

Alan Coates Bouquet (1884–1976): Twentieth-Century Foundations for an Anglican Theology of Religion

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In 1984 the General Synod of the Church of England cordially received the report Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue, which affirmed the presence of God with people of other faiths. Many varied influences had led to this positive stance, and this paper notes them. But it seeks primarily to highlight the part played by a Cambridge parish priest, Alan Coates Bouquet (1884–1976), in shaping Anglican attitudes over many decades. His frequently reprinted Pelican books, Comparative Religion (1941) and Sacred Books of the World (1954), were the most accessible sources of information about the world religious traditions in that period. Less widely known is a series of books and pamphlets on what is now known as the theology of religion. In these writings Bouquet set out his own position (“measured tolerance and faithful exclusiveness”) and mediated the Logos theologies of F. D. Maurice and B. F. Westcott.

The second half of the twentieth century may be seen as a time when Western Christians truly began to come to terms with religious pluralism. On the international level, the World Council of Churches (founded only in 1948 and very much the creature of the theological streams converging in the earlier part of the twentieth century) set up its Sub-Unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies in 1971, and moved with some speed to promulgate its *Guidelines on*

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Dialogue in 1979. These had been preceded by some fourteen years by the Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate*. Both these pioneering statements urged a new relationship between Christians and those of other religious paths and obediences. National churches were somewhat slower to respond, but respond many eventually did. Acting together through the British Council of Churches, the major denominations and missionary bodies in the U.K. created the Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths (CRPOF) in 1978 and appointed David Brown, Bishop of Guildford, to be its first moderator. This committee enjoyed the immense goodwill of all the churches; these had twice affirmed in the BCC Assembly that the presence of people of other faiths in Britain and Ireland was “within the gracious purposes of God” (a brave and prophetic statement given the sinister nationalist currents then, as now, endemic in the U.K.). The churches were looking to the new committee for help and guidance on many national issues: the shape of education, social policy, health care, chaplaincies, and so on. CRPOF saw all these issues within its remit, and might have simply contented itself with focusing on such practical matters.

But there was another set of challenges that neither the WCC *Guidelines on Dialogue* nor *Nostra Aetate* had confronted. Their eloquent calls for respect and tolerance were hardly inappropriate given the history of Christian defamation and depreciation of Jews and Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists, indeed of all religious others. But if we take just take the example of the WCC document we can see a reluctance to take seriously the theological and missiological dimensions that a new relationship between Christians and those of other faith traditions must be built upon. So we find in Paragraph 23 of the *Guidelines* these two formulations cast in interrogative mode:

What is the relation between the universal / creative redemptive activity of God towards all humankind and the particular creative / redemptive activity of God in the history of Israel and in the person and work of Jesus Christ?

Are Christians to speak of God’s work in the lives of all men and women only in tentative terms of hope that they may experience something of Him, or more positively in terms of God’s self-disclosure to people of living faiths and ideologies and in the struggle of human life?¹

¹ World Council of Churches, *Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1979), §23; <http://www.wccco.org/>

I have described elsewhere the twists and turns in the turmoil of the debates in world ecumenical circles.² Suffice it to say that the WCC Assembly meeting in Vancouver in August 1983 could get no further than to reaffirm “the uniqueness of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ” and then somewhat grudgingly to “recognize God’s creative work in the seeking for religious truth among people of other faiths.” The words of an alternative resolution, that “we recognize God’s creative work in the religious experience of people of other faiths,” were firmly rejected.³

Immediately the contrast with the British situation becomes apparent, and nowhere more so than in the response of the General Synod of the Church of England in 1981 to the British Council of Churches’ *Guidelines for Dialogue in Britain*. In commending these *Guidelines*, the Synod asked its Board of Mission and Unity for an extensive study of “the theological aspects” that should underlie interfaith dialogue. This was duly prepared by the Board’s Inter-Faith Consultative Group under the chairmanship of the then Bishop of Wolverhampton, Barry Rogerson, with Mary Tanner as its secretary, and was presented to the Synod in November 1984.

The shape of the report, entitled *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue*, is straightforward. It begins with reflections on the changed religious map of Britain, stressing the perplexity that this rapid change had brought to so many, including a “genuine fear of what is strange and ‘other’.” It also noted that the Christian community often found itself admiring the devotion and loyalty to their faith of the new members of British society and was “challenged by the deep springs of faith, wisdom and spirituality, the willingness accept the demanding rules and discipline of their faith, and the close fellowship and commitment to the family, often the extended family, that characterises the lives of others.” Because of this, the report observed, “Christians are now required to express their specific witness afresh

oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-and-respect/guidelines-on-dialogue-with-people-of-living-faiths-and-ideologies.

² See my “Ambivalent Theology and Ambivalent Policy: The World Council of Churches and Interfaith Dialogue 1938–1999,” appendix one in Kenneth Cracknell, *In Good and Generous Faith: Christian Responses to Religious Pluralism* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2006).

³ See David Gill, ed., *Gathered for Life: Official Report VI Assembly World Council of Churches, Vancouver, Canada, 24 July–10 August 1983* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), 40.

in the light of the new knowledge which increased contact with other religious tradition brings.”⁴

The second section of *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* reviewed the resources available for making fresh responses to other religious traditions. Here it relied upon the threefold typology developed by Alan Race, himself a member of the Consultative Group, namely the exclusivist, inclusivist, and pluralist positions discernible within Christian theology. The group was clear that all these three overall positions in relation to other religious faiths embody subtle differences within themselves and that none of these positions may truly reflect the position of any given individual. They could, however, form a starting point in the search for truth in our new expression of our faith, particularly as Christians consider “what has to be retained at all costs and what can be surrendered for the sake of better, richer things and deeper understandings.” Aiming at answering that question, the report turns “to the biblical witness for guidance and to the insights of the Christian tradition” to help us.⁵

There follows the centerpiece of the report. In three sections it discusses the Bible as a “Source of Authoritative Guidance,” the “Biblical Process,” and a sixfold exposition of what it called “Biblical Pointers”: the Creating God, the Covenanting God, the Electing God, the Incarnate God, God as Spirit, and the Saving and Judging God. As we shall see, underlying this exposition is a profound expression of the universal action and presence of God in the world.

The report concludes with a reaffirmation of the four Principles of Dialogue as set out in the BCC document *Guidelines for Dialogue in Britain*, sharpening and deepening their various emphases with the theological insights attained in the central discussion.⁶ It concludes with the personal reflections of members of the group on the process, during which they had “been forced to look again at what it is we believe and by listening to one another have begun to sense that the Spirit is leading us into new perceptions.”⁷ Its last words come as an

⁴ *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* (London: Church House Publishing, 1986), §11, 14.

⁵ *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue*, §22–23.

⁶ The Principles of Dialogue quoted in chapter 7 of *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* are: 1. Dialogue begins when people meet each other; 2. Dialogue depends upon mutual understanding and mutual trust; 3. Dialogue makes it possible to share in service to the community; 4. Dialogue becomes the medium of authentic witness.

⁷ *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue*, §81.

extended quotation from Bishop David Brown, who died before the report was fully shaped:

The apostle Paul declares his hope that God would one day “put his hidden purpose into effect and bring the universe, all in heaven and on earth, into a unity in Christ”, and in his great vision, John saw the universal city lit by the glory of God in and through Christ. There is much theological work to be done and many generations of dialogue before such a hope can ever come to fruition; but the task is a priority to which the churches must now give their attention!⁸

Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue was well received by the Synod later in 1984 and was soon after taken up as a study document for the Anglican Consultative Council in Singapore 1987, and thus gains its honorable place in the history of Anglican interfaith theology as the one Synodical statement of the twentieth century. But why did it have so generous a reception within Anglican circles?

The Anglican Tradition in the Theology of Religion

Though no Methodist can truly be called an outsider to the Anglican tradition,⁹ let me claim that status in order to extol the pearls of great price in the area of the theology of religion and interfaith relationships that lie embedded within Anglicanism. These are many and varied, and all worth celebrating. There is the long history of overseas engagement which accompanied the expansion of the British Empire and which brought many devout Anglicans into close contact with men and women of other faith. This tradition can be said to begin with Henry Martyn of Cambridge, chaplain to the East India Company, justly celebrated by Constance Padwick, through to Temple Gairdner and to Constance Padwick herself.¹⁰ The great Anglican

⁸ *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue*, §85. The whole document was dedicated to David Brown.

⁹ The argument for this statement, if argument be necessary, is set out in Kenneth Cracknell and Susan J. White, *An Introduction to World Methodism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁰ Constance Padwick wrote biographical studies of both Martyn and Gairdner: *Henry Martyn: Confessor of the Faith* (London: SCM Press, 1922), and *Temple Gairdner of Cairo* (London: SPCK, 1929). Padwick also published a constructive work for Christian–Muslim understanding: *Muslim Devotions: A Study of Prayer-Manuals in Common Use* (London: SPCK, 1961).

missionary societies, despite some false starts, were at the forefront of the change in missionary attitudes, producing such great figures as C. F. Andrews, the beloved companion of M. K. Gandhi. It surprised no one that eventually a General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, Max Warren, was the instigator of the influential *Christian Presence* series (1959 onwards) to which Bishop Kenneth Cragg contributed the first volume, *Sandals at the Mosque*. Another vigorous tradition that opened the hearts and minds of Anglicans is represented by teachers of spirituality like Evelyn Underwood, friend and collaborator of Rabindranath Tagore, and George Appleton, one-time Archbishop of Rangoon, one of whose prayers preceded the contents page of *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue*:

O Holy Spirit, whose presence is liberty: Grant me that freedom of the Spirit, which will not fear to tread in unknown ways nor be held back by fear of others or misgiving of ourselves. Ever beckon us forward to the place of thy will which is also the place of thy power, O ever-leading ever-loving Lord.¹¹

To all these resources we can add a number of central Anglican theological themes. Above all others is the re-espousal in the nineteenth century of the Logos doctrine of the Greek fathers, a movement led by Frederick Denison Maurice (1805–1872) in *The Religions of the World and their Relations to Christianity* (1847) and Brooke Foss Westcott (1825–1901) in his *The Gospel of Life* (1892, reprinted in 1906).¹² Rereading after twenty-seven years the “Biblical Pointers” section of *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue*, I found the marks of both Maurice and Westcott on almost every page. I want to suggest that their thinking had taken deep root in Anglican minds, preparing the ground for a ready assent to the theological position of the report. But a puzzle immediately presents itself. It can be safely asserted that very few of the members of the General Synod in 1985 had ever read either Maurice or Westcott, and some perhaps would barely have known their names. So how was the thinking of Maurice

¹¹ George Appleton, *One Man's Prayers* (London: SPCK, 1977), 19. Appleton also wrote the *Christian Presence* series volume on Buddhism: *On the Eightfold Path* (London: SCM Press, 1961).

¹² I have written about Maurice and Westcott and their influence in *Justice, Courtesy and Love: Theologians and Missionaries Encountering World Religions 1846–1914* (London: Epworth, 1995).

and Westcott mediated to both the writers of the report and to their readers?⁹

The answer is: through one remarkable but almost forgotten Anglican priest, Alan Coates Bouquet (1884–1976). It is my contention that almost singlehandedly, he kept alive Logos theology as the solution to the problem of the world's religious traditions for the second part of the twentieth century.

Alan Coates Bouquet: His Life and Writings

Bouquet was a quintessential Cambridge man. Graduating with first-class honors in 1905, by 1922 he had proceeded through the degrees of BD and DD. As a mark of his standing in the Cambridge academic community, he was invited to give both the Hulsean and Stanton Lectures in 1924–1925 and 1931–1934. Settling by vocation to the life of a parish priest, he became vicar of All Saints' Church in Jesus Lane, Cambridge, where he served for twenty-three years, retiring in 1945. Although he served both Jesus and Trinity Colleges during this period as a lecturer in religion, it was only after his retirement that he became University Lecturer in the History and Comparative Study of Religions (1945–1956). As a scholar-priest he produced a stream of books, mainly in the philosophy of religion. But some of these presaged what was to be his life study, especially a 1921 volume called *Is Christianity the Final Religion?*⁹ and another in 1932, *Man and Deity: An Outline of the Origin and Development of Religion*.

In 1935 Bouquet made his one translation of another's work: Erich Przywara's *Religionsphilosophie katholischer Theologie*, the Catholic contribution to the important *Handbuch der Philosophie* of 1926 (the Protestant contributor was Emil Brunner). To this work Bouquet gave an English title which bore no reference to the German: *Polarity: A German Catholic Interpretation of Religion*.¹³ There is no indication in the text why Bouquet undertook this considerable labor, but as we shall see, it has relevance to Bouquet's lasting achievement

¹³ "The title which I have given to this translation is not of the author's own choosing, but it is the one which seems on the whole to sum up his message, with its reiterated emphasis upon opposing yet complementary poles of thought, upon tensions, rhythms, oscillations, explosions, and balanced unities." "Translator's Preface," in Erich Przywara, *Polarity: A German Catholic Interpretation of Religion*, trans. Alan Coates Bouquet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), vii.

in laying the English foundations for a theology of religion. None of these early works made any great mark or sold very many copies.

But Bouquet struck gold when he was invited by Penguin Books to write a popular volume, *Comparative Religion: A Short Outline* (1941), followed with a new edition in 1945. This book was constantly reprinted, at least through 1975. In 1954 Bouquet added a second Pelican book, *Sacred Books of the World: A Companion Source-Book to Comparative Religion*, which went through at least nine printings. These two low-priced books found their way into countless Anglican parsonages and onto the shelves of lay men and women between 1941 and 1975.

After he retired as a parish priest, Bouquet travelled extensively in India and he felt able to write a Hutchinson's University Library volume on *Hinduism* (1948). This is chiefly notable for its extensive use of material gathered through what we would now call interfaith dialogue. But in India he was already turning his attention to his summation volume: *The Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions*, which was published in the influential series of the fifties, *The Library of Constructive Theology* (published in London by Nisbet and in the U.S.A. by Harper and Brothers, 1958). In this work he explicitly commits himself to the Logos theology of religion that had been first worked out by Maurice and Westcott.

Bouquet's last work in the theology of religion was a brief pamphlet entitled *Should Christianity Be Exclusive?* (1960), a pastoral reflection for those Anglicans already puzzled by the rapid religious changes of their times.

Bouquet's Singular Achievements

Bouquet remained a Christian theologian, though he often asserted the scientific objectivity of his work. "I have aimed at writing a plain tale," he began the preface to *Comparative Religion*,

inspired by scientific method. The facts are interesting enough in themselves, without the glamour of propaganda. But if anyone should ask: "But how can an Anglican padre be expected to produce an impartial treatise on a subject concerning which he is bound to have denominational convictions?"—my answer would be at once: "I believe that truth shines by its own light. I have faith that if my own creed is any sense absolute, it cannot suffer from an unprejudiced and dispassionate exposition of the history

of religion.” And so I have striven to write as scientist, not as an advocate.¹⁴

A similar declaration is to be found in *The Sacred Books of the World*: “I wish most emphatically to disclaim any intention seeking to compile a Bible of the world. My sole intention is scientific; the illustration, in effect, of the different types of religion which I have described in my previous work. Any valuation of the quality of the passages must be left to the reader’s own judgment.”¹⁵ The fact that Bouquet wrote as a Christian was particularly striking in view of the need for accurate scholarly treatment of religion in the middle decades of the twentieth century. In this period, the study of religion was merely a “Cinderella subject” in British university education; there was, for example, still only one chair of Comparative Religion in Britain in 1939. Eric Sharpe has observed that “at the outbreak of war the burden and the heat of the day was borne by . . . two Anglican clergymen, E. O. James and A. C. Bouquet.”¹⁶ Strictly speaking, neither James nor Bouquet was primarily a scholar of religion: James was an anthropologist¹⁷ and Bouquet a philosophical theologian.

A little later in his history of the study of religion Sharpe refers to “Bouquet’s popular work *Comparative Religion*” which began its “long and useful life in 1941.” He notes pertinently that this work was not “so much phenomenology as a series of brief regional characterisations of the history of religion, with a Christian logos theology at no great depth . . . beneath the surface.”¹⁸ Sharpe’s comment is exactly right: Bouquet disclosed his sense of his audience, and thus his overarching concern, right at the beginning of *Comparative Religion* by quoting this telling passage from the contemporary missiologist Godfrey Phillips:

It will greatly ease the missionary situation, and lift a burden from not a few consciences, if it is firmly established that it is *our* God

¹⁴ A. C. Bouquet, *Comparative Religion: A Short Outline* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin Books, 1941), v.

¹⁵ A. C. Bouquet, *The Sacred Books of the World* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin Books, 1954), 20.

¹⁶ Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 240.

¹⁷ E. O. James’s best known book, *Origins of Sacrifice: A Study in Comparative Religion* (London: John Murray, 1933), is still used today.

¹⁸ James, *Origins of Sacrifice*, 441.

who is dimly perceived by the fetish-worshippers, *our* God who hears prayers on the trembling lips of the non-Christian fatherless and widow, *our* God who receives psalms of faith addressed in ignorant sincerity to different beings.¹⁹

The companion volume, *Sacred Books of the World*, was even more explicit about its intended audience. In this work Bouquet prints two quotations from Justin Martyr's *Apology* I and II on the second title page:

We have shown that Christ is the Word (*Logos*) of whom the whole human race are partakers, and those who lived according to reason (*logos*) are Christians, even though accounted atheists. / Whatever men have uttered aright . . . belongs to us Christians; for we worship and love, next to God, the Word (*Logos*) which is from the Unbegotten and Ineffable God.²⁰

Bouquet never gave up on theological reflection. Thus, even when he was in the middle of a supposedly objective discussion of incarnation in Indian thought, his natural bent led him to Christian theologizing. In this remarkable passage in his *Comparative Religion*, Bouquet wrote:

To declare Jesus the unique incarnation of the Supreme God still leaves one the task of reconciling His appearance with those of other great prophets and teachers of past and present ages. This was done by the author of the Fourth Gospel, in his prologue, by the use of the idea of the Word or Logos of God, and such usage was continued by the early Christian writers to explain the work of the prophets and philosophers. But if Socrates, why not Rama or Gandhiji? The Indian, even if a Christian who places Jesus central in his thought, cannot exclude the idea that the Word of God may have enlightened some of his own great heroes and sages.²¹

That Bouquet could not constrain himself from Christian theologizing certainly diminishes his status as a comparative religionist,

¹⁹ Bouquet, *Comparative Religion*, vii, with no further indication of the source. Phillips, as Bouquet tells his readers, was Professor of Missions in the Selly Oak Colleges, in Birmingham.

²⁰ Bouquet, *Sacred Books of the World*, 5.

²¹ Bouquet, *Comparative Religion*, 139.

in the strictest sense. For our purposes, however, this is sufficient indication that the many Anglicans who read these two Pelican volumes were being introduced, quite subtly, to a very particular, and very positive, theology of religion. I have asked a limited sample of my own contemporaries (that is, people who were students in the fifties and sixties), if they could remember their first encounter with Bouquet's two Pelican books. They have nearly all replied in the affirmative. Further questioned about their reactions, they have said that although they can hardly remember the content of these books, they have no doubt but that they were left with a generous and affirmative impression of other religious phenomena, and that their first encounter with Logos theology was entirely owing to Alan Bouquet.

But many fewer are those who read the 430 pages of *The Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions*, published in 1958. And they would have had very little reason to do so, since the study of other religions formed no part of the theological curriculum in those days. Marcus Braybrooke recalls that as the Cambridge University Lecturer in Comparative Religion, Bouquet was assigned to lecture in the Divinity School at 5 pm in the May (Summer) term.²² Eric Sharpe recalls that at Manchester University, "the oldest stronghold in the country," a "special course" on comparative religion in 1956–1957 "mustered only three students, and before its end one-third of the class had fallen by the wayside."²³ Although Geoffrey Parrinder was appointed to teach Comparative Religion at King's College, London in 1958,²⁴ really not much was to change until the establishment of a department of religious studies led by Ninian Smart in the new University of Lancaster in the late sixties.

²² Marcus Braybrooke, *A Wider Vision: A History of the World Congress of Faiths, 1936–1996* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1996): "The widespread British indifference to the understanding of other religions, except amongst orientalist and some missionaries, may be illustrated by the situation at Cambridge University, when I was an undergraduate in the early sixties. Rev. Dr. A. C. Bouquet . . . gave the only lectures on the subject. They were held in the May term, which was dominated by examinations, at 5.00 p.m. in the afternoon, when no one in the summer expected to be indoors. It was assumed that hardly anyone would come and the assumption was self-fulfilling."

²³ Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History*, 287.

²⁴ There was an optional paper in the London University BD on Comparative Religion but none of my own teachers suggested I might choose it, despite my known intention to serve overseas. I thus missed the opportunity of being taught by Geoffrey Parrinder.

Despite the lack of an obvious market in the U.K. (the situation was different in the U.S.A.), the editors of the *Library of Constructive Theology* asked Bouquet for a major theological contribution and Bouquet obliged. Set free from the challenges of writing “scientifically,” Bouquet ranged widely over the world’s religious tradition expressing controversial and critical views. These he said were “not made in any spirit of antagonism or from any wish to hurt or score, but solely in an attempt to appraise what is true.” For our purposes it will be sufficient to notice first his enthusiasm for Logos theology, and second his weighing of previous writings in the field, clearly commending the Anglican tradition established by Maurice and Westcott.

Chapter 6 of *The Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions* offers an intricate and detailed comparative study of the origins of the Logos conception in the Greek world before Christ.²⁵ These Bouquet sees as culminating in the writings of the Hellenistic Jew, Philo (“the first great writer to relate the ideas of Hebrew theology to the Gentile Philosophies of late antiquity”). There follows a lengthy excursus on the role played by Philonic thought in the formulation of the prologue of the Fourth Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . In him was life, and the life was the light of all people” followed in verse 5 by the statement “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it”—or so the NRSV.²⁶ Bouquet sees that the manner in which the Greek verb *katalaben* had been translated as having profound significance for the theology of religion. Accordingly, he is at his most acerbic in his criticism of Hendrik Kraemer’s interpretation of *katalaben* in *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, the work that determined so much missionary theology after 1938.²⁷ He writes:

²⁵ Bouquet expresses his gratitude to “the Rev R. A. K. Runcie, Dean of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, who discussed with me the chapter on the Doctrine of the Logos in detail” (*The Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions* [Welwyn, U.K.: James Nisbet, 1958], vii). It is a pleasure to recall that Robert Runcie was Archbishop of Canterbury when the General Synod received *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue*.

²⁶ The Greek text reads *kai to phos en te skotia phainei, kai he skotia autou ou katalaben*.

²⁷ The most succinct and incisive critique of this book is by S. Wesley Ariarajah, *Hindus and Christians: A Century of Protestant Ecumenical Thought* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 52–88.

But even if one agrees with him to the extent of saying that of course the human religious consciousness is marred by self-centredness, and to that extent is incapable of a *full* recognition of God, and often engages wilfully in a flight from His presence, it does no good to exaggerate this by taking words in their wrong senses, and to intensify one's argument by misconstruing Scripture passages.²⁸

Bouquet's rebuttal begins by listing the translations of *katalaben* by British scholars from Christopher Wordsworth and B. F. Westcott through to E. C. Hoskyns and C. K. Barrett, all of whom point to the sense of "overtake," "overcome," or "overwhelm" rather than "understand" or "comprehend."²⁹ Perhaps the most imaginative as well as an accurate translation is that of James Moffatt: "the darkness did not master it." Bouquet goes on for many more pages adducing other biblical passages in support of the proposition that God is known through the Logos to people far beyond the confines of the church. The implications of this, Bouquet wrote, were "far-reaching and decisive." For Christians it means recognizing that, as they speak of Christ, their hearers have

already within themselves encountered the Divine Logos, though perhaps unconsciously, have been found by Him and have been moved by Him to make some step towards further knowledge and towards a deeper and more explicit relationship. This is perhaps what C. F. Andrews meant when he was asked how he approached earnest Hindus, and answered: "I always take it for granted that they *are* Christians, and as I talk to them, I often see the light of Christ come into their eyes."³⁰

After these words, Bouquet adds a single-line paragraph: "I believe this to be fundamental."

²⁸ Bouquet, *The Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions*, 155.

²⁹ Bultmann, by contrast, translates *katalaben* in the sense of *begreifen* rather than *ergreifen* or *uberwaltigen*, so Bouquet, *The Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions*, 156.

³⁰ Bouquet, *The Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions*, 160. Bouquet dedicated his 1948 book *Hinduism* "To the Memory of Charles Freer Andrews." Andrews (1871–1940) would have been Vice Principal of Westcott House in Cambridge when Bouquet was a student of theology. For a short study of Andrews as a theologian of religion, see Cracknell, *Justice, Courtesy and Love*, 170–183.

Bouquet's sharp criticism of Kraemer has its origins in his very early recognition that there was a tendency in Continental theology that was wholly inimical to an adequate understanding of religion. Writing in 1933, he describes what he calls a neo-traditionalist tendency to assert that Christianity is discontinuous with all other forms of human religiosity: "They appeared to claim that it was intrinsically quite different from the other systems of the world."³¹ For these thinkers to treat Christianity "as one system among others is to misconceive it." While setting out the reasons why such thinkers make this assertion Bouquet concludes that the advocates of this neo-traditionalist approach are operating with a false antithesis:

It is not a choice, as they insist, between a christology both catastrophic and dualistic on the one hand, and sheer relativism on the other. We can admit the correctness of the historical method, and the justness of the scientific reduction of the universe to a continuous system, and still confess that Christianity is Religion rather a religion.³²

Bouquet thus rejects what he terms as a "catastrophic and intrusionary" view of the person and work of Jesus, preferring an evolutionary one, thus echoing his mentor B. F. Westcott.³³ Concluding this section Bouquet again echoes Westcott:

We are only truly Christian and truly religious when we contemplate all things as proceeding from Deity and referable to Deity. To Deity is the sole glory of creation. No human achievement can claim to stand in its own right, and least of all that in which Divine Love is supremely at work *di' humas tous anthropous kai ten hemeteran soterian*.³⁴

³¹ A. C. Bouquet, *Jesus: A New Outline and Estimate* (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1933), 210.

³² Bouquet, *Jesus*, 212. That Bouquet has Karl Barth particularly in mind is shown in the lengthy footnote on page 216.

³³ See especially Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Gospel of Life: Thoughts Introductory to the Study of Christian Doctrine* (London: Macmillan, 1892). Bouquet dedicated his 1933 book, *Jesus: A New Outline and Estimate*, with these words: "Domui Westcottianae, Anno foundationis quinquagesimo dedicat alumnus amore plenus, A C B."

³⁴ Bouquet, *Jesus*, 215–216. Bouquet is echoing here more nearly the thought of Westcott's *Christus Consummator*.

Now we are able to see with some clarity why Bouquet spent so much energy on translating Erich Przywara's 1926 work, *Religionsphilosophie katholischer Theologie*. This essay appeared alongside an essay by Emil Brunner, entitled *Religious Philosophy of Evangelical Theology* (*Religionsphilosophie evangelischer Theologie*), in which, as Bouquet wrote, "we are told that philosophy of religion can only exist inside revelation. Such revelation being 'the word of God' mediated to us through the literature of Holy Scripture."³⁵ Bouquet was drawn to Przywara's work as editor of the journal *Stimmen der Zeit*, the Catholic rejoinder to the Barthian publication *Zwischen den Zeiten*. Though it would be too great a detour from the theme of the present essay to enter into a technical discussion of Barth's rejection of the scholastic principle of the *analogia entis*, it is clear that Przywara's exposition was vastly attractive to Bouquet.³⁶ In naming his translation *Polarity*, Bouquet wanted to call his readers' attention in the history of religion to opposing yet complementary poles of thought. "May not perhaps the comprehensive temper of the Church of England," he asked, "make this way of regarding the diversities of religious belief and practice congenial to us?"³⁷

We may return to our main theme: the Logos theology that underlay *Towards a Theology of Inter-Faith Dialogue*. Chapter 13 of *The Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions* is something of a tour de force as Bouquet takes his readers through the existing literature on the theology of religion, reviewing, however briefly, significant Anglican thinkers: *inter alia* Maurice, Illingworth, Westcott, James Maurice Wilson, William Temple, R. H. L. Slater, Evelyn Underhill,

³⁵ Bouquet, "Translator's Preface," in Przywara, *Polarity*, v. Elsewhere Bouquet specifically commends the words of Thomas Aquinas, and we quote them here to show the close relationship of the Logos doctrine to the schema of the *analogia entis*:

"As the thought of the divine Mind is called the Word, Who is the Son, so the unfolding of that thought *per opera exteriora* is named the word of the Word.

The created intellect is the imparted likeness of God, and every intellectual process has its origin in the Word of God who is the Divine Reason.

Christ is our internal teacher, and no truth of any kind is known but through Him; though He speaks in not language as we do, but by interior illumination.

The philosophers have taught us the sciences, for God revealed them to them."

³⁶ Bouquet, *The Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions*, 346.

³⁷ Bouquet, "Translator's Preface," in Przywara, *Polarity*, vii.

E. C. Dewick, and Lawrence Browne. Non-Anglicans include T. R. Glover, Nicol Macnicol, and H. H. Farmer. The other large selection is from those writing from within Continental Protestantism: Ernst Troeltsch, Rudolf Otto, Nathan Söderblom, Karl Jaspers, Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, Gustav Mensching, J. H. Bavinck, Gerhardus van der Leeuw. There are two Continental Catholics, Friedrich Heiler and, of course, Erich Przywara. There is one American, William Earnest Hocking, together with the significant figures of Arnold Toynbee and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. It is clear that Bouquet decisively rejects the neo-traditionalists and awards pride of place to those who commend some form of Logos theology, not only Maurice and Westcott but also William Temple and E. C. Dewick, and among the Continental thinkers, Nathan Söderblom, Paul Tillich, and Gerhardus van der Leeuw. Even the most cursory reader would have noted Bouquet's profound Anglican sensibility, his steady critique of the notion of discontinuity in religion, and his passionate belief that a Logos theology was the only way forward in Christian understanding of other faith traditions.

Bouquet's work was nearly done. Yet his deep pastoral sensitivity led him to produce a pamphlet for the *Questions at Issue* series published by the National Society and the SPCK in 1960. In *Should Christianity Be Exclusive?* Bouquet wrote for those who never would have read his larger works. In intention it is not dissimilar to *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue*, and could well have served in its day as a brief guide to its Anglican readership on interreligious matters. But the great immigration patterns of the later sixties had not taken place when he published this work, and Bouquet could only speak in general terms about the world religious traditions. We may nevertheless highlight his conclusions (in fact remarkable summaries of the position he had reached in his previous writings). He once again dissociates himself from the notion of beginning with the Reformation as a source for a theology of religion. Protestant Christianity has, he wrote "over-emphasized the exclusiveness of the Christian faith, partly because it has made a great deal of the Old Testament, with its sharp distinction between Jews and Gentiles."³⁸ Rather, he argued, we should go back to the early church where Christians lived "in close proximity to non-Christians" and did not feel that differences from them "entitled them to depreciate what ever elements of good-

³⁸ Bouquet, *Should Christianity Be Exclusive?*, 15.

ness and truth they saw in the beliefs of some of their neighbours.” Bouquet then offers this succinct formulation:

The Living God, they said, expressed himself in the whole of Creation, and this Self-expression they called the Logos, the Divine Principle, or Divine Word. The Word was the Light that enlightens every man (John 1.9) and in so far as anyone accepted and tried to follow that Light, even though he might seem an atheist, he was Christian in spirit. . . . This is the Logos-doctrine which, through the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel and its orthodox interpreters has come down to us as an essential part of the inheritance of the Christian movement.

To be sure, he asserts almost in the same breath, they also believed that “their experiences of Jesus justified them in holding as well as in declaring to others that in him was the fullest expression of the Divine Word (Colossians 2.9).”³⁹ But the principle is established: “distinctiveness and relatedness plainly exist in Christianity” and therefore “measured tolerance and faithful exclusiveness are permanent twin features in the presentation of the Christian message to the world in every generation.”⁴⁰

Closing Remarks

It is often the fate of foundation layers to have their work buried and rendered invisible. In Bouquet’s case we might add that sometimes the foundation layers themselves can get buried with their foundations. This brief survey has sought to enable Anglicans and others to recognize the singular achievement of a gentle and unassuming scholar-priest. The safe passage through the General Synod in November 1984 of *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue*, with its

³⁹ Bouquet, *Should Christianity Be Exclusive?*, 16.

⁴⁰ Bouquet, *Should Christianity Be Exclusive?*, 18. The actual closing words of his pamphlet are: “When all is said and done, a fully developed Catholic Christianity can be found to contain all those varied elements in other religions which are not incompatible with it; though it holds them in balance and without exaggeration or over emphasis.” Though I have not dwelt upon this aspect of Bouquet’s thought, it was to be present in *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue*: “Furthermore in the encountering of those of other revelations, new depths are discovered in the fullest revelation of God in Jesus Christ” (§40). “This must be so,” the report adds later, “from what we have understood from the Bible of the work of God the Creator, the Logos, and the Spirit” (§71).

clear affirmation that “Christians need to be open to recognize and respond to all manifestations of the Logos,” owes much to this particular disciple of Maurice and Westcott. Alan Bouquet transmitted not only the achievements of nineteenth and early twentieth-century Anglican thought to a new generation, but also deserves full acknowledgment of his own unique contribution to the progress of interfaith dialogue.