

form, infinite richness is expressed within the limitations of humanity. But humanity is richer in meaning *to us* than divinity, because of our experience of man and our ignorance of God. The 'poverty' of God consists in his simplicity, which is mysterious to us, but infinitely rich in meaning and intelligibility.

Finally, the process of religious translation can throw light on the process of *understanding* the incarnation. Just as the process of divine revelation takes its origin in a primitive Jewish tribe, whose language has to be translated into the great humanist languages of the world, so too God became man at an epoch of relative simplicity, when the clear-cut ideas needed to translate divinity into human form were common tender. But every age needs to grasp the incarnation for itself; in any age the terms are not lacking to make the simple but profound truth of God in the flesh come alive in the language and culture of the time. Perhaps 'translation christology' will have a part to play in this process.

## **'New and Non-New'** by Ian Gregor and Patricia Marshall

### **Any Number Can Play**

'Speak that I may see thee'—a line from one of Ben Jonson's plays serves to remind us that in language we reveal ourselves in a quite distinctive way. And perhaps nowhere is language more sharply revelatory than in those phrases which fall almost automatically from our lips, routine verbal gestures scarcely attended to.

I suppose, for the average layman, the most sustained theological discourse that he hears exists in the weekly sermon. Even with that general kind of context in mind, there would seem to have grown up in the last few years two kinds of vocabularies which stand in an interesting relationship to each other. As we look at the lists vertically we can see two quite distinct theological profiles—some features of more consequence than others, but taken together, an interesting whole.

*VOICE A*

*VOICE B*

*VOICE C*

Scene

A narrow wooden octagonal pulpit with gilt inlay, reached by way of a short spiral staircase. (A wooden door separating the staircase from the pulpit is an optional extra.) A microphone is suspended from a wooden canopy above.

Scene

A steel lectern positioned to the side of the simple altar-table. A microphone is clipped to the lectern.

Almighty God

Our Father

Our Blessed Lord

Christ

Holy Ghost

Holy Spirit

Our Blessed Lady

Mary

Holy Mother Church  
The One True Church  
The Church



The Institutional Church  
The Pilgrim Church  
The hierarchy

Soul

Self

Priest

Minister

The Holy Father

Pope Paul

Mystical Body

People of God

Christian Charity

Love

Fires of Hell

Final loss

Our Eternal Reward

The Kingdom

The Holy Sacrifice of  
The Mass

Celebration of the Eucharist

Prayers

Prayer

Sins

Sinfulness

Mortal Sin

—

Irregular motions of the  
flesh

(Joyful) acceptance of our  
sexuality

Sermon

Homily

Going to Confession

Acknowledging our failure

Going to Communion

Coming to Communion

<i>VOICE A</i>	<i>VOICE B</i>	<i>VOICE C</i>
Sacred Scripture	The Bible	
Non-Catholics Protestants Separated Brethren	Fellow Christians	
Good works	Caring	
Procession	Silent march of witness	
Catholic action	Christian witness	
Collection	Offering	
Outdoor collection	Planned giving	
The Good Nuns	The sisters	
A Special Indulgence	—	
Watering down of our Faith	Development of dogma	
Rosary, Sermon and Benediction	—	

*(Editor's note: We have provided a third column for *New Blackfriars* readers to fill in their own preferred 'post-progressive' or 'radical' or 'neo-conservative' phrases.)*

Clearly, there are two theological positions here of substance—but what these lists should make clear is that *all* language is metaphorical and nowhere more so than in theological language which, as Matthew Arnold pointed out a century ago, consists of terms which are simply 'thrown out' at a reality which can be neither encompassed nor defined by them.

It is tempting to think of Voice C finding a tone which would avoid the grace-notes of Voice A and the studied 'pianissimo' of Voice B. But this would be to misrepresent the issue. It is not the idiom which is at issue, but the exclusiveness of its rights. Voices A, B—and C—lose authenticity when they forget the possibility of each other, when they forget that language is gesture, and that Christianity revealed itself not in the word but in the Word made flesh.