in one's hand or mind does not guarantee a successful journey. One must make the trip to truly know it. This paper will describe a way to teach Scripture which can avoid the destruction of the process by either idolatry or blasphemy, but there are no guarantees. After a decade of being involved in such a journey, the deeper theological paradox in the process has clearly emerged. When there is success it is not the teacher's. It is when there is a successful balance among the relationships with the Creator, the child, the teacher, the community of children, the language itself, and the larger community of faith. Such a balance is not in the control of any one part of this network of relationships, but when it is there, the process proceeds gracefully.

It is the phenomenon of Grace in the process that requires religious education to think carefully about importing models from secular education established by the scientific method. Secular models can teach children to speak the language of science, but it takes a special kind of method to learn to speak and be Christian. It is a method that must be aware of the paradox of being both a teacher of Scripture and yet not being in ultimate control of how that set of tools will be used. This method, then, is one of Grace which can only be lived to be known and not logically reduced to a synthetic conclusion without losing much of its content.

This paper will describe the educational process in four parts. First, a discussion of language and reality will be presented to make clear what is meant by "speaking Christian". Secondly, the connection between "speaking" and "being Christian" needs to be explicated. Thirdly, the way to teach Christian language and experience to children will be presented. Fourthly, a method for the evaluation of the teaching approach will be suggested that remains faithful to the history of Western spirituality rather than borrowing both evaluation categories and method from science.

LANGUAGE AND SPEAKING CHRISTIAN

There are two basic life processes common to living systems all along the evolutionary scale. Each of these two processes has to do with metabolism. Metabolism is the complex of physical and chemical processes involved in the maintenance of life. One form is the ingesting and processing of energy. The other form is the acquisition and processing of information.

The metabolism of matter-energy is the conversion of raw environmental processes into energy forms, consumable or processable by particular living systems. The metabolism of information is the conversion of raw event-data into forms of information, consumable or processable by such living systems.

Science is interested in both forms of metabolism, but our interest will be confined to the metabolism of raw event-data and its decoding into information useful for living human beings.

Although the metabolism of information is basic to all living systems, the human being must consume event-data not only from the environment directly through its sensorium, but also from the communication environment. Such information is not directly verifiable from one's sensorium.

There are several levels of analysis for the human communication situation.¹⁾ The first level has a focus on the intrapersonal communication of a single person. The next level is interpersonal and has a focus on two or more persons. The third level is multi-personal and has a focus on the internal structure of multi-person human enterprises. The fourth level is the enterprise-environmental level where the focus is on the interface between human organizations and their environments. The fifth level of analysis relates to all the other levels. It is the analysis of the role that technology has to play in the levels of communication.

At all levels of communication the ability to rule out extraneous data as noise or irrelevant is as important as the ability to rule in what can be decoded as the message. For example, people who have had surgery to correct blindness from birth only gradually begin to distinguish shapes. Their association between touch and language has to be transferred to their association between language and the undefined, blinding reflections of light in the visual world of objects for them to begin to see.²

Unlimited and un-named experience is overwhelming. We struggle to frame the world to give it limit so that we can know it. Experience is processed through many perception gates inherited through the DNA code. It is also processed through the communication environment which gives us the language by which to speak about what we know sensorially.

While science studies the limits to knowing, theology studies knowing at the limit of our knowing and being. The metabolism of information about the ultimate limit for human beings requires a special kind of language which is "odd" only when compared to the language of science.

Communication among living systems is not a one-way process (sender-message-channel-receiver-oriented). That would mean that human beings were only able to be senders or receivers like a tape-recorder model. Sometimes communication is spoken about as if it were a "transfer of meaning", but none of our receptors is capable of receiving "meaning" so the notion of "transfer" is inaccurate. The linear formula, $A + B = X$ (A "communicates" something to B with X result) is similarly misleading. What one person says to another is no more the product of the speaker than it is of the hearer. The system of communication is neither linear nor algebraic, but it is a whole system of relationships of mutual adaptation and/or manipulation which in turn results in the building and/or confirming of family units, communities,

societies and all the other levels of communication.

The metabolism of raw, event-data about one's existential limits requires a special kind of language, because such awareness threatens to overwhelm the creature processing such experience. One way to hold such information at a distance by the symbolic environment is to be "objective" or "scientific" when dealing with human problems. Science, however, becomes a kind of blindness itself, a "scientism", when the interaction between one's own symbolic world and the world of event-data is lost to one's awareness.

The "new science" of the 17th century had two main tendencies in it. Descartes was an advocate of one. He argued for clarity, reason and deduction. Bacon took the other side. He argued for experiment, empiricism and induction. At times, in the centuries that followed, it seemed there was one scientific method, but in reality there were many.

In the 20th century Einstein's research suggested that we needed to use both induction and deduction, ideas and experimentation. He also noticed that language and experience are relative to the questions we ask or the tasks we ask them to perform.

Despite Einstein's observations, there was a dominant feeling in the West that science was based on "scientific detachment" and that facts were "found" by experimentation as if facts were the basic substratum of reality and were self-explanatory. One of the primary voices that argued against this view was that of Michael Polanyi, a Hungarian scientist. In 1933 he resigned his position at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin to protest against Hitler's policies and was invited to England to teach physical chemistry at the University of Manchester. In 1948 he exchanged his chair in physical chemistry for one in social thought so he could focus his research on human knowing.

Polanyi recognized the dangers of objectivism and the split between subject and object implied by scientism. His view was that we carry on both focal and indwelling knowing simultaneously, but that we cannot be conscious of both at the same time. We shift our focus back and forth.

If we were studying minerals our focus would be on the stone as our focal target. If the stone were suddenly realized to be a gravestone of a loved one, our attention would shift to what the rock means for us. Memories of the lost person might become conscious. Unfinished business might come to mind. Broken

dreams might appear. Speculation about the future without this person might arise. While all of this is going on we are still vaguely aware of the rock and could shift back to our study of it as crystals when the tide of indwelling knowing had ebbed.

An illustration will clarify the connection between the knower with what is known as well as its general levels:³⁾

Figure 1

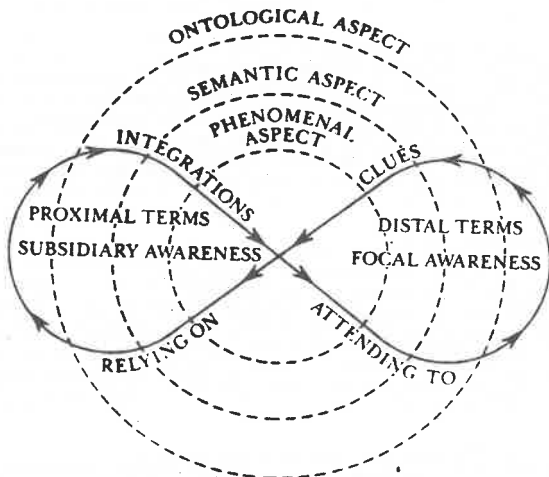


Diagram of Tacit Knowing

Richard Gelwick, *The Way of Discovery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

Language, as well as thinking and attention, help process the raw, event-data coming in. Both language and experience, however, reside within each person's body. This relationship not only connects the knowing subject and the object of his or her attention, but it also connects the levels of the reality link.

The first layer of relationship is the pattern which we experience as tacit and focal knowing. The semantic level is where the knowing emerges consciously in language. The third level is ontological. It is the link to ultimate reality.

The interest in the language itself as it gives raw event-data meaning, has become a focal target for many researchers. This interest in language has appeared in many fields such as the structuralists, the students of semiotics (from the Greek, *semeion*, sign), the new literary critics, and systems thinkers.

The structuralists are interested in the deep structures of human knowing. Jean Piaget is an exemplar of the developmental structuralists investigating cognitive development. Claude Levi-Strauss is an example of an anthropologist looking for the fundamental structures of behaviour in pre-literate activities such as kinship and myth.

Piaget found that human thinking develops in structural wholes called "stages" over time by means of interaction with the environment. Levi-Strauss discovered a structure that does not change over time (whether historical or personal). Human beings use such a structure as myth for a "true-making" agency to overcome "brute" reality and transform it to resolve the unresolvable "oppositions" in life.

American structuralists worked somewhat independently from European structuralists because of the two World Wars. They studied the Native American languages which were dying out. Franz Boas, Edward Sapir and B L Whorf concluded that language was the main factor in structuring community life and that people literally lived in different "worlds" when they spoke different languages. This view was in contrast to those who felt that they lived in the same world with different labels.

The power of language to structure one's "world" was also intimated by those who called for a whole science of signs called semiotics. One of the early pioneers to call for such a science was Ferdinand de Saussure. He lectured in Geneva between 1906 and 1911 and his lectures were collected after his death and published in 1915 as *Course in General Linguistics*.⁴⁾

The metaphor Saussure used was chess. He compared the structures of language to the rules of chess which are international. The actual utterances of people are like the individual games of chess played in each language domain.

During the early part of this century when the structuralists and those calling for a science of semiotics were first heard, the literary critics also shifted their interest. They stopped looking for the meaning of a text in the author's biography, the author's psychology, the relation of the text to the culture, or

to literary history and turned to the text itself. T S Eliot is an exemplar of the "New Criticism" of the 1930's. By the 1940's and 1950's it had become an orthodoxy itself and attracted a new "New Criticism" which provided a more detailed method by which to inspect the text. Barthes is an example of this group.

Roland Barthes attached naturalistic writers such as Balzac by showing their style was not style-less. He showed that all writing is structured by implicit codes.

There is a structure which raises the question and shows the movement toward its response (hermeneutics). A second code provides the connotations, the flickers of meaning (signifier). Collections of repetitions referencing back and forth is the third code (symbolic). The fourth code is the action structure and its implied result (proairetic). Finally, there is the "gnomic" voice of accepted knowledge speaking (cultural code). All literature is signifying and none is a pure, naturalistic mirror being held up to pure fact.

The Russian Formalist movement which emerged in the 1920's in Moscow and Petrograd had also focused on the text. This group of linguistics students and literary historians such as Roman Jakobson, Viktor Shklovsky and others were suppressed for political reasons in 1930. Their work was rediscovered in 1965 in Paris when a collection of their writings was published in French translation.⁵⁾

Shklovsky had observed that the essential function of poetry is to "make strange". Such language counteracts the process by which we become anaesthetized to the world in which we live. A new use of language helps us vividly to see the world, rather than numbly recognize it about us and within us.

The fourth group, the systems thinkers, is a diverse group which arose because the problems they were dealing with in many fields would not yield to traditional intuition or linear logic. Systematic thinking appeared in mathematical modelling, information theory, the theory of instruction and program, games theory, decision theory, catastrophe theory, family therapy, military analysis and in other areas. Bertalanffy is an example.

Ludwig von Bertalanffy, a Viennese professor of biology, who emigrated to Canada in 1949, attacked the reductionalistic explanation in biology and proposed a systems approach to study it. He saw life as a self-regulating, self-organization. He extended his view from biology to all systems. His proposed "General Sys=

tems Theory" emerged with a special emphasis on psychobiology and ecology.

There are many elements in common among the many applications of systems thinking. W I B Beveridge listed several characteristics which apply whether the system is physical, biological or socio-political:⁶⁾

- 1 The systemic components interact harmoniously to keep the system intact. An element not so interacting is not part of the system. In large systems not all components are of equal importance. Some can be lost without upsetting the equilibrium.
- 2 A system is more than the sum of its parts. Its character is given by its organizational pattern. This pattern has a function or purpose in relation to its environment.
- 3 When one component is defective and fails to interact properly with respect to the whole system, the whole system is affected.
- 4 Most systems are open systems. They depend on other systems for inputs like food or raw materials and the output affects other systems by work, goods or wastes. A closed system is usually a hypothetical construct for purposes of analysis.
- 5 Systems have a tendency to reach and maintain a dynamic equilibrium. When homeostasis is disturbed, built-in controls restore it to within normal limits to maintain the system. Homeostasis is also a tendency that can exist between systems. A terminal system changes little and only over long periods of time. A progressive system relates to other systems by always being in change.

This section's first conclusion is that both focal and subsidiary awareness are functions of the individual. Responsibility for both must therefore be accepted.

The second conclusion is that each language-experience system generates its own criteria for evaluation. This is true because each sphere of language and experience frames its own reality.

A third conclusion is that language-experience systems of reality affect each other. This is important to note because of the distortions that one system's language or experience can cause in another linguistic domain.

A fourth conclusion is that there may be clues in the structure of religious language for evaluation of its appropriate use. We will examine sacred stories, ritual and parable in section three and suggest how these structures can be used to help evaluate the quality of being Scriptural.

A fifth conclusion is that we live in "holons". This term was coined by Arthur Koestler, to identify the situation when a system is also part of a larger whole.⁷⁾ Two tendencies threaten to tear a holon apart.

One force in a holon draws it toward the larger system. This pull is counteracted by a force to maintain the integrity of the smaller system. These two forces are not opposite, but complementary in a healthy system.

If the two tendencies are maintained in balance, the whole system remains open and flexible to change. If it becomes rigid, the conflict will distort or destroy one or both systems. One needs to be like the Roman god, Janus, who could look both ways at once, to maintain one's balance.

Living at the limit of knowing and being, is still to live in a holon. It is the ultimate holon. The way that the tendencies are balanced at the limit is by "religion" (L, *re-ligio*, to tie, to fasten). Christianity's major model for living at the edge is the Incarnation. Participation in the Incarnation discloses a zone of meaning where the congruence of human life and the Creator is discovered in incongruity. Such a disclosure flashes with the ecstasy of knowing union with God when the paradox is lived. Laughter at the disclosure of meaning in paradox also breaks through. Anguish at the distance caused by the incongruity also crowds in on one, a discontinuity needing a way to be tied together in some action despite the polarity. The limit case, then, requires its own language-experience holon which is Scripture. This will be discussed more fully in the next section.

The metabolism of information in the linguistic domain of science works very well. When we approach the limit of knowing and being, we must shift to what is appropriate for that domain of experience to articulate the meaning present there for the whole human being. We turn now to the discussion of the link between speaking and being Christian.

SPEAKING AND BEING SCRIPTURAL

Intercommunication is the means by which communicational environments are created and maintained. Our institutions, ideologies, beliefs, values, theories and even our religion is in part created and perpetuated through intercommunication. This environment, this "reality", is a major part of our human ecology. We are, in fact, very much the communication experience we have had and we can be what our communicational ecologies permit or force us to be.

Perhaps the best way to approach the connection between speaking and being Christian, is from the point of view of general semantics. This area of learning was originated by Alfred Korzybski, a Polish mathematician and engineer. His monumental work, *Science and Sanity*, was first published in 1933,⁸⁾ but the foundations for this field were laid in 1921 by his first major work, *Manhood of Humanity*.⁹⁾

Semantics deals primarily with words and their meanings. Linguistics is concerned with the analysis of language structure. General semantics focuses upon the relationship between the language people use and how they think and behave.

The whole structure of general semantics was built upon a single basic assumption: that reality is to be conceived as a process. Korzybski's system was called "non-Aristotelian". It was non-Aristotelian in three basic ways: (1) nonidentity (A is not A); (2) nonallness (A is not all A); and (3) the principle of self-reflexiveness.

The first of the three non-Aristotelian principles, non-identity, is to say, following Korzybski's analogy, that "the map is not the territory". The second non-Aristotelian premise is to say that the process of abstracting is a process of leaving out the details. Thirdly, he noted that we employ language to talk about language, so that we can become involved in an infinite regress of talking about the nature of language.

The main distinction in Korzybski's work for our purposes was that between non-verbal and verbal communication. In the world of not-words there are three levels: the submicroscopic or "beable", the microscopic or "lensing" level and the macroscopic or "seeable" level. In the verbal range there were also three basic levels. First, there was the label or description or the "nameable" level. Secondly, there was the first inference or "lumpable" level. Thirdly, there was the second inference or

"relatable" level. The inferences could then go on into infinity.¹⁰⁾

An example drawn from Hayakawa's popularized version of general semantics¹¹⁾ is about "Bessie the Cow". She will be looked at from the submicroscopic level on up. To the physicist Bessie is electrons. At the next level, the submicroscopic level, she is a dynamic ongoing process. At the microscopic level she is a mass of tissue, cells, corpuscles and other "seeable" entities. At the descriptive level the word "Bessie" is a label given to that which we observe. This is a specific cow, the cow of our experience but now she is not that experience but a word. At the next level we might talk about "cows" since Bessie has a great deal in common with other cows, but, as you can see, we leave a wealth of detail behind at each level of analysis. Finally, we might speak of Bessie as "livestock" but now only those characteristics she has in common with other farm animals are included. The process can go on and on.

The point of this ladder of analysis is to note that even the sub-microscopic level, which is the event-level and the level of process reality, is already a level of abstraction which leaves out details. Seeing is also not seeing. All that can be hoped for is an awareness of the process of abstracting and the effort to correlate the structure of one's language with the structure of empirical reality.

The search for the zone of religious experience which correlates and co-determines religious language, has been a long and difficult one. Some of the greatest help has come from the critics of religion who have shown what religious experience and language are not.

The people who came into Freud's office in Vienna no doubt exhibited a religion that could be called illusion because it was not working in a healthy way. Freud stated his perception of the facts when he argued this, although he based his evidence on religious people who sought out a psychiatrist to help with the main of life as they lived it.

Nietzsche also, no doubt, had met people who reduced religion to a way that was not constructive. The reduction he identified was religion used to feel powerful for people who had no political power. This case too could be made from experience in life and literature.

Feuerbach argued that religion was a projection of human needs and aspirations upon the blank screen of the heavens. There are people who do that as well, so he too was in part correct with his reduction analysis.

Marx was also in part correct. Religion is sometimes used to drug the lower classes to keep them from demanding better conditions and participation in economic decisions.

Religion is also used to hold governments or cities together politically. Constantine's involvement in Christianity in the 4th century may have been partly motivated by this thought and certainly Machiavelli was frank about suggesting this as a political device for rulers.

These and other brilliant critiques of religion from the outside are what from the inside would be called "idolatry". The above critiques are concerned with a religion that has been pulled away from its appropriate empirical ground of the limit case into the world of everyday experience.

The reality of religion is not discovered by experience alone, as we have said. An appropriate language must also be used to co-create that reality. Linguistic philosophers have also helped to clarify the function of religious language.

The work of linguistic clarification in modern times began with some hostility. J H Randall tells the story about Paul Tillich reading a paper to a group of philosophers. G E Moore, a leader and founder of the linguistic philosophers in this century in the English-speaking world was present. When Tillich finished his paper, Moore stood up. "Now really, Mr Tillich, I don't think I have been able to understand a single sentence of your paper. Won't you please try to state one sentence, or even one word, that I can understand?"¹²⁾

The first step in the clarification process was to clear away the temptation to test religious language by the canons of science. The logical positivistic principle of verification by empirical data was announced primarily by A J Ayer. He said, "A sentence is factually significant to any given person if, and only if he knows how to verify the proposition that it purports to express - that is, if he knows what observations would lead him, under certain conditions, to accept the propositions as being true, or reject it as being false".¹³⁾

If we know where to look and we do look and find a statement false, then it is false. What if we do not know where to look? This was the next problem that was noticed and led to further clarification.

The next step was still somewhat hostile and tied to the canons of scientism. Anthony Flew in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*¹⁴⁾ shifted the credibility criterion to falsification from verification. A phrase like "God loves us" was considered meaningful only if one could decide how to tell if God does not love us. Religious phrases died "the death of a thousand qualifications", he said, so they could not be considered to convey any meaning.

Ian Ramsey's *Religious Language: An Empirical Placing of Theological Phrases*¹⁵⁾ was the step in the process that became free of the scientific overshadowing of religious language. Now the question became, what job does this language actually do, rather than, what does it not do? The answer to the question was that it has three jobs to do. It involves an "odd discernment", a total commitment, and a universal significance. The language expressed an experience that demanded these kinds of functions to be performed by the language appropriate to articulate it.

In *Blessed Rage for Order*¹⁶⁾ David Tracy suggested that the category of "limit" could specify what was "odd", totally committing and of universal significance in religious language. He did not suggest that this exhausted the meaning of the language system, nor did he mean this approach to suggest the God-of-the-gaps-in-science that Bonhoeffer attacked from prison.¹⁷⁾ That is self-defeating.

The conception of "limit" or "boundary"¹⁸⁾ is one that we also encountered in the discussion of systems-thinking. Each boundary is also a holon, however, and in this limit-case the claim is made that this is the last or the outside boundary. Yet when we discuss the limit-to-ourselves we do take a standpoint outside what we consider to be the "me" under discussion which is the limited. On the other hand, we do know that we are limited by our abilities, by human perception gates, by our involvement in the destruction of life, and by death. There are many ways that we are limited from the inside as well as being pressed upon from the outside by the experience of God's presence as a larger "I" outside our "I" viewing the "me" living in the world.

To discuss this relationship, language is strained. The rules of ordinary discourse are left behind. We must begin now to

discuss the shift to religious language at the limit-experience.

There are four levels to religious language and experience. The zone of reality appropriate for this language and experience is encountered at extreme moments in union, separation, and the recognition of God and self at the limit. The union is experienced as ecstasy. The separation is experienced as anguish. The recognition that both self and God as well as union and separation are present in language and experience cannot be described except, perhaps, by another Koestler coinage, "bisociation".¹⁹⁾

Bisociation is a transitory state of unstable equilibrium where both emotion and thought are disturbed. Two frames of reference cut across each other, like a vertical and a horizontal plane at right angles. Both planes are self-consistent and coherent but incompatible. Routine thinking is in one plane or the other, but not in both. Bisociation is oscillating back and forth, an experience that erupts in laughter. To experience the two dimensions and to retreat from that produces tears, because of the tragedy. To be able to cross over and back and recognize both dimensions takes patience, security and sometimes courage.

The first level of religious language is gestures and exclamations of ecstasy, anguish and laughter. The anguish is not tragedy. Tragedy is a retreat back into one reality from another as its tears come because of the limit. Anguish is more realistic. It knows the limit and the distance it places between us and what is on the other side. Clenched fists, the tearing of separation, the finality, and terror is more like that experience and yet these are not the experience but only pointers into the border zone of reality. Since that experience is so global and totalizing, one cannot put it into words and still be in the experience. This is true of the ecstasy, as the mystics have said forever, and with laughter. One cannot laugh and describe laughter at the same time.

When these experiences become language-events, the second level of religious language and experience begins. This level uses language but, as we have said, it is odd. The language refers to the experience of the limit but cannot do so directly or it would break the integrity of the experience's totality.

Language is in a double bind with respect to the limit. To know the limit in language, means that it must be limited by language to articulate it and that process breaks the totality of the limit encounter. If you can say what you mean, you know that you don't mean what you say.

Religious language approaches the double bind indirectly. It creates an experience indirectly with ordinary language. The experience, however, is not ordinary. It is the experience of the limit. The strange language of religion - myth, ritual, and parable - discloses its meaning rather than labelling something finite within the world of everyday events. It literally points to no thing, because things in the world are not what the limit is.

The method for attempting to understand how religious language works relies on the work of Paul Ricoeur. In *The Symbolism of Evil*²⁰⁾ he explored the layers of meaning about evil. To do this he adopted a "second naïveté" because he "wagered" we would be able to peel away Scriptural language layers and encounter the fundamental experience to which the layers of language pointed.

Under the theological discussions of guilt and sin he found a layer of confessions of defilement, guilt, stain, blemish, and infection. Under that he found the experience itself, "equivocal, laden with a multiplicity of meanings".

Our effort to investigate the zone of meaning at the limit, is somewhat like this. The second naïveté, however, is reinforced by working with children who are encountering the limit in a first naïveté. Working at the origins of the child's primal use of religious language not only gives clues about their world, but also the roots of adult usage.

There is a second difference between this work and Ricoeur's. What has been discovered, was not limited to evil. The original experience seems to involve separation, but also union in ecstasy and the recognition in laughter of the limit to such experience and language. After the undifferentiated experience of the limit in silence a level of exclamation emerges. In a third level we find sacred story, ritual and parable.

Sacred story is the positive sense of myth as being more than the facts. It is a master story into which our stories can enter for identity points. Its form gives safety because the whole story including redemption is there. In slavery there is also exodus. In exile there is also return. In death there is also life.

Ritual is rooted in sacred story, but it joins the polarities of life by action. When life and death come apart, we "do" a funeral. The same is true at other limit points such as birth, vocation, marriage, or restored health. All the endings have

beginnings in them and beginnings have endings.

Parable is the shock of experiencing both the identity and union in the safety of sacred story and the joining of experienced separation in ritual. The impossibility of knowing the unknown, shocks before laughter erupts and there are no guarantees that it will. The Parabler had to continually point out, even to those closest to him, that the Kingdom was not defined by the everyday, but *vice versa*.

Parable's engaging of the creative process is the root of love in its most ultimate sense. Sacred story involves one in primal faith. Ritual is fundamental hope which pulls the future into the present rather than escaping from the present into the future. All three of the theological virtues are more than emotions. They are primal ways of coping with the reality of the limit. Not only is the language of everyday changed to apply to this realm, but so are our ordinary emotions.

The fourth level of religious language has the three same functions and virtues, but they are linguistically and experientially shifted one step further away from the undifferentiated experience. At this level the parabolic shifts into paradoxical statements such as the enigma of Matthew, where in the same Gospel are found the commands to be perfect like God and to know that only God is perfect.

The fourth level of religious language shifts ritual into the rubrics which guide ritual. The action is described rather than done. The sayings of Jesus at the Last Supper, understood as something to be said at Holy Communion, is an example.

Sacred story enters the fourth level when summary statements are given in the form of law codes or covenants. These summary statements do not re-tell the stories upon which they are based. They only give the conclusions to guide one's actions.

The fifth level of sacred story is the level of systematic theology. It employs concepts to regulate the experiences and language of the first three levels. These more primal language events and experiences provide the "raw material" for theology, as Dietrich Ritschl has pointed out.²¹⁾ Without them there would be nothing for theology to do.

What is "religious" in religious language and experience, is the reality of the limit at the outer edge of our knowing and being. It is not approval (X is *my* religion) or disapproval (religion is

an opiate , projection, illness or illusion). It is not a reduction to an aspect of the human condition such as thinking, feeling or willing. It is not historical proof about what happened in historical time and place nor is it a suspension of the natural in time and place. It is not a generalization (All X is religion) nor is it a reduction (Only X is religion). It is not described in the language of everyday (the pencil fell on the floor), nor does any other secular language system or jargon do its job. What is "religious" about religious language and experience is that it carries us beyond normal usage to disclose the zone of reality and meaning at our limit despite the limit.

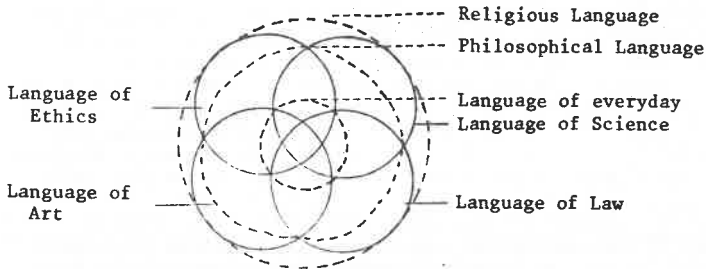
Religious language and experience are seldom encountered or taught in this appropriate way. The pull of secular language and reality systems usually distort religious language and experience because modern culture's sanction system is primarily secular and scientific.

We do not live at the limit most of the time. We forget the limit perspective on everyday life or we deny it. Its critique of ordinary experience fades even when we have been dramatically reoriented by it in positive or negative ways. Even professionals in religion sometimes go through the routine of religious observance and perspective rather than live in that "other Kingdom" or perspective that prophets point to. Despite all of this human tendency to turn towards the secular perspective and away from the sacred one, religious language and experience cannot be disconnected from the language of everyday. Two illustrations will show the complexity of this connection and how it can be identified.

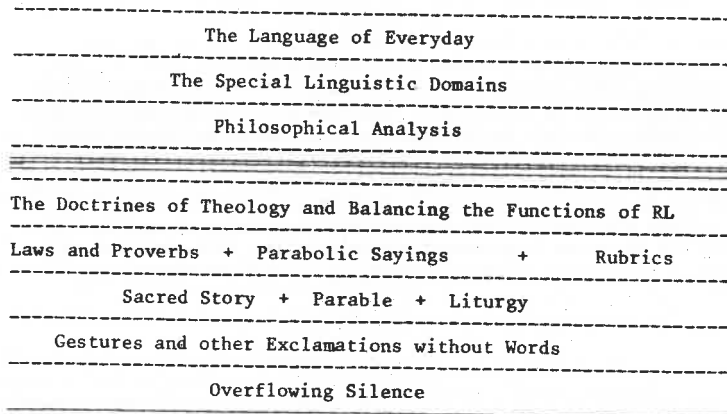
FIGURE 2 OVERLEAF

Figure 2

A. LANGUAGE DOMAINS:



B. LEVELS OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE:



The circles in the illustration identify linguistic domains in which people agree to speak in a certain way about life. At the edges of these linguistic systems the rules of discourse become more a matter of difference by degree rather than a distinction in kind. Notice that the language of everyday is mostly made up of overlapping systems.

The role of philosophy in this picture of language and experience is to reflect on how language is used in each domain and to connect such reflections into a philosophy of life. This is represented in the picture by the dotted line that is toward the outer edge of each circle.

At the outermost edge of the circles is another dotted line. This represents the language and experience of the limit to human knowing and being. Below the picture of the language domains in Figure 2 there is an enlargement of the levels in this outermost kind of communication. There are five levels of discourse in this language domain which will be commented on now.

The first level of the limit domain is that of silence. This is not empty silence but silence that is so full that nothing can be said. It is the total experience of being in relationship with the Creator which cannot be broken by words in thought or speech without breaking the totality of the relationship.

One might say from the scientific point of view that this first level is pure affect. "Affect" usually means the feeling of pleasantness or unpleasantness evoked by a stimulus. It also refers to an emotional complex associated with a mental act. It might also indicate a feeling connected with an emotion.

To say that the limit experience and its related language are evoked by a natural stimulus of the bio-psycho-social systems of the human being or by an artificial intervention such as an electrical or chemical stimulus, is not to contradict the theological analysis. The religious point of view is that the stimulus takes place at the letting go of the secular points of view and opening to the ultimate relationship with the Creator. This is an experience that cannot be controlled by method or experiment without reducing it to only a part of the total event. The event comes by Grace and can only be pointed to with a language of disclosure rather than labelled discretely.

The totality of this experience can be noted in the silence of the first of the five levels, but it should also be kept in mind as one looks at the other four levels. The three aspects of the middle levels are not to be isolated from each other. The second level of communication is still non-verbal. Gestures and cries of ecstasy and agony or laughter mark the first distinctions among the three aspects of religious language and experience.

The third level includes the narrative of sacred story, the surprise and paradox of parable, and the gestures and acts of liturgy.

The fourth level of religious language becomes more abstract. The three aspects become the summary of sacred story in law codes and proverbs. The parabolic becomes more abstract as sayings such as the beatitudes turn upside-down the proverbs of

the Wisdom Literature. The rubrics of ritual which tell how to do rituals replace the actual action being performed.

The fifth level is that of theology with its classic areas of discourse. Theology talks about religious language but must not become disconnected from its roots as it does so. One of its tasks is to keep balanced the three aspects of religious language and to comment on the relationship between this total perspective on life and language and other linguistic and experience domains.

Unbalancing the three primary aspects of religious language allows one of its functions to overcome the other two. Sacred story emphasized at the expense of parable becomes rigid and literalistic. When it is promoted at the expense of ritual, it becomes something only to be read from a book and not to be encountered in personal action. Ritual emphasized at the expense of sacred story and parable, becomes disconnected from the images of narrative and reduced to empty formalism. Parable emphasized at the expense of sacred story and ritual, becomes a use of religious language that is stuck in scanning for closure and/or locked in the dilemma of paradox without being able to live the paradoxical constructively as a step toward a new synthesis at a higher level.

Confusing the role of religious language with that of other linguistic domains, is a second kind of distortion that can be described with reference to the illustration in Figure 2. The most fundamental danger is when one of the secular spheres of language and experience is mistaken for the ultimate zone of meaning.

When the scientific domain of language and experience is expanded as if it were a religion, the open and free investigation of nature is replaced by a doctrine of scientism. Galileo's trial is a good example of this from the Catholic Tradition and the Darwinian agony is one from the Protestant Tradition. When religion is reduced to a science, it becomes a pattern of study and not a way of life informed by a relationship with the Creator at the limit to one's being and knowing.

When morality becomes a religion, it replaces well-being as the ultimate value by well-doing. Well-being is open, flexible and related to growth. Well-doing which is absolutized, becomes rigid and repressive. An example of this is the Protestant liberalism before the two World Wars. It was a point of view which expected to usher in the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. Ultimate evil was overlooked in the world. It makes a life of well-

doing in need of well-being to accomplish constructive intervention in the world without religious colonialism.

When art is expanded into a religion, it loses its ability to explore life within its living limits. This is true of any art form which becomes absolutized by turning it into the ultimate expression of reality. An illustration from literature can be found in Crossan's use of Sheldon Sack's categories of literature in the book, *Dark Interval*.²²⁾ The sphere of experience literature usually focuses on is the defending of the myth, exploring within its frame or attacking its frame of reference. This province is limited by myth on the one hand and parable on the other. Parable subverts myth and calls into question language itself. Myth establishes language.

When art breaks out of its appropriate brackets and overflows into the religious domain, it becomes rigid and forces all exploration by art media to conform. Art can no longer surprise us or explore life including its limits. When religion is reduced to art, it becomes an act of aesthetic enjoyment rather than an involvement in the ultimate limit.

When politics becomes religion, the leader or the state becomes the ultimate reality. This absolutizes political standpoints and shifts such language towards the limit case so that a Hitler might become one's saviour and the Jews might become ultimate evil. To save the ultimate reality of the State, such a "saviour" can do unlimited battle to remove evil. Political language shifts from solving the problems of everyday and dealing with the relations between states to absolutism. The border limit of death, guilt, human suffering, and the synergy of working together despite evil and pluralism is swept away in favour of the state and/or its leader's logic.

When religion becomes politics, it loses its ability to engender regeneration despite the state. It loses what is truly realistic because the ultimate limit involved in such an equation falls out. The seeking of liberation through politics in an ultimate sense, is a fallacy demonstrated throughout history by revolutions turning into absolutized governments of misplaced myths which repress growth and change. The struggle to distinguish religion and politics is an eternal one, needing constructive attention in each generation by both the Church and political institutions.

When philosophy becomes a religion, it reduces the relationship with ultimate reality to the single channel of communication, reason. This reductionistic reality can serve well to understand

abstractly the spheres out of which philosophy grows such as science, morality, art, or politics, but as the end in itself, it fails. The limit to being and knowing cannot be coped with or explored by this powerful tool alone. Our whole genetic, neurological, linguistic and cultural ability to process meaning is involved. The limit case must, therefore, be approached indirectly in a multi-channelled way by its own transcendental logic.

Philosophy has at times moved toward the limit case in its linguistic domain. Such language as "abyss", "chasm", "leap" or "nausea" have crept into philosophy structured as poetry, stories and plays. This kind of language is no longer philosophy and not yet religion. It is not yet religion because it lacks the whole language system of sacred story, parable and ritual that is appropriate for the disclosure of the limit.

Theology can also shade into the philosophic domain. When it does so, it shifts its point of view from the limit to what is limited in the secular world. Its "raw material" shifts from the experience of the limit to secular experience and it, thus, loses its perspective from which to critique secular views of reality including philosophy.

What is at work in these expansions of the secular to the limit and the reduction of religion to one of the secular domains, is described by religious language as "idolatry". The reduction of ultimate reality to science, morality, art, politics, or philosophy puts that reality over the other secular domains and religion at the limit to our being and knowing.

When religious language and experience are properly located empirically and used, the whole language system functions as an appropriate set of tools by which to construct meaning from the perspective of the limit. This set of tools, however, can be misused. This is why religion has always cried out against idolatry. It has cautioned us against the use of religious words as ends in themselves to be worshipped. It has attached religious practice when it has been done as an end in itself. Religious leaders and the worshipper himself or herself have also been called idols when they too have been objects of worship. Only the Creator is the proper object of worship and that relationship's most difficult point is at the edge of our being and knowing.

At one side stands the danger of idolatry. At the other side stands blasphemy. When one thinks he or she is god, then the

danger is as great as worshipping one of the tools for making meaning or a user of these tools as god.

The problem for teaching the art of how to use the tools of religious language to make meaning grounded appropriately is to avoid both idolatry and blasphemy. Teaching the art of being Scriptural without succumbing to either distorting force, is a sensitive and important task. We turn to a description of one such way now.

TEACHING THE ART OF BEING SCRIPTURAL

The teaching process to be described is one that teaches the art of the use of religious language to make meaning at the edge of knowing and being. It is, of course, impossible to talk about what cannot be put into words, so this art is one of using these tools to disclose the relationship with the Creator that is present in that zone of meaning. Again, this is impossible to force and control, since the Creator and our relationship with the Creator is something to be discovered by Grace rather than something that can be described without remainder or revealed by manipulation.

No way of education is truly unique and what will be described here is no different. It is based upon the work of Maria Montessori who, in 1896, was the first woman in Italy to graduate from medical school. In January of 1907 her interest in medicine shifted to education and child advocacy when she opened a school for young children in Rome. The rest of her life was devoted to these causes as well as advocacy for world peace. She died in 1952 a few months before her 82nd birthday.

In 1916 Montessori and her colleagues established an education and teacher-training centre in Barcelona, Spain. During the next 20 years she developed most of her advanced elementary school materials and theory there. She also began to experiment with religious education and said that this gave the Montessori Method "... a long-sought opportunity of penetrating deeper into the life of the child's soul and of thus fulfilling its true educational mission".²³⁾

Montessori's approach to education included a special emphasis on the environment for learning which was keyed to each developmental stage's special learning tasks, needs and limitations. She made the language of letters and numerals into manipulative materials so that the pre-school children and early elementary children could move them around to discover how to put their

culture's language and the language of mathematics together.

Montessori made sure that children had the freedom to make constructive choices about their learning tasks in her classrooms. She valued inner direction of children and supported their choices that led to mastery of words and numerals. Lessons were organized so children could control their own errors which gave additional emphasis to their constructive self-motivation. Respect for others and each other's work was fostered by classroom strategy and the teacher's example.

The spiral curriculum of Montessori expanded the child's language experience by identifying and presenting sub-languages such as history and science as the children advanced. While the main emphasis in the pre-school was on sensorial experiences with the manipulative materials, the primary focus of the elementary school years was to strike each child's imagination to see the possibilities for learning and the integration of all the aspects of knowledge in the world. The teacher modelled, especially Montessori herself, and supported learning as an aid to life and the power of creativity applied to fact so that each human being might contribute to the larger creative process in the cosmic environment.

In 1954 Sofia Cavalletti²⁴⁾ and her colleagues in Rome began their work at the Centro d. Catechesi to expand Montessori's experiments in religious education. Dr Cavalletti's broad interest in theology and her doctoral training in Hebrew literature and spirituality, gave Montessori's educational method a new depth in Scripture.

This author's own training in the Montessori approach to education was completed in Italy in the city of Bergamo at the International Center for Advanced Montessori Studies in 1972. It was during that year that he met Dr Cavalletti and he has continued to learn from her since that time by means of correspondence and by visiting her Center as well as from her visits to the Children's Center in Houston.

It is important to locate this approach within the prevailing views of Christian education. A useful summary of Christian education in North America has been provided recently by Seymour and Miller.²⁵⁾ A re-statement of their five fundamental categories of Christian education includes these models: schooling about Christianity, initiation into the faith community, direction of spiritual development, liberation from cultural constraints and instruction about how to interpret and apply Scripture.

None of the advocates of the above five models is limited to his or her order key emphasis. All clearly know that all of these approaches are important. The most significant point the book raises, however, is that none of these points of view as stated by their leading advocates deals explicitly with the importance of the young child's acquisition of religious language and its correlation with religious experience. This is true despite the awareness these leading figures have for the powerful impact language has on experience.²⁶⁾ The additional problem of how we adults must take responsibility for this early language acquisition, was likewise not addressed fully.

The process identified in this paper as the most significant aspect of religious education, is learning how to speak and be Christian. Schooling, initiation, spiritual development, liberation and the interpretation of Scripture all are related to this central point. A spiral curriculum that begins in early religious experiences and the acquisition of related religious language and winds out into the creation of new realities as one's experience and thinking broadens and becomes more differentiated, is what this paper advocates.

Dr Montessori provided an initial picture of how a spiral curriculum related to the whole person's development might be fashioned that begins with the sensorial experience of language systems. Her provision for maximum constructive freedom also gives religious education explicit room in which the Creator's role is acknowledged. Her modelling of respect for children and their total growth also, provides a view of how one can steer a path between the rocks of idolatry and blasphemy.

The primary means by which children learn, their play, was recognized and used by Montessori's method as the core process. Her respect for the power of this means of learning caused her to call children's deep play their "work". The goal of such work was not playing itself, but the building of a human being. Play's contribution to this primary need was what made it so pleasurable to children. She spoke of the child's depth of concentration as a "species of meditation".

To speak of "theological play" is not to speak of children playing superficially at something adults do better. It means that their interplay with the Creator at the limit of their being and knowing is a profound act that is indispensable to their growing to full maturity. The game that is played is the Ultimate Game.

Adults are just beginning to discover how serious play is. In the late 1970's over twenty research-oriented books in English were published. This was twice the total number of such volumes in the preceding fifty years.²⁷⁾

We human beings use play much like other mammals do. We take ordinary activities such as hunting or territorial defense and put them into a context that says the activity does not put the player's self-knowledge or identity at risk. By a wink or a smile we signal that the context does not define us completely. The activity is only instrumental to our interplay socially or with the environment. Play provides a framework by which one can explore, practice and grow.

Play makes human beings deeply happy when it is appropriately connected to growth and creativity. Researchers such as Garvey²⁸⁾, have traced the natural history of the smile and laughter in relation to play. Koestler²⁹⁾ discussed the spontaneous mirth that emerges in the creative act. Playing and creating are necessary for human health, Maslow concluded.³⁰⁾ Many such observations combine to convince us that creativity, the interplay with the environment and the deep satisfaction of growth all bear positively on human health.

The creative dimension of play is enormous. This can be illustrated powerfully by watching a young child's concentration during play. When children play "Mommies and Daddies", they become mommies and daddies. Piaget³¹⁾ called this an over-accommodation, a kind of play associated with imitation. There was also an over-assimilation aspect to play which Piaget noticed. When children play with an object such as a matchbox, it becomes the boat or baby carriage imagined.

Howard Gardner studied the child's use of metaphor.³²⁾ What he learned was that pre-school children often misunderstand metaphors, but they also use them with delight as they learn about language by experimenting with it in play. Age helps the interpretation of metaphors, but it is in the earliest years that the most striking metaphors are found. There is a decline of the use of spontaneous metaphor during elementary school years. Gardner concluded that this was probably because the child had mastered his or her basic vocabulary and no longer had to be so inventive and, secondly, that the school child had a natural bent toward conformity and rule-guided behaviour which discouraged the violation of those categorical boundaries he or she had just finished constructing.

Some cultures, such as the Pueblo Indians of northern New Mexico in the United States, respect and value the power of children to play not only because it can refresh adults and reawaken this power in them, but also because it bears with it an insight into life sometimes unavailable to adults. For example, children's intuition about strangers is respected as being able to inform adults about the danger such persons might present to the family.³³⁾

In other cultures, especially industrial ones, there is little permission to play after schooling begins at about the age of six years. The schooling process and the child's concrete operational period of cognitive development combine to narrow one's consciousness to grouping, classifying and correctly labelling the environment to mimic the conclusions of the culture's representative, the teacher. Knowing in this situation can be separated from interplay with the environment and each other, separated from the creative process, and separated from the joy of growth and renewal.

Interplay with the ultimate relationship we have with reality at the edge of our being and knowing, requires us to be creative and to play. To play is to "let go" and be in the game, as the American Indians of the South-west become part of the dance or a standpainting. The way one participates in the game is as important as the game itself.

Theological play is not childish but child-like. It is for adults as well as children and it is not a fad of the 20th century. Hugo Rahner, S J, attempted to give theological play a serious and historical framework when he showed how the ethic of the "grave-merry" persons joined classical humanism and the Christian sense of redemption.³⁴⁾

David Miller explored the connection of play and theology in a broader context than did Rahner in his *Gods and Games*.³⁵⁾ He studied the function of play in the fields of anthropology, ethnology, sociology, economics, psychology, literature, philosophy, mathematics and theology. In theology he found that, in addition to Rahner, there were discussions of play in theology by Harvey Cox, Romano Guardini and other modern theologians as well as St Thomas and Meister Eckhart. He also found that Nicholas of Cusa, Pascal, St Augustine, Erasmus, Kierkegaard, and Clement of Alexandria were interested in the playfulness of religion and the game metaphor as being useful for the expression of theology.

The confusion by adults about the role of play as distinguished from that of work, was succinctly summarized by Gordon Dahl in

his studies during the early 1970's in the United States.³⁶⁾ He suggested that many Americans, especially Protestants, tended to worship work as their ultimate activity. To compensate for this, they worked at their play to escape their misplaced worship of work. Worshipping work and working at play, left the worship of God to be something played at in a trivial sense. Children do not make such mistakes unless they are carefully taught.

Play and the game to be played form each other. It is, therefore, as important to be aware of distortions of the Ultimate Game, as of play. Robert S De Ropp classified life's games broadly into higher and lower games.³⁷⁾ The lower games were called "Object Games". They are played for wealth ("Hog in the Trough"), fame ("Cock on the Dunghill"), and glory or victory ("The Moloch Game"). There is a middle ground where the games are fairly neutral and are played to play no game ("No Game") or to raise a family ("Householder Game") as an ultimate aim.

We are interested in what De Ropp called the higher games and their relationship to play and the limit case. The categories of these higher games include the search for beauty ("The Art Game"), the search for knowledge ("The Science Game") and the search for salvation ("The Religion Game"). These higher games, also, have goals which define them and the activity of their playing. When the activity becomes the awareness of the creative process itself and one's relationship with the Creator, then we enter into the highest of the "Meta-games", what De Ropp calls the "Master Game", the process of awakening to life's fullest dimensions and process.

Theological play is similar for children and adults, because all human beings stand before the limit and the relationship with the Creator in the same way. If an adult talks down to a child when engaged in theological matters, then it is a sign that the adult is not aware that the child lives more of his or her life at the edge of being and knowing than the adult does because of his or her more rapid growth. The adult, on the other hand, is more at risk theologically, because of being more in control of the world of symbols which leads adults to believe that they have an ultimate control of reality.

It is hard for adults to throw themselves into the Ultimate Game, but this can be done with confidence because of the game's structure. If the game could always be won, its structure would collapse. If the game could never be won, the players would be destroyed. The Ultimate Game is neither a no-win, nor a no-lose proposition. It involves a kind of winning related to the depths

of the theological theme of Law and Grace.

To further identify the structure of the Ultimate Game, a brief description of each of its parts is necessary to complement our discussion of play. The parts to be described are the game's goal, the place of playing, the players, the pieces to be played with, the rules of the game and the kinds of time involved in the game.

THE GOAL OF THE GAME

The goal of the game is to know the unlimited Creator within the limits of the human being's perception system. This is a paradox, to know what we cannot know, but the paradox is not nonsense. It merely helps us realize the limits to the game and that the knowing involved is not like the ordinary knowing we are used to when we create a system that is known rather than being created in one.

The language of science which is very useful to describe and construct models for created matter, is not useful for knowing God. It takes another kind of language to create a "world" in which that sort of knowledge can be disclosed. The goal of the Ultimate Game is to learn the art of how to use this special language, religious language, and to make theological meaning with it. (Our discussion will be limited to knowing God with Christian language and being.)

THE PLACE OF THE GAME

With children the place for the game is a worship-education centre where the images of Christian language can be set on shelves all around a room to allow the children to literally walk into the language system when they walk into the room.

Every game must have a "place" even if it is limited to one's own mind. The reason that the place must be physical for young children, is that they are limited to their sensori-motor knowing when young, so they cannot create a "world" for this language without using their senses. The language is "materialized" so they can work with it, using all their senses, to make meaning in a way that is appropriate to their stage of development.

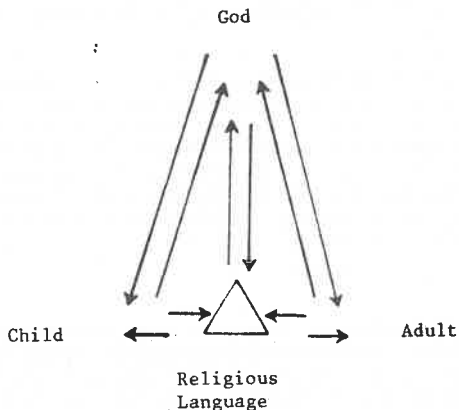
As the children grow older, they do not need the enclosed space as much. In elementary school they begin to make categories into which experience can be placed and in high school hypothetical worlds can be created and experiments conducted. What this

means is that for the young child, theological links can be made if the physical images are present in the room while later on these links can be made without this physical support. Finally, the "place" for the game can become the whole world.

THE PLAYERS OF THE GAME

The players in the game include the Creator, the game-master and the community of children or adults in the place where it is played. This makes the relationships complex during the game's playing and not able to be reduced to a relationship between a child and God or the child and the teacher or the child and the other children. The following diagram suggests this complexity:

Figure 3



THE PIECES BY WHICH THE GAME IS PLAYED

Games have pieces by which they are played even if they are mental ones such as the numerals kept in mind during certain mathematical games. In the games of arithmetic there are four basic functions: addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. The pieces of the ultimate game are the images of religious language and the basic functions of this game are: parable, sacred story and ritual.

The pieces are fashioned by essentializing the images of scripture to incarnate the core of the parable, sacred story, or

ritual in a physical material. A parable, for example, might be put in a gold box with an underlay of given definition to its space and figures made of laminated cardboard to be moved upon the underlay. These materialization of scriptural images are then placed on shelves and grouped according to their function.

The materialized images give children physical objects to know with by their sensori-motor knowing. This roots their use of the Christian language in movement. When Christian language is learned as disembodied words their empirical reference in the mind of the child is left to whim and can lead to unfortunate misunderstandings.

THE RULES OF THE GAME

The game begins when the game-master presents a "piece" of religious language such as a parable, a sacred story, or a liturgical act. At the Children's Center this is usually done in a circle at the beginning of a two-hour session. The session ends with the circle forming again to share prayers and something to eat and drink. In the middle hour of the session the children work on their own with materials they have chosen or they work in groups.

When the children are sick or have emotional and/or social problems, the number in the group is reduced, but the approach is the same. The approach is also the same with adults, but they usually sit on chairs around a table rather than on the floor as the children do.

The materials are not used for free play to be made into anything the child wishes. This is because they represent specific parts of Scripture. The materials and the presentation help the child enter the parable, sacred story, or ritual moment by means of the imagination. It is in the response to this involvement that the child creates his or her own synthesis of the image and issues in life that he or she is working with.

Note that what is presented is the image itself and not talking about it. This approach dwells in the metaphors and does not talk in a different kind of language about them to explain them or to say what the teacher thinks they mean. The teacher wonders and works with the material and, thus, models the art to be learned.

When the material has been presented, then a child can work with it any time he or she wishes. A first presentation might also be given by another child as well as the game-master.

After the presentation, the next step is to wonder with the material. This includes moving the pieces about as one plays with the meaning in wonderment.

After the presentation and the wondering, there is a third step. This is to make an art response about how the presentation and wondering feel. This can be done in the medium that the player prefers to prevent any kind of artificial restriction to his or her expression of the meaning.

The fourth step is to tell the game-master what this art response means. Even adults find this a very useful step in the process. Associations not recognized at first in relationships can be made clear by the hints and suggestions lying in one's art response to the experience of being in Scripture.

The fifth step is to put one's work away and to place the image worked with back on the shelf in its place within the Christian language system. This is especially important for the young children. An adult can perform this action with the mind without being in a room with the materialized images on the shelves but children cannot.

The five steps or rules are the core process of theological play functioning in the Ultimate Game to encounter and express meaning gained in relationship with the Creator and the language of creation in Scripture.

There are many other aspects to working with children and adults which are not commented on here. Classroom management is a complicated subject beyond the scope of this paper. This management for children and adults, however, is all integrated to enable the basic five steps to take place.

THE TIME OF THE GAME

There are many kinds of time. Distinctions made in the Greek language and familiar to New Testament writers, are especially useful here. *Chronos* is the kind of time kept with clocks. For the children who come to the Children's Center the time that elapses is two hours. In terms of *kairos*, significant time, more needs to be said.

Kairos suggests a moment of significance. In the English language the word, "timing", retains some of the Greek meaning. There is no equivalent word in French or German.

In classical Greek *kairos* did not have the full significance it had later to the Christians. It meant at first, the contingent moment in time which was the right time to go to war, to build a house, or sell a piece of cloth. In the Gospels the word took on more meaning and focused on the unique event in time, the appearance of the Christ.

When one is "in Christ", one participates in *kairos* whatever the *chronos* kind of time may indicate. It is an altered state where time spills out of the categories of past, present and future. During theological play in the Ultimate Game, the "eternal now" of *kairos* is present by God's grace.

Within *kairos* there are subdivisions in the way time is conceptualized which relate to the functions of religious language. The time of sacred story is a line with a beginning and an ending. Tying the Alpha and Omega together make time into the circle of the liturgical year when beginnings and endings occur together in the most solemn moments of Nativity, Easter and Pentecost. The time of the parabolic is the circle twisted back on itself to show how time can cross over itself in the creative process to the infinity point.

THE GAME MASTER

The role of the teacher is to be a guide. Hermann Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game*³⁸ presents some of the dimensions of this role with profound sensitivity. The *Magister Ludi* (Game-master) of the story is in charge of the game in Castalia, a special community devoted to the playing of this game. Joseph Knecht is a *Magister Ludi* of Castalia who plays the game so that he is absorbed by it but not pulled into it and thus losing himself. He resisted the game as an end in itself and with compassion agreed to resign his high position and become the tutor of a single boy, Tito, the son of a friend.

One morning, high in the mountains, he dived into a glacial lake to join Tito as Tito swam for the other side to reach it before the light from the sunrise did. Knecht (which means "servant" in German, the language of Hesse) struggled in the icy water. He sank below the surface and was never seen again. Tito never forgot his teacher and from then on his drifting life took focus to "... demand much greater things of him than he had ever before demanded of himself".

In Christian language the one who told parables became a parable. The one who shared the feast became the feast. The one who

lived the sacred story changed the story by becoming the story. There is a giving of one's self in the game that is spontaneous. It is not duty nor for satisfaction alone. When the appropriate presence is available in the game-master, then it is clear that the source of the deep joy in the game is the Creator who creates creatures who also create creating in others.

The role of the teacher would be overwhelming if God were not in the language of sacred story, parable and ritual. This means we can trust the language. God is also a player in the Ultimate Game, so we can also trust the game. This frees both the teacher and the children. The teacher knows that he or she is not the sole cause of the learning and the children or other adults know that they participate in the game with God and the community of faith. No one feels the necessity of becoming dependent on the teacher in a way that turns the teacher into an idol or tempts the teacher to blasphemy.

This concludes the discussion of the suggested way to teach the art of speaking Christian so that one cannot only speak, but be Christian. We turn now to the final question which concerns a means to evaluate the teaching process now identified.

The reason for developing an explicit research plan is not to prove that this is the only way to teach Scripture. It is a way to organize one's theory, practice and evaluation to give a basis for discussion and to provide a measure by which to improve one's ability to teach, whatever style is involved.

It is also important to make the method for evaluation explicit in order to co-operate with science. Teaching how to speak and be Scriptural has been shown to be related to one's health and maturity as well as to identifying one as being Christian. This means that the tools of religious language - sacred story, parable and ritual - are important for children with problems such as life-threatening illness, mental retardation, social and emotional disturbances and physical handicaps as well as in a preventative way for all children. An explicit basis for identifying when this approach is "working" is needed in order to see when and how it can contribute to the overall biopsychosocial health³⁹ of the individual in co-operation with scientific investigation and health care. If this is explicit, it also prevents the blurring of the boundary between scientific and theological method and language so that the distortion of either mode of inquiry is lessened.

EVALUATING THE TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE

"Evaluation" can mean many things, especially in a context where a theological experiment such as this one borrows from the methods of scientific evaluation. What is meant by evaluation here is quite modest and involves three goals:

- 1 The evaluation's first goal is to provide a way to test this method's general usefulness. The experiment is not able to be replicated by every person who might attempt it, because personal teaching styles differ, but it is not limited to the author's natural preference either.
- 2 A second goal is to provide enough explicit description and logical rigour to engage others to be critical about the theory, method and evaluation so that what remains implicit can be clarified and the wheat can be sifted from the chaff.
- 3 The third goal of the evaluation is to provide an appropriate amount of empirical basis for the claims made. This is not intended to "force" or "compel" anyone by the "facts". It is an effort to check this work by an appropriate level of factual detail.

This evaluation looks at two main time periods. The short term evaluation begins in the worship-education centre where the children literally enter the religious language system when they enter the room. The long term evaluation follows these children as they mature and as theological play is internalized to become an integrated part of adult life.

The hypothesis is that if children learn religious language while they use it to cope with limit issues, then it will become associated with the creative process and a relationship with the Creator. The short term evaluation checks to see if this has happened. The long term evaluation looks at the results later in life for those children considered to be among those for whom the method "worked".

The detail provided about the evaluation process for the reader of this paper is not complete and in some cases is still tentative. Further technical information can be obtained by writing to the author. For example hundreds of slides have been made of children's and adults' art responses to the materials incarnating images from Scripture. Most of the evaluation techniques mentioned have also been piloted in draft form. Major funding is still needed to devote full time to this project.

SHORT TERM EVALUATION

The quality of the child's involvement in the language system is determined by his or her involvement in theological play. This can be observed in a variety of ways.

Theological Play Quality:

- 1 The depth of concentration during the presentation of materials and the child's follow-up working with them is measured by an observer noting the length of concentration, distractability, and estimating the concentration's depth.
- 2 The child's self-directed movement in the worship-education centre is recorded. Attention is given to noting movement toward the materials on the shelf, carrying work through to completion, the return of materials to their place in the language system on the shelves, the physical linking of different parts of the system, and the ability to find another piece of work when one is finished. This physical activity is compared to that which seems at odds with a balanced use of the language system or the lack of connection with it as indicated by continued wandering and random motion.
- 3 The child's feelings related to work with religious language are also observed. Smiles, humming, skipping, etc. as well as negative signs are collected. This emotional overlay to activity is correlated if possible with related aspects of the Ultimate Game's structure - goal, rules, players, pieces, time and place.
- 4 Each child's art response and explanation of his or her art response is made note of. The art responses themselves are photographed and slides are kept for analysis. This shows the level of synthesis of limit issues and religious language images if any.

In addition to the evaluation of the quality of the child's play, there is also an effort to assess the integration and application of this language system into the child's everyday activities.

Integration and Application:

- 1 Parents are asked to keep a diary which notes comments and actions that their child or children make which might be related to Scripture. This diary is discussed with the worship-education centre team to see if there is relevance to the child's work there.

- 2 School teachers are given a checklist of behaviours to guide their observations during school to determine if and when the child uses religious language and/or its structures to solve limit problems such as conflicts on the playground, serious illness, children with handicaps, or stealing.

LONG TERM EVALUATION

When we turn to long term evaluation, the same two general categories are used. The quality of one's theological play and its integration and application to the rest of one's life are examined as before, but in a different way. Instruments using written responses can now be used with success.

Theological Play Quality:

- 1 The idolatry test is a questionnaire which investigates to what degree religious language is used as an instrument to make meaning and find direction as opposed to being worshipped as an end in itself.
- 2 The blasphemy test is a questionnaire to determine the degree of control the adult feels he or she has over the meaning of Scripture and how its teachings are to be applied to life's situations.
- 3 The language systems test determines whether or not the sub-systems of sacred story, parable and ritual are all functioning and whether or not they are used in a balanced way.
- 4 The final questionnaire is the classical identification test. It presents classic texts and their interpretation as well as descriptions of classic Christian life-styles from the pluralism mainstream of Christian Tradition. The subject attempts to identify the interpretations and life-styles that most accurately fit his or her own. If there is nothing that seems to fit his or her case, the subject writes his or her own form of interpretation and life-style.

The above questionnaires are rough approximations of the facts concerning these qualities of theological play. Interviews are an important adjunct to such a means of gaining information. Sometimes the interviews conducted to determine the developmental stage or style of one's faith, hope and love can be used to supplement the above information about the quality of the adult's theological play.

The second kind of long term evaluation attempts to gather information about theological faith, hope and love, the complex of theological virtues identified by St Paul.

The Pauline complex of theological virtues is considered for purposes of this theological experiment to be the core of the Christian's relation-forming abilities. In the child this is undifferentiated and experienced as a relationship with the Creator and the creative process working as part of the image of God in the individual. As one grows, the three aspects of this relationship-forming ability differentiate into the identifiable forms of theological faith, hope and love. As they become more differentiated, they also become more associated with specific sub-systems of religious language which are also becoming more distinct during development.

Faith is related to sacred story which is about the journey of faith and in which one's own story can be given context and greater meaning. Hope is related to the function of ritual which is the way to help maintain hope even when things seem hopeless. Love is related to the parabolic which shocks one's ordinary way of viewing the world, Scripture and language itself. It also engages the creative process in human relationships by creating new viewpoints.

Integration and Application:

- 1 The level of one's faith development is determined by a structured interview using the method of James W Fowler⁴⁰⁾ to determine the subject's stage. The function of faith structures appropriate for one's chronological age and the relationship of one's faith stage to the cognitive development used for one's daily life, are especially noted.
- 2 The centring ability of one's hope is determined by a structured interview and related to a model for evaluation derived from an analysis of the history of Western Spirituality by Urban T Holmes and his colleagues just before his death.⁴¹⁾
- 3 The structure and functioning of theological love in the form of the creative process is determined by a structured interview based on the application of the literature on creativity and its process by James Loder⁴²⁾ to theology. The most important aspect of this information is whether or not the adult can carry this process all the way through to completion when using religious language.

The reader can appreciate that many details have been left out of this description of the short term and long term evaluation process. A few additional words need to be said, however, about each of the three techniques for investigating the adult's integration and application of religious language.

Theological faith is the structure of one's relationship with the Creator. James Fowler has identified six stages which are determined by looking at seven aspects of the faith domain. Fowler's own description of the stages he has identified follows:

(See Figure 4 - p 72)

It might be argued that such an evaluation technique will truncate people's faith and put them into little boxes. On the other hand, such an objective tool gives one the distance and awareness of faith's variety of form to allow people to be who they are without entangling them in one's projections about where the researcher thinks they ought to be.

Theological hope is an ability based on the definition of hope by Jürgen Moltmann.⁴³⁾ Hope is not optimism or the bravery to order things and risk their disorder. It is not a flight from the pressure of the present into a consoling future. It is the drawing of one's future vision into the present and to already begin to live by it. This does not make the present more bearable. It often makes it more unbearable. The risk of hope is that it opens the cocoon of one's life provided by society and puts the individual directly in touch with a vision of the radical possibilities for life as understood from the limit perspective.

The model used to evaluate the development of this sort of hope that centres one's wholeness despite the pushes and pulls of distorting forces in life, is related to the way one organizes his or her life. Hope and one's ritual are connected if one does not place too narrow a definition on the term, "ritual".

The model for evaluation provides a comprehensive way of seeing how one's life ritual can be compared to the many patterns of spiritual life found in the history of the Western Tradition. See p 74 (*Figure 5*) - a diagram of our adaptation of the Holme's model.

The content of the centre of wholeness structure is the vision of the Creator drawn into the centre of one's life. It balances the tendencies toward feeling and thinking and the focusing and

and unfocusing approaches to that relationship. The distortions of this central position are understandable. They come from taking a spiritual tendency and pushing it to an extreme position to centre one's life around it.

The human tendency to get "stuck" in one of the extreme positions for the spiritual life, is to get stuck in a part of the whole of the spiritual life. It creates an "-ism" out of an aspect of that life. These distortions misrepresent the centre of the spiritual life as asceticism, rationalism, quietism, or pietism.

Erik Erikson has shown just how important rituals are to human health and development. Their patterning of existence covers fundamental moments in life from the mother's first greetings to her infant in the morning to the liturgy of the Christian Church at Easter.⁴⁴⁾

Barnard Bro's⁴⁵⁾ anthropological point of view complements Erickson's psychosocial developmental standpoint. The importance of ritual as general action patterns for life is that they tie together the bi-polar aspects of life. The opposites in life such as the extremes of life and death, light and dark, male and female, holy and profane or tribe and alien are held together by ritual action, "embracing negativity and moving beyond it".

The second level of religious language differentiates the experience of distance or separateness from the totality of the experience of the Creator. This emerges as a cry of anguish as one begins to be aware of the experience itself. Ritual reconnects the relationship by the act of liturgy in the context of the community of faith.

A person might appear anywhere on the picture of the aspects of the spiritual life. It is the quality of being stuck in one of those aspects that is of interest to the investigator. Hope and the centring of ritual is never static. It is the dynamic ability to return to centre that is considered a strength for purposes of this theological research.

Theological love is the third long term indicator of the integration and application of religious language in the adult. The model used to evaluate the functioning of this aspect of the relationship with the Creator is a pattern with five steps.

The engagement of this process is activated when there is change

ordifference noted in one's self or the environment. This disjuncture is left open and like the urge felt to close three lines which almost form a triangle, there is an urge to bring disjunction to conjunction. This is the first step.

The closure usually cannot be made within the framework that the problem presents itself in. A scanning, the second step, needs to begin to find a new frame for the disjunction in which a solution is possible.

The third step is the experience of knowing that a new frame and solution is possible. This is not to say that the solution becomes conscious. What is felt is the awareness that it is possible.

The fourth step is bringing to consciousness the articulation of what the new frame and its solution is. This means that bits of dream, a piece of a story, part of a song, some scattered experiences of close but unlike events must all play a part in the solution. What does not fit is set aside for another time and problem.

The final step is to place one's solution alongside those of others. How does this match their experience and thinking?

Love is the creative process as it takes various forms in life. When it is directed to the limit of experience and the Creator, it becomes theological love which re-frames all its other forms. Such love is not reducible to terms of sexual function, gender, romance, marriage or any other partial or everyday image. On the other hand, such metaphors have been used by mystics to point to the relationship with the Creator when other words seem to fail.

If theological love is not the process by which religious language is used by the adult, then a distortion is present which this evaluation attempts to identify. One might be stuck at any of the five steps in the process or the use of religious language might be associated with some other human process such as a hunger for power or wealth.

To bring this section to a close, a final comment related to the fourth test for the quality of theological play in adults needs to be made. This is because it is also a matter of general importance to the whole. This point is related to the classical identification of one's use of Scripture and life-style.

What has been attempted here is to remain faithful to the whole tradition of theology and to the wholeness of the way the human being processes raw event-data and language. Scripture has been approached with two spirits, both of which need to be held together in each person as well as in the Church.

The two spirits by which Scripture is approached are the traditions of monastic and scholastic theology. Jean Leclercq compared these two traditions carefully⁴⁶⁾ and noted the complementary functions they play during the middle ages to nourish each other. He also noted how historically they have sometimes broken apart and been at odds with each other. Our hope is that they will be integrated tendencies in each individual and in the Church. Perhaps, this approach to teaching how to speak and be Christian can contribute to that hope.

The scholastic tradition emphasized analysis, lectures, books and argumentation. Such linear thinking is usually associated with the functioning of the brain's left hemisphere. Monastic theology was more right hemisphere in its orientation. It advocated reading Scripture out loud and keeping it connected to the liturgy, especially in the Benedictine tradition. The text was understood by a free association among the images of Scripture so that each image deepened rather than explained the text by using another language system or level. The tradition of spiritual direction included some written manuals but it was mostly an oral tradition.

The teaching of Scripture to young children described here, is much more oriented in the monastic approach. By the time of adolescence, however, the scholastic approach becomes more useful. Much later in life the monastic approach again becomes important but not in the naïve way of the child. In one's later years the approach becomes more child-like, an awareness spoken of by St. Paul.

There are many paths of spiritual development. What has been suggested here is only one. God works in many ways to be with created creatures so that they can create creating in other creatures.

CONCLUSION

We are all involved in teaching children the art of the use of religious language whether we mean to be or not. The method we use is one that is conscious or not and the act of teaching is one done by design or default. What has been presented here is

an effort to accept the responsibility to teach by design and to know and be critical of what that design is. Above all, this has been an effort to conceptualize a new frame of reference for teaching Scripture which conserves both a commitment to and respect for Scripture and an openness and awareness of modern experience and language.

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Abstract -

One of the most challenging aspects of religious education is learning how to speak and be Christian. The author suggests that this requires a special kind of method: a method that must be aware of the paradox of being both a teacher of Scripture, and yet not being in ultimate control of how that set of tools will be used. This article puts forward a novel approach to teaching Scripture to young children, by consciously and extensively using the role of play in the learning process. The method described here is based on important elements of the Montessori approach to education, and has been developed by the author in the Children's Center in Houston, Texas, in close co-operation with the International Center for Advanced Montessori Studies in Bergamo, Italy. A detailed description of the theoretical basis of the method

and its application in practice is given here. A spiral curriculum that begins in early religious experiences and the acquisition of related religious language is advocated, which winds out into the creation of new realities as the experience and thinking of the child becomes differentiated. The aim is therefore to conceptualize a new frame of experience for teaching Scripture, which conserves both a commitment to and respect for Scripture, and an openness and awareness of modern experience and language.

STAGE	A. Form of Logic (Piaget)	B. Perspective Taking (Selman)	C. Form of Moral Judgment (Kohlberg)	D. Bounds of Social Awareness	E. Locus of Authority	F. Form of World Reference	G. Symbolic Function
I	Preoperational	Rudimentary empathy (egocentric)	Punishment - reward	Family, primal others	Attachment/dependence relationships Size, power, visible symbols of authority	Episodic	Magical Numinous
II	Concrete Operational	Simple perspective taking	Instrumental hedonism (Reciprocal fairness)	"Those like us" (in familial, ethnic, racial, class and religious terms)	Incumbents of authority roles, salience increased by personal relatedness.	Narrative-Dramatic	One-dimensional literal
III	Early Formal Operations	Mutual interpersonal	Interpersonal expectations and concordance	Composite of groups in which one has interpersonal relationships	Consensus of valued groups and personally worthy representatives of belief value traditions	Tacit system felt meanings symbolically mediated, globally held	Symbols multidimensional, evocative power inheres in symbol
IV	Formal Operations (Dichotomizing class - (societal)	Mutual, with self-selected group or class - (societal)	Societal perspective, Reflective relativism or class-biased universalism	Ideologically compatible communities with congruence to self-chosen norms and insights	One's own judgment as informed by self-ratified ideological perspective. Authorities and norms must be congruent with this	Explicit system, conceptually mediated clarity about boundaries and inner connections of system	Symbols separated from symbolized. Translated (reduced) to ideas. Evocative power inheres in meaning conveyed by symbols

<p>V</p>	<p>Formal Opera- tions (Dialec- tical)</p>	<p>Mutual with groups, classes, and traditions "other" than one's own</p>	<p>Prior to society, Principled higher law (universal and critical)</p>	<p>Extends beyond class norms and interests. Disciplined ideological vulnerability to "truths" and "claims" of outgroups and other traditions</p>	<p>Dialectical joining of judgment- experience processes with reflective claims of others and of various expres- sions of cumulative human wisdom</p>	<p>Multisystemic symbolic and conceptual mediation</p>	<p>Postcritical rejoining of irreducible symbolic power, and ideational meaning. Evoca- tive power in- herent in the reality in and beyond symbol and in the power of uncon- scious processes in the self</p>
<p>VI</p>	<p>Formal Operations (Synthetic)</p>	<p>Mutual, with the common= wealth of being</p>	<p>Loyalty to being</p>	<p>Identification with the species Transnarcis- sistic love of being</p>	<p>In a personal judgment in= formed by the experiences and truths of previous stages, purified of egoic striving and linked by disciplined intuition to the principle of being</p>	<p>Unitive actuality felt and participated unity of "One beyond the many"</p>	<p>Evocative power of symbols actualized through unifi- cation of reality media= and the self</p>

James W Fowler, *Stages of Faith* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

Figure 5

HOPE-RITUAL EVALUATION

