In these answers, which appear to have been written for the qualifying examination in Systematic Theology, King reveals his preference for aspects of both liberal and neo-orthodox thinking and explains his definitions of religious faith and conversion. He also notes that "without immortality the universe would be somewhat irrational." His faith in immortality "assured [him] that God will vindicate the righteous." King received a B on the examination.

1. I would begin my view of the function and importance of revelation and reason in the Christian religion by stating that both are important and necessary. For me the question is not revelation or reason, but revelation and reason. The one must supplement the other.

In modern contemporary Protestant theology, particularly continental theology, there is a strong tendency to cast out reason altogether. Indeed the distinctive feature of continental theology is to assert the conflict between reason and revelation. For then it is a matter of either/or and not both/and. Barth is very emphatic at this point. He leaves no room for natural theology. Brunner is somewhat more sympathetic toward natural theology. He gives reason a sort of propaedeutic function, however subordinating it to revelation. But it remains true that both Barth and Brunner affirm that reason is important in ultimate matters of faith. Man cannot know God by reason. In fact they would affirm that man can do nothing to get to God. It is God who must come to man through revelation. In these thinkers we find a sort of deification of revelation.

One the other hand we find many contemporary liberal Protestant theologians who would strongly disagree with the crisis theologians. For them reason must always supplement revelation. These theologians would not say that revelation is not important. They would say rather that revelation isn't meaningful or knowable apart from reason.

This certainly seems to me the more logical view. Without reason revelation remains meaningless and confused. Without reason it would be impossible to distinguish between a false revelation claim and a true revelation claim. Indeed reason is a presupposition for revelation. Revelation can come to inanimate objects. It can only come to a rational person.

And then again reason is necessary to communicate revelation. Before it (ie. revelation) can be communicated it must be placed in words and concepts which only a rational being can do.

If there is no rational being to interpret a revelation claim then it remains a bundle of nothing. It is certainly true to say that without reason
revelation is impossible. On every hand revelation presupposes reason. This is not to deify reason. It is merely to affirm that revelation is meaningless apart from reason. Reason is always needed to supplement revelation. Reason and revelation are not ultimately incompatible. On the contrary, the two presuppose each other. Without revelation there can be no reason, and without reason there can be no meaningful revelation. Revelation makes reason possible. Reason articulates and makes revelation intelligible.

It is quite interesting to note that all those theologians who spend hour after hour to prove that reason isn't valid in matters of faith must use reason to establish such a claim. How contradictory it is to use reason to prove that there can be no reason.

Those continental theologians who affirm that the scripture is the norm and standard of truth should reread Rom. 1:19. The man who refuses to use reason in interpreting God's revelation is without excuse.

2. In dealing with a situation like this the temptation would be to elaborate the theory of a finite God and leave it there. But the solution isn't that easy as far as I am concerned. I would much rather affirm the limitations of man's knowledge than the limitations of God's power.

So I would first tell this intelligent layman that there might be some hidden meaning and purpose in this tragedy that our finite minds cannot discern at the moment. I would assure {him} that there is always some mystery in God's ways. If there were no mystery in God's dealing, he would not be God. It is true that now we only "know in part."

All along I would be attempting to show him the value in believing in immortality in moments like these. It is true that without immortality the universe would be somewhat irrational. But by having faith in the immortal life we are assured that God will vindicate the righteous. I would assure that the Christian faith in its emphasis on immortality assures us that the ambiguities of this life will be meaningful in the life to come.

Then again I would attempt to show him that this tragedy might have some instrumental value for good. It can be a means of bringing the church member together in sympathy and love in a way that has never existed before. May it not be that there are no surd evils with devoid of instrumental value.

With all of this I would again stress the fact of mystery concerning God's ways. I would stress the fact that our knowledge is finite and limited. And that so long as we are on earth we will never understand all of God's way. "We only see through a glass darkly." Many of these problems will never be solved until we see God "face to face." 2

And finally I would emphasize the fact that the solution to the problem surrounding any tragedy is ultimately practical, not theoretical. Al-

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1. Romans 1:18-19: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness: because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them."
thought we cannot answer the problem theoretically, through faith we can transcend it as Christ did on the cross.

3. Sin has an ethical as well as a religious connotation. It is living contrary to one's own ideals as well as contrary to God's will. Man has a relation with himself, with other men, and with God. A perverted relationship with any of these is sin. A perverted relationship with oneself leads to the sin of disloyalty. A perverted relationship with other men leads to the sin of selfishness. A perverted relationship with God is the sin of unbelief. On each of these levels sin has a distinctive meaning.

Sin is also pride. It is not true that pride is the essence of sin as many neo-orthodox theologians would affirm. But it is true that the Bible presents pride as a real meaning of sin.

Sin is basically disobedience to the will of God. This disobedience to the will of God may be intentional or it may stem from ignorance. DeWolf refers to this distinction as that between formal sin and material sin, the former being intentionally and knowingly disobeying God's will and the latter being unknowingly disobeying God's will. Both, however, come under the category of sin.

The question of the origin of sin raises many question. The Bible points to several things as accounted for the origin of sin. Among them are the devil, the law, bodily passion, etc. It was tradition for older theology under the influence of Augustine to the fall of man and original sin as the explanation for the origin of sin. This emphasis on original sin is being reaffirmed today on the part of many neo-orthodox theologians. These theologians do not accept the doctrine in the Augustinian sense, since most of them accept the findings of historical and Biblical criticism. But they accept it as a mythological category to explain the universality of sin.

This doctrine of original sin, both in its traditional and modern forms raise the inevitable question of how can one be responsible and evil guilty of something that he hasn't committed? And furthermore such things as guilt and punishment are not transferable from one person to another. Such difficulties have lead many to totally cast out the category of original sin, recognizing, however, that within it are implied some profound truths.

Now all of this strikes me as erroneous and unhistorical. So long as the church is an organized historical institution, it can never be infallible. Moreover, it must be affirmed that it is erroneous to think of Christ as deliberately organizing the Church. It might be true to say that he believed in organization, the mere fact that he organized his disciples, but to say the Christ consciously organized the Church and made Peter the first Pope is push the record to false proportions.

It seems much more logical to find the origin of sin in man's free will. Sin originates when man misuses his freedom. A few theologians have tried to show how sin originates in misunderstood freedom. The child

2. 1 Corinthians 13:12: “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”
emerging from nonmoral irresponsibility to the awareness of moral consciousness attempt to assert himself to prove his freedom And in so doing he feels a sort of false autonomy.

All of this further validates the fact that the origin of sin is found in man's free will.

4. Meaning of the following

(1) Faith has often been looked upon as mere intellectual assent to a proposition or merely belief. But faith is more than either. Faith is fundamentally an act of commitment to that which is believe to be most valuable. Religiously speaking it is total surrender to God. Basically faith is not belief, (although belief is an element in faith) but an act.

For this reason faith is always significant. It is necessary for the very living of life. Even reason itself is a venture of faith. When faith is properly interpreted it is true that salvation is by faith.

(2) Grace has always been a significant concept in religious history. It is God free gift or free importation to man. It is the God giving of to man something that he can gain by his own powers.

In the history of theology this concept has usually been discussed in reference to salvation. It has lead to a discussion of prevenient grace and cooperative grace. (Augustine). In the reformation one of the characteristic utterances was, "salvation by grace." This emphasis on grace has often lead to a denial of man's freedom. If salvation is solely by grace, it is affirmed, man cannot be free.

However all of this isn't necessary. One can stress the necessity of grace in the salvation process and still affirm human freedom, Grace for it may well be that freedom is a gift of grace.

When grace is properly interpreted it is abid of abiding significance. We are all dependent on the grace of God for life and every worthwile goal that accompanies it. It is quite true that in Him we live and move and have our being.

(3) Conversion means a change of attitude or rather it means the acceptance of a new standard of values under the influence of some external power. Indeed every man in need of coversion. We are all in need of a better relationship with ourselves, with our fellow men, and with God. In this sense conversion must be a continual process. No one is every converted all at once.

(4) Repentance means a feeling sorry for one's sins accompanied by a change of attitude. It is a right about face. The feeling sorry without the change is not repentance. The two must go together.

If sin is a reality, as we all must admit, then even the concept of repentance is eternally significant. All men are in continual need of repenting. We must repent both invidually and collectively.

(5) Regeneration mean a new life that results after conversion and

3. DeWolf wrote "(5)" in the margin.
17 Dec 1953

repentance. It is a new set of values. It is a new adjustment to God, man, and self. It is what Jesus referred to in the Fourth gospel as the new birth.

Here again we find this an important and significant concept. In every age men are standing in the need of the new birth.

(6) sanctification means achievement of Christian perfection. It is that state in which the individual is free from sin and temptation. It is the ideal of all Christian development.

We must admit that if sanctification means freedom from sin and the doing of the ultimate will of God, man cannot be sanctified in this life. We may do the will of God in a particular situation, but the complexity of the social situation makes it almost impossible to do the ultimate will of God.

5. For me the church is both visible and invisible or to put it otherwise both organized and spiritual. The organized church is that fallible historic church filled with many of the evils of history. The spiritual church is the great fellowship of sharing under the guidance of the holy Spirit. It is the koinonia. It is in a sense the kingdom of God on earth.

The Roman Catholic view of the church hinges around the infallibility of the organized Church. It is held that this Church was organized by Christ, who in turn gave Peter the keys to the kingdom, making him the first pope.

Now all of this strikes me as erroneous and unhistorical. So long as the church is an organized historical institution, it can never be infallible. Moreover, it must be affirmed that it is erroneous to think of Christ as deliberately organizing the Church. It might be true to say that he believed in organization, the mere fact that he organized his disciples, but to say the Christ consciously organized the Church and made Peter the first Pope is push the record to false proportions.

So we must affirm that the organized church is fallible. This, however, does not mean that the organized Church isn’t necessary. It is absolutely necessary. It primary purpose in history is to keep the fellowship of love alive in history, to exhort and teach doctrine, and to raise its voice against social evils wherever they may exist.

The true Church is the spiritual Church. If there are any claims to infallibility it is here. It is in the spiritual Church that we witness the kingdom of God on earth. It is the true body of Christ. The organized Church is divided. But the spiritual Church is united.

6. It is hardly true to say that the affirmation of a monistic psychology with its emphasis on the inseparable union of personality and body is a disproof of human immortality. It all depends on ones conception of the body. If one holds a materialistic metaphysics believing that matter is ultimately real, then the above assertion is true. But if one holds a personalistic metaphysics, as I do, then Lamont’s assertion does not follow.4

Personalism affirms that the body, as well as all matter, is a phenomenal appearance of the divine activity. In other words, the body is an appearance of God's activity, making communication between finite persons possible. It is not ontologically real, but only phenomenally so. It is not intrinsic, but only instrumental.

Now with such an emphasis Lamont's difficulty is cast aside. If the body is only an appearance of God's activity it is still soul that is ultimately real.

Now Lamont may ask, if you say that the body is an instrument for communication between persons you are saying that the body is necessary? Certainly it is true that if immortality is real there must be some means of communication possible but one could answer that just as God provides a means of communication on earth through the body, he will provide a means of communication in an immortal state.

So after all Lamont's assertion that immortality is an illusion is not conclusively proved. The body which he is so concerned about as ultimately real may turn out to be mean a phenomenal appearance or occasion of the divine energizing.

AHDS. MLKP-MBU: Box 115.

From L. Harold DeWolf

30 December 1953

DeWolf explains the delay in evaluating King's qualifying examinations.

Mr. King:

I am sorry you have had to wait so long. Dr. Schilling left town before he had time to read the examinations and after his return we had to get together for consultation since our evaluations were not identical.

Happy New Year!

[signed] L Harold DeWolf

ALS. MLKP-MBU: Box 115.

From G. A. Key

12 January 1954
Chattanooga, Tenn.

Key, chair of the deacon board of First Baptist Church in Chattanooga and principal of Orchard Knob School, confirms King's preaching engagement.