

PROPOSITIONAL ELEMENT IN RELIGIOUS BELIEF

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Empiricism has challenged the validity of religion in modern times by showing that the religious statements are meaningless. However, there are some empiricists who have tried to save the meaningfulness of religious assertions by putting on them certain interpretations. Thus R.B. Braithwaite, under the influence of the later works of Wittgenstein who therein urges us "to look at the sentence as an instrument and its sense as its employment,"³³ in his Eddington Memorial Lecture: "An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief," has attempted to adjust religion to empiricism by a shifting ground technique. Braithwaite accepts the view that the meaning of language is found in its use, and, in order to show how a certain statement is used, he re-commends an empirical enquiry; "a statement need not itself be empirically verifiable, but that it is used in a particular way is always a straightforwardly empirical proposition"³⁴. Thus the task of an empiricist, Braithwaite holds, is "to explain in empirical terms, how a religious statement is used by a man who asserts it in order to express his religious conviction".³⁵ This task Braithwaite undertakes in his Lecture. An attempt will be made in this article to examine his views in order to see how far he succeeds in saving the meaningfulness of religious beliefs.

Employing the "use" principle, Braithwaite enquires into the meaning of religious statements and argues that religious statements are used as moral assertions. But the ethical theory that he accepts is "a conative rather than an emotive theory; it makes the primary use of a moral assertion that of expressing the intention of the asserter to act in a particular sort of way

³³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.H. Anscombe (Oxford, 1953), p. 126.

³⁴ R B. Braithwaite's Lecture: *An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief* (Cambridge, 1955), p. 11. Hereafter referred to as Lecture.

³⁵ Ibid.

specified in the assertion".³⁶ The conative theory of ethics is accepted by him because it is in accordance with the spirit of empiricism. It can be empirically examined whether or not a person intends following a certain moral policy by the observation of what he says and does. Religious statements also, Braithwaite asserts, are "primarily declarations of adherence to a policy of action, declaration of commitment to a way of life".³⁷ "The intention of a Christian," he adds, "to follow a Christian way of life is not only the criterion for the sincerity of his belief in the assertion of Christianity; it is the meaningfulness of his assertions."³⁸ Though Braithwaite assimilates religious assertions to moral assertions, he points out some differences between religious assertions and moral assertions. One of them is that, while a moral assertion specifies the policy with which it is concerned, a religious assertion does not make it clear which policy is to be carried out. So it is not any one religious assertion to be considered, as is the case in morality, but a system of religious assertions as a whole which would indicate a moral function. In order to know what a system of religious assertions would mean, we have to specify the kind of behaviour "which is in accordance with what one takes to be the fundamental moral principles of the religion in question".³⁹ Braithwaite gives the example of Christianity the fundamental principle of which, according to him, is the principle of love or *agape*. Thus the system of assertions which constitutes Christianity would receive the meaning which is given to the assertion "God is love," namely, the declaration of an intention to follow an agapeistic way of life. It is thus "the intention to behave which constitutes what is known as religious conviction,"⁴⁰ and "the primary use of religious assertions is to announce allegiance to a set of moral principles".⁴¹ This is borne out, Braithwaite holds, by the phenomenon of conversion "which is not only a change in the propositions believed — indeed there may

³⁶ Ibid., p. 12.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 16.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 19.

be no specifically intellectual change at all; it is a change in the state of will".⁴² A more fundamental difference between religious assertions and moral assertions is that in case of the former the intentions to carry out behaviour policies are associated with entertaining different stories. A story, according to Braithwaite, is a "set of propositions which are straight-forwardly empirical propositions capable of empirical test and which are thought of by the religious man in connection with his resolution to follow the way of life advocated by his religion".⁴³ It is the difference between one set of stories (the Buddhist stories) and another set of stories (the Christian stories) which would make the assertions of the former different from those of the latter. Thus, to assert the whole set of assertions of the Christian religion is both to tell the Christian doctrinal story and to confess allegiance to the Christian way of life.⁴⁴ But Braithwaite maintains that the stories need not be taken to be true in any sense; they are to be "entertained only". Their importance is "psychological and causal". "In religious conviction," Braithwaite says, 'the resolution to follow a way of life is primary; it is not derived from believing, still less thinking, of any empirical story. The story may psychologically support the resolution, but it does not logically justify it.'⁴⁵ Braithwaite concludes that his account of religious belief according to which "it is not a species of ordinary belief, of belief in a proposition [and] is an intention to behave in a certain way (a moral belief) together with the entertainment of certain stories associated with the intention in the mind of the believer . . . seems ... to do justice to both, the empiricists' demand that meaning must be tied to empirical use and to the religious man's claim for his religious beliefs to be taken seriously".⁴⁶

Braithwaite's attempt to reconcile religion with empiricism is perhaps the boldest of all the efforts on the part of empiricists, and indeed his account of the nature of religious belief has stimulated a lot of discussion among the

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 23.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 24.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 31.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 32-33.

philosophers of religion. By trying to show that, though religious beliefs appear to be assertions, they are really declarations of intentions of pursuing certain moral policies, he has made himself a notable representative of what may be called ethical reductionism. Since religious beliefs which purport to assert certain facts are neither empirical statements, nor scientific hypotheses, nor even the necessary propositions like those of logic and mathematics, and since these three kinds of propositions are, according to Braithwaite, the only kind that a philosopher can admit, religious beliefs cannot be assertions or propositions. They, if they have meaning, are like moral beliefs which, though not belonging to any of the three categories of propositions mentioned above, are still meaningful, for, though they do not assert anything like a fact, they are used as expressing the intention to carry out certain behaviour policies. It is obvious that this view of the nature of the religious belief, which underscores the conative element in it, completely eliminates any cognitive element in religious belief and reduces it to the status of a moral belief. Now, no religious man would deny the practical aspect of religion, and some will regard it as the basic aspect, but no religious man at the same time would be prepared to accept the complete elimination of any cognitive element in his religious statements, as Braithwaite's interpretation does. What we have to see is this: how far Braithwaite is justified in completely eliminating the cognitive element in religious statements and, if he is not justified, how can cognitive element be retained without doing violence to the spirit of empiricism?

Braithwaite holds that, without allegiance to a set of moral principles, there cannot be any true religion, and it is a fact that some people lead an agapeistic way of life and find religion quite alien to it. For example, a humanist follows a certain moral policy with full devotion, and he may not get inspiration from the life of Christ as much as he can get from some other source. But can he be a true Christian? The followers of traditional Christianity would say that such a person cannot be a true Christian. Thus Braithwaite's view has been criticised for its incompatibility with traditional Christianity, according to which a Christian not only adheres to the moral policy as advocated by Christianity, but also believes in the historicity of Jesus Christ and in the existence of God. He is also committed to certain beliefs about the nature of the universe and man's relationship to it. Mascall objects to Braithwaite's supposition that Christianity would be content with his conative view of religious statements. Mascall points out that "it is surely

undeniable that Christianity demands personal commitment not to a personal way of life (whatever that extremely vague phrase may mean), but to the concrete historical person, Jesus of Nazareth".⁴⁷ Braithwaite may reply to Mascall's objection that, though commitment to Jesus Christ entails that such a person existed, yet this commitment is basically bound up with adherence to an agapeistic way of life which Jesus Christ preached and exemplified in his deeds. Braithwaite will draw Mascall's attention to one of the stories of Christianity in which Jesus Christ said: "Ye are my disciples if ye do the things I command." Mascall's criticism is based on a particular interpretation of Christianity adopted by him and some people like Braithwaite may not accept it. This question of interpretation is, however, a controversial issue, as Frederick Ferre has suggested: "I he interpretation of the significance of Christian theism awaits an adequate analysis of theological discourse."⁴⁸

Though the main thesis of Braithwaite's Lecture is that a religious assertion is primarily a declaration of commitment to a way of life, he does not deny that there is a propositional element in a religious assertion. He admits that "a religious assertion will . . . have a pro-positional element which is lacking in a purely moral assertion,"⁴⁹ and that "the propositional element in a religious assertion consists of stories interpreted as straightforwardly empirical propositions which are not, generally speaking, believed to be true".⁵⁰ Braithwaite thinks that "there are four types of stories in the Christian set"⁵¹:

- (1) Historical statements, e.g. "Jesus was crucified, dead and buried, for which empirical evidence is relevant".
- (2) Historical statements, e.g. "Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, where non-empirical considerations would be relevant".

⁴⁷ E.L. Mascall, *Words and Images* (London, 1957), p. 60.

⁴⁸ Frederick Ferre, *Language Logic and God* (London

⁴⁹ *Lecture*, p. 24.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵¹ Ian T. Ramsay Ed., *Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy* (London, 1966), p. 91.

- (3) Statements which are at once historical and metaphysical in import, e.g. "Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost".
- (4) Purely non-empirical statements, e.g. "God is the maker of heaven and earth".

When Braithwaite says that the story is not to be taken as "a matter of empirical fact" or true, he does not mean the stories of types (1) and (2) above, for which there is evidence, but the types (3) and (4) above which, according to him, "must be taken as telling stories which were empirical propositions but whose efficacy for a Christian did not depend upon their being believed to be true, i.e. to correspond to empirical fact."⁵² It is with regard to these types of stories which cannot be regarded by an empiricist as true that Braithwaite's critics will disagree with him and say on the contrary that Christians do believe these stories to be true. D.M. Mackinnon finds it impossible to accept Braithwaite's view that "it would not matter whether or not there was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth provided that entertainment of the story about him restrained its causal efficacy . . . for, as a matter of fact," Mackinnon points out, "the efficacy of cementing the alliance between will and imagination that men have found upon the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth has been bound up with their belief that some at least of the events about which they are thinking actually happened."⁵³ Braithwaite would reply that Mackinnon is right here because the story about the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth is a matter of fact and it can be established as certain that events of his birth and death actually happened. But in the case of those stories [types (3) and (4) above] which cannot be established as a matter of fact and so cannot be regarded as true, Braithwaite would maintain that such stories should be "entertained in thought, i.e. the statement of story should be understood as having a meaning, without being taken as true".⁵⁴ Here Braithwaite seems to be suggesting that in the case of the stories which are known to correspond to empirical facts, like the story of the life and

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 80

⁵⁴ *Lecture*, p. 26.

death of Jesus of Nazareth, the question of their being believed to be true does not arise; they are *known* to be true. But it is different in the case of those stories [types (3) and (4) above] which are not *known* to correspond to empirical facts; and so they, Braithwaite holds, should not be *believed* to be true. Braithwaite does not use the phrase *known to be true*, but uses the phrase *believed to be true*, e.g. when, with regard to the stories of type (3) and (4) above, he says that their efficacy does not "depend upon their being *believed to be true*, i.e. to correspond to empirical fact".⁵⁵ In fact, he should have used the words "known to be true" in place of "believed to be true," because when any story corresponds to empirical fact, it is not *believed to be true*, but *known to be true*. Braithwaite does not distinguish between a statement *known to be true* and a statement *believed to be true* and consequently confuses "knowledge" with "belief," which he should have not done, if, as a true empiricist, he had followed Hume who did make a distinction between "knowledge" and "belief." Braithwaite is right when he says that if the religious man, while associating his intentions with stories of the types (3) and (4) above, means them *known to be true*, the religious man is mistaken. But, on the other hand, Braithwaite is mistaken in suggesting that since such stories do not correspond to empirical facts, or, in other words, *are not known to be true*, they should not be *believed to be true*, and so should be simply entertained in thought. Braithwaite seems to hold that if a statement does not correspond to empirical facts, the only cognitive attitude that can be legitimately adopted towards it is that of entertaining it in thought. But, on the other hand, it may be suggested that if a statement does not correspond to empirical facts, or, in other words, it is not known to be true, we cannot adopt the attitude of "belief" towards it; we can legitimately say that it is *believed* to be true as Kant said with regard to the existence of God. Kant indeed held that we do not know that God exists, nor do we know that He does not exist. In the situation we can legitimately say that we believe that God exists. If Braithwaite accepts this distinction between "knowledge" and "belief" we can retain the propositional element in a religious belief, even if we regard it, as Braithwaite does, as primarily a declaration of adherence to a certain behaviour policy.

⁵⁵ Ian T. Ramsay, Ed., op. cit., p. 91.

According to Braithwaite, knowledge is "a species of belief"⁵⁶ and this is why he uses the word "believe" instead of "knowledge" when he says that "it is not necessary . . . for the asserter of a religious assertion to *believe* in the truth of story involved in the assertions".⁵⁷ He further remarks that "educated Christians of the present day who attach importance to the doctrine of the Atonement certainly do not believe in the empirically testable story in Mathew Arnold's or any other form"⁵⁸ and here also by the words "do not believe" he means "do not know". It is this inappropriate use of the word "belief" (not distinguishing it from "knowledge") that has perhaps been responsible for the position that Braithwaite has taken with regard to the propositional element in religious statements. We may agree with Braithwaite that the religious man does not know certain stories in the sense that they do not correspond to empirical facts, but the latter would still believe in those stories. In other words, the stories are not known to be true in the sense empirical statements are known to be true, but they are believed to be true, Braithwaite seems to have misunderstood the sense in which the religious man rightly uses the word "belief". When he uses it rightly, he does not use it in the sense the word "know" is used. Thus we may say that it is not essential for the religious man to *know* the truth of the story associated with his intention to practise moral principles, but it is necessary that he should *believe* in the truth of the story. Indeed, it is because of this belief in the truth of the story that his intention becomes the intention of a religious man.

Braithwaite maintains that "to assert the whole set of assertions of the Christian religion is both to tell the Christian doctrinal story and to confess allegiance to the Christian way of life". This would suggest that he regards the doctrinal story as an integral part of religion, but since some of the propositions contained in the story are not based on "reasonable grounds to be true" [story of types(3) and (4) above], it should not be taken as true; it should be entertained in thought only. We, on the other hand, would suggest that for the religious man the "doctrinal story" along with the declaration of allegiance to a way of life is an integral part of religious assertions, and it can

⁵⁶ Phillips Griffiths, Ed., *Knowledge and Belief* (Oxford, 1967), p. 29.

⁵⁷ Lecture, pp. 25-26.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

substantially remain so if the story is believed to be true, and not merely entertained in thought. What does Braithwaite mean by "entertainment in thought"? By "I entertain a proposition," Braithwaite says: "I mean to say the least possible thing about my cognitive attitude, something involving neither my believing it nor my not believing it, neither my meditating upon it nor its just having come into my mind, neither my using it in a hypothetical proposition nor my making no use of it at all. To entertain a proposition in this sense is the same thing as to understand the sentence or other symbols used to stand for it."⁵⁹ One would wonder if any serious-minded religious man would regard a doctrinal story entertained in the way Braithwaite suggests, as an essential element of religious assertions. Braithwaite concedes that the propositional element in religious beliefs can be retained only by entertaining doctrinal stories in thought, and not by taking them as true, since there is no evidence for their corresponding to empirical facts. But the religious man may say that this is no concession. Retaining the propositional element in religious belief in the form suggested by Braithwaite is tantamount to not retaining it at all if it is not taken as true. Of course, the doctrinal stories should be taken as true, not in the sense that they are known to be true, but in the sense that they are believed to be true.

Braithwaite points out that "doctrinal stories" have a psychological and causal function. "Thus," he says, "it is an empirical psychological fact, that many people find it easier to resolve upon and to carry through a course of action which is contrary to their natural inclinations if this policy is associated in their minds with certain stories."⁶⁰ Hence Braithwaite is referring to an empirical fact which may not be true in all cases. Indeed, it may not be true in the case of mature people. William Lillie suggests that "this is the use rather blatantly made of such stories in children's sermons," but, he adds, "one wonders whether Nowell Smith would not regard this as a rather infantile element in Christian morality".⁶¹ Besides, it may be asked whether a doctrinal story "merely entertained in thought" or the same story believed to be true would make it easier for a person to follow a course of action. Here

⁵⁹ A Phillips Griffiths, Ed., op. cit., p. 29.

⁶⁰ *Lecture*, p. 27.

⁶¹ William Lillie, "Book Reviews," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, XX/1 (March 1967), p. 96.

Braithwaite has completely ignored the early period of Christianity and Islam when the believers pursued the religious way of life with such a profound spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice that it would be absurd to regard their actions as the effects of entertaining doctrinal stories in thought only. They, indeed, believed in the truth of the doctrinal stories they entertained, and the doctrinal stories not only served as the justification of their actions but also stimulated them to act.

Braithwaite holds that "a doctrinal story should be entertained in thought, it is telling of the story . . . the way in which one can tell ... the story of a novel with which one is acquainted".⁶² In other words, he regards the doctrinal stories as fictitious. On the other hand, we have suggested that, though in certain cases a doctrinal story is not taken by the religious man as true in the sense that it is not known to be true, it can be and, in fact, is taken as true in the sense that it is believed to be true. Braithwaite here may reply that a doctrinal story believed to be true will be as fictitious as the one entertained in thought only. But Braithwaite is mistaken in having this view of "belief". A belief-attitude to a proposition is a cognitive relation to act which simply shows that what has been asserted in the proposition is not known to be so. When a husband says that he believes that his wife is faithful to him, his doctrinal story about his wife's character is not fictitious. Indeed, it refers to a situation about which he cannot adopt the attitude of "knowledge," i.e. he cannot say that he knows that his wife is faithful to him, but about which he can adopt belief-attitude and say that he *believes* that his wife is faithful to him. When Hume said that he believed in the external objects, though he did not know that they as such existed, his belief in the existence of external objects was not fictitious.

While discussing the psychological value of stories of the religious men to carry out their behaviour policies, Braithwaite mentions "the story that in so doing they are doing the will of God".⁶³ It is correct to say that, indeed, the religious man regards his religious conduct as doing the will of God, but what is surprising is that Braithwaite suggests that "the intention to do what a person commands or desires, irrespective of what this command may be, is

⁶² *Lecture*, p. 24.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 31

no part of a higher religion".⁶⁴ What he means by "higher religion" is not clear, but since he refers to Christianity throughout his Lecture, he can be taken to mean by "higher religion" some institutional or prophetic religion like Christianity or Islam. And in these religions the moral conduct of the believer consists in carrying out the commands of God, as advocated by His prophet to whom he is by faith committed. His commitment is not conditional; it is absolute obedience to his prophet and to God. A true believer does not examine whether or not the commands to be carried out by him as a believer are in accordance with his own moral judgment. He carries them out even when he finds them against his own moral judgment. To say that "it is when the religious man finds that what . . . (God) commands or desires accords with his own moral judgment that he decides to obey or to accede to it"⁶⁵ is to ignore the fundamental characteristic of a religious behaviour policy, that it is pursued, not because it is determined by the believer's own moral judgment, but solely because it is commanded by God. Braithwaite may be right that "in religious conviction the resolution to follow a way of life is primary," but he is wrong in saying that "it is not derived from believing still less from thinking of, any empirical story". Indeed, in religious conviction the religious man resolves to follow a way of life because he believes in the truth of the doctrinal story associated with his resolution. It is in this religious belief that he finds justification for his conduct. To the question "why do you do this?" how common is this religious man's reply: "I do this because it is God's command!" The Christians certainly believe that because God loves them so they ought to love one another. They find the reason for following an agapeistic way of life in the conviction that "God loves them," by which they are trying to say that they themselves are the objects of God's love, and this gives them justification for their conduct of love to others. By ignoring the propositional element in religious assertions which, as suggested, can be retained in the form of "belief" and concentrating only on the conative element as the essence of religious assertions, Braithwaite has not characterised the religious assertions correctly. Indeed, the religious man does not use religious assertions in the way

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Braithwaite suggests; for the religious man the propositional element is no less important than the conative element in his assertions.

There is one important aspect of the religious life which Braithwaite would not be prepared to ignore, and which in a way is very relevant to the moral life with which he identifies the religious life. This is the concept of prayer. If Braithwaite's interpretation of religious assertions is correct, the concept of prayer becomes meaningless. What does prayer involve? Prayer is generally regarded as talking to God. Now, talking to someone clearly involves (a) knowledge of, or belief in, the existence of the person talked to, and (b) directing one's talk to the person. It is senseless to say "I am talking to Tom — but Tom does not exist or is not believed by me to exist." If belief in the existence of God and directedness of one's talk which are presupposed by prayer are interpreted along Braithwaite's lines, then prayer as normally understood becomes an activity in which religious people never engage. They do not merely entertain the existence of God in thought while praying as Braithwaite's view would imply, they also believe in the existence of God. They would address Him neither as an object of knowledge, nor as an object of pure imagination, but as an object of belief, which in Kant's words would mean that they would address God as if He existed. In other words, they would expect some response from God in the way they expect response from human beings who are addressed or talked to in the same way. On Braithwaite's view, prayer loses this talking to or addressing form and becomes merely a kind of activity whereby one, reinforces one's intentions to pursue a certain moral policy. Braithwaite would agree with Paul F. Schmidt when the latter says: "When we pray to be forgiven, we are trying to instil in ourselves a disposition not to behave in a certain manner, and we wish our behaviour to manifest our sorrow, our concern over what happens and our repentance; when we pray for something we do not expect, I hope, it is like a telephone call to a large department store where the item is promptly mailed out. Rather we seek to develop in ourselves modes of behaviour that will tend to bring what is asked for."⁶⁶ This "evocative" function of prayer may be one of the meanings of the religious language used in prayer, but when the religious man is engaged in prayer, he, apart from showing certain feelings about his past conduct reinforcing his good

⁶⁶ Paul S. Schmidt, *Religious Knowledge*, p. 87.

intentions to follow the moral policy in right earnest, talks to or addresses God in Whose existence he believes.

Braithwaite admits that the positive account of religious belief that he has given is not "the whole truth about religious belief"⁶⁷ and insists throughout his Lecture that the primary use of religious assertions is to announce allegiance to a set of moral principles. This view of religious belief is an answer to the question as to "which view of religious belief is compatible with acceptance of a thoroughgoing logical empiricism," but it may be asked whether the aspect of religious belief that Braithwaite is describing and which he regards as the primary aspect is really the primary aspect. Here Braithwaite's critics will differ from him. They do not think that the conative aspect of religious belief is really a *primary aspect*, though they will concede that it is an important aspect. Thus H.D. Lewis says: "In presenting this view Professor Braithwaite makes much of the very close relation there has usually been thought to be between religion and ethics. In this, I, for one, go entirely with him. Few things seem to be more regrettable than neglect of this close relation of religion and ethics, and I have ventured on more than one occasion to voice some very vigorous protests against the tendency of some theologians to obscure or distort the ethical factor in religion. . . . Morality in some form lies at the heart of most religions " But, Lewis points out: "It is one thing to say this, and to be concerned about it, it is quite another to claim to give an account of all that matters in religion in ethical terms."⁶⁸ Braithwaite may reply that he has been misunderstood. He is just regarding the conative element as one and not the whole aspect. Though he says so and admits that there is a propositional element in a religious belief, the whole trend of his Lecture tends to ignore this element. It has already been argued that retaining the propositional element in religious belief by allowing the entertainment of doctrinal stories in thought only without believing them true and assigning to them psychological and causal function is tantamount to eliminating the propositional element altogether. Besides, he does not even mention that he is giving a secondary place to the propositional element which is implied by his contention that the conative

⁶⁷ Ian T. Ramsay, Ed., op. cit., p. 88,

⁶⁸ 36. R.D. Lewis, *Philosophy of Religion* (London, 1965), pp. 92-93.

aspect is the "primary" use of religious beliefs. The way he accommodates doctrinal stories in his analysis of religious belief does not give them even a secondary position. If Braithwaite sincerely wishes to retain the propositional element, he cannot do so by giving it the position of "stories entertained in thought only"; it can be retained by taking stories as true, not in the sense of their being *known* to be true, but in the sense of their being *believed* to be true. "Belief " and "action" are the two basic components of religious life. Belief without action is a meaningless collection of words, and action without belief may be action all right, but it will not be the action of the religious man, however moral it may be in its character. It is the propositional element in the form of "belief" in religious assertions which gives them the name of religious beliefs and any system of religious statements in a particular religion the name of "belief system". If Braithwaite does not accept our interpretation, he is driven to the position which he seems to be avoiding that religious assertions are only declarations of commitment to a way of life and nothing else.

So we may conclude that Braithwaite's interpretation of religious utterances in terms of declarations of allegiance to a certain set of moral principles, as he has explained it, is not the correct interpretation of religious utterances. He is right in holding that religious utterances have no meaning in the sense that since they are not verifiable they cannot be factually meaningful, but the way he has tried to give them meaning by referring to the "use" principle and thus asserting that their use lies in their being declarations of allegiance to certain moral principles does not carry him far enough to give them any substantial meaning. Braithwaite's view of religious belief may be compatible with the spirit of empiricism, but it is hardly compatible with any religion (whatever view one may take of religion) especially with any higher religion. What is required is an interpretation of religious beliefs which may satisfy both empiricism and religion, and this is what Braithwaite has failed to achieve.